# Talking food: Everyday dieting practices in a weight management group

By

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Doctoral Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Loughborough University

March 2007

# ABSTRACT

This thesis used fifty hours of naturally occurring video and audio taped data from the 'weigh-in' section of four commercial weight management groups in the East Midlands of England. This thesis is a discursive psychological and conversation analytic investigation of the turn-taking organization of the talk, examining what the group leaders and members make relevant in their talk about food and dieting. The data was transcribed using the Jeffersonian method. Group members attend the group weekly, and are weighed - their weight gain, loss or maintenance is recorded on a membership card. The analytic chapters follow the format of the 'weigh-in' section of the meeting exploring firstly *how* the group leaders and members manage the practices of getting ready to be weighed; then how the 'news' of weight gain, loss or maintenance is told and receipted; before exploring how 'advice-giving' is constructed and the final analytic chapter deals with the issues of morality and accountability in the leaders' and members' talk. Analysis shows that the 'pre-weigh in practices' involved before the group members are weighed consists of two robust patterns, 1) the practice of getting undressed is not oriented to by either the group members or group leaders and the group leaders avoided direct eye contact and concerned themselves with other business or 2) when no undressing practices took place, the group leaders were much more comfortable with direct eye contact. These sequences show how the body and its practices are constructed in particular ways within, and as part of the practices of getting ready to be weighed. Analysis showed the telling and receipting of weight news gets done differently depending on whether the group members have gained, lost or maintained weight. When the news concerned weight gain, the sequence included a 'pre-announcement' and the news TCU was punctuated with marked trouble. When the news concerned weight loss, only the group members produced a pre-account and the news TCU contained no marked trouble. Finally, when the group members had maintained weight, the news TCU was delivered bluntly, and there was no evidence of trouble. In relation to advice-giving, analysis showed that group members repeatedly worked to assert their epistemic priority to avoid having to acknowledge the advice and the advice was receipted minimally. Finally, analysis showed that group members produced accounts with reference to a moral evaluation, such as blame or

culpability. Sometimes an account was produced to circumvent being held publicly accountable for the event or action. It became apparent that both the group leaders and group members could not orient to themselves, their behaviour or food without it being constructed within a moral or accountable framework.

Therefore, the thesis is an exploration of how group leaders and members manage the 'dieting-practices' involved in getting weighed in a commercial weight management group and how using DP and CA can show the intricate turn by turn organization of such practices.

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# Contents

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank first and foremost my two supervisors Dr. Elizabeth H. Stokoe and Prof. Derek Edwards without whom this thesis would not exist. They have given me the strength, courage and the benefit of their wisdom to help me through this academic journey. Secondly, I would like to give my thanks to all the members of DARG (past and present) whose advice and ideas have been important to the development of my thesis. I must also thank Dr. Jon Hindmarsh whose ideas were indispensable about how to approach the video data I had collected for my first analytic chapter, without which I am sure I would still be at a loss. Thank you also to all the group leaders, members and the founder of the East Midlands weight management group who made this thesis possible. Thank you to my parents (John and Elisabeth) for always being at the end of the phone, for supporting me emotionally and dare I say financially through my PhD. Your support has been amazing.

Finally, I have to thank my husband Shawn; he has been my rock through this emotional journey. He has seen me at my worst, in floods of tears desperate to give it all up, but also at my best. Throughout this whole process there are no words to express what his unquestioning support, unshakeable belief and love has meant to me. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, I could not have done it without you, nor would I want to.

I couldn't ask for anymore in a husband - you truly are 珍異

# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a discursive psychological and conversation analytic investigation of the turn-taking organization of talk within a commercial weight management group. The groups meet weekly and the meetings involve a 'weigh-in', where the group members are weighed, and their weight gain, loss or maintenance is noted down on their membership records card. The meetings also involve a 'pep talk' where current and relevant information is shared before a forty-five minute exercise class. The focus of the thesis is the talk that takes place at the 'weigh-in' scales. The group members' engagement *in*, and accountability *for* weight management and its success or failure was very much tied to dieting practices. Therefore the thesis explores *how* the group members and group leaders orient to each other's turns in talk, and what *they* make relevant in their descriptions of food and dieting, as well as their evaluative and assessment practices.

This introductory chapter locates my research within both past and present academic literature on pathologised eating behaviours, body image, and dieting. It provides a meta-analysis of this literature which introduces the subject matter of this thesis. This includes reference to detailed food intake plans, moral evaluations of food, failure to stick to diets and accounts as to what constitutes, 'naughty' and 'good' food (where 'good' is tied to weight management rather than the general nutritional value of the food) all of which makes a review of dieting and body image literature relevant.

Therefore, the chapter includes:

- Overview of existing literature and its relevance to my research;
- Précis of previous studies which claim to have studied women's dieting behaviour;
- Finally, an overview of how the thesis is structured, and what you as the reader can expect from each of the analytic chapters.

There is a wealth of potentially relevant literature that might inform this thesis, to a greater or lesser extent. In this preliminary review, I briefly outline some of the main trajectories of research into eating, body image, dieting and eating pathology. I explore their theoretical bases, and consider their relevance for this thesis. Firstly, the chapter focuses on pathologised eating behaviours and the complex relationship between women and food, before moving on to examine literature on the 'thin body' and body image. The chapter then examines the growth of the 'dieting industry' before considering social research on eating and conversation analysis literature and the practices of eating.

**Pathologised eating**

The rationale for this study partly emerges out of the eating disorders literature. Particularly from Helen Malson's (2000) observation that anorexia should be classified not as an individual pathology, but rather as an "intensified collection of experiences and damaging body management practices located precisely within the parameters of 'normality'; constructed by the same complex matrix of discursive practices which regulate 'normal' feminine practices" (2000, p.367). The definition of anorexia needs to be redefined to stop the traditional classification of women as either 'normal' or 'abnormal' in relation to their eating behaviour. This new definition needs to recognise that anorexia is more than just an individual pathology that originates from an individual woman. Malson calls for a definition that transgresses the individual, society and this dichotomy of abnormal and normal eating, so that the focus is on women's experiences of anorexia.

This redefinition must therefore include the study of women's dieting talk and relationship with food. If we are to see women's relationship with food as a continuum, this must include 'mundane' dieting. It appears that so-called 'mundane' dieting permeates daily life yet most individuals are not pathologised for their 'body management practices'; in fact, they are rewarded for it. Nevertheless, there is surprisingly little research focusing on how people talk about food and the pivotal role dieting has in their everyday lives, and this is one of the starting points for this thesis. The wider socio-cultural construction of 'the thin ideal' forms part of the relevant context for

understanding any issues of food and diet, and so will be considered in this introductory chapter.

Feminist psychologists prompted a shift in focus from understanding eating disorders as individual pathology to their treatment as socially constructed and gendered phenomena (e.g. Hepworth, 1999; Malson, 1998). Within these debates, women's relationships with food are presented as particularly complex and contradictory (Lawrence, 1984; Robertson, 2001). Meta-analyses of previous research reveals that even those women claiming to have a 'normal' relationship to food often limit and deny themselves particular foods. Research has indicated a substantial increase in BID (body image distortion) cases among the non-eating-disordered population (Cash, Winstead, & Janda, 1986; Malson, 1998; Thompson, 1986). Notions of 'limits' and 'denial' seem to comprise part of a wider moral discourse of food evaluation: foods are categorized and evaluated as 'good' and 'bad', 'naughty' and 'sinful' (Lawrence, 1984). It is likely, therefore, that descriptions of eating practices (at both micro and macro levels) will also be categorized in such moral terms, something that this thesis will explore.

Past psychological theories have theorized why people make the food choices they do, whether that is developmentally; cognitively or indeed psychophysiologically (see Steptoe, Pollard & Wardle, 1995). However, food choices have been shown to be more complex. Food choices are made within a wider context of social meanings (Ogden, 2003), one that requires people to account for not only their food choices but their eating behaviour. Food has been shown to be the site of many intrapersonal conflicts (Ogden, 2003). It has been suggested that for some people (usually women) food is indicative of and represents a conflict between eating and denial (see Bordo, 2003; Charles & Kerr, 1986a; 1986b; 1987; Lawrence, 1979; 1984; 1987; Murcott, 1983; Orbach, 1986, Stinson, 2001).

In conjunction with this notion of denial is the idea of food as not neutral, rather it represents guilt versus pleasure. Food is seen as something which is needed, but also something that can induce self-loathing once consumed (Chernin,1983; 1986; 1992). Coveney (2000) suggests that food induces pleasure but equally represents the source of anxiety, the main problem being that food pleasure challenges self-control. Coveney argues that nutritional knowledge about food does not merely consist of 'facts', rather it

teaches us about what when and how much to eat. Therefore, nutritional knowledge provides a guide for individuals to assess their own eating habits and the eating of others, in terms of what is 'good'.

Meadow and Weiss (1992) suggest that women '*torment*' themselves and are consumed by thoughts of forbidden foods or foods that they consciously deny themselves. They maintain that ordinary everyday women are engaged in an ongoing daily battle with food, "craving it, fearing it and letting it control their lives" (p.2). They go so far as to suggest that women's whole day is affected by the number they see on the weigh-in scales that morning and that is dependent upon how much they allow themselves to eat or more importantly not eat. If women allow themselves to deviate and they eat something they feel they should not, they berate themselves for being 'weak' and 'giving in', "I like to get into bed with a bag of Oreos and a good book. But when I weight myself the next day, I feel terrible" (p. 9). This quotation demonstrates the battle between what the woman '*likes*' to do and the reality of her eating behaviour.

Meadow and Weiss provide a good basis for comparison with my data. The women in my data corpus would be seen as 'everyday' women, and by that I mean they have not been classified as suffering from an eating disorder. These women participate in mundane dieting on a weekly basis and stick to the diet on a daily basis. The women in my data do talk about feelings of guilt and shame. I return to this later in chapter 6 of the thesis, where I explore how morality and accountability are co-constructed as relevant in dieting talk. This chapter examines also whether the women in my data corpus refer to food in the same way and maybe more importantly whether they punish themselves for deviating from the diet. It seems then that food is bound up with and oriented to from within the wider moral discourse of *sin*, *guilt*, and this notion that some foods are *forbidden*.


**The thin body**

Thinness has been culturally synonymous with success and moral perfection (see Brownell, 1991), juxtaposed with the cultural notion that fatness represents "laziness, lack of discipline, unwillingness to conform" (Bordo, 1990, p.95). Fat and thin bodies are saturated with cultural and moral meanings (Malson, 2000). Past studies have shown

young women's talk about eating, dieting, and body image to construct 'fat' as unattractive and shameful. Conversely, 'thinness' was oriented to as highly desirable (cf. Wetherell, 1996; Wetherell & White, 1992). It seems then that people use talk to construct the 'fat body' as consistently negative and 'thin body' as beautiful. (Bessenoff, 2006; Sobal & Maurer, 1999; Malson, 1995; Malson & Ussher, 1996b).

Women's complex relationship with food has been theorized as being so prevalent as to be described as prescriptively normal, (see Polivy & Herman, 1985). Moreover, the construction of the 'thin' body as indicative of beauty and the 'fat' body as representing ugliness (Malson, 1998) has become dominant and normalized, so much so, that it is rarely challenged. Anderson and Bulik (2004) found that women tend to report a higher drive for thinness, and tend to place a greater importance on weight and shape in relation to how they feel about themselves (Barry, Grilo & Masheb, 2002; McCreary & Sasse, 2000).

Rodin, Silberstein and Striegal-Moore (1984) suggested that feeling 'fat' for many women is an everyday part of life, and consequently as a result many of these women turn to chronic dieting as a solution. This work provides an interesting starting point for my thesis. Only one of the women in the whole of my data corpus could be considered clinically obese (for definitions see WHO), yet all the other group members are there either because they are slightly overweight or they are unhappy with their weight. Whether they are or not is really irrelevant, the fact is these women are generally unhappy with their weight.

How we talk about 'fatness' is directly relatable to how we talk about 'thinness' (Rich & Evans, 2005). There is an association and dominant discourse that thinness and weight loss is 'universally good' (Evans, Rich & Davies, 2004; Rich & Evans, 2005) and therefore, being overweight and not losing weight is 'universally bad'. The government and health organizations discourse of fatness implicitly contain notions of guilt, shame, and stigma. Such that, thinness is associated with control, morality and consequently, being overweight is associated with out of control and badness (Evans, 2003; Gard & Wright, 2001; Gordon, 2000). Some have argued that 'health discourses' are equally as unhelpful as both the thin and fat discourses. Harjunen and Rich (2005) suggest that the 'healthism' discourses allow an authorative gaze over the body. Such that there is public

commentary on young people's size and shape, which they argue can be detrimental to the health. However, the body is not a "natural, transhistorical object" (Riley, 1988), rather the body and its surveillance is emergent and constituted within various discourses (Malson, 1998).

Chapman (1999) outlined a shift from dieting for weight loss discourse to a "healthy eating" discourse for weight control. She suggested this shift has occurred for two main reasons. Firstly, people (mainly women) are dissatisfied with the success rate of conventional dieting plans, promising much but delivering little in relation to a long-term weight loss solution. Secondly, other discursive shifts in governmental literature, campaigns, and the media have all contributed to an environment in which the 'healthy eating' discourse, rather then the 'dieting discourse' has emerged (see also Fraser, 1997).

Chapman found that women differentiated between the old beliefs about 'dieting', which was seen to be antiquated, and the new belief that 'healthy eating' led to long term weight control. When defining 'dieting' the women used such words as 'control', 'deprivation', 'denial', 'cheating and guilt' and the women described their eating behaviour when on this diet as 'being good' or 'behaving'. The women also talked about certain foods being responsible for their 'downfall' and after eating these foods it evoking extreme feelings of guilt.

Rather than talking about denial, women talked about 'healthy eating' in terms of 'watchfulness', "I'm not on a strict diet, I'm just watching my food intake" (Chapman, 1999, p.78). They talked about making permanent life changes that included exercise rather than 'going on a diet'. Going 'on' something inherently implies that you will come off it at some point. In contrast to the talk about dieting, the women talked about 'healthy eating' being permanent, and something that they did not go 'on' or 'off'. The women talked about this type of plan and food in terms of balance. They emphasized the ultimate goal of the new approach was long-term health rather than quick weight loss.

It seems then that although women may frame the way they talk about food differently, it still involves some level of surveillance. Even when the women talked about not being on a diet – they were still watchful of what they ate. This could be informative for my thesis. How do the women in my data corpus refer to food? Do they see their eating behaviour as a constant battle, between what they *want* to do and what

they *should* do? And who is the person doing the surveillance, is it them or the group leader, or both? Such issues are explored further within chapter 6. Just as a discussion of the 'thin body' makes relevant a discussion of the 'fat' body; consequently, any talk about the 'body', makes relevant a debate about the concept of body image. Therefore, the next part of the chapter examines previous literature on body image and how body image has been conceptualized.

**Body Image**

Body image as a topic, rightly or wrongly, invariably becomes entrenched in any discussion about diet, food, fat fixations, and weight, and has attracted much academic attention. Although as a stand-alone topic it will not be discussed in my thesis, nonetheless a brief outline of works is deemed appropriate as both the group leaders and members explicitly refer to 'body shape' and 'inches' in their talk.

Body image has attracted more and more research in the past twenty years (Grogan, 2006). Although body image can be defined as a multidimensional construct, it can be loosely characterised as the degree of satisfaction with one's current physical self (size, shape, general appearance; Cash & Deagle, 1997). More recently, evaluations of body attractiveness and emotions associated with body shape have been included (Grogan, 1999; Muth & Cash, 1997). The consequence of negative body image has been identified as evident in reference to risk status for developing eating disorders, depression and low self-esteem (Attie & Brooks-Gunn, 1989; Harter, 1998; Leon, Fulkerson, Perry & Cudeck, 1993; Ricciardelli & McCabe, 2001; Richards, Casper & Larson, 1990).

There are many contributing factors identified within the literature as being central to the development of a positive or negative body image, for example, social comparison (e.g., Jones, 2002) and the media (e.g., Anderson & DiDomenico, 1992; Bessenoff, 2006; Engeln-Maddox, 2006; Garner et al, 1980; Lindberg, Hyde & Mckinley, 2006; Markula, 2001; Merten, 1996; Milkie, 1999; Paxton, Schutz, Werthaim & Muir, 1999; Taylor et al, 1998; Thompson et al, 1999). Groesz, Levine and Murnen (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of literature suggesting that media exposure affected women's feelings about their own body. They found exposure to images of thin women was associated with increased body dissatisfaction, especially with those women already

struggling with their body image. Feminist theorists maintain that in contemporary society, adult women's discourses are concerned with appearance and judgment, from both peers and the media (see Charles & Kerr, 1986b; Hoyt & Kogan, 2001; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996; Grogan, Williams & Conner, 1996; Stice et al, 1994).

Many researchers have argued that although women within Western cultures are aware that the abnormally thin ideal goal is not attainable, it does not prevent them feeling guilt, shame and disgust at their own body. Further, it has been claimed that most women have a contradictory and problematic relationship with food and the body, many being dissatisfied with their body shape and weight (Orbach, 1993). A negative body image can result in many unhealthy eating behaviours, such as binge eating, restrictive dieting (Keery, van der Berg, & Thompson, 2004) and self-induced vomiting (Levine & Piran, 2004). The feelings of guilt and shame were evident in my data corpus, as the group members explicitly referred to being disgusted by their eating behaviour.

Although popular magazines and newspapers acknowledge that women's body image is incredibly distorted, they elaborate and enforce this dissatisfaction with their constant stream of information about the perfect body (Kalander, 1997; Markula, 2001; Urbanska, 1994). Even magazines claiming to use 'real women' who are content not to look like the thin ideal include some text about weight or slimness. Cosmopolitan ran such an article, claiming to celebrate the 'real woman'. However, interviews with all the women revealed that all wanted to change some aspect of their body, suggesting that they definitely felt imperfect in their normalcy (Cusumano & Thompson, 1997; Tait, 1997). This is synonymous with the types of things the group members talked about it my data. They are all real women, but none are happy with either their body weight or shape.

Although socio-cultural factors have been shown to be increasingly important to body image, there is a growing body of literature that suggest that body image is subjective and open to change through social influence (Groetz, Levine & Murnen, 2002), and is not the only factor that make women feel dissatisfied with themselves. Recent research has shown that women look at a variety of other-related beauty attributes in terms of meeting this 'ideal', such as, flawless skin, well-styled hair, and attractive facial features. Engeln-Maddox (2006) suggests that women not only want the 'thin'

body ideal, they also want to emulate the whole package presented by the women in the media. So, when and if women reach this 'ideal', are the women happy and satisfied?

Granberg (2006) examined how members of either 'Weight-watchers' or 'Overeaters anonymous' felt about their weight loss. Through semi-structured interviews, she examined how women felt about the realities of losing weight compared with their expectations of how it would make them feel. In conjunction with this, she looked at how weight loss affected their perceptions of self and body image. She looked at where participant's expectations had not been met by the weight loss, and how the women dealt with having lost the weight, but still did not feel attractive, satisfied, respected, or happy.

Granberg found that the relationship between the 'self' and weight to be a highly salient complex relationship. The participant's body weight was found to be directly relatable to their sense of social identity and feelings of belonging. Aspects of participants personal identity were bound up with losing weight, so that women felt they would be prettier, more accepted, more satisfied in relationships with others if they lost weight, "I always thought when I lost weight my life would be perfect." (Granberg, 2006, p.115). Participants described difficulty when the reality of weight loss did not live up to their perceived expectations of how their lives would be transformed. The recognition of oneself as thin but not necessarily feeling more attractive or happy was frequently cited as a challenge for the women.

The disappointment of this study for me is that it deals with women's interview responses to questions about their relationship with the self and their weight. Granberg treats these responses as a kind of transparent, 'doing-nothing window' to their lives and minds. The responses of the women are glossed to produce generalisations on the subject. However, even if the talk had been examined in detail, it would have been interview talk about life, rather than ordinarily situated talk-in-interaction. This provides further justification for my chosen methodology and choice of analysis. I provide a study of actual weight management practices, in which talk is part if the activity and not just an off-stage, retrospective reflection on practices (cf. other critiques of using research interview data for conversation-analytic and related studies: Edwards & Stokoe, 2004; Potter & Hepburn, 2005; Roulston, 2006).

Having briefly outlined literature about body image, I will now move on to discuss what I feel is the major failing of most of this literature, that is whether the concept of body image can be studied as something tangible and existent outside the parameters of talk. Irrespective of epistemological stance, all the literature mentioned above assumes that body image is measurable in one of two ways: either as an internal construct that is externalised (Cash & Deagle, 1997), or as an external societal construct that is internalised by women (Orbach, 1993). Even articles claiming to delve into the construct of body image (e.g., Banfield & McCabe, 2002; Slade, 1994) fail to address the status of body image as a measurable construct. All start from the assumption that it is measurable (see Gleeson & Frith, 2006).

Thus, the debate between, and within, the relevant articles centres around which methodology produces the most accurate representation of body image. Banfield and McCabe (2002) conceptualize body image as a multidimensional construct, but there is no agreement between theorists about which dimensions should make up this construct. Slade (1994, p.302) viewed body image as "a loose mental representation of body shape, size and form which is influenced by a variety of historical, cultural and social, individual and biological factors, which operate over varying time spans". However, Gleaves et al (1995) argued the body image construct contained four distinct dimensions: fear of fatness, body distortion, preference for thinness, and body dissatisfaction. However, there have been a number of revisions of the measures used to define body image in the last ten years (Stewart & Williamson, 1994). This differentiation between the definitions of body image makes it incredibly difficult to enable comparisons.

The techniques used to measure body image are equally as varied. Some based around the perceptual elements of body image, including distorting video cameras (Freeman, Thomas, Solyon & Hunter, 1984), the distorting mirror (Traub & Orbach, 1964) and distorting photographs (Gluckman & Hirsch, 1968) all require participants to adjust an image until it corresponds with how they perceive their body (see also Brodie et al, 1989). Others claim to measure the affective and cognitive elements of body image constructs. The Body Dissatisfaction Subscale of the Eating Disorder Inventory (Garner, Olmstead & Polivy, 1983), which usually involves a self-report questionnaire is designed to measure psychological and behavioural traits. Banfield and McCabe (2002) also

ultilized the Body Image Avoidance Questionnaire (Rosen, Srebnik, Saltzberg & Wendt, 1991) along with the Weight Loss Behaviour Scale (Maude, Wertheim, Paxton, Gibons & Szmukler, 1993; Wertheim et al, 1992;), both assessing avoidance strategies employed by participants in situations that provoke concern about physical appearance, in conjunction with assessing methods of weight loss.

All of these methods assume that body image as a construct exists 'inside people's heads', available for researchers to access, measure, code and make inferences about women and their relationship with their body. None of the studies mentioned above explore the notion of how women talk about and refer to their body, in their own words. Even if interviews are conducted, preset categories are provided, whereby the women must identify themselves, as one thing or another.

Although more recently health psychologists have begun to acknowledge that body image is 'subject to change through social influence' (Grogan, 1999, p.2-3) and can be influenced by peers and the media, outside influences are still conceptualised to affect an individually internally held mental model of body image (see Gleeson & Frith, 2006). Other more sophisticated measures have been developed, such that computer programs enable participants to alter computer images of themselves digitally (Stanford & McCabe, 2002). However, the assumption is still that differences in participant's responses can be mapped onto and can be assumed to present real differences in the ways they perceive or evaluate their bodies (Gleeson & Frith, 2006).

However, advocates of conversation analysis (CA) and discursive psychology (DP) would argue body image as a concern, or analysable construct, are identifiable in talk in interaction, identifiable as important or notable when the speakers refer to it as such. Categories (such as AN or body image) are analysed as matters being handled, managed, produced and made relevant in talk, rather than something existing outside of the talk (cf. Drew & Heritage, 1992; Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1998b). Therefore, the concepts of 'body image' and anorexia nervosa should be explored and explained in terms of their construction within talk, an exploration of which seems absent from the literature (cf. Malson, 2000). More recently some health psychologist have called for the reification of the body image construct (cf. Gleeson & Frith, 2006), to examine how individuals use their understanding of body image in their everyday lives and in

interactions with others. Theorists advocate the study of body image as an activity rather than a product (see Cash, 2002). Having looked briefly at the past literature that has examined the concept of body image, the chapter will now briefly discuss the diet industry. The weight management group where I collected my data is part of a wider multi-billion pound business and therefore it is necessary to briefly look at the diet industry as a whole.

**Diet Industry**

This part of the chapter examines how the diet industry developed. Membership to commercial weight loss groups increases almost weekly, yet, so does the national obesity levels exponentially in contemporary society. However, how did the diet industry become so important primarily in women's lives?

Much of the research places the development of the diet industry in the 1960s. In the 1960s women were encouraged by fashion houses to release their bodies and rely upon natural control and support. Women were no longer required to control their flesh with the use of corsets, they could set it free (see Ogden, 2003). However, with this freedom came the message that women should have no flesh to control or support. So to conform to this new radical change in fashion and society, women had no choice but to change their bodies (Greer, 1970), "women could go bra-less as long as their breasts revealed only a restrained life of their own, and corsets were out, as long as what was left behind did not need a corset" (Ogden, 2003, p.106). The 1960s represented the onset of the dieting boom, and central to this was the dieting industry. The diet industry was borne. The first British 'Weight Watchers' opened in 1967, Rosemary Conley's Complete Hip and Thigh Diet (1989) to date has sold over two million copies. Rosemary Conley has since published more dieting books based on the same type of principles (Conley, 1999; 2007). Ogden suggests that the diet industry perpetuates its own existence. It generates stereotypes (reinforced by the mass media), associated with socially acceptable body sizes. Not only does the diet industry promote the belief that thinness is the most desirable state, it also supports the belief that thinness is associated with control. One popular diet book writes, "it is imperative that you exercise control when you eat combinations. Don't let your heart take over. Eat like a human being, not a fat person."

(Mazel,1981, p.114). Thinness is presented as the cultural norm, whereby individuals exert control and are not gluttonous. Thinness has not only become synonymous with adjectives such as control and desirable, it has also morphed to include the person itself, whereby thin individuals are regarded as good and overweight individuals are tantamount to being bad. Women are constantly bombarded with the ever shrinking image of women, where the newest clothes size to aspire to or emulate is '00'.

However, cultural notions of gluttony and laziness are not a preoccupation of western modernity. Medical advice examining diet is well established within historical literature, whereby dietetic management was seen as inextricably bound up with religion (cf. Cheyne 1671-1743; Cornaro, 1475-1566). Both Cheyne and Cornaro advocated the controlling of diet to aid health, mental stability and control passions. Cornaro specifically designed his diet from within an exclusively religious framework, as a defence against the temptations of the flesh. The surplus of rich food, lack of exercise and urban living were seen as the reasons for much of the illness which pervaded the 17th century. Gluttony, over indulgence of rich foods and lack of exercise were seen to go against 'nature', all of which interfered with natural digestion processes, "when mankind was simple, plain, honest and frugal, there were few or no diseases" (Cheyne, 1733, pg. 174). Whilst Cheyne wrote for the London elite, his philosophy was adopted by a wider audience through the preaching of Wesley (1752, as cited in Turner, 1992), and soon the middle class were adhering to his model of exercise and dietary control.

Much of the contemporary medical research follows on from this historical model, in that food and diet are still regarded a way to control or prevent illnesses. A 'healthy diet' is deemed necessary to stay fit and active. Since the 1900s there has been a poliferation of literature surrounding the notion of health eating and what constitutes a healthy diet (Ogden, 2003). Current recommendations for adults include a balanced and varied diet, high in fruit, vegetables, complex carbohydrates but low in saturated fat. Medical research recommends adhering to this type of diet to prevent illness, for example coronary heart disease (Truswell, 1999); moderate alcohol consumption has been noted to have health benefits (Friedman & Kimball, 1986) and diet has been identified as been paramount in the variation in the incidence of all cancers (Doll & Peto, 1981).

Nevertheless, this said, diet is also identified by the medical field of research as causing many of the illness mentioned above. Too much salt, saturated fat and alcohol are listed as primary causal factors of developing particular illnesses (Ohlson et al, 1985; see Smith & Krauss, 1988; Truswell, 1999). So within medical research food and diet are seen as both preventative and causal factors contributing to either illness or health. 'Advice' about diet and which foods should or should not be eaten is mentioned in some of the analytic chapters. The group leaders relay information about the nutritional value of foods to the group members. This can be prompted by a direct question by the group member, but in the majority of instances, the group leader offers this advice without the request.

Psychologists have theorized about a broad spectrum of topics in relation to food and diet. For example, people's food choices have been accounted for by three competing theories. First, developmental psychologists understand that people learn to make food choices as a result of learning through exposure to particular foods, social learning (observing other's behaviour) and finally associative learning (certain behaviours are reinforced) (Birch, 1980; Birch, 1999; Lowe, Dowey & Horne, 1998; Wardle 1995). Within the developmental approach, parental attitudes to foods and food choices are seen as pivotal to the process of social learning for the child. Food and diet choices are seen as constructed through social experiences in the child's early developmental processes.

In contrast, cognitive psychologists regard people's diet and food choices as resulting from a series of interacting cognitions. Most theoretical models draw upon social cognition perspectives (Health Belief Model, Becker & Rosenstock, 1984; Theory of Reasoned Action, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Health Action Process, Schwarzer, 1992). Briefly, these models incorporate the attitude to a given behaviour, risk perception, the costs and benefits of a particular behaviour, self-efficacy and social norms. These models are applied to eating behaviour mainly with two objectives, firstly as a means predictor of food choice, and secondly as a means of intervention to change food choice (Povey et al, 2000). Finally, the psycho-physiological model views food and diet as a result of chemical senses and the impact of neurochemicals. However, much of this research is laboratory based, using animals (see Blundell, Hill & Lawton, 1989).

These theoretical frameworks minimize the complex meanings of food, body shape and size. Mainstream psychological research, when exploring food practices, has tended to focus upon attitudes and behaviour towards food via questionnaire-based designs. All regard eating as a physiological and cognitive activity (see Conner, Martin, Silverdale & Grogan, 1996; Herman & Polivy, 1980; Wardle, 1988), the social and interactional nature of food consumption is typically regarded as an influence on, rather than being central to, food choice and eating behaviour (Wiggins, 2002).

**Social research on dieting**

Although dieting within contemporary society is regarded as so common it can be understood as a normal part of everyday life for many women, there have been few studies which have attempted to explore the social context of food, eating and the body. This social context has therefore been academically overlooked (Germov & Williams, 1996). Although many have studied food and nutrition in a social context (see Beardsworth & Keil, 1992; 1997; Lupton, 1994; Maurer & Sobal, 1995; Mennell, 1985; Mennell et al, 1992; Murcott, 1983a, 1988), few have studied the dieting process by exploring the discursive practices that construct it. Studies of eating behaviour have tended to focus on pathologised eating disorders or disordered eating (see Halliwell & Martin, 2006), whilst others have focused upon food preferences and how these affect eating behaviour (Cantin & Dube, 1999; Sparks, Conner, James, Shepard & Povey, 2001).

Many have speculated about why dieting seems to be a practice favoured by women. Wolf (1990) argues that society demands women to eat differently to men, "dieting is the essence of contemporary femininity. Denying oneself food is seen as good in women, bad in a man…the current successful and 'mature' model of femininity submits to a life of self-denial in her body" (1990, p. 200). More recent literature has examined how an individual's size/shape influences a physician-patient interaction (see Krainin, 2002) and also retail interactions (King, Shapiro, Singletary, Turner & Hebl, 2005) but these studies do not examine how participants display their own orientations to weight and getting weighed.

In one rare study of everyday dieting, Germov and Williams (1996) conducted focus groups to explore the notion of dieting and why it is synonymous with being female, and how women feel about themselves whilst dieting or not dieting. They identified a number of reasons presented by the women to explain why they dieted. Firstly, the women acknowledged both familial and social pressures surrounding thinness, "it's what's fed to you…not as food but in words" (1996, p. 635). Many women also expressed the trade-off they were prepared to do for the thin ideal, that is, diet versus health. The women viewed weight loss and health separately; their prime motivation for dieting was achieving the desired body shape, not necessarily health (see also Chapman & MacClean, 1993).

The participants ascribed moral qualities of 'good' and 'bad' to particular foods, in conjunction with this, they expressed feelings of guilt, or shame after having consumed such identified food items, "as soon as I eat something that's not on my diet, I do feel guilty, I feel really bad" (Germov & Williams, 1996, p.336). This construction of themselves and food with the framework of guilt and shame will be analysed further in the thesis in light of the data collected to see if women attending this weight loss group construct their talk about themselves and food in these terms.

Germov and Williams (1996) concluded that dieting must not be theorized as a simplistic, deterministic ruse women employ to respond to the pressure to conform to the cultural norm (see Wolf, 1990). Rather, it is much more complex, women have a contradictory relationship with food, deriving from it both pleasure and pain. Women police themselves and others, whereby the social control over women's appearance is perpetuated not just by men, the media and society, but women themselves. Women do not just passively absorb these cultural thin ideals; they collude in them, reward each other and ourselves for achieving them and celebrate them.

Germov and Williams used focus groups to obtain their data. Whilst focus groups are not necessarily problematic, they still present the participants' quotations as representative of or expression of some inner world. Data from focus groups is typically presented in the form of quotations from the participants. However, in many cases these quotations are not analysed at all, and if they are, they are analysed at the level of content, rather than for the interactional business they achieve (Drew, Raymond & Weinberg,

2006). This thesis aims to study naturally occurring data and wants to examine how the group leaders and members construct versions of their world so such methods that orchestrate answers/views/opinions on preset questions were not considered.

A second study by Stinson (2001) examined the dieting culture from inside a commercial weight loss group within America. Although she promises to focus her analysis on the "shared meanings that are constructed, interpreted, rejected and reconstructed in the process of conversation and discussion" (2001, p.27), her involvement in the ethnographic study as a participant, desperate to lose weight herself obscures what could have been an insightful piece of research useful for my thesis. She gives an insider's insight into the functioning of a weight loss group, and the ways in which the predominantly white, middle-class women negotiate their desires and identities. However, her analysis shows an exploration of women's experiences (including her own) of dieting, losing weight and struggling with their desires. The study is somewhat disappointing for me in that, it contains the narrative of her struggle with weight and her experience of the weight loss group, which is not a problem in itself, but the study shows no analysis of the women's talk, as first promised. Again, this study provides retrospective reflection on practices rather than talk-in-interaction.

Whilst both Germov and Williams, and Stinson identify some potentially interesting points concerning dieting and food, their research examines women's experience of dieting and food out of context, via non-naturalistic settings. The answers to questions within the focus group are treated as a representation of internal states, as truthful accounts of how these women feel about themselves. There is no analysis of language or discourse as an arena of action and of social interaction in its own right, where events are specifically formulated with regard to talk's interactional contingencies, which is what this thesis attempts to provide. I do not wish to denigrate this type of qualitative research, my focus however, is on naturally occurring data analysed using CA/DP methodology.

Guendouzi (2004) provides one example of a more recent study that claiming to analyse naturally occurring talk about food and the body. Guendouzi examined the talk of a group of British teenage girls and the talk of a group of professional women (teachers). The aim of the study was to explore if the 'socially acceptable body ideal' was evidenced

in how the women talked about diet and exercise. The teachers audiotaped conversations that took place during their coffee break, and the teenage girls audiotaped weekly get-togethers at one of the girl's home.

The study concluded that women have a complex relationship with their body. The teachers' interactions seemed to focus upon weight and diet, whereas the teenage girls seemed to talk more about achieving a 'toned' body. Guendouzi concludes that this difference is attributable to the current media images of the 'perfectly toned body' available to the younger women. She maintains that within society the 'thin ideal' has been replaced by the 'toned ideal'. Media images display not only thin women but also ones with a perfectly toned body.

Guendouzi claims that both the professional women and teenage girl's talk display certain discourse practices, such as the discourse of pathological confession; weakness in relation to their appetite control; criticism of other women; and the conflict between asserting their individualism in relation to their body shape and what society considers socially acceptable. Although Guendouzi states she uses discourse analysis as the methodology, her analysis comprises broad, generalised statements about the two groups of women rather than detailed analysis of how food, exercise and talk about bodies are managed and handled with their talk, and what *types* of things the women and teenage girls made relevant.

Zdrodowski (1996) interviewed 195 women who classed themselves being overweight about their experiences of eating in public. For many, eating out, or going out for a meal is associated with feelings of enjoyment and pleasure. However, for many overweight women it is fraught with anxiety (see Finkelstein, 1989). She used a mixture of open-ended comments on topics such as, clothes, shopping and medical matters, to more focused questions such as, "When did you first become aware of weight issues".

Zdrodowski examined how women felt in different *types* of public eating-places, which included the work canteen, the pub, and finally more formal restaurants. The women reported policing their behaviour when it came to visiting the staff canteen in relation to other dinners, "I always go last in the queue so that I can see what is on the menu and what everyone else is having…if others have chips I feel as if I can too" (p.658). So, it seems that these women examined their own eating behaviour so that it

was similar to their peers and work colleagues. Others reported that they found it easier to eat at their desks, so they could avoid the pressure (actual or imagined) of having their food choice scrutinised, "I know they think I'm standoffish but I'm not really. It's easier not to go with them, then I can eat what I want to eat" (p.658). Most of the women commented on finding eating at the pub more difficult as it was "more public" and there was less space, so the act of eating became a more focused activity (p.658). The women also suggested that the pub contained people who did not know them, the implicit implication being they could be judged more harshly for their eating behaviour be strangers.

When eating in public involved a more formal setting, such as a restaurant, the women seemed even more aware of what they were eating in the presence of others, "I always choose healthy meals with plenty of veg… it depends on if people can see me when I am eating as to whether I have a sweet" (p.661). Another woman said, "I have vegetarian meals because they look healthier…I'd rather have steak or chicken but they often come with chips and I feel as if everyone is looking at me" (p.661).

Zdrodowski found that when eating out in restaurants the women fell into two main categories, those who rarely ate out, so when they did, they ate what they wanted and usually that involved things they rarely had or cooked at home. The other group of women tended not to choose what they *really* wanted to eat, and were conscious that they should be seen to be eating a 'healthier meal'. The women felt that by eating a salad or healthy meal they were sending a message that although they were overweight, they were doing something about it, whereas fattening foods, such as chips and pudding could invoke an accusation or judgement about their overweightness. This study therefore suggests that women feel being overweight is deviant. Moreover, the participants felt other people were policing their eating behaviour. Rather than risk recriminations or judgments, many of the women chose to eat alone or at home. Zdrodowski argues that the powerful message heard by overweight women is that they are socially deviant. She maintains overweight women tend to lead restrictive lives in order to avoid this message.

The construction of this Zdrodowski's study presupposes the existence of a weight problem in its respondents. Although there was a mixture of open-ended questions, the structured part of the questionnaire asks, "When did you first become

aware of weight issues". This leaves no opportunity for participants not to have a 'weight issue'. Also, it forces participants to place themselves in certain categories, preset by the researcher. Again, this study uses women's interview responses to questions to make claims about 'everyday experience' rather than examining in situ social practices.

The data for my thesis were collected from a commercial weight management group where the group members are weighed. Other than being at the doctor's surgery, or maybe the gym, there are few instances where people are weighed in a public environment. However, there is a growing of body of literature that looks at how primary nurse carers and patients negotiate being weighed. Although there are many others, for example, Pillet-Shore (2006) videotaped such interactions and found that both parties engage in extensive utterances during getting weighed. She observed that being weighed is something that both the nurse and patient share mainly in two ways. Firstly, both nurses and patients have access to the displayed result when they are weighed, unlike maybe blood pressure or their pulse. Secondly, the patient understands the weight readout and can immediately assess that in relation to their health.

Both patients and nurses made reference to a weight result they considered to be 'desirable' or 'good', as opposed to 'undesirable' or 'bad', which Pillet-shore argues displays their moral orientations to weight. This is something that could be relevant or evident within my data. Pillet-shore identified two main things that the interaction of weighing seemed to do doing. Firstly, the process of weighing seemed to be a "locus of epistemic negotiation and face work" (p. 410). Secondly, weighing was constructed a "locus of (potential) affiliation" (p. 416), past research has shown that patients co-operation is gained by showing affiliation and treating the patients as 'persons' (Emerson, 1970, DeBehnke & Decker, 2002). This could also be relevant for my study, in relation to how the group leaders respond to and manage the group members. After all, the members are grown women who are paying for a weight loss service. This could make relevant some issues about accountability, and who is accountable for the member's weight loss.

Having examined previous literature about pathologised eating behaviours, the thin body and body image, and critiqued previous studies, this chapter now considers how advocates of conversation analysis have look at the practices involved in eating.

**Conversation Analysis, Discursive psychology and eating**

Conversation analytic and discursive research concerning food and the practices of eating has attempted to move away from cognitive appraisal and individual consumption, choosing to focus more on naturalistic settings. So there has been a recent move to examine the 'topics' of food and eating via the study of the occasions in which such things naturally happen, using CA as the analytic tool, and looking at how eating, assessing food, occur within the turn-taking system, and in courses of action, such as family mealtime interactions (Wiggins, 2002; 2004; Wiggins, Potter & Wildsmith, 2001).

It has been suggested that food becomes social the moment we orient to it, we relate to others through acts of giving, sharing, and withholding food, and our eating practices are embedded within daily and annual routines (Charles & Kerr, 1984; cf. DeVault, 1991; Visser, 1986, 1991). Past research concerning food has tended to incorporate implicit assumptions (see Rolls & Hetherington, 1990; Wardle & Beales, 1988). Specifically, that measurements used within both quantitative, and some qualitative research, can be seen as an accurate representations of internal states (such as guilt or shame - see Germov & Williams, 1996; or feeling full, or satiated, see Rolls & Hetherington, 1990). Such studies also make the assumption that participants' responses are "related to, and therefore predictors of, actual eating behaviours" (Wiggins, Potter & Wildsmith, 2001, p.6). Wiggins et al identify a number of common assumptions present in this type of literature. First, they point out that eating behaviours are treated as an individual activity, involving perceptual and cognitive appraisals which directly influence eating styles. The second assumption is that quantifiable measurements can be used to access internal states (such as the body image distortion tests mentioned previously), and finally that participants' answers to questions present a truthful representative of internal attitudes and mental states. The focus of this type of research has looked at which food preference exists and these in turn affect eating behaviour (Cantin & Dube, 1999; Santich, 1994; Sparks, Comer, James, Shepard & Povey, 2001). However, Wiggins suggests that this causes problems when these types of accounts are used instead of how people actually eat in practice. Use of interviews not only limits the *types* of responses people can provide and also sets the agenda for the kinds of responses people can give (Potter, 1997). This type of study can lead to the generalization of eating habits based on

an individual's answers to questionnaires. Therefore this questionnaire-based research fails to acknowledge the interactional nature of eating practices, along with the contextual influence of social interaction.

Eating practices can include activities such as urging, offering and negotiation, these negotiations are bound up with the construction of food within the talk. For example, by giving reasons for eating or not eating particular foods within a mealtime interaction, the very nature of the food is constructed and evaluated (ibid., p. 8). How food is described within talk is very important, as it determines how the food will be treated from that point on within the exchange; that is, whether it will be classed as something that one should, or could eat (Sneijder & te Molder, 2002; Sneijder & te Molder, 2004; Wiggins, 2002; 2004). Such a description of food in part informs my thesis. The women attending the weight loss group refer to food as good or bad, and although this could be seen to be doing moral work, they negotiate and evaluate different foods in their talk, as being bad or good, either agreeing or revaluating them depending on the interaction which ensues. By revaluating and using different expressive emphasis in their talk, the women are able to construct the food in differing ways.

Accountability is also of interest when examining talk about food. Wiggins et al and Sneijder and te Molder (2004) note that in mealtime interaction accountability about what food is eaten, or not eaten is evident within the talk. This notion of accountability has been identified as important in reference to body image literature and the cultural thin ideal (see Davies & Furnham, 1986; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996, respectively). However, dieting practices are also accountable matters, whereby, successful dieting is oriented to as an accomplishment, and unsuccessful dieting seems to prompt an account by the women as to why they have gained weight. This is something that could be expanded and explored within my thesis.

Wiggins (e.g., 2002) has continued to use CA to inform other areas of eating practices, in exploration of the 'social nature of eating'. She has examined how the use of pleasure, namely the sound of a 'gustatory *mmm'* can be analyzed as a "social phenomenon bound up with interaction and communication" (2002, p.312). The expression *'mmm'* has previously received analytic attention in relation to organizational features, such as position in the talk, as this can inform its function (see Jefferson, 1984a;

Koole, 1998; Schegloff, 1982), in conjunction with the use of the term (see, Czyzewski, 1995; Gardner, 1997, 2001; 2006; Schegloff, 1982).

Different types of *mmm*s  have also been identified in the research as having analytic importance, such as a 'degustatory *mmm*' (Gardner, 1997, p.150) associated with eating and drinking practices, as opposed to the 'gustatory *mmm*' which, although similar, is usually emphasized or exaggerated by expression (Wiggins, 2002). The gustatory *mmm* is noted as being identifiable by accompanying eating or talk about food and hearably evaluative in a positive direction. Wiggins further explores how the position of the *mmm* in the talk constructs or conveys bodily pleasure and how other speakers orient to it within the talk.

Wiggins has also examined how the notion of 'healthy' eating behaviours are constructed and oriented to within family mealtimes (cf. 2004). Meal preparation and more specifically mealtimes are where individuals 'do' healthy eating. The study uses tape-recorded family mealtimes to examine how nutritional advice is embedded and managed in conversational activities. The study also examines how healthy eating behaviour can be constructed jointly within the family or aimed at particular individuals. Healthy eating is not necessarily a unitary action that can be separated from other aspects of daily life; rather it is situated within practical and interactional contexts. Wiggins found that talk about food can include nutritional information, such that food is constructed as 'good for you', a commonly used phrase in nutritional guidelines and media sources (Bennett & Hodgson, 1992; Marks et al, 2000).

Alternatively, healthy eating talk may be constructed as general advice as justifying the provision of certain foods at the meal table. What Wiggins' work continues to show is that food and eating is not just about food: it is also bound up with social relations and the practicalities of daily life (Wiggins, 2002; Wiggins, Potter & Wildsmith, 2001).

So far, I have outlined past literature on pathologised eating behaviours which suggested the tendency to polarise eating behaviour as either normal or abnormal is unhelpful. I have talked about the juxtaposition of the 'thin body' as good and the 'fat body' as bad, and have examined how women's relationship with food are complex and contradictory. I have also critiqued various studies (Granberg, Germov & Williams,

Guendouzi, Stinson) all of which have examined women's relationship with food or dieting through qualitative interviews. These methodologies although not problematic, report on women's generalised experiences of dieting rather than the situated practices of doing dieting. My thesis will add to the growing body of CA and DP literature on eating by examining how issues pertaining to food and diet are oriented to and constructed within an interaction between the group leaders and group members in a weight management group. This chapter now moves on to provide an overview of the thesis contents.

**Outline and structure of thesis**

So, how is my study different from the ones critiqued above? The structure and subject matter of my thesis has been informed solely by the data I collected. I had no preconceived ideas about what my data might show or what topics would be constructed and oriented to within the talk. I focused on using both discourse analysis and conversation analysis to see what *business* was relevant for the group leaders and group members. From my analysis of the data, a structure of how a 'weigh in' in this particular environment was done emerged, which both the group leaders and the group members collaboratively produced and maintained. Irrespective of which geographical location was examined and which group leader was taking the weekly meeting, there was an overall sequential pattern concerning the practices and organised activity which took place. This pattern is outlined below:

- Exchange of weight records cards (this record card is where the group leader notes down the group member's weight gain, loss or maintenance for that week);
- The group members undress or do no undressing prior to the weigh in;
- Preliminary "small talk"; this talk was related to other things other than the serious business of getting weighed, such as the weather;
- A greeting or pre-news account sequence is done by either the group leaders or group members;

- News delivery by the group leaders (announcing weight gain, loss or maintenance;
- News receipt by the group member;
- Advice giving sequence initiated either by the group leaders or group members.

Although the order of these practices may differ, all were present in the entire data corpus irrespective of whether the group member had gained, lost, or maintained weight. The structure of the thesis and analytic chapters follow this sequential pattern of how a 'weigh-in' gets done. I have chosen to organise the thesis such that the relevant literature pertaining to each analytic chapter is used as a starting point and introduction to that subject matter. For example, the first analytic chapter looks at the practices involved in getting ready to be weighed in public. Therefore, the chapter uses the past literature on eye gaze and bodily gestures as a starting and reference point for my analysis. This format is then repeated for each analytic chapter.

Chapter 2 outlines the step by step process involved in obtaining the data, the intricacies involved in data collection both technical and practically,  and details of how many hours of data were collected. An outline of the basic principles of the Jeffersonian method of transcription and an exploration of the theoretical rationale in using discursive psychology and conversation analysis are also discussed

The first analytic chapter (chapter 3) of the thesis examines how both the group leaders and group members negotiate getting weighed in public. Social actions are inextricably bound up with practical reasoning, and bodily gestures, which makes human conduct accountable (Garfinkel, 1967). Audio and video recordings provide a resource to examine the contextual basis of their occurrence (Heath & Luff, 1992). Therefore, gestures, gaze, body movements are all activities which can be studied for how they are produced and oriented to by both participants (Heritage, 1984), and moreover how participants subsequent actions are organized in relation to prior turns (see Heath & Luff, 1992).

Body movements and talk are the primary medium for how people accomplish social actions. These actions are not analyzable as separate from the reflexive context in

which they are constructed moment by moment. Therefore, participants use both verbal and non-verbal actions to accomplish social actions and activities within face-to-face interaction. Gesture and the direction of eye gaze are often produced simultaneously with talk to accomplish a particular action (see Goodwin, 1981a; Heath, 1986; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2000; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002).

This chapter therefore draws upon this literature as a starting point and explores the 'weigh-in' practices which the analysis shows takes place within the weekly meetings. The chapter examines how the women negotiate, construct and manage *getting* undressed publicly within their talk and actions. How these practices work in aggregate to accomplish particular 'weigh-in' sequences are considered. There is a CD accompanying this particular chapter (which can be requested from the author). It contains each of the real time video clips for the extracts contained in this chapter. I felt that although the video stills captured a certain amount of body movement and gaze, they did not show how the group leaders use their gaze as part of the ongoing and unfolding interaction. The real time video clips enable you (the reader) to see the phenomena happening. Due to the amount of data I have collected it would be impossible to include all of the video data or indeed the audio data. However, since this chapter is primarily about how people can use their body movements as part of their interaction, it was a necessary inclusion.

The second analytic chapter (4), explores how the 'news' of weight gain, loss, or maintenance is delivered. Maynard (1996; 1997; 2003) has found that the telling of news happens across typically four distinct turns at talk:

| 1 | $\rightarrow$ | Announcement |
| 2 | $\rightarrow$ | Announcement response |
| 3 | $\rightarrow$ | Elaboration |
| 4 | $\rightarrow$ | Assessment |

This sequence provides a framework for how people 'do' news announcements and receipts through sequential interaction. However, "whether news is 'good' or 'bad' is not inherent in events" (Maynard, 1997, p.94). Rather, it is conditional on the actions and responses of the participants in the interaction. This chapter therefore, is an exploration of

news-telling in the weight management groups, and provides an interesting basis for comparison with Maynard's work. Analysis focuses on the way weight news is negotiated between the group leaders and members.

Chapter 4 therefore explores whether there was a robust pattern, for weight news delivery, and whether this is different depending on whether the news being delivered concerns weight gain, loss or maintenance. The chapter also looks for any identifiable differences between what the group leaders and members *treat as* good and bad news: news deliverers and recipients do not always orient to or treat announcements as the same type of news (Maynard, 2003). The initial analysis revealed not only sequentially different patterns for how the news was told, but also how the news responses and news receipts were formulated, depending on whether the news involved weight gain, loss or maintenance.

Chapter 5 looks at how the group leaders and group members construct advice giving. Three main ways of advice receipt have been identified (Heritage & Sefi, 1992). Firstly recipients can use a 'marked acknowledgement', indicating acceptance of the advice. Marked acknowledgments include "Oh right", whereby the 'Oh' treats the prior announcement as 'news' for the advice recipient, and the following 'right' overtly marks their acceptance of the advice. Secondly, recipients may use an 'unmarked acknowledgement', here although the recipient avoids an overt rejection of the advice, they are clear about their resistance to it. Unmarked responses include 'mm', 'yeah' 'hm' or 'that's right'. Here the advice recipient does not acknowledge the information in the prior turn as 'news'. Finally, recipients of advice can do an assertion of knowledge or competence, such as 'I know', or 'it doesn't always work for me' (Jefferson & Lee, 1981; 1992). Here the advice recipient shows that the advice is redundant by conveying that they already know what is being offered or, are already undertaking that particular course of action. Again, although the advice is not rejected outright, it shows resistance. The chapter uses these practices as the basis of looking at my data corpus. The focus is on how this advice is receipted by the group members and how this advice giving practice is managed by both the group leaders and group member within the talk.

Finally, chapter 6 examines how group members produce successful dieting as an accountable matter and how morality talk is bound up with talk about food and dieting.

Previous literature has suggested that women construct food within this moral framework. Analysis of my data shows both the group members and group leaders orient to losing weight as morally sanctionable. Accounts can and are proffered by the group members prior to their 'weigh-in' in order to explain that the impending news delivery may concern possible weight gain. This account however, must be validated by the group leader. There are legitimate accounts, such as Christmas, Easter or holidays that seem to be produced, and pre-understood by both the group leaders and members as valid. All these occasions are normatively situations whereby individuals can put weight on. However, accounts can also be requested by the group leaders in explanation of some weight gain or maintenance, which suggests that dieting behaviour is an accountable matter, something this thesis will explore in detail.

This thesis explores how women talk about food and dieting as part of the situated practices of a commercial weight management group. It reveals the intricate way in which these women construct their talk to assert their own knowledge, accept advice, or provide accounts for their eating behaviour.

# CHAPTER 2

## METHOD

This chapter provides an overview of the processes involved in collecting the data from the weekly 'weigh in' meetings. The chapter begins by outlining the different phases of the data collection process. It therefore provides:

- An account of how access was gained;
- Details on data recording. Intricacies involved in data collection both technical and practically are described, along with the actual data corpus collected;
- The methods of analysis. The basic principles of the Jeffersonian method of transcription (Jefferson, 2004) are considered;
- An outline of the theoretical rationale underpinning the thesis; questions such as why conversation analysis (henceforth CA) and discursive psychology (henceforth DP) were adopted for this thesis and how they informed the process of data collection and analysis.

For the purposes of this chapter I have concentrated on the features of method, data collection and data analysis in general when discussing CA and DP. However, both CA and DP are further discussed where specifically relevant in the data analysis chapters that follow; for example, the value of video recordings is explored in chapter 3.

The data were collected from four different weight management groups in different geographical areas in the Midlands of England. Each of the weekly management groups is attended to separately in this chapter. Digital photographs and video stills are included to enable the reader to visualize the room layout.

### Gaining access

In order to investigate the social organization of everyday eating, dieting and weight management practices, I wanted to collect naturally occurring 'talk-in-interaction' rather than interview accounts of such experiences. Interview data, whilst interesting, are

accounts *of* social life, 'produced relevantly to given agendas, interviewer prompts and responses', and must be treated as a form of interaction in their own right (Edwards & Stokoe, 2004, pg.7). The value of 'naturally occurring' data is that it provides a basis for studying social life as it happens, unmediated, and unhindered by prior research interests, categories or agendas, although this is a debatable point (e.g. Potter, 2003; Rapley, 2001; Speer, 2002).

Therefore, I wrote letters to a number of national organizations such as 'Weight-Watchers', 'Slimming World', Overeaters Anonymous' and the 'National Eating Disorders Organization' in an to attempt to gain access to potential sites where talk about dieting, food, bodies and weight would occur naturally (see Appendix 1). All of these organizations, for a variety of reasons, declined to be involved. However, in October 2003, one weight management organization based in the East Midlands agreed to take part in the study. After a face-to-face meeting in November 2003 access was negotiated to two clubs within my local geographical vicinity for a period of eighteen months. Access to two further clubs was negotiated in April 2004 and November 2004 consecutively. Therefore in total, data was collected weekly from four local clubs between December 2003 and January 2005. I felt that different geographical areas and therefore different group leaders would allow not only for a much wider data corpus, but also an improved platform to be able to study the practices of weight management.

In December 2003 I, along with my supervisor, attended both of the weekly meetings to meet the group leaders and members. These initial meetings had various functions: firstly, to explain the nature of the research, to explain the ethical issues (confidentiality, anonymity, right to refuse, right to withdraw) related to video and audio recording, and secondly, to gain informed consent from the group members (*all* group members read the consent form and agreed to take part in the study, every group leader signed the consent form on behalf of every member see Appendix 2). Any group members who exercised their right not to take part were not audio or videotaped (only 2 refused to partake and none withdrew their consent at a later stage). No group members who had initially agreed later asked to be withdrawn. These meetings finally enabled an assessment of how the data could be collected with minimal disruption to the group and

its normal practices. Also it made possible an evaluation of the format and order of the meetings.

The group leaders are all 'franchisees' and therefore buy the rights to use the brand name of this particular weight management group, along with all their products and diets. So essentially, the groups are their own business, whereby weekly figures for attendance and weight losses are sent to Head Office weekly. All the meetings, irrespective of geographical location or group leader, used the same format for their weekly meetings. This format involved three main practices:

- A '*weigh in*', where all the members are weighed. The group leader then records their weight loss, gain or maintenance on a personalised record card (both the group leader and group member have a copy).
- The members are then given a '*pep talk*' by the group leader, whereby any advice or information is shared and the weekly weight losses (but not gains) are announced to the whole group and the 'Slimmer of the Week' is presented with a certificate.
- After this there is 45 minutes of aerobic *exercise*.

**Recording the data**

Before data collection officially started I carried out a test recording. Data from one complete weigh-in session was collected and examined from each of the locations in order to ascertain the most unobtrusive, yet most useful position for the video camera and audio equipment.   After the initial visit, it was decided that the 'weigh-in' section of the meetings would be both audio and video taped but the pep talk would be subject to audio recordings only.

The decision to only audiotape the 'pep talk' was based on the fact that the primary focus of the research was to collect conversational interaction between the group leaders and group members. The interaction between group leaders and group members does not happen in the same way within the pep talk section of the meetings. The group leaders gather all the members together and she talks on a chosen subject (this changes weekly) which can last anywhere from between 5-10minutes. Consequently, it is usually

just the group leaders talking. However, this said, on some occasions members of the group ask questions or react in response to an aspect of talk. This can take many forms, such as a whimsical comment about some aspect of the group leader's talk or members can react to a large weight loss announcement, such as "↑Oooo↓". Therefore it was felt that this section could still provide some interesting analysable audio data for later analysis.

The 'weigh in' was both videotaped and audio taped for two reasons: First, the practices of getting on and off scales, stripping down to an appropriate level of clothing for getting weighed, and so on, are all fascinating practices that were studied as part of the analysis. Secondly, video data also provided an opportunity to study how the body is an extension of talk as action (Goodwin, 1994; Lomax & Casey, 1998). Issues with reference to the practicalities of using video data are dealt with in the analysis section of this chapter.

One factor that needs to be acknowledged is that in three out of the four groups music was played in the background. The reasons why music was not played in the fourth site, the Methodist Church, are unclear. Background music was part of the usual practice and was played for two main reasons (as provided to the researcher). Firstly it created a friendly, welcoming environment for regular attendees and new members. Secondly it allowed an element of confidentiality as the music prevents any conversation being overheard by other group members. However, this had considerable implications for the quality of the data available for collection. Therefore the problem of this background had to be managed. If the music were turned off, lowered or moved, the normal practices of these meetings would be altered purely for the purpose of the research. However, if the music were left playing this would leave little audible data for transcription and analysis.

The problem was overcome in two ways. Firstly the audio and video equipment used for recording the interactions was changed to much more sensitive digital devices in April 2004. The difference in sound quality was noticeable and the conversation that took place between the group leaders and group members was much clearer. However, it must still be acknowledged that some talk is inaudible and therefore not of transcribable quality. Secondly, after a few weeks of data collection, the group leaders asked about the quality of the data obtained and asked specifically if the music was too loud. I did say
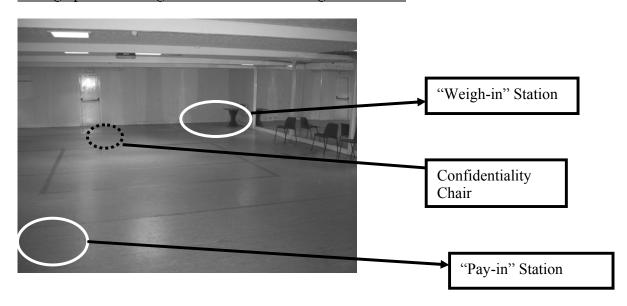
that it had impacted upon the sound quality of the data and they agreed to turn the sound down slightly. However, there were some concerns, as I did not want my presence to impact on the group's usual organization and practices. After some consideration, it was felt that it was necessary in order to ascertain data of a transcribable quality. So, although the position of the music was not changed, the sound level was changed slightly.

The video recording equipment was a 'Canon Digital Video Camera MV750i'. The camera was placed to the side of the 'weigh-in' station, angled on a tripod to capture the interaction whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the group members involved (which meant not filming their full face, although this was not always possible). The camera was set to record as soon as the first group member was weighed. In three of the data collections sites I was near enough to the camera, so that if there was a long gap between women being weighed, the camera was paused. However, this was rare and therefore most of the time the camera was run continuously. At the fourth site the group leader learned to use the camera, so that she paused the filming if and when there was a gap between 'weigh-ins'. At this site I was seated at the 'paying' station for most of the duration of filming, which was at the opposite side of room. Having dealt with issues pertinent to the initial process of gaining access, and the practicalities involved in recording the data, I now move on to the detail of data collection in and the context of each site individually.

In order to manage the data corpus and for the purpose of analysis, each time a group member got on an off the scales the interaction was considered a separate 'unit'; such that if 30 women attended one of the meetings, then there would be 30 separate interactions available for analysis.  These 'units' are not only available for analysis in there own right, but it enabled me to group the data corpus from the various sites into weight gains, weight losses and weight maintenance in order to identify robust patterns.

**Site One:** Referred to throughout as 'The Golf Centre':

Photograph 1a showing the location of the "Weigh-in" Station



Photograph 1b showing the location of the "Pay-in" Station



Data was collected from this site each week from 17th December 2003 to 16th June 2004 (excluding Christmas, New Year and bank holidays). This franchisee has a well established long running group. Most of the members have been attending the weekly

meetings for many years. Some use it as a maintenance marker to keep their weight in check. Whilst others use it as a resource to lose weight and gain expert advice. The golf centre's group leader has been a franchisee of this national organisation for over 10 years. Attendance at this group was subject to fluctuation depending on the time of year (e.g. school and bank holidays). However, average attendance ranged between 10-30 women each week[1]. The group was run every Wednesday morning from 9.45-11.30am.

As the subject matter of this thesis is somewhat sensitive in nature, once the camera and cassette recorder were started, myself as the researcher would leave the immediate area of the 'weigh-in' station and sit in another part of the room (refer to the above photograph 1b). The pay in desk was situated at one end of the room, staffed by the cashier. After paying and receiving their record card, the women moved to the opposite end of the room, whereby a chair was set out in the middle of the floor. The group members form a queue behind this chair. This chair was referred to be the leaders and members as the '*confidentiality chair*' (see photograph 1a). The group leader then calls each woman forward individually to be weighed. This practice firstly enables the group leader to control the volume of women attending the weigh in station, but it also provides a confidential environment so that any issues or concerns can be dealt with privately on a one to one basis. It also enables the group member's weight gain, loss or maintenance to remain confidential.

The table below shows details of the data collected from the 'Golf Centre'. The table outlines the date and the length in minutes of each data recording. In addition to these details, the number of units (how many women are weighed) for each weekly meeting is also included.

**Table 1:**

---

[1] There are no male members, although male attendance is not 'banned' per se, no men attended any of the groups where I collected data.

**Data gathered from the Golf Centre (17<sup>th</sup> December 2003 to 16<sup>th</sup> June 2004.)**

| Date | 'Weigh-in' (minutes) | Units per wk | Length of 'pep talk' (minutes) |
|------|----------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| 12/12/03 | 21 | 20 | 8 |
| 17/12/03 | 28 | 12 | 9 |
| 07/01/04 | 29 | 18 | 2 |
| 21/01/04 | 35 | 17 | 5 |
| 28/01/04 | 36[2] | 20 | 4 |
| 04/02/04 | 26 | 25 | 4 |
| 11/02/04 | 26 | 20 | 2 |
| 12/02/04 | 20 | 10 | 4 |
| 18/02/04 | 20 | 15 | 3 |
| 25/02/04 | 30 | 12 | 4 |
| 31/02/04 | 20 | 14 | 4 |
| 17/03/04 | 20 | 16 | 5 |
| 31/03/04 | 15 | 17 | 5 |
| 07/04/04 | 15 | 10 | 2 |
| 14/04/04 | 30 | 13 | 4 |
| 21/04/04 | 20 | 12 | 5 |
| 26/04/04 | 28 | 10 | 3 |
| 28/04/04 | 15 | 16 | 3 |
| 05/05/04 | 24 | 18 | 3 |
| 12/05/04 | 15 | 19 | 2 |

---

[2] Due to inaudibility this data was not transcribed.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 19/05/04 | 20 | 17 | 3 |
| 26/05/04 | 15 | 19 | 5 |
| 02/06/04 | 10 | 20 | 6 |
| 09/06/04 | 27 | 19 | 8 |
| 16/06/04 | 30[3] | 20 | 5 |
| **Total** | **610** | **409** | **108** |

This table shows that over the time period in which data was collected, 409 women's interactions were audio and videotaped, resulting in 610 minutes of data.

---

[3] Due to inaudibility this data was not transcribed

**Site Two:** Referred to throughout as 'The Church Hall':

Photograph 2a showing the location of the "Weigh-in" Station



"Weigh-in" Station

Photograph 2b showing both "weigh-in" and "pay-in" stations



"Weigh-in" Station

"Pay-in" Station

Data was collected this site from January 2004 to September 2004. The group met on Monday evenings from 6.30-7.45pm. It followed a similar format to the meetings held at the 'Golf Centre', in that there is a weigh-in session, followed by the pep talk, and 45 minutes of aerobic exercise. However, due to the constraints of the room used the layout

was slightly different. Unlike site one, where the pay in station and weigh-in were at opposite ends of the room, at site two they were almost adjacent (see the above photographs 2a & 2b). This had an impact upon data collection. As the women have to both queue to pay and queue to be weighed in very close proximity, there was much more background noise. The average attendance at this particular group was subject to much more fluctuation. This may have been due to the timing of the class, as many of the women worked full time and had a family and therefore had many more constraints than the women attending the class during the day. Table two shows the dates of data collection, the length of each weekly meeting recorded and the number of units gained.

**Table 2:**

**Data gathered from 'The Church Hall' (5th January 2004 to 13th September 2004)**

| Date | Weigh-in (minutes) | Units per week | Length of 'pep talk' (minutes.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 05/01/04 | 40 | 25 | 4 |
| 12/01/04 | 20 | 19 | 5 |
| 19/01/04 | 30 | 20 | 1 |
| 02/02/04 | 38 | 24 | 1 |
| 09/02/04 | 38 | 19 | 6 |
| 16/02/04 | 20 | 15 | 8 |
| 23/02/04 | 20 | 17 | 1 |
| 05/03/04 | 15 | 12 | 2 |
| 22/03/04 | 26 | 16 | 8 |

| 29/03/04 | 19 | 20 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|
| 05/04/04 | 22[4] | 16 | 2 |
| 19/04/04 | 26 | 18 | 6 |
| 21/04/04 | 15 | 15 | 4 |
| 26/04/04 | 20 | 18 | 3 |
| 17/05/04 | 36 | 20 | 6 |
| 24/05/04 | 25 | 24 | 4 |
| 07/06/04 | 11 | 10 | 5 |
| 09/06/04 | 10 | 8 | 3 |
| 14/06/04 | 27 | 19 | 5 |
| 21/06/04 | 10[5] | 10 | 4 |
| 02/08/04 | 16 | 12 | 1 |
| 06/09/04 | 15 | 10 | 3 |
| 13/09/04 | 10 | 9 | 2 |
| **Total** | **509** | **732** | **84** |

At this particular site, 732 women's 'weigh-in' interactions were video and audiotaped, resulting in 509 minutes of data.

---

[4] Data inaudible
[5] Data inaudible

**Site Three:** Referred to throughout as 'School Hall':

Photograph 3a showing both "weigh-in" and "pay-in" stations



| | |
|---|---|
| | "Weigh-in" Station |
| | "Pay-in" Station: location of researcher during "weigh-in" |
| | Confidentiality Chair |

Photograph 3b showing both "weigh-in" and "pay-in" stations



| | |
|---|---|
| | "Weigh-in" Station |
| | "Pay-in" Station |

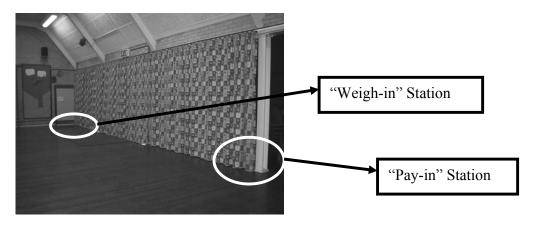Data were collected from this third site from 5th April 2004 and continued until 26th January 2005. The group met on a Wednesday evening from 6.30-7.45pm. The meetings followed the same general format as with the previous two groups. The women paid and registered at one end of the room and then moved to queue behind the chair at the other end of the room and waited for the group leader to call them individually to be weighed. (see photographs 3a and 3b to see the room layout). The attendance for this evening group was always between 15-35. The group leader as with the previous two groups has

been a franchisee for over 10 years. Many of the women have been attending this group for a few years. As with site one, the room layout enabled me to start the recording equipment and then leave the immediate weigh in area and sit at the cashier desk at the opposite end of the room. As the number of women attending this group was high therefore it was possible to leave the camera and audio equipment running continuously. However, the group leader learnt how to operate the equipment so she could 'pause' it if there was a gap in the queue. This meant ethnographically I had very little input or impact on the interaction between the group leader and group members. Below Table three outlines the length of time in minutes and number of units for each weekly meeting.

**Table 3:**

**Data gathered from 'The School Hall' (14th April 2004 to 26th January 2005)**

| Date | 'Weigh-in' (minutes) | Units per week | Length of Pep Talk (minutes) |
|------|----------------------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 05/04/04 | 43 | 32 | 7 |
| 14/04/04 | 40 | 30 | 10 |
| 14/04/04 | 29 | 25 | 10 |
| 21/04/04 | 40 | 31 | 7 |
| 28/04/04 | 45 | 35 | 12 |
| 05/05/04 | 43 | 33 | 5 |
| 12/05/04 | 40 | 29 | 10 |
| 26/05/04 | 41 | 29 | 7 |
| 02/06/04 | 34 | 25 | 8 |
| 10/06/04 | 43 | 29 | 10 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 16/06/04 | 30 | 22 | 5 |
| 23/06/04 | 30 | 26 | 10 |
| 30/06/04 | 38 | 28 | 5 |
| 14/07/04 | 40 | 33 | 5 |
| 21/07/04 | 27 | 27 | 11 |
| 04/08/04 | 20 | 19 | 12 |
| 11/08/04 | 18 | 18 | 5 |
| 18/08/04 | 19 | 20 | 9 |
| 25/08/04 | 25 | 22 | 6 |
| 01/09/04 | 36 | 28 | 5 |
| 08/09/04 | 30 | 26 | 8 |
| 29/09/04 | 30 | 19 | 10 |
| 13/10/04 | 37 | 28 | 10 |
| 20/10/04 | 31 | 25 | 7 |
| 10/11/04 | 21 | 22 | 5 |
| 17/11/04 | 26 | 26 | 3 |
| 24/11/04 | 20 | 19 | 5 |
| 15/12/04 | 25 | 17 | 10 |
| 05/01/05 | 38 | 30 | 15 |
| 12/01/05 | 30 | 18 | 12 |
| 19/01/05 | 25 | 15 | 10 |
| 26/01/05 | 30 | 20 | 5 |
| **Total** | **1024** | **806** | **259** |

This 3rd site enabled data to be collected from 806 women's interactions, resulting in 1024 minutes of data.

**Site Four:** Referred throughout as 'The Baptist Church':

Photograph 4a showing both "weigh-in" and "pay-in" stations



Photograph 4b showing both "weigh-in" and "pay-in" stations



Access to this site was negotiated differently from access to the previous three groups. To date I had collected data from three separate groups. However, the same group leader ran two of the groups, the Golf Centre and the Church Hall. In order to be able to make

claims about robust patterns within the data concerning diet talk, it was decided that another group should be approached with a different group leader to provide a more varied data corpus. In late November 2003 I had been invited to present at the organisation's annual franchisee conference. Here I was introduced to the group leader of what I have called the 'Baptist Church' site and access was negotiated to attend her group meetings from late November until January 2005. The group met on Thursday mornings 9.30-11.00am. The average weekly attendance for this group was between 3-10 women. The meetings followed the same format as the previous groups visited. The pay-in and registration desk was at one end of the room and the 'weigh-in' station was at the opposite end (see photographs 4a & 4b). However, the room was considerably smaller than the venues used for the previous sites for data collection. This impacted upon the background noise level. Although music was not played in these group meetings, if more than a few women were in attendance the room became very noisy. The chairs for the women to sit on before and after being weighed were in very close proximity to the weigh-in station. Table four below outlines the number and length of time for each unit collected.

**Table 4:**

**Data gathered from The Baptist Church (November 2004 to 16th January 2005)**

| Date | Weigh in (minutes) | Units per week | Length of Pep Talk (minutes) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 11/11/04 | 12 | 10 | 5 |
| 21/10/04 | 11 | 9 | 5 |
| 28/10/04 | 10 | 8 | 6 |
| 18/11/04 | 17 | 12 | 5 |
| 25/11/04 | 8 | 5 | 12 |
| 2/12/04 | 7 | 3 | 4 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9/12/04 | 15 | 8 | 6 |
| 06/01/05 | 12 | 8 | 10 |
| 20/01/05 | 24 | 5 | 9 |
| 28/01/05 | 11 | 3 | 8 |
| **Total** | **127** | **71** | **70** |

It is clear from the table above that the lengths of the 'weigh-in' section of this particular group are significantly shorter than any of the other groups. However, it must be noted that this was the smallest of the four groups. Some weeks there were only three women were in attendance.

**Summary Table of data gathered from all four sites.**

| Site | Time Period 2003-2005 | Units gathered | 'Weigh in' total (minutes) | 'pep talk' total (minutes) | Number of women refusing to take part | Number of new women |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The Golf Centre | Dec 03-June 04 | **409** | **610** | **108** | **0** | **178** (231 women repeatedly attended) |
| The Church Hall | Jan 04-June 04 | **732** | **509** | **84** | **1** | **150** (582 women repeatedly attended) |
| The School Hall | April 04-Jan 05 | **806** | **1024** | **259** | **1** | **300** (506 women repeatedly attended) |
| The Baptist Church | Nov 04-Jan 05 | **71** | **127** | **70** | **0** | **1** (70 women repeatedly attended) |
| **TOTALS** | | **2018 (women recorded)** | **2270[6] (37.83 usable hours)** | **512 (9 hours)** | **2** | **629** (1389 women repeatedly attended) |

As the above table shows, only 2 women out of the 2018 recorded refused to take part in the study (no one asked for the camera to be turned off after filming had started). None of the women asserted their right to withdraw at a later date. The table also shows that during the period of filming, a total of 629 new women joined the weight management groups and therefore, 1389 were women who attended regularly (returned each week).

The chapter so far has explored the practical aspects involved with collecting naturally occurring data. This has included a detailed description of the early negotiation stages

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[6] (Approximately 14 hours of video tape was not of usable quality)

with various organizations, the initial problems that needed to be addressed and overcome, in conjunction with describing the data collection process in detail. Finally it has outlined the amount of data collected at each of the four sites. I will now move on to discuss the conventions used to transcribe the data, followed by a discussion of the theoretical rationale of the thesis.

**Transcription**

As can be seen from the summary table, I collected a total of 50 hours of both audio and video data for the 'weigh-in' section of the weekly meetings (37.83 of transcribable quality) and 9 hours for the pep talk section of the meetings. The whole corpus of 'weigh-in' data has been transcribed at a basic level. Below is an example from the data corpus which illustrates how the data is transcribed at this basic level (GL is the group leader and GM is the group member).

Example of basic transcription:

```
10      GL    Okay, it's gone up
11            half a pound.
12      GM    Ah mm.
13      GL    Right uh, how are we going to sort this?  Just I mean
14            looking at what you were doing when you were steadily
15            losing.
16      GM    Yeah.
17      GL    And what you're doing now.
18      GM    Yeah.
19      GL    What's changed?  Can you pinpoint what's different?
20      GM    I think (  ) to have bread again and I know I shouldn't.
21      GL    Right so it's a bread thing?
22      GM    Yeah definitely.
```

It would be impossible to cite and analyse all the data collected for this study. Therefore, after the basic level of transcription was completed, a total of 150 'units' were identified as particularly rich and have therefore been further transcribed using Gail Jefferson's (2004) conventions for CA. I am using the word 'units' as defined within this chapter to

mean one complete instance of a group member being weighed. The data extract below is the exact same extract as above but it has been subject to more detailed transcription, using the Jeffersonian method of transcription (see Appendix 3 for glossary).

<u>Same example using the Jeffersonian transcription:</u>

```
10      GL    H̲hok̲ay::::
11            (0.8)
12      ((scales bleep))
13            (1.6)
14      GL    .Hh it̲'s °gone° up ha̲lf a °po:und̲.°
15            (0.3)
16      GM    'a̲ve=I,
17      GL    M̲mm.=
18      GM    =Mmm.
19            (1.4)
20      GL    ::R̲i:::ght*
21            (1.5)
22      GL    U::r:::::rh̲ .hhh=how=we=gonna sort th̲is̲.
23            (2.5)
24      ((scales bleep))
25            (0.8)
26      GL    .Tch ju̲s:' I me̲an lo̲oking at what you were doing when:
27            you were steadi̲ly losing.
28      GM    Ye̲ah,
29      GL    And what you're doing n#ow̲.
30            (0.3)
31      GM    Yeah,
32      GL    What'̲s̲ chan̲ge̲d,
33            (1.5)
34      GL    Can you pinpoin̲' what's di̲fferent.
35            (0.9)
36      GM    .hh I thi̲nk I-
37            (1.0)
38      GL    I get #through the-this ca̲rbin' to have bre̲ad again=an' I
39            know I sho̲uldn't,
40            (0.3)
41      GL    Ri̲:ght, so it's a bre̲ad thing.
42            (0.4)
43      GM    Ye:ah,
44            (0.3)
45      GM    De̲finitely,
46            (0.8)
```

The differences between the two types of transcriptions are clear. The Jeffersonian method involves a minute level of detail, including pauses and such details as the weigh-in scales bleeping, along with a graphical representation of prosody, and intonation of the two speakers. This second method is used throughout the thesis for all transcription and analysis. There are many advantages of this method compared to the original basic

transcription method. It is clear that the first method does not capture everything that is happening in this interaction. Not only does it not provide prosody or intonational detail, it doe not contain the subtleties participants use in talk to do interactional business.

The second method (Jeffersonian method) allows the analysis of minimal turns and gaps in the talk that could be interactional significant (for example line 19 and line 42). This method also allows for the transcription of in-breaths and non-lexical turns, such as 'urm' and 'urr'. Past research has shown these types of turns can perform delicate interactional business (Schegloff, 1981). This type of transcript also seeks to capture such features of talk such as overlapping talk, laughter, and words that are said with contained laughter (to name but a few). All of which can be seen to be performing certain business in talk, such as alignment, preferred or dispreferred responses (see Jefferson, Sacks & Schegloff, 1987; Jefferson, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984b; Schegloff, 1992). Without the more detailed transcript method, many devices and practices people use in talk would not be available for study.

The total 150 'units' are divided so that there are 50 instances of weight gain, 50 weight loss and 50 weight maintenance. These units have been subject to this detailed analysis to provide a corpus to examine and identify any robust patterns in how the business and practices involved in getting weighed are managed in talk. In addition to this, particular special occasions have been included in the sample. Both pre and post-Christmas weekly meetings have been analysed for the existence of robust patterns in relation to normative social accounts used to justify any fluctuations in relation to weight gain regarding these social occasions.

Just before I move on to discuss the analytic method, the electronic bleeping of the 'weigh-in' scales is included in most of the extracts contained in this thesis. No inference should be drawn from this bleeping unless explicitly referred to. The scales bleep for many reasons, just before they give a reading, but also they turn off automatically after a period of time and therefore, bleep when turned on again. All the names used in extracts are pseudonyms.

**Analytic method**

The data were analyzed using an ethnomethodological approach, drawing on conversation analysis (CA), and discursive psychology (DP). CA was used to examine the turn-taking and action-sequential organization of the talk. It explored how the group leaders and group members oriented to each other's turn in talk, and what they make relevant in their descriptions of food and dieting, as well as their evaluative and assessment practices (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998). DP was drawn upon to analyze how the group leaders' and members' versions of their world are assembled, stabilized and validated as authentic, factual and independent of their producer within the interaction (cf. Edwards & Potter, 1992). Although discourse is a functional process, which is both constructive and constructed, language itself is not the only interpretive aspect of talk between individuals. Even non-verbal activity, such as eye gaze, and workplace tools can be analysable for what they *do*. The 'weigh-in' data was both audio and videotaped, therefore, the eye gaze of both the group leaders and group members will be analysed to see if there are any robust patterns.

The following section of this chapter outlines briefly CA and DP. For extended overviews of CA and discourse analysis, see Wooffitt (2005), and for discursive psychology see Edwards and Potter (1992; 2003; 2005).

**Conversation Analysis**

CA and DP can be viewed as complementary in terms of their methodological approach to naturally-occurring data. Both examine the *business* of talk. In relation to the focus of analysis, both CA and DP focus on *how* individuals *do* what they do and how they understand what the other parties are doing with their talk (cf: Schegloff, 2005). CA provides conventions for studying the detail of talk as a medium of social interaction. Conversation analysis as a discipline emerged from the framework of ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967). Its focus has been to move away from traditional explanatory and experimental methodology. Rather it embraces naturalistic social action and interaction as valid and interesting phenomena readily available for analysis. CA therefore seeks to study interaction itself. Participants "whether intentionally or not, implicitly display their

understanding and analysis of what is happening as it happens" (Antaki, 1988, p. 129). CA considers talk central to social life (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).

Schegloff and others have postulated that the study of conversation explores the "primordial site of social life" (Schegloff, 1996a, p.3-35), whereby ordinary conversation can be considered the most fundamental form of talk-in-interaction. Individuals use talk (face to face or via telephone) to generate, construct, manage and maintain relationships and their day-to-day lives. Talk is not merely the result of an exchange of information, rather it is a collaborative process whereby participants orient to each others turns at talk to create and construct a meaningful conversation. Therefore relationships with one another, along with our sense of who we are to one another are all managed in talk.

However, it is important to highlight that talk is both functional and purposeful. Individuals *do* things with their talk, such as, blaming, invitations, compliments, requesting help or advice to name but a few. CA is concerned with the structures and practices which make interactions mutually comprehensible to both speaker and recipient (Schegloff, 1995; 1997). This thesis uses CA to examine the order and sequence of the group leaders and group member's turns at talk. This next section of the chapter outlines briefly only turns at talk and talk as social action. It is acknowledged that CA as a methodology encompasses much more than is discussed here; however, for the purposes of this thesis turn-taking will form the basis of the CA type analysis in conjunction with using DP.

**Turns at Talk**

This refers to the most basic and fundamental organization of conversation, in that, people talk in turns. No matter how many parties are involved, whatever topics are covered, one speaker takes a turn, followed by another speaker. However, there is variation in the length of one's turn and the order in which speakers are selected for the next turn at talk (cf. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Research has revealed that individuals are organized in their taking of turns at talk (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). Furthermore, transitions from one speaker to the next are finely executed and co-ordinated, such that robust conventions that individuals adhere to within conversation

have been identified (cf. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). They include such things as, overwhelmingly, one individual talks at a time; occurrences of more than one speaker talking are common but brief; various turn constructional units are employed by speakers; repair mechanisms exist for dealing with turn-taking errors and violations (cf: Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977).

Individuals talk using 'turn constructional units', commonly abbreviated as TCUs (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). These can be sentential, as in a complete sentence; lexical, such as a one word answer or greeting (e.g., 'Hello'); phrasal or clausal, which can be seen as a complete unit but less than a sentence ('Oh dear', etc.). At the end of each TCU there is a transition relevance place (TRP), which is where next speaker may be selected or may self-select to speak. But how does the speaker know that the current speaker is about to complete their turn? Individuals in conversation monitor ongoing talk and project when the current speaker will finish. Individuals rely on features of talk such as its grammar (is the turn grammatically complete?); intonation (is the current turn intonationally complete?) and finally, action (has the turn completed a recognisable action in the sequential context?). This projectability (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) is what enables smooth transition between speakers. This all happens turn-by-turn as the conversation unfolds, in that particular time and context. Conversational topics, length or turn size are not planned prior to the conversation taking place, therefore individuals accomplish all these things during the conversation.

Studies have also shown that turns are 'allocated' in talk. This allocation can be broadly divided into two groups. Firstly, those in which the next turn at talk is allocated by the current speaker, through devices such as the use of a direct question or using the person's name. Here the selected individual has the right and is obliged to take the next turn at talk. Secondly, those in which a next turn is allocated by self-selection. Whereby the current speaker has not identified a next speaker, self-selection for next speakership may, but need not, be instituted (cf: Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). This said, the identification of these robust patterns does not mean they are 'set' and must be adhered to by all parties in the conversation as finite rules.

Invariably these conventions are broken and the smooth transition of the conversation is momentarily disrupted. CA enables the study of such variances. Similarly

individuals use certain conventions within talk. For example, first-pair parts are used to construct conversation in ways that constrain what should be done in a next turn, for example a 'question' makes an 'answer' specifically relevant for the next turn. Another convention is an adjacency pair, such as a 'greeting' that makes relevant a 'return greeting' in next turn. There is an expectation that the recipient should therefore respond with an appropriate next action, such as the relevant greeting or answer. This is a constraint of sorts, but only in so far as the absence of an appropriate response is conspicuous. However, these absences or deviations from the norm are interesting and analysable. These are the types of noticings which will be the focus of the following analytic chapters. Do the group leaders and members deviate from this norm and, if so, when and how is this receipted by the other speaker/hearer? And what actions, with regard to the setting's business and organization, are thus accomplished? That brings us to talk-as-action.

**Talk as Social Action**

Talk can also be seen as *social action*. Individuals use talk to *do* story telling (Antaki, 1988), invitations, rejections, agreeing, or blaming (Drew, 2005). Participants construct their turn at talk not only to perform some action, but also in response to the prior turn. In order for the conversation to make sense to both parties, responses need to be constructed to be relevant to what has just been said (ibid). Participants are constantly analysing the prior speaker's conduct and the result of this analysis is evident in the construction of their response.

Therefore, CA as a discipline focuses on how this process occurs turn by turn, "It is not enough to show that some utterance was understood by its recipient to implement a particular action…an account must be offered of what about the production of that talk/conduct provided for its recogniziability as such an action" (Schegloff, 1996c. p.173). Much research has been conducted both 'doing' and 'using' CA across different disciplines, including sociology, linguistics, health psychology and social psychology. It has enabled the study of talk-in-interaction that would not have been otherwise accessible for analysis in this way (Potter 2004a), for example family mealtime interactions

(Wiggins 2002; 2004). These principles have provided the foundational rationale that has underpinned my thesis from the outset.

**Discursive Psychology**

Discursive psychology has a complex theoretical lineage. It draws on ideas from a variety of differing paradigms, including discourse analysis, rhetoric, sociology of science, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis and post-structuralism. The main epistemic principle of discursive social psychology is that, talk can be seen as action-oriented, situated and constructed (Edwards, 2005b; Potter, 2004b; Potter & Edwards, 2003a). The discursive paradigm focuses on *what* people are doing in talk and *how* they construct versions of reality and associated mental states and psychological characteristics. It explores how people categorize and formulate their world, in ways that attend to 'psychological' concerns such as motive and memory, stance, bias, stake, etc. It is concerned with what individuals make relevant and *how* accounts of the social world are managed within talk. My thesis draws upon this paradigm to explore *what* the group members make relevant in their talk about dieting and food and also, *how* the group leaders construct their responses.

DP's main aim is to counter how mainstream psychology has previously viewed and studied discourse. In the past discourse has been viewed as the expression of inner thoughts, intentions and cognitive structures. In contrast DP considers how psychological categories and factual descriptions are built, managed, produced and made relevant in talk (cf: Drew & Heritage, 1992; Edwards, 1997; Potter, 1998b). DP rejects the cognitivist notion that talk reveals the inner workings of the mind, in favour of viewing talk as performative.

Talk can be seen as constructing a version of events, produced sequentially in reaction to rhetorical contexts and constructed in response to the prior turns at talk (Edwards & Potter, 2005). Talk is rhetorically organized, whereby claims and versions are constructed to undermine alternatives. Therefore talk is both constructive and constructed (Edwards, 1999; Potter & Edwards, 2003b; Potter 2004a). In this thesis analysis will look at how diet, weight gain, loss or maintenance are managed, produced and made relevant by both the group leaders and group members. Although this thesis

does not have preconceived ideas or particular theoretical questions preset before data analysis, the group members attend these weekly meetings to be weighed. There are only three possible candidates for the 'weigh-in', either the group members will have gained, lost or maintained weight. Therefore, as a starting point, the focus of the analysis began with looking at these three possible weight categories as a way into how these categories are managed in the talk.

Within the analysis of how people attend to the factuality of versions of the world, DP also examines how psychological business such as intentions, motives and prejudices are handled and managed in talk and text, without necessarily having to be overtly labelled as such (Edwards, 1999). One of the pervasive features of everyday life is how participants construct and counter their stake or interest with in the talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992). These practices are constructed within the content and organisation of talk and therefore can be considered socially accomplished.

Individuals use a variety of discursive devices to construct their factual accounts as valid and authentic, rather than reflections of stake, error or prejudice. These can include: category entitlement; vivid description; narrative; extreme case formulations and accountability (for a full discussion see Edwards & Potter, 1992). These genres and devices work interactionally in ways that minimise the potential for a particular account or version to be refuted or challenged.  When offering reports of particular events, individuals routinely deal with issues of agency and responsibility (cf: Edwards & Potter, 1992). DP has examined how this 'mind-world accountability' is constructed and defended in specific contexts and the way different kinds of activities pose different sorts of accountability (cf. Watson & Sharrock, 1991).

The characteristics outlined above were all influential in the decision making process when considering the methodological basis for the analysis for my thesis. Seeing and examining talk as the site of social action permits an exploration of the *business* of the talk within the setting of a commercial weight management group. What group members and group leaders *do* with their talk, and what specific version of events are made relevant, are all available candidates for analysis. I examine how the business of weight loss, gain or maintenance gets done in talk, and how this varies depending on the nature of the 'news' to be delivered. How group members construct themselves, as a

'good' or 'bad' dieter is evident only by studying the detail of their turns at talk. This talk is saturated with issues of accountability and morality. How this morality and accountability is constructed, managed and oriented to by both the group leader and group members is explored through examining the talk. CA and DP provide the principles and framework required for the fine-grained analysis of talk as social action.

**Video Data**

As explained earlier in this chapter, the 'weigh-in' was both audio and video taped. The value of data gathered by way of video is well documented in various paradigms. However it has been utilized most prolifically within anthropology (Albrecht. 1985; Erikson & Schultz, 1982; Gottdeiner, 1979; Grimshaw, 1982). There has been a distinct lack of reliance on this method as a way of gathering data within social psychology, despite some suggesting that it is the ideal method for gathering data for the naturalistic study of situated social interaction (cf. Goodwin, 1981; Heath, 1986; Lomax, 1994; Mallet, 1990, 1993). Although it must be acknowledged that since starting this research video data has become an expanding method of analysis.

Data gathered using video provides access to the richness and complexity of human interaction (Lomax & Casey, 1998). Furthermore it has been suggested that it provides a more accurate record of social interaction than any other unaided human observational technique (Gottdiener, 1979). Advocates argue that video recorded data ensures a record that is not only available for other researchers, but allows analysis to be delayed until the researcher has left the field.

There is a distinct dichotomy within the literature in relation to the validity of video captured data. The first approach claims that the presence of the video recording equipment has no impact upon the social interaction or participants, therefore arguing that the epistemological stance of the data is preserved (Lomax & Casey, 1998). The second approach argues that the video camera intrudes upon social reality and therefore "alters… the representation of reality" (Heider, 1976, p.51). However, more recently Lomax and Casey (1998) have suggested this finite distinction (that the subjects are either affected or not) is both problematic and unhelpful. Rather than simply ignoring or negating the role

of the research process in video-based data, they suggest viewing the process of data collection as integral to the social construction of the interaction.

Therefore, *how* the researcher and the participants negotiate and manage the presence of the video and how this in turn shapes or impacts upon the interaction are all analysable and should not be marginalised, ignored or seen as necessarily problematic. These are practices are valid and available for analysis and should be acknowledged and regarded as such. Heath (1986) demonstrated how one participant's attention was drawn to a partially hidden camera by his daughter's constant pointing and gaze-direction. Instead of this being seen as problematic, the noticing and orientation to the camera with the talk became part of the analysis.

Lomax and Casey (1998) note that midwives often made comments about local observable phenomenon, which indicated some 'preparing for midwifery' activity. However, it was clear from the preceding and following talk that technical and professional midwifery talk was not yet appropriate or possible. The researcher may also be included in this preparatory talk. Analysis of this interaction can reveal how individuals manage the business of moving between the casual and formal business of consultations. Using video data enabled a full analysis of how group members and group leaders attend to this and is dealt with in chapter 3.

The presence of this preliminary talk in turn creates issues in relation to when the camera should be turned on for filming. Should this preliminary talk be included in the data collection and analysis? The primary purpose of using video data is to capture social life as it happens. Therefore, this preliminary talk is integral to how both the group leader and members, along with the midwives manage the interaction. However, Lomax and Casey identified issues regarding the decision about when in the consultation was an appropriate time to turn on the camera. Epistemologically and ethically, who is entitled to make the decision about when this appropriateness starts and stops? The question about when to start filming was not necessarily an issue for my research. The camera was set to record once the first woman was waiting to be weighed. This practice was adhered to for all of the groups. The camera was switched on once the first woman was at the weigh in station. Therefore any preliminary talk, before the business proper ensued, was captured and as a result is available for analysis. However when to pause or turn the camera off did

become something that needed consideration. If there was conversation or interaction, which involved something other than weight, and body management practices should the recording equipment be turned off until the conversation moved back to the relevant issue of weight management? After some deliberation it was decided that the camera should be left running to include *all* conversation that took place between the group leaders and group members. To film only conversation relevant to the subject matter of my research would have involved researcher manipulation and this was deemed unethical and counter to the foundational principle of the thesis. Critics have disregarded any debate regarding the negotiation of when to turn the camera on or off, brandishing it either insignificant or proof of manipulated, unnatural data intruded upon by the researcher. However, it can be useful. Examining how participants orient to the recording equipment, and how the business is accomplished can all be analysable practices in their own right (Lomax & Casey, 1998).

The video data collected for my data corpus will be also be used to examine how the group leaders and group members use their directional eye gaze and general visual direction in their interactions at the weigh-in scales. While I acknowledge the theoretical arguments about the use of video camera and its influence on the data collected, I nevertheless feel this medium is integral to examining how individuals construct and co-construct the production of meaningful action (Goodwin, 2000a). This is explored further in chapter 3.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the practicalities involved in collecting data for this thesis. It has explained how access to the weight management groups was negotiated and along with detailing how the data was collected, what equipment was used and how the data has been transcribed.

The second section of the chapter has explained why I chose to use conversation analysis and discursive psychology as my *analytic* method. Both of these approaches fit together with the rationale for the study and how I wanted the thesis to progress.

Having spent time introducing the background literature and the methodological rational, the thesis now moves on to the analysis of the data, with four analytic chapters and finally a concluding chapter.

# CHAPTER 3

## PREPARING TO WEIGH IN

**Introduction**

This chapter examines how group leaders and group members attend to the practices involved in preparing to be weighed, and how those practices are managed and oriented to within the talk. One might typically think that weighing oneself is a concealed, individual activity that takes place in the privacy of one's home, often involving being in some state of undress or being naked. However, in these weekly meetings the group leaders and group members must manage this preparatory business in a public environment. It could be argued the primary aim of the women attending these meetings is to lose or maintain body weight. Therefore, the scales become a major site for interaction and the business of weight management. The process of getting weighed in this milieu may still inevitably involve some level of undressing, such as, taking off shoes, stripping off coats, jumpers and sweatshirts. This chapter therefore, examines how the women negotiate, construct and manage *getting* undressed publicly through their talk and actions, and how these practices work in aggregate to accomplish weigh-in sequences.

Before turning my attention to the analysis of these 'weigh-in' practices, it is necessary to outline how and why the use of video-recorded data can enrich analysis. In conjunction with exploring interaction through 'ordinary' conversation, there has been a growing exploration of how talk is organized in institutional settings such as courts of law, medical consultations and emergency control rooms (see for examples Atkinson, 1982; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002; Whalen, 1995). This growing body of literature uses a combination of video and audio recordings. Video recordings of interactions provide the researcher with access to the richness and complexity of social action, allowing particular events to be repeatedly analysed (Heath & Luff, 1992; Heritage & Atkinson, 1984).

Social actions are inextricably bound up with practical reasoning, including bodily gestures, which makes human conduct accountable (Garfinkel, 1967). Audio and video

recordings provide a resource to examine the contextual basis of their occurrence (Heath & Luff, 1992). Therefore, gestures, gaze, body movements are all activities which can be studied for how they are produced and oriented to by participants (Heritage, 1984), and for how participants' subsequent actions are organized in relation to prior turns (see Heath & Luff, 1992).

Body movements and talk are the primary media for how people accomplish social actions. These actions are not analyzable as separate from the reflexive context in which they are constructed moment by moment. Therefore, participants use both verbal and non-verbal actions to accomplish social actions and activities within face-to-face interaction. Gesture and the direction of eye gaze are often produced simultaneously with talk to accomplish a particular action (Goodwin, 1981a; Heath, 1986; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2000; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002; Kendon, 2000).

Participants produce their actions sensitive to, and in response to, the conduct or action of others. The work of being a hearer in face to face interaction requires situated use of the body and gaze. It can display to others the focus of your attention. Moreover, speakers not only use their gaze to see relevant action in the body of a silent hearer, but actively change the structure of their emerging talk in terms of what they see. The focus therefore, is not visual events in isolation but instead the systematic practices used by participants in interaction to achieve causes of collaborative action with each other.

Visual events such as gaze play a central role in this process. However their sense and relevance is established through their embeddedness in other meaning making tasks and practices. Gaze has an intrinsically temporal dimension, as it leads to ongoing changes in the organization of emerging action. Past research has examined the ways in which speakers change the structure of an emerging utterance and the sentence being constructed so that its appropriateness for its addressee in that moment is maintained (see Goodwin, 1979; 1981). Also it has been shown that speakers modify their turns at talk in relation to the hearers visible appraisal of what is being said (Goodwin, 1980; Goodwin, 1984). Therefore how participants treat the visual displays of each other's bodies as consequential and how this is relevant to the moment-by-moment production of talk is important.

In turn, participant's actions form the framework to which subsequent action is oriented. Therefore, participants build an "architecture of intersubjectivity" (Heritage, 1984, p. 254), in which they display their ongoing and constantly updated orientations towards the business at hand and the emerging turns at talk. In conjunction with gestures and eye gaze, participants can orient to tools, artefacts, workplace objects and technologies (see Heath & Hindmarsh, 2000; Heath & Luff, 2000; Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000; Whalen, 1995). The meaning of such artefacts and objects only becomes relevant depending on the participant's next action and orientation to the said object. Having briefly outlined how talk, gaze and objects all work together to enable the participant to make sense of the interaction, the duration of chapter examines how gaze and objects are made relevant, if at all, for participants in a 'weigh-in' interaction.
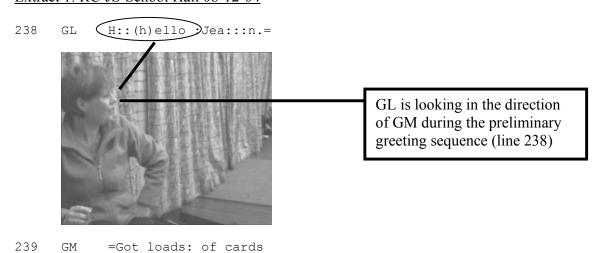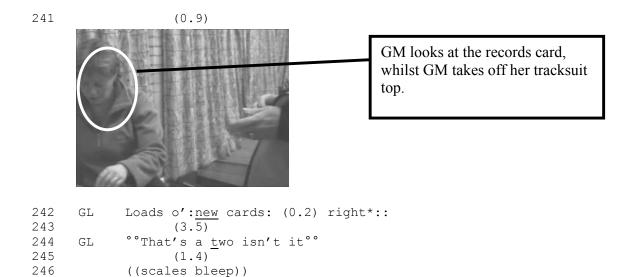
**Analysis**

The analysis focuses on a corpus of interactions that took place between the group leaders (GL) and group members (GM) at the weigh-in scales of these weekly meetings. The focus is on exploring how the practices involved in getting weighed are oriented to and managed in the talk, if at all. Consider extract one below, where the group member is performing some level of undressing.

Extract 1: RC-JS-School Hall 08-12-04

```
238     GL      H::(h)ello  Jea:::n.=
```



GL is looking in the direction of GM during the preliminary greeting sequence (line 238)

```
239     GM      =Got loads: of cards
240     GL      Loads of c#ards a::u#kay,
```

```
241                    (0.9)
```



GM looks at the records card, whilst GM takes off her tracksuit top.

```
242    GL    Loads o':new cards: (0.2) right*::
243            (3.5)
244    GL    °°That's a two isn't it°°
245            (1.4)
246          ((scales bleep))
```



Gaze moves from records card to member when news is delivered.

```
247    GL    >You've lost three=pounds.<
```

The above fragment shows how the group leader's (GL) turns at talk are precisely coordinated with her direction of gaze. At line 238, she says ":(h)ello :Jea:::ne." whilst looking directly at GM who is approaching the desk. However, where GM comments on how many cards she has (line 239), GL takes the cards and her gaze moves from GM to the cards in her hands and GL starts to shuffle them. The 'records card' becomes the focus of the next few turns. Previous studies have examined how participants may orient to workplace objects or tools (see Heath, 1986; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2000; Hindmarsh & Heath, 2000), as ways of performing various kinds of social-interactional work. These objects can range from computers, paperwork, to doctor-patient records. In this instance both the group leader and group member orient to the 'records card', which is used to note down any weight gain, loss or maintenance from week to week.

The video still shows that during the verbal interaction GL uses the change of direction of visual gaze to indicate the start of business proper. GL changes her relevant gaze from looking directly at GM during the informal preliminary talk to looking at the records card when business proper ensues (cf: Goodwin, 2000b). This is similar to the interactional structure of doctor-patient interactions whereby the doctor's gaze can impact upon the smooth progressivity of the talk. Any institutional interaction can potentially involve the move from 'preliminaries' to 'business proper' (see Lomax & Casey, 1998; Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002).This progression from preliminary talk to business can be dependent upon the participants responses and orientation to objects or tools.
Rather than seeing this preliminary talk as being just mere 'mundane utterances', it can be seen as orienting to doing preparing for business proper (in this case being the group leader or group member). Lomax and Casey (1998) note that midwives in their research often made comments about local observable phenomenon which indicated some 'preparing for midwifery' activity. However, it was clear from the preceding and following talk that technical and professional midwifery talk was not yet appropriate or possible.

Similarly, at the beginning of a doctor-patient consultation, the direction of the doctor's gaze upon the records, rather than direct eye contact with the patient, is legitimated by virtue of the doctor reading the patient's notes. Glances through the doctors prior written, or computer- generated entries, are also accepted social actions within this type of institutional interaction (cf. Heath & Hindmarsh, 2002).

In the same way, in the environment of this commercial weight management group, it seems that orientation to the records card is an understandable and legitimate action for the group leader to perform when moving from preliminaries to business proper. In relation to this, the eye gaze in the above extract seems to support this change of focus. When the group leader and member are performing preliminary talk, the eye gaze is more direct. However, when the business proper is introduced, in the form of the records card, the eye gaze of the group leader becomes focused upon that card.

In conjunction with this move from preliminary talk to business proper the group member starts to perform some undressing practices. Where GL says, "Loads o':new cards:" (line 242), GM is carrying out the preparatory practices involved in getting

weighed by starting to take off her tracksuit top (just slightly off camera). GL does not engage with GM directly whilst she is doing this preparation. Then after the short pause GL produces an intersubjectivity boundary marker, "right*::". Although there is no direct or explicit call to business, such as, "on you get then", the "right*::" in GL's turn signals a move to the business at hand. It could also be an invitation from GL to GM to get on the scales (Davidson, 1974; Pomerantz, 1984b). The use of the word 'right' functions as a change of state token and an orientation to business proper (Heritage & Atkinson, 1984). GL is blocking the continuation of the conversation about how many cards GM has and is orienting GM to the business of getting weighed. GM does not respond verbally with a response to the invitation offered (line 243), instead there is a gap of 3.5 seconds. Normatively a silence or a pause after an invitation has been delivered in the previous turn at talk is seen as an indication of potential trouble or rejection (Davidson, 1984).

However, here the video still shows that GM is bodily carrying out her acceptance of the invitation by getting onto the scales, ready to be weighed. During this exchange GL is still looking down at the table focusing on the records card. In the 3.5 second gap GM does step onto the scales and during this gap, GL's gaze is flicking between the card in front of her and the scale readout. At line 242 GL asks for clarification from GM regarding a number that is written on the records card, "°°That's a two isn't it°°". During the following gap GL is altering the figures on the record card. GL then does the news delivery, ">You've lost three=pounds.<." (line 248). When the news of weight loss is delivered, GL moves her eye gaze from the weigh-in scales to look directly at GM and smiles.

This extract starts to show how practices involved in getting weighed in a public environment can be managed and oriented to by both the group leader and the group member. The use of the records card is similar to that of patients' records in a doctor-patient consultation, in that they legitimize the lack of direct eye contact at the beginning of the interaction. Furthermore, the data shows that both the group leader and group member work to avoid directly orienting to the undressing practices performed. GL does not directly engage with GM during these undressing practices, rather she focuses on practices associated with being a group leader, such as referring back to previous entries on the records card and filling in the date for that week. This enables GM to undress

without maybe feeling self-conscious (at least without being directly observed). GL in her role as group leader must manage this delicate practice of members getting undressed and weighed in public.

As I suggested earlier, getting weighed is generally thought of as a private practice or, if public, it happens within a medical environment. The result of such a weigh in is not usually available for public consumption unless the individual chooses to share it. Although getting undressed, or in some state of undress or being naked, are practices that occur in other settings, such as a gym changing room, or on the beach, each of these different settings would have to be managed, normatively, in and for each setting. What I am providing here is one such setting, and the particular norms and orientations done in that setting.

In the weight management milieu the result is something that becomes sanctionable and accountable. Individuals can be held accountable for any fluctuations in their weight. It could be that the focus of the group leader's eye gaze upon the records card and use of non-direct eye contact during the undressing practices are all institutionally organized ways of managing this delicate matter of being weighed in public. Or, it could be something unique to this particular group leader. Therefore, further examples are examined to see if the use of eye gaze and the records card are robust patterns of how both the group leaders and members manage getting weighed.

Consider extract two, in this extract the group member does perform some level of undressing.

Extract 2: RC-JS-School Hall 03-11-04

142    GL    ↑(h)Hello- ↑Pat.=



No direct eye gaze

```
143   GM    =All right
144           (0.4)
```
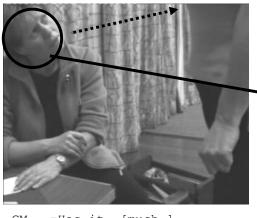


No direct eye gaze or explicit mention of the undressing practices

```
145   GM    I can't stay but I've (0.8) come
146         to be [we:ighed.]
147   GL          [>Well<   ] you've come to be weighed
148         that's: uh- (.) the important bit.
149           (5.6)
150         ((scales bleep))
151           (2.0)
```



The group leader's gaze is focused on the records card

```
152    GL   (h)Ri:ght it's :gone b:ack up this we:ek.=
```



GL moves her eye gaze to look directly at GM when the news of weight gain is delivered

```
153    GM   =Has it. [much,]
```

```
154    GL              [Yeah ]
155               (0.4)
156    GL    Pound and a half.=
157    GM    =Yeah
```

This extract further demonstrates how the group leader's directional gaze and turns at talk work to manage the undressing practices performed by the group member.  The first two video stills show that after the preliminary turn, "↑(h)Hello- ↑Pat.=" (line 142), the group leader's gaze is focused on the records card. After the card is handed over, the group member starts to partially undress, starting with taking off her shoes (lines 145- 146). While the group member is undressing, the group leader is looking directly at the records card, which is now in front of her on the desk. This is analogous with the previous example where the workplace object, in this instance the records card, becomes the focus of the group leader's attention, rather than looking directly at the group member. Thus during the undressing the group leader does things that avoid direct eye contact. The group member's undressing is part of her preparation in order to get weighed. These practices could be seen as important preliminary tasks for the only the group member to engage in, and the group leader's role is to avoid drawing attention to this undressing.

There are some alternative and maybe more obvious kinds of explanations for these patterns. Firstly, GL does need to look at the records card of the group member in order to check what her weight was last week in order to see whether she has gained, lost or maintained weight. However, maybe it is the timing of her gaze change that makes it noticeable. The group leader has many other opportunities to examine the records card throughout. Secondly, the change in gaze to look at the group member when the news is delivered is not just that it is safe to look now, rather it is important to monitor GM's reaction. That is, the eye contact at the end has its own function just then, when it happens, irrespective of GL having previously been looking at the records card beforehand.

It has been suggested that the move from preliminary talk to 'business' involves an action that concerns both participants, in this instance, the group leader and group member. It requires their mutual focus and concentration (cf. Heath, 1986). Therefore, the interaction moves to being a jointly constructed action. However, I would tentatively

suggest that even though the preliminary task of getting undressed is an action performed by the group member, it requires the group leader to do avoidance and understanding, therefore making the preliminaries and the subsequent move to business a jointly constructed action. Therefore the change in gaze and body movement is not just what they have to do anyway, rather the joint timing of these movements are crucial.

During the gap (line 149) GM gets onto the scales and the news delivery is produced by GL, "(h)Ri:ght it's :gone b:ack up this we:ek.=" (line 152). It is at this point in the interaction that GL moves her gaze from the scales readout to look directly at GM, this change of gaze being accompanied by a facial gesture (see video still), which seems to be a look of concern. Much has been written about how the tellers of bad news can 'leak' or 'give off' the news prior to its telling, by means of a facial gesture (Clark & Labeff, 1982; Goffman, 1959; Maynard, 2003; Quill, 1991). In this instance, the bad news concerns weight gain, and the change of directional gaze in conjunction with the facial gesture leaves the group member in no doubt that GL has interpreted the news as bad. Not only does it signal that GL sees the news concerning weight gain as bad, but also that she is using her gaze direction to elicit a response from GM. In this case, the direct eye contact prompts a clarification question from the group member, "=Has it. much," (line 153).

It seems then that in this particular environment the move from preliminaries to business proper is punctuated with directional eye gaze. This gaze seems to be used by the group leaders to signal how and where the group members should respond to things like the news delivery. Also the group leader uses non-direct eye gaze and objects when the group member is involved in the preliminary business of getting ready to be weighed. There seem to be two main observations about the extracts discussed so far. Firstly, such sequences demonstrate how the body and its practices are constructed in particular ways within a commercial weight management setting to circumvent orienting to them explicitly. Secondly, both parties collude in this lack of explicitness of getting weighed in public.

Overall, extracts 1 and 2 exemplify a possible structure for how the practices involved in being weighed in public are structured, oriented to and managed by both the group leader and member:

Pre-weigh in sequence (greeting);

→       Handing over of the records card;

→       Undressing practices and change of group leader's directional eye gaze;

→       Business proper;

→       News delivery and more direct eye gaze from the group leader.


In the extracts that follow, I examine how robust this sequence is and see whether it provides a framework for how these practices are done in this environment. In Extract 3, the group member removes her tracksuit top in order to be weighed.


Extract 3: RC-SL-Church Hall 26-04-04

```
40    GL    Yes,
```



GL is not engaged in direct eye contact during undressing practices
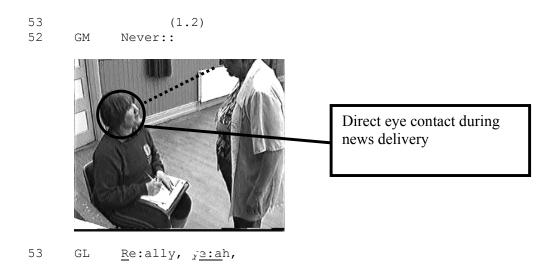
```
41    GM    ((          ))
42              (2.0)
43    GL    °°°Right°°°
```



After undressing practices are complete, direct eye contact

```
44              (1.2)
45    GL    *Step on for ↑:me,
46              (2.1)
47    GM    OO(h)ps ⌊°Heh heh hhhh°        ]
48    GL            [£you all £r(h)ight, ]
50              (2.5)
52    GL    Well=you've lost six po:unds:
```

```
53                    (1.2)
52      GM      Never::
```



Direct eye contact during news delivery

```
53      GL      Re:ally, ɾə:ah,
```

Extract 3 is another clear example of how the group leaders work to avoid direct eye contact when the group members are performing some form of undressing practices. GL produces the greeting sequence, "Right," (line 40) as the group member hands over her records card. As soon as the member has done this she starts to take off her tracksuit top. The group leader changes her directional gaze and focuses on the records card rather then looking at the group member whilst she is undressing. This is similar to the previous extracts, where the group leaders focus on the records card as a legitimate basis for their change of directional eye gaze away from the member while they undress. The membership category 'group leader' immediately makes relevant certain actions or behaviour. It enables the records card to function as a reasonable workplace object for their attention without seeming rude or disengaged.

Prior to the "°°°Right°°°" (in line 43), the group leader does look briefly in the direction of the group member, before looking away again, however, the undressing practices are completed. Then as GL invites GM to get onto the scales, she changes her directional gaze to look directly at the group member, "°°>On=you< step on for me°°," (line 45). The undressing practices have been completed and it seems that GL is now more comfortable engaging in direct eye contact with the group member. This in conjunction with the hand gesture functions as a change of state token and signals the move from preliminary to business proper. This is also similar to the previous examples where directional eye gaze can signal to the group member that business proper is about to ensue. When the member is performing undressing there is no direct eye contact,

however, when the undressing is complete, the group leader engages in more direct eye contact.When GL produces the news delivery, she engages again in direct eye contact "Well-you've lost <u>six</u> po:unds," (line 52).

Extract 3 provides another example to support this notion of a robust pattern of how group leaders and group members use their bodies and directional gaze to manage undressing practices and getting weighed in a public environment. Although this final extract (extract 4) is not analysed as fully as the previous extracts, it provides another example of how the group leaders use their directional gaze to avoid looking at the group member whilst they are performing undressing.

<u>Extract 4: RC-SL-Church Hall 26-04-04</u>

```
90                  (3.0)
```

GL is focused on the records card during undressing practices

```
91          ((scales bleep))
92              (4.6)
92    GM    It's a good job, you're not saying that alou:d to that,=
93    GL    ↑YES:↑ heh heh heh
```

Direct eye contact during news delivery

```
94          [((scales bleep)) ]
95    GL    [.Hhhh I          ] sh£all let you po:nder on that o(h)ne
```
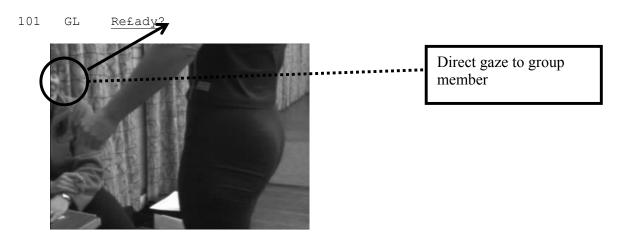
```
96          heh heh
97    GM    heh heh,
```
Compared to the previous extracts, extract 4 is slightly different in that there is no pre-'weigh-in' sequence greeting. However, the group member does hand over her records card and smiles before she starts to perform her undressing. Whilst the group member starts to perform her undressing, in this instance taking off her trainers, the group leader is focused upon the records card rather than in the direction of the undressing. The group leader does not verbally deliver the news; rather she just smiles, writes down the weight on the records card and shows the group member the news (written on the records card which is one of weight gain). However, as the group member starts to comment on not saying the result out loud, the leader changes her directional gaze to look directly at the group member, "It's a good job, you're not saying that alou:d to that,=" (line 92).

This extract demonstrates that the group leader's eye gaze again punctuates the move from the preliminary undressing practices and business proper. It also shows that the group leader uses the records card in conjunction with eye gaze to avoid looking in the direction of the group member as they partially undress practices. The data corpus was examined as a whole and no cases were found whereby the group leader deviated noticeably from these practices.

Having examined how both the group leader and member manage and orient to the practices of being weighed in public, I started to become interested in how the group leaders and members managed the preliminaries when no undressing practices were managed. As I have suggested, there appears to be a robust pattern of group leaders working to avoid direct eye contact during the performance of undressing, including the use of the 'records card' workplace tool to initiate doing other business. The question now arises, are these practices done in the same way? The next section of analysis will look at extracts where the group member arrives at the scales all ready to be weighed to examine how this is managed in the talk. Consider the below extract, the group member arrives at the scales ready to be weighed.

Extract 5: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
101    GL     Re£ady?
```



Direct gaze to group member

```
102    GM:    >I'm rea£dy<
103               (0.9)
104    GM:    Question is whether you ar£e= [I've been naughty,]
105                                         [((scales bleep))  ]
```



Maintained direct gaze

```
105    GL:    You've got away with it=you have stayed the same,
106    GM:    ↑↑Have ↑I↓,
```

What is immediately apparent is how there is a noticeable difference in the direction of the group leader's eye gaze in comparison with the previous examples where undressing practices took place. Here the group leader seems much more comfortable with direct eye contact with the group member.

In extract 5, the preliminaries do not involve a 'greeting' sequence per se, however it is analogous with extract one, where the group member does not do the conventional second pair part. GL starts the interaction with, "Re£ady?" (line 101). This lexical TCU is delivered with contained laughter. Although this turn could be seen as
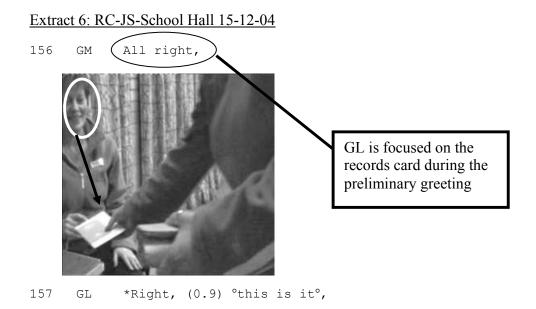
launching 'business proper', the presence of the laughter suggests an informality that could be seen as preliminary type talk. This is supported by the following turn at talk, as GM responds with, ">I'm rea£dy< (0.9) Question is whether <u>you</u> ar£e= I've been naughty," (lines 102,104). Thus GM responds by mirroring the humour initially introduced by GL. This also suggests that GM heard the turn as a preliminary rather than business proper. The video still shows that GL is engaged in much more direct eye gaze than in extracts where undressing happens. There is less focus on the workplace tool, the records card. This could suggest that the records card is not required as a way of the group leader doing business proper when there is no undressing. In the previous examples I suggested that the group leaders may use the records card to justify or manage their lack of direct eye contact whilst the group member is undressing. In extract 5 the need for such justification is no longer necessary as the group member does not undress. However, that is not to say that the records card is suddenly rendered irrelevant. Its presence is still evident in terms of how the sequential organization of a weigh-in is conducted. Handing over the records card remains part of how a weigh in gets done. But the specific use of it, and the precise timing of that usage depends on whether or not some form of undressing take place.

GM starts to provide a pre-weigh-in account detailing her behaviour: "Question is whether <u>you</u> ar£e= I've been naughty," (line 104). Via the construction of this multiple TCU turn the group member projects the likely outcome of the news delivery, as bad news. As I have emphasized, this exchange at the weigh in scales is a joint construction between the group leader and member whereby both parties have some stake in the outcome. This turn demonstrates that for the group member her weight result has an impact upon the group leader. It may be that the group leader does not see the interaction in these terms, but the group member is accountable to the group leader for changes in her weight. This is further supported by the final TCU, "I've been naughty", which implies that losing weight and sticking to a diet is something that one is morally or normatively obliged to do. The use of the word 'naughty' echoes other instances throughout these data in conveying the moral dimension of weight, dieting and teir accountability. This is explored further in chapter 6.

The group leader joins in with this construction of GM having been naughty, with her news delivery, "You've got away with it=you have stayed the same," (lines 105 & 106). GL does a projection prior to the news delivery, "you've got away with it". This aligns with GM's assessment of herself as naughty. To have 'got away' with something implies having done something bad. This orients to and constructs dieting behaviour as a morally sanctionable activity.

GL delivers this news delivery with direct eye gaze. This is analogous with the previous examples where the group leaders have looked directly at the group member for a reaction to the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance. However, in the previous examples where undressing has been present, the interaction has involved minimal eye gaze prior to the news delivery. The main observation about this extract is the extent of direct eye contact almost uninterrupted throughout the exchange. This supports the analytic conclusion that eye contact and eye gaze direction in this setting are indeed functionally relevant to the interpersonal management of undressing.

The following extract is a further example of where the group member arrives at the scales ready to be weighed, without the need to (further) undress.

Extract 6: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

156   GM   All right,



GL is focused on the records card during the preliminary greeting

157   GL   *Right, (0.9) °this is it°,

No undressing practice, but pre-weigh in sequence involves more direct eye contact

```
158   GM      See how bad it's got.
159           (1.0)
160   GL      .Hhokay
161   GM      It's been a while (0.7) sorr[y   ]
162   GL                                  [But ] you've had a good
163           time,
164   GM      I've been ill and I've,
165           (0.5)
166   GL      Oh right,
167   GM      Work commitments and last week we were in New York,
168           so (1.0) we went to >New York for my birthday< (0.5)
169   GL      °U-huh°
170   GM      So:: it was it was good-good fun.
171           (1.8)
172   GL      h w'll=you have put *two on
173           (0.3)
```

GM starts the conversation with a truncated 'are you all right' greeting, "All right," (line 156). However, instead of doing a greeting GL's gaze is focused on the records card and she starts her turn at talk with "*Right," (line 157). This 'right' could be seen as an intersubjective boundary marker or blocking token. It functions to block any further greetings or preliminary talk. It seems that GL is ready straight away to start business proper. This could be attributable to the absence of undressing. The group member has arrived at the scales ready to be weighed, and again there appears to be less attention to the records card by the group leader. Again also, there is much more direct eye contact and less initial preliminary talk than in the extracts involving undressing. Although the video still shows GL looking directly at the records card initially when GM approaches the scales, after she has written down the date, she moves her gaze directly back to the group member.

There is a pause (0.9 seconds) and then GL continues with "°this is it°," and she is smiling. This TCU implies that tonight's 'weigh-in' is somehow important. GM's

subsequent turn, "See how bad it's got" (line 158) suggests that there has been some sort of prior problem. At this stage GM does not produce any further account or assessment to explicate what that problem might be. A gap of 1.0 seconds develops. During this gap GL is looking at the records card and the weigh in scales. GL produces a reformulation of her previous blocking token, ".hokay" (line 160). This now functions to orient the interaction towards business proper.

The interaction continues with GM producing an increment to her previous account, where she reveals that she has not been to the meetings for while. This helps explicate the earlier reference to 'see how bad it's got'. The orientation to not attending the meetings also implies that she has not been sticking to the diet. GM's account includes references to both her birthday and a trip to New York. In this institutional environment certain events are produced as understandable accounts for not sticking to the diet, special occasions such as birthdays and holidays are regularly used by the group members as 'pre-weigh' in forecasts projecting, and somewhat pre-empting the impact of likely bad news.

In the 1.8 second gap (line 171) GM gets onto the scales and GL moves her eye gaze from the weigh-in scales to look at GM directly. The change of the group leader's gaze moves from the weigh-in scales readout to engage with GM directly as she delivers the news, ".hhhh w'll=you have put *two on" (line 172). This is comparable with the previous extracts where the group leader engages the group member during or just after the news delivery. Even when undressing practices have taken place and the group leader has previously worked to avoid direct eye contact, GL's gaze is always changed to directly engage the group member when the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance is delivered.

Extracts 5 and 6 suggest a possible pattern for how a weigh-in gets done when the group member arrives at the scales ready to be weighed (no need to undress). This pattern differs from when the interaction involves GM undressing. The records card remains an important tool in the structure of signalling a move from preliminaries to business proper. The group leader uses the records card as her focus when the group member performs some undressing. The records card is also used by GL when GM arrives at the scales ready to be weighed. But when no undressing has to be done, GL

appears to be more comfortable with holding direct eye contact throughout the duration of the interaction.

→   Pre-weigh-in sequence (greeting);

→   Handing over of the records card;

→   No undressing practices and direct eye contact from group leader;

→   Business proper;

→   News delivery and direct eye gaze from the group leader.

Although the order of these practices may change, it seems that the group leaders are much more likely to engage in direct eye contact when the group member does not perform any undressing and arrives at the scales ready to be weighed. More examples are analysed to see if this pattern is robust.

Consider extract 7, where the group member arrives at the scales ready to be weighed. This extract provides another example of how different the interactions are in relation to eye gaze when there are no undressing practices.
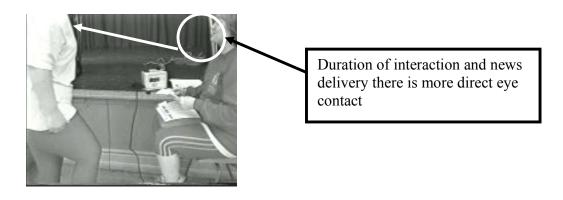
Extract 7: RC-SL-Church Hall 26-04-04

```
20    GL    Heh, heh, Hi Ma(h)ndi, you=all=ri(h)ght,
21              (1.8)
```



No undressing practices. GL is focused on the records card during the initial pre-weigh in sequence

```
22    GL    °°Ri:g(h)ht°°, do: you want to step on. for: ↑me,
23              (3.0)
24          ((scales bleep))
25              (1.7)
```

Duration of interaction and news delivery there is more direct eye contact

```
26    GL    Well=you've lost thre:e pou:(h)nds:.
27    GM    >Oh,<
28    GL    Well: done, heh heh,
29          (5.7)
30    GL    There you [go=wonderful.            ]
31    GM             [Lovely thanks very much]=
32    GL    =Oka:y.
```

Extract 7 shows clearly how the group leader is much more comfortable with direct eye contact when the group member does not undress. GL starts the pre-weigh-in sequence with a greeting, "Heh, heh, Hi Ma(h)ndi, you=all=ri(h)ght," (line 20). As this sequence of preliminaries is produced by GL, the group member hands over her records card. This is comparable with the previous extracts where the records card is a key part of the move from preliminary to business proper. In her next turn GL invites GM to step onto the scales, "°°Ri:g(h)ht°°, do: you want to step on. for: ↑me," (line 22). Again the 'right' at the beginning of the first TCU functions as an intersubjective boundary marker. It signals to GM the end of the preliminaries and the start of business proper. This is supported by the next TCU, where GL invites GM to step onto the scales.
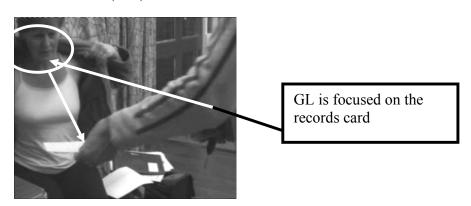
GL continues to hold GM's direct eye gaze, breaking it only to look at the readout of the weigh in scales. However, when she delivers the news, "Well=you've lost thre:e pou:(h)nds:." (line 26), her gaze returns to engage the group member directly. Extracts 5, 6 and 7 provide clear examples of how group leaders and members manage the business of getting weighed when there are no undressing practices. In each extract, the group leaders engage much more in direct eye contact and the records card, though still integral to the interaction, is not a major main focus for the group leader's attention. This suggests that the need for a reason for lack of direct eye gaze is removed when there is no undressing to be done. From studying the data corpus as a whole, there are no deviant

cases where the group leader spends more time on the records card when no undressing takes place.

However, in the data corpus there was *one* deviant case where the group member mentions explicitly getting undressed. The group member explicitly refers to the 'undressing' practice of preparing for business proper and orients to how heavy clothes can impact upon her weight reading. The group member and group leader orient to and collude in the construction of clothing as impacting upon impending weight. The analysis focuses upon how this explicit referral practice is managed in the talk.
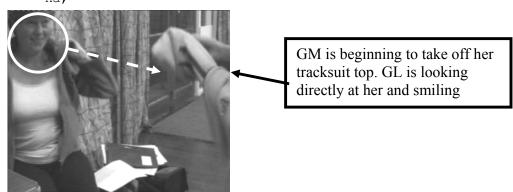
<u>Extract 8: RC-JS-School Hall 10-06-04</u>

```
345    GL    Ri(h)ght=>thank=you< Sam .hh,
346          (1.3)
```



GL is focused on the records card

```
347    GM    I'll put that on the<u>re</u>.
348          (5.8)
349    GM    Whether it makes a difference I n£ever know b(h)ut heh he
350          ha,
```



GM is beginning to take off her tracksuit top. GL is looking directly at her and smiling

```
351    GL    You'd be surprised actually, <u>clothes</u> are <u>ve</u>ry, <u>very</u> he<u>avy</u>.
352          (2.4)
```

GL's gaze is directed at the weigh in scales and records card

```
353         ((scales bleep))=
354    GL   =That's down a poun:d,
```



GL delivers the weight loss news with direct gaze

```
355    GM   .Tch oh good.
```

In all the previous examples examined in this chapter, the group leader has worked to avoid direct eye gaze when there has been any undressing practices performed by the group members. Extract 8 is unique and a *deviant* case for two main reasons. Firstly it is the *only* example in the whole date corpus where the group member specifically draws attention to the practice of undressing. Secondly, the group leader remains in direct eye gaze when the undressing takes place.

As with the other extracts examined here, GL starts the pre-weigh-in sequence with a greeting, "Ri(h)ght=>thank=you< Sam .hh," (line 345). This sequence of preliminaries is produced by GL and the group member hands over her records card. This again is comparable with the previous extracts where the records card is a key part of the move from preliminary to business proper.

The explicit referral by GM about whether taking off clothing makes a difference to weighing is produced after a gap of 5.8 seconds, "Whether it makes a difference I n£ever know b(h)ut heh heh" (line 349). The group leader is engaged in direct eye gaze with the group member as she is starting to undress. Rather than start to focus upon the

records card as with previous extracts, the group leader continues to keep direct eye gaze (see lines 349-350). This is a deviation from how group leaders have managed undressing practices in the data corpus. So what is it about this extract that makes the group leader continue with her direct eye gaze during the undressing? It could be that GM's explicit referral to this very practice of undressing and the humorous way she talks about whether her clothes make a difference, affects GL's reaction and orientation.

I talked earlier in the chapter about how participants body movements, eye gaze and talk all work in conjunction with each other to shape the turn by turn action. Here, it could be that GM's explicitness shapes GL's gaze and action.

GM's turn is produced with both contained and explicit laughter. This shows that she is in a position to take this trouble telling lightly (Jefferson, 1984b). It could be that the laughter functions to defuse the fact that GM is getting weighed in a public arena. Therefore, the laughter could work to hide the embarrassment of getting weighed in public. Also, the majority of women attending this group take the business of weight loss seriously. A pound gained is very important to them. GM's use of humour and laughter could be seen to neutralize the seriousness of the impending news delivery about her weight. In that, she is in a position to take the news lightly. However, GM responds with taking the matter seriously, "You'd be surprised actually, clothes are very, very heavy." (line 351). This supports past research on the telling of troubles that involve laughter in turns at talk (see Jefferson, 1984b). Rather than treating it as a joke, GL takes GM's previous turn at talk seriously. The use and placement of the word actually within turn constructional units has been the focus of past research (cf: Aimer, 1986; Clift, 2004; Lenk, 1998; Smith & Jucker, 1999; Schegloff, 1996a). Quirk et al (1985) maintain that the use of the word 'actually' can validate and reinforce the true value of a clause or statement. Here GL's use of the word 'actually' does informational repair work by correcting GM's presupposition about clothes making a difference to weight. By responding with using the word 'actually' GL is reinforcing the 'truthfulness' of the claim.

GL also produces extreme case formulations by repeating and placing emphasis on the word 'very' in her turn, "clothes are very very heavy".(line 351) Normatively, extreme case formulations are used in complaint sequences (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz,

1986). However here GL uses the repetition of the word 'very' to validate GM's prior observation as correct. Its very use implies that clothes are frequently shown to impact upon an individuals' weight. Pomerantz (1986) maintains that extreme case formulations can be used to propose something is frequent or commonly done. In this interaction it allows GL to reassure GM that in her capacity as group leader, and 'expert' she has had experience where clothes have been proved to make a difference to individuals weight. Note, that during this exchange GL is not looking directly at GM. Rather she is focused upon the records card and the weigh-in scales. This is somewhat analogous with the previous examples. When undressing has been examined previously, the group leader has worked hard to avoid direct eye contact and has focused on the records card until the point at which the news delivery is done. In this case, the group leader deviates from this pattern by engaging in direct eye contact whilst the group member is undressing; however she conforms to the pattern by disengaging and focusing on the records card after the undressing, resuming eye contact only when the news delivery is produced.

The scales bleep and the news announcement is delivered at line 355, "that's down a poun:d". (line 355). GL moves her gaze from the table and records card to looking directly at GM. After the 'business' of being weighed is finished, the interaction returns to GM's initial turn at talk about the clothes.

```
356     GM     .Tch oh good.
357     GL     Just out of interest, [pick it u-      ]
358                                  [((scales bleep))]
359     GL     pick your jumper up,
360                  (0.8)
```
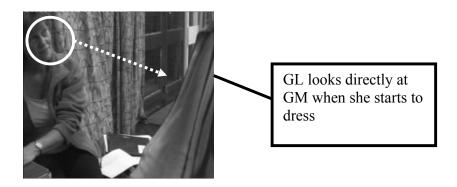


GL points directly at GM's jumper on the floor and initiates the second weighing .

GL re-introduces the topic of the 'jumper' in a very casual manner in her next turn at talk, "Ju<u>st</u> <u>out</u> of interest," (line 357). GM puts the jumper back on and at line 361, GL instructs GM to get back onto the scales. Again whilst GM is starting to dress, GL looks directly at her.

```
361     GL    Get on again,=
362     GM    =And also j<u>ea</u>ns, I think jeans are a,-
363              (1.0)
364     GL    °J<u>eans</u>°-jeans make a difference,
```
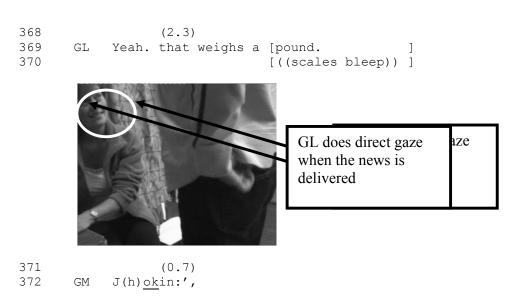


GL looks directly at GM when she starts to dress

This extract deviates from all the other extracts in that after the business of getting weighed, the group leader is talking and looking directly at the group member as she starts to get dressed at the scales. GM orients to the fact that she has jeans on this week also, and that they can impact upon a weight reading. GL moves her gaze from the table, to directly engage with GM. GL again responds with validation and an assertion of her knowledge and expertise as group leader, "They do::" (line 365)

```
365     GL    They do::
366              (0.5)
367     GL    <u>Ju</u>mp on ag<u>ain</u> just out of interest.
```

When GL asks GM to "Jump on again just out of interest" (line 367), she is smiling and looking directly at her. It seems that GL produces this turn with a certain amount of casualness with the repetition of the exact phrase, 'just out of interest' (lines 357 and then again line 367). Normatively, individuals do not repeat exact replications of a phrase used in previous turn at talk. There is usually some upgrade or downgrade to the statement. Upgrades function to strengthen the point of view or turn at talk. Downgrades normatively engender disagreements (see Pomerantz, 1984). However, here GL does an exact duplication with no up or downgrade. This conveys that whatever the result of the new weigh in, it is not important. This is merely something they are doing as a matter if interest. The results have no consequences and therefore are irrelevant to GM's ongoing weight loss program, although this casualness could be because GM has lost weight anyway that week. There is a 2.3 second gap whilst GM gets back onto the scales with the jumper on.

```
368              (2.3)
369   GL   Yeah. that weighs a [pound.          ]
370                           [((scales bleep)) ]
```



GL does direct gaze when the news is delivered

```
371              (0.7)
372   GM   J(h)okin:',
```

As with the previous extracts, when the *news* is delivered, the group leader is looking directly at GM. The subsequent weigh in shows that the jumper weighs a pound (line 369). GL delivers the news with a smile and direct eye contact. This news functions to reinforce and validate both GL's and GM's previous turns. They have proved that what women wear when they are attending these weigh in sessions can impact upon the eventual weight readout.

This extract is exceptional in the data corpus. There are *no* other examples where the group member explicitly refers to getting undressed and how much the weight of her clothes could affect the weigh-in. There are also no other examples where the group leader engages so directly with the group member when they are getting undressed, and certainly none where both parties engage in weighing the clothes to find out how much they weigh. It could be that GM's explicit introduction of the subject of getting weighed in public shaped the subsequent interaction.

**Conclusion**

This analysis has demonstrated, firstly, how particular sequences involving the body and its practices are performed in particular ways within the specific setting of a commercial weight management group in ways that circumvent explicitly orienting to those practices. Secondly, both parties collude in this lack of explicitness regarding getting weighed in public. When the weigh-in sequence involves some level of undressing by group members, the group leaders avoid direct eye contact. Rather, they tend to focus on the practices characteristic of being group leader, such as writing on the records card. However, when the group member arrives at the scales ready to be weighed, the group leaders use much more direct eye contact, breaking this only to look at the readout from the scales.

The use of records card and directional eye gaze appear to be organized to manage the delicate matters of undressing and getting weighed in public. Analysis suggests that the group leaders use gaze direction, and the records cards in ways, and at precise interactional junctures, that legitimate their avoidance of direct eye gaze and eye contact. It is perfectly reasonable within their role as group leader to be focused upon the workplace tools and objects associated with this role. However, rather than that built-in legitimacy being an explanation for the card-attention, the specific timing of that attention, and its selectivity to occasions of undressing, suggest that it provides a resource for group leaders to manage the interaction.

This is comparable with previous research on doctor-patient consultations. At the beginning of the interaction when the patient is accounting for their visit, doctors tend to focus on the patient's past medical notes rather then directly engaging with the patient

(Heath, 1986; Heath & Luff, 1992). It seems then that doctors and group leaders have ways of legitimately avoiding eye contact during an interaction, putting the tools of their trade to further interactional uses.

However, my research departs from previous literature in that when the group member arrives at the scales ready to be weighed, the directional eye gaze is noticeably different. Although the records card is still an integral part of the movement from preliminary to business proper, the group leaders are much more engaged in direct eye contact.

One thing that gaze direction and attention to the records card may be doing is providing a legitimate basis for the group leader to disengage from the group member accountably, as a routine part of doing their job, thereby enabling the group member to undress in front of them without feeling (at that point) watched or examined. So for example, in extract 1 we see clearly the group leader *working to* avoid direct eye contact when the group member is undressing. In contrast, extract 7 shows that when undressing is not required, the group leader no longer needs to work to avoid eye contact. The various extracts examined show how the *practices* involved in getting weighed in this environment are negotiated between group leaders and members. How these practices are managed is accomplished in and through participants' talk, actions and gaze direction.

The chapter also explored the only example in the whole data corpus where these practices differed. Both the group leader and group member produced talk which explicitly focused upon getting undressed and the impact of certain clothes on how much weight the group member may or may not have lost. I have tentatively suggested that the interaction was shaped by the explicitness of the group members' talk about the clothes. The fact that there was only one deviant case strengthens the practices of how getting undressed gets done in this environment, and how these practices are negotiated by both the group leaders and members.

In this deviant case, the group member explicitly talked about whether her jumper being heavy would impact upon her weigh-in results. The group member and group leader both collude in this construction of, and orientation to the *type* of clothes worn being primary to the results displayed on the scales. This results in a long exchange, which ends with the group leader weighing the jumper itself. The fact that clothes worn

seem to have such a direct impact upon the weigh-in result, it seems strange that this is the *only* example in the data where this was evident.  This could suggest that most of the women attending this group are already familiar with the necessary practices associated with getting weighed in a public arena, which is not wearing light clothes per se but the consistency of wearing the same kinds of clothes each week and undressing to the same level. It could be argued that these women are going to be weighed, and the object of the weighing is to check out how much weight they have gained, lost, or maintained, then every opportunity to make the result as positive as possible would be taken.

Although the video stills do capture the essence of what I am analysing, they do not show the dynamic ways in which the group leader and group member use their body, gaze and workplace tools (in this instance the records card) to achieve things in talk. The video stills, although useful for presentation alongside talk transcripts, remain a poor substitute for the actual video clips (CD can be requested from the author).

Having looked at how the group leaders and group members negotiate the delicate business of getting weighed in public, the following chapter examines how the news of gaining, losing, or maintaining weight is handled and managed by both participants.

# CHAPTER 4

## THE TELLING OF WEIGHT NEWS

**Introduction**

The preceding chapter dealt with how the practices of getting undressed were managed in the talk between the group leaders and group members and a robust pattern was found about the how these 'pre- weigh-in' practices occur. This chapter will focus on *how* the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance is delivered and receipted within the talk. Therefore, the first section of analysis will look at *how* the news is delivered within the data and whether these ways of telling are formulated differently in the talk depending upon whether the group members have gained, lost, or maintained weight. The chapter will then move on to explore how the 'news TCU' is constructed: do the group leaders always *tell* the news in the same way and is this the same for weight gain, loss and maintenance? I then move on to explore how the group members receipt the news to see if there are patterns in the response to the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance and if so, whether the responses are different for each. Therefore, the structure of this chapter is as follows:

- Analysis of the news delivery sequence for weight gain, loss and maintenance;
- Analysis of how the group leaders construct the 'news TCU' and if this is the same for weight gain, loss and maintenance; and,
- Analysis of news receipts and is there any pattern, and if so is it different for weight gain, loss and maintenance.

**Delivering the news in talk-in-interaction**

There is a wealth of literature which informs the telling of 'news'. Previous studies of news delivery have included the presentation of bad news in institutional settings such as medical interactions, or law enforcement (e.g. Clark & Labeff, 1982; Lind et al, 1989; Maynard, 1989; McClenahen & Lofland, 1976; West & Frankel, 1991). Bad news and good news are pervasive features of everyday life. The telling and receiving of news

occurs across a wide spectrum of social situations both formal, such as a doctor-patient consultation and more informal, such as two friends sharing accounts of events in their lives. In his studies of how bad news is delivered in clinical settings and ordinary conversation Maynard (1996; 1997; 1998; 2003) has shown that the telling of news happens typically across four turns at talk:

Four Part News Delivery Sequence (Maynard, 1996).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | → | News announcement |
| 2 | → | Announcement response |
| 3 | → | Elaboration |
| 4 | → | Assessment |

This sequence provides a framework for how news announcements and receipts are sequentially ordered in interaction. However, this is not a rigid formulaic structure that can be applied to any news delivery situation. Although typically a news sequence occupies four turns, sometimes news sequences are produced with only two or three turns. It is adaptable and co-constructed within talk, depending on how the news is assessed and receipted by the participants. Certain assessments can work to prolong or curtail news delivery sequences. Information is shared everyday in talk; however, it becomes *news* when participants work to display it as such (Maynard, 2003). It could be argued surely that some news is obviously 'good' or 'bad', such that news of a death is inherently bad news. However, 'good' or 'bad', is established interactionally (Maynard, 2003), "whether news is 'good' or 'bad' is not inherent in events" (Maynard, 1997: 94). Rather, it is conditional upon the actions and responses of the participants within the interaction, such that a death could come as relief for the family that have seen the person suffer.

Although 'forecasting' as a device is not included as part of Maynard's news delivery sequence, he suggests that bad news is often forecast as an indicative feature of its telling (Maynard, 2003). News tellers use forecasting to allow the news recipient to infer what kind of news the delivery it is likely to include before it is told. Research has shown that doctors use this device when they have to tell their patients bad news (Clark

& Labeff, 1982; Maynard, 1989; West & Frankel, 1991). Forecasting is a deliverer's strategy for conveying bad news, that permits the hearer to become conscious of and realize/guess its' telling (Maynard, 2003). However, this said, the news recipient can also use this device in the process of negotiating a news telling.

The first part of this chapter will provide an interesting basis for comparison with Maynard's work. Therefore, taking Maynard's sequence as a starting point, I began by examining whether the news telling was different depending upon whether the news concerns weight gain, loss or maintenance. The group leaders can see the weigh-in scales readout before the group member and are therefore in a privileged position to know the specifics of the *type* of news that the delivery will concern. I started to investigate whether the type of news made a difference to how the group leaders told the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance. The chapter will examine numerous extracts from weight gain, loss and maintenance in turn, starting with weight gain, to try to unpack how 'weight' news is interactionally managed in this type of context. In all the extracts GL is the group leader and GM is the group member.

**The telling of weight gain news**

I will examine the extract below in detail, before examining further extracts across the data corpus to consider if there are any patterns, similar to that identified by Maynard, in how weight gain news is told and constructed.

Extract 1: RC-JS- School Hall 10-06-04

```
1              ((scales bleep))
2                  (1.5)
3 →    GL    .Tch gonna' hate ↓me, (0.2) s'gone up five pounds.=
4 →    GM    =.HHhh↑o::hh,
5                  (0.5)
6      GL    've you [been away again   ]
7 →    GM           [Ooo:ooooo,:::::::] ((carries on for 1.3))
8 →    GL    .whh ooh de:ar.
9 →    GM    °↑~Oh↓: ↑↑dear~°=
```

The above extract demonstrates the telling of this weight gain news happens across several turns of talk.

| 1 | Forecasting | → | Gonna hate me (0.2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | News delivery | → | s'gone up five pounds |
| 3 | Announcement response | → | .HHhh↑o:::h, |
| 4 | News assessment | → | Ooo:ooooo,:::::::: |
| 5 | News assessment | → | .whh ooh de:ar. |
| 6 | News assessment | → | °↑~Oh↓: ↑↑dear~°= |

It is interesting to note that the telling of this weight gain news happens across several turns of talk and shows the group leader using the forecasting device. There are multiple news assessment turns by both the group leader and member. In extract 1 then the group leader, GL uses a forecasting device in the form of a pre-announcement, ".Tch gonna' hate ↓me," (line 3) to project the upcoming bad news. However, it is not just a pre-announcement but it carries the notion that it is bad news rather than good by *forecasting* the recipient's response of 'hating her'. At this stage it is unclear whether the 'hate me' is meant to be heard literally. What it does do is convey that GL is displaying some kind of responsibility for the group member's weight gain or responsibility for having to deliver bad news (blame the messenger, see Maynard, 2003). As group leader, she is in a privileged position in that she can see the readout on the scales before the group member. She can therefore compare it with GM's previous weeks on her records card to see if the news involves weight gain, loss or maintenance and so she knows that the news about to be delivered constitutes a weight gain.

The news receipt, ".HHhh ↑o::hh," (line 4) conveys a sense of shock, excitement or surprise at the news delivery, but not hatred, as predicted in the previous forecast (see Maynard 2003, p. 101 for definitions of news receipts and newsmarks). This all helps to hear "gonna hate me" as a bad news announcement, rather than a literal forecast. The intonational delivery of this turn shows that GM produces the first part of the turn with an in-breath loudly and the pitch of the TCU goes up and continues to rise. Although it is impossible to assign a definitive description of what this news receipt is doing, the following turns at talk suggest that the GM is aligning with the group leader's forecast

that the news is bad. News receipts, such as "oh" typically work to bring to an end the news delivery sequence. Heritage (1984a, p.344) has suggested that in rare cases, the intonational delivery of such news receipts can function as an 'encouraging announcement turn', and therefore work to encourage the progression of the news delivery sequence. Here, it seems that GM's news receipt and subsequent assessment all function to encourage the news delivery sequence.

The news assessment by GM happens here in overlap (lines 6 and 7). She produces a squeaking sound with her hand up to her mouth, which is very high pitched. This happens as GL asks for an elaboration, in the form of a question about whether GM has been away on holiday, "'ve you been away again" (line 6). This question has two functions. Firstly, it gives GM an opportunity *to* account for her weight gain, as well as being a candidate account provided by GL on behalf of GM for the weight gain. The account is one that provides for the weight gain in terms of the group member's failure, outside the group and its activities, rather than that of the agency. Secondly, holidays are situations in which people are relaxed and do not necessarily watch every calorie. Although people can purposely diet in preparation for a holiday, it is produced here as a culturally acceptable account for weight gain. The interaction continues with progression into an advice giving sequence. (Advice giving will form the basis of the next analytic chapter.)

There are some interesting features of this news delivery sequence to note, firstly, the group leader starts the news delivery sequence by producing a forecast to hint at bad news. Maynard does suggest forecasting can be a deliverer's device to hint at possible bad news, and it seems here the group leader is producing her turn and using the forecast to forewarn the group member that the news is bad news. Remember that the group leader can see the weigh-in scales, whereas the group members can not see the read-out. Therefore, the group leader is in a position to forecast bad news. What is maybe more interesting is that the group leader has all ready assessed the 'weight news' as 'bad' news. The news is not delivered for the group members to assess is at bad, rather it is delivered as 'bad' and the group member is left in her next turn to either align or disagree with this assessment. Secondly, there are multiple news assessment turns, produced by both the group leader and group member. This could be due to the intonational delivery of the

news receipt, which encourages the continuation of the sequence. This news delivery sequence demonstrates how GM's news receipt can result in the production of the sequence past an initial announcement and response, which shows how news delivery sequences are co-constructed.

So, the central observations about extract 1 are, that the possibility of bad news is pre-empted by the use of a forecasting device and that the news is assessed by both the group leader and group member across several turns of talk. Part of how weight news is managed by the group leaders could be to provide a forecasting device to forewarn the group members of bad news. Further extracts are examined to see if these observations are present across the data. In extract 2 below, we can see how both the group leader and group member use the forecasting and accounting devices to produce the news:

Extract 2: RC-JS-School Hall 10-06-04

```
193 → GL    Ri:ght* >how's it gone this week then.<
194 → GM    ↑All ↑righ' (0.4) I-I've ↑not ↓felt ↑well so bu'
195   GL    Ri:ght*
196              (0.8)
197   GM    'specially t'da:y I've felt o↑ff whether I've lost any ↑I
198         dun't ↑know,
199         ((scales bleep))
200              (1.4)
201 → GL    .hn:o it's actually gone ↑up,
202 → GM    Has it.=
203   GL    =Yeah
204              (0.7)
205 → GM    Don't know how [that's °happened° ]
```

The above extract is the second piece of evidence for a possible emerging sequence of how weight gain news is told and managed in this context.

| 1 | Forecasting | → | Ri:ght* >how's it gone this week then.< |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Pre-account | → | ↑All ↑righ' (0.4) I-I've ↑not ↓felt ↑well so bu' 'specially t'da:y I've felt o↑ff whether I've lost any ↑I dun't ↑know, |
| 3 | News delivery | → | .hn:o it's actually gone ↑up, |
| 4 | Announcement | | |

|   | response | → | Has it.= |
| 5 | News assessment | → | Don't know how that's °happened° |

The interaction begins with the group leader producing a question, "Ri:ght* >how's it gone this week then.<" (line 193). This turn is not a replication of the forecasting device used in extract 1, rather it could be seen as a type of "How are you" question that can start off clinical visits, nevertheless, it is constructed to allow the group leader to ascertain the *type* of weight news this interaction is likely to involve. The turn focuses on asking about how 'it's gone' which refers to the diet, rather than enquiring about how the group member is.

GM responds by producing a pre-account, "↑All ↑righ' (0.4) I-I've ↑not ↓felt ↑<u>we</u>ll so bu'" (line 194). GM starts her turn with "All righ'", which is doing an answer, but she follows this by starting to produce an account. By constructing this 'not feeling well' account it enables the group member to revisit this after the delivery if the news is bad. If the news delivery involves weight gain, GM can use her account of not being well to validate any fluctuation in her weight. By providing an account first before the news delivery, it allows group members to back date their accounts and back-datedly predict or validate weight fluctuations (Edwards, 2006).

GM adds an increment to her account in her next turn so it includes a specific reference to that particular day, "'specially t'da:y I've felt o↑ff whether I've lost any ↑I dun't ↑know," (lines 197-198), the way this turn is constructed to allows for the possibility of the possibility of bad news. This turn also functions to seek confirmation from the group leader as to whether her pre-account is correct. The news delivery, ".hn:o it's actually gone ↑<u>up</u>," (line 201), shows that the news concerns weight gain, and therefore, provides confirmation that GM's has indeed not lost any weight.

The use and placement of the word 'actually' within turn constructional units (referred to as TCU) has been shown to be significant (cf: Aimer, 1986; Lenk, 1998; Smith & Jucker, 1999; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 1996a). Firstly, the use of the word can indicate a marking of information as 'new', prompted by a question, or as a repair to misinformation in the prior turn at talk. Secondly, 'actually' marked TCU's can be utilized to construct a dispreferred answer to a question built to prefer a yes

response.  Thirdly, the use of the word 'actually' can be used to do informational repair work by correcting either a fact explicitly stated or presupposed in a prior turn at talk (cf: Clift, 2004).In this instance GL is using the word 'actually' to repair the misinformation presented by GM in her prior turn about possible having lost weight.

 GM produces a confirmation question as the news receipt, "Has it.=" (line 202). Questioning newsmarks as a news delivery response can function to encourage further elaboration of the news. Prior to the news delivery GM constructed her account to include a reference to 'not knowing' whether she had lost any weight (line 197-198). Therefore, the question works to get GL to elaborate and confirm that the news concerns weight gain.

The news assessment is an example of the group member using not knowing as part of the account to remove her agency for the weight gain, "Don't know how that's °happened° ." (line 205). Group members displaying 'not knowing' in the assessment and elaboration part of the weight gain news sequence was a common occurrence across the data corpus. Uses of such psychological terms as 'know' are part of a strategy by which participants avoid or collude with the construction of public accountability (cf. Edwards & Locke, 2003; Edwards & Potter, 2005). Memory is often theorised as a cognitive process, which underpins what people recall or say about past events (cf. Lynch & Bogen, 1996). However, in using 'I don't know' individuals can bring into question the existence of an event, or it can work to produce a turn as displaying some kind of innocence or righteousness (Lynch & Bogen, 1996). In this instance, it is not necessarily that GM does not know how she has gained weight. Rather her use of the expression obviates her being held accountable or responsible for it. (The notion of accountability is dealt with later in chapter six).

Overall, extracts 1 and 2 contain a possible structure for *how* participants *use* the news delivery sequence outlined by Maynard when the news concerns weight gain in this context.

1       →       Forecasting device used by the group leaders or group members;
2       →       News delivery by the group leaders;
3       →       Announcement response by the group members;

4    →    News assessment by the group leaders or group members;

5    →    Further assessment or elaboration. This can include a question from the
          group leaders, an advice giving sequence initiated by the group leaders or
          the group member displays not knowing.


The above outline shows that the telling of weight gain news may happen across distinct turns at talk. The main identifiable differences thus far between Maynard's news delivery sequence and the possible sequence that takes place in this weight management environment are the *frequency* of the use of the forecasting device in the form of hints or pre-accounts and the multiple assessment news turns by both the group leaders and group members that is atypical of the four part news delivery sequence.

      In the extracts that follow, I examine how robust this sequence is and see whether it provides some framework that is indicative to how the news of weight gain is told. Extract 3 shows in this instance it is the group member who uses the forecasting device in the form of an account to hint as possible upcoming weight gain news, as in extracts 2.


<u>Extract 3: RC-JS-School hall 15-12-04</u>

```
481    GL    ↑Hazel
482    GM    Hello
483    GL    >Hallo:<
484               (1.1)
485    GL    Tha::nk you >very much,< >how are ↑yo::u?<
486    GM    I'm okay thank ↑you:
487    GL    Go:od
488               (0.9)
489 → GM    Don't know about my ↑weight though >ha ha< ha:::h,
490               (1.0)
491 → GL    Uh[m:::::         ] (0.8) .hh your weight is: a pound an'
492           [((scales bleep))]
493         a ha:lf: (0.5) more than it was last time.
494               (1.2)
495 → GM    I'm not surprised.
496 → GL    #Oka:y
497    GM    Ha [ha ha          ]=
498           [((scales bleep))]
499 → GL    =That's=not* a disaster,
```

As with extracts 1 and 2, extract 3 has similar sequences for how the group leader and group member construct the telling of weight gain news in the talk. It is interesting to note that again there are multiple news assessment turns done by the group leader.

| 1 | Pre-account | → | Don't know about my ↑weight though >ha ha< h<u>a</u>:::h, |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Forecasting | → | Uh[m:::::     ] (0.8) |
| 3 | News delivery | → | .hh your weight <u>is:</u> a pound an' a h<u>a:lf:</u> (0.5) more than it was last time. |
| 4 | Announcement response | → | I'm not surprised. |
| 5 | News assessment | → | #<u>O</u>ka:y |
| 6 | News assessment | → | =That's-not* a disaster, |

GM uses a pre-announcement forecast, "Don't know about my ↑weight though >ha ha< h<u>a</u>:::h," (line 489). The laughter is precisely timed to ironically contrast with the greeting sequence of GM being 'okay' even though her weight may not be. Laughter in troubles-telling (cf. Jefferson, 1984b) and complaints (cf. Edwards, 2005) indexically displays the speaker as not troubled by the telling or, not disposed to being affected by it. Laughter can signal the speaker's attitude to or stance on the particular subject, in conjunction with signifying how the other party may respond (cf. Edwards, 2005). In this instance, it displays that GM may not be affected by the possible upcoming bad news delivery, or has at least considered weight gain news as a possible outcome and can manage it.

The laughter functions to project possible trouble regarding the upcoming weight news and consequently orients the group leader to that possible bad news. Forecasting devices hint at bad news but do not disclose it at that point (Maynard, 2003). GM does not explicitly state she has gained weight, but the construction of the turn is enough to suggest possible trouble. It could be argued that at this stage, GM is displaying agnosticism about the weight, but in producing her turn indicating possible trouble, it has a pessimistic component.

However, GL has trouble constructing and delivering this news telling. She starts with a stalling 'uhm' (line 491). Stalling devices become a kind of 'forecasting' in that they are produced when there is bad news to tell but the potential deliverer wishes to avoid or delay the telling (cf. Maynard, 1996; 2003). In the previous extracts the group leader also had trouble constructing and delivering the 'news TCU'. These news TCUs seem to be punctuated with pauses, hedges and general interaction trouble. The news is not simply told. Could this suggest that trouble is an indicative feature of delivering bad news TCUs in this environment?

The news delivery confirms GM's forecast, as the news concerns weight gain. The news receipt, "I'm not surprised." (line 495) rejects the newsworthiness of GL's delivery. By forecasting the account of not knowing whether her weight would be okay, it allows this notion of back-dated predictability (cf: Edwards, 2006). GM can acknowledge GL's turn as 'not news'. It allows GM to evade her public accountability for the weight gain as she has already hinted that her weight may have increased. Individuals can display 'not news' to them by using these kinds of TCUs (see Terasaki, 1976). GM's treatment of the news as not newsworthy means that in her next turn GL uses 'okay' as lexical prompt to encourage an assessment (line 496). The subsequent laughter from GM and the "That's-not* a disaster" by GL (lines 498-499) both do an assessment. The interaction continues with GM and GL talking about strategies for weight loss.

Extracts 4 and 5 show further evidence for a possible emergent news delivery sequence for weight gain. In these extracts, as in extract 2 both the group leaders and group members can be seen to use a forecasting device, in the form of pre-accounts. Extract 4 shows the group member using the forecasting device in an explicit way as she states she thinks she has gained weight at the very beginning of the weight in sequence without knowing the news:

Extract 4: RC-SP-Baptist Church 22-11-04

```
12      GL      How are you all ri:ght,
13                   (1.9)
14  →   GM      Think I've gained
15      GL      H:hhhh,
16              ((scales bleep))
17  →   GL      °°I'm afraid it has gone up a little bit°°
```

```
18 →  GM    °Three,°
19             (1.5) ((GL is shaking her head at this point))
20 →  GM    Oh n:o, I knew I'd gained
21 →  GL    That's a po::und
22    GM    Mind I'm not surprised °act(h)ually°
```

The structure of the news delivery is analogous with the previous examples studied.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Forecasting | → | Think I've gained |
| 2 | News Delivery | → | °°I'm afraid it has gone up a little bit°° |
| 3 | Announcement response | → | °Three,° |
| 4 | Elaboration | → | Oh n:o, I knew I'd gained |
| 5 | Elaboration | → | That's a po::und |

This extract demonstrates the group member using the forecasting device, "Think I've gained" (line 14). In this instance, GM explicitly states that she thinks she has gained weight. The formulation of this pre-account is slightly different to the previous ones explored. Here GM is much more explicit about having gained weight. Again, I have referred to the turn as a pre-account, as it projects an account for having put weight on. The news delivery, "°°I'm afraid it has gone up a little bit°°" confirms GM's forecast, she has gained weight. The use of 'I'm afraid' shows that GL is 'prefacing' the news delivery (Maynard, 2003). In the forecasting of news the news teller can use a 'preannouncement', such as 'I've got some bad news', or 'Have you heard' this pre-empts bad news but withholds its telling until there is a go-ahead token from the news recipient (Maynard, 2003), such as, "No what". The news teller can also 'preface' the news, this device seems to evade the need for the go-ahead token from the recipient as the news is prefaced and then told in the same TCU. Here GL prefaces the news with 'I'm afraid' and then goes straight into the news delivery, 'it has gone up a little bit,'. This turn functions to minimize the news as it delays somewhat the specific details of the weight gain. GL has told GM that her weight has gone up, but not by how much.

The announcement response by GM "°Three°," is produced as a possible candidate for how much weight she has gained. The group member can not see the 'read-

out' from the scales and therefore produces a 'guess'. In the silence at line 19, the group leader is shaking her head. The following elaboration "Oh n:o, I knew I'd gained" (line 20) hints at some foreknowledge. The "Oh n:o," prefaced news assessment by GM acknowledges the news as bad, but the following assessment, "I  knew I'd gained" rejects its newsworthiness (line 20). Here GM is showing that her forecast prediction was correct and therefore GL's news delivery is merely confirming something she already knew. This rejection of the news as not newsworthy evades her public accountability. By explicitly stating in her pre-account that she thought she had gained weight, she can now revisit this account and claim previous knowledge, (evident by her turn at line 20). Note that she has changed the construction of her TCU from 'think' she'd gained, something that was abstract to 'knew' which is more concrete.

GM only produces an assessment after the amount if weight gain is explicitly produced by the group leader at line 22, "Mind I'm not surprised °act(h)ually". This turn confirms GM's pre-account that she thought she has gained weight and works to show that the news is not newsworthy to her. However, this extract provides another succinct example of how all the group leaders have possible trouble delivering bad news. The news sequence ends and the interaction moves into an advice giving sequence.

Extract 5 below is examined in much less detail, but it is another succinct example of the emerging sequential pattern of how weight gain news is told in this environment. GM produces a pre-account of a weekend away before the news delivery.

Extract 5: RC-JS-School Hall 05-04-04

```
41      GL      Hello
42      GM      Hello:
43      GL      Are you well
44 →    GM      I ↓am: [but  ] I've had a wonderful weekend 'cos I've been
45      GL             [Good ]
46      GM      To Scotland
47                     (1.5)
48 →    GL      [Aaaaaaaaaaaaaa]
49      GM      [For a holiday], so it's not going to be good
50                     (1.7)
51              ((scales [bleep))  ]
52 →    GM              [Very bad ] hhhhh
53 →    GL      .Hhh it's up (0.2) two and a half,
54                     (1.0)
55 →    GM      °°That's bad°°
56 →    GL      Well it is and it isn't, (0.4) what ↑I ↑would (1.2) say is
```

Here it is clear that the group member is using the forecasting device to hint at the possibility of bad news:

| 1 | Pre-account | → | I ↓am: but I've had a wonderful weekend 'cos I've been To Scotland |
| 2 | Pre-account | → | For a holi<u>day</u>, so it's not going to be Good |
| 3 | Pre-account | → | <u>Ve</u>ry bad hhhhh |
| 4 | News Delivery | → | .Hhh it's up (0.2) two and a <u>half</u>, |
| 5 | Announcement response and assessment | → | °°That's bad°° |
| 6 | News assessment and Elaboration | → | <u>Well</u> it <u>is</u> and it <u>isn't</u>, (0.4) what ↑I ↑would (1.2) say is |

The group member produces her pre-account over several turns, and with each new turn adding an increment and further pessimistic projection to hint at bad news. In this extract, as with previous ones examined, there is the reliance on the script formulation of a holiday as the reason why this group member may have gained weight. In two instances GM explicitly mentions 'not going to be good' and 'very bad', both in reference to the impending 'weigh-in', both of which provide this pessimistic projection and hint at possible bad news. As with the all the previous examples, the news delivery TCU has marked trouble. It is punctuated with an in-breath and a pause, which seems to be indicative to the telling of weight gain news TCUs. GM responds with a simultaneous news receipt and assessment, which leaves GL in no doubt that she has assessed the news as bad. In the following turn the GL starts with a further news assessment, "<u>Well</u> it <u>is</u> and it <u>isn't</u>,", before starting to elaborate and move into an advice giving sequence. Advice-giving is dealt with fully in the next chapter.

The previous extracts show group leaders finding the delivery of bad news problematic. However, they perform that orientation skillfully, and in analyzable ways.

Extracts 6-11 are examples of how the news of weight gain when delivered by group leaders is always accompanied by some form of a disclaimer type phrase or a pause.

Extract 6: RC-SL-Church hall

```
12 →  SL    Pound and a half on I'm afraid
13    Liz   Oh I can live with that,(.)Oh Sue if you'd knew what I've
            had
```

Extract 7: RC-SL- Church hall

```
13          ((scales bleep))
14 →  GL    You've (0.2) °(h)gone up a half°, sor:ry,
```

Extract 8: RC-JS-School hall

```
156 →  GL   (h)Ri:::::gh'=it ↑has actually gone up (.) half a
157         poun[:::d.              ]
158    GM       [O::h ↑No:::::::::.]
```

Extract 9: RC-JS-School hall

```
152 →  GL   (h)Ri:ght it's :gone b:ack up this we:ek.=
153    GM    =Has it. [much,]
154    GL             [Yeah ]
```

Extract 10: RC-SP-Baptist Church

```
98 →  GL    Hmmmm [has actually gone up a pound ]
99    GM          [Yeah you see #heh heh#        ]
```

Extract 11: RC-SL- Church Hall

```
50          ((scales bleep))
51 →  GL    Oh de(h)ar , you've gone up I'm afra:id,
52    GM    Mm yes: [yeah    ]I can tell in my
```

In all the above extracts the group leader displays the troublesome nature of delivering weight gain news. It seems as suggested by Maynard (2003) that trouble is indicative to the telling of bad news. All the news TCUs contain some form of pause, or hedging or

trouble. The group leaders seem to manage the telling of this news by displaying some level of accountability or investment. In all the extracts there is the use of such phrases as, "I'm afraid" or "Right" or as in the very first extract examined, "Gonna hate me". This supports the notion that weight gain is something that must be accounted for, and is a sanctionable action. It also seems to suggest that the group leaders feel some sense of responsibility.

Past research suggests there is a certain asymmetry in existence between good and bad news (see Heritage & Stivers, 1999; Maynard, 2003; Maynard & Frankel, 2006), in that a deliverer displays a certain reluctance and hesitancy when bad news is to be told. Therefore, typically bad news is withheld and shrouded, sometimes only being delivered as answers to specific questions (Maynard, 2003, p. 162). In contrast, good news is easily told. Heritage and Stivers (1999) founds that clinicians frequently used silence or forecasting when having to tell bad news. This is supported by Maynard and Frankel (2006) who found that serious conditions like cancer or heart problems were delivered to the patients with caution. Even when the bad news contained more benign conditions, such as high blood pressure, the news was produced guardedly in the physicians talk Physicians and patients receipted diagnostic good news using semantically positive terms, but bad news was produced in a semantically neutral way (see also Hoffman et al, 2003; Lehtinen, 2005).

However, in my data corpus however, there was one deviant case. Therefore, the final extract in this section shows the group leader delivering the news bluntly, with no 'trouble', which seems to have punctuated all the previously discussed extracts. The extract shows the group member has gained weight this particular week. The initial turns in the interaction are concerned with the preliminary talk of getting ready for the business proper of being weighed as discussed in the previous chapter.

Extract 12: RC-JS-School Hall 21-07-04

```
520    GL        H(h)allo:: Tr(h)ace:::y.
521    GM        How are you,
522    GL        I'm very well thank you, how are y:ou,
523    GM        Fine thank you:,
524                   (1.6)
525    GM        Got a co:ld=huh huh huh,
```

```
526                        (0.9)
527   GL      Yes who hasn't [heh heh ] at the mo:ment, .hh
528   GM                     [Awww    ]
529   GL      considering it's supposedly mid [su:mme:r.    ]
530   GM                                      [Mid summe:r. ]
531                        (0.4)
532           ((scales bleep))
533                        (0.5)
534 → GL      You've put half a pound on.
535 → GM      °O(h)h g(h)od°, I think I'm ~go£ing~ heh heh=
536 → GL      =Ri::ght [no:w           ]come on, >mind< you've got
537                    [((scales bleep))]
538   GL      to :stop this::
539                   (0.7)
540   GM      Heh huh huh
541   GL      Wher::e are you struggling:g .hhh
542                   (0.8)
543   GM      °I am strugglin'°
```

An initial observation about this extract is that it does not comply with the other weight gain news delivery sequences discussed so far in this chapter. Firstly, there is no forecast device used by either the group leader or group member. Secondly, the news TCU is delivered with no trouble which was so evident in all the other extracts discussed. Finally, there are no multiple assessment turns.

1    News delivery            →    You've put half a pound on

2    Announcement response    →    O(h)h g(h)od, I think I'm ~going~heh heh

3    Elaboration              →    Right now come on, mind you've got to stop
                                   this

The above extract shows that neither the group leader nor group member do forecasting before the news delivery. The news is delivered bluntly by GL "You've put half a pound on" (line 534). At this stage it is not clear whether GL considers this news to be good or bad. The TCU contains no stalling or delaying techniques, such as 'um' or a pause to show how GL's is assessing this news telling. The *type* of weight news is constructed collaboratively after GM's news assessment, "O(h)h g(h)od, I think I'm ~go£ing~ heh heh=" (line 535). GM uses an *oh*-prefaced assessment newsmark (Maynard, 1998), which function to show that GM is displaying this is 'news to her' (cf: Terasaki, 1976). These *oh*-prefaced assessments are used before the assessment of both good and bad news. GM

continues her turn with, "I think I'm ~go£ing~ heh heh=". The 'oh god' part of the news assessment is delivered with breathiness and shows that GM is assessing the news as bad. However GM abandons her TCU without completing the 'I think I'm going' and she starts to laugh.

GL does not join in with this laughter and instead she produces "Right" as a newsmark which functions as a blocking token to stop the laughter and return to the seriousness of the topic. This is supported by the following elaboration, "now come on >mind<you've got to stop this" (line 536). This constructs GL as someone with authority who has the 'right' to give such direct orders, 'you've got to stop this'. This orients to GM as the one who is accountable for the weight loss. The 'you've' in GL's turn, places the responsibility firmly with her as group member. After GL's elaboration turn a gap of 0.7 seconds develops (line 539) and this is followed by GM laughing (line 540), indicating possible interactional trouble.

Up to this point in the interaction GM has not produced any forecasting or account to indicate she has been having trouble with the diet. In the rest of the data group members use a number of forecasting accounts within this environment. Two of these are that they admit they have been 'naughty' or 'bad', or they disclose they are struggling with the diet. Up to this point in the extract, GM has done neither of these actions. This leaves GL to start to probe for reasons as to why GM is gaining weight, "Wher::e are you struggling:g .hhh" (line 541). GM uses the same word in her turn and confirms to GL that she is indeed struggling with the diet, "°I am strugglin'°" (line 543). The interaction progresses from the news delivery sequence into an advice giving sequence.

It is clear from this extract that both the group member and group leader both deliver and receipt the news of GM's weight gain as 'bad' news. However, GL does not employ any of the forecasting devices to allow GM to guess at possible bad news. As we have seen from the earlier extracts the news teller (in this case the group leader) often precedes bad news with marked in-breaths or pauses (Leppänen, 1998b), none of which are evident here. However, research regarding HIV counselling has shown that bad news can be delivered straightforwardly without any hedging, forecasting or interactional trouble (Maynard, 2003). Counsellors delivered the HIV status of their clients frankly, regardless of whether the result concerned a positive or negative result. However, in the

weight management environment although still institutional, is much more informal and the news is not as life changing or serious. However, GL has emulated this bluntness by not attempting to stall the telling of the bad news. This however was a deviant case within my data corpus for weight gain news delivery.

Analysis of the weight gain extracts has shown that in the majority of cases where the group members have gained weight, one of two things occurs. Firstly, the group leaders employs some kind of forecasting device, which either allows the group members to predict the impending news themselves or it functions to soften the news delivery. The group leaders can also rely upon forecasting to stall the news telling. Secondly, the group members manage the interaction by using the forecasting device in the form of a pre-account.

This *pre-account* functions to do two things. Firstly, it allows the group members to produce a pessimistic projection. At the beginning of the interaction, the group member does not know whether the news is 'good' or 'bad'. Therefore, this projection prepares both the group leaders and group members for possible bad news. Following on from this point, group members can then refer back to it after the news delivery to produce a *not newsworthy* news assessment. It implies a certain amount of predictability, or foreknowledge about the news.

Secondly, the production of a pre-account also works to evade being held accountable by the group leaders at a later stage in the interaction. Dieting is an accountable matter and an accomplishment. By providing a pre-account, group members limit or avoid being held publicly accountable for any subsequent weight gain. The telling of news in this environment is a shared, constructive, collaborative process between the group leaders and members. It does not just involve the teller revealing the news to the recipient. The group members can themselves be involved in telling the news prior to the announcement. It has been suggested that although both speakers contribute to the accomplishment of news telling, this is not always equal or symmetrical (Maynard, 1996; 1997). How 'good' or 'bad' the news is depends on how its recipients receipt and assess it. In this context, what is 'bad' news for the group leaders in terms of weight gain, may well be 'good' news for the members. For example let us revisit extract 6,

```
12 →  SL    Pound and a half on I'm afraid
13    GM    Oh I can live with that,(.)Oh Sue if you'd knew what I've
            had ((the member is referring to food consumed here))
```

Here it seems the group leader is delivering and assessing the news as 'bad', which is suggested by the 'I'm afraid'. However, for the group member it seems that the news is not that bad, it is implied that compared with what she has eaten that week, it could have been so much worse.

In summary, there is a robust sequence of actions that both the group leaders and group members produce in the delivery sequence when the news concerns weight gain. All of the above extracts demonstrate how both the group leaders and group members use the forecasting device in the telling of weight gain news. The turns in this environment can perform multiple actions simultaneously. The group members can perform a news receipt, but this receipt can also do an assessment. The news delivery sequence in this environment seems to be dependent upon the *type* of news being told, as to how it is constructed within the interaction. It was suggested at the beginning of the chapter that news delivery usually follow a prototypical structure of a four part sequence (cf. Maynard, 2003). It seems that unpacking how weight news is told in this environment, has shown that although the structure may not deviate too far from that outlined by Maynard, what is different is *how* turns get assembled, *how* they are designed and constructed and what *business* they perform in the talk.

Weight gain news is accomplished across an ordered sequence of turns evident in all the extracts examined. These include the forecast by either the group leaders or pre-account by the group members; the news delivery by the group leaders; the announcement response by the group members; a news assessment, which can be done by either the group leaders or group members and can take up several turns in the interaction; finally there can be an elaboration of the news. This elaboration if done by the group leaders includes either a question, or the initiation of an advice-giving sequence. If the elaboration turn is done by the group members, they do a display of 'not knowing'.

Therefore, it could be that in this context, group members produce pessimistic projections and accounts to try to hint at possible upcoming bad news (weight gain) prior

to the news delivery, and subsequent accounts of 'not knowing' following the delivery. These patterns were evident in all four geographical weight management groups where data was collected. The analysis has shown the presence of a possible pattern for how the news of weight gain is constructed in talk.

Taking the emergent pattern of how group leaders do weight gain news as a starting point, the next part of the analysis will focus upon how the news of weight loss is delivered and managed by both the group leaders and members. The analysis will look for similarities and differences, if any, between the telling of weight gain and weight loss news.

**The Telling of weight loss news**

Consider extract 13 where the group member produces a pre-account in the form of a joke in response to the group leader.

Extract 13: RC-SP- Baptist Church 18-11-04

```
18      GL    So get the tight t-shirts out (0.3) get rid of the baggy ones,
19 →    GM    Well it=in't the same here.
20            (0.4)
21      GL    Huh hu
22            (0.6)
23      GL    Well you was pretty go:od last week, s[o::    ]
24 →    GM                                         [I kno:w ] but I
25            think I've,
26            (1.2)
27      GM    Done a downward t[u::rn        ]
28                           [((scales bleep))]
29            (0.4)
30 →    GL    You've still lost, -oo 'cuse me, you've still lost a po:und,
31 →    GM    Yeah,
32            (0.5)
33 →    GL    That's all ri:g↑ht,
```

The news is told here over five turns at talk, with the forecasting device by the group member happening over more than one turn at talk:

1      Pre-account          →      Well it=in't the same here.

| 2 | Pre-account | → | I kno:w but I think I've done a downward turn |
| 3 | News delivery | → | You've still lost |
| 4 | Announcement response | → | Yeah |
| 5 | News assessment | → | That's all ri:g↑ht, |

What is immediately apparent is that the group member uses a forecasting device to hint at the possibility of bad news regarding her weight. However, the group member produces this device in two places. The first use is in response to GL's reference to the previous group member who has lost weight and is told to start wearing tighter t-shirts, "Well it=in't the same <u>here</u>." (line 19). This immediately makes available the account that the weight news could possibly be bad. GM is orienting GL to the fact that the same advice of being told to wear tight t-shirts will not be repeated here.

GL responds with laughter "Huh hu" (line 21), however, GL seems to counter the initial pessimistic projection by a somewhat more optimistic projection, "Well you was pretty <u>go:od</u> last w<u>ee</u>k, so::" (line 23), which is based on GM's weight result last week. However, GM counters this with another more explicit pre-account, "I kno:w but I think I've, done a downward tu::rn" (lines, 24-26). GM adds further information to the first forecast, by stating she has had a 'downward turn'. At this stage it is not clear exactly what GM is referring to in terms of the 'downward turn' but the implicit suggestion is a negative one, which could refer to her eating habits or weight. The production of a pre-account by the group member is something that was evident in the previous weight gain news sequence.

The news delivery, "You've still lost oo 'cuse me, you've still lost a po:<u>und</u>, ". The 'still' in GL's TCU orients to GM's previous turn where she admits to having a downward turn. So, even if GM has experienced a 'downward turn' she has still lost weight. In response to the news delivery GM does a weak receipt "Yeah" (line 31). This could be seen as GM receipted the news as good, the fact that she has experienced this downward turn and has still lost a pound. Or it could be hearable as disappointment. It seems to suggest that losing a single pound in this environment is disappointingly not enough. It is therefore not just a matter of losing or gaining weight, rather it is how much

weight is lost or gained. This hearing of the news assessment conveying disappointment is somewhat supported by the following assessment turn by GL, "That's all ri:g↑ht," (line 33).This could be hearable as GL producing an assessment that performs reassurance. Although the group member is displaying disappointment, the group leader is showing that she has still lost weight and should not be disillusioned. The news delivery sequence ends and the interaction moves to an advice giving sequence, which includes an exploration of how and why the downturn has happened.

The main observations about extract 13 are that the group member uses a forecasting device in the form of a pre-account to hint at the possibility of bad news regarding the impending weigh-in result. This is similar to extracts where the group members had gained weight, and also that the news delivery turn is delivered without any evidence of 'trouble'. This extract provides a basis to examine further extracts in detail to see if these turns form any kind of pattern for how the group leaders and members do the telling of weight loss news.

Extract 14 starts with some preliminary greeting talk, then the group member uses a forecasting device by producing a pre- account detailing that she had been away on holiday, which hints at the possibility of bad news.

Extract 14: RC-SL-Church Hall 05-07-04

```
135   GL     (h)How are you oka:y,
136 →GM      Ye:ah I was away la:st week [so       ]
137   GL                                 [Oh right]
138          (0.8)
139   GL     On you step.
140 → GM     Staying with my mum so lord knows what that's done to
141          [anything  ]
142   GL     [Oh right. ] heh heh
143          (1.6)
144          ((scales bleep))
145 →GL      You've lost three pou:nds.
146 →GM      :Oh that's:=
147 →GL      =Well done
```
Firstly, as with the previous extracts the pre-accounting from GM happens across more

than one turn at talk.

| 1 | Pre-account | → | Ye:ah I was away la:st week so |
| 2 | Pre-account | → | Staying with my <u>mum</u> so lord knows what |

|   |   |   | that's done to anything |
|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | News delivery | → | You've lost thr<u>ee</u> pou:nds. |
| 4 | Announcement response | → | :<u>Oh</u> that's:= |
| 5 | News assessment | → | =W<u>ell</u> done |

GM starts to do her pre-account immediately after the greeting sequence, "Ye:ah I was away la:st week so" (line 136). As mentioned earlier in the chapter, group members regularly use a holiday as an event that provides an account within this environment to validate weight fluctuations. This normative formulation enables the group member to present 'the holiday' as an account which has a recurring, predictable, sequential pattern (Edwards, 1995). She adds a further increment at a later turn, "Staying with my <u>mum</u> so lord knows what that's done to anything" (line 140). This turn adds more details to GM's account of why she is possible hinting at bad news, and although could be seen to claim ignorance about not knowing what it has done to anything, it is still a pessimistic projection which can be heard as reporting possible trouble.

The news delivery by GL, "You've lost thr<u>ee</u> pou:nds." (line 145) must disconfirm GM's initial hints at possible bad news. GL delivers the news with emphasis and stretching on the word 'pou:nds'. GM responds by using an '*oh*- plus partial' news receipt (Maynard, 1998; 2003), "Oh that's=" which could also be about to also perform an assessment. The ':<u>Oh</u>' part of the receipt orients to an acknowledgment of GL's prior turn as 'news' and the 'that's' implies the beginning of an assessment. This is comparable with some of the previous extracts discussed where the news receipt turn by the group member often carries out two simultaneous actions, receipt and assessment, such as in extract 5, "That's bad".

However, this TCU is abandoned and GL provides a latched assessment. This assessment from GL, "=W<u>ell</u> done" (line 147) ends the news delivery sequence. The use of congratulatory statements at the end of a news delivery sequence will be returned to later in this chapter.

It is also interesting to note that in both of the weight loss extracts examined so far, as part of the pre-accounting sequence a TCU has ended with the word 'so'. In extract 13. "Well you was pretty go:od last w<u>ee</u>k, so::" (line 23). Although it is the group

leader using it in response to the pre-account put forward by GM, it functions to allow the next speaker to hear the upshot of what the current speaker is saying, without them having to say it explicitly. Similarly, in extract 14, the group member ends her pre-account with, "Ye:ah I was away la:st week so" (line 136). This 'so' is produced to allow GL to make the connection between the going away and the impact that could have had on her weight and therefore the possibility of bad news. An unfinished turn ending with a 'stand-alone so' can achieve particular business in talk. It can invite the collaboration of the other participant to complete the turn or, as a response to the action it is designed to call attention to (cf. Raymond, 2004). A 'stand-alone so' prosodically marked in the turn-final position can project an upshot and indicate that the speaker will not go on to produce it (see Raymond, 2004).

There seems to be an emergence of a difference between how the news TCUs are constructed. When the news concerned weight gain, the news TCUs were punctuated with hesitancy and it seemed that the group leaders had trouble telling the news. However, in these two extracts showing the delivery of weight loss news, there is no such marked hesitance or trouble. It could suggest therefore, that trouble is indicative to the telling of bad news, and not in the telling of good news, in this case, weight loss.

Maynard argues that recipients of bad news are "restrained in their acknowledging and assessing turns" (2003, p.174). However, with the extracts presented thus far, it is not possible to make that distinction. Certainly, there seems to be support for the asymmetry of good and bad news in this weight data. However, the recipients of the good or bad news (the group members), are not consistently restrained in the subsequent turns of talk. Extracts 13 and 14 provide the basis for further exploration for this matter and for whether there is a possible sequence for the telling and receiving of weight loss news.

Consider extract 15, which provides another example of weight loss news delivery, in which the group member produces a pre-accounting forecast.

Extract 15: RC-JS-School Hall 08-12-04

```
224    GL    Thank=you,::::::
225              (.)
226    GM    Thank you:
227              (0.6)
228    GL    How's::=J(h)ill, hhh
```

```
229    GM   Okay,
230              (1.7)
231 →  GM   °°I bet I've put on,°°
232              (0.4)
233 →  GL   You've dropped a pound and a half this we:ek.=
234         =((scales bleep))
235 →  GM   Have I:,
236              (0.4)
237 →  GL   We#ll=°done.°
```

As with the previous extracts, there is an emergence of a sequence about how weight loss news is done. There is a pre-account, followed by the news delivery and subsequent news receipt and assessment turns. As with the other weight loss extracts, the group member produces the pre-account forecast and the news assessment turn is delivered by the group leader.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Forecasting | → | °°I bet I've put on,°° |
| 2 | News delivery | → | You've dropped a pound and a half this we:ek.= |
| 3 | Announcement response | → | Have I:, |
| 4 | News assessment | → | We#ll=°done.° |

The group member produces a forecast in the form of a pre-account, "°°I bet I've put on,°°" (line 231). This is a similar formulation of the preannouncement forecast used in both previous weigh loss and weight gain extracts, such as extract 4, "I think I've gained". GM is using this to tell GL that the upcoming 'weigh-in' could concern bad news. However, the 'bet' part of the TCU enables some scope for her prediction to be wrong; however it still contains a tendency towards a pessimistic projection. This is another example of how the pre-account can be used to back date predictability about the weight result which was evident in the weight gain extracts. It manages the notion of public accountability. If indeed the group member is shown to have gained weight, she can revisit this account and either claim prior knowledge or assess the delivery as not newsworthy information.

However, the news delivery by GL disconfirms GM's pre-account, "You've dropped a pound and a half this we:ek.=" (line 233). The announcement response, in the

form of a news receipt, "<u>Have I</u>:," (line 235) is formulated as a question and it implies that GM is surprised at the weight loss. The emphasis on 'have' and the elongation on 'I' in conjunction with the upward intonation at the end of the TCU all suggest that this is not only newsworthy information (see Maynard, 2003) but that the news has been receipted and assessed as good news. The news delivery sequence ends with GL also producing as assessment turn, in the form of a congratulatory statement, ""We#ll=°done.°"". This turn is similar to the previous extracts and could possibly be evidence of an emergent pattern about how group leaders assess weight loss news. It also orients to weight loss being an accomplishment, something that invokes aspects of accountability and morality. Both of these will be revisited in the following chapters. This section of the chapter has examined three weight loss extracts thus far and it seems that there is a possible news delivery sequence emerging for weight loss:

| 1 | → | Forecasting device used by the group member; |
| 2 | → | News delivery by the group leader; |
| 3 | → | Announcement response and sometimes a simultaneous assessment by the group member; |
| 4 | → | News assessment by the group leader, which is produced as a congratulatory statement. |

There is a distinct difference between the delivery sequence of weight gain and weight loss news. Firstly, although both news sequences start with the use of a type of forecasting device, who produces them differs depending on the type of news. In the case of weight loss news, it seems *only* the group members produce a pre-account. When the news concerns weight gain *both* the group leaders and group members employed this device. In the following extracts I examine whether these general features form a robust sequence of how weight loss news is done.

The extract below shows GM producing a forecasting in a slightly different way than previously examined. In all the previous extracts, the group members have used a pre-account which refers to some event or tells the story of why they may be hinting at bad news. However, here GM uses a self categorization, explicitly calling herself 'fat'.

Although it is phrased differently, it functions in the same way in the talk, to make the GL aware of the possibility of bad news.

Extract 16: RC-JS-School Hall 06-10-04

```
300    GM    [Hello:::::.  ]
301    GL    [Pat::::    ] how are y::ou,
302 →  GM    Well: fat probably bu' [there we go.     ]
303    GL                           [That's all right,]
304    GL    Have you been awa:y,
305               (0.4)
306 →  GM    >Oh no< I've had a weddin:g and I've had people staying so:
307               (0.6)
308    GM    Heh heh heh,
309               (1.6)
310    GM    Hhhh
311          ((scales bleep))
312               (0.5)
313    GM    And <I've> <not> <come> for two weeks:.
314               (0.6)
315 →  GL    You've :actually lost half a pound.
316 →  GM    OH=(h)my :wo(h)rd, [ heh heh heh         ]
317 →  GL                       [Is that all right,  ]
```

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Forecasting | → | Well: fat probably bu' there we go. |
| 2 | Forecasting | → | >Oh no< I've had a weddin:g and I've had people staying so: |
| 3 | News delivery | → | You've :actually lost half a pound. |
| 4 | Announcement response | → | OH=(h)my :wo(h)rd, heh heh heh |
| 5 | Question | → | Is that all right, |

GL starts the interaction with "how are y::ou," (line 301), GM does a dispreferred response. Rather than doing, 'I'm fine', GM says, "Well: fat probably bu' there we go."(line 302). This turn functions as a forecast in the form of a pre-announcement regarding the impending news delivery. GL asks a specific question about being away (line 304). GM answers by adding further details, ">Oh no< I've had a weddin:g and I've had people staying so:" (line 306). This is another example of where the group members leave the TCU unfinished with the use of the word 'so'. The use of 'so' in this case performs the same function as seen in the previous extracts, in that, it allows the group

leader to here the upshot of what is not said. By stating she has had friends to stay, GM is hinting that the news could concern weight gain, but she does this without explicitly stating it. This suggests that GM is shrouding possible bad news by not explicitly stating that she thinks she may have gained weight. However, producing a pre-account where she uses the pretence of a 'special occasion' and having 'people to stay' allows for this back-predictability. If the news is bad, then she can refer back to this account to avoid being held accountable for the weight gain. So, GM has a 'valid' reason for maybe not achieving weight loss that week, and therefore can avoid being held personally accountable for it.

However, GL's new delivery disconfirms GM's forecast, "You've :actually lost half a pound." (line 315). As with extract 8, the GL uses the word 'actually' to disconfirm GM's prior pre-account that she is 'fat'. In her news receipt GM displays this is 'news to her' (Terasaki, 1978) with her *oh-* prefaced response, "OH=(h)my :wo(h)rd, heh heh heh" (line 316). Although it is impossible to assign a definitive interpretation of what is meant, it seems that GM is producing her TCU to show amazement and astonishment at the news delivery, evidenced by the breathiness, interpolated laughter and increased pitch of the 'oh' followed by more laughter.

This news receipt also could be seen to perform a simultaneous assessment. The presence of laughter and the 'oh my word' in conveying surprise also hints that GM is assessing the news as good. GL's elaboration prompt is said in overlap with GM's laughter (lines 316 317). GL has mis-projected the possible transition relevant place and therefore overlapping speech happens. GL uses her question to check how GM has assessed the news delivery, "Is that all right," (line 317). This displays that GL is making sure that GM is happy with the news delivery. The sequence ends with GL praising and congratulating GM on her weight loss.

This weight loss extract seems to follow the emergent pattern mentioned previously for how weight loss news is told and receipted. The group member produces the forecasting device, although in a slightly different format, it still performs the same function. The weight loss news TCU is delivered simply, with no trouble and the sequence ends with the group leader doing a congratulation statement, which supports this notion that good is forthrightly delivered, unlike bad news.

The following example also adheres to this weight loss news delivery sequence. The group member produces a pre-account to show how she regards the weigh-in to be the worst bit of the evening.

<u>Extract 17: RC-SL-Church Hall 05-07-04</u>

```
199    GL     [Hi   ]
200    GM     [Hello ]
201    GL     How are you all ri:ght,=
202    GM     =All right thank ↑you,
203              (1.3)
204  → GM     Get the w#orst bit over fi£r'-
205              (0.5)
206    GL     Right so when you're ready then.
207              (4.1)
208            ((scales bleep))=
209  → GL     =Lost half a pound.
210  → GM     Well that's surprised abo[ut it    ]
211    GL                              [Are you ]heh heh heh
212              (1.0)
213  → GM     Very surprised actua£lly
214  → GL     T£here you go well done.
215    GM     Thank you very mu:ch,
```

This weight loss interaction conforms to the possible delivery sequence identified earlier in the chapter.

| 1 | Forecasting | → | Get the w#orst bit over fi£r' |
| 2 | News delivery | → | Lost half a pound. |
| 3 | Announcement response | → | Well that's surprised about it |
| 4 | Announcement response | → | Very surprised actua£lly |
| 5 | News assessment | → | T£here you go well done |

The interaction begins with the greeting sequence and the exchange of records cards. Then GM, the group member does a pre-account forecast, "Get the w#orst bit over fi£r'" (line 204) to refer to the 'weigh in' section of the evening. Although she does not explicitly say she is expecting bad news, this TCU orients and projects this same pessimism present in the prior extracts, inferring possible bad news. However, the news delivery by GL confirms weight loss, "Lost half a pound." (line 209). This is the

analogous to the previous weight loss news TCUs as it is delivered by the group leader with no interactional trouble.

GM's subsequent announcement response, "Well that's surprised about it" (line 210) orients to the weight loss being a 'surprise', which implies she was expecting some other weight news, possibly weight gain. However, at this stage it is unclear whether the 'surprise' is 'good' or 'bad' news. GM follows with an upgraded second announcement response, "Very surprised actua£lly". Here GM is producing this further turn as an upgrade but still she does not explicitly state whether she considers this to be a 'good' or 'bad' surprise. The placement of the word 'actually' at the end of the TCU is marking the previous news delivery turn as 'new information' (cf: Clift 2004), which all work to hear this TCU as acknowledging the news as newsworthy information.

The first part of GL's elaboration turn, "T£here you go" could be a reference back to how GM was dreading the weigh in section. 'T£here you go' with its contained laughter intimates that GM was silly to see the 'weigh-in' as the 'worst bit', as she has lost weight. The second part of the TCU ends with a congratulatory statement, 'well done'. It is received with a canonical "Thank you", showing the recipients understanding of having been congratulated. This is another example of weight loss news delivery sequences ending with the group leader producing some form of positive affirmation of the weight loss as good news and something worthy of celebrating.

Extract 18 provides further support for a possible sequential order for the delivery of weight loss news. As with the previous extracts it is the group member using a pre-account.

Extract 18: RC-SL-Golf 21-01-04

```
1 →    GM     If I haven't los:t, there's going to be (0.9) trouble, so
2             mov:e your tripod [okay, ]
3      GL                       [He(h) ]h heh heh heh
4                 (1.0)
5 →    GM     [After  ] I've suffered as I ' ave this week:e(hh)nd
6      GL     [Heh hee ]
7                 (7.2)
8 →    GL     You've lost half a pound
9 →    GM     'ow much,
10     GL     Half a pound.
11                (2.9)
12 →   GM     ↑H(h)A::lf a ↑po(h)u::nd,
```

```
13 →  GL    DON'T yo:u moan about that because you'll in a couple of
14           weeks:
15    GL    tim:e you'll it'll-have come off even more. so: heh heh heh
16           heh, no it is good.
```

| 1 | Pre-account | → | "If I hav<u>e</u>n't los:t. there's going to <u>be</u> (0.9) <u>trouble</u>, so <u>mov</u>:e your tripod okay," |
| 2 | Pre-account | → | After I've <u>suffered</u> as I ' <u>ave</u> this week:e(hh)nd |
| 3 | News delivery | → | You've lost half a pound |
| 4 | Announcement response | → | '<u>ow</u> <u>much</u>, |
| 5 | News assessment | → | ↑<u>H(h)A</u>::lf a ↑<u>po(h)u</u>::nd, |
| 6 | News assessment | → | <u>DON'T</u> <u>yo</u>:u <u>moan</u> about that because you'll in a couple of  wee<u>ks</u>: |

As with the previous weight loss extracts the group member uses a pre-account announcement about how there is going to be 'trouble' if she hasn't lost any weight this week ""If I hav<u>e</u>n't los:t, there's going to <u>be</u> (0.9) <u>trouble</u>, so <u>mov</u>:e your tripod okay," (line 1). The construction of this TCU makes it immediately hearable as humourous but also there is some implicit reference to suggest that GM is expecting to have lost some weight. The construction of the beginning of the TCU, "If I hav<u>e</u>n't los:t" could also be hearable as the beginnings of an indirect complaint by GM (cf: Edwards, 2005a). The TCU hints at some kind of investment from GM and therefore the compliant is legitimate (see Pomerantz, 1986). If GM has not lost any weight there is going to be some kind of repercussion. In her next turn GM adds further detail to her pre-account, "After I've <u>suffered</u> as I ' <u>ave</u> this week:e(hh)nd" (line 5). This provides some further justification to hear the previous turns a possible complaint sequence. GM has 'suffered' in her investment.

The news delivery, "You've lost half a pound" (line 27) is delivered by GL. The announcement response by GM is produced as a question, "'<u>ow</u> <u>much</u>," (line 28). The function of this question is unclear. It could be orienting to two separate things. Firstly, the question has been produced by GM due to a mishearing of the news delivery and

therefore could be performing a clarification action (see Drew, 1997). Secondly, the question could be a response to convey GM's disbelief about the news delivery. This repair initiator asks for specific clarification details about the weight loss, which could indicate that there is starting to be some interactional trouble. The TCU is delivered with emphasis and the 'much' is at a higher pitch. GL repeats the weight loss news (line 10) with the omission of the word 'you've', which further supports the notion that the previous question by GM was not produced as a mishearing. As with all the previous weight loss extracts, the news is delivered simply, with no trouble. After the repetition of the news a gap of 1.0 second develops (line 29), this silence projects potential rejection or trouble (cf: Davidson, 1984). Silence following an invitation, offer or news delivery is an indication of possible trouble or an indication that something about the offering in the prior turn was inadequate in some way (Davidson, 1984).

In GM's subsequent turn she repeats the news, "A ↓ha::lf a ↓pou::nd," (line 31). Normatively, individuals do not repeat exact replications of a phrase used in previous turns. There is usually some upgrade or downgrade to the statement. Upgrades function to strengthen the point of view or turn. Downgrades normatively engender disagreements (see Pomerantz, 1984). Although GM does not necessary verbally downgrade the phrase, she does use her intonational delivery with the inclusions of stretched words to show her possible disgust at the news.

GL responds in her next turn with, "Don't you moan about that…" (line 32). The use of the word 'moan' validates GM's previous pre-account which was produced as a complaint (see Edwards, 2005). When GL delivers this turn, she is looking directly at GM, but she also uses her finger to point and she wags it up and down. This finger wagging is done with an accompanying smile, all this works to further validate that maybe GM has produced something that is a valid complaint. It also constructs GL as someone with authority who has the right to reprimand GM. Both the 'Don't' and 'moan' are delivered with louder pitch. GL uses her category entitlement as group leader to support this chastisement, "O↑ooo next week you'll have lost even more so heh" (line 32-33). GL immediately makes relevant her 'expertness' as group leader. She is displaying her 'knowledge' that if GM has really been as good as she is claiming, the weight loss will eventually show next week. There is also some management of the issue

of accountability. The use of the word 'you'll' works to place the responsibility for weight loss firmly with GM. GL's turn functions to block the extension of the news delivery sequence. The news assessment turns by both GL and GM start to produce an account and advice giving sequence.

This extract shows that weight loss news has a recognisable structure and is produced in talk in a way that is comparable to the previously explored extracts. One feature, which has been present in all the extracts examined so far, is that *only* the group members produce the pre-account forecast. If you recall in weight gain news sequence, both the group leader and group member used the forecasting device (albeit in slightly different ways).

The following two extracts are analysed in less detail. Both provide further support for the emergence of a weight loss news delivery sequence. Both extracts show the group member producing a pre-account forecast before the weigh in news.

### Extract 19: RC-JS-School hall 05-04-04

```
12    GM    °Hello°
13    GL    ↑↑Hello ↑Debra↓ and Sue.
14          (1.9)
15 →  GM    Not this-evening makes a'-difference,
16          I've been bad this we£e↑k,
17    GL    Oh-↓ri:↑ght::::.
18          (2.9)
19 →  GL    ↑↑You ↑have↓n't you've lost half a ↓pound,
20 →  GM    ↑Have I? ooh great*
21          (0.5)
22    GL    So what's your view of being bad.
```

### Extract 20:RC-SP-Baptist Church 21-07-04

```
45    GM    Hello there
46    GL    Hello Helen, thank you
47    GM    Thank you
48          (1.9)
49    GM    How are you
50    GL    I'm very well thank you and you
51 →  GM    I'm all right, .hh until you te£ll me I put weight
52          on, (.) and then I won't b:e,
53 →  GL    No, I'll tell you you've lost half a pound.
54 →  GM    Oh we:ll heh
55 →  GL    ↑That's all ↑right,
```

```
56 →   GM      Better than putting some on
57 →   GL      ↑↑That's ↑↑fine
```

Although the number of turns taken over the sequential delivery of the news may be different from the previously examined extracts, it is clear that in both extract 19 and 20 *only* the group member produces the pre-account forecasting device.

In extract 19, GM produces her pre-account in a similar format to that seen in extract 11. In extract 11 the group member used a self-categorization reference to describe themselves explicitly as 'fat', in extract 19, GM explicitly refers to herself as 'bad', " Not this-evening makes a'-difference, I've been bad this we£e↑k," (lines 15-16). The use of such words such as 'bad' will be explored fully in a subsequent chapter (6), but suffice to say this immediately makes relevant some kind of moral dimension to the business of being weighed. GL acknowledges this pre-account in her following turn, "↑↑<u>You</u> ↑<u>have</u>↓n't you've lost half a ↓pound,". The 'you haven't' at the beginning of this TCU is referring back to GM classifying herself as 'bad'. GL goes on the produce the news delivery and disconfirms the forecast, as the weight news concerns loss, rather than gain. The news TCU is delivered without any 'trouble', pauses or stalling, the news is simply told. As with the previous extracts the news receipt also performs a news assessment, "↑Have I? ooh <u>great</u>*" (line 20). The "Have I" acknowledges GL's previous turn as newsworthy and the "ooh great" assesses the news as good. The interaction continues with GL and GM discussing their definition of 'being bad', which results in an advice giving sequence.

Extract 20 is similar in that the group member produces the pre-account forecast, "I'm all right, .hh until you te£ll me I put w<u>eig</u>ht on, (.) and then I <u>won</u>'t b:e," (lines 51-52). Here GM is letting GL know that she is expecting to have put on weight. The news TCU, "<u>No,</u> I'll <u>t</u>ell you you've <u>lost</u> half a pound." (line 53) again is simply told, without any trouble. It firstly works to acknowledge GM's prior account, with the 'No' and then the news delivery disconfirms GM's prediction about weight gain. GM's announcements response, "Oh we:ll heh" is interesting as it implies some kind of 'disappointment', which is supported by GL's response, " That's all right".

Analysis has shown that there is an emerging pattern as to how weight loss news is told and receipted by the group leaders and group members. It seems that there are noticeable differences between the news delivery sequence for weight gain and weight loss news are delivered and receipted. The following extracts show more examples from the data corpus of weight loss news TCUs, which all demonstrate that weight loss news is not shrouded, but told forthrightly and easily. It is also interesting that in the majority of the extracts concerning weight loss news, the group members do surprise or delight, even when they have used this pessimistic projection in the form of a pre-account.

Extract 21: RC-SL-Golf 21-04-04

```
15 → GL    Well you've only lost two pounds
16   GM    Oh good
17   GL    Well done heh
```

Extract 22: RC-SL- Golf 21-01-04

```
107→ GL    You've lost four pounds EXcellent
108  GM    I have been trying
109  GL    You certainly have well done that's excellent
```

Extract 23: RC-SL- Church hall 07-06-04

```
45    GL    >Step on when you're< ready [yeah,      ]
46    GM                                [Ready yes  ]
47          (1.7)
48          ((scales bleep))
49          (1.6)
50 →  GL    Lost a pound [well done.   ]
51    GM                 [°Gr(h)eat°   ]
52          (0.5)
```

Extract 24: RC-JS-School Hall 06-10-04

```
315 →  GL    You've :actually lost half a pound.
316    GM    OH=(h)my :wo(h)rd, [ heh heh heh        ]
```

Extract 25: RC-JS-School Hall 08-09-04

```
158 →  GL    W#ell you <have> (0.4) <:los::t,> (.) hang on as my maths
159          is absolutely appalling, .hh er:m six, you've lost eight
160          pounds.
```

```
161              (0.4)
162    GM   No.
163              (0.5)
164    GL   °Yes.°
```

Extract 26: RC-SP-Baptist Church 09-11-04

```
130 →  GL   Well <you> <have> <lost> (0.2) three pounds.
131              (0.4)
132    GM   °Wonderful,°
```

Extract 27: RC-SL-Golf 05-01-04

```
112    GL   You've :only lost five pounds::,
```

However there was one *deviant* case, where there was no forecasting device used by the group member. The extract below concerns weight loss but there is no forecast used by the group member. Rather the group leader delivers the news in a blunt format with no softeners or forecasting. The group member provides an account in response to the news delivery, rather than before the news telling.

Extract 28: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
589    GL   ↑>Helen<, ↑>hello<
590              (1.7)
591    GL   >Thank you very much=how are you?<
592    GM   I'm fine thank yo:u
593    GL   Good
594              (4.9)
595         ((scales bleep))
596 →  GL   It's down ↑half a ↑pound,
597 →  GM   ↑Is it↑ really honestly heh
598 →  GL   Really ↑honestly↑, [truthfully  ]
599    GL                     [I'm shocked ] [I've had a bad  ] week
600                                          [((scales bleep))]
601    GM   as we(h)ll, heh heh
602              (0.7)
603    GL   Right
```

This telling of this weight loss news does not conform to the majority of cases within the data for one main reasons, the group member does not use a forecasting device

to hint at the possibility of bad news prior to the news delivery, rather she produces the account post news delivery.

| 1 | News delivery | → | It's down ↑half a ↑pound, |
| 2 | Announcement response | → | ↑Is it↑, really honestly heh |
| 3 | Announcement response | → | Really ↑honestly↑, truthfully |
| 4 | Assessment | → | I'm shocked I've had a bad week as we(h)ll |

The first few turns of this interaction are concerned with the preliminaries of a greeting sequence and the exchange of records card to note down the weight result. Note that the group member does not produce any pre-account here. The news delivery, "It's down ↑half a ↑pound," (line 596) is receipted by GM, "↑Is it↑, really honestly heh" (line 597) uses an encouraging newsmark to display this as newsworthy information (see Maynard, 2003; Terasaki, 1976). GM acknowledges the prior turn as news and encourages its development by producing an announcement response, however at this point it is not clear how GM has assessed this news, however, the prosody and laughter imply a positive assessment, rather than a pessimistic one. GM constructs her turn with higher pitch and emphasis which all seem to work to do possibly shock and disbelief but also maybe joy at the weight loss result. GM ends her TCU with the word 'honestly'. Honesty phrases can be used in the construction of dispreferred answers (Edwards & Fasulo, 2006) or in assessments (Pomerantz, 1984). These phrases are not used in the sequential business of talk to claim honesty, rather they are "members' ways… of asserting sincerity and independence as the basis of what they are saying on occasions in which something functional, normative, or invested is expectable" (Edwards & Fasulo, 2006, p.371-372). In this instance GM uses the word 'honestly' in response to GL's news announcement. She is not accusing GL of lying rather it is used to get GL to repeat the news announcement.

In her next turn GL does a partial repeat of GM's prior announcement response, "Really ↑honestly↑, truthfully" (line 598). This functions as an upgraded second assessment by the inclusion of 'truthfully'. GM does a last item onset overlap. A last item

onset overlap occurs when the next speaker projects the upcoming possible transition place of the current speakers turn, or, the current speaker does not complete their turn and continues to talk. Here due to exact repetition GM has projected the possible transition place to be after honestly. However GL continues and adds the increment 'truthfully'. Therefore, GM starts her turn just slightly early. GM does an assessment of the news, where she explicitly states she has 'had a bad week', "I'm shocked I've had a b<u>a</u>d we<u>ek</u> as we(h)ll" (line 599) and starts to provide an account.

The telling of weight loss news in this particular interaction is different from all other tellings of weight loss news for one main reason. The news is delivered directly by the group leader without the group member doing a pre-account forecast. There is evidence of all the other sequential steps of how weight loss news is told, in that, both the group leader and group member do assessment turns. In the majority of the weight loss news sequences in the corpus, the telling of news was always preceded by a forecast by the group member.

All of the extracts seem to support the initial observation that when the group leaders do weight loss news telling, it is different from a weight gain news telling. There are fewer pauses and some congratulatory assessment statements, such as, 'well done', or 'excellent' accompanies it. Maybe not surprisingly this is in direct contrast with the gain news sequence, where the news delivery is marked with pauses and difficulty.

The analysis has shown that the telling of weight loss news happens across a robust sequence of actions that differ from that of weight gain news. The news delivery sequence for both weight gain and weight loss contained a forecasting turn, yet *how* they are used differed.

In the telling of weight gain news, both the group members and group leaders produced a forecast, although the use of the forecast performed different business. However, in weight loss news, *only* the group members used a forecast, usually in the form of a pre-announcement to suggest possible bad news. Although there was one deviant case where no forecast was present, and the account was produced after the news delivery, the majority of weight loss news adhered to the pattern whereby the group member produced a pre-account forecast. How the news TCU was constructed was different depending on whether the news to be told concerned weight gain or weight loss.

When the group leader had to deliver bad news, that is weight gain, the news was shrouded, with the TCU containing interactional trouble. The news was not simply told, suggesting that trouble is indicative to the telling of bad news. Conversely, when the group leader had to deliver the news of weight loss, there was no evidence of such trouble. The news TCUs contained no pauses, hedging or self-initiated repairs, suggesting that good news is not subject to the same interactional difficulty as bad news.

However, there are also similarities between the two news delivery sequences. In both the telling of weight gain and weight loss news the news was receipted and assessment, sometimes in the same turn. The assessment turns could take multiple turns at talk, and was produced by both the group leader and group member. The chapter will now move on to discuss the final possible weight news, that of weight maintenance.

**The telling of weight maintenance news**

The final available category of news delivery is weight maintenance. The following analysis will examine how the group leaders and members construct the news delivery and see if there are any similarities with the previous analysis.

Extract 29: RC-SL-Church Hall 05-07-04

```
57      GL     Right okay. (0.5) (throat clearing)
58             (6.9)
59      GL     How are you Michelle [all right ]
60      GM                         [Not too bad ]
61             (0.5)
62      GL     On you step for m:e,
63             (4.8)
64 →    GL     Stayed the sa:me
65 →    GM     O(h)::h.
66             (1.1)
67 →    GL     .Hhhh is that [you          ex]:p(h)ecte:d
68                          [((scales bleep))]
69             or::
70             (0.9)
71      GM     Uh:::::m (0.5)try to hard at the beginning of the week,
72             °it's when I get to the° weekend=
73      GL     =Yes ye:ah heh heh
```

In extract 29 what is immediately apparent is that in this extract there is *no* forecasting device produced by either the group leader or group member. After the preliminary talk,

the interaction turns to the serious business of getting weighed.

| 1 | News delivery | → | Stayed the sa:<u>me</u> |
| 2 | News receipt and | → | O(h)::h. |
| 3 | Question | → | .Hhhh is that you e<u>x</u>:p(h)ecte:<u>d</u> |

This extract shows that the telling of this weight maintenance news happens across three turns at talk. The news delivery is delivered immediately with no forecasting from either the group leader or group member, "Stayed the sa:<u>me</u>" (line 64). The news receipt by GM, "O(h)::h." (line 65), confirms the prior news delivery as an informing, but is a typical news receipts that work to discourage any further elaboration of the news delivery sequence (see Heritage, 1984a). However, it is not clear whether this 'Oh' is receipting the news as 'good' or 'bad'. GL does not elaborate, rather she responds to this sequence terminal character by producing a question which performs a checking out action, ".Hhhh is that you e<u>x</u>:p(h)ecte:<u>d</u>" (line 67). GL is trying to ascertain how GM has assessed the news. By using the word 'expecting', the group leader could be trying to assess if this news delivery is a surprise or a disappointment for GM. This checking out also could be seen as trying to prompt an account from GM. Note that GM treats it as this and starts to provide an account. It suggests that when a pre-account is present prior to a news delivery, it avoids this rather more confrontational (albeit indirect) request for an account. The news delivery ends and the interaction does move from news delivery to accounting and advice giving.

From this initial weight maintenance extract there are a number of actions, which could be seen to form a possible pattern for the telling of weight maintenance news. The central observation of extract 29 is that there is *no* forecasting or pre-account device used by either the group leader or group member. Secondly, the news TCU is simply told which is comparable to the weight loss news TCUs. These possible patterns will form the basis for examining further extracts.

Extract 30 shows again how the news is told with no forecasting from either the group leader or the group member.

```
159   GL     How are you ok£a:y,=
160   GM     =Hot
161   GL     Hhhhh, it has gone warm hasn't it,
162   GM     Yeah
163   GL     Right Zoe when you're °ready°.
164              (3.7)
165          ((scales bleep))
166              (1.1)
167 → GL     .tcha .hh °Stayed the same.° did you expect ↑that,
168              (0.3)
169 → GM     I expected to p£ut some m£ore on, [s-  ]
170 → GL                                      [Did ] you heh heh
```

The telling of this news happens over three distinct turns at talk.

| 1 | News delivery | → | .tcha .hh °Stayed the same.° did you expect↑that, |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Announcement response | → | I expected to p£ut some m£ore on, s- |
| 3 | Question | → | Did you heh heh |

In the first few turns of this interaction both GL and GM are engaged in some preliminary talk (as identified in the previous chapter) which is analogous to the previous extract and others already examined in this chapter. GL delivers the news, ".tcha .hh °Stayed the same.° did you expect ↑that," (line167). As with extract 29, there is no forecasting device produced before the news delivery. The news TCU, although could be seen to contain some minor trouble in the beginning, evidenced by the in-breath, the telling of the news is done straightforwardly. It is interesting to note that in both of these extracts the news TCU's contain the exact same formulation, 'stayed the same'. There is also a comparison to be made in relation to this notion of expectation. Although in extract 29 GL asks, ".Hhhh is that you ex:p(h)ecte:d" (line 67) after it is unclear how GM has receipted the stay same news, and in this extract the expectation is produced directly after the news delivery, ".tcha .hh °Stayed the same.° did you expect ↑that," (line 167). Nevertheless in both extracts it is the group leaders who introduce this 'expectancy'. Firstly, it could be that on both occasions the group members do not provide this pessimistic projection of possible bad news, and therefore, the absence of an account prompts this very direct questioning from the group leaders. Or, the lack of an assessment turn after the news

delivery means the group leader needs to prompt. This could be indicative to the type of news being told and will be investigated further in the following extracts.

The announcement response and answer the the question concerning expectations, "I expected to p£ut some m£ore on, s-" (line 169), suggests that GM is pleased with the 'stay same' news and had expected to have put some weight on. The use of contained laughter in the words 'p£ut' and 'm£ore' supports this turn as receipting the news as good. The elaboration turn by GL responds to GM's expectation of weight gain, "Did you heh heh" (line 170) and it mirrors GM's laughter. The news delivery sequence ends after this elaboration turn and GL starts an advice giving sequence.

The telling of weight maintenance news seems to have its own sequence, which is different from both weight gain and weight loss. The main way the sequence differs is in relation to the forecasting device. There is *no* use of the forecasting or pre-account device by either the group leaders or the group members. In weight gain news both the leaders and members use the forecasting device. In weight loss news, only the group member used the forecasting device. Secondly, the news TCU seems to be told in the same way and contains the use of the same phrase, and due to the lack of this pre-account, prompts direct questioning from the group leader as to the members assessment of the news as 'good' or 'bad'.

Overall, extracts 29 and 30 contain a possible structure for how the news of weight maintenance is delivered.

1 → No forecasting device used by the group leaders or group members;

2 → News delivery by the group leaders;

3 → Announcement response by the group members;

4 → Further questioning asking for an assessment from the group members.

Further extracts will be examined to see if this possible pattern is a robust way of telling weight maintenance news. Consider extract 31, what is immediately apparent again is the lack of a forecasting or pre-account device.

<u>Extract 31: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04</u>

```
59      GL    .hhh *Right m'de:ar .hh=
60            =((scales bleep))
61                 (1.7)
62 →    GL    .hh ↑Stayed the same.=
63 →    GM    =Yeah that's what I had in my mind [yes]
64 →    GL                                       [Yes] Okay↑
65      GM    Yes I'm quite happy with that, [>because<]
66      GL                                   [Right,  ]is that [lots of=
67      GM                                                     [Lots of
68            Christmas dinners yes]
69      GL    =socialising, heh heh]
70      GM    and I thought o-if I can jus' stay the same=ha ha ha=
71      GL    =That's <absolutely> [fine,]
72      GM                         [Yes  ]
```

| 1 | News Delivery | → | .hh ↑Stayed the same.= |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Announcement response | → | =Yeah that's what I had in my mind y<u>es</u> |
| 3 | Questioning | → | [Yes] Okay↑ |

In this extract there is no preliminary talk, the interaction starts with, ".hhh *<u>R</u>ight m'de:ar .hh=" (line 59). This orients to business proper, there is no preliminary talk, rather GL launches into the purpose of the interaction. As with the previous two extracts, there is no forecasting or pre-account proffered by the group member prior to the news delivery. The news delivery ".hh ↑Stayed the same.=" (line 62) is delivered without any trouble or stalling and again the news TCU contains the extract same phrase, 'stayed the same'.

GM's news receipt response, "=Yeah that's what I had in my mind y<u>es</u>" (line 63) displays that this is not newsworthy information (Maynard, 2003). GM demonstrates she may have already had an idea that she would have maintained rather than gained or lost any weight this week. Starting and ending her TCU with 'yeah' and 'yes' works to reinforce this sense of 'knowing'. Individuals use such psychological terms to perform certain actions in talk (Edwards & Potter, 2005). In this instance GM is performing avoiding disappointment at the news that she has stayed the same in weight. By the use of the word 'mind' she is displaying that GL is therefore merely confirming something that

GM already knew. This also could be seen to performing some kind of expectation. Although unlike the previous examples, where the group leader introduced the notion of expectation, there is an implicit referral to the news containing some kind of expectation.

GL does an elaboration, "Yes Okay↑" (line 64). Although GM has displayed this is not news, she has not produced an assessment of whether she sees the news as good or bad. Therefore the "okay" from GL works to check out how GM has interpreted the news delivery. GM's next turn, "Ye<u>s</u> I'm quite happy with that,…" starts to provide the beginnings of an account as to why she is happy with the weight maintenance news. This formulation of 'quite happy' orients to the fact that although she has not lost any weight, but she has not put any on either. This implicitly does some moral work. By using this softner 'quite' within the TCU, GM is orienting to the category of successful dieter. In this environment it would not be acceptable for her to be completely happy with not having lost any weight. GM can express happiness at not gaining weight, but the 'quite' allows her to simultaneously display some disappointment at not having lost any weight. It must be noted that contextually this interaction takes place in December. Christmas time is normatively a season where individuals attend lots of social occasions, and therefore possibly put weight on. This is supported by the following turns since the interaction continues with advice about how to survive the Christmas party season.

From the analysis so far it seems that there could be a possible pattern emerging about how weight maintenance news gets done in this environment. Another interesting feature is that in all three extracts, the news assessment has had to be prompted in a further turn by the group leader. In each extract, the group member has produced an announcement response, but they have not assessed the news as good or bad. In extract 29 the assessment is prompted by GL asking, ".Hhhh is that you e<u>x</u>:p(h)ecte:<u>d</u>" (line 67). In extract 30, the group leader asks ".tcha .hh °<u>St</u>ayed the same.° <u>did</u> you expect ↑that," (line 167) and finally in extract 31, the group leader asks "Yes Okay↑"(line 64) to check out how the GM feels about the news delivery. All the extracts also demonstrate how weight maintenance news happens without the use of a pre-account and that the sequence happens within three turns at talk. The following example shows how the news is again delivered straightforwardly with no pre-account.

```
17 →  GL      Stayed [the same        ]
18             [((scales bleep))]
19 →  GM      Ooo:o. ((nasally))
20                (3.7)
21 →  GL      .Hhh how you going inches wise,
22            ((scales bleep))
23                (1.3)
```

| 1 | News delivery | → | Stayed the same |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Announcement response | → | Ooo:o  ((nasally)) |
| 3 | Question | → | .Hhh how you going inches wise, |

The first thing to note is that the news delivery happens without the group leader or group member doing a pre-account, "Stayed the same" (line 17). The announcement response by GM, "Ooo:o ((nasally))" (line 19) is another prototypical news receipt produced to discourage elaboration of the news sequence (Heritage, 1984). The 'Ooo:o' is produced with downward intonation and stress on the beginning vowel, however, as with the previous weight maintenance extracts, whilst acknowledging the prior turn as newsworthy information (Maynard, 2003), GM does not provide an assessment.

Yet again it seems this lack of prior assessment results in GL producing a direct question. However, rather than asking about GM's expectation, she changes topic, ".Hhh how you going inches wise," (line 21). This reference to inches suggests that GL is aligning with GM's previous discouragement turn of the news delivery sequence and aligns by changing the subject. The news delivery sequence ends and the interaction continues with a discussion about inch and weight loss.

As with all the preceding extracts the news TCU in this extract contains the exact same phrase, 'stayed the same'. There is no forecasting device used by either the group leader or pre-account produced by the group member. However, unlike the previous examples there is no explicit reference to the notion of expectation; rather the focus of the question is about inches. However, it could be seen to be alluded to by GL's pursuit of how many inches GM has lost. There is an expectation that if the group member is not

losing weight which can be visibly seen on the scales, then maybe they are losing inches
instead.

Extract 33 shows the weight maintenance news conforming to the three-part
delivery sequence, and demonstrates the lack of pre-accounts in the telling of weight
maintenance news.

Extract 33: RC-SP-Baptist Church 26-11-04

```
2      GL    How are you Angela=all right,=
3      GM    =Not too bad thank you,
4                  (0.6)
5      GL    °Thanks::°
6                  (1.0)
7      GL    °R(h)ight on you step for me°,
8                  (5.9)
9            ((scales bleep))
10                 (1.3)
11 →   GL    Stayed the same=
12 →   GM    =All we:ek
13                 (2.2)
14           ((scales bleep))
15                 (0.2)
16 →   GL    O(h)ka:::y,
17     GM    Yeah,
```

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | News delivery | → | Stayed the same= |
| 2 | Announcement response | → | =All we:ek |
| 3 | Question | → | O(h)ka:::y, |

As noted with the weight maintenance extracts, there is no pre-account produced by the
group member. The news delivery, "Stayed the same=" (line 11), shows that GM has
stayed the same in weight this week and it contains that exact phrase. GM does a news
receipt, "=All we:ek" (line 12), which only acknowledges the prior turn as news, but does
not provide any assessment of the news. It could be argued there is an implicit suggestion
of the expectation of something more in using the phrase 'all week'; all the same the
news is not explicitly assessed.

As with the prior extract, after the lack of news assessment the group leader
produces a question in her next turn, "O(h)ka:::y," (line 16). This works to prompt an
account from GM as to her assessment of the news, which she gets in the next turn,

'yeah,'. Although it can be seen as a weak assessment, nevertheless it is an assessment, This signals an end to the news delivery and the following turns orient to practices about losing weight.

The previous analysis of the data extracts suggested that in every case where the group members have maintained their weight, the group leaders always seemed to use the phrase, "stayed the same" in the news TCU. There may be lexical additions, such as, "*you've* stayed the same" or "*its* stayed the same". Irrespective of the group leader the phrase, "stayed the same" was used every time when delivering weight maintenance news. The following extracts show a cross section from the data corpus of the group leaders telling weight maintenance news which validate this claim.

Extract 34: RC-JS-School Hall 01-09-04

```
112 →  GL    You've stayed the sam:e.
```

Extract 35: RC-SL-Church Hall 02-06-04

```
26 →  GL     Stayed the same,
```

Extract 36: RC-SP-Baptist Church 08-11-04

```
12 →   GL    .Hh ↑Stayed the sa:me.
```

Extract 37: RC-SL-Golf 17-12-03

```
4 →   GL     °Stayed the ↓same°
```

Extract 38: RC-SL- Golf 21-01-04

```
100 → GL    Stayed the same=
```

Extract 39: RC-JS- School Hall 15-12-04

```
62 →  GL     .hh ↑Stayed the same.=
```

All the above extracts show that the news delivery of weight maintenance all included the phrase 'stayed the same'. There were no pauses and no evidence of interactional trouble. What is also interesting is the fact that the group members treat their weight news as something they must *account for* but only it seems when prompted by the group leaders. In the previous possible weight news categories, accounts were proffered willingly (albeit pessimistically) prior to the news delivery.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has illustrated *how* the telling of weight news is negotiated and managed between the group leaders and group members within the institutional talk of a weight management group. The chapter took Maynard's four-part news delivery sequence as its starting point in order to investigate whether news within a weight management environment was done differently depending on whether the news concerned weight gain, loss or maintenance.

Analysis showed two main differences. Firstly, the news delivery sequences were different depending on whether the group leaders were delivering the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance. Secondly, the analysis also showed that the conversational tools both the group leaders and group members used in these tellings were different for weight gain, loss and maintenance. These extracts illustrate the way delivery of 'weight news' is a concerted accomplishment within participants' talk. Its appropriate evaluation as 'good' or 'bad' has some interesting implications for those whom run the groups, as well as for our understanding of what is treated as successful weight management. These accounts and their sequential organization, provide another basis for developing our understanding of the culture of dieting, normative appearance, bodies, and so on.

When the news involves weight gain one of two patterns occurred, either the group leaders used a forecasting device, or group members used a pre-account. The group leaders used the forecasting device to hint at possible bad news having seen the weigh-in scale read-out, so the group members could hazard a guess at the upcoming news delivery. Although Maynard talks about forecasting, the main difference is the *frequency* with which the group leaders used this device.  When the group member produced a pre-account it was a pessimistic projection to hint at possible bad news. Also in proffering an

account prior to the news delivery, it was then available to the group members to draw upon to circumvent public accountability if the news was 'bad'. So, the robust pattern evident from the analysis shows that weight gain news happens across distinct turns at talk which include: A forecasting device, produced by either the group leaders or group members; the news delivery; the announcement response and assessment turn, which can happens simultaneously or in separate turns. These assessment turns can take up more than one turn at talk and can be done by either the group leaders or group members.

Maynard suggested that news delivery sequences prototypically take four turns, however it can take less than four turns and therefore presumably it could take more than four turns also. It seems that when the news is concerned with weight gain it typically takes five turns.  The delivery sequence is not formulaic, in that it can be just transposed onto any interaction and 'fit'; rather it is a context-sensitive series of turns that prototypically occupy four turns but not necessarily. However what is worth noting is that if the news delivery sequence ended with an elaboration turn done by the group leader, it normatively took the form of a question or the initiation of an advice-giving sequence. If the group members did this turn, they did 'not knowing'. That is, the group members constructed their TCU with such phrases as, "I don't know how that's happened". These types of turns which make reference to cognitive states are built to evade any public accountability for the weight gain.

Not only was there a pattern present for how the news delivery sequence was constructed turn by turn, there was a pattern about how the group leaders constructed the news delivery turn. When the group leaders had to deliver bad news the TCUs frequently contained pauses and stalling, such as "urm". It also contained some reference to the nature of the news being bad, with such phrases as, "I'm afraid" or "Right". This orients to how normatively individuals avoid or delay having to tell bad news.

Consequently, there were also patterns about how the group member constructed their news response. Across the data corpus group members receipted bad news in one if two ways. Either they did a 'not knowing' or alternatively, they showed surprise by the use of a question, "Have I".

There was only one deviant case whereby weight gain news was delivered by the group leader without the reliance on any of these devices. The news TCUs for weight

gain were delivered with hesitation and trouble, which suggests that deliverers are reluctant to tell 'bad' news bluntly, which supports the previous literature.

The telling of weight loss news also happened across distinct turns at talk. The first turn of the weight loss news sequence is a pre-account, as analogous with the delivery of weight gain news. However, it is *only* the group members who use this device in the form of an account pre-weight news. This is in contrast to the telling of weight gain news, where the group leaders employed forecasts and members used pre-accounts. This pre-account functioned to project possible bad news and was constructed before any weigh in results had been discussed. Therefore, this account could be reformulated and used by the group members' in later turns to validate any fluctuation in weight. The second turn was the news delivery by the group leaders. The third turn was the announcement response and usually an assessment produced by the group members and then finally the group leaders did a further assessment or an elaboration turn.

How the group leaders told weight loss was also constructed differently from weight gain news. The news delivery TCU for weight loss contains no pauses or hedges, rather it is constructed with positive assessments or statements, such as "well done" and "excellent" and usually contains some orientation to weight loss being an accomplishment. In relation to how the group members receipted the news of weight loss, this was done in one of two ways. Either they included the use of an extreme case formulation in conjunction with showing surprise, such as, "wow I'm amazed" or "I'm shocked". Or, they referred back to their earlier forecasting account and orient to how much worse the weight reading could have been, for example, "Not bad considering". This is analogous with previous research that shows that individuals can tell 'good' news without the need to shroud or stall it.

Finally, when the group members have maintained their weight the majority of news was usually delivered across three turns. The group leaders used no stalling or forecasting device, instead the news was delivered bluntly. Therefore, the sequential pattern for delivering weight maintenance news involves; the news delivery sequence (these news TCUs for the weight maintenance data corpus without exception contained the phrase 'stayed the same'); the announcement response and finally a question by the group leader to prompt an assessment turn. The news delivery sequence was shown to

happen frequently over only three turns at talk before the interaction moved to the action of advice giving or closure. It is not as trouble-free as saying that the group members produced terminal characters (Heritage, 1984) to discourage the elaboration of the news delivery and that is why the sequence repeatedly only occupied three turns. However, it seems that there are main two differences between this and previous weight news deliveries examined in this chapter. Firstly, there is an absence of a pre-account by the group members. Secondly, the group members do an announcement response but not an assessment of the news, which results in the group leaders having to directly pursue an assessment turn through producing direct questions, such as 'Did you expect that', or 'Okay'. The combination of the lack of pre-account and absence of an assessment turn by the group members (until prompted by the group leaders), all seem to work to make this news delivery sequence typically less than the four prototypical turns.

The assessment turns were slightly more complex than both weight gain and weight loss, such that *how* the group members receipted the weight maintenance news could be seen as dependant upon their reasons for attending the weekly meetings. If the group members were attending the meetings after having reached their target weight and their main objective was to maintain weight, the news could be receipted as good news. However, if the objective of the group members was to lose weight the news was receipted as bad news. To add a further complication, even if the member's goal was to lose weight, the news of 'stay same' could still be receipted as 'good' news if they had been particularly 'naughty' that week, such that the members produced relief as they had 'got away with it'.

This chapter also touched upon 'back-dated predictability' as a device group member's use. Group members can produce a pre-news account so that if the news delivery is bad (containing weight gain or maintenance news), they can go back to their pre-account almost as a way of circumventing responsibility. For instance, the group member in extract 5 (p. 108), produced this pre-account "I ↓am: but I've had a wonderful weekend 'cos I've been to Scotland for a holi<u>day</u>, so it's not going to be good". This pre-account allowed the member to use this as a reason for why she had gained weight. It also allows the group member to assert their epistemic priority of 'knowing', they can claim 'knowing' and in doing so reject the newsworthiness of the news delivery. Pillet-Shore

(2006) has shown that in clinical setting where nurses are weighing patients, they also used a form of what she calls 'pre-emptive accounting'. Weight news is treated by both the deliverer and recipient as an accountable matter, which may not be necessary, or required in other everyday setting where news is being told or receipted.

This analysis has shown that the management of news delivery has its own sequential patterns depending on whether the news concerns weight gain, loss or maintenance. The analysis has also shown that how the group leaders and group members deliver and receipt this weight news has identifiable configurations within the talk.

Having dealt with the preliminary practices involved in getting weighed in public and how group leaders and members manage the telling and receipting of news, the thesis will now move on to discuss what happens after the news delivery sequence ends. The next chapter will therefore examine how the group leaders and members negotiate the progression from the news delivery sequence to the action of advice giving.

# CHAPTER 5

## THE INTERACTIONAL ORGANIZATION OF ADVICE-GIVING

**Introduction**

The previous two analytic chapters explored how both the group leaders and group members manage getting weighed and also how the news of weight gain, loss or maintenance was produced in this setting. This chapter will explore how the group leaders and group members managed and oriented to moving from the news delivery sequence to what I am glossing as 'advice giving'. I start by looking at how 'advice giving' is constructed and oriented to within my data corpus. Extracts are examined from where the group members have gained, lost or maintained weight. In light of this analysis, I consider if there are any similarities in relation to the previous advice giving literature. I then explore if there is a robust pattern in relation to how advice giving is initiated and receipted within my corpus.

The situated practice of advice-giving has been previously defined as "sequences in which an interactant describes, recommends or otherwise forwards a course of action" (Heritage & Sefi, 1992, p.368). Either party in the interaction can initiate this 'advice-giving sequence' in a variety of ways. Firstly, advice can be *requested explicitly* through the use of a direct question format either by the speaker or hearer. This establishes the relevance of subsequent advice-giving turns at talk in three important respects: (1) the specific problem is locatable by the both the advice requester and hearer, (2) this problem area is considered problematic for the requester, (3) it sets up the requester's prospective alignment as advice recipient, and therefore legitimates the delivery of any advice sequence that may ensue (Heritage & Sefi, 1992).

Secondly, advice-giving can be occasioned by *describing an 'untoward' state of affairs* which initiates an advice-giving sequence from the other interactant (see Heritage & Sefi, 1992). The untoward state of affairs can include presenting a puzzle or the telling of story, which implies a problem, without it being explicitly stated. This state can be self or other-initiated and in these instances a situation or issue is referred to within the

interaction without it being constructed necessarily as a direct request for advice, it is treated as advice-relevant.

Finally, the advice-giving sequence can be initiated *without any prior request* for advice. This means that an advice-giving sequence is initiated without any prior explicit request, or any identification of a problem. However, the request and delivery of advice is not always straightforward. A direct explicit request for advice may not elicit an advice-giving sequence, nor does it guarantee a positive receipt by the requester, or the recognition of it as advice. Moreover, many requests for advice are purposely designed to display a measure of knowledge by the requestor (see Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Hutchby, 1995). This design construction serves a dual purpose: it manages the requestor's competence while circumscribing the scope of the advice requested.

More recently advice giving has been examined by advocates of CA looking at interactions between health professionals and their clients (Heritage & Lindstrom, 1998; Pilnick, 1999; 2003; 2004; Silverman, 1997; Silverman, Perakyla & Bor, 1992). These CA studies explore the activity of advice giving and have focused on a distinction between 'advice' and 'information'. 'Information' is presented in a factual or non-normative construction, for example, "Take 3 tablets, 3 times a day", whereas, 'advice' has a normative, somewhat moral dimension which can describe certain courses of action. Silverman states, "The answer seems to be that in the Information-Delivery Format, unlike the Advice-Giving format, patients are only interactionally required to give response tokens or unmarked acknowledgements" (Silverman, Bor, et al 1992, p.184). Past literature has suggested that unmarked acknowledgements showed 'resistance' by the recipient to the advice being told. Dingwall & Robinson (1990) suggest that unmarked acknowledgements (such as 'mm', 'yeah' 'hm' or 'that's right') may simply suggest that the recipient does not know how to respond to the prior turn. Therefore, it seems conceivable that the use of minimal responses by the recipient does not necessarily indicate that turns are being heard as either information or advice, rather that however it is being heard by the recipient, there is lack of stated commitment to any future action based upon it (see Pilnick, 1999). Minimal acknowledgement may be all that is required for the interaction to continue (Pilnick, 2003); however it does little to

show the level of recipients' knowledge or their intention to act upon the information or advice given.

Finally, recipients of advice can do an *assertion of knowledge or competence*, such as 'I know', or 'it doesn't always work for me' (Jefferson & Lee, 1992). Jefferson and Lee suggest the advice recipient is showing that the advice is redundant by conveying that they already know what is being offered or are already undertaking that particular course of action. Again, although the advice is not rejected outright, it shows resistance (Jefferson & Lee, 1981). Pilnick (2003) especially in patient/pharmacist interactions argues individuals may try to display their knowledge to pre-empt further information giving, rather than showing the advice or information is redundant. Goldberg (1975) has suggested that the range of resources individuals have for *showing* rather than *claiming* competence are limited.

Pilnick has suggested that negotiating an advice giving or informing sequence is interactionally delicate, and becomes even more delicate when the recipient of the advice or information has some knowledge or competency relating to the subject matter. Therefore the issue of using this knowledge and competence to inform practices and actions can be problematic (Pilnick, 1998).

Taking this literature as a starting point, I started to examine how advice giving and advice giving receipts were produced and oriented to within my data corpus. I started to wonder how 'advice' or 'information' is oriented to, managed and receipted within this environment. Although this setting is not medical per se, there is still a situation whereby the group members could have some level of competence and knowledge about the subject matter and the group leaders could be seen to be 'expert'. I wanted to look at what the group members and group leaders *treat* as advice, and whether it is recognizable as 'advice' in the usual sense of the word. As discovered in the previous chapter, a different pattern existed for weight gain, loss and maintenance, so the question arises, would the structure of advice and receipts be the same across all three possible weight scenarios. This chapter examines extracts from weight gain, loss and maintenance in turn, starting with weight gain.

**Analysis**

I will examine the extract below in detail, before examining further extracts across the

data corpus to pursue those patterns.

Extract 1: RC-JS-School Hall 10-06-04

```
10    GL    Hhokay::::
11                (0.8)
12          ((scales bleep))
13                (1.6)
14    GL    .Hh it's °gone° up half a °po:und.°
15                (0.3)
16    GM    'ave=I,
17    GL    Mmm.=
18    GM    =Mmm.
19                (1.4)
20    GL    ::Ri:::ght*
21                (1.5)
22 →  GL    U::r:::::rh .hhh=how=we=gonna sort this.
23                (2.5)
24          ((scales bleep))
25                (0.8)
26 →  GL    .Tch jus:' I mean looking at what you were doing
27          when: you were steadily losing.
28                (0.3)
29    GM    Yeah,
30    GL    And what you're doing n#ow.
31                (0.3)
32    GM    Yeah,
33 →  GL    What's changed,
34                (1.5)
35 →  GL    Can you pinpoin' what's different.
36                (0.9)
```

This extract shows that the initial problem identification seems to be the weight gain.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Initial inquiry | → | Getting on the scales and waiting for the readout |
| Problem indicative response | → | .Hh it's °gone° up half a °po:und.° |
| Focusing inquiry into the problem | → | Ri::::ght* (1.5) ur:::::rh=how=we=gonna sort this. |
| Pinpointing problem | → | Tch jus:' I mean looking at what you were doing when you were steadily losing, |
| Directive questioning | → | And what you're doing n#ow. |
| | → | What's changed, |
| | → | Can you pinpoint what's different. |

In the context of this group's routine activities and purpose, the delivery of weight gain news is itself the first indication of what the members would instantly recognize as 'problematic'. Unlike medical encounters where some explanation or expansion of the 'problem' may be necessary due to the nature of the vocabulary and condition, here no such explanation is present or necessary. Both the group leader and group member orient to the news delivery of weight gain as a problem. So, it seems that news delivery can *simultaneously* do news and be the start of a problem identification.

It could be argued that half a pound weight gain is not *obviously* problematic and needs defining as such. However, for the group members whose very aim it is to lose weight, any gain is inherently bad news. This is supported by the absence of the need for a joint identification of the 'problem'. Note that, "Ri::::ght* (1.5) ur:::::r<u>h</u>= how= we= gonna sort th<u>is</u>." (line 20) does not define what kind of problem there is, or indeed why it is a problem, rather it is treated as obvious by both the group leader as member. Furthermore, it is pre-supposed as something to 'sort' out in one clear direction.

It seems that there is something identifiably different from other settings regarding the nature of the news, in its status as good or bad, and therefore its identification as a problem. In this weight-loss environment, the news and problem are heavily circumscribed, limited, pre-understood, or pre-supposed by both parties. In other settings, there may be more scope for different kinds of problems to arise, which require further definition, understanding, or explanation. However, in this environment maybe the initial news delivery and therefore problem is already '*pre-coded*' as problematic or not; getting onto a set of weight scales, after all, permits of a very restricted kind of information. Therefore, having identified the 'problem', the group leader begins to use direct questions to elicit an explanation or strategy for chance from the group member. However, in lines 16-21 GM provides no clear response other than news receipt, along with some lengthy silence, leaving it for GL to formulate things in terms of problems and solutions.

GL produces her interrogative as 'doing a topic', "Ur:::::r<u>h</u> .hhh=how=we=gonna sort th<u>is</u>." (line 16). GM produces no response to GL's inquiry, and so GL must continue to try to identify why GM has gained weight that week. GL introduces the problem with 'Ri::::ght* ' (line 16). This functions to focus in on the specific problem. This focus

allows GL to tailor her advice giving sequence specifically for that group member. The 'right' signals the start of business proper, that is, the identification of why GM has gained weight. This results in a gap of 2.5 seconds, which shows interactional trouble. This is similar to the extracts in the previous news delivery chapter whereby direct questioning often resulted in trouble or silences.

GL uses her next turn to do some information gathering concerning the group members behaviour prior to her weight gain and now, ".Tch jus:' I mean looking at what you were doing when you were steadily losing, And what you're doing n#ow." (lines 26 & 30). This shows that GM was (successfully) losing weight in previous weeks and suggests that she may have done something different to gain weight in the last week. The focusing of the problem of the weight gain continues over several turns with GL getting only minimal responses from GM, such as 'Yeah'. Although 'yeah' can be seen as an aligning token, it seems to be used here as a continuer to allow GL to ask a direct question. GL occupies multiple turns with increments that build up to the question. In producing these multiple turns, GL gets agreement from GM at every stage. GM in her turns seems to be doing an approach to advice. The first opportunity (after line 22 – she has already passed up opportunities at 19-21) for GM to respond at a transitional relevant place is presented at line 26, "What's changed,". This direct question results in a gap of 1.6 seconds. GL reformulates and rephrases the question, "Can you pinpoint what's different" (line 28). This direct question results in a further silence of 1.0 seconds. Silences following a direct question can indicate possible trouble or rejection (see Davidson, 1984). However this silence may not indicate rejection, rather it could suggest GM's difficulty in answering the direct question.

So, although there is no explicit 'advice request' (Heritage and Sefi, 1992) from the group member, her response to the news delivery confirms that advice could be appropriate. The group leader seems to construct her turns with the use of direct questions to initiate a solution to this pre-coded problem of GM's weight gain. I will examine further extracts to see if these observations about how the group leader uses direct questions to initiate a solution from the group member are present across the data. In extract 2 below, we can see that the group leader uses direct questions after the news delivery.

```
612     GL    [Have you been ] actually away-away o:r,
613     GM    We went to France for sort of only a day (0.2)
614           [so:  ]
615     GL    [Right]
616              (0.7)
617     GM    It's very ha:rd not to eat (0.5) nicer fo:od over
618           there.
619     GL    Tch. oh I do know #that*.
620     GM    Uh::m (0.4) and I've not been very good at the
621           weekend::
622              (0.7)
623     GM    So:::
624              (1.2)
625 →   GL    So how can you get yourself back on track.
626              (2.2)
627     GM    Uh::m not °being° (0.9) °naughty°
628              (0.9)
629 →   GL    But ho:w,(0.8) because it's very-it's very easy to
630           stand there and say I'm not going to be naughty,
631     GM    Ye::ah.
632              (0.8)
633 →   GL    But (0.3) what can you <do> to stop yourself being
634           °naughty°.
635              (2.4)
```

In this second extract, the 'problem' has been jointly identified just prior to these turns, with GM having put on weight. It seems that as with the above extract GL is treating the news as bad or problematic without having to explicitly state it as such (line 625).

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Forecast | → | Uh::m (0.4) and I've not been very good at the weekend:: (0.7) so::: |
| Focus of problem directive question | → | So how can you get yourself back on track. |
| Problem indicative response | → | Uh::m not °being° (0.9) °naughty° |
| Focus of problem and direct questioning | → | But ho:w, (0.8) because it's very-it's very easy to stand there and say I'm not going to be naughty, |

In this extract, as with extract 1, there is no direct advice request from the group member. The group leader assumes that the news about weight gain makes an initiation of a

solution and advice giving sequence appropriate next actions. As with previous extracts such as in chapter 2, extract 9 (line 136) both the group leader and the group member use unfinished TCUs. GL uses 'or' rather than the 'so' produced by GM, nevertheless both function to allow the recipient to guess the upshot of what is being said. GM produces her 'so' at the end of her turn to allow GL to hear her account as a possible candidate explanation for why she may have gained weight, "We went to France for sort of only a day (0.2) so: " (lines 613-614). GM produces this account about being on holiday, but this does not include an advice request.

GL starts to focus on the problem, ""So how can you get yourself back on track." (line 625). As with the previous extract, GL is clear that the responsibility for the weight loss strategy lies firmly with GM (line 34 in extract 1). However, this direct question results in a gap of 2.2 seconds. This silence suggests that GM is having difficulty in responding to the previous turn. On examination of the video, it shows that GL is looking directly at GM, although GM distracted by getting off the scales, she is looking at GL and not responding. This is comparable with extract 1, whereby silence ensues after the group leader asks the group member to pinpoint what has changed in her routine to account for the weight gain. Silence after a question or invitation can indicate upcoming possible rejection or trouble (Davidson, 1984; Pomerantz, 1978b). The silence suggests that GM is having some trouble in answering this question. So, it could be that asking the group members to provide an answer to their weight gain via such a direct route may not be the most effective way of starting an advice giving sequence.

Extract 2 seems to follow an analogous structure to extract 1, whereby the group leader uses direct questioning to prompt the group member to produce a strategy to combat their weight gain. More examples will be examined to see if this can be seen as part of how advice sequences get done in this environment. Also, rather than just looking for confirming cases, the data will be examined to check for any *deviant* cases, where the pattern does *not* occur. The following extracts are not examined in any detail but provide further examples of how the group leader produces direct questions to prompt a strategy for weight loss.

Extract 3: RC-SL-Church Hall 06-09-04

```
110          ((scales bleep))
111                (1.0)
112   GM     Oh you're joking
113                (0.9)
114   GL     Mmm,
115                (2.1)
116 → GL     Not done anything differently [o::r ] are you
117   GM                                    [No   ] not food
118   GL     feeling a
119   GM     wise
120   GL     difference=shape wise,
121                (2.3)
```

Extract 3 extract shows that neither the group leader nor member orient explicitly to any weight news. However, the following turns, especially line 116 suggest that the news concerns weight gain. As with the above extracts the group leader produces a direct question to ascertain possible reasons for the weight gain. Also, the direct question is followed by a significant silence. The extract below shows how the group leader constructs her turn with the use of a direct question.

Extract 4: RC-SL-Church Hall 07-06-04

```
9            ((scales bleep))
10    GL     °Ok(h)ay th(h)anks:°
11                (3.4)
12    GL     Right do you want to step on when you're ready to
13           (0.5) please
14                (6.0)
15           ((scales bleep))
16           ((inaudible))
17    GM     Mm yes: [yeah     ]I can tell in my
18    GL             [>Do y'-< ]
19    GM     clo:thes [so:  ]
20    GL              [Yeah ]
21                (0.6)
22 → GL      Do you think it's=>sort=of=like< the aftermath of
23           your h:oliday:.
```

Although this is constructed slightly differently than the previous extracts, in that GL is asking about possible reasons for her weight gain, the extract still displays how the group leaders use direct questions to initiate a solution to, or explanation for, weight gain. Having examining how the initial advice sequence is constructed I will now examine how

both the group leader and member orient to this. Therefore, the chapter will now move to examine what happens after this initial question has been posed by the group leaders.

Extract 5: RC-SP-Baptist Church 16-12-04

```
605    GL     (h)Ri:ght=it's :gone up two pou::nds=
606    GM     =Oh ↓dear heh heh
607           [((scales bleep)) ]
608    GL     [Is this too many ] err meals out or::
609              (0.4)
610    GM     ↑Err I don't really ↑know↓ (0.5) >I don't< ↑really
611           ↑know↓
612              (1.4)
613    GL →   Jus:' looking at (1.7) what you did there where you
614           lost two and a #half=
```

Extract 6: RC-JS-School Hall 21-07-04

```
534    GL     You've put half a pound on.
535    GM     O(h)h g(h)od, I think I'm ~go£ing~ heh heh=
536    GL     =Ri::ght [no:w            ]come on, >mind< you've got
537                    [((scales bleep))]
538    GL     to :stop this::
539              (0.7)
540    GM     Heh huh huh
541    GL →   Wher::e are you struggling:g .hhh
542              (0.4)
```

Both extracts 5 and 6 show that after the news delivery of weight gain, the group leaders produce direct questions. These questions seem to function to prompt the group members into producing a strategy for weight loss. Also, these turns leave the members in little doubt that eating behaviour and any subsequent weight gain, loss or maintenance is their responsibility.

It seems however, that other forms of weight news prompt these kinds of direct strategy questions from the group leaders. Consider extracts 7 and 8.

Extract 7: RC-SL-Church Hall 29-09-04.

```
50     GL     Sta:yed the sa:me.
51              (0.5)
52     GM     I'm- (0.2) I'm strugglin:', I can't understand it,
53     GL     Right, [why,           ]
54     GM            [I mean,         ]
```

```
55                      [((scales bleep))]
56    GL    Cos you [were doi:ng  ]so well,
57    GM            [I don't know, ]
58    GM    I kno(h):::w, I know,
59 →  GL    So what's cha:nged.
```

Extract 8: RC- Baptist Church 29-11-04

```
47    GL    You >:stayed the same.<
48              (1.3)
49    GM    I thoug'=I might 'ov.=
50          =((scales bleep))
51    GL    =S'ok#a::y
52              (1.8)
53 →  GL    Right*::, (0.6) ↑how looking at what you did
54          last week and what you've done this we:ek,
55              (0.5)
```

In both these extracts the news is not presupposed as bad by both parties unlike the
weight gain extracts. Here it seems the group members assess the news as bad.
Nonetheless, the group leaders use the same types of direct question formulations to
prompt a strategy from the group members as to the solution.

So, I have established that the when faced with the problem of weight gain and
also, it seems, weight maintenance, the group leaders seem to produce direct questions in
order to prompt a strategy from the group members on how to start losing weight. The
next part of the analysis will focus on what happens after the initial problem
identification. Therefore, I return to an extract where after the initial question posed by
the group leader about GM's weight gain; GM starts to formulate an explanation.

Extract 9: RC-JS- School Hall 10-06-04

```
37    GM    .hh I think I-
38              (1.0)
39    GM    I get #through the-this carbin' to have bread
40          again=an' I know I shouldn't,
41              (0.3)
42    GL    Ri:ght, so it's a bread thing.
43              (0.4)
44    GM    Ye:ah,
45              (0.3)
46    GM    Definitely,
47              (0.8)
48    GL    Ri:ght
49              (0.6)
```

```
50    GL      .Hhhh (0.7) *Can ↑you::: (1.1) not have it in the
51            house.
52                  (0.4)
53    GM      >Pa'dun,<
54                  (0.3)
55    GL      Can you (.) not have it in the house.=do you have
56            to have it
57    GM      Yeah [well I#]
58    GL           [Or     ] can you buy (0.4) grot bread that
59            you really don't lik*e
60                  (0.1)
61    GM      I think I'd be better (.) t:o (.) do away with
62            bread full stop.
63    GL      If you can ↑not have it in the hous*e, (0.2)
64            [then] that is
65    GM      [Yeah ]
66    GL      wa:y [the ] best way because if it's ↑not ↓the:re
67    GM           [Yeah]
68    GL      You ca:n't [eat it.     ]
69    GM                 [That is m:y ] (0.3) that is my craving
70            for bread.
71    GL      Right.
72                  (0.6)
73    GM      Yeah,
74                  (0.2)
75    GL      Right=
```

In this extract after the identification of the weight gain as problematic, GM starts to produce a response, ".hh I think I-" but does a self-initiated repair. There is a gap of 1.0 seconds and then GM starts a new turn in the form of an explanation and account, ".hh I think I- I get #through the-this carbin' to have bread again, an' I know I shouldn't," (line 32). GM starts her TCU with a self repair, "I think-I get". It seems that GM was going to produce a more general account with the use an internal mental state, 'think'. The word *think* can imply the consideration of a future action (see Edwards & Potter, 2003). In this instance, it seems to downgrade the epistemic status of what details she can report in relation to the specifics of the problem. GM was going to suggest a possible explanation or produce a speculative answer, however she self-repairs and produces something much more specific, "I get #through the-this carbin' to have bread again". It is at this point in the interaction that GM does some responsive detailing and begins to acknowledge that there is a problem. She explicitly states that she know she should not eat too much bread, "an' I know I shouldn't,". 'Not knowing' or 'knowing' can be analysable in talk for what action it performs. In the previous chapter, group members produced accounts of 'not

knowing' in order to avoid being held publicly accountable for their weight gain. In this extract, however, GM is claiming to 'know' she 'shouldn't' be doing what she is doing.

This allows GL to hold her accountable for her actions, but also allows an advice sequence to be constructed that is specific to the problem. The use of the word 'shouldn't' is interesting as it suggests some moral dimension or rules about dieting and being a good dieter. Morality talk seems to be inextricably bound with food and dieting and it is explored fully in the next chapter. This presentation of 'knowing I shouldn't' also works to circumvent advice that could be proffered as a solution to the problem. For example, GM is implicitly saying, do not suggest that I should not be eating bread, because I already know that. This is similar to previous studies where advice recipients work to display their competence or knowledge about the particular subject to pre-empt more information or advice and GL uses it as grounds for collaborative or stepwise advice giving (Heritage & Sefi, 1992; Pilnick, 2003; Pudlinski, 2002; Raymond & Heritage, 2002; Silverman, 1997). It could also function as a signal to GL that just saying she should not eat bread is not going to be enough, as a piece of advice. This implies that GM is going to need something more helpful, something additional or new, that she does not already know, or put into practice, rather than just 'don't do it'.

GL responds by explicitly identifying 'bread' as the main problem and therefore a possible candidate for the weight gain, "Right, so it's a bread thing." GL starts her turn with the word, "Right". GL produces this TCU to signal recognition of the 'type' of problem it is, that is, a 'bread thing'. GM has provided something concrete that GL can now formulate her advice around. Note how GL formulates the candidate explanation, "it's a bread thing" rather than, say, "so you think you're eating too much bread", is a specific formulation of the problem. It seems to identify it as a problem of a recognizable type, with bread specifically as the problem rather than, say, GM having a lot of it lately, or eaten too much carbohydrate of which bread happens to be an example, or whatever. It is a formulation that points to the kinds of solutions GL offers, like not having it in the house – that is much easier to do for a specific food, as distinct from just eating less, or avoiding carbohydrates – it locates a solution in terms of the bread itself.

GM responds to this explicitness by confirming this as her main 'problem', "ye:ah (0.3) definitely" (line 37). The confirmation of the exact problem from the group

member, results in the group leader being able to formulate strategies and advice specifically related to avoiding or reducing bread. It is interesting to note that in the beginning of the advice giving sequence regarding the bread, GM only gives minimal responses, such as 'yeah'. Such unmarked acknowledgments perform a variety of functions within talk. It could be that a minimal response is all that is required for the interaction to proceed (Pilnick, 2002). Or, GM does not know how to respond with more detail to the prior turn (see Silverman, 1997). These minimal receipts could suggest passive rejection of the advice given (see Heritage & Sefi, 1992), as the 'yeah' produces GM's responses as non-committal to the advice being offered, or it could be there is just a lack of explicit stated commitment (cf. Pilnick, 2003; 2004).

GM has identified and confirmed the 'problem' as a 'bread thing'; now both parties begin to explore a candidate solution. It also provides another example of where the word 'right' is produced to precede the deployment of a strategy for combating GM's problem. GL's advice starts with a suggestion to remove the identified problem, in this case 'bread' from the house, ".hhhh (0.8) *Can ↑you::: (1.1) not have it in the house." (lines 50-51). The out-breath followed by the two silences suggests possible trouble. As with the extracts examined in the previous chapter (4), concerning bad news, advice giving TCUs also seem to contain marked trouble, indicated by pauses or self-repairs and reformulations. It suggests a tentative formulation by GL regarding her suggestion. GL must manage how advice and suggests are phrased so as not to alienate or upset her group members. The hedging and softer formulation works to recognise and deal with this dilemma. This is reminiscent of other CA work done in health settings where the negotiation of an advice sequence must be handled with delicacy (Pilnick, 2004; Heritage & Lindstrom, 1998).

GM responds with a next turn open class repair initiator, ">Pa'dun<" (line 53). GM is indicating that she has had some difficulty with GL's prior turn but has not specifically located where or what that difficulty is (cf. Drew, 1997). GL responds by not only repeating her previous turn, but she adds a self-repair and reformulates the turn, "Can you (0.1) not have it in the house.=do you have to have it" (lines 55-56). This suggests that GL recognises that GM may not have understood the prior turn, so she changes her TCU to ask a slightly different question. Note that the "do you have to have

it" provides for the possibility that GM may have trouble complying with not having bread in the house, such as that other people in her household may require or want bread.

The notion of constraints or inability is already encoded in the design of "Can you…". This functions not only as just as a softened suggestion but it implies and recognises a possible constraint on what GM can do, given perhaps that she is part of family and has other people to feed or shop for. GM responds with an unmarked acknowledgement, quickly followed by what seems to be the beginning of a prefaced account, "Well". Prefaced statements normatively pre-empt justifications or accounts (see Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Although it is impossible to guess what GM is about to say, it does seem that GM may be about to produce an account to defend why she has to have bread in the house. It seems that GL has sensed this account may be about to be produced.

Therefore, GL starts to produce an alternative suggestion to have *some* bread in the house, "[Or   ] can you buy (0.4) grot bread that you really don't lik*e," (lines 58-59). GM responds by agreeing with GL's first suggestion about not having bread in the house, "I think I'd be better (0.1) t:o (0.1) do away with bread full stop." (lines 61-62). It seems that GM *never* clearly responds to the notion of not having bread *in* the house. Rather her turn avoids directly countering GL's strong suggestions or advice about how to deal with her craving for bread. What GM seems to go along with is her need to do without it, maybe altogether and not just cut down on how much bread she eats. However, that is not the same as not having it in the house, which GM never clearly accepts. It seems that the group member is asserting her epistemic priority, in that she is adapting GL's advice to suit her situation.

However, the inclusion of the word 'think' suggests that GM is only considering this as a future projected action. In saying she 'thinks', she is considering the future possibility of not having bread in the house, there is no firm commitment to 'do' it. Nevertheless, GL continues to build upon her initial suggestion. She adds a further practical and obvious reason for not having bread in the house, in that, if it is not there then GM can not eat it, "If you can ↑not have it in the hous*e, (0.2) then that is way the best way because if it's ↑not ↓the:re  You ca:n't eat it" (lines 63-64). Again, all this flows nicely from the specific formulation, "it's a bread problem".

GL produces the advice solution as something which could be seen as irrefutable logic, however, the brutal solution of not having bread in the house seems to elicit a collaborative agreement from GM. GM formulates the bread as a 'craving', implying some level of physicality to her need for the bread. It is more than whimsical overindulgence, but something which she has difficulty controlling. Therefore GM's solution is not to have the temptation in the house. Throughout this turn GM overlaps at various transition relevance places with unmarked acknowledgment, "Yeah" (line57) and "Yeah" (line 65). These unmarked acknowledgments could suggest GM's apathy to the advice offered. However, alternatively it could be that advice receipts, as with other health setting environments, get done in this way.

The advice suggested by GL so far has been common sense, not having bread in the house or buying bread that the group member does not like. It may be difficult for the group member to produce an enthusiastic response to such mundane, obvious advice. However, rather than it just being a matter of the advice being too commonsensical, it seems that GM is displaying trouble with the actual advice GL is offering, the not buying bread at all, or having 'grot' bread. The sense is that the suggestions are problematical and maybe not realistic for her. So the combination the advice not being suited to the individual along with the common sense nature of the advice could result in the group member not producing enthusiastic or animated responses. This lack of enthusiastic uptake of advice and the assertion of epistemic priority could maybe an 'ethno-method' for how group members receipt weight advice. However, as suggested earlier, minimal responses suggest little about any future actions or uptake of the advice by the recipient.

The next part of the advice sequence is initiated by GM through the use of a direct question, "So what do you sa-suggest as well (.) you <u>know</u> lik- not (0.2) not 'ave it in the 'ouse an:::' er::" (lines 78-79). As with previous examples studied in the interaction this turn contains marked trouble evidenced by the reformulations, self-repairs and silences. In the previous example earlier in the interaction, the group leader had difficulty constructing and delivering the advice turns. In this instance, the group member is having difficulty constructing her turn. This suggests that whether the group leader or the group member produces it, any advice TCUs are punctuated with marked trouble. This seems to suggest that advice giving is not told or receipted in a straightforward way. Pilnick (1999)

suggests explicitly requesting advice represents a personal disclosure of uncertainty about an appropriate course of action. This could explain GM's difficulty in constructing the turn.

```
78 →  GM    So what do you sa-suggest as well (.) you kno:w
79           lik- not (0.2) not ['ave    ] it in the 'ouse
80           an::: er::
81    GL    [I would ]
82               (0.6)
83    GL    Don't ↑have it in the house (0.4) .hhh but have
84           other things:: in*stead [that ] you
85    GM                             [Yeah ]
86    GL    tha=that you enjoy
87    GM    Yeah
88    GL    I mean it's no use for example if-if you say to me
89           go out and buy crisp breads
90    GM    No=
91    GL    =That's a >complete waste< of time 'cos I ↑hate
92           crisp breads
93    GM    Yeah=
94    GL    =I just wouldn't eat them.
95    GM    Yeah,
96    GL    But today at lunchtime I had ↑cous cous,
97    GM    Yeah, [you had what]
98    GL          [and it      ] had cous cous
99    GM    ↑Oh did ya, right,
100   GL    Yeah,
101   GM    Right
102   GL    an we had-we had salad,
103   GM    Yeah
104   GL    An::d (0.5) ham and we had cous cous with it and
105          it was l:ovely and I re::ally-it-the flavoured
106          ones I re::ally enjoy,
107   GM    Yeah,
108              (0.4)
109   GL    So, (.) >I didn't have bread< it got me away from
110          it
111   GM    Yeah
112              (1.3)
113   GL    I kne:w exactly how many calories I was having
114          >'cos I know how many< is in:: (0.4) the packet so
115          I had a careful portion .hh >so I knew< ex↑actly
116          what I was eating
117   GM    Yeah,
118 → GL    and:: it got me away from bread.
119   GM    Yeah, yeah that is me downfall
120   GL    So try it
```

In response to GM's direct question, GL starts to tell a personal narrative. This displays GL as someone who is entitled to talk on this subject because of her personal

experience, but also, it shows GL's expertise at providing alternatives to her members' food cravings. GL makes the story telling personally *relevant* for GM by reintroducing the 'bread', "So, (.) >I didn't have bread< it got me a<u>way</u> from i<u>t</u>" (line 109). This makes it harder for GM to reject the advice about trying cous cous, as it has worked for GL and got her away from bread. GL reformulates the bread relevance in her further turns after displaying diet relevant information about cous cous, "<u>and::</u> it got <u>me</u> <u>away</u> <u>from</u> <u>bread</u>." (line 118). This sequence ends with, "So <u>try</u> it." (line 120). This suggestion gets only a minimal response from GM, "Yeah" (line 121), which implies that GM is not totally convinced by the exchange of bread for cous cous.

This is supported by the following section of the interaction as GL begins to formulate other ways to avoid eating bread. GL uses the remainder of the interaction to not only outline how she avoids bread but also to produce alternative suggestions to bread, like rice or pasta.

```
122 → GL    Ri::ce you know [if you're cooking rice] in the
123   GM                   [Don't like rice      ]
124   GL    evening=
125   GM    =don't like pasta either,
126   GL    Okay
127   GM    I wish I was like that with my br<u>ead</u>
128             (1.0)
129   GM    Really
130 → GL    Potat↑oes, >potato salad<
131   GM    Yeah
132             (0.3)
133   GM    Yeah
134   GL    Save yourself some pot<u>at</u>'s for the next day,
135   GM    Yeah,
136             (0.5)
137   GM    Yeah,
138   GL    Anything that gets you away from bread
139   GM    Yeah,
140             (0.6)
141   GM    I know that is my [d<u>ow</u>nfall, ]
```

Here GL formulates her advice so that it specifically presents GM with alternative strategies for avoiding bread. However, GL immediately rejects these alternatives, "Don't like rice" and she works to fend off future advice by adding, "don't like pasta either," (lines 123-125). Note that GM's anticipation also displays an orientation to the general category of filling carbohydrates of which bread, rice, potatoes and pasta are all

members. GM is displaying not only that she understands the finite details, but that she recognizes on what basis GL is introducing these alternatives. Namely, that they are as filling as bread but not necessarily carbohydrates she has a craving for in the same way. GL occupies substantial turns at the end of this interaction and adds encouragement type statements, such as, "So try it" (line 106). Goldberg (1975) has suggested that "a set of instructions is commonly broken down into its smaller component parts, each of which is delivered one at a time over a series of sequentially placed turns" (Goldberg, 1975, p.273). Here it seems that GL is delivering one set of instructions over several turns at talk and therefore minimal receipts could be seen as entirely appropriate.

GL ends this interaction with, "That's your target for the week" (line 143). A target is something to be 'aimed' for but not necessarily reached. It projects some future action while also providing for the possibility of failure. Although there is no positive uptake of the advice, it seems to suggest that there could be a combination of common-sense advice requiring little positive feedback and some level of resistance present in advice giving sequences in this institutional environment. The group members seem less inclined to be enthusiastic about the 'common-sense' or irrefutable logic of the advice offered by the group leaders, or it could be that minimal receipts are all that are necessary in this type of interaction.

This extract shows that advice-giving disrupts the smooth progressivity of the talk. The advice TCU whether produced by the group leader or member are all punctuated with noticeable interactional trouble. There are some notable differences between the advice-giving sequence identified by Heritage and Sefi (1992) and how advice-giving is produced within this environment. The responsive detailing and the focusing of the initial inquiry into a problem happen over several turns at talk. The group leader continues to add more detailing in her turns to get the group member to clarify exactly what the problem is. The advice turns in this extract are preceded by the use of the word 'right'. The advice-giving is not simply told, as with the news delivery sequence in the previous chapter, when the interaction concerns weight gain, there seems to be some interactional trouble. The group member does not accept the advice unproblematically.

The central observations about extract 9 are that the advice giving happens across several turns at talk and the advice is receipted with unmarked acknowledgements which perform minimal acceptance and imply rejection or resistance to the advice. It is clear that there is no "advice requestor" (Heritage and Sefi, 1992) when the advice sequence is first introduced. However, even when the group member does directly request advice in the form of a question, the ensuing advice is passively rejected. I have suggested that rather than seeing these responses as signifying rejection, an alternative may be to see them as a way group members do advice receipts in this particular environment. When the advice concerns more mundane common sense matters it may be that group members do not respond with enthusiasm. Pilnick (1998) suggested that patients and carers exposed to clinical procedures over a period of time can use the medical discourse to display competence and knowledge. Pilnick also suggests that when new information is given, its newness can be minimised by the patients and carers relating it to their existing knowledge base. It could be that the group members have been exposed to the 'advice-giving' procedures and practices over the weeks and therefore, it is no longer newsworthy information. Further extracts are examined to see if these observations are present across the data, or if there are any deviant cases whereby the structure and formation of advice differs. Consider extract 10 below, which seems to show how the group member shows her resistance to the advice.

Extract 10: RC-SL Church Hall 01-09-04

```
218    GL    How: (2.5) compare- if you look at (1.3) the diet how
219          it's set out (0.6) and you look at what you':re
220          eating,
221                (1.2)
222    GM    Mm
223    GL    How different is it,
224          (3.6)
225    GM    Mm
226          (1.9)
227    GM    The only bad thing I'd say that I'm e:ating (0.7)
228          which,(0.4) ↑no::: it's not even over the five
229          percent be>cause< I have fr:ench fries, you know the
230          (0.9)the fr:ench fries,
231    GL    Mmhm
232    GM    They're less five than five percent,
233    GL    Right,
234                (2.0)
```

```
235    GL   So is it just quantity,
236             (0.6)
237 →  GM   Maybe.
238             (2.9)
239 →  GM   Or maybe I'm just not eating properly, (1.0) so at
240         set times.
241             (1.1)
242    GL   That doesn't=matte:r.  Even if you graz::e your way
243         though the day,
244    GM   Yeah
245    GL   If: you:: keep it under control:: with the quantity,
246 →  GM   Mm=
247    GL   =and the type of food, .hh then when you actually eat
248         it really doesn't matter
249 →  GM   Mm
250    GL   As long as you're not leaving eno::rmous gaps between
251         eating.
252 →  GM   Mm.
253             (1.0)
254    GL   So::: (0.8) when it boils down to it I think it's got
255         [to be:    ]
256    GM   [The amount]
257    GL   It's the °quantity.°
258             (0.8)
```

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Focus of problem directive question | → | How: (2.5) compare- if you look at (1.3) the diet how it's set out (0.6) and you look at what you':re eating, |
| Focus of problem | → | The only bad thing I'd say that I'm e:ating (0.7) which,(0.4) ↑no::: it's not even over the five percent be>cause< I have fr:ench fries, you know the (0.9)the fr:ench fries, |
| Directive questioning | → | So is it just quantity, |

GL follows this alignment turn by starting to formulate questions to try to find the root of why GM has put on weight, "How: (2.5) compare- if you look at (1.3) the diet how it's set out (0.6) and you look at what you':re eating, How is it different" (lines 218-223). This complex TCU is beset with interactional trouble. GL restarts this turn and self-repairs twice, at "How" and "compare" in the turns opening. There is a distinguishable difference between error and repair. Individuals make multiple mistakes within talk but chose not to repair them. Therefore, the practice of self-initiated repairs can be studied for what action or business is being done. GL's self-repairs in this turn can be seen as a set of

practices via which she is managing how to ask GM what she has been doing differently in relation to her eating behaviour, which could be seen as a delicate matter. Even when GL does start the turn, there are many punctuated silences.

This marked trouble is similar to advice formulation turns found in both extracts 1 and 2. It is also reminiscent of the news delivery sequence discussed in the previous chapter concerning weight gain. It could suggest that advice giving when related to weight gain is not easily or simply told, as mentioned earlier the initiation of an advice giving sequence is delicate interactional activity, which could explain the 'trouble'. Or, it could be a display of how GL is struggling to find out why GM has gained weight. As with the previous extracts examined in this chapter so far, the direct question, "How different is it" (line 223) results in a gap of 3.6 seconds, which suggests further trouble.

The 'Mm' produced by GM is followed by a further gap of 1.2 seconds and only then does she start to formulate an account of her eating habits, "The only bad thing I'd say that I'm e:ating (0.7) which, (0.4) ↑no::: it's not even over the five percent be>cause< I have fr:ench fries, you know the (0.9) the fr:ench fries," (lines 227-321). Here GM is vocalising her thinking or rationale for answering the question, "no::: it's not even". This part of her turn does not seem to be addressed to GL directly, instead GM is displaying 'doing thinking'. It is also interesting to note that GM formulates her turn with the word selection of 'french fries' as opposed to 'chips', where 'chips' are usually associated with fast food establishments and 'french fries' permit a more legitimate form of cuisine.

GL produces a possible candidate explanation by asking another direction question, "Right", "So is it just quantity" (lines 234 & 236). The 'right' (line 234) marks a boundary, GL is blocking the continuation of GM's account and is orienting and focusing the interaction into specific details, "So is it just quantity" (line 236). This receives a hedged agreement from GM, 'maybe' which is followed by an increment, "Or maybe I'm just not eating properly, (1.0) so at set times." (lines 240-241). The construction of this advice receipt TCU is interesting. Even with direct requests for advice, there is rarely an occasion where the group member is willing to concede control and accept the advice willingly. Rather, there is some display of competence or knowledge to circumscribe the advice. Heritage and Sefi (1992) found this to be true in advice offered and requested by midwives and new mothers. The mothers were reluctant

to acknowledge complete ignorance. GM produces her increment to circumscribe the possible suggestion that she is eating too much, preferring to introduce the idea that it is not that she is eating too much, rather she is eating chaotically and not at 'set times'. This could also be a way for GM to get more advice and information (Pilnick, 1999). However, GL uses her expert knowledge to dismiss this idea, "That doesn't=ma<u>tte</u>:r. Even if you gr<u>az</u>::e your way though the day," (lines 243-244).

GL uses her role as 'expert' to construct a series of turns to demonstrate her knowledge of how what time you eat has no bearing on weight gain; rather it is the amount of food. Note however, that this advice could still be seen as a formulation tailored to this particular client's problems. There could be another group member whose problem is formulated as continual snacking throughout the day, which is ruining her diet. Therefore, the group member's habit of grazing or eating several times a day could be identified as a problem, whose *practical* solution might be to cut out the snacking and get back to 3 square meals.

In fact, the next extract demonstrates this point nicely. The problem and solution in extract 11 are not just a matter of total amount eaten, but of when, because of metabolic rates, etc. Indeed, it seems that advice is tailored to formulations of the problem, and problems formulations are themselves designed for the advice that follows, such as "it's a bread thing", and not buying bread (extract 9 lines 42 & 55).

Rather than agreeing explicitly with GL's advice, GM does a kind of showing that she is hearing and understanding what GL is saying, sort of indicating that she is 'getting the point'. However, notice that throughout this whole section of advice giving she receipts each new addition minimally. This could be because the advice is delivered over several turns (as Goldberg suggests) and there minimal receipts encourage this interaction. These minimal responses seem to be a feature indicative to advice giving where the participant has gained weight.

However, extract 11 below is where the group member has maintained her weight. It is clear that this group member also produces unenthusiastic responses to the advice offered. We join the interaction just after the group member has been explained that she only has soup for lunch and can not understand why she is maintaining weight.

Whilst this is not an explicit request for advice her puzzlement does make an advice giving sequence a possible appropriate next action.

Extract 11: RC-SL-Church Hall 29-09-04.

```
84      GL                 [>So all you have    ] in the middle of
85           the day< is a slimmer soup.
86      GM   I jus' have a sli-a slim: packet of slimmer [soup. ]
87      GL                                              [Right ]
88           I think that might be part of the problem then.
89      GM   >Do you reckon it [is,<  ]
90      GL                      [Have ] a little bit of
91           carbohydrate with it
92 →    GM   Yeah,
93               (0.4)
94      GL   because you will::, (0.4) if you're not eating
95           carbohydrate as in, >s-you know,<
96           [complex carbohydrates,] you will slow your
97 →    GM   [Yeah yeah   yeah       ]
98      GL   metabolism down.
99      GM   Yeah.
100     GL   An::d (0.7) re:ally (0.3) to go from breakfast right
101          through to the evening,
102 →   GM   Yeah,
103     GL   without [having some,           ]
104     GM           [You see for breakfast,]
105             (1.1)
106     GL   Have a little bit, even if it's:: (0.5) *half a slice
107          of bread [o::r  ]
108     GM            [Yeah, ]
109     GL   a slice of light bre::ad.
110 →   GM   Yeah,
111     GL   Uh::m o:r, h-you know, a small pitta, [o::r something
```

GL identifies a possible candidate for GM's 'problem' in her next turn, "Right I think that might be part of the problem then" (lines 87-88). As with the previous extracts examined, the 'right' works as an inter-subjectivity boundary marker. It marks either the introduction of a new topic or a subject change. In this instance, the 'right' is produced as a last item onset overlap, and it functions to block any further discussion of what the group member eats with her soup. Instead, GL goes on to do an assessment of the 'problem' as she sees it. Normatively second assessments work to either upgrade or downgrade the prior assessment (Pomerantz, 1984b). However, GM produces a dispreferred response, ">Do you reckon it is,<" (line 89). Rather than doing an upgraded agreement or downgraded disagreement, GM formulates a question.

GL does not directly address this question in her next turn, rather she begins to give advice, "H<u>av</u>e a little bit of carbohydrate with it" (lines 90-91). GM produces a minimal receipt which could be seen as continuer, "Yeah," (line 92). GL continues with an increment to her advice, "because you will::, (0.4) if you're <u>not</u> eating carbohydrate as in, >s-you know,< com<u>ple</u>x carbohydrates, you will slow your metabolism down. An::d (0.7) re:ally (0.3) to go from breakfast right through to the evening, without having some," (lines 94-103). These multiple TCUs are analogous with the previous advice TCUs examined in this chapter, in that they all contain some kind of restart, pause or evidence of trouble. GL's advice TCUs display 'expertise' knowledge, in relation to her membership category of group leader. She produces a somewhat more technical formulation to her advice, mentioning 'complex carbohydrates' and 'metabolism'. However, throughout this sequence of talk, GM receipts the advice with "Yeah" - these turns could be seen as continuers, in that the advice or information is not yet complete.

GL continues to produce an increment to her advice sequence, "H<u>av</u>e a <u>li</u>ttle bit, even if it's:: (0.5) *<u>hal</u>f a slice of bread o::r a slice of light bre::ad. Er::m o:r, h-you know, a <u>sma</u>ll pi<u>tta</u>, o::r something like that." (lines 106-114). Here the advice is centred around trying to get the group member to eat more complex carbohydrates. Note that the quantity of the bread is mentioned each time, "half a slice" and "small pitta". This highlights this notion that dieting and advice talk can be centred on portion sizes and control, if that is formulated as part of the problem by either GL or GM. Although the group member is bring encouraged to eat these *type* of foods, control is bound up within the advice. Group leaders in previous advice sequences examined have also referred either implicitly or explicitly to portion size and control. I think what it demonstrates is that weight advice can be built around these kind of pre-constructed categories, Silverman, Perakyla & Bor (1992) suggests that advice can be personal and specific and thus can be recipient designed.

There are similarities between this extract and the previous weight gain extracts. There are instances where the group leader and group member work hard to display their epistemic priority. The advice TCUs are punctuated with interactional trouble, such as pauses, self-repairs and restarts. As with all the previous extracts, irrespective of whether

they concerned gain or maintenance, the advice and information given is commonsensical and logical and is rarely receipted with enthusiasm from the group members.

Overall, the extracts presented so far conform to a possible structure for how an advice giving sequence is built and oriented to by both the group leaders and group members. All the extracts have demonstrated that advice is not easily told or receipted by either the group leaders or group members, and that the advice sequence happens over several turns within the interaction. It is also interesting to note that the advice-giving turns in the sequence can perform more than one action (see Schegloff, 2007, on 'interlocking' actions).

As in the previous chapter, news delivery turns could do both a news receipt and assessment simultaneously. Here it seems that the news delivery can also be the pre-coded or pre-defined problem. By the very nature of this environment, a weight gain constitutes a problem. This needs no problem indicative response from the group member. It is understood by both parties without the need for joint construction, that weight gain constitutes a problem. I have also established that weight maintenance although not pre-coded in the same way as weight gain, does elicit this direct questioning formulation by the group leaders. It also seems that group members assert their epistemic priority. Although the order of this sequence may change, they are present in the advice giving sequences examined thus far:

- → Initial inquiry, getting on the scales and waiting for the readout from the scales;
- → Problem indicative response, the news delivery itself;
- → Focusing the problem, in the form of a direct question by group leader;
- → Problem indicative response by group member;
- → Possible candidate causes;
- → Advice giving;
- → Minimal response or receipt.

The extracts above have shown there to be a possible structure for how advice-giving is jointly constructed by the group leaders and group members when the news concerns weight gain and weight maintenance.

This next section of analysis examines extracts where the group members have lost weight. I will examine the extract below in detail, before examining further extracts across the data corpus to consider if there are any patterns, in how advice-giving sequences are initiated, structured and oriented to. Since this is a 'weight management group' it could be argued that advice giving could be seen as less appropriate. The extract below shows how the group leader and group member jointly construct the advice and how the advice is only weakly receipted with minimal commitment from the group member.

Extract 12: RC-SP-Baptist Church 01-11-04

```
267  GL    You've lost a pound and a half,=
268        =((scales bleep))
269  GM    Oh it's not too bad [then.           ]
270                            [That's :fine, ]
271        ((scales bleep))
272  GL    It's absolutely, (2.8) abso:lutely fi:ne.
273              (1.4)
274  GL    It's better to do it slo::wly
275  GM →  Mmm:
276              (0.4)
277  GL →  It re:ally is. it doesn't matter ho:w slow it is:
278        (0.6) as long as it jus::' <steadily> (0.4)
279        <creeps> (0.3) <down.>=
280  GM →  =Ye:ah.
281              (0.5)
282  GL    So:: (.) if you can (0.3) :look at what you've
283        done the previous week, (0.4) look at what you've
284        done this week (1.0) .hh and:: (0.9) think about
285        the differences, and take that away and work on
286        the differences::.
```

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Possible problem indicative response | → | Oh it's not too bad [then. |
| Focus of problem | → | It's better to do it slo::wly |
| Focus of problem advice | → | It re:ally is. it doesn't matter ho:w slow it is:(0.6) as long as it jus::' <steadily> (0.4) <creeps> (0.3) <down.>= |

This advice sequence is reminiscent of the previous extracts examined so far within this chapter.  The news is the weight loss announcement. Then GM provides an assessment of

it, "Oh it's not too bad then" (line 269), whereupon GL provides an upgraded second assessment, "It's absolutely fine". Agreements and disagreements are the options for second assessments, where it is normative for agreeing second assessments to upgrade firsts (Pomerantz, 1984b), which is what happens here. GM's *tentative* assessment "not too bad" may also be an orientation to GL's being properly the expert, the person entitled to say whether, and how much, the news is good or bad. And indeed, in providing a strongly upgraded second assessment, with repaired emphasis on the ECF "absolutely", GL asserts, "That's fine" (line 270).

Further, it appears to be GM's tentative first assessment, along with the delay at 273 and the minimal "Mmm" (line 275), that GL then deals with, by treating GM as possibly disappointed that her weight loss is so small – because small weight losses are good, etc., and even just the thing to be aiming for (that is, better than larger weight losses across short periods of time). This is all prior to any advice-giving.

GL's turn, "it's better to do it slowly" (line 274) is a *formulation of what GM is already doing*, that is achieving small amounts of weight loss rather than sudden big falls. So, the 'advice proper' starts at line 282. Note the conjunction "so…" – which links what GL says next to what she has just said, as a consequence of it. Such that she introduces the advice as an upshot of her formulation that small drops or changes in weight loss are good. Note that the 'advice' does not contain anything new, except for GM to monitor what she's been doing, and work on it.

GL reinforces the sentiment of her previous turn about losing weight slowly, "It re:ally is". The insertion of the word 'really' works to upgrade the previous statement (Pomerantz, 1986, includes 'really' as a term used in 'extreme case' formulations, used in environments of actual or possible disagreement) and functions to reassure the group member that losing weight slowly is a good thing. GL goes on to add further detail to her turn, "it doesn't matter ho:w slow it is: (0.6) as long as it jus::' <steadily> (0.4) <creeps> (0.3) <down.>=" (lines 277-279). The delivery of these TCUs includes deliberately slowed words punctuated with pauses in between each word, which all seem to work to add impact to GL's whole statement. It provides the group member with encouragement about her progress and weight loss. Although the turn could be heard to be doing reassurance and alignment, there is a reference to expectations about successful dieting. It

orients to show how slow weight loss is acceptable, as long as it 'steadily creeps down', the 'as long' in the turn works to reinforce this notion of expectation.

However, this turn receives a minimal response, "Ye:ah" (line 280). Normatively, 'yeah' signifies an aligning token, but here it could be as suggested by Dingwall & Robinson (1990) that GM does not know how to respond to the prior turn. The following part of GL's TCU is punctuated with silences, hesitation and restarts. This seems to suggest that as in the weight gain extracts examined earlier, advice even when concerning weight loss is still a delicate matter and is not simply told by the group leader and is not unproblematically receipted by the group member, "So:: (.) if y<u>ou</u> can (0.3) :<u>l</u>ook at what you've done the previous wee<u>k</u>, (0.4) look at what you've done this wee<u>k</u> (1.0) .hh and:: (0.9) think about the differences, and <u>ta</u>ke that away and work on the differences::." (lines 282-285). In this turn, GL produces a positive strategy for how GM can keep losing weight. The advice is formulated and delivered as common sense and again contains an element of irrefutable logic. To examine what has worked in the weeks between the weigh in, and work on the differences, seems logical. Therefore it makes it more difficult to dispute the advice.GL orients to weight loss being the responsibility of the group member. By repeating 'you' throughout the turn, it functions to reinforce this notion of agency and control.

It seems that even when the news concerns weight loss, there are similarities between this and the weight gain and maintenance extracts. The group leaders still see an advice sequence as an appropriate next action even when there is no direct request from the group members. Secondly, the group members work to do this assertion of knowledge. The advice TCUs all seem to contain pauses and repairs as with the advice TCUs in weight gain news, which suggests that advice is not easily told or receipted. These weight loss extracts so far seem to follow the initial sequence outlined earlier in the chapter for how advice gets done in this environment. However, for the pattern to be considered robust, more examples and any deviant cases need to be examined. Consider extract 13, which shows how the group leader still starts an advice giving sequence when the group member has firstly lost weight but also provides no advice prompt.

## Extract 13: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
589   GL    ↑>Helen<, ↑>hello<
590           (1.7)
591   GL    >Thank you very much=how are you?<
592   GL    I'm fine thank yo:u
593   GL    Good
594           (4.9)
595   ((scales bleep))
596   GL    It's down ↑half a ↑pound,
597   GM    ↑Is it↑ really honestly heh
598   GL    Really ↑honestly↑, [truthfully  ]
599   GM                       [I'm shocked ]
600         [I've had a bad  ] week as
601         [((scales bleep))]
602   GM    we(h)ll, heh heh
603           (0.7)
604   GL    Right
605           (0.5)
606   GM    Heh
607           (0.4)
608   GL    ↓Well (0.9) if yo:::u (1.5) er:: °hang on a minute
609         I'm, this has all gone completely to pot°
610   GM    Hhh
611           (0.4)
612   GL    If yo:::u (1.6) if you carry <on> (0.4) being ba#d
613   GM    Mm
614   GL    then it will go on,
615           (0.4)
616   GM    Right.
617           (0.7)
618   GL    If you can go phew got a#way with that, .hh (1.2)
619         a:nd try get >just a little bit back on track
620         again<  (1.4) °it won't be so bad°
621   GM    Right okay,
622   GL    It's: it's just: (1.3) taking it gently (0.7) now,
623   GM    Mm hm
624           (0.9)
625   GL    Have your tre:ats, go out enjoy yourself, have a
626         drink, .hhh have extra:: but if you can do that
627         and then be extra good (0.8) in between times,
628   GM    Mmm
629   GL    ↑then you can maintain.
630           (0.3)
631   GM    Yeah
632         Nobody's saying lose weight
634   GM    Hhhh
635   GL    Because you know come on< this is life an'
636   GM    Yeah
637   GL    you know we're out (0.3) well >we've got friends
638         Saturday night< an' we're out Tuesday Wednesday
639         night [next week ]
640   GM          [Yeah      ]
641   GL    uh:m that's life at the moment,
```

```
642    GM    Yeah
643    GL    but if you can maintain (1.2) °it's worth doing,°
644    GM    Okay
645    GL    So well done that's all right,
```

Focus of problem      →      yo:::u (1.6) if you <u>carry</u> <on> (0.4) being ba#d
                             then it will go on,

GL starts her advice sequence, "If yo:::u (1.6) carry <on> (0.4) being ba#d then it will go on," (line 612). This is reminiscent of the 'cautionary tale' outlined by the group leader in extract 8 about what will happen if the group member does not get her eating behaviour under control. The group leader now changes the focus of the 'badness' from the week, and makes is agentive to the group member, "If yo:::u carry <on> being ba#d", which places the responsibility for the weight control firmly with GM.

The group member responds with, "Right." (line 604). In previous extracts, it is the group leader who has used 'right' as an inter-subjective boundary marker. Here GM seems to be signalling that the previous turn is newsworthy information. GL continues with an increment to her advice, "If you can go phew got a#way with that, .hh (1.2) a:nd try get >just a little bit back on track again< (1.4) °it won't be so bad°" (lines 618-620). The formulation of 'phew got a#way with that' orients to dieting as an accountable matter. To 'get away' with something means to have avoided some consequence or negative action because of some wrong or inadvisable behaviour. Here the group leader has classified the group member as 'bad' but she has still managed to lose weight. This advice turn is similar to previous extracts in that, it is punctuated with pauses, restarts, and significantly quieter talk. GL uses the word 'try' in this turn, which suggests this advice as an option rather than something the group member should do.

GL produces the 'just a little bit back on track again' at a slightly faster pace than the contiguous talk. The formulation of 'just a little bit' implies that there are different levels of being off track and that group members can be *slightly* off as opposed to *fully* off track. It also suggests that this member is one of those who has wavered only slightly off track. GL's following TCU, 'it won't be so bad' orients to getting back on track as a damage limitation strategy. If the group member gets back on track, even a little bit, then the effect on her weight will not be so bad. Unlike extract 8 where the

group member asserted her knowledge and had already put the advice into practice, here GM receipts the advice with 'Right okay," (line 621). This implies that GM has receipted this advice turn as 'newsworthy' information and maybe something she had not considered.

GL continues with her advice, "It's: it's just: (1.3) <u>t</u>aking it gently (0.7) now" (line 622). This turn contains noticeable pauses and has a restart at the beginning, which is comparable to the previous advice turns examined. The use of the word 'gently' further supports the earlier suggestion that this group member is one that has only slightly fallen off track. It also implies that the hard work is behind her and she can afford to slow down a bit now. The word 'gently' suggests less pressure. These advice TCUs receive more minimal receipts, "Mm hm" (line 623), which could be seen as a continuer, encouraging GL to carry on with her turn.

GL's advice continues with an increment, "<u>H</u>ave your tre:ats, go out enjoy yourself, have a drink, .hhh have extra:: but if you can do that and then be extra <u>good</u> (0.8) in between times," (lines 625-627). These advice TCUs are comparable with the control and cautionary tale advice formulated in the previous examples. It shows that dieting is something that you have to think about constantly and re-adjust your life to accommodate. You can go out and have a drink or a 'treat', but you must be good for the rest of the time, and in fact you must be 'extra good'. The use of the words, 'treat' and 'extra good' show dieting as morally sanctionable. This will be the focus of the next chapter, but suffice to say being a good dieter means to be in control of your eating behaviour.

GL continues by using another example of active voicing, "Nobody's saying <u>lose</u> weight (…) Because you know come on< this is life an' you know we're out (0.3) well >we've got friends Saturday night< an' we're out Tuesday Wednesday night next week er:m that's life at the moment, but if you can maintain (1.2) °it's worth doing,°" (lines 632-643). The first part of this turn, "Nobody's saying lose weight", removes GL's agency from the statement. In using the extreme case formulation, GL is orienting to two things. Firstly, the time of year, as it is a few weeks before Christmas and secondly, she is suggesting that no one would expect someone to lose weight. The next part of the turn, "Because you know come on this is life as' you know we're out", constructs GL as

someone who is reasonable. GL is doing 'being ordinary' (see Sacks, 1992). Instead of being the group leader, rather she is orienting to how she is also socialising with friends and going out, "that's life at the moment". The next part of the turn, "but if you can maintain (1.2) °it's worth doing°". This is delivered by GL as 'group leader' and is produced almost as another cautionary tale. It is not dissimilar to the previous examples where the group leader uses a cautionary take after doing alignment.

In this instance, the group leader has shown alignment by recounting a personal story about her upcoming social life, before the 'but' which indicates a change of topic. It is produced as a 'damage limitation' strategy, the notion of control and dieting are implicitly referred to here. GL is advocating living life, but at the same time, the members should exercise some level of control. At the very least, the group members should maintain their weight over the festive period. She is constructing herself as reasonable, by suggesting weight maintenance as opposed to weight loss.

During these multiple turns of advice, the group member produces minimal receipts, such as "Yeah" (lines 631, 636, 642) and "Okay" (line 644). This is reminiscent of all the previous extracts examined where the group members do not use any enthusiastic or positive uptakes to receipt the advice offered by the group leaders. I have tentatively suggested throughout this chapter that this lack of positive uptake may be attributable to the irrefutable logistical basis of the advice being offered. The advice is based on the very straightforward principles of eating less food, portion control and doing more exercise. This is somewhat common sense and not 'newsworthy', in that it is not novel information, or certainly not unheard-of advice each time a group member gets weighed. This is reminiscent of previous CA studies which show that advice is frequently minimally receipted and maybe this is how advice and receipts get done in this environment too. It is not that the group members are rejecting the advice offered, rather they do one of two things, they use minimal receipts or they assert their epistemic rights.

Consider extract 14 where the group member works to assert her epistemic priority.

Extract 14: RC-SL-Church Hall 17-11-04

```
350  GL     You've lost half,
351  GM     Oh right.
352→ GL     Tha#t's all r#ight.
```

```
353         (0.6)
354         ((scales bleep))
355         (1.1)
356 GL    No that's fi:ne,
357         (0.4)
358 GM    Jus' make [sure   ] I can get back on: er:
359 GL            [Gu::ud ]
360 GM    on track again.
361 GL    Ye[s::. ]
362 GM      [I'm  ] jus' having the odd (0.3) pudding':: you
363       see.
364         (0.6)
365 GL    [(h)Ye(h)s::. ]
366 GM    [Only         ] low fa' ones though, but obviously
367       it makes a difference dunt'it.
368         (0.6)
369 GL    (h)Yes but,
370 GM    Yeah
371 GL    I'm surprised that it makes that much
372       [differenc:e. ]
373 GM    [Ye::ah.      ]
374         (1.1)
375→ GL    Mayb:::e (0.8) just h:ave a look at (h)how muc:h
376       you're eating
377 GM    Mm
378         (0.7)
389 GL    .Hhh because I would say that it's more likely
390       that overall (0.6) you s- your portion sizes have
391       crept up a little bit.
392 GM    Yeah.=
393 GL    =>Cos just having a puddin:',< [a  ] low fat
394 GM                                   [Mm ]
395 GL    pudding, (.)
396 GL    won't put weight [on  ] you, it really won't.
397 GM                     [No. ]
398 GL    .Hh so I think it's generally (0.4) you're
399       [p'rhaps ] just
400 GM    [Yeah    ]
401 GL    eating that little bit more than you were and you
402       may have
403 GL    just have to take just a [tiny bit off just to
404 GM                             [Yeah yeah I'm going back
405       to my fromage frais     ]
406 GL    make sure you maintai:n  ]
407 GM    and banana now,
408         (0.9)
409 GM    It's safer heh heh.
410 GL    How excitin:::g.
411 GM    Yeah
412 GL    Hah hah hah
```

This extract shows how the advice giving sequence is initiated by the group leader after a series of turns from the group member outlining how she needs to get back on track.

| Assessment/ problem → identification | | Tha#t's all r#ight |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Detailing | → | Jus' make sure I can get back on: er: on track again |
| Account | → | I'm jus' having the odd (0.3) puddin':: you see |
| advice giving | → | Mayb::::e (0.8) just ha:ve a look at (h) how Muc:h you're eating |

The formulation of the news assessment by the group leader in this extract, "Tha#t's all r#ight" (line 352), seems to contain some implicit reference to expectations of *acceptable* weight loss. In the previous chapter, I considered how the news of weight maintenance was not always delivered or receipted as good news by either the group leaders or members. The group members are primarily attending these weekly meetings to lose weight. Therefore, it seems logical that any news other than weight loss has the potential to be delivered and receipted as 'bad'. In this extract and extract 7 the news concerns weight loss. However, it seems that the group leaders and members do not necessarily receipt the news of only a half pound loss as 'good'.

In the above extract, GM does not respond to the group leader's assessment of the weight loss news, rather a gap of 1.7 seconds develops. GL reformulates her previous turn, "No that's fi:ne" (line 356), where GL's "No" denies some implicit understanding about GM, based on her receipts, that she may be disappointed. In the previous extracts examined, apart from one, the group leaders have initiated the advice sequence by producing a direct question or a series of turns designed to get at the specific details necessary for the advice. In this extract it is the group member who starts to formulate getting back on track as a necessary action, "Jus' make sure I can get back on: er: on track again" (line 358 & 360). The 'again' at the end of this turn implies that although GM has lost half a pound, she may not have been as regimented with her eating as before, or that maybe she has struggled with the diet in the past.

Also, notice that GM talks about 'make sure I can', which seems to suggest getting back on track is a future projected action, rather than something she is doing. This is different to the group member's responses in extract 8 (line 53) where not only has she

recognised the action needed, she already done it. GM begins to do some accounting and starts in overlap of GL's agreement, "I'm jus' having the odd (0.3) puddin':: you see." (line 362). This TCU acts as an increment to GM's previous turn and explains why see feels she needs to get back on track. The use of the word 'jus' and 'odd' all work to construct GM as a different type of dieter from the members in extract 1 and 6 who could not control their cravings for bread and sweet stuff respectively. Instead, the use of these minimizers work to show GM to be somewhat more in control.

GM seems to feel the need to quantify her indulgence in her next turn by producing a further explanation, "Only ] low fa' ones though, but obviously it makes a difference dunt'it." (line 365-366). GM's TCUs are constructed to get a preferred response. However, GL works to manage her epistemic rights in this second position assessment, "(h) Yes but," (line 368). Recipients can manipulate their responses to reassert their claimed epistemic knowledge about a subject matter (see Raymond & Heritage, 2002). In this instance, the 'yes but,' works to show the preferred response to GM's question, but it simultaneously works to allow GL to add an increment and downgrade GM's prior turn. This is evident in the next turn "I'm surprised that it makes that much differen:ce" (line370). This turn achieves two things. Firstly, it achieves the reinstatement of GL's claim to knowledge and secondly, the use of 'that much difference' creates an element of scepticism about GM's previous accounting in relation to her admittance to having the 'odd pudding' and 'getting back on track'. The 'that much' suggests that maybe GL is unconvinced by how much GM has been deviating from the diet plan. Although this could be interpreted as somewhat confrontational, GM comes in a last item onset overlap, "Ye::ah" to show her alignment and agreement with GL's statement.

However, this second position assessment creates the space for GL to be able to introduce some advice, which she does in her next turn, "Mayb::::e (0.8) just h:ave a look at (h)how muc:h you're eating" (line 373). The reinstatement of epistemic authority has enabled GL to make relevant at this point the person-specific advice category of portion size (see Silverman et al, 1992). Earlier in this chapter, I talked about how group leaders used certain questions to gather specific information from the members before starting their advice sequence. In this instance, the advice sequence relates to portion size. This

advice TCU is analogous with the previous examples explored, as it contains a restart and a pause. This seems to support the earlier suggestion that along with news TCUs, advice TCUs are not easily told or introduced into the interaction.

GM minimally receipts this advice, "Mm" (line 373). This minimal recipiency could be seen as a continuer. GL proceeds by adding an increment to her prior turn, (as suggested by Goldberg, 1975) ".Hhh because I would say that it's more likely that overall (0.6) you s- your portion sizes have crept up a little bit." (Lines 376-377). In this turn, GL works to circumvent the previous suggestion by GM that it is her 'odd pudding' that is making the difference to her weight. GL reinstates her epistemic priority within the interaction. The 'more likely' works to undermine GM's previous attempts to explain her slow weight loss and reasserts GL as the expert, and therefore, knows best.  GM responds with a minimal continuer, 'Yeah'. GL adds another increment to her advice, ">Cos just having a pudding:'< a low fat pudding, won't put weight on you, it really won't" (lines 379-381). During this turn, GL does a pre-insert repair. She clarifies and adds more detail to her description of a pudding and chooses to repair that to a 'low fat pudding', which is how GM initially described herself as having. The 'it really won't' works to undermine GM's potential candidate account and therefore asserts GL's epistemic right as the group leader to be giving advice.

During this turn, GM overlaps twice with, "Mm" and "No". In both cases, it seems that GM has mis-projected the transition relevance place. GM goes on to add a further increment detailing portion control, ".Hh so I think it's generally (0.4) you're p'rhaps just eating that little bit more than you were and you may have just have to take just a tiny bit off just to make sure you maintai:n" (lines 383-390). The 'little bit' and 'tiny bit' both work to imply that it will not take much of a change to affect GM's weight. There is evidence of restarts and hedges with in GL's turn, which all work to manage how delicate giving and the telling of advice is when the expert role and setting are ambiguous. Although I have previously described this environment as institutional, it is less formal than a medical consultation. The membership categorization of doctor is culturally understood to immediately make appropriate some kind of authority or professionalism (Hester & Eglin, 1997). However, in this instance, although the group leader has some expert knowledge, her advice is less technical and based upon irrefutable

logic. Therefore, she has to manage giving non-technical advice whilst maintaining a friendly tone.

This turn is overlapped with GM doing an assertion of knowledge, "Yeah yeah I'm going back to my fromage frais and banana now" (lines 388-391). GM is displaying her knowledge of the right *type* of dieting food and behaviour. She avoids wholeheartedly accepting GL's advice in relation to her portion size and instead chooses to go back to her previous strategy. In producing this dessert as something she is 'going back' to, it constructs GM as someone who has got some kind of knowledge about what works for her and in doing this she reinstated her epistemic authority. It is not that they reject the advice offered by the group leaders. Rather they choose to circumvent even having to deal with it by doing this assertion of knowledge.

Analysis of the weight loss extracts shows a pattern similar to the weight gain extracts. Where the group members have lost weight, they assert their epistemic priority by displaying an assertion of knowledge when faced with an advice sequence or suggestion. The group members work to show their competence and knowledge about a certain subject. They seem unwillingly to relinquish control and admit a lack of knowledge.

However, one main difference between the weight gain and loss extracts is the mutual understanding of the news delivery as problematic. In the previous weight gain extracts both the group leaders and members mutually exclusively considered the news of gain 'bad'. There was no joint construction of the 'problem', it was implicitly seen as problematic, without the need for confirmation. However, in the weight loss extracts this was not evident. It would be logical to think that advice giving would happen less frequently when the group member has lost weight, such that the purpose of the members attending these weekly meetings it to lose weight. Therefore, when they are succeeding surely the need for advice is reduced? However, the group leaders were just as likely to launch into an advice giving sequence irrespective of whether the group members explicitly asked for help. There also seemed to be the notion of acceptable weight losses. Both the group leaders and group members implicitly told and  receipted the news of weight loss news as not necessarily bad, but not good either.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to use extracts from the data corpus from weight gain, loss and maintenance to ascertain whether there was a robust pattern as to how advice-giving gets done. There were many similarities across the data corpus, irrespective of whether the news concerned gain, loss or maintenance.

Firstly, the analysis examined extracts where the group members had gained weight and looked at how the advice was constructed and oriented to by both the leaders and the members. Throughout the extracts, there was a lack of positive uptake from the group members for any advice offered by the group leaders. I hesitantly suggested that this lack of enthusiastic uptake was due to the common sense and logical nature of the advice. Most of the advice seemed to be centred around categories relating to portion control, eating less food and doing more exercise. It could be that most of the advice is unsolicited, and also that food and eating are everyday practices over which we (and group members) might be expected to have mundane competencies, and therefore receipting the advice as 'earth-shattering' says something about their competencies

Pilnick (1998) suggested that repeated exposure to certain information can result in that it being absorbed into an existing knowledge base. It could be also be that in the case of long-standing group members, that advice information is no longer 'newsworthy', and therefore does not elicit an over-enthusiastic response, which could account for the minimal uptake of advice proffered.

Group members continuously receipted the advice minimally with the use of "Yeah" and "Mm". Group members also asserted their epistemic priority through displays of knowledge when faced with an advice sequence or suggestion, even when the group member specifically asked directly for advice, such as in extract 5. This is reminiscent of previous literature which shows that normatively there is no enthusiastic positive uptake of advice. However, it must be reiterated that minimal recipiency does not allow for speculation about possible future actions. Also, the construction of a TCU as 'advice' does not guarantee it will be received in this way by its recipient (see Pilnick, 1999). As with the news delivery TCUs in the previous chapter the advice TCUs all contained some form of interactional trouble, whether that be in the form of pauses,

restarts or self-repairs. It seems that advice, like the news, is not easily told and must be handled with delicacy.

Next, the analysis moved on to examine weight maintenance extracts to see if there were similarities between the weight gain and loss extracts. The structure for how weight maintenance advice was told was comparable with the advice sequences in both the weight gain and weight loss extracts. The news of weight maintenance was not mutually understood by the group leaders or members as either good or bad news, such as in the weight gain extracts. Therefore, the leaders and members jointly constructed the 'problem' through direct questioning and accounting. It seemed that expectations were explicitly referred to within this section of the data corpus. Group leaders asked the members if they had expected to stay the same in weight, or the group member explicitly referred to expectations in their receipt to the news delivery.

It seems that 'expectations' about weight loss can be influenced by the behaviour of the group members during the previous week. If the group members considered themselves to have been naughty and they had stayed the same in weight, they receipted the news as good news. However, if the group members had been 'good' all week and still stayed the same, both the group leaders and group members used the advice giving sequence to find out the root of the problem. As with the previous extracts, the advice TCUs were not easily constructed, nor were they receipted well. There was more evidence to support this idea that group members asserted their epistemic priority. They were reluctant to produce enthusiastic receipts to the advice offered. All the interactions normatively ended with no firm confirmation that the group member would commit to the following the advice offered, although it must be acknowledged that this can be seen as any indication of future actions of the group members.

Finally the analysis focused on weight loss extracts to see if there were any similarities. When the extracts concerned weight loss the structure of the advice sequence was similar to that present in the weight gain extracts. However, this notion of the 'problem' being a mutual understood without the need for further exploration was not present. It would seem logical that any weight loss news in this environment would be deemed as good news. However, the group leaders were just as likely to launch into an advice giving sequence when the news concerned weight loss as when it concerned gain.

However, there was this notion of 'acceptable' weight loss, which seemed to be implicit in the extracts. Both the group leaders and members constructed turns to manage this issue of how many pounds were considered acceptable.

The group members were reticent of the advice offered, just as they were when the news concerned weight gain. The advice TCUs were minimally receipted and group members relied upon assertions of knowledge. As with the weight gain advice TCUs, it seemed the group leaders had difficulty formulating advice sequences when the group member had lost weight. The advice focused again upon these categories concerning portion control and eating less. It was interesting to note that numbers or amounts became important when the group members and leaders were talking about portion control, such as in extract 11 where the group leader explicitly states "half a slice of bread" (p.172). It seems that numbers or sizes of portions eaten are an important factor when members are accounting for their eating behaviour. As with the weight gain extracts, the advice TCUs were not easily told and most contained some form of interactional trouble, such as pauses and restarts.

Although the order of this sequence may change slightly and advice can be re-introduced at a later stage in the interaction, this analysis has shown there to be a structure for how advice sequences get done in this weight environment;

→    Initial inquiry, getting on the scales and waiting for the readout from the scales;
→    Problem indicative response, the news delivery itself;
→    Focusing the problem, in the form of a direct question by group leader;
→    Problem indicative response by group member;
→    Possible candidate causes;
→    Advice giving;
→    Minimal responses or receipts to the advice.

Throughout this and the previous chapter, this idea of dieting as morally sanctionable has been evident in the extracts across the data corpus. Dieting is something to be successful at and something which requires an account to explicate a dieter's eating behaviour

should it not conform to the norm. Therefore, the next chapter focuses on the moral aspects of dieting talk and examines how it is managed and oriented to within the data.

**CHAPTER 6**

**MORALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**Introduction**

The previous three analytic chapters have followed the sequential order of how weigh-in practices are structured and done within this institutional environment of a weight management group. This chapter is constructed slightly differently to the previous three. As I noted at the start of this thesis, and notwithstanding a general interest in weight and dieting issues, I had no preconceived notions of what dieting talk would 'look like' : the structure and subject matter of the thesis was informed by my emerging analysis. During my analysis of the data corpus, notions of morality and accountability were difficult to ignore. Throughout the preceding analytic chapters, I have drawn attention to these issues as an important embedded facet of the group leaders' and members' talk about food and diet. It seems that dieting and weight are bound up with issues of morality and public accountability in this environment. Therefore, rather than exploring whether the notions of accountability and morality are present and oriented to by the leaders and members, I am starting this chapter with the idea that they are inherent to my data corpus. This chapter draws on extracts from across the data corpus to examine how the group leaders and group members orient to and manage morality and accountability in talk. In some cases I have included the whole extract for the purposes of context; however, I will be focusing only on the parts in which these issues become relevant.

I have suggested in preceding chapters that the group leaders and members construct dieting practices as accountable matters, for example, "how d'you think you've *done* darlin'" "I've been *bad* this week", "after what I've done this week", and "I haven't eaten anything extra or anything". Account-telling is accomplished interactionally, whereby accounts are provided for both prior and post 'weigh-ins' to explain their respective weight loss or gain. Accounting has been shown to do certain business in talk. Participants can use accounts to interactionally construct preferred meanings for problematic events, to construct how others see them and their actions (Buttny, 1993;

Duck & Pond, 1999). The group members' use of categories, descriptions and scripts all work to produce moral sense (cf. Stokoe & Edwards, in press)

In conjunction with members using categories, successful dieting is oriented to as an accomplishment, "well *done*", "ooh great", "Oh it's not too bad then", in which "any consideration of the accountability of social conduct brings directly into focus moral dimensions of language use" (Drew, 1998, p.295). The issues surrounding morality and food are also interesting theoretically. Morality can be seen as an intrinsic quality of everyday social interaction. When analysing language it is difficult to avoid expressions that do not carry some form of moral meaning (cf: Bergmann, 1998). This is of particular interest when examining interaction about food. It seems talk, in weight management groups, is saturated with moral work ("good", "virtuous", "*well* done").

Morality can be seen as an intrinsic quality of everyday social interaction. When analysing language it is difficult to avoid expressions that do not carry some form of moral meaning (cf: Bergmann, 1998). This is of particular interest when examining interaction about food. It seems talk, in weight management groups, is saturated with moral work ("good", "virtuous", "*well* done").

Previous works concerning the study of moral discourse have either been tied up with referring to moral discourse from within a normative frame of reference, or, morality has been treated in a positivistic manner, something which can be studied from a decontextualized, theoretical basis (Bergmann, 1998). However, it has been suggested that morality must be analysed as something which is interactively achieved and negotiated through discourse (Bergmann, 1998; Drew, 1998; Stokoe & Edwards, in press).

The moral work of language can be both implicitly or explicitly accomplished within talk. However, this distinction could be seen to create methodological issues for the analysts (Drew, 1998), for example, if there is no overt orientation by the speakers to the presence of this moral work within the talk, (that is to say they are implicit), are we (as analysts) right to study it within the parameters of moral work? Stokoe & Edwards (in press) suggest focusing on how participants manage to blend morality or moral evaluations with ordinary accounts and descriptions of everyday events, which they refer to as 'mundane morality' (p. 1)

Group members oriented to morality through the practices of accountability: They produced accounts with reference to a moral evaluation, such as blame or culpability. Sometimes an account was produced to circumvent being held publicly accountable for the event or action. It became apparent that both the group leaders and group members could not orient to themselves, their behaviour or food without it being constructed within a moral or accountable framework. The group members frequently used what in poetics is called a "*transferred epithet*" to refer to and classify themselves or food as '*bad*' or '*naughty*'. A transferred epithet is "an adjective modifying a noun which it cannot logically modify, yet which works because the metaphorical meaning remains clear" (Clark, 2001, p.1). In this environment this poetic device was employed by the group members to transfer the naughtiness or badness from the food to themselves, or vice versa. Therefore, if 'naughtiness' is a moral category, and some item of food is categorised as '*naughty*', the naughtiness is derived from the person for eating it. This analytic notion of transferred epithet will be explored within this chapter.

Both group members and leaders transferred morality to objects of desire and repression, such that chocolate becomes 'sinful' or 'naughty' in some way. Food in this context is often constructed as or referred to as a '*treat*', along with the implication that 'treats' are given to reward 'good' behaviour or actions. Therefore, food in this institutional environment is not neutral. Rather it is constructed and oriented to by both the group leaders and group members as something which can 'be' something, other than just food.

Health debates have been shown to be important in constructing definitions of moral character, such that, to be healthy is to be a 'good' person (Benford & Gough, 2006; Crawford, 1994; Crossley, 2002). In conjunction with this, a discourse of 'good' and 'bad' foods is available both in wider society and also other institutions for people to make moral judgments about food choice. Smith (2002) found that women prisoners made distinctions between 'good' healthy foods, which included fruit and vegetables, in contrast to greasy food such as crisps, ice-cream and chocolate that were categorized as 'bad', unhealthy foods . Therefore, if we assume that this notion of healthy and unhealthy foods is a discourse that people use to perform certain business in talk, it will be

interesting to see how women who are participating in a diet account for eating different *types* of foods that are categorizable in moral ways.

Individuals can also produce '*defensive detailing*' (Drew, 1998), where speakers produce extensive detailing to produce an account or description of an event as 'trouble' rather than a transgression on their part. In doing so, they attempt to avoid a possible moral judgment or evaluation. Such that, a person may produce an account of being ill, as opposed to just non-attendance in an explanation of being late or not showing up at all, therefore hopefully discourage any possible moral judgment.

So, defensive detailing works to allow the speaker to manage the implications of their own conversational conduct and moral behaviour. Without the use of defensive detailing participants may otherwise be open to the accusation of a transgression (cf. Drew, 1998). The use of this rhetorical device has been observed in institutional environments, such as medical encounters. The patient's detailing is implicitly produced to construct themselves as being a particular type of person, such as a 'good patient', when their actions could be deemed the opposite (Bergmann & Wiltschek, 1992; Heritage & Sefi, 1992). This chapter will therefore examine if the group members work to construct themselves as 'good' dieters.

**Analysis**

Consider extract 1 where the group member has gone up two pounds in weight. Both the group leader and member deploy a notion of 'naughtiness' and contrast 'good' and 'bad' food.

Extract 1: RC-SL-Church Hall 03-11-04

```
597              (1.1)
598    GL    ↑Hi=
599    GM    =Hel::lo.
600              (0.3)
601    GL    Tha::nk you very=much, right*=Lisa::
602              (4.0)
603          ((Scales bleep))
604              (1.3)
605    GL    Right it's gone :up two.
606    GM    O:::h. again, I keep going up-down, up-do::wn.
607          ((Scales bleep))
608    GL    But you were awa:y.
609              (0.8)
610    GM    [Ye::ah          ]
```

```
611     GL    [Have you been ] actually away-away o:r,
612     GM    We went to France for sort of only a day (0.2) [so:  ]
613     GL                                                   [Right]
614            (0.7)
615 →   GM    It's very ha:rd not to eat (0.5)nicer fo:od over there.
616     GL    Tch. oh I do know #that*.
617     GM    Uh::m (0.4) and I've not been very good at the weekend::
618            (0.7) so:::
619            (1.2)
620     GL    So how can you get yourself back on track.
621            (2.2)
622 →   GM    Uh::m not °being° (0.9) °naughty°
623            (0.9)
624     GL    But ho:w, (0.8) because it's very-it's very easy to stand
625           there and say I'm not going to be naughty,
626     GM    Ye::ah.
627            (0.8)
628     GL    But (0.3) what can you <do> to stop yourself being
629           °naughty°.
630            (2.4)
631     GM    As in:
632            (1.7)
633 →   GM    Well it's me I'm putting the food in my mouth
634           [so   ]
635     GL    [Right ]
636     GM    I've got to stop doing that,
637     GL    Right.
638     GM    So::
638            (0.6)
639     GM    ↑Uh::m I do find it very hard when we're out and about to
640           find fo:od that (2.1) I can eat that I-that I'm getting
641           what
642     GL    Yes=
643     GM    Sort of [calorie] intake, other than buying packeted
645     GL            [Yep    ]
646     GM    sandwiches.
647            (0.7)
648     GL    So:: (0.4) can you take nibbly bits with you [so   ]  that
649     GM                                                 [↑Yeah]
650     GL    if you do stop,
651            (0.3)
652     GM    ↑Uh:m
653            (0.3)
654 →   GL    You're less likely [to eat ] bad stuff.
655     GM                       [Yeah,  ]
656           Yeah=
657     GL    =But that's the way to do it.
658     GM    Mm
659            (0.3)
660     GL    If you jus:' take >I don't know,< some Thai bites like
661           we've got on there=
662     GM    =Yeah
663     GL    Or something like that, so that (0.5) when you stop and
664           have a coffee or whatever,
665     GM    Ye:ah.
666 →   GL    Yes you might have something but you're not going to eat
667           too much.
```

```
668   GM   Mm.
669   GL   And then you control it [better.  ]
670   GM                           [It's the ] weekends I find the
671        hardest.
672   GL   Yeah ever#ybody does.
673   GM   Yeah I'm fine during the week because I'm-I'm at wo:rk and
674        I just have a sandwich or a salad cos I don't have time to
675        go (0.6) anywhere else but it's the weekend I find (0.6)
676        when we are (1.2) more out.
678   GL   I kno#w it's,
679              (0.3)
680   GM   Yeah
681   GL   It's very-very difficult (0.5) but* (0.3) if you want once
682        get yourself over the first (0.4) weekend and you realise
683        that you've actually had (.) a really good time [without ]
684   GM                                                   [Yeah    ]
685   GL   being naughty,
686   GM   Mm
687   GL   >Then you know that you can do it the next week.<
688   GM   Yes yeah
689   GL   Okay,
690   GM   Yeah
691              (0.6)
692   GM   I'll try ha#:rd.
```

The construction of food as something that is not necessarily neutral starts after the news delivery of weight gain, "It's very ha:rd not to eat (0.5)nicer fo:od over there."(line 615). Although the food is not explicitly referred to as 'bad' the fact that it is 'very hard not to eat' it, makes it immediately hearable as something which is difficult to resist. The description 'nicer' is interesting, in that it fits a notion that 'bad' food is more pleasant, and therefore tempting, than 'good' food (see James, 1990). There is a strong sense in which 'bad for your body' is associated with 'good to eat', just as in religious morality, there is a notion that sin is pleasurable and tempting. Why would anyone eat 'bad' food if it were not just what they want? Movies like "Chocolat" and "Babette's Feast" trade on this notion of sumptuous, rich food being naughty but nice, as does the phrase "naughty but nice"!

GM's turn is bound up with the language of desire and restraint, her construction and intonational emphasis of 'it's very ha:rd' implies that the food had an element of indulgence, in that it is nice to eat, and tempting. GL's turn functions to do two things. Firstly, she responds by aligning with GM's observation, "Tch. oh I do know #that*." (line 616). Secondly, GL's turn asserts her epistemological knowledge by not acknowledging GM's prior turn as 'news', she is demonstrating she already knew that the

food abroad is 'nicer' and therefore more difficult to resist. However, GL's alignment shows that it is an understandable failure on GM's part.

GM's next turn functions as an addition to the account in progress at line 615, it adds further detail to her evolving narrative about her eating behaviour, without responding at all to GL's turn at line 616, "Uh::m (0.4) and I've not been very good at the weekend:: (0.7) so:::" (lines 617-618). GM describes herself as 'not been very good'. This is a neat example of where the group member defines *her own actions* as bad. The badness of her conduct is tied to categories of food that she is not supposed to eat while on her diet. She can be bad, or naughty, for eating these categories of food. There is no explication of what GM means by 'not been very *good*'. But the implication is that maybe she has eaten foods which are not on the diet.

Although GM does not explicitly say she has been bad, by constructing herself as, 'not very *good*' the inference is that must have been *bad*. This is supported by the 'stand alone so' produced at the end of her turn (Raymond, 2004). GM uses the 'so' to allow GL to make the connection between what is not said and the subsequent implication. It also shows that this group member constructs herself as 'good' or 'bad' dependent upon the food she has consumed. This performs some sort of veiled morality (Bergmann, 1992), in that, the embedded implication is that there are 'good' and 'bad' foods and 'good' and 'bad' dieters.

GL does not explicitly align with or refute GM's construction or herself as bad, but in her next turn she projects a future action concerning changing GM's eating behaviour, "So how can you get yourself back on track." (line 620). This formulation implies that there are also 'good' and 'bad' ways of behaving in relation to dieting. Getting 'back on track' suggests that dieting requires an element of being in control; the metaphor is that of a train or tram being guided and constrained by fixed lines, or a traveller sticking to the beaten path and not wandering into danger or getting lost. There is an element of presupposition about this formulation. GL presupposes that getting back on track is the thing that GM will want to do, such that this is behaviour that a 'good' dieter would want to do.

GM's response, "Uh::m not °being° (0.9) °naughty°" (line 622) further displays this notion of accountability and moral dimension of food talk. In this extract, the group

member produces the end of this turn with noticeable softness. Although it is impossible to assign definite meaning to this, it would seem that the group member is producing this to be hearable as some kind of confession. GM's quiet enunciation, coupled with the brief formulaic and obvious content of her reply, suggests an orientation to the notion that it is something she really ought to know, something she has been told, or told herself, many times – a basic rule, nothing new.

The use of the word '*naughty*' implies an element of intentionality. The action is done knowingly, in this instance; GM has knowingly eaten the 'nicer food'. 'Naughty' is part of a wider generic category of words that can be used in reference to children and their behaviour. However, the word is also used intertextually in the diet industry, 'naughty but nice'. This association enables the group members to *borrow* the word to describe their eating behaviour. It downgrades the seriousness of the act of eating bad food and makes it hearable within this childish, mischievous context. Thus there is a strong association between these moral discourses of 'naughty', the way people talk to and socialize children, and the position of these women as accountable to the GL for conforming to the rules. It could be a way of dealing ironically with that kind of asymmetry, when it the person is not a child answering their mother, but two adults where the follower is, after all, paying the leader for their advice.

GL aligns with this description of GM as 'naughty', and asks her how she is going to stop herself being naughty, "But ho:w, (0.8) because it's very-it's very easy to stand there and say I'm not going to be naughty, But (0.3) what can you <do> to stop yourself being °naughty°." (lines 624-628). In these multiple TCUs GL acknowledges how 'very very easy' it is to *say* you are going to stick to a diet, where the implication is that sticking to a diet is in practice a difficult thing to do. It also works with a normative contrast between words and deeds, such that good dieters need to do more than just *say* they are going to take responsibility for their weight, they have to translate those words into actions. Therefore, GL asks for practical suggestions for how GM can stop herself 'being naughty'.

GM follows these multiple TCUs with an admission of responsibility and accountability for her weight gain, "Well it's me I'm putting the food in my mouth so I've got to stop doing that," (Lines 633-636). GM orients to agency and her

accountability, which is further supported by the emphasis on 'me'. GM also produces a projected future action about what she must do to prevent continuing to gain weight. This shows how the group member produces turns that relate implicitly or in this case explicitly to this notion of accountability. It seems that in this environment certain behaviours must be *accounted for*, in this case, behaviour that has resulted in weight gain.

The reference to 'good' or 'bad' food is reintroduced later in the interaction. However, it is introduced by the group leader, rather than the group member, "You're less likely to eat bad stuff." (line 654). It is interesting that this formulation by GL produces the reference to food as 'bad stuff'. This more generic, vague formulation does not cause any trouble for GM, she responds with 'Yeah', which suggests that although GL has not been specific in her description, GM knows exactly what 'bad stuff' refers to in this environment.

The notion of control in relation to food choices and portion sizes was examined in detail in the prior chapter on advice giving. In this extract, the group leader moves on to touch upon control, "Yes you might have something but you're not going to eat too much. And then you control it better."(lines 666-669). This notion of portion size and control performs some moral business. Eating too much implies an element of gluttony. Cultural ideals about gluttony and laziness are not a preoccupation of western modernity, but echo the 'deadly sins' of a religious morality of the dangers of desire, and the need to resist temptation and the pleasures of the flesh. The surplus of rich food, lack of exercise and urban living were seen as the reasons for much of the illness which pervaded the 17th century. Gluttony, over indulgence of rich foods and lack of exercise were seen to go against 'nature', all of which interfered with natural digestion processes, "when mankind was simple, plain, honest and frugal, there were few or no diseases" (Cheyne, 1733, p.174).

In the weight management environment, then, it seems that overeating still evokes this wider moral framework. As a dieter, being in control not only of what food one eats, but also the amount of food, is oriented to by both the group leaders and group members as being important, and involving notions of resistance to temptation, which is "very very difficult" (line 681).

In extract 2 below, the group member explicitly refers to herself as 'naughty'.

Extract 2: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
660    GL    =That's cruel (0.5) Ready?
661 →  GM    >I'm ready< (0.9) question is whether you are=[I've been
662                                                        [((scales
663          bleep)) ]
664 →  GM    naughty,]
665    GL    You've got away with it=you have stayed the same,
666    GM    ↑↑Have ↑I↓,
667 →  GL    Ye:ah, so you haven't been that naughty.
668    GM    I have I had a chocolate bar last night,
669    GL    Wo::w
670    GM    I kno:w and two chocolates today at work,
671          (0.7) 'cos I thought I'd been °bad° (1.5) so I treated
672          myself, (2.2) so that's not bad=
673    GL    =That's fine, (0.9) .hhh two chocolates won't put weight on
674          you
675               (0.7)
676    GM    But I had a chocolate bar and a >packet of crisps as well<
677          four glasses of wine and two whiskeys,
678               (1.1)
679    GL    Now that will put weight on you, you see whhh, that's not
680          what you sai::d hah hah hah
681               (1.1)
682    GM    You only get half the story
```

In this extract, GM describes herself as 'naughty' prior to the news delivery (line 661-662). This formulation is slightly different from how the group member used the word in the previous extract. In Extract 1, GM used 'not being naughty' in formulating a strategy for changing her eating behaviour. However, here GM explicitly states, "I've been naughty,". This constructs GM as someone who has deliberately or intentionally broken the diet. However, the use of the word 'naughty' implies this childish element, as in the previous example, which suggests GM is in a position to take the admission lightly. Note, how GM's use of the word 'naughty' invokes the domain of child socialization. It echoes something about the relationship between GM and GL, while doing so in a way that is hearably light and ironic, given that they are both adults and GL is not really in a position of clear authority over GM.

GL produces the 'stay same' news delivery and subsequently does an assessment, "Ye:ah, so you haven't been that naughty." (line 667). In this turn GL does not fully align with GM's prior assessment of herself as 'naughty'. The insertion of the word 'that' before the 'naughty' implies that even if GM has been 'naughty' she must have exercised some level of restraint. GM goes on to refute this assessment of herself as not naughty by

producing a narrative which outlines all the things that she has eaten which have led her to classify herself as 'naughty'. She firstly confesses to eating a chocolate bar, "I have I had a chocolate bar last night," (line 668). Chocolate is one of those types of food which is related to sinful, indulgent but pleasurable behaviour, and certainly is not a food which is necessarily associated with 'good' dieting behaviour (see Benford & Gough, 2006).

However GL's response, "Wo::w" (line 669) suggests that this confession is not enough to warrant GM as 'naughty'. In response to this assessment, GM produces further evidence of her naughtiness, "I kno:w and two chocolates today at work, (0.7) 'cos I thought I'd been °bad° (1.5) so I treated myself, (2.2) so that's not bad=" (lines 670-672). Here the chocolate is oriented to as a 'treat'. A 'treat' by its very nature represents occasionality and is something that usually rewards 'good' behaviour. GM reformulates and repairs the construction of herself from 'naughty' to 'bad'. By providing the specific number of chocolates she ate, GM does defensive detailing. GM is working to avoid being accused of eating a whole box of chocolates; rather she was restrained in only eating two.

It is at this point that GL asserts her epistemic knowledge as group leader. By displaying that GM's behaviour firstly does not justify the label 'naughty' and secondly is not 'naughty' enough to make a difference to her weight (lines 673-674), GL works to reject the narrative of 'naughtiness' thus far. In response to this, GM produces a further list of things that she has eaten and drunk, which includes 'chocolate, crisps, wine and whiskey' (lines 676-677). GL responds by orienting to this list as definitely things that will affect GM's weight, "Now that will put weight on you, you see whhh, that's not what you sai::d hah hah hah" (line 679-680). This implies that had GL been told the truth then she would have aligned fully with GM's assessment of herself as 'naughty'. These TCUs construct eating behaviour as something which can include the odd treat but needs to be kept in control. If eating behaviour is allowed to get out of control then it will sabotage the group member's weight. This constructs eating behaviour as an accountable matter and a morally sanctionable one. So that dieting is constructed and oriented to as something this has consequences, if it is not adhered to properly.

Note also the very nice expression "you've got away with it" (line 665). This does some useful accountability work. It implies that GL has indeed done something bad,

preserving the category 'bad' or 'naughty' for food (chocolate) that does not seem in this case to have produced weight gain. 'Getting away with it' is a formulation that means we do not have to now shift chocolate onto the 'good' list, as non-fattening. It is a device for maintaining a line of advice, or categories of right and wrong eating, in the face of counter evidence. You see the same kind of comment when a sportsman makes an error but without bad consequences – like a cricketer missing a shot but the ball misses his wicket - or anywhere else in life when mistakes and misdemeanours do not reap their expected negative rewards; mundane morality in action.

Extracts 3, 4, 5 and 6 below all show further examples of how both group leaders and members use this construction of being naughty not only in relation to their eating behaviour and also how they use it to classify themselves as 'naughty'.

Extract 3: RC-JS-School hall 05-04-04

```
15    GM     Not this-evening makes a'-difference,
16 →         I've been bad this we£e↑k,
```

Extract 4: RC-SP-Baptist Church 12-11-04

```
13    GM    .Hh nuthin:g re:ally:, in fact I feel I've been
14          better this we:ek,
15               (1.3)
16 →  GM    And I was a bi'- (0.4) naughty last we:ek:.
```

Extract 5: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
244   GM    and I hadn't really had one (0.6) and I jus'=thought .tcha
245         you've been so good have a mince pie >and then it was just<
246         have another arhh have another one hah hah so I was a bit
247 →       naughty yesterday, but- but that's not too bad,
```

Extract 6: RC-SL-Golf

```
30 →   GM   .Hhh I didn't ha:ve->I didn't have< a b:ad week but I
31          didn't have a good week.
```

Extracts 3 to 6 show how the group members use both being 'bad' and 'naughty' to orient not only to their eating behaviour, but also to how they construct the week itself. Therefore, the 'badness' and 'naughtiness' can be constructed as agentive, to refer to themselves, or transferred to the week, which somehow circumvents their involvement in it. In extract 7 below, the group member has put on five pounds in weight. Note how both the group leader and member construct her behaviour as morally accountable.

Extract 7: RC-JS-School Hall 10-06-04:

```
3      GL     Gonna' hate ↓me, (0.2) s'gone up five pounds.=
4      GM     =.Hhh↑o::hh (0.5)
5      GL     've you [been away again]
6      GM            [Ooo:ooooo,:::::::: ] ((carries on for 1.3))
7      GL     .whh ooh de:ar.
8      GM     °↑~Oh↓: ↑↑dear~°=
9   →  GL     =Oh that's a shame because you did so we:ll
10     GM     Oh right well there we are=
11     GL     =Right
12            (0.5)
13  →  GM     Teaches me a lesson again doesn't it
14            (1.1)
15     GL     °Yes° [~Oh ~sor:ry],
16     GM           [.Tch       ]
17            (0.8)
18  →  GM     Well=it's hardly your fault heh
19            (0.5
20     GL     No but i::t's (0.8) it's a shame [can
21     GM                                      [have to watch it
22            ]
23     GL     you  ]
24     GL     Yes, .hhh I think it does sho:w that
25            (1.3)
26     GL     >The prob-< the thing with this is-is that it is a
27            lifetime commitment,
28     GM     Mmm mmm
29  →  GL     You don't have to watch what you eat every minute of
30            every day but you have to be ve:ry in contr:ol
31            (0.7)
32     GL     [Really]
33     GM     [Mmm   ] mm
34     GL     all the time
35     GM     °Yeah°
36     GL     Otherwise it's so easy [to let it slip]
37     GM                            [Yeah  yeah    ]
38            °that's the thing°
39     GL     So (h) uh:m
40  →  GM     °Have to° repent*
41     GL     Well you know you can
42     GM     Yeah
```

```
43   GL    When you set your mind to it you [do it]
44   GM                                     [Yeah ]
45   GL    fantastically well
46            (0.8)
47   GM    ↑Yeah↑
48   GL    So go for it
49   GM    Okay
50   GL    (h)Okay
```

What is immediately apparent about the group leader's first turn is that she constructs her turn to imply that she is some way responsible for the impending news delivery, "Gonna' hate ↓me," (line 3). The group leader forecasts the bad news as something she personally should be hated for. This seems somewhat extreme, but is reminiscent of past work which has examined how often the news teller can be blamed for a bad news delivery (see Maynard, 2003). Both the group leader and member assess the news, ".whh ooh de:ar." and "°↑~Oh↓: ↑↑dear~°=" (lines 8 and 9).

GL's following turn, "=Oh that's a shame because you did so we:ll.." (line 9) orients to the weight gain as something that GM needs to feel disappointed about. The construction of the second TCU, 'did so well' juxtaposes her past behaviour as 'good', but her present behaviour as 'not so good'. It implies that the group member is no longer succeeding as 'good dieter'. Part of being a successful dieter in this environment means fulfilling certain requirements, one of which is continued weight loss. Not adhering to this makes the group member's behaviour accountable and morally sanctionable.

Although these turns orient to the word 'shame', which has strong moral associations, they are constructed to present the group member's *performance* as shameful, not her personally. GL is not constructing GM as shameful, rather the fact that she has gained as a shame, since she had been losing weight up until that point. Literally, she says "*that's* a shame" meaning the news, the weight gain. It is a description in which the "shame" is grammatically attached to the event or news, to "that", rather than the person. This is a small grammatical observation, but it is what gives the sense that the "shame" is somewhat displaced from the person to the events. There is also the immediate, contrasting assessment of the person herself, "because *you did so we:ll*" – it is as if GM is doing well, but the results are somehow going wrong; mundane morality in action.

GM's response, "Oh right well there we are=" (line 10) produces her news assessment to circumscribe any obligation concerning public accountability. She accepts that the news is bad and does not feel the need to produce some kind of account for the weight gain. Her next turn, "Teaches me a lesson again doesn't it" (line 13) is interesting. The formulation of 'Teaches me a lesson' suggests that GM's weight gain represents some form of punishment for her eating behaviour. Individuals are normally 'taught a lesson' after they have broken the rules or behaved badly, and have to suffer the consequences. In this instance the lesson is that bad eating behaviour results in weight gain and GM therefore needs to be more vigilant about her eating behaviour.

The use of the word 'again' suggests that this is not the first time that this particular group member has gained weight and implies that she has not heeded the lesson. The tag question after the TCU, "doesn't it" functions to invite the group leader to align with this prior assessment. This also supports this notion that both the group member and the leader are involved in this construction of weight gain, loss or maintenance as something which is accountable.

After a gap of 1.1 seconds, GL does indeed align with GM's previous turn, "°Yes° ~Oh ~sor:ry," (line 15). Note that the group leader's delivery of the 'yes' TCU is produced at a much quieter tone than the previous talk. This suggests that GL is almost reluctant to align with GM's prior assessment about the weight gain 'teaching her a lesson'. Previous literature has shown that participants tend not to explicitly do moral judgments of other's actions or behaviour (see Drew, 1998). The softness of GL's response could be orienting to that norm. Also, the membership category of group leader makes immediately relevant certain roles, obligations and expectations. The GL is primarily there to facilitate weight loss. Therefore, if their members are not succeeding there is some accountability for the group leader, which may go some way to explain her opening turn.

However, in conjunction with this role, the leader must also delicately manage dealing with paying customers who could withdraw their business at any time. Consequently, the group leaders must manage making the women accountable for their weight gain or maintenance without ostracising them. This multiple role may account for why the 'yes' is produced at a noticeably quieter tone. This is further supported by her

following TCU, "~Oh ~sor:ry" (line 15). It is not just a straightforward case of GL having some sort of authority here. GL must manage some delicate relationship issues here, with regard to issues of authority, and the basis on which GL can condemn or instruct GM's conduct. This is different to being authoritative in the role of a parent with your child.

The 'Oh' in this TCU is delivered with wobbly intonation (see Hepburn, 2004), which seems to suggest that GL is having some kind of trouble in producing this turn, which seems to be conveying some kind of concern, upset or caring. This understanding is supported by the 'sorry' which follows the 'oh'. '*Oh*'-prefaced responses to assessments have been shown to convey a stance to the prior speaker's turn in which the second speaker claims to have a perspective and opinion that is epistemically independent of the first (Heritage, in press). When making second assessments, it works to display that the second speaker's agreement is not merely a seconding, but was formed prior to hearing the first assessment (ibid.). In this instance, GL produces the *oh*-prefaced second assessment in response to the weight gain news, something which she forecast as bad news prior to the news delivery. GL's use of the word 'sorry' suggests that she feels some kind of responsibility or accountability for the news of weight gain.

After a gap of 0.8 seconds (line 17), GM responds with, "Well=it's hardly your fault heh" (line 18). "Well"-prefaced statements normatively pre-empt justifications or accounts (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). In this instance, GM produces her turn to somewhat downgrade GL's prior pronouncement of being 'sorry'. It functions to remove the agency or responsibility from GL. GM's use of the word 'fault' does moral work, implying some kind of blame for the situation or action, in this case the weight gain. It works to firstly reassure GL that she, as the group member, does hold GL accountable for her possible weight gain whilst at the same time it somehow releases GL from the burden of feeling blameworthy.

GM ends her TCU with a laughter particle. Laughter within a troubles telling TCU demonstrates the troubles-teller is in a position to take that telling lightly, as Jefferson calls it, "*troubles- resistive*" (see Jefferson, 1984b, p. 367). However, normatively the trouble recipient does not respond by aligning with the laughter, rather they produce a serious response, indicating they are *troubles receptive*. It is interesting to

note that the laughter particle occurs after the implicit suggestion that GL is somewhat to blame for the weight gain. GL does not participate in the laughter and rather treats the implicit suggestion as serious, "No but i::t's (0.8) it's a shame can" (line 20). The 'no' is in response to the suggestion that GL has no responsibility or blame for the weight gain. It functions to reassert her epistemic priority.

In the previous chapter, I talked about how both the group leaders and members work to assert their competence and epistemic priority in relation to advice giving. In this instance, the group leader is explicitly making it known she is aware she is not to blame for any weight gain. Although this seems to be in direct contrast to GL's construction of the pre news delivery forecast. The use of the word 'shame' again does moral work. The 'it's' seems to function to reduce some of GM's agency. This construction makes it hearable as the weight gain and situation is something to be sorry about rather than GM's actions. .

In her next turn, GM reclaims her agency, "have to watch it" (line 21) which also orients to dieting as something which she has to be vigilant about. It is something which has to be 'watched' and she constructs dieting as something she has to be in control of. GL aligns with this construction in her following turns, "You don't have to watch what you eat every minute of every day but you <u>have</u> to be <u>ve:ry</u> in <u>contr:ol</u> really all the time" (lines 29-34). In these multiple TCUs, GL contradicts herself. She starts off by telling GM that she does not have to watch what eats 'every minute of everyday' and then ends by saying GM has to be 'very in control really all the time'. GL uses extreme case formulations, "every minute of every day". Extreme case formulations have been shown to perform certain business in talk. Individuals can use them to defend their positions or stance, to challenge a counter argument and also to demonstrate 'consensus formulations', which circumvent a possible accusation of investment (see Edwards & Potter, 1992; Hutchby & Woofitt, 1998; Pomerantz, 1986; Potter, 1996). By formulating her turns with ECFs, GL is orienting to GM's prior turn where she refers to 'watching it' and defends her position about group members having to watch portion control. The evidence for adhering to GL's advice is the very fact that this group member has put on five pounds in weight.

GL starts to produce a counter argument, "you don't have", which implies that GM does not have to so vigilant. However, the 'but' projects possible bad news, or a negative increment to GL's turn. This is where the contradiction occurs, "but you have to be ve:ry in contr:ol really all the time". Again GL produces extreme case formulations and the emphasis on 'control' performs moral business. GL's turns orients and constructs dieting as something which firstly, the members must be in control of all the time and secondly something which requires commitment and dedication. This whole turn implicitly constructs dieters as certain *types* of people who must be in control of their eating behaviour all the time. GL does a further increment to this moral construction of dieting behaviour in her subsequent turns, "Otherwise it's so easy to let it slip°that's the thing°" (lines 36-38). This adds to this whole construction of dieting as something which is fragile or precarious if not watched constantly.

GM responds with, "°Have to° repent*" (line 40). The use of 'repent' is interesting here. It has both religious and moral overtones, suggesting that GM needs to be remorseful and be forgiven for some sinful action. This implies that group members who break the diet should be remorseful of their behaviour. This supports GM's earlier reference to the weight gain teaching her a lesson, and adhering to GL's advice about being 'very in control'. All these turns work to construct dieting as not only an accountable, but an action that is subject to being morally sanctionable.

In summary, extracts 1 to 7 show how the notion of morality and accountable seem to be bound up with dieting talk in this commercial weight management group. Both the group leaders and members construct their talk about food in these terms. However, they not only refer to food in these terms, but the group members describe *themselves* as 'naughty'. This suggests a possible way of how morality and accountability gets done in this institutional environment. Consider extract 8, in this extract food is constructed and oriented to as a 'treat' by the group leader and the group member is constructed as 'being bad'.

Extract 8: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
589    GL     ↑>Helen<, ↑>hello<
590              (1.7)
591    GL     >Thank you very much=how are you?<
```

```
592   GM    I'm fine thank yo:u
593   GL    Good
594               (4.9)
595         ((scales bleep))
596   GL    It's down ↑half a ↑pound,
597   GM    ↑Is it↑ really honestly heh
598   GL    Really ↑honestly↑, [truthfully  ]
599 → GM                       [I'm shocked ] [I've had a bad  ] week
600                                           [((scales bleep))]
601   GM    as we(h)ll, heh heh
602               (0.7)
603   GL    Right
604               (0.5)
605   GM    Heh
606               (0.4)
607   GL    ↓Well (0.9) if yo::::u (1.5) er:: °hang on a minute I'm,
608         this has all gone completely to pot°
609   GM    Hhh
610               (0.4)
611 → GL    If yo:::u (1.6) if you carry <on> (0.4) being ba#d
612   GM    Mm
613   GL    then it will go on,
614               (0.4)
615   GM    Right.
616               (0.7)
617   GL    If you can go phew got a#way with that, .hh (1.2) a:nd try
618         get >just a little bit back on track again<  (1.4) °it won't
619         be so bad°
620   GM    Right okay,
621   GL    It's: it's just: (1.3) taking it gently (0.7) now,
622   GM    Mm hm
623               (0.9)
624 → GL    Have your tre:ats, go out enjoy yourself, have a drink,
625         .hhh have extra:: but if you can do that and then be extra
626         good (0.8) in between times,
627   GM    Mmm
628   GL    ↑then you can maintain.
629               (0.3)
630   GM    Yeah
631   GL    Nobody's saying lose weight
632   GM    Hhhh
633   GL    Because >you know come on< this is life an'
634   GM    Yeah
635   GL    you know we're out (0.3) well >we've got friends Saturday
636         night< an' we're out Tuesday Wednesday night [next week ]
637   GM                                                 [Yeah      ]
638   GL    Uh:m that's life at the moment,
639   GM    Yeah
640   GL    but if you can maintain (1.2) °it's worth doing,°
641   GM    Okay
642   GL    So well done that's all right,
```

The group member produces the first reference to what could be seen as talk which performs moral work, "I'm shocked I've had a bad week" (line 599). GM explicitly states she has had a 'bad week' and being 'shocked' at her weight loss. This turn provides another example of how group members use a 'transferred epithet'. By describing the *week* as bad, GM avoids focusing upon what she has actually done. She provides no further explication about what constitutes a 'bad week', but the news receipt of 'shock' about her weight loss implies, relevantly to this context, something about what she has been eating.

It becomes clear from the following turns that GL hears it as referring to GM's eating behaviour, "If yo:::u (1.6) if you carry <on> (0.4) being ba#d then it will go on," (line 611-613). Note that GL changes the focus of the '*badness*'. When GM produces her turn, she orients to having a 'bad week'. However, when GL responds, she orients to GM herself being 'bad'. This functions to place the accountability and responsibility of weight loss firmly with the group member. It constructs eating as an accountable and morally sanctionable activity. This turn is constructed almost as a *cautionary moral tale* or *fable*. The moral message is, being bad is not something that dieters should do, and maybe more importantly, if the badness continues then the result will be weight gain, "it will go on". This is reminiscent of the previous extract, whereby the lesson was that bad eating behaviour results in weight gain.

By including the *consequences* of not being good, GL works to further this construction of bad dieting behaviour as punishable. This is further supported by GL's subsequent turns, "If you can go phew got a#way with that, .hh (1.2) a:nd try get >just a little bit back on track again< (1.4) °it won't be so bad°" (lines 617-619). GL seems to be presenting GM with a damage limitation strategy for dealing with her lapse from good eating behaviour. GL's orientation to 'phew got a#way with that', seems to suggest that GM has been lucky this time, even though she has deviated from good eating behaviour, she has escaped without suffering the consequences. This is analogous with the previous remarks where the group leader talked about "getting away with" deviating from the diet. However the following part of the turn uses a metaphor referring to getting 'back on track' and then 'it won't be so bad'. This further works to construct dieting and eating

behaviour as something which must be adhered to all the time, but if group members should deviate then the strategy is to get back on track.

GL continues this notion of control in her following turn where she constructs food as a 'treat', "Have your tre:ats, go out enjoy yourself, have a drink, .hhh have extra:: but if you can do that and then be extra good (0.8) in between times," (lines 624-626). GL's construction of eating and drinking the wrong food as 'treats' is slightly differently from extract 2, where the group member referred to eating the food to 'treat' herself. Normatively, a 'treat' is something that you do not have very often. The very word is designed for its occasionality. A 'treat' is a special thing which people earn; as a child you are 'treated' as a reward for 'good' behaviour, as an adult you might treat yourself if you feel you need or deserve it (as the group member constructed her account in extract 2). So within this framework, 'good dieters' can reward their 'good' eating behaviour with 'treats'. This constructs dieting within a wider moral framework of not only 'good' and 'bad' food, but also this notion of rewarding deserving behaviour and punishing undeserving behaviour.

These multiple TCUs orient not only to food as a 'treat', but also to this notion of being 'extra good'. GL associates having 'treats' and going out with 'enjoying yourself'. She even goes as far as to suggest that the group member could have 'extra'. However, GL follows this construction of going out and having fun with the explication of a broader context of restraint and control, 'be extra good (0.8) in between times'. The idea of going out and having fun is juxtaposed with this idea of restraint and self-discipline. This seems somewhat paradoxical, in that it is precisely the same stuff that constitutes 'bad' food and drink, that also serves as a reward for avoiding it (in contrast, say, to children being rewarded for good behaviour).

It demonstrates this whole embedded notion throughout the extracts, that dieting in this institutional environment involves being 'in control'. It also involves an element of denial. Food is not only good and bad, 'bad' food can also be good, but only when it rewards its own avoidance. The required regime is one of discipline and moderation, of temptation, resistance and rewards. The main observation about the extracts so far, therefore, is that the group leaders and members do not talk about food or themselves without making both implicit and explicit reference to morality and accountability.

Extracts 9 and 10 provide further examples of how the group leaders orient to food as a treat, but also how this *type* of food should be controlled rather than merely avoided. This all works to construct eating behaviour as a controlled, restrained, moral activity.

Extract 9: RC-SP-Baptist Church

```
25    GL                              [If ↑yo:u ] ↑can:: *keep yourself
26        as active as possible over the- holiday=
27    GM    =That's it
28    GL    An:d (0.5) jus:' try an::' (0.5) think* right I'm going out
29 →      I'll have a treat and enjoy it .hh but in between ti[mes ]
30    GM                                                      [°Mmm°]
31 → GL    I'll be as good as possible and then (0.6) °you'll keep it
32        under control°=
```

GL orients to balancing going out and enjoying 'treats' with being as 'good as possible' in-between times. This strategy is constructed as something which will allow GM to keep her eating behaviour under control, without always and only having to resist temptation.

Extract 10: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
250 → GL    *tre:ating yourself to degrees >all right< (0.5)
251        a mince pie
252    GM    Yeah
253    GL    >but not three<
```

In extract 10, GL explicitly orients to portion control (a form of moderation) and constructing 'treats' as something where control must be exercised; having a treat is fine but not three at once. Extracts 9 and 10 provide further support, then, for how 'good' eating behaviour is constructed within a moral discourse of self control and restraint.

The following two extracts are not analysed in such fine detail but they do show how these notions of morality and accountability are formulated and oriented to by both the group leader and group member. Consider extract 11, in which the group member explicitly refers to a notion of 'good intentions' (line 201).

Extract 11: RC-SL-Church Hall 17-12-03

```
197   GL    How are you Jaqueline
198   GM    (.) Fat heh [heh    ]
199   GL                [heh heh]
200   GM    If I've not put about four pound on this week
201 → I'll be deli:ghted I've had my da::ughter home and the good
202         intentions
203              (1.0)
204         ((scales bleep))
205              (3.0)
206   GL    Pound and a half on I'm afraid
```

The idea of having 'good intentions' in relation to eating behaviour is another example of knowingly breaking the diet. This is analogous to extract 1 where the group member talks about being naughty, which implies an element of intentionality. GM refers to having 'good intentions' before her daughter came home and (with that as the implicit cause) she broke the diet. This whole narrative works as defensive detailing. GM's introduction of the daughter visiting constructs breaking her good intentions as exceptional and externally caused, part of a special occasion, which works to ward off any potential accusation about a moral transgression, or personal failure on GM's part (Note: in Attribution Theory, this is what is called an 'external' rather than 'internal' causal attribution; the social psychology of causal attribution has been reworked in discursive terms by Edwards & Potter, 1992, 1993). This narrative functions as a valid account for having eaten 'bad' foods.

Extract 12 below is another demonstration of how weight and dieting behaviour are treated as accountable matters, and how group members orient to knowingly breaking the diet.

Extract 12: RC-SL-Golf 21-01-04

```
24    GL    Right on you step
25              (4.0)
26    GL    Stayed the same=
27    GM    =>Hav' I<
28              (2.0)
29 →  GM    It's all I des:erve,
30    GL    Heh heh
31 →  GM    I don't deserve anymore so
32    GL    No.
33    GM    Thank you
```

In this extract, the group member has maintained her weight. After the news delivery, GM is resigned to the fact that the weigh in result is directly related to her eating behaviour. She explicitly refers to 'deserving' the result, which performs moral work and constructs weight loss as something which only happens when you have been dedicated, "It's all I des:erve," and "I don't deserve anymore so" (line 29-30) . This suggests that GM has deviated from her usual eating behaviour or exercise plan and done something differently. To *deserve* something suggests worthiness, or some commendable act. This immediately implies that GM has been neither. It's a two-sided coin. Being good is rewarded by weight loss. Being bad is punished by weight gain or, as in this case, absence of the desired weight loss.

This is reminiscent of the news delivery chapter where I talked about this idea of expectation and weight loss. Group members talked about how *much* effort they had expended in terms of sticking to the diet and extra exercise as being directly relatable to their subsequent weight loss, or not. In some instances, group members felt they *deserved* to lose more weight. However, in extract 11 and 12, both group members take responsibility for their weight result. In extract 11, GM is explicit about having broken the diet because her daughter was visiting. In extract 12 the group member is less explicit with her account, however, by explicitly stating she 'deserves' the result, she is suggesting her behaviour warrants the stay same result.  The specific formulations "*all* I deserve" and "I *don't deserve any more*" imply that this is a negative deserving, that weight maintenance is a bad result.

The group leader and group member in the following extract (13), both perform explicit moral business in the discussion of the group member's eating behaviour.


Extract 13: RC-SL-Golf 21-01-04

```
1      GL     Ri:gh' Su:e 'ow'd' think you've done darlin::'
2   →  GM     I've ↑be:en ↑good.
3                    (0.1)
4   →  GL     'ave you been go:od,
5      GM     I've been good.
6   →  GL     Have you been >good=good<,
7                    (0.3)
8   →  GM     Yes, (0.2) I won't say (0.1)°virtuous° but I've been (.)
9             >ve:ry good.<
10     GL     Aww hello, the excuses are coming in a minute (.) you wait
```

```
11            for i'
12    GM     >Put it this way,< I expect more than a half a pound,
13            (6.0)
14    GL     Oh [o↑↑oo.              ] one and a half,
15    GM        [Better than I thought]
16    GL     Ooo↑↑ooo↑o well done
17    GM     HA heh heh heh heh,
```

GM produces the first reference to 'being good' as a second pair part to GL's enquiry about how she had done, "I've ↑be:en ↑good." (line 2). GL does a partial repeat of GM's answer with a pre-expansion insert, "'ave you been go:od," (line 4). Rather than producing an upgraded response, GM does an exact repeat, "I've been good." (line 5) without any of the intonational expression of the prior turn.

This whole sequence of turns is constructed around GM's behaviour and the orientation does moral work. It seems that the exact repetition of her prior turn does not provide enough details for GL, who repeats her prior question with a post-insertion expansion, "Have you been >good=good<," (line 6). This suggests that there are different levels within being either just *good* or *bad*. This is reminiscent of extract 8 where the group leader refers to being 'extra good' and also extract 9 where the group leader orients to being as 'good as possible' in-between treats. The implication is that, being 'good-good' is somehow better than just being 'good'.

GM's response shows that she has heard GL as asking whether she can describe her behaviour as extra good. GM responds with, "Yes, (0.2) I won't say (0.1) °virtuous° but I've been (.) >ve:ry good.<" (lines 8-9). GM produces this explicit orientation to being 'virtuous'. To be virtuous has strong moral and religious associations with being principled and self-restrained. However, GM downgrades her behaviour to 'very good'. The 'won't say' at the beginning of the second TCU suggests that this may be what she really wants to classify herself as but does this downgrade to 'very good' to avoid and circumscribe any accusation of self-praise.

This is another example of where the group leader is producing defensive detailing to protect herself from potential accusation if the weigh in result is not quite as good as she is predicting. Participants have been shown not to agree with positive assessments or praise themselves (Pomerantz, 1978b; 1984). Note that GM does not just say that she's not *been* virtuous, but says "*I won't say*" virtuous. It is a denial of saying or

claiming it. That helps us see that she is managing not just the morality of eating, but the morality of self-description. In denying to herself the category "virtuous", we are invited to see "very good" as not the most she might have claimed about herself – as a somewhat restrained, less boastful, more credible self-description.

It seems that the central observations about all the extracts so far are that group members and group leaders can produce turns that do either explicit or implicit moral work concerning their eating behaviour and food. In the above extract GM actively constructs herself as a 'good' dieter, who has in fact been 'very good' that week. She even goes as far as to predict how much weight she is expecting to lose. This is another example of how morality and accountability seems embedded and bound up with talk concerning food and diet talk in this environment.

It seems that talk about any form of food or being a dieter is synonymous with some sort of moral business. Food is no longer just fuel that feeds the body, it is no longer neutral. Rather both the group leaders and members classify it into *good* and *bad* categories and food even becomes a '*treat*', a reward for good dieting behaviour. In conjunction with this, the group leaders and members refer to *themselves* as 'good' or 'bad' depending on how they view their eating behaviour that particular week. Extract 14 below shows the group member explicitly referring to her self being 'really really good' (line 18).


Extract 14: RC-SP-Baptist Church 19-01-05

```
12      GL     You've gone up a pound as:-
13             (0.8)
14      GM     ↑Oh that's stra:nge,
15             ((scales bleep))
16             (0.9)
17      GL     [↑Oh  ]
18 →    GM     [I've ] been re:ally:, re:ally: good.
```


This extract provides another example of how group members classify themselves as 'good' or 'bad' depending on their eating behaviour. In this particular extract GM works to construct herself within this wider moral framework. The defensive detailing (line 18) to construct herself as 'really really good' not only works to construct GM as someone who *deserved* more weight loss, but also works to avoid any possible accusation about

her wrongful eating behaviour, even though she has gone up a pound in weight. In producing this turn where she constructs herself as not only 'good' but 'really really good', GM is working to circumvent any possible chance that she will be held accountable for her weight gain.

Consider extract 15, in which the group member constructs herself as 'not being very good' which is analogous with previous examples. However, this example differs from the others examined so far, in that GM explicitly talks about being *told off* by the group leader. In extract 7 the group member talked about her weight gain teaching her a lesson, but that was a self-taught lesson. In the extract below GM is expecting chastisement from GL.

Extract 15: RC-SP-Baptist Church 01-10-04

```
354      GM    Hell::o.
355              (4.4)
356      GL    Yes::::: thank you very much.
357              (1.3)
358 →    GM    I've not been very go~od (0.6) so: (0.4) you're gonna' to
359            tell me off again probably.
360      GL    O(h)ka::y.
361              (1.3)
362      GM    Oufff
363            ((scales bleep))
364              (0.7)
365      GL    You've stayed the sam:e.
366      GM    That'll do: yes I think=
367 →    GL    =°So I won't tell you [off.°       ]
```

After the greeting sequence, GM explicitly orients to herself within this moral framework of 'badness', "I've not been very go~od (0.6)" (line 358). This admission is immediately followed with this formulation of the group leader expectably performing some level of reprimand, "so: (0.4) you're gonna' to tell me off again probably." (line 358-359). The inclusion of 'again' implies that this is something which the group leader has done previously, and therefore that this group member is not a consistently 'good' dieter. This is reminiscent of the group member in extract 7, 'teaches me a lesson again' implying that deviating from the diet may be a regular occurrence. This reference to being 'told off' is again something which is usually associated with parent-child, or teacher-pupil, boss-employee – but in any case, some kind of unequal, subjugated relationship

interaction, in that you "tell off" a child, not an adult (Aquilino, 1997; Benwell & Stokoe, 2004)

I suggested earlier in this chapter that the diet industry borrows certain words and uses them intertextually, such as the word 'naughty', which is conventionally associated with children who are naughty and are reprimanded (by adults) for their behaviour. Again here, 'being told off' is strongly associated with parent-child interaction but it is used here by an adult (the group member), to refer to another adult's possible action (the group leader). It functions to downgrade the seriousness of how the group member views the possible bad news delivery. It works similarly to laughter in trouble telling. The troubles teller produces laughter to show they are in a position to take the troubles telling lightly (see Jefferson, 1984b). In this extract, the use of the childish reference works to show GL that GM is in a position to take any possible bad news concerning her weight lightly.

GL recycles GM's earlier reference to 'telling off' after the news of stay same is delivered, "°So I won't tell you off.°" (line 367). GL produces this turn at a softer pitch than the adjacent talk. It aligns with GM's ability to take the news lightly. However, the softer delivery could be done to manage this idea of an adult 'telling off' another adult, especially in this setting, where GL is not GM's boss but, if anything, employee, or paid service provider. These turns orient to dieting and weight loss as being an accountable matter. GM constructs her turns to display that she recognises this accountability and that she is accountable to GL for any possible weight gain, or bad eating behaviour. The extract explicitly refers to this notion of expectation and chastisement by the group leader. Extract 16 is another example of where the group member refers to being accountable to the group leader for her weigh in result and eating behaviour.

Extract 16: RC-JS-School Hall17-11-04

```
375    GL    Stayed the same.=
376          =((scales bleep))
377    GM    >Oh good.<
378    GL    Is that all right, [heh heh ]
379    GM                       [Yeah.  ] heh
380              (0.2)
381    GL    Go::od.
382              (0.4)
383 →  GM    You're probably not very pleased about it. bu'
384              (0.4)
```

```
385    GL    :No [that's  ] fine,
386    GM        [Heh heh ]
387             (0.6)
388 →  GL    I: (.) as fa:r as I'm concern::ed, (0.6) not putting
389          weight on (0.4) is achieving.
390             (0.5)
391 →  GL    So:: (0.2) as long as it's not gone up
392    GM    Okay.
393    GL    >It doesn't matter.<
394             (0.6)
395    GL    So that's fine.
```

GM orients to her accountability and also the expectations of her as a group member of this institution at line 383, "You're probably not very pleased about it. bu'". This is analogous with the previous extract where the group member explicitly talks about being accountable to the group leader for her any weight fluctuations. This implies that group members must adhere to certain obligations in their role as group member. Furthermore, to be considered a 'good' dieter they must be seen to be achieving weight loss. This orients to this whole idea about expectations and weight loss. Both extract 15 and 16 seem to suggest that group members have expectations about how much weight they should lose and furthermore how much the group leaders expect them to lose. This constructs 'good' dieting as an accomplishment and something which is measured, not only numerically, as in the 'weigh-in' result, but also morally.

GL does not align with GM's previous suggestion, ":No that's fine," (line 385). Although it could be argued that the use of the word 'fine' is downgraded from the word 'pleased' and holds some kind of veiled moral judgment, GL goes on to demonstrate her expectations in relation to weight management, "So:: (0.2) as long as it's not gone up >It doesn't matter.<"(lines 391-393). In these multiple TCUs, GL explicitly orients to what she *expects* from her group members. As long group members are not gaining weight, then, as far as she is concerned it is okay. This produces weight management as an action which must be accounted for by the group members.

There is an interesting delicacy in how both the group members and group leaders manage the authoritative dimension of their relationship. It is not as clear cut as say an employer and employee, rather the group member is more like a customer with rights and demands. In this sense we can see evidence for the management of these rights through various practices. The group leader produces turns which contain humour or irony, such

as in extract 2 where the group member describes her eating behaviour and the group leader responds with, "You've got away with it" (line 665), or in extract 15 where the group leader responds to the weight news with, "° So I won't tell you off°" (line 367). This alludes to how the group members seem to treat the group leaders as having some kind of authoritative role, whereby they must be accountable for their behaviour and risk being 'told off'. However, it is not oriented to by either seriously or as unquestionably as in other kinds of asymmetrical relationships. It seems that this is treated more as a 'service counter' rather than an authoritative relationship.

Extract 17 provides an example of how getting weighed in public can involve an assessment within a moral framework.

<u>Extract 17: RC-SP-Baptist Church 01-11-04</u>

```
257     GM    Hello::
258     GL    Hello Julie,
259              (0.3)
260     GM    Hmuh hmuh=
261     GL    =Thank you
262              (0.7)
263     GL    >↑Jump on the scales< Ju:lie,
264              (0.5)
265 →   GL    You look guil:ty.
266              (4.5)
267     GL    You've lost a pound and a half,=
268           =((scales bleep))
269 →   GM    Oh it's not too bad [then.        ]
270     GL                         [That's :fine, ]
271           ((scales bleep))
272     GL    It's absolutely, (2.8) abso:lutely fi:ne.
273              (1.4)
274     GL    It's better to do it slo::wly
275     GM    Mmm:
```

GL produces her assessment of GM before the news delivery, "You look guil:ty." (line 265). This assessment suggests that GM may be facially leaking her anticipation of a bad news delivery. I talked in the first analytic chapter about how the tellers of bad news can 'leak' or 'give off' the news prior to its telling with facial gesture (see Clark & Labeff, 1982; Goffman, 1959; Maynard, 2003; Quill, 1991). However, in this instance it is the group member (the news recipient) who is performing the facial leaking. It is impossible to know why GM is looking 'guilty' however it could suggest that she has not stuck to

the diet. In fact, I can imagine such a look signalling apprehension at being weighed and judged, rather than guilt because of bad behaviour. And that makes it all the more interesting and remarkable, that GL chooses to formulate it as "guilty" – guiltiness is certainly not one of the major categories of emotional expressions (anger, sadness, joy, disgust, etc.) in the research of Ekman and others (Ekman, 1997; Ekman, 1999a; Ekman, 1999b) – guilt is an emotion very much bound up with social judgements and moral interpretations, rather than distinct facial expressions.

The word 'guilty' is part of the wider religious type discourse which relates to sin, immorality and remorse. The use of the word 'guilty' in this TCU performs moral business. It suggests that feeling guilty could be appropriate in relation to weight and eating behaviour. It orients to dieting and eating behaviour as an accountable and morally sanctionable matter. GM does not respond to this assessment. GL does the news delivery, "You've lost a pound and a ha<u>lf</u>,=" (line 267). GM provides an assessment of it, "Oh it's not too bad [then." (line 269), whereupon GL provides an upgraded second assessment, "It's absolutely, (2.8) abso:<u>lu</u>tely fi:ne." (line 272). Agreements or disagreements are the options for second assessments, where it is normative for agreeing second assessments to upgrade firsts (Pomerantz, 1984b), which is what happens here. GM displays another example of this idea of expectation and weight loss. It shows that group members are concerned with how *much* weight loss is acceptable. This could be symptomatic of the wider construction of weight loss being accountable. This is also reminiscent of how the group members in previous extracts referred to the group leader expectations of their weight loss.

Therefore, GM's *tentative* assessment "not too bad" may be an orientation to GL being the 'expert', the person entitled to say precisely whether something, and how much, is good or bad. And indeed, in providing a strongly upgraded second assessment, with repaired emphasis on the ECF "absolutely", GL asserts that right. This extract shows that both the group leaders and members are aware of the expectations bound up with weight and eating behaviour.

The following extracts all demonstrate this idea of certain amounts of weight loss or gain are oriented and constructed as being 'not (too) bad'.

```
12      GM    Yeah.
13      GL    So t-if you try and nibble on (0.1) good stuff,
14      GM    Mm hmm,
15              (0.4)
16      GL    °But don't worry about it.°
17              (1.3)
18      GM    Mmm yeah
19      GL    Ju£s' have a look, jus' keep it u£nder control.
20              (2.7)
21            ((scales bleep))=
22      GL    =In fact you've only put half a pound on.
23      GM    Oh re:ally:. oh that's not bad,
```

In extract 18 there are examples of three different orientations to morality. Firstly, the group leader orients to food within this moral framework of 'good' food, "nibble on good stuff" (line 13). There is no further clarification needed as to what constitutes 'good stuff'. This is similar to extract 1 (line 654) where the group leader talked about limiting 'bad stuff'. Secondly, she constructs this nibbling with the wider framework of portion control, "keep it u£nder control" (line 19). The implicit implication is 'good dieters' are members who can keep control of their eating behaviour and portion sizes. Finally there is this assessment by the group member of the weight gain being oriented to as, "that's not bad" (line 23). This could be in response to GL's prior formulation of "only put half a pound on", where the 'only' functions to downgrade the weight gain.

It seems that weight gain is downgraded to not being 'too bad' when the group member has provided a pre-weigh in account outlining how 'bad' they have been that particular week. Consider the following two extracts where the group leaders assess the news of weight gain as not too bad, in light of what they have been told about the member's eating behaviour.

Extract 19: RC-JS-School Hall 15-12-04

```
112 → GL    You've put a #pound on [that's not #too] bad.
```

Extract 20: RC-SL-Church Hall

```
20      GL    .hhhh w'll=you have put *two on
21              (0.3)
22      GM    Right okay=
```

```
23    GL    =but it could have been a hell of a lot wors::e
24 →  GM    That's all right then >that's not too bad actually<
```

Extracts 19 and 20 work to construct certain amounts of weight gain as acceptable for the group leaders. In extract 19 it is the group leader who orients to the weight gain being 'not too bad'. In extract 20, the group leader orients to the two pound weight gain being 'okay' and produces an increment, "but it could have been a hell if a lot wors::e" (line 23). This construction functions as a 'cautionary tale' for the group member. This is similar to extracts 2, 7, and 8 all of which outline what will happen if the group members' do not change their eating behaviour and conform. In this extract these TCUs work to imply that GM has been lucky to only put on two pounds. This is supported by GM's next turn, ">that's not too bad actually<" (line 24). The 'actually' implies that she is aligning with GL's prior turn, that in light of her eating behaviour she has been lucky.

The final extract (21) shows another example of how the group member constructs her news delivery assessment in the wider framework of expectation and accountability.

Extract 21: RC-SL-Church Hall 09-08-04

```
29    GL    That's a po::und
30            (2.2)
31          ((scales bleep))
32            (2.0)
33    GM    Mind I'm not surprised °act(h)ually°
34    GL    Heh heh [We've just bee-]
35    GM            [Well it's just ] been my birthda:y,
37    GL    A-
38    GM    And my son's birthda:y [so it's been ] like that
39    GL                          [O(hh)h:::    ]
40    GM    cakes all round
41    GL    Heh heh heh
42            (1.3)
43 →  GM    °That's not too #bad actually considering° hhh=
44    GL    =Heh heh heh
```

GM's news assessment suggests that she has was expecting a weight gain result, "Mind I'm not surprised act(h)ually" (line 33). The laughter particle in the word 'actually' suggests that maybe GM has not stuck to the diet and moreover is in a position to take

this lightly. GM goes on the produce an account for her assessment which functions as defensive detailing, "Well it's just b<u>een</u> my birthd:<u>ay</u>" (line 35). 'Well' prefaced statements can preface justifications or accounts, as indeed this one does (Kitzinger & Frith, 1999). Special occasions such as birthdays, have been shown in this thesis to be produced as a valid account to circumscribe accountability for any possible weight gain. These TCUs function as defensive detailing; GM is circumventing the possibility of being accused of being gluttonous in reference to eating lots of cake. By using the occasionality of a birthday, it allows for this to be a one off celebration, rather than reflection of her typical eating behaviour.

GM's next turn, "°That's not t<u>oo</u> #bad actually considering° hhh=" (line 43), suggests that the group member was maybe expecting more weight gain. She has oriented to eating two lots of birthday cake. The use of the word 'considering' orients to the amount of 'bad' food she may have consumed. This is similar to extracts 18, 19, and 20 where the group members and leaders back date their news assessment as 'not bad' in relation to the account they have given earlier in the interaction outlining their eating behaviour.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has been an exploration how the group members and group leaders construct their talk about food and eating behaviour within a wider moral framework. Each example has demonstrated that both food and the group members themselves are subject to this moral framework. In this institutional environment, food is no longer *neutral*. Rather it is divided into categories whereby certain foods are seen as acceptable and by definition '*good*', and other foods are categorized as 'bad' and therefore subject to limits and controls, i.e. food is given meaning, is discussed and accounted for in relation to the institutional practices of this weight management group. The group leaders and members talk about this '*bad*' and as '*treat*'. Firstly, food as a 'treat' is constructed by the group leaders as something which has to be controlled and by its very nature is occasional. As in extract 2 and 8 whereby the treats are constructed as being part of enjoying socialising, but are juxtaposed immediately with this notion of restraint and control.

Secondly, this type of 'bad' food is used as a reward for *good* dieting behaviour. Therefore, 'bad' food is talked about as both the downfall or reason why a member has not lost weight, yet at the same time it is used as a 'treat' for having stuck to the diet for the week, so 'bad' food is used to reward 'good' dieting behaviour. It thereby has a special kind of moral status, applicable to notions of restraint, control and moderation, such that bad food is okay if it can be controlled, 'everything in moderation', and you are 'extra' good the rest of the time. This separates it somehow from other instances of morality, for example killing. Abstaining from killing someone all week, does not allow you to commit a few murders as a reward (a slightly extreme example granted). But, it demonstrates that there is something about food, desire and restraint that is morally special, something which allows the use of the very thing which is morally sanctionable to be had occasionally, like the proverb says "a little bit of what you fancy does you good".

The group members' eating behaviour was subject to moral tales of consequences. The group leaders used cautionary tales to demonstrate what would happen if the group members continued to be 'bad', as in extract 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10. It seems that eating behaviour and being a 'good' dieter are subject to moral controls. Dieting is therefore, an accomplishment which requires a certain level of control, commitment and restraint.

Throughout my analysis group members have produced accounts to circumvent public accountability for the weigh in result and their behaviour. In this chapter, I have talked about 'defensive detailing' whereby group members use accounts to circumscribe being accused of any possible moral transgression. Therefore they produce accounts, such as the 'birthday story' in extract 21 and the account of being 'really really good' in extract 14 to refute the possible accusation that they are 'bad' dieters.

Not only is food talked about as either 'good' or 'bad', but both the group members themselves orient to themselves as 'bad' or 'naughty'. Group members occasionally used transferred epithets about 'naughtiness' to transfer poetically from the moral agent to the object of desire, such as food. It is not that the group members are 'good' or 'bad' rather they deem themselves to be dependent upon their food choices. The group leaders' colluded in this construction of members being 'bad' or 'naughty' which constructs dieting as something which is accountable. Also as members must

adhere to the rules to be seen as a 'good dieter', therefore, dieting is an activity at which one must be seen to be achieving and not achieving results in punishment or cautionary tales of consequences. This is analogous with the work done by Meadows and Weiss (1992) where the women talked about food in terms of 'good' and 'bad', and expressed self-loathing if they had eaten 'bad' foods.

This analysis has provided a glimpse of how talk about food and dieting is bound up with morality and accountability. It shows that food is not neutral in this environment and dieting and eating behaviour are actions that must be accounted for. Previous social interaction literature has explored particular practices with reference to eating food in a familial setting. It showed certain activities such as urging, offering and negotiation, are bound up with the construction of food within the talk. For example, by giving reasons for eating or not eating particular foods within a mealtime interaction, the very nature of the food is constructed and evaluated (see Wiggins, Potter & Wildsmith, 2001, p. 8). How food is described within talk is very important, as it determines how the food will be treated from that point on within the exchange, i.e. whether it will be classed as something that one should, or could, eat.

This description of food as something which is desirable, sinful or as a 'treat' has been shown to be very important within my data corpus. The group members do not necessarily explicit state reasons why they eat certain foods, but certain foods are constructed as difficult to resist, suggesting that food is not neutral. Rather it is emotive and full of temptation.

Accountability also seems to be of interest when examining talk about food. Wiggins, Potter and Wildsmith note that in mealtime interaction accountability about what food is eaten, or not eaten is evident within the talk. This notion of accountability has been identified as important in reference to body image literature and the cultural thin ideal (see Davies & Furnham, 1986; Grogan & Wainwright, 1996, respectively). However, dieting practices are also accountable matters, whereby, successful dieting is oriented to as an accomplishment, and unsuccessful dieting seems to prompt an account by the women as to why they have gained weight.

There seems to be a set of moral dilemmas that both group leaders and group members constantly orient to:

| | |
|---|---|
| → | being a 'good' dieter rather than a 'bad' dieter; |
| → | Treating yourself if you have been good (such that you have lost weight); but being punished if you have been bad; |
| → | Avoiding 'bad' foods, yet using these very morally sanctionable foods as a treat when you have been good; |
| → | Control and restraint juxtaposed with enjoying yourself and living life; |

I started this chapter with the idea that morality and accountability were inherent and pervasive within my data corpus. I have argued that the group members' and leaders' seemed incapable of talking about food and their dieting behaviour without constructing it either explicitly or implicitly within this wider moral framework of 'good' and 'bad'. I have demonstrated that food is not something which is talked about or constructed as neutral. Rather in this environment it is something which is produced to construct people as 'good' or 'bad'. Also, 'good eating behaviour' and 'good dieters' are rewarded with 'treats' and weight loss, whereas 'bad' dieting behaviour is punished with weight gain or weight maintenance. It seems therefore that talk about weight management gets done within this institutional environment within a moral framework which juxtaposes 'good' against 'bad', and 'naughty' as opposed to 'virtuous'.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**

**CONCLUSION**

The aim of this thesis has been to examine, turn-by-turn, the interaction that takes place between group leaders and group members in a weekly commercial weight management group using CA and DP as the chosen methodology. In this concluding chapter, I summarize the main findings by providing a brief review of each analytic chapter, before reflecting on my choice of methodology and exploring what contribution my research has made, if any, to addressing the gap in the existing literature.

The chapters were themselves organized sequentially in that they follow the step by step practices performed by the group leaders and members involved. Chapter 3 examined the preparatory practices performed and oriented to by both the group leaders and members before the actual weighing is done. This chapter used both the audio and video data to examine how the group leaders and group members used their body and directional eye gaze as an integral part of the interaction. I showed how gestures, gaze, body movements are all activities which can be studied for how they are produced and oriented to by participants (Heritage, 1984), and for how participants' subsequent actions are organized in relation to prior turns (see Heath & Luff, 1992), visual events, such as gaze, play a central role in this process. Analysis showed that when the group members engage in any undressing, whether that be taking off their shoes, or jumper, then they are done so 'parenthetically', not for comment, and the group leaders work to avoid direct gaze. Rather, they performed other tasks relating to the business of getting weighed, such as noting down the date on the records card. When no undressing took place, that is the group member arrives the scales ready to be weighed, the group leaders engaged in direct eye contact with the group members. This pattern held for all but one deviant case that showed a group member explicitly referring to whether or not her jumper would make a difference to her 'weigh-in' result. This explicit mentioning of the jumper led to a humorous exchange where the group leader not only validates the group member's tentative suggestion, but actually weighs the jumper, to discover how much of an impact

it would have had on her weigh-in result. Although displays of humour occured frequently in the interactions between the group leaders and members, this was the only example whereby the practice of undressing was mentioned explicitly by either.

The group leader's use of records card emerged as a significant workplace tool in this environment. Orientation to the records card was shown to be part of the practices necessary for the group leader to do a 'weigh-in'. As with patients' records in doctor-patient consultations, this focus upon the group members' records card was mutually understood as an understandable and legitimate action for the group leader to perform when moving from preliminaries to business proper. When the group leaders and members are performing preliminary talk, the eye gaze is more direct. However, when the business proper is introduced, in the form of the records card, the group leader's gaze becomes focused upon that card. Rather than that built-in legitimacy being an explanation for the card-attention, the specific timing of that attention, and its selectivity to occasions of undressing, suggest that it provides a resource for group leaders to manage the interaction.

I suggested in the conclusion of Chapter 3 that one thing that gaze direction and attention to the records card may be doing is providing a legitimate basis for the group leaders to disengage from the group members accountably, as a routine part of doing their job, thereby enabling the group members to undress in front of them without feeling (at that point) watched or examined. These practices suggested a possible structure for how the practices involved in being weighed in public are structured, oriented to and managed by both the group leader and member;

→     Pre-weigh in sequence (greeting);
→     Handing over of the records card;
→     Undressing practices and change of group leaders' directional eye gaze or no undressing practices and more directional eye gaze;
→     Business proper;
→     News delivery and more direct eye gaze from the group leader.

These practices were shown to be robust, occurring throughout the data corpus. After the preparing to be weighed practices were managed, the next sequential part of the interaction concerned the group leaders telling the *news* of weight gain, loss or maintenance. How this news was told and receipted became the focus of the following chapter. Therefore, the second analytic chapter (four) takes the three possible weigh-in results (gain, loss and maintenance) and deals with them each in turn, as interactionally accomplished news deliveries. I was interested to see if the group leaders managed the telling of weight gain, loss or maintenance news in the same way. The analysis showed that in fact the structure for delivering *weight news* was not necessary different to the structure outlined by Maynard, rather it was different in *how* these turns were constructed, managed and oriented in order to accomplish the telling of 'weight news'. However, what is interesting to note is that the sequence was different, depending upon what *type* of news the group leaders had to tell, such that news about weight gain, loss or maintenance were oriented to differently consistently within the talk by both group leaders and group members.

When the group leaders had to report weight gain there was a structure for how this got done.

| 1 | → | Forecasting device used by the group leaders or pre-account used by the group members; |
| 2 | → | News delivery by the group leaders; |
| 3 | → | Announcement response by the group members; |
| 4 | → | News assessment by the group leaders or group members; |
| 5 | → | Further assessment or elaboration. This can include a question from the group leaders, an advice giving sequence initiated by the group leaders or the group members displays 'not knowing'. |

The telling of weight gain news was accomplished across distinct turns at talk. The main identifiable difference between Maynard's news delivery sequence and the sequence that takes place in this weight management environment was the recurrent and frequent use of the forecasting device in the form of hints or pre-accounts by both the group leaders and

group members. It is not necessarily that Maynard's sequence does not contain a forecast or a pre-account, rather that in this context group leaders and members were producing these practices to perform some *business* in the talk.

When the news concerned weight loss, the structure differed slightly. Firstly, although both news sequences start with the use of a pre-account, who produced them differed depending on the *type* of news. In the case of weight loss news, *only* the group member produces a pre-account. When the news concerns weight gain *both* the group leaders and group members employed this device. Therefore, the sequence for the telling of weight loss news was:

1 → Pre-account used *only* by the group members;

2 → News delivery by the group leaders;

3 → Announcement response and sometimes a simultaneous assessment by the group members;

4 → News assessment by the group leaders, which is produced as a congratulatory statement.

*How* the news TCU was constructed differently depending on whether the news to be told concerned weight gain or weight loss. When the group leaders had to deliver bad news, that is weight gain, the news TCU was punctuated with interactional trouble (what Schegloff, 2007, calls 'perturbations'). The news was not simply told, suggesting that trouble is indicative to the telling of bad news, and that bad news is delayed or shrouded in some way by the deliverer. Conversely, when the group leaders had to deliver the 'good' news of weight loss, there was no evidence of such trouble. The news TCUs contained no pauses, hedging or self-initiated repairs, suggesting that good news is not subject to the same interactional difficulty as bad news, such that 'good' news is easily told.

However, there are also similarities between the two news delivery sequences. In both the telling of weight gain and weight loss news the news was receipted and assessed, sometimes in the same turn. The assessments could take multiple turns at talk, and were produced by both the group leaders and group members. When the news concerned

weight maintenance, the structure was different from the other two telling structures. Firstly, there was *no* forecasting or pre-account device used by either the group leaders or group members and secondly, the news TCU was simply told which is comparable to the weight loss news TCUs, and the news sequence typically occupied only three turns. The structure for how the news of weight maintenance is delivered was as follows:

1    →    No forecasting device used by the group leaders or group members;

2    →    News delivery by the group leaders;

3    →    Announcement response;

4    →    Pursuit for further assessment or elaboration from either group leaders.

Therefore, Chapter 4 demonstrated that the telling of news in a weight management group was different depending on the *type* of news to be told. Analysis showed that the delivery of weight news had its own sequential patterns depending on whether the news concerns weight gain, loss or maintenance. The analysis also showed that how the group leaders and group members deliver and receipt this weight news has identifiable configurations within the talk.

      After the telling of the news was done, the group leaders generally moved into what I have called an 'advice-giving' sequence. Therefore, chapter five examined how advice is managed, constructed and oriented to within this environment. Previous research has suggested that advice and information giving is handled and managed with delicacy (see Pilnick, 1999) and the appropriateness of advice is not straightforward. It seems that information is presented within a factual framework, whereas advice seems to be bound up with morality. Even if the TCU is constructed and delivered as 'advice', there is no guarantee that the recipient will respond to it as such (see Pilnick, 1999).

      In this weight-loss environment, the news and its import are heavily circumscribed, limited, pre-understood, or pre-supposed by both parties- in this environment it seemed the initial news delivery and therefore a possible 'problem' was already pre-coded as problematic or not; getting onto a set of weight scales, after all, permits of a very restricted kind of information. The group leader will have only three

possible candidate results – weight gain, loss or maintenance – whose significance is heavily 'given' in the context of a weight management class.

Therefore, could one assume that when the group member had lost weight there would be no advice given? Analysis showed that this was not the case, even when group members had lost or maintained weight, the group leaders produced 'advice' TCUs about how to keep momentum going, how to continue to lose or maintain weight (depending on the group member's ultimate goal).

Group members frequently asserted their epistemic priority, irrespective of whether they had gained, lost or maintained their weight. When advice was proffered by the group leaders, the members repeatedly receipted these advice TCUs with, "`I kno(h):::w, I know,`" (line 58, extract 7, p. 159) or by receipting the news as 'not news' "`I thoug'=I might 'ov.=`" (as in line 49, extract 8, p. 159). It is not that they reject the advice offered by the group leaders; rather they choose to show they have some knowledge on the subject matter. Goldberg (1975) suggested there are few ways to show rather than claim knowledge about a subject matter, therefore it could be that this is how group members showed their understanding of the advice and information being offered. The group leaders also worked to assert *their* epistemic priority and expert knowledge in their advice giving sequences. Overall, it appeared that group members were reluctant to unquestionably accept advice in this environment.

Heath (1992) suggested that in doctor/patient consultations the patient retains some level of 'differential status' between themselves and the doctor, not only in deference to their expertise but also so as not to undermine the very reason for their visit. However, in my data, it could be argued that the group members need no such reason, whilst the group leader is somewhat expert, they are likely to have some level of competency about the subject matter. It could also be why the group members are much more inclined to assert their epistemic priority in the interactions. Pilnick (1998) has suggested that patients and carers tend not to treat new information as 'newsworthy', due to their exposure to medical discourse, they just add it to their existing repertoire. It could be that due to the commonsense, logical nature of the advice proffered, the group members do not treat the advice as newsworthy.

Analysis in Chapter 5 showed that 'advice-giving' gets done and receipted in particular ways in this environment, irrespective of whether the news concerned gain, loss or maintenance. Although the strict order of this sequence might vary somewhat, a canonical set of components for how 'advice-giving' gets done applied across all three weight possibilities:

> → Initial inquiry, getting on the scales and waiting for the readout from the scales;
> → Problem indicative response, the news delivery itself;
> → Focusing the problem, in the form of a direct question by group leader;
> → Problem indicative response by group member;
> → Possible candidate causes;
> → 'Advice-giving';
> → Minimal responses and receipts to the advice.

The final analytic chapter (6) examined how morality and accountability were constructed, managed and oriented to within the talk. Chapter six provided examples from the data corpus which showed that both morality and accountability are bound up with talk about food and diet. Food was shown to be no longer *neutral*. Rather it was divided into categories whereby certain foods were seen as acceptable and by definition '*good*', whereas other foods were categorized as 'bad' and therefore subject to limits and controls.

There was a paradoxical occurrence of the same food being constructed by both the group leaders and members as '*bad*' and at the same time as a '*treat*'. Food, or maybe more importantly 'bad' food, was constructed as something which *must* be controlled, restricted and limited and was produced in accounts by the members as the reason for having not lost weight or gained weight. However this very same food was oriented to by the group leaders as a 'treat', these 'bad' foods can be eaten as a reward for *good* dieting behaviour. Group members occasionally used transferred epithets about 'naughtiness' to shift a descriptor poetically from the moral agent to the object of desire, such as food. It is not that the group members are 'good' or 'bad', rather they deem themselves to be

dependent upon their food choices. The group leaders colluded in this construction of members being 'bad' or 'naughty', which constructs dieting as something morally accountable. Group members' eating behaviour was subject to moral tales of consequences. Group leaders told cautionary tales of what happens if the members continue to have 'bad' eating behaviour.

I ended the chapter with what I called a set of 'moral dilemmas' that both group leaders and group members constantly orient to, these being:

→　　being a 'good' dieter rather than a 'bad' dieter;

→　　Treating yourself when you have been good (such as having lost weight); but being punished if you have been bad;

→　　Avoiding 'bad' foods, yet using these morally sanctionable foods as a 'treat' when you have been good;

→　　Control and restraint juxtaposed with enjoying oneself and living life;

All the analytic chapters have shown an overall set of practices which the group leaders and group members do when performing the business of getting weighed in a commercial weight management group:

→　　Exchange of weight records card;

→　　Undressing or no undressing;

→　　Preliminary "small talk";

→　　A greeting or account sequence;

→　　News delivery;

→　　Advice giving sequence;

Having provided a summary of the thesis's findings, I now move on to reflect upon my chosen methodology. The first three analytic chapters (précised above) have demonstrated how close turn-by-turn analysis can reveal robust patterns for how practices of getting weighed gets done. For example, the analytic chapter focusing on the telling of news (4) revealed the way weight gain, loss and maintenance news was told and received

by both the group leaders and group members. Although the news delivery sequence was shown not to be very different from the news delivery sequences outlined in the previous literature (cf: Maynard, 2003), however what was different was *how* turns gets assembled and *how* they are designed and *what* business they performed in the talk.

Chapter 5 explored how 'advice-giving' was produced and managed in the talk between the group leaders and group members. This supported previous CA literature which showed advice giving was handled and managed with delicacy, which says something about how difficult 'advice giving' is in an everyday type setting. My research adds to the growing body of CA literature in health-related type settings looking at how advice and information is delivered and receipted. My research provides a starting point for more exploration of advice within weight management settings.

DP was used extensively in chapter 6 where morality and accountability were examined. This chapter showed the discursive management of moral identities in practice. Group leaders and members produced transferred epithets, displayed moral dilemmas, and constructed the availability of 'bad' foods as *treats* for 'good' eating behaviour (including avoiding them), along with feelings of guilt and shame. Such that these 'bad' foods are used by the women as both naughty indulgences – oriented to as the source of their inability to lose weight, whilst at the same time, these very foods are endorsed as 'treats' for good eating behaviour when members have lost weight. All these available discourses were shown to be situated, indexically relevant, interactionally managed everyday concerns.

On reflection, then, the chosen methodology enabled rich insights into the everyday dieting practices of the group leaders and members which may not have been possible with other methodologies. My thesis makes a valuable and significant contribution to the growing use of CA and DP in the study of naturally occurring data. More importantly, it starts to address the gap in the literature that looks at dieting and the body.

So, having made such a claim, what does this thesis contribute to this existing body of knowledge and literature about women, body image, dieting and food? Past research has divided women into pathologized and non-pathologized groups, such that women are either classified as having 'abnormal' or 'normal' eating practices and

behaviour (see Malson, 1998). This has been deemed unhelpful. This research upholds this, in that the women in the data corpus would have been classified as 'normal'. However, what this research has shown is that those involved in the mundane practices of dieting feel guilt and shame in regards to their eating behaviour. They feel the need to account for their eating behaviour to circumscribe blame. The members constructed their behaviour within a wider moral framework. An analysis and discussion of these kinds of practices have until now been absent from the existing literature. Meta analysis of past literature showed women to have a complex and contradictory relationship with food, often limiting and denying themselves certain foods. My research has demonstrated in particular how women see food as both the enemy and a friend.

There are some major differences between my research and previous works, which I believe is fundamental to the contribution my work makes. Firstly, there are very few qualitative studies that look at women's mundane dieting practices, those that do, quote from interview or focus group talk, in which women provide generalised comments and anecdotal illustrations. My research examines *how* talk about weight, bodies, food, exercise and diets feature within, and in the accomplishment of actual practices of weight management and its accountability in a specific setting. So, rather than relying on generalised artefacts from interviews or focus groups, my research clearly demonstrates the women managing and orienting to this dilemma in their talk. Rather than obtaining women's reflexive and autobiographical comments on themselves, I have shown the practices of dieting evolving turn by turn in their conversations with the group leaders.

I suggested in the introduction that Meadow and Weiss (1992) provided a good basis for comparison with my research. They suggest not only do women *torment* themselves with particular foods, their whole day pivots around the number they see on the 'weigh-in' scales. My research has allowed the fine-grained exploration of how these practices are managed in everyday settings. Namely that the slightest increase or decrease in the numbers on the 'weigh-in' scales does impact heavily on how the members talked about themselves (chapter 4). However, it also demonstrated how the group leaders acknowledged and receipted the weight news of their members. This type of analysis is absent from much of the previous literature.

The group members seemed incapable of referring to their eating behaviour and certain foods without it being constructed within a wider moral framework of 'good' and 'bad'. My research also showed that women construct themselves as 'good' or 'bad' depending on what food they have eaten. This has been documented previously (Bordo, 1990; 1993; Coveney, 2000; Lawrence, 1984), however my research is unique in that you can see *how* and *when* the group members produce this discourse and what business it performs in their talk. Women draw upon guilt, morality and accountability discourses to counter blame or circumvent culpability for weight gain or maintenance. Therefore, these discourses do not exist outside the talk, rather notions of thinness, weight gain, loss and maintenance are all managed, produced and made relevant in the talk.

The introduction started with past research that almost exclusively focused on pathologized groups. My thesis is fundamentally different in that the focus is on the practices of dieting that women do every single day. Maybe my thesis is a novel way of starting to look at this whole topic via close-grained interaction analysis. Rather than talking about women and food based upon experiential artefacts, my research shows dieting and eating behaviour is a managed concern within the practices of everyday social interaction. This thesis has shown that getting weighed in a public environment as part of a commercial weight management group is the site for many interesting phenomena and practices between the group leaders and group members.

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# Appendix 3

Glossary of Transcription symbols: (Jefferson, 2004)

°°      Degree signs enclose speech delivered at a noticeably softer pitch than
surrounding talk

[      A left bracket indicates the point of overlapping talk

]      A right bracket indicates the point at which the overlap stops

=      Indicates no break or gap between one participant's turn and another

(0.0)    Indicates elapsed time in silence by tenth of seconds

(.)      Indicates a micropause of less than a tenth of a second within or between
utterances

word    Underscoring indicates some form of stress, via pitch and or amplitude

:      Indicates prolongation of the immediately prior sound. Multiple colons indicate a
more prolonged sound

-      A dash indicates a cut-off

↑↓     Indicates shifts into especially high or low pitch

?      Rising intonation

.      Falling intonation

,      Slightly rising intonation

.hhh    Indicates an in-breath

( )      Empty brackets indicates that the transcriber was unable to get what was said, the
length of the space indicates the length of the untranscribed talk

NO     Upper case indicates especially loud sounds relative to the surrounding talk

< >    Right/left carets bracketing an utterance or utterance-part indicate speeding up

n(h)o  A row of hs or single h within a word, indicates breathiness, as in laughter, crying

       etc.

\#     Croaky voice