Activity orientation in the talk of politicians, news journalists and audiences

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Abstract

The talk of politicians, news-journalists and audiences has been relatively neglected in social psychology and media studies. Within these approaches talk has been ignored altogether, treated as a symptom of cognitive or ideological processes or employed simply as a tool to gain access to 'inner' 'meaning making' or 'outer' behaviour. This thesis explored a corpus of talk data from a discursive perspective in which the talk itself was the focus. It was argued that politicians and news-journalists could in different ways be seen to orientate to the 'truthfulness' of what they say. Thus politicians' were found to cite others to corroborate their claims, and new-journalists through their exchange of utterances attended to the co-construction their 'impartiality' and 'authoritativeness'. Politicians were also found to construct intent in terms of acting in 'the national interest' - this 'repertoire' could blame or exonerate self and others depending crucially on talk-context in which it was produced. Audiences' talk about their identity and contrasts with others was also explored. Their talk was analysed not to uncover their 'meaning-makings' or behaviour but instead to discover the activity orientations of their talk and its sensitivity to the surrounding talk context. In this way the talk of politicians, news-journalists and audiences was not seen as a symptom of some separate, 'underlying' phenomena of interest nor as a mere tool to access their 'inner' or 'outer' world - but rather it was the focus of study itself. Approached in this way talk was understood as orientated to a range of activities such as warranting, exonerating, blaming and so on. It was argued that these activities could be conceptualised as occurring within and across talk context - that is in sequences of talk. The implications of the thesis were considered for aspects of social psychology, media studies and discursive approaches.
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Chapter 1; Introduction

1.1 Overview of the scope of the thesis

This thesis aims to outline a perspective on the talk of politicians, news-journalists and audiences which explores the activity orientation of their discourse. In doing so it provides a stance which critiques aspects of media studies which have often failed to attend to talk in terms of its action orientation, the surrounding talk context and the ways in which claims can be made to appear truthful or warranted. Thus this thesis explores talk on and about the television in a way which highlights its functional or action-orientated aspects asking how audiences variously construct the identity of themselves and other viewers, how politicians construct accounts for the actions of themselves and their political opponents and how politicians and new journalists attend to the status of the claims they make by warranting moves. It also offers a critique of much of experimentally orientated social psychology which tends to either ignore language all together - treating it as a mere derivative of ‘inner’ cognitive processes (such as self-categorisation) or use it in a way which discards considerations of detail and context in preference for underlying essences (such as the factors which will persuade an audience). By contrast this thesis attends to the detail of talk and its context without reducing talk to a derivative or mere symptom of cognitive activity. The focus then is on talk as a social activity in itself rather than as a means (good or bad) of developing pictures of the mental world of ‘speaker’ or ‘listener’.

Constructionist and action orientated aspects to language collectively encompass a vast array of ‘social science’ research yet this thesis differs from some of these in important
respects. Whilst it shares the constructionist interest found for example in critical linguistic analysis and the action orientation of speech act theory and the accounts literature it problematises both approaches - largely with regard to their lack of emphasis upon detail and surrounding talk context. Thus this thesis argues from the stance of a discursive perspective which whilst not necessarily closed to issues of power and ideology is centred on the detailed explication of features present within actual instances of talk. It seeks to use insights that are already established in discourse and conversation analysis research to explicate the constructions produced, their variation and their precise orientation to surrounding talk context. In highlighting these features it is hoped that the traditional approaches to the talk of audiences, news-journalists and politicians within media studies and social psychology will be challenged such that abstract models whether social or cognitive do not replace detailed inspection of the talk itself. Finally the thesis seeks to further develop ideas within discourse and conversation analysis by exploring the ways in which footing can be deployed as a warranting device, through considering the different functions that a single repertoire might accomplish and by examining the diverse functions that the construction of contrasts with others might accomplish. In each of these cases aspects of the way in which language can be skilfully deployed are addressed within the context of a corpus of data derived from the talk of politicians, news-journalists and audiences - although some of the features highlighted may (arguably) be of relevance for other talk contexts.
One way to understand perspectives on media audiences is to see them against a background of approaches which (as Livingstone, 1991, notes) oscillated between emphasizing the power of the media, or ‘text’, and the active, discriminating audience or ‘reader’. As Moores (1993) points out early interest in the media very much saw the audience as a ‘mass’ subject to manipulation; resulting in either ideological deception or moral decay “depending on which side of the political spectrum the critique of mass culture came from” (1993: 5). The ensuing ‘effects’ approach to research popular in the United States measured ‘immediately observable changes in human behaviour’. Much of this work tackled the ‘moral decay’ issue with a particularly strong interest in the media’s role in promoting ‘aggressive behaviour’. Within this line of work questions of ‘meaning making’ or the message of the media were relatively unexplored. This emphasis on ‘signification’ rather than simply behaviour change came with ‘critical-semiotic’ perspectives, often drawing upon the work of Althusser (1984).

Semiotics will be touched on later in this introduction when consideration is given to its role in an emerging social constructionist perspective. For now it is worth noting that the broadly Althusserian perspective constructed audiences as ‘readers’ of the ‘text’ or media, as Moores (1993) points out this change in language partly indicated a change in the perceived role of audiences - there seemed at least a hint that they were involved in the construction of meaning. However in practice audiences were still largely construed as ‘ideological dupes’ subject to the manipulation of the media. Althusser’s ‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’ (1971) positioned the media, along with other
institutions such as school and family, as a means of sustaining and reproducing the ‘unequal relations of industrial production’.

Althusser’s approach to the media was popular partly because it provided a relatively clear intellectual agenda. Scholars could decode the ideological messages - typically supportive of the current power relations - which the media produced. One aspect of this perspective was that it tended to assume that whilst critically orientated scholars were well placed to decode and resist embedded ideological messages audiences were in general likely to accept the message effected by but unaware of the ideological ‘medicine’ they had imbued. Moores (1993) illustrates the picture of the audience implicit within such research; “in the work of MacCabe, Heath and others, the text is not so much ‘read’ as simply ‘consumed/appropriated’ straight via the only possible positions available to the reader - those inscribed by the text.” (1993: 15).

One potentially positive feature of this line of research was that it opened up the possibility of analysing some of the ways in which political ideologies actively construct and create representations of reality. Indeed there is even some indication that the appearance of truth or common sense of certain ideologies can be understood as a feature of its construction a theme which links to constructionist concerns and which will be explored throughout this thesis.

However one problem with the Althusserian approach is that it underestimates its own perspective or ‘point of view’ in analysis. Thus it adheres to the notion of an ideologically neutral or true ‘potential’ message which can be contrasted with the ‘ideologically loaded’ actual messages within media or society. As Wetherell and Potter
suggest there is a tension within such a position: "Once the constitutive role of discourse becomes apparent then simple distinctions between distorted discourse and truly descriptive discourse become increasingly untenable." (1992: 61). A second problem with the Althusserian approach is that the perspective underestimates the role of audiences depicting them as passive recipients of ideological messages. This theme is taken up by Hall (1980), Brunsdon (1981) and Morley (1980) each of whom challenge the conception of passively constituted audiences and instead construe audiences as 'active producers of meaning'. That is they developed a perspective from which the media text alone did not completely prescribe the meanings arrived at by audiences. Indeed the encounter between audience and media (or text) was understood as 'interdiscursive'. That is there was some emphasis on the 'repertoire of discourses' to which audiences have access. This idea of repertoires is taken up differently in this thesis and is outlined later in the introduction - for Morley the repertoires of discourse represented ways of making sense of the media - available frameworks for interpretation based on the subjects 'cultural, educational institutional' context (Morley, 1980: 163 cited in Mores, 1993: 16).

The importance of social and educational status for the interpretation of media texts was built in to Morley's (1980) famous *Nationwide* study. This landmark in media research made use of the newly available video technology by showing screenings of the current affairs programme *Nationwide* to twenty nine groups of subjects (though data from one group was not used). The twenty eight groups whose data was analysed were described as "drawn from different levels of the educational system, with different social and cultural backgrounds" (1980: 36). Thus Morley was able to provided a group by group
"case study" such that the comments from group twenty one "white mainly male bank managers..." could be contrasted with those of group twenty two "An all male group of white, full-time trade union officials..." (1980: 108) and these could be further contrasted with group thirteen "A group of mainly female West Indian literacy students...". These snapshot abbreviations of Morley's actual descriptions are intended to briefly highlight three themes. First, that with regard to his own agenda Morley was keen to interview groups of people who could be said to vary on socio-economic and political distinctions. Second, that inevitably attempts to characterise the groups relied upon Morley's own gloss on the members. Third that the analysis was conducted along the lines of socio-political groupings such that it is differences perceivable with regard to this classificatory scheme which became important.

It is worth considering this reliance on social positioning in further detail. On the one hand Morley was keen not to oversimplify the effects of social status, ethnic identity, political affiliation and education on meaning making - in particular he was critical of simple reliance on 'class'; "social position in no way directly correlates with decodings - the apprentice groups, the trade union/shop stewards groups and the black FE student groups all share a common class position, but their decodings are inflected in different directions by the influence of the discourses and institutions in which they are situated." (1980: 137). Thus Morley was seeking a more sophisticated means of making sense of audiences responses to the 'code' or 'presumed message' of *Nationwide*. Yet Morley's refined picture still emphasised glosses on occupational, educational and ethnic group membership. For Morley it was important to explore that ways in which differently positioned groups could be seen to vary in the responses they made to the *Nationwide*
programme. Hence black further education students and shop stewards were in different ways felt to be less accepting of the programmes message and ideology than apprentices and bank managers. In a retrospective comment some years after the publication of the *Nationwide* Morley maintained this emphasis; “The different responses and interpretations reported here are not to be understood in terms simply of individual psychologies. They are founded on cultural differences embedded within the structure of society - cultural clusters which guide and limit the individual’s interpretation of messages.” (1992: 118).

Where differences were noted within groups their homogeneity was not called into question but instead it was taken as another feature of the group - principally that it reflected a ‘clash of discourse’ available to that particular culturally placed group. One example of this is evident with group eleven described as; “mainly West Indian/African women, working class background, studying English as part of a commercial course, full time in an FE college, predominantly ‘don’t knows’ politically” (1980: 71). Morley juxtaposes contradictory quotes from within the group; “they should have more politics on Nationwide” and “Oh no, I don’t like politics” (1980: 72). In the light of these statements the group is described as contradictory in the “terms in which their distance from the dominant culture is set” (1980: 72). That is the fruitfulness of the group framework for conceptualising the data is not questioned but instead contradiction and the clash of discourses available to the group are seen as features of their socio-economic position. A similar treatment is given to individuals - that is any variation or contradictory claims are treated as revealing something about the individual’s social positioning and that of the group which they are conceptualised as belonging to. Thus
Morley cannot be accused of entirely denying variation or contradiction - but rather the way in which he treats it can be challenged. For Morley such differences were not common and where they did occur they too could say something about social positioning; “differences between individual readings within each group are to be acknowledged, but .. they .. do not erase the patterns of consistency and similarity of perspectives within groups which I have attempted to establish at a more fundamental level” (1980: 138).

Whilst recognising the contribution of Morley’s work - which could be seen as challenging the hegemony of a critical-textual perspective on the media - it too had shortcomings. Of particular importance for this thesis the issue of talk itself receives somewhat mixed treatment in Morley’s work. On the one hand the data consists entirely of participants’ talk and there is reference made to discourse analysis and the constructive rather than simply referential aspects of language. Yet on the other there is very limited engagement with participants talk as constructions of reality, the notion of discourse is not used as a perspective upon the talk but rather as an abstract socio-historically positioned framework through which meanings are produced. That is it is invoked as the medium through which social positioning affects participants response to the television - responses are shaped by the discourses available to that particular grouping. This perspective leaves the issues of participants’ constructions and local talk context unexplored.

At an analytic level Morley’s work relied heavily on isolated quotes, bite-sized snippets of audience talk shorn of any surrounding talk context. This both reflects a disinterest in local talk context and prevents it from being part of the analysis. Such an approach not
only takes away an aspect of context from Morley’s research it also prevents others approaching the work from being able to make sense of quotes such as “Oh no, I don’t like politics” in terms of an orientation to the surrounding talk context. That is the lack of talk context gives one less bit of information to the reader against which analytic claims can be investigated. Whilst Morley could be seen as underplaying the local talk context he equally appears to over-emphasise socio-political aspects of context. Morley (1992) himself touches on this issue in a retrospective look at his Nationwide research; “there is a tendency in the Nationwide project to think of deep structures (for instance class positions) as generating direct effects on the level of cultural practice. That is a tendency which I would want to qualify more now, examining in detail the different ways in which a given ‘deep structure’ works itself out in particular contexts, and trying to reinstate the notion of persons actively engaging in cultural practice.” (1992: 136).

More generally whilst some of Morley’s original reliance on social positioning has been brought into question in his more recent work there is still an enthusiasm for accounts of media consumption which attend to ‘broader’ cultural issues. For Morley (1992) the choice is between an analysis of audiences which addresses processes of consumption within particular domestic contexts and one which explores macro-political and ideological processes: “Put another way, it is a question of steering between the dangers of an improper romanticism of ‘consumer freedoms’, on the one hand, and a paranoid fantasy of ‘global control’ on the other.” (1992: 272). To some extent the stance taken in this thesis falls into the ‘micro’ side of Morley’s dichotomy - its attention to context is overwhelmingly limited to that of surrounding talk with very little attention paid to wider socio-political occurrences and positionings. Yet Morley’s distinction centres
largely on the agency of the audience with macro perspectives very much underestimating agency and micro perspectives overestimating it. By contrast this thesis will leave issues of agency on one side making no attempt to assess the extent to which audiences are ideologically ‘free’ or ‘determined’. In common with Morley it will collect audiences talk about viewing - however in contrast it will explore that talk as a forum in which versions of identity are variously constructed. These constructions will not be linked to large societal dimensions of context but rather will be explored in terms of the way in which they orientate to and function within their surrounding talk context.

In order to produce a clearer picture of this focus it is worth considering research which emerged partly to address the issue of ‘micro’ context - namely the ‘reception ethnography’ of Lull (1980), Hobson (1980), Ang (1985), Morley (1986) and Radway (1987, cited in Moores, 1993). Moores (1993) argues that in order to fulfil its aim of providing a picture of how the audiences perceive and make sense of the media then a sense of the viewing context becomes crucial. Although Morley (1980) emphasised one aspect of context - the ‘macro’ or wider structural dimensions - he failed to address the ‘micro’ context or the everyday domestic circumstances in which people watch television. Taken together even this sampling of enthographic studies represents a relatively wide range of concerns including the social uses of television (Lull, 1980), gender and media genre (Hobson, 1980, 1982; Ang, 1985; Radway, 1987, cited in Moores, 1993), and the family dynamics of television viewing (Morley, 1986). Each of these studies in different ways sought to explore what actually took place in everyday patterns of television viewing rather than contrive screenings in which groups of strangers watched together in unfamiliar surroundings. This methodological shift
reflected a commitment to the natural, everyday context as an important aspect to be explored rather than being eclipsed by macro-context issues. Indeed much of the research has stressed the way in which the big issues of power, ideology and subjugation are instantiated in local dynamics in the everyday negotiation of ‘who watches what when, why and how’.

One approach used in such studies was that of participant observation - exemplified by Lull who together with a team of researchers “ate with the families, performed chores with them, played with the children, and took part in group entertainment, particularly television watching” (1980: 201). Using this approach Lull (1980) noted the ways in which television viewing could create a context for intimacy: “The man was a hard working labourer who nearly always fell asleep when he watched television at night. He dozed as he sat in a recliner rocking chair with his shoes off. He snored loudly with his mouth open. His wife, who had been sitting on the floor in the same room, pushed herself along the floor until she was close to his chair. She leaned back until her head rested against his bare feet and smiled as she created this rare moment of ‘intimacy’.” (Lull, 1980: 203, cited in Moores, 1993: 34). Another common approach (sometimes used in conjunction with participant observation but often on its own) is the semi-structured or unstructured interviews in which participants’ talk about their patterns of media consumption and the meaning which it has in their lives. Thus Hobson found that some of her female consumers of Crossroads displayed an awareness of the criticisms the programme received; “I mean they’re terrible actors, I know that, and I just see through that, you know. I just, now and then I think, ‘Oh God, that’s silly’, you know,
but it's not the acting I'm interested in, it's what's going on. I suppose I'm nosey.” (cited in Moores, 1993: 42).

This strand of ethnographic work certainly took seriously the notion of the natural or everyday context of viewing and in doing so saw that mundane interactions and media uses could be explored as an important part of media consumption. It also enabled a purchase on macro issues such as power and gender from the perspective of the ‘local’ or micro level patterns of media consumption. However both participant observation and interviews can be criticised as failing to fully explore or take into account local talk context. Participant observation relies upon researchers’ glosses of the participants’ behaviour and talk - thus we are given constructions or accounts of behaviour as the data. This reflects both a lack of reflexivity about the constructive nature of researchers’ summaries and often denies direct access to social activity itself. Thus from this perspective talk may be summarised into some generic description such as ‘intimacy’ or argument’ rather than explored in its detail. Furthermore the interview data uses talk as a tool to get at real social behaviour rather than as a forum of social activity in itself. From this perspective talk is often treated as a window upon inner attitudes or outer behaviour rather than as a construction of reality and a medium of interaction itself. In Hobson’s work cited above the female participants’ talk could be seen in terms of its dextrous orientation to possible (mis)readings by the interviewer. Thus the participant displays an awareness of criticisms levelled at Crossroads, cites instances of her own criticism of the programme, provides a way of reading her engagement despite these criticisms and uses a playful self-deprecating comment ‘I suppose I’m nosey”. The point is that social activity is here not just referred to but present within the talk about television. Whilst
ethnographic approaches have shown an interest in the domestic contexts which are referred to in interviews they have perhaps underestimated the activity immediately present within those interviews. Furthermore whilst such ethnographic work emphasised context it did not consider talk as creating and orientating to context. Thus the idea that talk could be seen as construction in context, a medium of social interaction which both generates and orientates to the surrounding talk context in which it occurs was outside of the scope of ethnographic research.

Another strand of recent research is well exemplified in Livingstone and Lunt’s (1994) *Talk on Television*. Livingstone and Lunt (1994) provide a perspective on audience discussion programmes which explores the phenomenon in the light of social theory, notably Habermas’s (cited in Holub, 1991) concept of the public sphere. This framework is used to understand the notion of participation or the lack of it by members of the public in politically powerful institutions (who form the public sphere). Livingstone and Lunt point out that features of audience discussion programmes - such as lay people being able to hold the representatives of power to account and being able to tell their own ‘private’ stories publicly - are potentially significant. First simple conceptions of distinctions between private and public sphere are transcended in public tellings of private stories. Second, this challenges media conceptions of divisions between information and entertainment and thereby questions traditional ideas about the public having potential involvement in the latter rather than the former. Third, ideas about the ‘refeudalisation’ of the public sphere - with its picture of a declining opportunity for ‘lay’ participation in public sphere activity is implicitly questioned by the emergence of
audience discussion programmes which can be seen as “a potentially emancipatory public sphere.” (1994: 180).

The approach taken in this thesis if juxtaposed against that of Livingstone and Lunt could be seen as paying relatively less attention to issues of social theory and displaying more interest in the surrounding talk context for any one utterance. However it is worth noting that Livingstone and Lunt attend to language in a way which Morley (1980) did not and thus exemplify one way in which audience research has developed. Rather than assessing the extent to which audiences identify with encoded meanings within the media Livingstone and Lunt consider the different ‘readings’ of the media which audiences can give. Thus one relevant reading entailed talk which depicts audience discussion programmes as ‘romance’ another as ‘debate’ and a third ‘therapy’. Here the analysis is not tied to particular social positionings but rather seen as frameworks through which audiences make sense of the programmes. Though unexplored Livingstone and Lunt’s work implicitly allows for the possibility of individual members of the audience moving between these different ‘participation frameworks’ rather than being locked into position according to either their social positioning or their presumed ‘mentalistic’ attitude. A second feature of their analysis relevant to this thesis is that they not only explore talk about audience discussion programmes but also talk within such programmes. One example of this entails an exploration of the way in which expertise is contested and negotiated in the talk itself. One particularly interesting aspect of this is the way in which the host can position the participants on the programme which could be read as establishing, changing or undermining their ‘production framework’ or footing. The concept of footing will be returned to later but it is worth noting here that the
speaker's position with regard to their talk can be seen as open to construction. Some of
the different ways in which footing can be achieved and can serve the function of
warranting claims will be considered in chapters 2 and 3 in the light of Goffman (1979)
and Clayman (1992). Thus whilst this thesis pays more attention to local talk context
and less to wider questions of social theory it does pursue some of the issues - often
implicit - within Livingstone and Lunt. In particular a focus on talk without reference to
socio-political 'group' and sensitive to variation and also an exploration of the
negotiated to-be-constructed aspects of expertise are key themes.

1.3 Social Psychological Perspectives

(a) The Social Psychology of Persuasion

Whilst the social psychology of persuasion shares some of the same phenomena of study
considered with regard to mass media research its approach is markedly different. In
contrast to much of media research there is very little theorising of its objects of study -
so for example there is little concern with identifying what constitutes an 'audience' or
indeed a 'speaker'. Furthermore there is no attention given to issues of content explicit
or implicit within the media broadcasts - instead 'messages' are treated in terms of direct
utterances arguing for or against a particular position rather than as anything to be
decoded by analyst or audience. In this way the social psychology of persuasion is much
more akin to 'effects research' which sought to measure the behavioural impact of the
media - particularly in terms of its potential role in causing aggression in its audience.
The interest in audiences within the social psychology of persuasion is not an attempt to
observe what audiences ‘normally’ do nor to measure how social positioning effects the
decoding of the media - instead they are explored solely in terms of the impact which the
media has on their attitudes. The emphasis is not on describing patterns of (naturally
occurring) social behaviour but rather to predict outcomes that is to determine “who says
what to whom with what effect” (Billig, 1987: 63).

This focus emerged as a result of the context in which persuasive communications
research was developed - namely the perceived needs of the United States’ army during
the Second World War. Just as Robert Yerkes had developed the group test of
intelligence as part of the American Psychological Associations response to selection
needs of the United States’ army in the First World War (Leahey, 1987) so Hovland and
colleagues’ research into persuasion was developed as a technology to serve US
propaganda needs for the Second World War. In particular the United States War
Departments’ Information and Education Division, (to which Hovland contributed)
sought to develop propaganda films which would raise morale and persuade the United
States army personnel that the war with Japan would last several years (although history
proved this to be false). Like Robert Yerkes before him, Hovland sought to develop his
research in the midst of conducting practical interventions. Billig (1987) cites Hovland’s
awareness of this potential conflict in aim; “in nearly all cases ... the studies had an
immediate practical purpose and did not constitute a systematic research programme.”
In this way the thrust of the research was to identify the ingredients which would best yield persuasive effect - rather than to explore or reflect upon problems with the methodology or definition of concepts. A search was on for key essentials which could be distilled from the particulars of experiments and applied to any given situation. This experimental methodology itself shaped the emergent perspective within persuasive communications research. In deeming the phenomena amenable to simulated study a particular set of assumptions about persuasive communications are invoked. One consequence of this is that a picture of persuasion emerges with emphasis placed on the sorts of issues which are easily manipulated in experimental contexts. The understanding of persuasive communications is in terms of generic variables - the essential characteristics of the persuasive act - which are thought of as effective regardless of the particulars of context. As Billig notes "Hovland's research strategy was based upon attempts to eliminate particularity, in order to observe general features." (1987: 67). This emphasis on finding features which could be generalised led to attention being given to the 'form' rather than the 'content' of the message.

An illustration of this approach is apparent in research into the source of a message. The attributed 'source' of a persuasive communication has become one of the key 'variables' of interest in persuasion research. The basic hypothesis guiding such research is that the originator or source to whom a message is attributed will have a measurable effect on the amount of attitude change. The concept of 'attitude' will not be explored here apart from to note that whilst defined in some later work as a cognitive construct centring on an evaluative judgement it was treated fairly unproblematically in much research as simply the measured response to a given question e.g. the strength of agreement or disagreement
with an evaluative statement. The focus thus was upon using it as a tool to measure the effects of experimental manipulation rather than as an object requiring theoretical attention (which some subsequent research partially addressed). Furthermore even research which did attempt to reflect upon the phenomena of attitude was happy to maintain the assumption that it existed as essentially a cognitive entity - the possibility of unpicking the rather rigid and mentalistic assumptions came with the deployment of discourse analysis within a social psychological context (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).

Likewise the source of the message was straightforwardly treated as the person or persons who were said to have issued the persuasive message. Here the simulated experimental methodology gave no hint as to the sorts of complexities concerning source which Goffman illustrated and will be explored later. Thus Hovland and Weiss (1951) presented subjects with an argument in favour of a new atomic submarine - one group being told that the argument came from a prestigious American physicist Richard Oppenheimer, the other that it was from a Russian newspaper Pravda. For Hovland and Weiss the particulars of Oppenheimer and Pravda did not matter all that was important was what class or category of sources they could be taken to stand for with regard to the American participants used; Oppenheimer was assumed to represent a ‘highly credible source’, Pravda a source of ‘less credibility’. Similarly the actual content of the persuasive message was not seen as important. It did not matter that the message concerned an atomic submarine other than that Oppenheimer could be taken as a credible expert on the topic whilst Pravda’s stance could be seen as arousing suspicion in the context of the ‘cold war’. The hope was to distil from these particulars generalised laws such as ‘highly credible sources are more persuasive than less credible ones’. That
is the 'formal' features of the experiment were stressed - hence in many subsequent texts Hovland and Weiss is cited as demonstrating that highly credible sources are more persuasive than less credible sources - the details of Pravda, Oppenheimer and submarines are treated as optional extras with the focus being on the generic predictive findings. Context was also considered unimportant unless it too could be coded up into a generic predictive model. Further research into persuasive communications whilst free of some of the requirements of the military still reflected this emphasis upon generic, predictive models. An example of this is Petty and Cacioppo’s (1981) approach to the relative importance of source (e.g. expert or non-expert) and type of message content (e.g. lots of supporting arguments or anecdotal claims).

The potentially confusing and contradictory persuasive communications research findings were resolved into a consistent generic model by proposing and ‘experimentally demonstrating’ that the context of audience involvement is important. Hence the audience is codified as either high or low in involvement with the persuasive topic - highly involved audiences are deemed to be influenced by the ‘quality of the message’ whilst those with low involvement were thought to be swayed by the attributed source of the message. In this way persuasive communications research followed an experimental trajectory of seeking to find a generic, consistent model of persuasion which can be continually refined by the qualifying exceptions which arise. The approach taken demonstrated a failure to reflect upon the built-in assumptions of the experiments - thus the idea that the source of a message may be a matter of construction and debate was not and could not be contemplated in experiments where participants were unproblematically told who had issued the persuasive message. Furthermore, the
manipulation of variables as generic categories ensured that findings would either confirm or disconfirm what had already been foreseen rather than present the possibility of fresh discoveries. Indeed the experiments foreclosed the possibility of exposing their own limitations - as naturally occurring talk in its particular detail was not gathered or explored there was never any sense that it had something to offer or indeed any challenge to make of experimental work. Finally, details of actual utterances and their talk (and even non-talk) context could not be discussed or juxtaposed with the generic perspectives as the experiments which dominated the research were above all else exercises in reducing particular details to generic types.

This approach stands in sharp contrast to a genuine interest in what transpires in non-manipulated, everyday persuasive attempts - where there is the possibility of discovering how speakers attempt to be persuasive, where the detail of talk and its orientation to context can be drawn from the data and where simple conceptions of source and message are questioned. It is this approach to exploring actual talk - both the overt persuasive attempts of politicians and the talk of news journalists - which is adopted in this thesis. This is not to entirely dismiss all that experimentation has or can be but rather to call attention to what can be gleaned from an altogether different perspective upon persuasion. Whilst the loss of a experimental-manipulative approach foreshortens attempts to map predictive laws it opens up an exploration of the everyday doing of persuasion - how members orientate to real life persuasive attempts. This perspective has nothing to say about efficacy and would thus be unlikely to assist military propaganda - but it does provide a stance from which hasty certainty regarding ‘who or what the source is’ can be questioned. Finally the loss of a ‘generic’ model encourages attention
to be given to the workings of the particular. Thus the ways in which talk orientates to, creates, maintains and transforms ‘context’ in its detail both limits the sorts of generalised predictions which can be made and at the same time opens up an appreciation of the description of the details of the talk in front of us.

(b) Self-Categorisation Theory

Another strand of research from social psychology which acts as an important point of contrast with the approach taken in this thesis is that of self-categorisation theory. Self-categorisation theory - developed by Turner (1987) - provides an approach to identity which emphasises something of the variety of different ways in which people can construct their identity by drawing upon particular ‘applicable’ categories. This perspective is re-visited in chapter 5 but it is worth briefly considering some of its key features here. At one level self-categorisation theory suggests that how we come to think of our identity can vary widely - that is that we can apply any of a massive range of categories to ourselves from the superordinate such as ‘human being’, through the intermediate or group level which would include shared aspects such as religious, political and occupational affiliations to the subordinate or individual level which emphasises my difference from rather than similarity to others. Each of these according to Turner (1987) comprise the categories out of which we can come to form an identity. The theory also indicates some role for the situation in shaping conceptions of identity - the particular categories that are ‘activated’ are seen as ‘triggered’ by a an interaction between the individual and their environment. Thus a given individual may in certain
circumstances come to think of themselves in terms of their sporting allegiances this would set into play a range of possible group level categories - the particular assignment of category would hinge upon the individual’s calibration of their similarities and differences with other category members. As a consequence of this calculation (the meta-contrast ratio) the individual may categorise themselves as belonging to a particular football club’s group of supporters. In this way self-categorisation theory emphasises something of the multiple possible versions of identity that are available to an individual and that context in some form can play a role shaping identity construction - both of these themes (at this level of abstraction) have some degree of resonance with the approach taken in this thesis. Furthermore as chapter 5 illustrates the notion of contrast central to self-categorisation theory is seen as an important device in the study of audiences talk. However when the details are put into place the differences with the current thesis become more marked - in particular as is suggested below it is the emphasis on cognition and the inattention to language which profoundly distinguishes the self-categorisation theory approach from that of this thesis.

To further illustrate these differences it is worth drawing upon an example of self-categorisation theory which is particularly relevant to issues of media consumption - namely Terry, Hogg and Duck’s (1999) work on the ‘third-person effect’. The ‘third-person effect’ refers to the notion that typically individuals will perceive others as more easily influenced by the media than themselves. The basic concept taken from Davison (1983) is developed by Terry, Hogg & Duck (1999) such that group identification is worked into a revamped model: “Specifically we emphasise an “us” - “them” or group-based distinction in perceptions of persuasive influence - a distinction that was implicit
in Davison’s (1983) original formulation of the third-person effect, but one that has been underplayed in more individualistic accounts of the phenomenon.” (1999: 298).

Thus Terry, Hogg & Duck (1999) argue that it is possible to refine the basic claim that people tend to ‘perceive’ others as more easily influenced than themselves in the light of self-categorisation theory. That is they argue that the perception of others is more refined - differentiating in particular those who are ingroup and outgroup members and taking into account whether ‘being influenced’ can be construed as consistent with the group identity: “From a self-categorisation perspective, we propose that third-person perceptions are sensitive to the categorisation of self and other into relevant ingroup and outgroup categories, and reflect the ‘accentuation of similarities’ within, and differences between these categories.” (1999: 301).

Terry, Hogg & Duck refer to data in which Australian audiences report the extent to which they and others were influenced by political broadcasts they had seen. Consistent with Davison’s (1983) general thesis they reported that ‘average’ others were more easily influenced than they themselves were. Furthermore - in line with self-categorisation theory expectations - political outgroup members were more influenced than the ingroup especially amongst those who strongly identified with the ingroup. The only exception to this was were material was viewed as favourable to the ingroup in which case the influence on the ingroup (including self) was reported as being greater than that on the outgroup.

A number of criticisms can be brought to bear on both self-categorisation theory per se and its particular contribution to ideas about the third-person effect. Starting with problems applicable generally to self-categorisation theory it is possible to question the
extent to which self-categorisation theory ever gets beyond a commitment to ‘mentalism’. Thus despite the suggestion that the theory extends beyond individualism and to introduce a wider social context it is still extremely cognitive in its orientation. The presumed mechanisms at work entail a cognitive conception of group (or category) identification, cognitive assignments of others to in or out groups and cognitive perceptions of others. This cognitive emphasis is captured in the language of Terry, Hogg & Duck (1999): “When people define and evaluate themselves in terms of a self-inclusive social category the joint processes of categorisation and self-enhancement come into play. Categorisation perceptually accentuates differences between ingroup and outgroup and similarities among ingroup members (including self) on stereotypical dimensions. ... Moreover, because the self is defined in terms of group membership, self-enhancement motives prompt the group member to seek behaviourally and perceptually to favour things ingroup over things outgroup.” (1999: 301, 302, emphasis added).

For self-categorisation theory the concept of categories is a central concern and is explored in terms of mental aspects presumed to be present in order to predict behaviour. Thus the relevant categories are understood as the individual’s cognitive self assignments to particular categories. To some extent this stands in contrast to the rather determinist picture touched on within certain media approaches, in which social positioning alone was thought an adequate category. Yet whilst this approach offers at least the appearance of taking the participants self definitions into account it does so not by dealing with the demonstrably present categorisation in language but instead with researchers’ glosses on internal processing. This contrasts with the interest in categories
from an ethnomethodological, conversation analytic and discursive perspective in which the construction of and the differentiation between categories in talk-in-interaction is a central concern. These approaches - which will be drawn upon in this thesis - seek to describe how members do the construction of categories rather than using researchers' ascription of mental units to produce a cognitive process model.

With regard to the specific work on the third-person effect Terry, Hogg & Duck (1999) in passing mention that a survey was used to gather the data. Once again as with experiments into attitude change the methodology gives a glimpse at certain 'ontological' assumptions. In survey approaches neatness and simplicity is valued over complexity and detail. The words used are principally authored by the researchers involved in compiling the survey tool rather than derived from the participants. Likewise the interpretations of the responses, perhaps a tick or a circle on a scale, are those of the researcher. The ambiguity whilst not visible in a survey (except when the participants take it upon themselves to add lib) are none-the-less present. The particular sets of constructs by which I identify myself with a political group and make judgements about others membership and ease of influence become far more complicated and fluid when talk itself is explored. This thesis explores participants’ talk about self, contrasts with others and references to media influence. Yet it approaches these issues 'bracketing off' consideration of what does or does not occur in participants' 'inner mental world' and leaving to one side a quest for context free laws. Thus cognitive conjectures and causal certainties are replaced with attention to the patterns of the participants’ talk and in particular the skilful orientation to talk context which this reveals.
1.4 Semiotics and Social Constructionist Perspectives

This thesis adopts a broadly social constructionist perspective with regard to both talk on and about the media. The definition of social constructionism is, as Danzigér (1997) notes, certainly open to multiple versions itself. Here the concept is used to get at the idea that reality can be constructed (particularly through language) in a variety of ways and that the construct or version produced can be explored in terms of the functions it might have. These functions could be variously conceptualised as readable in terms of ideological implications and/or as interactional moves. Some of the issues concerning these ‘macro’ versus ‘micro’ orientations will be attended to later in outlining critical linguistics and conversation analysis. For now it can be briefly noted that ‘micro’ interaction orientated perspectives are often critiqued for overly focusing on the nuances of talk and failing to address wider contextual factors which are not explicitly revealed and orientated to in the actual talk. Conversely macro approaches are held to account for importing a priori concepts regarding the operation of social forces and paying insufficient attention to local talk context. In order to provide a further sense of social constructionism’s roots and to get a flavour of some of its influence in making sense of media output and audience talk it is worth considering the key figure of Ferdinand de Saussure.

De Saussure, (1974, cited in Potter and Wetherell, 1987) arguably the founder of semiology, argued that language is one (particularly important), code or system of signs out of which meaning is produced. His notion of the ‘arbitrariness of the sign’ challenges our intuitive sense that our representations of reality are brought about by reality itself - instead it suggests that our notions of reality are made available through our systems of
representation. Rather than being able to apprehend reality directly it is through systems of signs such as language that we do so. Crucial to our sense of the nature of reality is the 'relations between signs' the links in the total system of language. Some aspects of this can be understood in terms of oppositional pairs thus the opposition between 'pain' and 'pleasure' could be seen as a particularly important way in which we give meaning to our personal experiences. The meaning of pain is understood by references to other clusters of terms which are available to describe personal experience - its position in the language nexus produces meaning for us quite apart from any actual physical stimuli. Some aspects of this line of thought have been developed in the work of Derrida who amidst a range of other arguments indicated the difficulties of attempting to escape from and act in control of a language system which 'has us' and defines us. In order to appreciate the impact of social constructionism on this thesis it is worth considering both the work of Barthes and Foucault and the various applications of the perspective to media and textual analysis.

(a) Barthes

One of the ways in which semiology developed was that through the work of Barthes it took into account the extent to which culture plays a role in producing, sustaining, altering and transmitting meanings. Thus Barthes has explored something of the way in which meanings encoded in language and other signs can be seen as situated in and influenced by the culture in which they occur. Barthes (1985/1988) depicted his earlier *Mythologies* (1973) as an attack upon 'the petit-bourgeois good conscience' - exposing
some of the culturally specific meanings which everyday aspects of (Caucasian, middle-
class, French) life stood for. Thus a ‘mere’ wrestling match told the story of the triumph
of good over evil. Barthes’s work can be read as signalling not so much the arbitrariness
of meaning produced by an abstract system of signs - but something more culturally
located. That is Barthes positions signs as producing a meaning which gives reproduces
and serves the needs of the culture in which it arises. In this way Barthes can be seen as
touching upon something of the functional aspects of signs that particular
representations of reality can be associated with.

In addition to introducing a sense of cultural context and function to semiology Barthes
was also keen to stress the importance of point of view. This line of argument provided
an analytic focus (initially for literary criticism) in which the identification of the
perspectives adopted by the writer or narrator was a key feature. Barthes (1985/1988)
drew implications from this concept in terms of reflexivity and scientific status for
semiological work: “...concerning the first point, the scientificty of Semiology, I no
longer believe - nor do I desire - that Semiology should be a simple science, a
positivistic science, and this is for a primordial reason: it is the responsibility of
Semiology, and perhaps of Semiology alone of all the human sciences today, to question
its own discourse: as a science of language, of languages, it cannot accept its own
language as a datum, a transparency, a tool, in short as a meta-language; strong with the
powers of psychoanalysis, it interrogates itself as to the place from which it speaks...”
(1988: 7 & 8). This investigation of the point of telling is crucial to the social
constructionism drawn upon in this thesis. If we are concerned with the multiple possible
versions of reality - many of which could be considered ‘true’ in a conventional sense -
then it makes sense to enquire as to which version of reality is being produced, what its functions are and what point of view is implicitly or explicitly entailed.

(b) Foucault

These themes of construction and point of view of telling form an important strata of Foucault’s work. Indeed as Wetherell & Potter (1992) note Foucault uses the notion of the unavailability of construction - from whichever perspective we adopt - to critique other (often Marxist) approaches to history; “Ideology, Foucault suggests, always implies the possibility of a non-ideological gaze at history. It assumes that someone somewhere (usually the speaker) can see through the smokescreens of delusion to describe what history is really about ... In opposition to this, Foucault sees any knowledge, including historical knowledge, as constructed through discursive formations. ... The result is what Foucault calls archaeological or, later, genealogical studies which look at how the conditions for knowledge, including historical knowledge, become produced.” (1992: 80, 81). Thus Foucault’s constructionism led to a reflexive awareness that one set of constructions can not be easily critiqued and abandoned in favour of a ‘true’ set which the analyst and other ‘intellectual elites’ have access to. Instead constructionism becomes the very fabric of all representations of reality - not just those that are ‘ideological’.

This commitment to a constructionist perspective became increasingly evident as Foucault’s work developed. Thus in contrast to Foucault’s (1970) The Order of Things his (1972) The Archaeology of Knowledge displayed a move away from ideas conveyed
in discourse ('epistemes') to discourse (or 'discourse') itself; “the history of ideas looks for, and the archaeologist doesn’t, psychological and sociological causes of intellectual events” (Merquior, 1985: 78). Foucault’s ‘archaeological’ work did not see ‘discourse’ as a document - a useful conveyor of information about psychological or sociological causes - but instead as monuments - important in their own right for what they themselves display. Thus rather than pursuing themes within documents the structure of the document’s discourse itself becomes key - the sorts of constructions produced become in themselves the focus.

For Foucault 'discourses' or forms of construction were not merely representational as Merquior points out; “. Foucault warns that discourses are not to be taken as sets of signs referring to representations; rather, they are to be understood as practices. Naturally discourses employ signs, but what they do is more than use them to decode things. Foucault’s aim is precisely to describe this extra function of discourses.” (1985: 76). A particular function which Foucault was concerned with was the operation of power. Miller (1987) notes Foucault’s focus is on power through the subject positions available to individuals - and even the concept of individuality - rather than domination or subjugation of an overt, external nature. Thus the work of Foucault does not necessarily see individuality and the pursuit of pleasure as guaranteeing freedom and liberty - instead they can prove to be reflecting subtle power infused discourses. From this perspective the construction of our sense of self can be seen as pieced together from a particular array of options - from available discourses which can be related to other discourses in a web of power.
In this way Foucault saw construction as a central concern in social analysis. For Foucault this led to some level of reflexivity - an all embracing constructionism problematised attempts to produce a ‘real’ construct-free version of reality. Furthermore, emphasis was placed less on the operations of powerful agents within society and more on the actual discourses or constructions of reality themselves and their power infused ‘regulatory’ functions. These themes have clearly influenced a range of media work in general and formed an important backdrop against which discourse analysts variously position themselves. Some of these lines of thought will be picked up later but for now it is worth considering some of the ways in which this thesis orientates itself to Foucault. First the thesis in line with Foucault tends to avoid attempts to refer to construct free or ideologically neutral ‘true’ messages - these are easily avoided in their crudest sense -yet it is still possible to present a thesis as providing a ‘God’s eye view’, free from the limitation of perspective on the data or analysis referred to. The only safe-guards against this are the occasional ‘warning’ passages such as these - (although paradoxically such confessions to reflexive awareness can themselves be seen as positioning texts in particular rhetorically convincing ways). Indeed the notion of point of view will as we shall see in a moment be an important point for further consideration in the discourse to be analysed. Second, discourse will be seen in its own right - that is it will be explored in terms of the versions of reality produced rather than with regard to its points of reference and correspondence or lack of it with a ‘reality’ outside of the text. Third, some of the impetus for exploring the function of talk will be present in this thesis, that is talk will be seen not just in terms of the versions of reality produced but with regard to the possible functions of the constructions offered.
However the thesis will differ from Foucault in a number of ways. For Foucault the key function of discourse was the subtle operation of power. This is both rather vague and narrowly defined. Wetherell & Potter (1992) criticise the lack of interest in specifics in much of Foucault's work noting that "the directive force (power) is dislocated to become a type of Hegelian Spirit wandering through time." (1992: 86). In graphic terms this captures the lack of specificity in Foucault's work. Foucault demonstrates little interest in actual instances of text - beyond those necessary to illustrate or mobilise an argument and he has no interest in actual instances of talk. Thus whilst discourses were treated as permeating everyday common sense ideology, thought, speech and practice - little attention was given to the scrutiny of any relevant data. This lack of interest in data generally and in actual utterances in particular served to leave unchallenged the rather narrow power-directed focus in Foucault's work. Had Foucault taken the opportunity to inspect actual talk in context it is possible that a wider array of functions would become apparent. This interest in something of the variety of functions of actual instances of constructions in context will be of crucial concern in this thesis.

(c) Social Construction and Media Analysis

It is worth noting that the issues of 'point of view', ideology, construction and power form an important background not just for an emerging 'constructionism' but also more specifically for media research. One example of such research is that of Hartley (1992) whose exploration of the point of view of television news provides a fruitful illustration of some of the possibilities and limitations of this line of media research. Hartley
reworks the fictional film-making convention of distinguishing ‘p.o.v’. *(point of view)* shots and ‘neutral’ shots. A *point of view* shot in film-making literature refers to a sequence of film “that shows the scene or characters from one of the characters’ point of view.” (1992: 77). In deploying such shots the point of view is made clear by including parts of the observing characters figure or by obviously moving with them. However other classes of shots are deemed ‘neutral’ in that they do not signify a particular character’s point of view. Hartley challenges this distinction arguing that “All shots have a point of view,” (1992: 78). So-called ‘neutral’ shots - which might capture all of the characters on film - still have a literal place from which they are filmed and as Hartley points out are only perceived as neutral by contrast with more explicitly ‘positioned’ camera angles. Furthermore, the images selected and their positions in the news narrative can be seen as representing a point of view in that they may attend to issues of ‘who is to blame’ for negative outcomes. These issues raise questions not only for fictional film-making but also for the television news in terms of its use of ‘obvious’ point of view shots and ‘seemingly neutral’ camera positionings. In addition they problematise the sequences of narration and image used in television news as inevitably suggesting ‘who or what is to blame’ rather than remaining free from partisan views and controversies. Hartley approaches this in terms of “the inevitable contradiction between TV news’s *formal* relations and its *institutional* relations ... News has to be impartial; that is, it must narrate events without a point of view. Since that is impossible, there is a contradiction between (required) impartiality and (unavoidable) point of view. ... Nevertheless, the news institutions have not only accepted the requirement of impartiality, but (even in the face of widespread doubt and criticism) they continue to assert that they have achieved it.” (1992: 78).
One example which Hartley gives of this is the implicit cause and effect structure used in words and especially pictures constructing a version of 'a public service workers dispute'. As Hartley notes: “Both the film report sections .. reiterate this cause-effect movement. They open with almost identical shots .. showing the picket lines of strikers (cause), and then spend most of their time on the effects on patients and medical staff. Whilst these effects are being shown visually, the voice-over commentary ascribes causes to them ... Hence it follows , the cause of the event is the negative action initiated by the strikers; its effect is on medical staff and patients.” (1992: 79).

Hartley’s analysis usefully explores some of the implications of semiotics for the study of media and it does go at least a little way to incorporating language as well as visual signs into its analysis. However there is a sense in which language is not being engaged with as thoroughly as it could be. Fowler (1991) expresses something of this sentiment in his comments on media analysis more generally: “The ‘standard position’ of current studies of the media is that news is a construct which is to be understood in social and semiotic terms; and everyone acknowledges the importance of language in this process of construction. But in practice language gets relatively meagre treatment, when it comes to analysis: the Glasgow Group, and Hartley, for example, are more interested in, and better equipped technically to analyse, visual techniques in television. More Bad News does devote three chapters to language, but the analysis is anecdotal and lacking in detail (from a linguists point of view).” (1991: 7 & 8).
Critical Linguistic Analysis

Fowler (1991) develops the critical linguistics model which was sketched in Fowler, Hodge, Kress & Trew (1979) this model very much adopts the constructionist concept that representations of reality are not simply determined by the actual nature of reality. Furthermore language is brought centre stage as the central sign for the construction of reality - the structuring medium which creates or constructs our sense of reality. This premise is developed in two ways by critical linguistics analysis; first, the constructions are explored in terms of the ideological functions which they serve and second, particular attention is paid to the ‘deep structure’ especially the transitivity of sentences used by the media. It is worth noting that this constructionist emphasis has not extended to the constructions deployed by audiences but has rather stayed with those produced on television, radio and newspapers - that is by media institutions in the act of communicating to a ‘mass’ public.

At one level Fowler’s work is consonant with the commitments of the Glasgow University Media Group and to an extent with those of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, that is each approach in different ways shows an interest in the ideology which the media produce and maintain in their constructions of reality. This theme has often been explored in terms of both the selection of events to be reported on and their treatment or ‘transformation’ into news stories. Thus the Glasgow University Media Group used a variety of illustrations to support its premise that; “The news treats political views and policies of the right quite differently to those of the left.” (1982: 68). Fowler to some extent shares an interest in the ideological messages within the media but seeks to explore them not by analysis of camera stills and ‘telling’ quotes
but by investigating the linguistic features - particularly the grammatic structure - of claims made and linking these to an explication of ideological functions.

Some of this emphasis draws upon the work of Halliday (1971, 1978 & 1985 cited in Fowler, 1991) who stressed something of the diverse functions of language. Understanding language as providing multiple possible versions of the world enables us to ask ‘what are the functions of this particular version produced in this way in this context?’ Whilst deployed initially in the analysis of fiction, Halliday usefully distinguished ideational, interpersonal and textual functions which remain important across a vast array of written and spoken language contexts. The representational or ‘ideational’ aspect of language, emphasises the way that language can produce a version of reality - that is its world-making or reality constructing aspect, this concept encourages us to ask what version of reality is being produced and to what purpose. Interpersonal functions focus attention on the way in which spoken language in particular can orientate to the interlocutors involved - that is it can enact or do things as well as express them. The textual dimension of language refers to the way that it can orientate to itself and other texts for example any given text can position itself as argumentatively opposed to other texts or discourses or as corroborated by them. These themes taken in their broadest sense - as outlined here - encompass all that this thesis will examine. That is the thesis in analysing the talk of politicians, news-journalists and audiences will explore the versions of reality produced, it will do so with reference to the action orientation of language and the ‘truth’-status of the text produced. In order to clarify further what this agenda entails it is worth considering something of the way in which aspects of Halliday’s broad agenda were developed in Fowler’s work.
Fowler (1991) was particularly interested in the ideational function - the representation of reality within language and the ideological functions which were in play. An especially important strand for Fowler being transitivity which Halliday depicts as the foundation of representation: “perceptually the phenomenon is ‘all of a piece’; but when we talk of it, we must ‘analyse it as a semantic configuration’ - that is, we must represent it as one particular structure of meaning.” (Halliday, 1985: 101, cited in Fowler, 1991: 71). Of particular interest in transitivity analysis are the different ideological implications of passive and active formulations of behaviour. Thus Fowler (1991) notes the difference between an actual headline; “PC shot boy from 9 inches” (1991: 71) and a passive alternative; “Boy was shot by PC from 9 inches” (1991: 78). Using this illustrative example Fowler argues that the agency of the PC involved is emphasised in the actual formulation as compared to the passive alternative. This analytic tool is thus available to inspect the media for its treatment of agency - at a simple level questions can be asked about what versions of clauses are used - active or passive, what alternatives are available and what functions are served by the formulations actually used?

Whilst this approach provides an interesting language orientated constructionist analysis of texts it is worth noting some of its limitations. First, the analysis which centres on the grammatic structure of isolated clauses regardless of their discursive context seems ill equipped to deal with conversational talk. To apply this framework to conversations would entail discarding an enormous amount of surrounding talk data which might add much to our understanding of the function of the utterance. Even within the confines of monologic and written discourse the approach can be challenged for its lack of attention
to the entirety of the text. Montgomery (1986) hints at this by drawing upon an example of a passive or 'agent deleted' headline from the *Morning Star* the headline; "Scargill injured in worst clashes yet" (19/6/1984) suggests that the police are exonerated from causing harm to Scargill - whereas the article as a whole may be seen as providing a different perspective. In this way Montgomery questions whether all examples of passive formulations can be treated as exonerative.

Thus the reduction to syntactic structure actually sacrifices some of the details of the constructions produced by the media. In many cases questions of agency are developed across a longer stretch of discourse than a single clause. Furthermore the very focus upon transitivity can negate other important aspects of the media's construction of reality. A second set of concerns is that by placing such an emphasis upon the ideology transmitted by the media little scope has been given to explore the multifarious functions of talk by media audiences. A third limitation is that critical linguistics could be seen as bringing to the text a range of *a priori* assumptions which place limits on the functions which can be explored. An example of this is the interest which critical linguistic analysis shows in media discourse's reproduction of ideologies which re-enforce the status quo. Yet this is problematicised in Fowler's own example (cited above) from the 'right-wing' *Daily Express* in which the account of a police constable's action accentuates agency and culpability rather than attenuating it. This tendency to bring a set of expected functions to the text stands in contrast to approaches which aim to discover the particular, often highly localised function of talk.

The approach taken in this thesis shares with semiology and critical linguistics an interest in the constructing aspects of language and an interest in the functions of such
constructions. However it explores the construction of reality in audiences talk as well as that of politicians and news-journalists. Furthermore, it looks at the versions of reality produced in terms of larger passages of discourse in context - sometimes deploying the concept of repertoires at other times exploring conversational moves - in all cases attention is broader than an analysis of isolated clauses. Finally, it develops two aspects implicit within Halliday’s formulation of function which have been relatively under-explored in media research - that is the action orientation of talk-in-interaction and the validating or warranting techniques employed by politicians and news journalists in their talk on television. In order to clarify these different foci it is worth considering Goffman’s contribution to an understanding of the position from which the speaker talks (or their footing) and speech act theory’s contribution to the idea of talk as activity.

1.5 Goffman’s Work on Footing

Goffman demonstrated an interest in interaction in a variety of - often mundane - settings. Across a range of texts he explored something of the way in which people participate in different forms of social encounter - in particular Goffman explored the patterns or rituals of social life - that is how we enact social interaction. Goffman’s (1979) work on footing is particularly important in this thesis as it provides scope for considering the means by which claims might be warranted, that is made to appear true.

In this work Goffman problematised the simplistic dyadic conception of talk in which talk is understood as comprising one speaker and one listener each preoccupied respectively with speaking or listening. Goffman sought to decompose these global
categories into "smaller, analytically coherent elements" (1979: 6). Thus he argued that
the relations of members of a social gathering to an utterance can be conceptualised in
terms of each member's 'participation status'. It is possible to use Goffman's concept of
participation framework to reconstrue the simplistic understanding of a hearer in much
previous literature. Thus 'hearing' could be distinguished into a range of participation
frameworks depending for example on whether the hearer was the intended recipient or
addressee of the utterance, or an unintentional overhearer or even an intentional
overhearer (as with media audiences of televised interviews). Likewise - and of more
central concern to this thesis - speaking could be thought of in terms of several
'production formats' - that is people may relate to utterances as the one who gives them
voice (animator), as the person or persons who selected the words uttered (author) or as
those whose beliefs or positions are represented in the utterance (principal). As
Goffman notes this conception problematises the use of such vague and undifferentiated
categories as speaker and hearer, "The point of all this, of course, is that an utterance
does not carve up the world beyond the speaker into precisely two parts, recipients and
non-recipients but rather opens up an array of structurally differentiated possibilities,
establishing the framework in which the speaker will be guiding his delivery." (1979:
11).

Goffman notes that even when we do engage in spontaneous or what he called 'fresh
talk' we might be using the words of others or expressing positions held by others. That
is - playfully or seriously - any given animator may produce an utterance which is
positioned as something another has said, a generic saying or something which someone
else might say in these circumstances. Thus Goffman recognises that the animator can
change their positioning or 'footing' with regard to their utterances. This notion of the animator changing their production status - in particular its deployment so as to warrant claims made by citing corroborating others - will be explored in chapter two of the thesis. However there is another aspect of footing which Goffman hints at which will be considered in chapter three - that is the role of others. In addressing the particular features of story telling Goffman implies that conversational participants have to co-operate with the teller by giving them extended floor space - by foregoing interruptions which they might otherwise issue in 'non-storied' conversation. This suggests that others can be involved in allowing an animator to achieve a particular footing a theme which will be addressed in chapter three when studio news-room interaction will be explored in terms of how this might serve to warrant claims made by correspondents.

Having briefly considered some of the ways in which Goffman's (1979) concept of footing has informed aspects of the analytic focus in this thesis it is worth reflecting critically on this work. First it can be noted that for Goffman as with this thesis language is approached largely from an interaction perspective. From this perspective language is explored in terms of its action or task orientation - what it does rather than what it reveals about the mental state of the speaker or the workings of ideology. Second, Goffman's interest in ritualised aspects of social behaviour reflect a sense that meaningful structure can be found in seemingly unstructured encounters - however mundane. Third, Goffman was keen not to carelessly import conceptual frameworks from everyday language use, thus his refinement of the terms 'speaker' and 'listener' or 'hearer' stands in contrast to the unexplored concepts of 'source' and 'message' found with the social psychology of persuasive communications.
Having acknowledged these features which are largely consonant with the analysis in this thesis it is worth highlighting certain areas of divergence. First, although Goffman found a role for language within the framework of an interaction orientated analysis he sometimes implied that verbal exchanges were limited in the insight which they could provide. In seeking to illustrate this line of thinking Goffman drew upon the hypothetical example of two mechanics working together on a car; “An audio transcription of twenty minutes of such talk might be very little interpretable even if we know about cars; we would have to watch what was being done to the one in question. The tape would contain long stretches with no words, verbal directives answered only by mechanical sounds, and mechanical sounds answered by verbal responses. And rarely might the relevant context of one utterance be another utterance.” (1979: 15 & 16). The key problem with this line of argument (linking to a second criticism of Goffman’s work) is that no transcript was actually produced. Whilst Goffman may be correct in suggesting that certain visual cues not obtainable on an audio-tape transcript could prove important there is still a sense in which he seems to underestimate the significance of some of what would be present. As will be argued with regard to conversation analysis it is possible to incorporate minimal acknowledgement tokens such as ‘mmm’ and silences into the analysis - indeed one could inspect what sort of absence of speech is held accountable and what is not. Thus one could envisage a prolonged absence of talk in which there is considerable engine noise as less accountable than an absence of talk with no other noise. To return to Goffman’s concern if we wish to know about how to repair the car he may well be right that there are considerable omissions if we cannot inspect the components being manipulated. However if our interest is in interactional issues such as
accountability then we can still inspect how the participants treat the utterances and silences of the other.

A second criticism exemplified in Goffman’s hypothetical example is that he did not strive to provide detailed coherent data sets against which his analytic claims could be checked. Thus whilst Goffman was at pains to avoid reliance on common sense terminology many of his examples appealed to typical situations, examples from a hotchpotch of sources and his own glosses at interactions he had come across. This resulted in a generally poor quality of transcribed interaction which gave insufficient data for scrutinising claims made and which often left features of interaction such as pauses, overlapping talk and surrounding talk context to the reader’s imagination. Thus whilst Goffman brought a useful interaction-orientated focus to social analysis and highlighted participation status or footing as a useful way of approaching talk the development of these ideas could be seen as limited by the lack of careful analysis of talk in context. A perspective which stresses the activity orientation of language will now be considered.

1.6 Speech act theory and account giving perspectives

Speech act theory and the account giving literature seeks at some level to consider the interaction potential of talk itself. The notion that language can be explored in terms of its interactional accomplishments was the central concern in Austin’s (1962) *How to Do Things with Words*. Austin (1962) argued that utterances could be viewed as performing actions rather than simply transferring information from speaker to listener. Austin
developed a range of hypothetical examples of such ‘performatives’ which vary from utterances issued in an official capacity within a ceremony e.g. “I hereby sentence you to five years imprisonment” to the less formal “I promise you’ll get it by tomorrow”. Whether formal or informal, utterances can be explored in terms of what they do - or the functions they perform - in the above examples sentencing and promising. Austin referred to such utterances as illocutionary acts which had ‘perlocutionary effects’. Thus utterances could be constructed not simply representations of reality but as actions. Austin recognised that such speech acts had effects - the speech act of sentencing places a legal limit on the recipient’s (or addressee’s) freedom, setting in motion a chain of official consequences, detention, transfer to a prison and so on. But the effects of both the sentencing and promising act can go beyond official protocol; the sentencing may upset some listeners (perhaps including the addressee) whilst it could appease others; the promise may evoke a sense of reassurance or suspicion.

To some extent as well as suggesting the effects that utterances have, Austin indicated that context is important - albeit in a very particular way. Austin argued that for an utterance to properly perform certain ‘felicity conditions’ had to be met. Thus sentencing would not be performed by someone without the authority to do so (usually a judge) nor would it be performed if uttered before the trial (in circumstances where the ‘rule of law’ is followed). Likewise promising to give what the speaker does not have the power to deliver could be seen as equally ‘infelicitous’. Yet it is worth noting that even if lacking felicity utterances could be seen as achieving some interactional effects. Thus if a stranger stops me in the local Iceland store and says to me “I sentence you to five years imprisonment” then even though I remain free I may well experience effects, perhaps
bewilderment or anxiety and (as will be touched on later) I may well reply -that is verbally *inter-act* with the stranger. Two immediate criticisms spring from this observation regarding Austin’s method, first, that he concentrated upon isolated utterances rather than conversational sequences - hence he had little interest in replies (and the actions which they co-perform e.g. humour, blame, embarrassment). Second, Austin relied on hypothetical ‘typical’ examples of utterances - which conformed to his common sense understanding of how utterances might typically look rather than the potentially counter-intuitive exploration of how utterances are actually constructed and co-constructed. Yet, despite these shortcomings it is worth noting that Austin’s work does usefully and unequivocally emphasise that speech can be explored as action rather than merely as information transfer. This line of thinking as Antaki (1994) and Buttny (1993) note has formed the implicit background to the ‘account-giving’ literature.

To some extent Scott and Lyman (1968) could be seen as heralding the ‘birth’ of the accounts literature. Their paper developed a list of explanations or ‘accounts’ for a wide range of *deviant* acts. As Antaki (1994) notes Scott & Lyman’s conception limited itself to exploring exoneration of a particular range of (deviant) behaviours. Furthermore the focus was upon the *rational explanation* for the outcome rather than the subtle social interaction which may otherwise exonerate behaviour such as instances of self-condemnation, laughter, or tears - each of which could be seen as functioning in an exonerating fashion - depending crucially on the local context. Linked to this concern is that the actual working out of exoneration in terms of the surrounding talk context was not adequately explored - that is the emphasis was upon the (often hypothetical) isolated utterance rather than the conversational sequence. Scott and Lyman’s (1968) key
distinction was between 'excuses' (where the actor denied responsibility for the act) and 'justifications' (where responsibility was accepted but a reason for it was given).

This classification formed the beginnings of an increasingly complex edifice. Semin & Manstead (1983) developed the taxonomy by providing a number of additional distinctions between the various forms of excuses and justifications which intention talk might take. Thus one justification, for example an "appeal to values" (which could include claims to do things for religious or political purposes) can be distinguished from another such as an "appeal to need for facework" (which may include claims about the impression which a particular course of action might create). This perspective is potentially fruitful in considering politicians' talk about why they acted or spoke as they did - that is their intentions.

The account giving approach has enabled us to conceptualise talk about intent as a particular form of justification which might take a variety of different forms, thus the work can act as a useful template enabling us to recognise differences between what may otherwise appear to be similar accounts. However the empirical basis for much of the accounts literature has, as Antaki (1994) suggests, been rather limited with the templates acting as blinkers rather than sensitisers. Taxonomies have often been developed from deductive hunches rather than inductively inferred from actual talk, an approach which Sacks (1984) notes will always lead to limitations - not least because it denies the possibility of the researcher discovering unanticipated aspects of intention talk.

One strand of empirical work that has taken place relied upon existing taxonomies to test the efficacy of one sort of account as opposed to another (Langer et al, 1978, Ungar, 1981
& Weiner et al, 1987 cited in Antaki, 1994). This approach attempted to fit accounts into a causal model - with for example some accounts being claimed to cause a greater ‘exoneration effect’ than others. One difficulty with such an approach is that it rather assumes that the theoretical hunches about the various forms of account are correct - in jumping to questions of causation it implies that the descriptive work, concerning the various forms of accounts, has been adequately completed. Another empirical strand sought to develop the descriptive scheme by getting respondents to produce written accounts of their behaviour from which category based schemes are developed, (Felson & Ribner, 1981, Schonbach & Kleibaumhuter, 1989 cited in Antaki, 1994) points out that such work is limited both because of its reliance on written rather than 'live' accounts and because it involves a mixture of trivial and hypothetical stimuli events for which accounts were elicited. Cody & McLaughlin (1985) went a stage further by working from students’ summaries of accounts used by defendants in courtroom contexts - yet the summaries themselves could be seen as missing much of the descriptive detail and rhetorical context of the original account. Furthermore there could be a danger that the student observers involved may have produced summaries which reflect various pre-existing schemes or expectations for accounts rather than the particular nuances of the actual accounts given in the courtroom.

Thus the account giving approach to intention talk has been fruitful insofar as it has enabled us to appreciate the complex range of intentions which people may appeal to in their talk. However the emphasis upon developing generic taxonomies rather than documenting actual talk has resulted in a relative neglect of the details and context of talk about intentions. This thesis picks up the attention to the activity orientation of language
but focuses on the detail and content of the talk - which are touched on in different ways by both ethnomethodological and conversation analytic perspectives.

1.7 Garfinkel and Ethnomethodology

These themes of talk detail and surrounding talk context which are a central concern of the thesis rest in part upon the ideas of indexicality and reflexivity outlined in ethnomethodology and developed within conversation and discourse analysis. First it is worth considering some of the contributions which Garfinkel (1967) has made in developing an ethnomethodological approach.

The very notion of ethnomethodology stresses ‘members methods’ - the methods people use to account for the actions of themselves and others. This focus stands in sharp contrast to the functionalist ideas Garfinkel sought to problematise. Functionalism wanted to explain deviance by finding the variables which account for certain individuals’ failure to comply with cultural norms. Garfinkel wanted to study the norms, or common sense itself, not in terms of the operations of forces upon individuals - but as fashioned up at a micro level in the ‘throw away scraps’ of social interaction and conversation so easily ignored by social scientists. One means of getting at this ‘common sense knowledge’ which Garfinkel developed was the ‘breaching experiment’ - that is an exploration of what occurs when the common sense patterns are deliberately breached. An example of a breaching experiment is given below in which S is the unsuspecting ‘subject’ and E the ‘norm breaching’ experimenter;

S: How are you?
E: How am I in regard to what? My health,
my finances, my school work, my peace
of mind, my...

S: ((Red in the face and suddenly out of control))

Look! I was just trying to be polite. Frankly
I don’t give a damn how you are.


This wonderful example illustrates the way in which a breaching experiment deliberately upsets or alters the expected trajectory of social discourse. The idea being that by producing ‘disorganised interaction’ something is revealed about the way in which “the structures of everyday activities are ordinarily and routinely produced and maintained” (Garfinkel, 1967: 38 cited in Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 32). In many breaching experiments the unaware subjects demonstrated a way of making sense of the unexpected interaction - perhaps taking it as indicative of a particular game, mood or set of feelings. That is participants orientated to the idea that there was a rationale a sense of something sensible which they could orientate to continue to interact or to appropriately end the interaction.

In addition to exploring participants’ orientation to intelligibility - Garfinkel highlighted something of the way in which members’ interpretations of what is taking place demonstrated the indexical and reflexive properties of utterances. That is Garfinkel (1967) provided a perspective on talk as both sensitive to the surrounding talk context in which it occurs (indexical) and as inevitably involved in doing or interacting within the world (reflexive). The notion of indexicality is easily understood in terms of (though not
restricted to) the indexical nature of meaning - thus the utterance “we’ve lost him” may have one meaning within a conversation between people in a ‘getaway’ car and another in a conversation amongst surgeons in an operating theatre. The context both in gross terms (i.e. ‘getaway’ or ‘surgery’) and in the specific exchange of utterances or conversational sequence allows for the same utterance to be understood as carrying very different meanings.

The idea of reflexivity emphasises the action orientation of utterances which from an ethnomethodological perspective is seen encompassing all speech - with the function of any one utterance being context dependent. Thus even an apparently descriptive utterance such as “the washing up’s still there” or “the eclipse looks really beautiful” can be seen as ‘doing’ rather than just reporting. The first utterance could blame someone for failing to fulfil a duty - the second could do exoneration for a long detour to a remote star gazing spot or may be an act of affiliation with members of a local astronomy club. This second example hints at the idea that indexicality and reflexivity can be fruitfully taken together. That is the action accomplished by a given utterance (not just its meaning) can be seen as shaped by the surrounding talk context rather than always being contained within and apparent from the utterance itself.

This emphasis upon the local activity of interactants is as Zimmerman and Weider (1971) suggest central to the critical edge of ethnomethodology; “Once brought under scrutiny, the “orderly structure” of the social world is no longer available as a topic in its own right (that is, as something to be described and explained) but instead becomes an accomplishment of the accounting practices through and by which it is described and
explained. It is in this decision to bring such accounting practices under investigation as phenomena in their own right without presupposing the independence of the domain made observable via their use that constitutes the radical character of the ethnomethodological enterprise.” (1971: 293, 294).

One aspect of this stance is that it acts as a critique of those accounts of social behaviour which rely heavily on analysts’ categories and descriptions - thus references to features not demonstrably treated as important by participants are avoided. This perspective is itself not without problems or challenge - in particular as will be considered in the concluding chapter there is a debate to be had about whether analysts can readily shed their own concepts and straightforwardly access participants’ accomplishments. A second and related aspect is that ethnomethodology provides a new way of conceptualising ‘mundane’ exchanges as crucial sites for social life. Interactional participants could be seen to orientate to the local unfolding situation in such a way as to make it intelligible - that is to work out what sort of activity sequence the exchange of utterances constitute. Thus sequences of utterances can be explored with regard to what they do or co-construct, how each utterance forms the surrounding context for other talk and how participants make sense of and orientate to these unfolding contexts. In this way ethnomethodology offers a perspective which attempts to replace broad, structural sociological concerns with attention to local activity - a change of focus which entails reconfiguring mundane interaction as a site of crucial importance whose processes are revealed by attention to local detail and context.

To some extent this thesis will - in common with ethnomethodology - explore participants’ orientation to local activity. Furthermore relatively little attention will be
paid to stock ‘macro’ issues such as class, gender or political affiliation accept where they are explicitly referred to within the talk examined. Yet this thesis will differ from the approach to the method of ethnographic research sketched out in Garfinkel (1967). Garfinkel’s reliance on breaching experiments inevitably limited the sort of interactional data he collected. In particular most of the experiments entailed one of the interactional participants (usually a student of Garfinkel’s) working from a script or other guidance - with the example illustrated above the student was requested to challenge the traditional ‘how are you’ question. This means that rather than displaying context sensitivity aspects of the participants’ orientation to each other - the unfolding trajectory of activity sequences could not be fully explored. This problem was compounded by the reliance upon retrospective accounts of interactions - which typically entailed researchers’ glosses rather than the actual detail of utterances. Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998) note that Garfinkel was aware of some of the limitations of the breaching experiments - however it was with the work of Sacks that a methodological breakthrough occurred. By placing an emphasis upon talk in context or conversation Sacks opened up a new avenue for exploring participants’ orientations to local context.

1.8 Sacks and Conversation analysis

Many of the themes crucial to the work of Sacks have already been alluded to but is perhaps worth briefly identifying some of his contributions in terms of his attention to data, to activity sequences and participants’ demonstrable orientation to talk context.
With regard to data Sacks at one glance shares a platform with social psychologists - that is both stress the importance of empirically derived data. Thus, whilst Goffman happily adopted a magpie approach to snatches of text and overheard conversations and whilst Garfinkel relied on breaching experiments Sacks was rigorous in collecting and analysing empirical evidence. Sacks, in common with some of the social psychologists considered earlier, saw the need for a thorough and systematic approach to data and prioritised data over theory; “Sacks could also be eclectic in his use of illustrative data (for instance, he often drew on sources such as the writings of philosophers, Freud or the Old Testament). However, the whole thrust of his argument is that theory ought to be data driven, rather than data being used to support theory.” (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 29). Yet Sacks, in contrast to social psychologists was fascinated by actual patterns of talk-in-interaction as it occurred - not in measured experimental effects. In particular Sacks was not happy with the idea of using data to simply test theories instead his ‘data-driven’ approach suggested a different model of science; “When we start with a piece of data the question of what we are going to end up with, what kind of findings it will give, should not be a consideration. We sit down with a piece of data, make a bunch of observations, and see where they will go.” (Sacks, 1984: 27, cited in Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 29).

Sacks’s refreshing approach to actual instances of talk are tied in to his emphasis on activity sequences. Thus as Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998) note he challenges the approach adopted by Austin and others who rely on hypothetical utterances by daring them to invent not just isolated utterances but conversational sequences. This both questions the reliability of even single hypothetical utterances and also emphasises the much neglected
but ‘naturally’ occurring conversational sequences in which we exchange utterances. Thus, with Sacks an emphasis upon conversation comes centre stage. In this way Sacks explored utterances as a crucial part of unfolding conversational sequences and as interactionally potent, or activity orientated. The speech act emphasis on utterances as performing is here combined with ethnomethodological considerations of context to consider the way in which conversation itself in its unfolding sequence displays the sort of activity taking place.

Allied to an emphasis on participants’ orientation to the unfolding conversation is a prioritising of their concerns over those of analysts. Sacks was keen to argue against the popular social science idea that “the phenomena most worthy of analysis were unobservable - for instance, attitudes, class mobility, or the cause of deviance.” (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998: 25). Indeed for Sacks if analysts attempt to impose an expert view on what the phenomena of interest is or indeed on what causes are in play they are left with a near infinite choice - limited mainly by the academic conventions within which they work. By contrast Sacks offers an approach which considers the demonstrable way in which it is those features which participants demonstrably orientate to which should be treated as important. A key part of this is the convention which Sacks initiated whereby an analysis is supplied with a transcript against which the analyst’s observations or claims can be assessed. In this way rather than ushering in hidden variables and conceptions - which the analyst has special access to - there is an attempt to rely upon the demonstrably present data to support claims about the patterns which are present.

This approach is described (e.g. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) as both exceedingly context sensitive yet also context free. Indeed Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998) declare this
interface as a central aim for conversation analysis; “The aim of conversation analysis, as it has developed out of Sacks’s work, is to explicate the structural organisation of talk-in-interaction at this interface between context-free resources and their context-sensitive applications.” (1998: 36). That is the emergent conversational patterns are not limited to a particular type of conversation - instead similar patterns can emerge across different participants in different (gross) contexts. Yet despite this there is a context sensitivity as talk is always seen as orientating to its surrounding talk context. These features enable this thesis to draw upon conversational patterns evidenced in very different data to note similarities and in a limited way contribute to an understanding of the pattern of talk in context. Thus conversational analysis ideas are drawn upon to heighten rather than deaden attention to the context sensitivity of talk in interaction and in drawing upon them some further sense of how talk orientates to context may be offered. The emphasis which this thesis places on talk-in-interaction owes a great deal to conversation analytic research. It is this combined with aspects of discourse analysis which forms the guiding perspective on the talk data analysed here.

1.9 Discourse analysis

The aspects of discourse analysis which have shaped this thesis overlap considerably with the conversation analytic perspective outlined above. Some of the antecedents to this approach have already been sketched in this introduction. Thus the work of de Saussure (cited in Potter and Wetherell, 1987), Barthes (1973, 1985/88) and Foucault (1970, 1972, 1982) has in different ways opened up a perspective which explores
symbols (in particular language) as building or constructing reality rather than simply and unproblematically reflecting it. Much of this line of thinking - in particular its ideological aspects as applied to media texts has been developed in the work of Fowler (1990). In addition to this speech act work of Austin (1962) has provided an emphasis on the action-orientation or ‘talk as doing’ aspects of utterances. The work of Garfinkel (1967) provided an insight into the local orientation of interactional participants and Goffman (1979) with a related interest in the micro level of interactions offers the possibility of exploring taken for granted speaker - hearer categories. Finally, the conversation analytic work of Sacks (1992) enables the interaction sequences of talk (or conversation) to be explored, looking at what language does - not just in terms of isolated utterances - but with regard to its orientation to unfolding, co-constructed local contexts.

Against this diverse backdrop it is possible to understand something of why discourse analysis has developed in so many diverse ways. Thus some strands of discourse analysis draw strongly upon the Foucaultian roots and emphasise the power and ideological dimensions to constructions of reality. From this perspective (at the risk of crude simplification) it is possible to view any piece of discourse - whether produced by media, audience or elsewhere as providing a version or construction of reality which serves particular power related purposes. Alternative versions of discourse analysis have drawn much more of the conversation analytic and ethnomethodological strands emphasising the sequential organisation of talk and participants’ orientation to the unfolding context. The orientation of this thesis has oscillated during the writing of it, the previously intended argument for an eclectic approach has been attenuated but not
entirely discarded. Whilst there are problems with the slightly oversimplified macro/micro dichotomy presented here it is worth noting that predominantly the analysis in this thesis emphasises the local or micro context and pays far less attention to 'wider' socio-political aspects of context. In order to provide a stronger purchase on the approach taken within this thesis it is worth briefly sketching three further areas of background literature, Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) work on interpretative repertoires, Potter and Wetherell’s (1987) reference to ‘variation’ and Edwards & Potter’s (1992) development of the ‘discursive action model’ and work on ‘variation’.

The notion of ‘interpretative repertoires’ was developed in Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) research on the discourse of biochemists involved in researching a controversial domain. Gilbert and Mulkay conducted extended interviews with 34 members of a research group involved in exploring cellular biology. The purpose of Gilbert and Mulkay’s research was obviously not to decide on the controversy as to how energy was stored in cells, nor was it to uncover ‘how science is done’ which has been pursued in the ‘sociology of scientific knowledge’ - instead it was to explore the variation in accounts of theory choice. Thus Gilbert and Mulkay wanted to uncover how scientists accounted for their own preferred theory of cells and for the opposing perspectives of other researchers. The variation which was most apparent in the biochemists’ discourse was in the type of account offered for their own choice of theory as contrasted with their account of other ‘rival’ researchers choice. These types of account were identified in terms of “clusters of terms descriptions and figures of speech often assembled around metaphors or vivid images.” (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 90). It is these ways of constructing reality which were deemed ‘interpretative repertoires’. The particular details of the repertoires
identified by Gilbert and Mulkay included the pattern of scientists talking about their own theoretical commitments in terms of discoveries from scientific methodology or ‘the empiricist repertoire’ - whilst the competing perspectives adopted by others were dismissed as shaped by speculations or personal biases that is they were described in terms of a ‘contingent repertoire’.

Gilbert and Mulkay’s work is important in a number of ways. First, it exemplifies a commitment to exploring talk in terms of its construction of reality rather than as a means to disclose inner attitudes or prior behaviour. Second, in doing so it is interested in the content of discourse - it explores the particular version or versions of reality which are produced. Third, it considers how these versions of reality vary - that is it questions why some scientific commitments are credited as empirically driven whilst others are dismissed as contingent. These themes have been an important distinctive flavouring within the development of discourse analytic research, (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). That is discourse analysis approaches texts in terms of being a version or construction of reality,. From this vantage point it is possible to explore the variation in the versions of reality which are produced and the action-sensitivity of this variation - that is how it functionally orientates to the specifics of context.

This interest in the various versions of reality which are produced in discourse has been a central concern in a wide range of research. One way in which this has been developed is through exposing the ideological functions of particular versions of reality. In this vein Gill (1993) notes the different accounts or ‘practical ideologies’ which are drawn upon to justify sexist practice. Another stance has explored the rhetorical deployment of constructions - considering how versions of reality can be appealed to so as to support a
stance taken or to advocate a certain position. Macnaghten (1993) exemplifies this in his exploration of the various constructions of ‘nature’ deployed in a debate involving council officials and property developers. A third perspective is to view constructions of reality in terms of the apparent contradictions within a single speaker’s discourse, (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). This third approach is particularly important in the context of social psychology as it serves to problematise simplified notions of talk as a mere reflection of stable individual differences in ‘attitude’ or ‘personality’. The idea that individuals may variously or seemingly contradictorily construct reality points to the way in which speakers display an orientation to talk context. This line of research shows an interest in the local work or functions of constructions of reality. It would however be misleading to imply that in some sense the different concerns of ideology, rhetoric and local talk context could not be explored in tandem. Wetherell and Potter’s (1992) exploration of the discourse of Pakeha New Zealanders with regard to Maori culture and people considers both the ideological implications of the constructions offered as well as their orientation to ‘local’ issues such as appearing ‘tolerant’. Indeed with this thesis the consideration of interpretative repertoires in chapter six will to some extent attempt to explore a range of different functions - making the argument that even a single repertoire can be seen as orientating to several functions depending crucially on talk context.

These themes of versions of reality orientating to local talk context draw considerably upon the ethnographic and conversational analytic perspectives considered earlier. They also denote something of a division within discourse analysis between a ‘critical’ discourse analysis - with an interest in the ideological functions of discourse - and more interaction orientated work - concerned principally with what is being accomplished in
the immediate or 'local' talk sequence. To some extent the veracity of this distinction can and will be questioned - for the time being it can be viewed as at least in part reflecting an analytic choice in emphasis. That is it is possible to conceptualise any utterance as being 'local' and 'action orientated' as well as dealing in versions of reality and hence having at least some ideological import. This thesis seeks to keep open to the possibility of multiple functional readings of any one utterance. However in the analysis it seeks to use as much talk context as possible - this could be seen as justifiable in terms of providing data which can be used by readers to verify or question the claims made and as a fruitful rhetorical stance from which to question social psychology and media studies. However it can be criticised firstly because other formulations of context (e.g. the social class of participants) are conspicuously absent and secondly because the inclusion of talk context lends itself towards a predominantly 'local' focus on talk activity.

Something of the attention to local talk activity as a critical perspective on cognitive and social psychology is evident in Edwards and Potter's (1992) formulation of the 'discursive action model'. The 'discursive action model' provides a perspective on talk as action which is designed to challenge cognitively inspired approaches to issues of memory and attribution. For Edwards and Potter (1992) rather than seeking to develop an understanding of 'inner-processing', psychology could adopt a different, discursive agenda. The discursive action model provides an approach to talk which does not see it in terms of what it says or fails to say about inner mental processes. The 'model' Edwards and Potter (1992) provide is not a map of cognitive causes or effects but rather a set of orientations organised around the issues of action, fact and interest and
accountability. These three broad concerns are broken down further into several overlapping elaborations. Thus under the heading of action Edwards and Potter state that “the focus is on action, not cognition” (1992: 154). This is further elaborated with a consideration of the implications of this for remembering and attributing which are viewed in terms of ‘reportings’ i.e. the doing of giving an account or report rather than as expressing essentially inner cognitive activities. Finally with regard to action Edwards and Potter (1992) note the importance not just of the action potential of isolated utterances but rather the sequences of activity in which utterances are issued. This perspective draws upon both the speech act emphasis on talk as action and more particularly the conversation analytic interest in sequences of talk. The additional twist beyond conversation analysis is the use of this ‘talk-as-action-in-action-sequence’ perspective to critique cognitively inspired psychology and social psychology.

Edwards and Potter’s (1992) second theme of fact and interest elaborates a concern over issues of ‘stake’ or ‘interest’ which are often ‘managed’ in reported attributions. That is many instances in which people talk about causes are far from ‘neutral’ reportings - this is particularly clear in the case of politicians’ discourse considered in Edwards and Potter (1992) and within this thesis, yet the principles can be (as Edwards and Potter, 1992, note) extended to include more mundane explanation sequences. Thus, across a range of talk contexts ‘reports’ can be seen as interested or as having implications for the ‘speaker’ and ‘hearer’. This observation ties in to the notion that reports may have to attend to their apparent truthfulness and undermine alternatives. These concerns are most obviously present in chapters two and six of this thesis - which consider politicians’ discourse - in particular there is some exploration of how politicians attend to issues of
warranting their claims and undermining those of others. However the concerns are also present in chapter three which considers the talk of news-journalists - here although there are less obvious competing versions to be undermined - skilful orientation to the apparent 'truthfulness' of claims can still be discerned.

Edwards and Potter's third theme of accountability outlines the interconnected ideas that “Reports attend to the agency and accountability of the current speaker's action including those done in reporting.” (1992: 154). These ideas overlap in a number of ways with the earlier concepts of talk as activity and as orientated to stake and interest. Some of the handling of stake and interest is done through reportings which attend to accountability - "who did what and why and who is to blame, or receive the credit". The idea that the reporting itself sets up accountability issues for the speaker reflects a distinctively ethnomethodological strand in that it emphasises the speakers' reflexive awareness. Because talk is an action and occurs within an activity sequence and, given that conversational participants are aware of this the act of talking itself needs to be attended to. Thus a criticism of a third party may in certain sequences require work so as not to be heard as mean spirited or inappropriate. Within this thesis accountability will be pursued both with regard to politicians' talk about the motivations or intentions behind their action in chapter six and also in the talk of news audiences about the viewing behaviour and political identity of themselves and others in chapters four and five. Across each of these chapters in different ways consideration will be given to this two-fold interest in agency and accountability - recognising both the surrounding talk context and the orientation to the act of talking itself.
More generally Edwards and Potters' (1992) perspective can be seen as addressing cognitive and social psychological issues from the perspective of discourse analysis. This could be seen as limited (as Edwards and Potter, 1992, acknowledge) in that it lets 'traditional' psychology carve up the social world into 'topics' - thus topics such as persuasion, identity or attribution each of which are touched upon in the current thesis arguably arise as perspectives upon the data which owe much to a more cognitive and causally committed version of psychology than to a sensitivity to the nuances of talk itself. This perspective certainly has some legitimacy and acts as a fruitful critique of some of the ways in which the analysis of the current thesis is organised in certain chapters; the organising theme appears to have stronger links to a brand of social psychology (and in places media studies) which is being criticised rather than to the features of language in use which the thesis seeks to celebrate. However it could be counter argued that any mode of organisation is a construction of the data rather than a neutral telling of its properties - a point which will be explored further in the concluding discussion. Furthermore, and perhaps more pertinent an advantage of the reference to traditional psychological and media studies literature is that a point of contact is made with where the disciplines are - or have been. Thus, at a minimal level, this enables a context to be provided at overlapping points of interest and allows some scope for considering the implications of a discursive perspective for some familiar and still popular perspectives within social psychology and media studies. In this way there is the possibility that this strategy - though potentially limiting - can be used as a means of dialogue and debate between different traditions - not to gloss over real differences in approach but to at least recognise that the argument is where it is because of the other, (Billig, 1987).
This thesis has approached talk data with an emphasis upon the ways in which all participants - whether politicians, news-journalists or audiences - construct reality through their talk and accomplish various functions. Thus a broadly discursive perspective is adopted which understands talk as producing particular versions of reality which can be explored not simply in terms of their overt points of reference but in terms of the functions which they accomplish. This theme has been explored in the light of conversation analytic work which (as has been pointed out above) emphasises something of the way in which talk in interaction can be understood as an activity which orientates to the surrounding talk context. Taken together these ideas amount to a perspective on talk as constructing reality (not simply reporting upon it), as activity orientated (instead of simply expressing thoughts or behaviours) and as tailored to the talk context (rather than being context free). The ‘method’ of analysis adopted in this thesis follows far more from this perspective on discourse or talk than from any pre-defined sequence of operations performed upon the talk data collected.

The thesis seeks to engage in a series of critical studies which draw upon a corpus of talk data - from politicians, news-journalists and audiences - and illustrate something of the way in which language has been neglected by a range of potentially relevant social psychological and media approaches. It engages in an explication of talk to consider how a broadly discursive perspective leads to conclusions which in some sense challenge or question other perspectives particularly within social psychology but also in media studies. The difference frequently hinges upon how the talk - understood as activity orientated and tailored to its surrounding talk context in this thesis - might be unexplored, glossed over or treated as merely derivative of fixed ‘inner’ (or ‘outer’)
entities from other perspectives. Whilst the particular form of the argument varies across each of the five empirical chapters they each emphasise something of the way in which talk can be fruitfully approached as a subtle medium of activity in context.

1.10 Chapter Overview

Chapter 2 explores the use of citation of others amongst politicians - in particular it explores how politicians orientate to the potential charge of merely constructing reality so as to suite their vested party-political interest. The chapter draws upon Goffman’s (1979) concept of footing and Clayman’s (1992) development of these ideas to problematise social psychological approaches which often imply that the speaker can be equated with the source of the utterance and, moreover, suggest that there is no benefit in exploring the actual processes of persuasive attempts. Rather than attempting to replicate persuasion in an experimental fashion the chapter relied on actual instances of politician’s televised talk. In exploring the ‘naturally occurring data’ -which the social psychology of persuasion tends to reject - a case is made that politicians make the most of the potential flexibility regarding their footing (or production roles) and cite others to endorse the claims which they make. This process is not hailed as a persuasive tool which can be mapped into a context-free model but rather a context sensitive move which is open to various forms of rhetorical challenge and reconstruction.

Chapter 3 also explores the issue of footing but does so by reference to news-journalists - the data being derived from sequences of interaction between studio news-readers and correspondents broadcast on television news programmes. The work of Goffman (1979)
and Clayman (1992) remains important but the concept of footing is taken as a starting point in the development of an interest in how the media positions its discourse as objective and authoritative. Whilst these issues map on to the concerns of Fiske (1987), Hartley (1992) and indirectly to the work of Barthes (1973) - the focus here is the role that the conversational sequences between news journalists can have. It is argued that an exploration of the introductions which studio news-readers give for news correspondents construct the correspondents in a manner which orientates towards their objectivity and authoritativesness. Furthermore, the very interaction between studio news-reader and correspondent can be seen to differ from that found when politicians are interviewed - a difference which again can be seen to orientate to the epistemological status needs of the news-journalists. Thus the chapter suggests that it is the sequences of interaction between studio news-reader and correspondent which can be seen to favourably position each others’ talk.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore aspects of the television audiences’ talk. This data (which was derived from unstructured group and individual interviews following a screening of a television news item) provides a pool of talk which encompasses an enormous breadth of topics and demonstrated a vast array of conversational moves. The particular focus taken touches on aspects of participants’ talk about their own engagement with television news and various contrasts between themselves and others. In chapter 4 attention is paid to the way in which participants’ talk about their viewing attitudes and behaviour could be seen to vary considerably such that one interviewee could within the course of a single interview adopt a variety of positions which defy the ready classification present within some media studies (and social psychological) work. Rather than developing a new
improved classificatory scheme chapter four considered the constructions of 'viewer identity' not as mere reportings on actual behaviour or attitudes (as some approaches to audience reception might) but as interaction-orientated accomplishments, which are shaped and reshaped by - or orientated to - the ever changing talk context.

Chapter 5 explores the way in which contrasts can be seen as a device deployed in the midst of participants' 'identity talk'. Thus the interview data produced an array of utterances in which the 'interviewee' explicitly contrasted themselves with either specific or more generalised 'others'. These contrasts include but are not restricted to issues of media consumption. In chapter 5 the argument is made that such contrasts need not be approached as mere verbal indications of 'inner mental calculations' (as self-categorisation theory might imply) but rather that they can be seen as contextually sensitive activities in their own right. These could include challenging group membership, positively positioning the speaker, attenuating criticism of another or attending to the prior sequences of conversation. Thus audiences' deployment of contrasts can be treated as skilful orientations to context whose functions vary widely according to the form that they take and where they are deployed.

Chapter 6 returns to politician's talk to explore the recurrent 'repertoire' of talk about 'the national interest'. Politicians were frequently found to make reference to themselves and their party acting in 'the national interest' and others failing to do so - a pool of such talk data was assembled for the analysis. This apparently similar talk content is seen to enact a range of different functions (such as blaming or exonerating) depending on the talk context in which it is uttered. Furthermore, it is argued that such claims are highly
contestable and the surrounding talk context is crucial in clarifying what sort of activity-potency they may have. Indeed, rather than being encapsulated within an individual utterance it is indicated that the sequence of talk provides for, or undermines claims to have acted in the national interest.

Across each of the five ‘empirical’ chapters the corpus of talk is explored not to generate a sense of causal links or rigid differences between the talk of politicians, new-journalists and audiences - but rather to explore how through such an analysis insight can be gleaned with regard to the talk activity itself and to consider the implications with regard to aspects of social psychology and media studies. Each chapter approaches talk itself as the object of study rather than using it to access ‘inner’ thoughts, ‘outer’ behaviour or ideological processes. In this way the emphasis is upon talk as an activity orientation - an enacting social activity - rather than a mere means of conveying information. This reconfiguration of talk problematises perspectives in social psychology and media studies which have dismissed talk altogether or used it simply as a ‘window’ on to the subjects ‘inner’ or ‘outer’ reality. Furthermore, the thesis in emphasising the sequences in which talk occurs demonstrates the (talk) context-dependent aspects of utterances - a theme which problematises quests for generic, causal laws and abstracted typologies as well as those methods which depend upon isolated utterances. Thus the thesis to some extent follows a different agenda to those found within much of media studies and social psychology, involving a re-focusing on talk itself as the object of study. Yet, it is suggested that this reconfiguration could open up new ways of appreciating something of the importance of talk itself and provide a
methodological perspective which enables broad theoretical concerns to be pursued in a context sensitive empirical approach.
2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter draws upon the work of Clayman (1992) and Goffman (1979) to suggest that ‘footing’ can be useful in understanding something of how politicians can corroborate or warrant their claims by citing the support of others. It commences by reviewing some of the key research in persuasive communications with a particular focus on research concerning source characteristics which are thought to add to the efficacy of a communicator’s persuasive attempt. The shortcomings of this ‘traditional’ approach are highlighted, in particular the way that it has failed to provide an adequate description of the way in which communicators do not purely position themselves as the sole author of their utterances but often cite other sources as corroborators or endorsers of their message. The chapter goes on to explore the issues of citing others through an analysis of extracts drawn from a range of televised political discourse broadcast in the UK and US. The analysis highlights some of the ways in which politicians construe others whom they cite, in particular it is suggested that cited others are construed as offering apolitical, expert and counter-interest warrants for their claims - precisely the sorts of themes stressed in ‘traditional’ persuasion research. However, far from being fixed ‘psychological objects’, it is argued that such source characteristics are ‘to-be-constructed’ resources, accomplished to suit the immediate argumentative context. Thus rather than constituting just another set of persuasive moves - whose essences can be experimentally tested the chapter suggests that any claim of endorsement is potentially contestable - that is it not only fits into its talk context but is co-dependent upon it in attempting to accomplish a warranting move.
2.2 Traditional Approaches To Persuasive Communication

A key concern within this chapter is the question of how claims made by politicians are warranted - or to narrow the scope somewhat - how aspects of footing are involved in politician's production of self-warranted claims. A warranted claim in this context is understood as one which appears to provide grounds for being understood as a reflection of 'reality as it is' rather than a contrivance of the speaker. In one sense these sets of concerns were explored in persuasive communications literature. The (largely American) social psychological research which developed in this field sought to find ways of confecting messages which would be believed and consequently to identify the ingredients of a persuasive communication. Crucial to this enterprise was the way in which either the message or the source of the message might be seen as substantiating or warranting the persuasive attempt. In this chapter attention will be paid to the way in which the 'source' of a message has been approached in the social psychology of persuasive communications and the different insights which a discursive perspective can offer.

A crucial strand of persuasive communications research from Hovland et al (1953) through to Eagly (1992) and White & Harkins (1994), has explored the way in which the source to whom a message is attributed has an influence upon the impact of that message. This research was associated with the idea that if the message was attributed to a source who was perceived to have the requisite characteristics then the persuasive attempt would be successful. Much of the ensuing research sought to establish which source characteristics would prove persuasive. Consistent with this aim a taxonomy of
'persuasive' source characteristics has been developed, such as expertise, trustworthiness and similarity to the target audience. Each of these has been thought of as important determinants of the extent to which a target audience will be persuaded. Thus where a message is attributed to an expert, trustworthy and similar source then, ceteris paribus, the audience is more likely to be persuaded. Refinements to this basic position have suggested that the source of a message becomes especially important where the audience is not able or willing to engage with the content of the message (Chaiken, 1980, Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, Eagly, 1992) and where the medium through which the message is conveyed highlights source characteristics (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979) as television is thought to (Andreoli & Worchel, 1978).

Whilst such research has provided an interesting taxonomy of source characteristics it has, as Billig (1987) argues, typically reflected a quest to discover 'the concrete factors' which will determine an audience's response. The source of a message has been investigated so as to locate what are understood to be 'psychological objects', such as expertise, trustworthiness and similarity, which can be placed in a causal model of persuasive influence. Consistent with this aim carefully controlled experimental procedures have been used which have often involved a written presentation of both message and source characteristics. Thus Maddux & Rogers (1980) explored the influence of expertise by attributing a message, about the amount of sleep needed, to an unknown 'Dr Campbell' who was introduced through written stimuli material as "recognised by those in his field as one of the world's foremost authorities on sleep and sleep research" (in the 'expert' condition) and as "recognised by those in his field as one of the foremost authorities on music during the Baroque period" (in the 'non-expert'
condition). Such research provides a simplistic comparison between conditions, e.g. expert versus non-expert, which is then used to deduce the efficacy of the manipulated variable, in this case expertise, as a relatively context-free psychological object. Predictably Maddux and Rogers found that the sleep expert was more persuasive than the equally eminent non-expert with regard to sleep. These findings subsequently become assimilated into social psychological texts as ‘proof’ (indeed, as cited sources) that indicates that specificity of expertise is crucial to the efficacy of a persuasive attempt.

This approach could be seen as limited on both conceptual and empirical grounds. Conceptually the understanding of source remains almost entirely unexplored. Thus, despite Goffman’s (1979) ideas about footing, research has failed to consider the different ways in which speakers can position themselves regarding what is said. Empirically because of the emphasis on finding causally effective ingredients and the idea that such factors exist as context free entities, such research has not explored the complex ways in which people actually do the business of persuasion. Thus the ways in which people construct and deploy source characteristics in real argumentative contexts has been unexplored in an experimentally driven research programme which through simulation has sought to identify features which transcend context. This chapter seeks to develop the concepts of footing to make sense of real-life persuasive communications. In doing so it will argue that a more informed conception of possible speaker positionings challenges any implicit or explicit ideas about source characteristics being relatively stable properties of the actual speaker. Instead the analysis enables us to consider the
ways in which speakers can construct and contest the source characteristics which they and others draw upon.

2.3 Data and analytic approach

(a) Data
The corpus of data assembled for the analysis in this chapter comprised a range of televised political talk. This talk included the three 1992 US presidential debates and news and discussion programmes prior to and soon after the 1992 UK General Election, additional material from UK news programmes and previously published material was also used. The ‘election context’ of much of the material is not explicitly used to guide the analysis although it could tentatively be suggested that this may have resulted in even more highly contested claims and counter-claims between politicians and hence the issue of corroboration or warranting may have been all the more salient.

(b) Analytic approach
At first the analysis encompassed a broad array of concerns with the sorts of activities and constructions of reality which politicians were engaged in - this became increasingly specific as a concern with the question of warranting and an awareness of politicians’ citation of others came into focus. It was at this stage that previous literature, notably that of Clayman (1991, 1992), Edwards and Potter (1992) and Wooffitt (1992), was especially useful providing both additional extracts for analysis, some of which are drawn upon in this chapter, and (in the case of Clayman especially) helping to specify the aspects of citation which would be emphasised. From this interface of current data and previous literature attention was placed on the way in which politicians cite others
not to achieve ‘neutrality’ (as Clayman, 1992, noted was the case for news-journalists) but rather to corroborate or warrant their claims - that is to make their potentially contestable claims appear ‘true’.

2.4 Analysis

(a) Footing shifts and warranting of talk

Goffman (1979) indicates that the ‘source’ of a message can be much more complex than the ‘common sense’ equating of speaker and source imply. As considered earlier Goffman argued that it is possible to distinguish the one who voices an utterance (animator) from the one who formulates the words (author) and the ones whose sentiments are expressed in them (principal). Whilst not necessarily separate - the possibility of separate roles was identified. Goffman’s ready distinction can itself be problematised - for example a speaker glossing an announcement made by another source is to some extent co-authoring the actual words used. Furthermore as Levinson (1988) points out when interaction sequences are explored such codifications of footing become still more complex. However such work does at least provide a valuable starting point - which Clayman (1992) has fruitfully applied to the exploration of news-journalists’ talk. For Clayman (1992) the possibility of accomplishing a footing shift did not simply pose problems for common sense equating of animator, author and principal - it also linked to the activity orientation or function of talk. Clayman in exploring the case of news interviews argued that citing others (as author or principal) was a means by which news-journalists retained neutrality. This is illustrated in extract 1 below;

6 IR: You heard what Doctor Yalow said earlier in
7 this broadcast she'll have an opportunity to
8 express her own opinions again but she seems
9 to feel that it is an EMinently soluble problem,

(IR = Interviewer)

In the extract the claim that "it is an EMinently soluble problem" is attributed not to the interviewer themselves but to someone else "Dr Yalow". It is as if Dr Yalow is actually making the claim, thus Dr Yalow's characteristics become important vis a vis the claim which is made.

Clayman (1992) explored the way in which interviewers cite others so as to eclipse themselves, to do neutrality, such that it seems that the cited other, in this case Dr Yalow, is making the claim instead of the interviewer. However it is also possible to consider that others may be cited as sharing authorship or principalship, such that they endorse, corroborate or in other ways warrant a speaker's utterances. Extract 2 provides an example of the way in which a speaker can cite an other to warrant their claims;

Extract 2

The following extract is taken from The Granada 500, a one-off programme broadcast live three days before the 1992 UK General Election. Each of the three main party leaders was in turn invited to respond to questions put by members of the studio audience.
SA: If you do get to form a government Mr Kinnock err what immediate changes would you make that will effect the likes of all the people from Bolton >the working class people< what immediate changes <would you make>?

NK: fine >thanks very much< well the first changes that people will feel the effects of are the changes in old age pensions which will increase the pension by eight pounds per week the couple and five pounds per week for the single pensioner the increase to the full rate for child benefit for all children >and of course the impact< which will soon become evident of the extra six hundred million pounds that we'd be committing to the health service now the effect of those things together with our training programmes for instance will start as the National Institute <a totally independent economic body demonstrates> will start to bring a low in the >a slow down in the rise of unemployment< to such an extent that unemployment will be three hundred thousand lower under our policies in the view of this [independent

SL: [right let

NK: an err analysis so tho that immediate effects would be felt within a very short time=

SL: =right=

NK: =after the election next Thursday
In extract 2 a claim is made regarding the effects of part of Labours economic policy. The claim is not given simply as being Mr Kinnock's prediction "I think the effect will be" instead a separate source is cited; "the National Institute ... demonstrates", (lines 16 & 17). However rather than exhibit neutrality about the National Institute's prediction Mr Kinnock shows concurrence "as the National Institute...demonstrates". In this way both Kinnock and the National Institute are positioned as offering the same prediction about the effects of Labour's economic policy. Citing the National Institute has provided a means of endorsing the economic policy and corroborating its claimed effects.

In this chapter a number of extracts of politician's televised discourse broadcast in the UK and the US are drawn upon in order to explore the way in which politicians cite others not so much to do neutrality but to corroborate their claims and endorse their policies. It is argued that politicians cite others so as to orientate to sceptical readings of their utterances, that cited others are constructed as providing apolitical, expert or counter interest warrants and that the process of citing others forms just one move in an ongoing rhetorical struggle.

(b) Context of sceptical readings of political speech

Far from being context-free the politicians' discourse which will be explored in this chapter could be seen as shaped to deal with the particular argumentative context in which it occurs. One aspect of this context is that recipients of a politician's message can
draw upon the resource of an accusation of stake or interest by claiming that the words uttered reflect the politician's particular aims or motivations rather than the entity which they are talking about. Extract 3, 4 and 5 below provide examples of the way in which claims made by certain politicians are dismissed by other politicians as merely reflecting vested interest or stake, Edwards & Potter (1992).

**Extract 3**

The following extract is taken from the BBC's Breakfast News broadcast on the 4th November 1992. In it News-reader Nicholas Witchel interviews the then Home Secretary Douglas Hurd about a forthcoming European vote in the House of Commons. The vote was expected to involve a number of Conservatives voting against the Government motion including the back-bencher James Cran.

1 NW: Let's turn to Europe (0.5) James Cran MP says
2 the <Euro-Rebels> are rock solid at thirty five
3 [the government
4 DH: [he would wouldn't he?]

(NW = Nicholas Witchel, DH = Douglas Hurd).

**Extract 4**

The following extract is taken from Question Time which was broadcast on the 10th June 1993. In it Jack Straw, (then Labour's Local Government Spokesperson), responded to a question from the studio audience to which Ian Laing, (Secretary of State for Scotland), gave the first response. Peter Sissons hosted the programme.
SA: is this the beginning of the end for John
Major?
PS: Ian Laing
IL: ((responds))
JS: well I'd all but (.). I'm always scared stiff by unanimous votes of confidence because you can bet your life that behind the veneer of unanimity there is very great discord (0.5) now Ian came out with his script pretty well (0.5) I congratulate him err on it
SA: ((laughter))
JS: he had to say that didn't he?

(SA = Studio audience, PS = Peter Sissons, IL = Ian Laing, JS = Jack Straw).

Extract 5

The following extract is from the first US Presidential Debate broadcast in October 1992. The extract includes part of George Bush's one minute rebuttal to a question which the host, Journalist Jim Larer, put to Bill Clinton.

JL: Governor Clinton how do you respond on on to the President on the ques (0.5) >you have two minutes <on the question of experience (0.5) he says that is what distinguishes him from the other two of you
BC: ((replies))
GB: I just thought of another er heh (1.0) another big difference here (0.5) between me I don't (0.5) believe err (0.5) Mr Perot feels this way, but I know Governor Clinton did because I want to accurately quote him< he thinks (0.5) <I think he said> that the country is coming apart at the seams (1.0) now (0.5) I know (0.5) err that the only way he can win is to make everybody believe the economy's err worse than it is (0.5) but this country's not coming apart at the seams for heaven's sake (0.5) we're the United States of America (0.5) we (0.3) inspite of the economic problems we're the most respected economy around the world (0.5) many would trade for it we've been caught up in a global slow down (0.5) we can do (0.5) <much much better >but we ought not to try to convince the American people that< America (0.5) is a country (0.5) that's coming apart at the seams (0.5) I would hate to be running for president (1.0) and think that the only way I could err win would be to convince every everybody how horrible things are

(JL = Jim Larer, BC = Bill Clinton, GB = George Bush).

In extract 3 Douglas Hurd reiterates the challenge which Mandy Rice Davis used during the Profumo trial of 1963, Edwards & Potter (1992); ">he would wouldn't he?<" (line 4).
Hurd's deployment of this phrase implies that what compelled James Cran to predict success for the 'Euro-rebels' was not the truth but either his skewed perception or his motivation to talk up the 'Euro-rebel's' chances. In a similar fashion in extract 4 Jack Straw's rhetorical question; "he had to say that didn't he?", (line 12), suggests that Ian Laing's defence of John Major was produced not because of Major's attributes but rather because Laing was motivated to appear loyal to and confident in the Prime Minister. In extract 5 George Bush attributes Clinton's claim that "the country is coming apart at the seams", (lines 12 & 13), not to the entity, the state of the country, but instead to Clinton's desire to win office, (lines 13-15, 22-28).

Attributional research provides an initial insight on this practice in suggesting that where a claim can be attributed to dispositional factors, (including the sources 'biased' knowledge, aims or motives), then, ceteris paribus, the communication will be less persuasive, (Eagly, Wood & Chaiken (1978), Eagly & Chaiken (1984), Eagly (1992)). Edwards & Potter (1992) have provided an important development on such themes by focusing not on locating the causes of persuasive efficacy but rather on a careful description of the way in which participants in political discourse orientate towards the idea of interest or stake behind a given message. It is here that the resource of citing another becomes fruitful for the politician. If the claims of a given politician are likely to be dismissed as reflecting skewed and incomplete knowledge or as being simply a 'motivated account' then the politician can orientate towards this possibility, warranting their claims and proposals, by citing others who are constructed as less 'motivated'.

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(c) Apolitical Endorsement

One possible means of by which politicians can orientate to the potential charge of 'bias' is to carefully construct another source as being outside of the party political arena and hence free from a, (party political), stake or interest in the claims which they are cited as corroborating. Extracts six and seven exemplify some of the ways in which such an 'apolitical' source is constructed and deployed in political debate.

Extract 6

The following extract is from Newsnight broadcast on the 20th of March 1992, just prior to the UK General Election. The presenter Frances Stock is interviewing the then deputy leader of the Labour Party Roy Hattersley.

1 FS: there have been calculations on err Labour's budget
2 which suggest that it is even more redistributive
3 than Dennis Healey's budget's budget was in the
4 1970's [now you're very much in favour
5 RH: [Conservative Conservative Conservative par
6 FS: Conservative propaganda perhaps
7 RH: Conservative party=
8 FS: =but how would you answer it?=
9 RH: [>Conservative party calculations<
10 FS: =you're in favour of redistribution are you not?
11 RH: I'm certainly I'm I'm whole heatedly in favour of
12 redistribution I'm also in favour of honest
13 statistics and the statistics everyone relies on
14 who wants to give an honest picture are the
Institute of Fiscal Studies statistics which make the point that I made a moment ago ninety percent of the population will be either better off or no worse of eighty percent will actually be better off and the other ten percent we're talking you know (. ) about nine percent on their marginal income nine percent of their additional money> which might have and should have been taxed for [National Insurance contribution

FS: [right
RH: = [and the other rate which will=
FS: [wha
RH: = [not be as onerous as the Tories are now making=
FS: [what about
RH: = out

(F.S.= Frances Stock, R.H.= Roy Hattersley).

In extract 6 the interviewer raises the controversial point that Labour's budget may be more redistributive than Dennis Healey's budget of 1970's was, (lines 1-4). However she does not claim authorship, or principalship, instead she merely animates suggestions based on the calculations of others; "there have been calculations on err Labour's budget which suggest" (lines 1 & 2) and thus maintains neutrality, Clayman (1992).

In his response Roy Hattersley could have simply denied that Labour's budget is more
redistributive, but such a strategy may lay him vulnerable to the charge; "you would say that wouldn't you?" Alternatively he could have mirrored the interviewer claiming; "there have been calculations which suggest otherwise". Yet such a claim even if taken at face value does little more than suggest that there is a degree of uncertainty regarding the redistributive nature of Labour's budget. Instead Hattersley highlights the vested interest or stake behind the statistics which the interviewer cited and constructs the statistics which he wishes to cite as apolitical, free from biasing motivational factors. Hattersley first names or nominates the statistics which the interviewer alluded to; ">Conservative Party calculations<" (line 9). Putting this label on the calculations positions them not as some 'objective truth' but rather as a particular partisan version, one which differs from other versions and which therefore reflects the vested interest of the Conservative Party rather than the features of Labour's budget itself. Hattersley underlines this point by claiming to be in favour of "honest" statistics, (line 12 & 13), implicitly positioning the ">Conservative Party calculations<" as dishonest statistics.

Having foregrounded the notion of partisan 'bias' with regards to the calculations the interviewer alluded to, Hattersley then constructs the statistics he wishes to cite as transcending such bias, that is he positions them as being independent or apolitical. In order to do so Hattersley highlights the issues of consensus and motivation; "the statistics everyone relies on who wants to give an honest picture" (lines 13 & 14). Thus instead of simply citing an alternative source of statistics he positions his source as superior to the ">Conservative Party calculations<" (line 9). First he deploys consensus, "everyone relies on", as Edwards & Potter (1992) note this can be understood not as an ingredient in the speaker's mentalistic calculation of cause, but instead as a rhetorical
device deployed to suggest that if everyone relies upon these statistics then they must be reliable. Second, Hattersley foregrounds the notion of the 'motivated' use of statistics. The consensus he has constructed is not all inclusive - because it excludes ">Conservative Party calculations<" - however it includes all of those "who want to give an honest picture". Implicitly those producing ">Conservative Party calculations<" are constructed as being motivated to give a dishonest picture - their calculations can be attributed to their intent to distort, to their motivation or vested interest rather than to the entity itself. By contrast Hattersley has positioned the source he is about to cite as relied upon be "everyone" who is motivated to "give an honest picture".

Thus extract 6 reveals the way in which a politician can discredit rival claims by attributing them to stake or interest and yet warrant their own claims by deploying a cited other whom they construct as apolitical and therefore 'beyond' motivational bias. Extract 7 extends this analysis by demonstrating the way in which disconfirmed expectations can be foregrounded as a means of constructing a cited other as an apolitical source.

**Extract 7**

The following extract is taken from the Granada 500, the one-off programme broadcast live in front of a studio audience three days before the 1992 UK General Election and referred to in extract 2.

1   SL:   answer the other point as well that >which we've
2     picked up from this meeting as we've gone
3     through the last three weeks in Bolton< which is
4 that the minimum wage will lead to unemployment
5 NK: well it hasn't done in any of the comparable
economies the studies that have been done for
instance of the French economy in the whole
introduction of the national minimum wage
there (.) which was at a higher level than
ours is that there has <been no increase in
unemployment> as a consequence of the national
minimum wage< there's a very good reason for that
(.) the introduction of the national minimum wage
in France where there are many small businesses of
course has also meant an increase in demand >an
increase in expenditure< so in addition to the
impact of the national minimum wage in terms of
costs of employers there's been extra sales (.) and
the two have balanced out to the extent that the
investigators from the OECD who expected to find
an increase in unemployment discovered after very
long and thorough analysis <that this was not
the case> (.) >there's no reason why it
should be the case in Britain either<

(SL = Sue Lawley, NK = Neil Kinnock).

In extract 7 the notion that "the minimum wage will lead to unemployment" (line 4) is
depicted as being "picked up from this meeting as we've gone through the last three
weeks in Bolton" (lines 2 & 3). Thus the interviewer is clearly displaying neutrality,
Clayman (1992), positioning the claim as the audiences rather than her own. In the midst of doing neutrality the interviewer has constructed a degree of consensus, thus it is implied that this idea about the minimum wage is more than just the opinion of one or two isolated individuals.

As with Hattersley's response in extract 6 Kinnock's reply does not simply state that the minimum wage won't lead to unemployment, instead he makes careful use of another, the OECD, to warrant his claim. In turn the OECD are not simply presented as warranting Kinnock's claim, instead they are constructed in a particular way: "the investigator's of the OECD who expected to find an increase in unemployment discovered after a very long and thorough analysis <that this was not the case>" (lines 19-23). Thus the people making the claim are not just from the OECD, they are "investigators" reaching conclusions "after a very long and thorough analysis". In this way the discourse is constructing some notion of an objective empiricist search for the truth. But what is even more striking in this passage is the way in which the disconfirmed expectations of the OECD investigators are spelt out; "who expected to find an increase". In order to unpack some of the subtleties of this utterance it is useful to consider an example from the work of Wooffitt (1992) in which similar use is made of disconfirmed expectations.

**Extract 8**

*The following extract is taken from the (untelevised) interviews with members of the public which Wooffitt (1992, p.74) reports upon;* 

17 er:m and I wanted to know what was
In extract 8 the speaker is giving an account of having heard a happy but unexpected little tune in their home. An important aspect of the account is that the speaker has produced it as a paranormal experience. Rather than simply claim; "I heard a happy little tune and knew it was from the spirit world" the speaker carefully warrants the alleged paranormal qualities. In extract 8 the speaker implies that they expected to find a 'material' rather than paranormal cause for the tune. As Wooffitt (1992) notes, producing such expectations enables the speaker to position themselves as sharing 'normal assumptions'. Doing so could be understood as mitigating the extent to which their claim that it was a paranormal experience can be attributed to dispositional factors such as their 'skewed perception' of the world or their 'motivation' to promote paranormal explanations of phenomenon. Furthermore it implies that the evidence for it being a paranormal phenomenon is so compelling that it overturned their initial assumption that there was a material cause.

In a similar fashion when Kinnock foregrounds that the OECD 'investigators' "expected to find an increase in unemployment", (line 20 & 21), he orientates towards scepticism about his claim that the minimum wage does not lead to an increase in unemployment. He constructs the OECD investigators as sharing the expectations which the interviewer constructed of the people at the Bolton meetings, thus the conclusions which the OECD reached cannot be simply attributed to dispositional 'biases'. Furthermore by foregrounding initial expectations which were overturned after the investigation Kinnock implies that the evidence that the minimum wage did not lead to unemployment was
sufficiently compelling to force a change of mind.

The important theme to emerge from extracts 6 and 7 is not so much that apolitical sources may be more persuasive, such a claim implies a causal model when the focus here is on adequate description. Instead these extracts illustrate the way in which politicians orientate to the notion that apolitical sources are more persuasive by the particular ways in which they construct others whom they cite as providing apolitical corroboration of their claims.

(d) Expert and counter-interest endorsement

The ideas of expertise and bias, important in much of the social psychological literature on persuasive communications, re-emerge to some extent in extract 9. Here Clinton can be seen as orientating to in the particular attributes he highlights in the construction and deployment of his cited others.

Extract 9

*The following extract is taken from the second presidential debate of 15th October 1992.*

*Bill Clinton's response is to a question put by a member of the studio audience.*

1  S.A.  erm (1.0) in the real world that is outside of
2  (1.0) err (0.5) Washington DC (. ) compensation and
3  achievement are based on goals defined and achieved
4  (. ) er the deficit is my (. ) er bh >my question is
about the deficit< (0.5) er would you define in specific <dollar goals> (.) how much you would reduce the deficit in each of the four years of a Clinton administration and then enter into a legally binding contract with the American people that if you did not achieve those goals you would not seek a second term of office (1.0) answer yes or no and then comment upon your que your answer please

B.C. no and here's why (1.0) and I'll tell you exactly why (0.5) because the deficit now has been building up for twelve years I'll tell you exactly what I think can be done I think we could bring it down by fifty percent in four years and grow the economy (.) now I could get rid of it in four years in theory on the books now but to do it you'd have to raise taxes too much and cut (.) benefits too much to people who need them >and it would even make the economy< worse (0.5) Mr Perot will tell you for example that that the expert he hired to analyse his plans says that it will bring the deficit down in five years but it'll make unemployment bad for four more years (0.5) so (.) my view is sir (.) you have to increase investment (.) grow the economy and reduce the deficit by controlling health care
costs (.) prudent reductions in defence
(. ) cuts in domestic programmes (.) >and asking
the wealthiest Americans and foreign corporations
to pay their fair share of taxes< and investing
and growing this economy (0.5) I ask (.)
everybody to look at my ( . ) economic ideas
nine Nobel prize winners and over
five hundred economists and hundreds of business
people >including a lot of Republicans said< this
is the way you've got to go if you don't grow
the economy you can't get it done but I
can't foresee all of the things that will happen
and I don't think a president should be judged sho
solely on the deficit (0.5) let me also say we're
having an election today you'll have a shot at me
in four years and you can vote me right
out if you think I've done a lousy job ( . )
an I would welcome you to do that

(SA = Studio audience, BC = Bill Clinton).

Extract 9 is taken from the second Presidential Debate of 1992. Clinton's response follows a long question from the studio audience (lines 1-13) the crux of which is; "would you define in specific <dollar goals>" (.) how much you would reduce the deficit in each of the four years of a Clinton administration" (lines 5-8). In his reply Clinton refuses to make a concrete commitment but suggests that he may be able to bring the
deficit down by 50% over four years "and grow the economy" (lines 17-19). What is particularly interesting is the way in which Clinton goes on to warrant his claims, first by using Mr Perot's "hired" expert to criticise Perot's plans, then by citing "Nobel Prize winners", "economists" and "Republicans" as endorsing Clinton's own economic ideas.

Whilst Clinton could have simply claimed that Mr Perot's plans will "make unemployment bad for four more years" such an utterance could easily be attributed by the audience to Clinton's vested interest. Instead Clinton cites "the expert" whom Mr Perot "hired" as the source of the criticism, (lines 24-27). In this way Perot's plan is being challenged, not just by Clinton, but by an "expert" and furthermore by one who Perot himself had hired. The fact that Perot hired the expert is foregrounded as if to imply that being paid by Mr Perot may produce some motivation to withhold criticism of Perot's plans. Producing criticism from "the expert he hired" could be seen as a more rhetorically powerful formulation, the criticism was forthcoming from the expert despite the interests which the expert may have had as a paid consultant to Mr Perot.

These themes of expert and counter-interest others reappear as Clinton warrants his own economic ideas. Clinton produces an implicit contrast with "the" singular expert Mr Perot "hired" by claiming; "I ask (.) everybody to look at my (.) economic ideas" (lines 35 & 36), here Clinton implies that he has taken a wide consensus of opinion and that those whom are about to be cited were "asked to look" -not hired to analyse- Clinton's own plans. Clinton then cites "nine Nobel Prize winners and over five hundred economists and hundreds of business people >including a lot of Republicans<" (lines 37-39), as endorsing his ideas. This large group of people is constructed as co-authoring
a single sentence; "this is the way you've got to go if you don't grow the economy you can't get it done" (lines 39-41). Clinton defines these cited others in terms of both their expertise and their political allegiance. The mention of "nine Nobel Prize winners" has a resonance with the unequivocal expert formulation found in Maddux & Rogers (1980) whose "Dr Campbell" was constructed as; "recognised by those in his field as one of the world's foremost authorities on sleep and sleep research".

In extract 9 Clinton can be seen as orientating to the potentially persuasive nature of such unequivocal expertise by foregrounding such qualities in those who are cited as endorsing his economic ideas. Thus nine people are defined in terms of their expert status "Nobel Prize winners", five hundred others are defined in terms of their knowledge base "economists". Whilst these 509 people could each be constructed in many different ways they are selectively defined vis a vis their purported expertise and knowledge. Furthermore in citing "500 economists" and "hundreds of business people" Clinton is deploying consensus. Thus as with extract 6, consensus here can be seen as a "disputable, to-be-achieved construction, designed for whatever discursive work is at hand", Edwards & Potter (1992, p.108). In constructing large numbers as endorsing his economic ideas Clinton is orientating to the notion, experimentally explored by McArthur (1972), that if large numbers agree then the cause of their agreement can be seen to lie in the entity, in this case Clinton's economic plans, rather than in the sources' dispositional characteristics.

The idea that it is Clinton's plans which have produced the endorsement he cites is further emphasised by reference to "numerous Republicans". The "hundreds of business
people" may well have included many Democrats, however Clinton highlights the unexpected endorsement, the counter-dispositional or counter-interest endorsement offered by "Republicans" who support his economic plans. This can be seen as slightly different to the appeal to neutrality considered in extracts six and seven. Whilst an appeal to neutrality rests on a claim that the source is free from 'bias', a claim which might be challenged by any of a whole spectrum of counter-claims, the counter-interest source is constructed as 'biased' but biased towards the political opponents of the speaker. Implicitly Clinton's plans are so compelling that they gain support even from those whose dispositional qualities might predispose them to withhold such support. The very description of these supporters as "Republicans" is interesting, if these people are now offering to support Clinton they could be defined as Democrats, however Clinton chooses to construct them as Republicans foregrounding the counter-interest nature of their endorsement.

The important issue in extract 9 is not so much what persuasive effect constructions of expert and counter-interest endorsement may or may not have, but rather the way in which 'expertise' and 'bias' can be put to rhetorical work in particular argumentative settings. Thus extract 9 shows the way in which issues of expertise and bias are demonstrably orientated to through the particular version of reality which the politician has constructed.

(e) Challenging the use of the cited other

Extracts six, seven and nine above if taken in isolation could share one of the shortcomings of social psychological experiments in persuasive communications. That is
they could imply that it is adequate to consider a 'message', such as a politician's answer to a question, in isolation - cut off from the context of ongoing argument. Thus the preceding extracts could be (mis)read as implying that in citing apolitical, expert and counter-interest others politicians have found a 'last word' in their debate, when as Billig argues "We may search for the last word, but for so long as human thought continues, the last word should be unobtainable, for there is always more that can be said." (1987, p.256). Extracts ten and eleven demonstrate just two ways in which the debate can continue after the deployment of a cited other, first by foregrounding the motive for citing the other and second by disputing their purported characteristics.

(i) Questioning the motives behind citing the other

Extract 10 demonstrates the way in which the motive behind citing an apparently counter-interest other can be brought into question. The extract shows the way in which the act of citing an unexpected source can be reinterpreted not as compelling evidence for the speakers case but rather as an indication of 'desperation'.

Extract 10

*The following extract is taken from Question Time broadcast one week before the UK's 1992 General Election.*

1  **SA:** Mr Heseltine with respect you've been in power now for thirteen years where are we? (0.5) and
2  where [were we at the [end of [your last=

100
MH: [oh wh] [o.k.] [o.k.]

=thirteen years?

can we answer that question? because it's a

fundamental point (.) we were the sick man of

Europe in 1979 with winter of discontent

SA: ((applause and shouting))

MH: that's where we were

SA: ((applause and shouting))

MH: now (0.5) now let's now let's start listening

where we are (.) British production is at an

all time high the [number of days lost through=

PS: [one last point

MH: =industrial disputes is the lowest for one

hundred years British exports are at an

all time high British share of world trade has

risen for the [first time for the sec=

PS: [(three syllables)

MH: =for the first time since the second world war

and we have got the highest order book in

our companies for eighteen months and sales

retail sales are now rising in fact the economy

is poised to recover

SA: ((laughter))

MH: and if you want if you want the best evidence

for that Jaques Delores says this country is a

haven for inward investment because the Tories
30 have made it such

31 SA:  ((applause))

......

32 AS:  I'll just point out two reasons why we know
33 Michael is in very substantial trouble on this
34 question (0.5) firstly he had to quote in his
35 defence Jaques Delores
36 SA:  ((laughter))
37 AS:  now when a Tory has to quote Jaques Delores you
38 know they're getting desperate

(SA = Studio audience, MH = Michael Heseltine, PS = Peter Sissons, AS = Alex Salmond)

In extract 10 a member of the studio audience questions the state of the country after thirteen years of the Conservative Party being in office (lines 1-5). Towards the end of a list of 'achievements', (lines 13-24), Michael Heseltine claims "the economy is poised to recover" (lines 24 & 25) - which is met by laughter from the studio audience. Heseltine then cites the well known French Socialist and former EC president Jaques Delores; "if you want the best evidence for that Jaques Delores says this country is a haven for inward investment because the Tories have made it such" (lines 27-30). Here Heseltine does not spell out the particular characteristics of Jaques Delores, to some extent it may have been unnecessary as his previous clashes with the Conservative Party received
sufficient publicity for him to be recognisable as a counter-interest source. Given the well publicised animosity between Delores and the Conservative Party his attributed claim could be seen as a powerful rhetorical resource, acting like the "Republicans" Clinton cited in extract 9. That is Delores's apparently pro-Conservative remarks can not be easily dismissed as merely reflecting his vested interests or dispositional bias. Instead the implication is that Delores has made the claim in spite of himself because the evidence of the Conservatives' facilitation of inward investment in the UK is so overwhelming. Thus citing Delores could be understood as a rhetorical moves which mitigates some of the charges of vested interest which may be made if Heseltine were simply to make the claim himself.

However Alex Salmond, (the Scottish Nationalist representative), provides a different framework for interpreting Heseltine's deployment of Jaques Delores; "I'll just point out two reasons why we know Michael is in very substantial trouble on this question (0.5) firstly he had to quote in his defence Jaques Delores (.) now when a Tory has to quote Jaques Delores you know they're getting desperate" (lines 32-38). Far from construing the citation of Jaques Delores as evidence of the Tory's contribution to inward investment in the UK, Salmond has interpreted it as evidence that Heseltine is "in very substantial trouble on this question".

In his response Salmond claims that Heseltine "had to" quote Jaques Delores and that when a Tory "has to" quote Jaques Delores "you know they're getting desperate". The use of "had to" and "has to" implies that Jaques Delores is cited not because the evidence is so compelling that even Jaques Delores agrees with Heseltine- but rather because
support for Heseltine's claims is so limited that he has no choice but to cite those whom he would prefer not to. In this way Salmond construes the deployment of the counter-interest other as evidence of desperation. Implicitly the more obviously counter-interest the other is - the more desperate the situation of the speaker who "has to" cite them. Furthermore the use of "had to" and "has to" foregrounds precisely the sort of motivational issue which Heseltine's deployment of Delores may have been designed to deal with. The counter-interest other could be seen as a powerful rhetorical resource in so far as it can ward off challenges that a claim merely reflects a motivated account or version of the world. In claiming that Heseltine "had to" cite Jaques Delores Salmond suggests an end or aim which the utterance of Heseltine "had to" achieve. In this way Salmond has emphasised the motivated, goal directed, political intent of Heseltine's claims.

Salmond subsequently ties his construction of Heseltine's particular use of Jaques Delores into what Montgomery (1991) refers to as a 'generic maxim' - or generalised claim about 'the way things are'; "now when a Tory has to quote Jaques Delores you know they're getting desperate" (lines 37 & 38). The wide terms of this generic maxim "when a Tory", repositions the specific charge against Heseltine as but one example of a more general 'rule'. Implicitly deploying a generic maxim suggests a naturalised or 'out-there-ness' quality to the rule being espoused. Furthermore this generic maxim does not play down but instead draws out the counter-interest quality of Delores's claim, setting Tory and Delores as clearly different - and interpreting the citation as a sign of partisan "Tory" desperation.
Thus whilst the deployment of Delores could be seen as a rhetorical resource designed to fend of accusations that Heseltine's claims merely reflect his own motives - Salmond has turned this around. He has reconstructed the startling quality of a Tory citing Jaques Delores as evidence of a very strong motivation, a desperate need, for Heseltine to find anyone who will substantiate his claims.

(ii) Challenging the characteristics of the cited other

Extract 11 exemplifies another way in which the deployment of a cited other can be challenged. Here the challenge rests not with a questioning of the motives behind citing the other but with a dispute regarding the actual defining characteristics of the cited other.

Extract 11

The following extract is taken from Question Time broadcast in October 1992 after news of the UK Government's controversial pit closure programme was released.

1 PS: if you were Industry Secretary now (.) >and you have
2 been Industry Secretary< what would you do with DAF
3 Leyland DAF?
4 TB: you would see to it (.) that British manufacturing
5 Industry received the same support that British
6 agriculture receives (.) because its a a >Tory wool
7 pull< 'the farms on the market place' because you'd
8 loose every rural constituency you hold in the House
of Commons (. ) and I think you've got to regard Industry as a > as a < national interest and that means you've got to build up coal (. ) we've got a thousand years of coal under our territory the gas and oil are going to run out > I don't know if we're going to have a question about the pits < but to sack miners at a moment when the one natural resource we have > for three hundred to a thousand years ahead < is coal (. ) is part of the same policy (0.5) it doesn't make sense and people don't believe these arguments any more Michael (. ) they just don't believe them any more

PS: Michael Heseltine

it's very interesting you say they don't believe them

TB: they don't

MH: err your ability to rewrite history is proverbial

SA: ((laughter approximately 2.5 seconds))

TB: we're not talking about my ability

MH: but but in (. ) for the sake of further and better particulars and accuracy may I quote to your colleague who was a minister in office when you were a part of the Labour Government describing what you have just described as a triumph of your policies > may I just quote him < and it is Hansard the twentieth of October nineteen ninety two the
Extract 11 commences with Tony Benn dealing with a question asking what he would do with Leyland DAF, a company facing possible closure, if he were Industry Secretary, (lines 1-3). This question is asked against a backdrop of the Conservative Government's pit closure programme which was very much in the news at the time. In his answer Benn
makes specific reference to the issue of pit closures; "to sack miners at a time when the
one natural resource we have >for 300 to 1000 years ahead< is coal (.) is part of the
same policy (0.5) it doesn't make sense and people don't believe these arguments any
more Michael (.) they just don't believe them any more" (lines 14-20). Heseltine
responds by citing Dick Marsh as criticising a previous round of pit closures which
occurred under a Labour Government during the time that Tony Benn was part of the
cabinet, (lines 29-35). The interesting point during the subsequent exchange is the way
in which the identity of Dick Marsh is openly disputed, (lines 36-54).

Heseltine constructs Dick Marsh as "a Minister in office" (line 30), when Benn was in
the Cabinet and "the Labour minister" (line 42), whereas Benn constructs Dick Marsh as
"a Tory" (lines 36, 41, 45, 46, 48, 50 & 54). Such an exchange illustrates the way in
which even an apparently straightforward question of another politician's political
identity can be seen as an open-to-argument issue. The very possibility that source
identity can be disputed in this way is hidden from view in investigations which simply
present subjects with written stimuli attributing a given message to a particular source,
(such as US physicist "Robert Oppenheimer", Hovland & Weiss, 1951, or "Dr
Campbell", Maddux & Rogers, 1980), whose attributes are treated as indisputable
essences. Such experiments treat source characteristics as a matter of consensus on
which everyone will 'naturally' agree.

By contrast the exchange between Benn and Heseltine in extract 11 shows that what may
appear to be a fairly clear cut question of a politician's political identity can be seen as a
to-be-constructed resource, Edwards & Potter (1992), Wooffitt (1992). Thus Dick Marsh's characteristics are not simply reported upon but constructed, and they are constructed in the midst of an argumentative context. That is Dick Marsh is constructed to accomplish a particular rhetorical task. For Heseltine Dick Marsh is constructed in terms of the role he used to have as "the Labour Minister" (line 42) which achieves the task of providing a counter-interest criticism of the Labour Government's earlier pit closure programme. For Benn Dick Marsh is constructed in terms of who he currently is, as a Conservative Peer in the House of Lords, which highlights the motivation which he might be presumed to have in criticising the Labour Government he was once a part of.

In highlighting quite contradictory facets of Dick Marsh both Heseltine and Benn orientate to the notion that a counter-interest claim, such as criticising the political part to whom one belongs, has more rhetorical efficacy than an interest-consistent claim, such as criticising one's political opponents. Thus the identity of Dick Marsh, far from being an indisputable essence, is transiently accomplished in the competing rhetorical moves of Heseltine and Benn.

Extracts 10 and 11 illustrate the way in which the act of citing another source is but one move in what is an ongoing argumentative context. Whilst a politician can construct a cited other, (so as to provide an apolitical, expert or counter interest warrant for their claims), both the act of citing another and the purported properties of the cited other are themselves open to be constructed to accomplish the rival rhetorical work of their politician's opponents.
2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has sought to extend previous approaches to persuasive communication by highlighting the way in which politicians variously deploy cited others to endorse their policies and corroborate their claims. In so doing it has differed from experimental work, much of which has sought to uncover what Billig (1987) refers to as the 'still secret' "secrets of persuasion." Here, as with the work of Wooffitt (1992) and Edwards & Potter (1992), there has been no attempt to locate the most potent persuasive ingredients or to construct a causal model linking stimuli materials to measurable outcomes. Instead the emphasis has been upon providing an adequate description of the practice of persuasive discourse within particular contexts.

This attempt to describe some of the features of politicians' use of cited others has found some degree of resonance with the taxonomies of 'persuasive' source characteristics detailed in the experimental literature. Thus the emphasis on apolitical, expert and counter-interest sources can to some extent be seen as echoing earlier work. Psychologists involved in attempts to uncover the "secrets of persuasion" have highlighted precisely the sorts of issues which politicians demonstrably orientate towards in their discourse. That is apolitical, expert and counter-interest sources appear to be deployed as rhetorical resources within particular circumstances. However this chapter challenges us to reconceptualise exactly what "source characteristics" are. Perhaps it is possible to question their status as 'psychological objects', unequivocal essences existing within the person, instead they could be construed as to-be-disputed constructions accomplished and re-accomplished within a shifting rhetorical context. To
Edwards & Potter we could subject source characteristics to the same rethink which they offer for features such as 'personality' and the 'self' that is as "the discursive resources that people draw upon to do particular sorts of interactional work" (1992, p.176).
3.1 Chapter Overview

In chapter two the notion of footing was drawn upon in order to understand politicians’ attempts to warrant their claims. This linked to both the work of Goffman (1979) and Clayman (1992). Goffman’s work was important in that it was this that gave analytic attention to the potentially complex, multifaceted and fluid interactional roles in everyday discourse, that is he provided the analytic space from which it was possible to explore the different positions speakers and listeners adopted. As chapter two noted, Clayman illustrated a fruitful application of these ideas by exploring the way in which participants could use the fluidity and complexity of their footing to variously position themselves. Thus news-readers could orientate to issues of neutrality by positioning their challenges as authored or representative of other sources such that they themselves are positioned as mere animators and thus not accountable for or identifiable with the position the words represent. Chapter two itself explored the parallel orientation of politicians who sought not so much distance from the words they uttered but endorsement from other sources who were less easily dismissed as merely voicing partisan rhetoric. Thus it was argued that politicians’ rhetoric could be studied not just in terms of its persuasive effect but by identifying the way in which it orientated to the particulars of context in utilising various constructions of authorship or endorsements of the sentiments they have voiced. This chapter maintains an interest in how participants make use of the multiple positioning possibilities and how these might relate to the warranting of claims - but it takes the focus away from how speakers position themselves to consider how interactants can position each other.
The data explored here is the dialogue produced by studio news-readers and correspondents in live conversation on television news. The issue that is pursued with this data is the way in which both the news-readers’ introductory sequences and the interaction itself between news-reader and correspondent can be seen as orientating to issues of ‘objectivity’ and ‘authoritativeness’. That is this chapter suggests that in the news-readers’ act of addressing and locating when and where the correspondents are speaking from they position their contribution in a way which makes it appear more truthful. Likewise it is argued that the interaction between studio news-reader and correspondent positions the talk of both participants as less open to challenge or alternatives than is the case when politicians are interviewed.

3.2 Background Literature

Some literature has approached questions of television news bias from the point of view of a standard which should be maintained. Indeed this sense of ‘should’ is often enshrined in various statutory and regulatory controls on the broadcast media many of whom have to meet legislative requirements of providing neutral and authoritative news coverage, Clayman (1991, 1992). News organisations may indeed construe their own remit of activity in such terms - thus Schlesinger (1987) draws upon a BBC guideline: “The BBC’s primary constitutional role is that of a supplier of new and true information as described above. It shares the roles with a free press, but with one important difference, in that a newspaper has a point of view and a place of its own in the political spectrum. The BBC has none.” (1987, p.169). Schlesinger draws upon this to argue that BBC adopts the ‘Mannheimian’ notion that they can report upon yet stand ‘above’ all
conflict an attribute which many news organisations may be seen to share.

An opposite perspective but along the same ‘objective-biased’ continuum is provided by critical media scholars who expose the problem of bias and in particular attempt to identify whose interests are recurrently served in the ‘biased’ versions of reality which the news produces. Particularly active in this area are the Glasgow University Media Group who (as was mentioned in the introduction) explored something of the way in which text and images used on national television news in the UK could be seen as serving the interests of those who hold power e.g. owners, managers and those within the political establishment rather than those who pose challenges such as striking workers and left-wing groups. In a retrospective on their work the Glasgow University Media Group (1982) argue that “For over six years our research unit and others have compiled evidence pointing to severe breaches in the requirements of impartiality and balance. ... Broadcasting is too important to be ignored, and it is foolish to wait for changes in other parts of society before demanding that it live up to requirements of accuracy and balance.” (1982: 168). Thus such work treats bias as an obligation which television news should fulfil and uses research as a tool to illustrate where it falls short and what ideologies are revealed in such shortcomings.

This chapter tackles the issues of objectivity and bias from a slightly different angle. Whilst not discounting the value of work which has explored recurrent ideological orientations on the news the key interest here is objectivity as an achievement rather than as an obligation. That is this chapter seeks to explore how the news achieves the appearance of objectivity and authoritativeness particularly in the interaction between
studio news journalist and correspondent. One strand of research which comes some way towards the current concerns is that outlined by Fiske (1987). Fiske’s work provides a useful sketch of some of the ways in which various components of television news programmes can work to corroborate the news’s version of events. One way in which this is developed is by exploring the role of ‘actuality’ footage. Thus Fiske argues that such material even that drawn from library sources unrelated to the event can be used to authenticate the discourse of the studio. That is he argues that such ‘evidence’ can “situate the meanings in the events themselves” (1987: 289). This particular line of analysis is noted as potentially fruitful but not explored in this chapter as the emphasis is placed instead on the aspects relevant to the interaction between the studio news-reader and correspondent where footage itself has a less direct role. There are however three other aspects which Fiske raises each of which will be referred to in the analysis within this chapter -these are the ideas of immediacy, exnomination and location.

Fiske notes that the emphasis on immediacy that is “nowness” or “liveness” works “to promote the transparency fallacy and to mask the extent of the construction or interpretation that news involves. ... The instantaneity implies that there has been no time for editorialising or reworking, that television brings us events-as-they-happen.” (1987: 289). This theme is present not only within correspondents reports but is also observable in studio news readers’ introductions of correspondents as such it will be briefly returned to within the analysis. Fiske further identifies exnomination as important with regard to the authoritativeness of the news. In the introduction Barthes (1973) notion of exnomination was briefly introduced and linked to Hartley’s (1992) work on the point of view implied by camera angles. There it was noted that Hartley had sketched
out a critical perspective on the construction of the news which took into account the visual perspective or point of view of telling which was offered. Fiske offers the possibility of a slightly different framework starting with a very broad definition of exnomination; “Exnomination is the evacuation of a concept from the linguistic system with its structure of differences and alternatives. That which is exnominated appears to have no alternative and is thus granted the status of the natural, the universal, or that-which-cannot-be-challenged.” (1987: 290).

However in pursuing Barthes notion of exnomination Fiske tends to treat all labelled tellings as nominated and all unlabelled accounts as exnominated. In terms of the subjects within a specific news story Fiske notes how the management point of view has no spokesperson and is therefore exnominated whilst the union perspective has named individuals speaking and is thus nominated. This line of thinking is also used by Fiske to explore the positioning of news journalists themselves. For Fiske correspondents who tend to use individual ‘sign-offs’ are positioning themselves as more nominated than studio news-readers who tend not to label themselves. Reflecting on the correspondents Fiske argues that: “their “truths” appear subjective, “nominated” ... and therefore lower in the discursive hierarchy than the “truth” of the news reader.” (1987: 288). In this way Fiske equates labelling or naming with nominating and the absence of naming with exnomination. Fiske further highlights that the correspondent’s location can be understood as linked to the appearance of the ‘truthfulness’ of television news - in particular he emphasises the significance of their distance from the studio news-room; “Spatially positioned further away and discursively subordinated is the reporter, who signs off as both an individual and an institutional voice. Her/his function is to mediate
These aspects of exnomination and location are central to the focus of this chapter. Yet whilst it is recognised that Fiske has fruitfully drawn attention to these key aspects of the news’s construction of objectivity and authoritativeness a number of limitations can be noted. In particular it could be argued that exnomination may not operate simply in terms of labels and “sign-offs”, such a perspective as Fiske notes provides a hierarchy of “truth” even amongst news journalists on a single programme broadcasting the same news item. Indeed within the dialogues which are to be explored within this chapter this suggests an uneven positioning in which with each mention of name the studio news-reader drags the correspondent further and further down the epistemological ladder. This perspective could be seen as forging too strong (and literal) a link between nomination and naming. Thus as this chapter will argue naming can be seen as doing other work than ‘nominating’ in the Barthian sense - likewise nomination can be seen as operating outside of the simple ascription of names to speakers. In particular this chapter argues that nomination can be seen as operating not just when there is a named individual talking but rather whenever there is a sense that their discourse represents a nameable perspective on the events or a neutral ‘exnominated’ telling of the truth. In this sense it is not just the fact that a name is used but how the discourse of the speaker is itself positioned. Furthermore the location of correspondents for Fiske was understood primarily as being away from the sanctity of the news-room - such that it could mediate between “raw reality” and the final truth spoken by the news reader.” (1987: 288).
epistemological status of the news-room. This understanding of location does usefully identify it as linked to issues of authenticity but arguably underestimates the precise ways in which it can function - that is how the specific construction of location used can be seen as orientating to the production of an authentic news report.

This chapter will address some of the themes which Fiske has outlined from a slightly different stance. The approach taken will, like Clayman (1992), emphasise the importance of talk detail as the medium through which speaker positioning is accomplished. Furthermore in line with Sacks (1992) it will consider the way in which utterances can be understood as designed so as to be appropriate for their recipients. Thus the broad areas of concern sketched out by Fiske will be revisited by exploring the orientation of the talk between studio news-reader and correspondent expert. Naming and exnomination treated together by Fiske will be considered separately in this chapter whilst location will be seen as more astutely attuned to correspondents’ positioning than Fiske implied. Naming will be explored as part of a pre-sequence in which the studio news-reader introduces the correspondent and attention will be paid to the way it attends to issues of addressivity and connotes a particular relationship between studio news reader and correspondent. Correspondents’ location - also part of the news-readers’ introductory segment - will be explored not in terms of distance from the studio but as formulated so as to emphasise proximity to the events being reported on. In particular location will be explored as a resource which can be drawn upon and constructed within introductory items by the studio news-reader such that the correspondent is positioned as speaking from ‘where the events are happening’. Exnomination will be explored in terms of the positioning of talk itself rather than with regard to labelling of the speaker. As has
been noted earlier Clayman (1992) argued that news-readers achieved neutrality by citing others whose claims served to challenge the politicians they interviewed and hold them to account. Thus the citation of others allowed for the claims of politicians to be nominated. In this chapter the interaction between studio news-reader and correspondent is seen to lack precisely those nominating features which characterise interviews with politicians. Thus it will be argued that the detail of the talk, in particular how turns are treated by the studio news reader positions the correspondents’ discourse as exnominated.

3.3 Data and analytic approach

(a) Data and definitions

The analysis draws upon extracts taken from a pool of 36 ‘interviews’ between studio news-readers and correspondents which were broadcast on UK news programmes between 8th October 1993 and 12th February 1999. In addition to this occasional reference will be made to other interviews involving politicians primarily as a point of contrast. This range of data in itself does little to corroborate the analysis - however it does provide the possibility of at least tentatively considering questions of prevalence and variation. That is where certain clearly identifiable patterns are raised for example with regard to the naming and locating of the correspondent by the studio news reader some reference will be made to how frequently this occurred in the current data set. This is not to over enthusiastically endorse a tendency which has perhaps received too much attention in social psychological research but rather to provide more precision to claims of tendencies particularly where instances are relatively uncontentious and hence their counting less disputable. Allied to this is an awareness that in some instances the data set
could be useful for illustrating apparent exceptions to the patterns which seem to emerge. In some instances such exceptions appear to further clarify the case being developed in others they seem at least initially unexplainable and perhaps serve to caution against overstatement.

Throughout the chapter the term news-reader is used to refer to the main anchor-person who hosts the particular news broadcast being analysed and who both reads news items and introduces each new segment of news. The term correspondent refers to reporters whose official title (often overtly used) might include “economics correspondent”, “economics editor”, “political correspondent”, “chief political correspondent” and “political editor”. The analysis is based on that talk produced in the studio news readers’ introduction to the correspondent and the dialogue which they have together.

(b) Analytic approach

The analysis began with a far smaller data set than the thirty six correspondent interviews eventually compiled. Initially 5 interviews involving correspondents and 1 with a politician were drawn upon with an additional 3 drawn from previously published interviews featuring politicians. These materials were transcribed and inspected with a view to their functional orientation - that is what they could be heard to be doing. This analysis developed in broad terms the themes of immediacy, naming, location and exnomination which are pursued in this chapter. However care was taken to develop these ideas - thus the pool of data was expanded to include a total of 36 interviews with correspondents and 7 with politicians (with a further 4 drawn from previously published materials).
The transcripts were inspected with regard to the issues of location, naming and immediacy - all of which were fairly easily identifiable features (in the way in which they were defined here) and hence the frequency of occurrence was noted. Interaction between news-reader and correspondent was also explored - here patterns were arguably more subtle and were explored by comparing interviews with correspondents with interviews involving politicians. Through this comparison some of the distinctive features of news-reader-correspondent interaction were outlined. These processes thus involved some degree of careful engagement with the data but they were also shaped and reshaped by the available literature - which collectively served several different purposes. In some cases previous research helped to deepen observations adding more precision to the point being made - an example of this being Schegloff’s (1972a) work on the formulation of location. In other cases the literature acted as a starting point which this research sought to develop further - examples of this are Fiske’s (1987) observations regarding the news’s means of achieving the appearance of objectivity and authoritativeness, Livingstone and Lunt’s (1994) work on the positioning of experts on audience discussion programmes and Clayman and Whalen’s (1988/89) attention to the importance of interaction in co-constructing the interviewer’s ‘impartiality’. In this way the analysis has sought to be informed by both the current data and prior literature.

3.4 Introductory Sequences

(a) Floor delegation

Prior to the interview between studio news-reader and correspondent there is an introductory sequence which typically includes reference to who the correspondent is
and where they are. One way of understanding this is to treat it as a sequence in which
floor delegation is handled - the studio news-reader transferring the 'floor' or right to
speak to the correspondent. Scollen (1998) draws upon the work of Schegloff (1972b) to
suggest that news introductions can be understood as achieving some limited delegation
of the floor - or right to speak - from the studio to the correspondent. Scollen argues that
"the answerer of the summons (or call) does not have rights to the introduction of the
topic. The answerer replies in such a way as to turn the floor back to the caller after
completing the identification sequence so that the caller may introduce his or her topic.
In the case of the television news report we see that it is the presenter who asserts the
right and power to define unilaterally the situation and to introduce the topic and only
rather narrowly and temporarily delegates the floor to the named reporter." (1998: 161).
It is important to note that Scollen draws upon the notion of floor delegation primarily in
exploring the switch from studio news reader to correspondent report and is thus less
concerned with the focus here which is on the interaction between news reader and
correspondent. Yet this difference if anything is likely to lead to a still more tightly
controlled floor delegation such that the correspondent has the floor just for the time
necessary to answer the questions provided by the studio news reader. Extracts 1 and 2
below illustrates something of this limited 'hand over' or delegation of the floor;

**Extract 1**

*This is taken from BBC Breakfast News, 3rd may 1996 - studio news-reader Justin Webb
is in dialogue with political editor Robin Oakley;*

1 *JW:* and now we go to Downing Street and
2 to our political editor Robin Oakley
(.. Robin ↑good ↑morning again
4 RO: good morning Justin
5 JW: so err John Major stays in place and
6 they soldier on
7 RO: yes I think err we won’t see any
8 immediate threat to John Major’s
9 leadership as a result of this contest
10 ((Oakley’s answer continues))

Extract 2

This extract is taken from BBC Breakfast News broadcast on the 28th May 1993.
Nicholas Witchel is the studio news-reader and Emma Udwin the correspondent.

1 NW: joining us now from Westminster is our political
2 correspondent Emma Udwin (.) Emma good morning
3 to you (.) how much danger do you sense Norman
4 Lamont poses to the Government from the back
5 benches?
6 EU: well I don’t think there’s any question that
7 there is a high degree of acrimony now between
8 Norman Lamont and the Prime Minister
9 ((Udwin’s answer continues)).

These two extracts despite a large number of similarities display a difference which
hinges on the issue of delegation. In extract 1 the correspondent receives a turn for talk
without a specified question - the pause after “Robin ↑good ↑morning again” (line 3)
invites a reply from the correspondent without clarifying a domain for his contribution. Hence all that the correspondent can do is reply within the terms of reference used “good morning Justin” (line 4). The extensive contribution only commences when the studio news reader provides a point for the correspondent to comment upon “so err John Major stays in place and they soldier on” (lines 5 & 6). By contrast the good morning greeting in extract 2 is treated as part of an introductory sequence the correspondent only responding when the studio news reader’s question has been issued “how much danger do you sense Norman Lamont poses to the Government from the back benches? (lines 3-5). Together these two extracts point to the way in which the correspondent gives to the studio news reader the right to specify the topic for their response rather than volunteering information at the first opportunity. In this regard the question within the introductory sequence and any ensuing questions are the means by which the news-reader invites and delineates the areas for the correspondent’s contributions. Whilst the introductory sequences can clearly be understood as attending to floor delegation there is far more work being done. Of particular importance for our current concerns is the way in which the introductory sequence in addressing the correspondent and locating when and where they are speaking from attends to the objectivity and the authoritativeness of their claims.

(b) Addressivity

A key issue with regard to addressivity is how speakers indicate to whom their remarks are addressed. That is in producing an utterance how can I signal that it is designed for one person rather than another. In the case of studio news-readers they need to find a way of switching from directly addressing the television audience (whilst reading the
news) to addressing questions to the correspondent for which the audience are intentional indirect addressees or overhearers. A particularly overt way in which this is discursively achieved is through the switch in names used to refer to the correspondent. Extracts one and two above illustrate precisely this move, the correspondent is talked about in terms of location, role, full name and then first name. This move is hearable as a switch in addressee - that is the talk of “Robin Oakley” seems to be directly addressing the audience whilst “Robin” or “Emma” appears to initiate a dialogue between the news reader and the correspondent. Levinson (1988) notes this in commenting upon an extract in which Bruce Kent and the Question Time audience are variously positioned as the direct and indirect addressees; “normally, names can only figure in vocative expressions if they occur as first names alone, or title-plus-last name...Thus in saying, for example Bruce Kent, there will be a point during the production of the phrase where what is coming might be a vocative of direct address (namely ‘Bruce’), that possibility evaporating with the appearance of the initial consonant of ‘Kent’.” (1988: 218). Thus the name switch can be seen as a means of signalling that the studio news reader having uttered just the first name of the correspondent can from then on be understood as addressing the correspondent rather than the audience.

However, crucial to this switch is the way in which the audience are kept in the role of intentional overhearers or indirect addressees. Levinson (1988) suggests two means by which discourse can be marked as intentionally for overhearers, the first is by ‘A telling B about B events’ this is perhaps particularly evident in celebrity interviews “you’re going on tour for three weeks” and in various award ceremonies “you have a career spanning forty years in which you have won seven Oscars”. The second means, which is
of more direct relevance for our current concerns is through the production of discourse “which lacks many conversational devices that either seek to establish in advance what may be ‘news’ or serve to acknowledge the newsworthiness of an informing” (1988: 221). The second strand to this has been seen as particularly important in broadcast interviews on television news. Thus Greatbatch (1992) refers to the ways in which news interviewers (IRs) position the audience as (indirect) addressees even when they are explicitly addressing the interviewee; “They do so by avoiding actions which are characteristic of private conversation. Specifically, by respecting the constraint that they should confine themselves to asking questions, IRs withhold a range of responsive activities which are characteristically produced by speakers during and/or following responses to their questions in conversational contexts. These include acknowledgement tokens (mm hm, uh huh, yes, etc.) (Schegloff 1982: Jefferson 1984b) and news-receipt objects (oh, really, did you, etc.) (Jefferson 1981a, 1984b; Heritage 1984b).” (1992: 269, 270). The absence of those markers which denote the questioner as the primary recipient of the answers given by the interviewee serve to position the overhearing news audience as the indirect addressee of the correspondent’s talk.

(c) Positioning the relationship between studio news reader and correspondent

It has already been noted that in addressing the correspondent the studio news-reader routinely switches from full name to first name alone. To some extent, as noted above, this can be understood as enabling the news-reader to clearly signal the switch of addressee - such that they can move from addressing the audience whilst reading the news to addressing the correspondent to ask them questions. It was noted that this switch was carefully handled so as to retain audiences as intentional indirect or overhearing
addressees. However on its own this perspective fails to account for the distinctive nature of this move - that is that the use of first names is as scarce in interactions between news-readers and politicians as it is common between news-readers and correspondents. The analysis of extracts three to seven explores this issue with extracts three and four illustrating typical modes of address used between studio news-readers and politicians.

Extract 3

This extract is an edited excerpt taken from an interview between television interviewer Brian Walden and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and is cited in Edwards & Potter (1992, p.132, 133).

1BW: (.4) now Prime Minister (.2) how do you
2res pó::nd (. ) to this claim of blame (. ) may be
3of crucial significance for you personally and to
4your government so I put it to you (. ) are you to
5blame for Nigel Lawson's resignation (. )

Extract 4

This extract is an edited excerpt taken from an interview between a television interviewer from the MacNeil/Lehrer news programme broadcast on the 25th July 1985 and cited in Clayman (1992, 191).
IR: hhhh Mister Chettle what d'you say duh those people who've said this on our program several times now:: uh in thuh last uh few weeks, that hh TIME is running out in South Africa. >that something must b- must be done: (. ) or thuh whole thing is gonna go up

Extracts three and four illustrate the relatively formal introductions used by studio news-readers when they are interviewing someone who is outside of the 'news-team'. Politicians and other spokespeople are often introduced and addressed by official titles - in extract three the term of address was "Prime Minister" elsewhere a host of other formal titles are used e.g. senator, mister Ambassador, Reverend Boesak, (all cited in Clayman, 1992). In extract 4 the interviewee was addressed in terms of their surname - which is again commonly found whenever an official title is not used, (Clayman, 1991, 1992). Whilst these two extracts are rather unremarkable they serve an interesting point of comparison with the mode of address used between studio news reader and correspondent illustrated below. Indeed it is worth noting that were this formal mode is departed upon it is treatable as worthy of comment as extract 5 suggests.

Extract 5

This is taken from the BBC's 'Election 97' programme on the day after the Labour Party's victory in the UK's general election of 1997, the interviewer is David Dimbleby and the politician is the former Labour Prime Minister Jim Callaghan.
In extract 5 it is worth noticing how ‘Jim’ is produced after considerable delay. When it is uttered it is followed with a retrospective request for the permission of its use “if I might call you that” (lines 3 & 4). The retort (lines 5 & 6) plays upon the unusual informality by using the interviewer’s own first name - another move which is rarely found in encounters between news journalists and those from outside of the news team. Thus the deployment of a first name in extract 5 is treated as accountable by the interviewer and as worthy of indirect comment by the interviewee. By contrast with this propensity to formality the interaction between studio news readers and correspondents is marked by much more frequent use of the first name particularly in the introductory sequence. Out of the sample of 36 such interactions there were just three instances in which there was no reference to the first name of the correspondent by the studio news reader. Extracts six and seven illustrate the typical modes of address used.

Extract 6

This extract is taken from Independent Television's Channel Four News broadcast in the UK on the 15th February 1995. The news item concerned the publication of the Scott
Report - detailing issues of the illegal supply of arms by the Conservative Government.

The studio news reader is Jon Snow.

1  JS:  we're joined again from Westminster by
2      our political editor (. )  Elanor Goodman
3      ( . )  erm Elanor this huge report ( . )
4      three times the length of err War and
5      Peace ( . )  what's it done for tempers down
6      there?

Extract 6 illustrates the way in which the correspondent is introduced using her full
name but addressed using simply her first name “Elanor”. In a few cases even the first
name is abbreviated as with extract 7 below;

Extract 7

This extract is taken from the 9 O’clock news broadcast on the 8th April 1997 - Peter
Sissons is the news reader with Nicholas Jones as correspondent.

1  PS:  Since we went on air ( . )  Neil Hamilton’s
2      adoption meeting has ended and   he has
3      been re-adopted as the Conservative
4      candidate in Tatton ( . )  Nicholas Jones
5      joins us from there now ( . )  Nick ( . )  what
6      can you tell us?
One way of understanding the use of first names is that they are a form of what Goffman (1972) dubbed 'tie-signs'. By tie-signs Goffman was referring to the indicators of a relationship between two people. Goffman particularly develops this theme in considering various forms of romantic relationships between people which may have different requirements of secrecy or expression. Thus a tie-sign could be the holding of hands, eye contact or it could be expressed in talk especially the manner of address.

"Two sorts of persons can be informed by a tie-sign: the ends of the relationship or third parties. And signs may be specialised in this regard. For example, hand-holding is (among other things) an open declaration to third parties that they are in the presence of a certain kind of relationship; squeezing a held hand and declining to let ones' hand be found for holding (or once released to be regrasped) are signs ordinarily designed for the ends' private consumption. The 'arm-lock', the device whereby an adult female 'takes the arm' of an adult male and thereby signifies she is in a 'with' that provides her male protection, seems to be done for the information it provides third parties - except, of course, when a kerb or rough road is to be negotiated, or when one end uses the public character of the hold to prove a point to the other end." (1971: 234). Whilst one might want to question the rather sexist stereotypes on which Goffman draws his notion of tie-signs can be seen as fruitful and of use well beyond the romantic examples cited above. Thus the very use of first names can be seen as tie-signs signalling to the audience something about the nature of the relationship between the studio news-reader and the correspondent.

This reading of the use of names echoes work by Sacks on the use of names in multi-party conversations. Sacks argued that where others were present the names that
conversational participants used for each other would take into account the fact that others are overhearing them: “Now in doing that they might perhaps be taking account of the instructional use of names, and also, of course controlling the kinds of information that can be gotten about the two parties concerned. That is, e.g., if you overhear two parties, and they use one or another name to each other, you can make interesting guesses about their relationships, and one of the ways they can intend to conceal that sort of thing is by the kinds of names they use to each other ‘in public’.” (1992, vol.1: 289).

From this perspective the notion of tie-signs or relationship indicators can be seen as including the names participants use to each other in front of overhearers and furthermore can be understood as designed so as to orientate to their receipt.

In the context of the interactions between television news readers and correspondents the deployment of the first name could be hearable as connoting some form of togetherness or shared membership between the news-reader and the correspondent. Some corroboration for this reading may be present not only in the prevalence of tie-signs in news-team interactions and their absence in encounters with non news-team members but also in the recurrent determiner ‘our’. Whilst it cannot be claimed that the phrase “our political/economics correspondent/editor” was used on each occasion it was in 21 of the 36 extracts considered, plus on one occasion reference to the “BBC’s political editor” was made. Of the 14 remaining instances at least 8 were exchanges in which the correspondent had already been introduced to give a report and in some cases was referred to again after the interaction with the studio news reader. In most of these cases the data is not available to assess how the correspondent had been referred to by the studio news reader elsewhere in the programme - but in the two extracts where the other
whilst in extract 7 there appears to be no use of “our” in introducing Nicholas Jones elsewhere in the same programme he is referred to by the news reader as “our political correspondent”.

This use of “our” has also been explored by Sacks in his lecture on ‘Selecting Identifications’ - in it Sacks considers the way in which pronouns, names and relational terms demonstrate how speakers “design their talk for recipients” (1992, vol.2: 445): “I’m talking about the combinations of pronouns and relational terms; things like “my mother”, “your brother”, and things like that. Where plainly for those, a speaker who uses one of them should do it by reference to himself and the recipient such that, e.g., one shouldn’t use “my mother” to a recipient for whom that person referred to is also the mother - one should use, instead, “our mother”.” (1992: 445, 446). This suggests that the use of our and the naming can both be seen as orientating to the news audience and signalling to the audience something of the relationship between news reader and correspondent - that is it can be treated as designed with receipt in mind rather than a coincidental pattern. The “our” itself is potentially hearable as either including or excluding the audience - that is the correspondent could be understood as belonging to either the news-reader and the audience or to the news reader and others on the news team. There is at least a prima facie case for the second claim which ties into the use of institutional role and naming. When the news-reader introduces the correspondent they typically do so using both their organisational role and full name “our political editor Robin Oakley” - this can be heard as rather different to “our friend Robin”. The use of institutional role and full name seems to connote that the our is the news team’s - (in one
case were “our” was not used “BBC’s political correspondent” was used instead).

Furthermore the switch between full name and first name tends to suggest that this correspondent is “Robin Oakley” or “Nicholas Jones” to the audience - but “Robin” or “Nick” to the news reader.

Taken together these aspects of identification and address could be heard as suggesting a togetherness of studio news-reader and correspondent - that in some sense they are both part of the same (news) team. This togetherness or team-ness can be understood as positioning the talk of the correspondent in a particular way. Rather than being the words of a separate individual the utterances of the correspondent are in some way incorporated - they are the words of a team member. Without wanting to speculate too far on the functions it might worthwhile sketching out two possibilities. First by positioning the words as coming from someone who is linked to the studio news reader they are less hearable by the news audience as threatening or challenging the version of events provided by the studio news-reader’s coverage. Second - and very much linked to the first point - by positioning the correspondent’s talk as that of a collaborative colleague some dimension of a shared viewpoint may be implied. One aspect of this is that when taken together with the interaction style considered below the togetherness may suggest that both news-reader and correspondent concur in the version of events which the correspondent produces, implying some level of consensus (Edwards and Potter, 1992) as well as the absence of clearly identifiable points from which to challenge the correspondent’s talk. These features can be understood as serving to position not just the correspondent but the talk that they produce in a way which renders it less open to direct challenge or question. This line of thinking becomes more clear when considered
(d) Formulating time and place: speaking ‘live’ from the ‘heart’ of the action

So far mention has been made of the important work done in news-readers’ introductions with regard to naming correspondents. A further feature is that such introductions make implicit or explicit references to the immediacy and location of the correspondent’s report. These issues will be considered with regard to their orientation to the ‘objectivity’ and ‘authoritativeness’ of the correspondent’s talk.

(i) Immediacy

The immediacy of the interaction between the studio news reader and the correspondent is typically signalled by the use of the adverb “now”. Extracts eight and nine illustrate this usage;

Extract 8

This extract is taken from the BBC 9 O’Clock News broadcast in the UK on the 8th October 1993. The item concerned John Major’s speech at the Conservative Party Conference. The news reader is Martin Lewis.

1 ML: >Our political editor Robin Oakley joins me
2 now from Blackpool< (..) Robin what has
3 today's speech <and this week done> for Mr
4 Major's position and authority
Extract 9

This extract is taken from Independent Television News's News at 10 broadcast in the UK on the 27th March 1996. The item reported concerned European Community's disputes regarding the safety of UK beef - the news reader in John Suche

and joining us now from Westminster our political editor Micheal Brunson (.)

now Michael that err package of measures the Prime Minister spoke about there< what news on that tonight?

Without wishing to become over-reliant on measures of frequency it may be worth briefly considering how in different ways the studio news-readers' introductions tend to emphasise the immediacy or "liveness" of their talk with correspondents. Indications of immediacy were present in 33 of the 36 interviews between correspondents and studio news-readers. In 21 of these cases use was made of the word "now" - as illustrated in extracts 8 and 9 above. Thus variations such as "joins me now", "joins us now", "joining us now", "joining me now" or "I'm joined now" account for the majority of references to immediacy used by studio news-readers in their introductions. In one additional case immediacy is implied by using the present tense verb 'am' but without reference to 'now' - "I'm joined from Westminster". In 6 other instances use was made of the verb 'is' e.g.; "here's our economics editor", or "Robin Oakley is at Westminster". Whilst these cases are not as explicit in temporal reference as 'now' - 'am' and 'is' still suggests that the interaction is happening now rather than in the past - that is it works
quite differently to other possibilities eg.; "Robin Oakley was at Westminster". An illustration of the use of “is” (which is combined with other temporal references) is given in extract 10. In a further five cases where “now”, “am” and “is” were absent the introductory sequence signalled a return to the correspondent; “back to”, “from Westminster again”, “joining us again”. These clauses each suggest something that is happening as the audience watches the programme - that is they position the exchange which is to follow as something which is happening at that moment. Sometimes as in extract 11 this is further accentuated by explicit references to changes which have occurred whilst the programme has been broadcast. In the three cases where immediacy was not signalled in the introductory sequence one was an instance of incomplete data and the remaining two involved the correspondent being physically located in the studio next to the news-reader such that visually there were indications that the sequence was live.

Extract 10

This is taken from BBC’s Newsnight broadcast on the 23rd June 1995 and concerns former Conservative prime Minister John Major’s campaign to be re-elected as the Conservative Party leader, the studio news reader is Sheila McDonald.

1 SM: well Mark Mardell is at this very
2 minute (. ) outside John Major’s campaign
3 headquarters (. ) in Cowley Street ( . )
Extract 11

This is taken from the BBC's Nine O'clock news broadcast on 8th April 1997 - the news item concerned the Tatton Conservative Association's endorsement of the controversial Conservative candidate (and sitting MP) Neil Hamilton - Peter Sissons is the studio news Reader.

1    PS: since we've been on the air (.)
2    Neil Hamilton has been adopted as
3    Conservative candidate for Tatton (.)
4    we're joined again from Tatton by our
5    political correspondent (. ) Nicholas
6    Jones (. ) Nick remind us of how the
7    meeting divided

In each of the extracts considered some discursive work can be seen as taking place which signals that the exchange is 'live' rather than pre-recorded. The interesting feature from this chapter's perspective is not just that the interaction between news-reader and correspondent is live but that it is clearly pre-announced as such - that care is taken such that the audience will be aware of its "nowness". Thus the formulation of immediacy used by the news reader could itself be explored in terms of the functions which it orientates to. These functions may include those of 'objectivity' and 'authoritativeness' referred to earlier but need not be restricted to that. At one level the emphasis on immediacy is readable or hearable as stressing the relevance of the news - that is that it is bringing something up-to-date rather than 'old news'. Indeed a case can be made for this
interpretation as sometimes politicians are interviewed live and introduced in a manner which emphasises their “liveness” - arguably it is harder to sustain the idea of newsreaders orientating to the ‘objectivity’ and ‘authoritateness’ of the politicians they interview particularly in the light of work by Pomerantz (1988/89). Yet it is possible that in the context of eliciting a report from a correspondent and when combined with other features - such as the formulation of location, naming and interaction sequences - the emphasis on immediacy can be understood as attending to the ‘truth’ status of the correspondent’s talk.

The work of Fiske (1987) referred to earlier suggests that such an emphasis on immediacy may serve to authenticate the news allowing it to be seen as a direct expression of what is happening rather than a construction or version of events which has been produced by the news itself; "Hand in glove with objectivity go authenticity and immediacy. Both these link news values in particular with realism, and immediacy with "nowness" or "liveness", both of which are central to the experience of television. In news, both work to promote the transparency fallacy and to mask the extent of the construction or interpretation that news involves." (1987, p.289). This the very act of highlighting or emphasising the immediacy of news claims can in itself suggest that there has been little if any opportunity for editorial ‘construction’. In her research on court-room testimony Scheppele (1994) argues that recipients of accounts will treat immediate or first versions as more truthful than revised versions - even if the first version has been offered under conditions of extreme stress and emotional turmoil. However whatever the possible ‘effects’ of the formulation - it can be argued that the news-readers themselves hearably treat immediacy as a feature which is worthy of
highlighting and that this can be understood as orientating to issues such as newsworthiness and quite possibly the truth status of the correspondent’s claims.

(ii) Locating the correspondent

In his review of correspondents’ reports Scollen (1998) notes that where they are away from the studio the ‘closing frame’ or end sequence typically involves the correspondents name, news agency and location. In the interactions with correspondents explored in this chapter a similar pattern of emphasising name and location is found in the studio news readers introduction of the correspondent. In particular it seems that emphasis is placed on the correspondent interacting with the studio news reader from the place where the reported events have been or are taking place. From the pool of 36 extracts explored in this paper 29 involved the correspondent being out of the studio and each one of these made clear that the correspondent was relevantly located. In 26 cases the correspondent’s location was directly mentioned, whilst in 3 instances it was highlighted either visually (by text on screen indicating location e.g. “Washington”) or by the interview following on directly from the correspondent’s own ‘located’ sign-off. Thus the correspondent’s utterance of “Michael Brunson News at Ten Westminster” is followed immediately by the news reader’s introduction; “well Michael Brunson joins me now (.) Mike..”. The seven remaining cases which entail the correspondent being located in the studio each involve retrospective comments on the 1997 general election campaign, six occurring within the specially extended BBC Nine O’clock News coverage. In these cases of the correspondent being located in the studio there is a tendency (with one exception) for the scope of the commentary to be relatively broad e.g. commenting on the performance of each of the three parties. Furthermore those
occurring within the extended Nine O'clock news tend to provide a retrospective appraisal of a range of party political news covered in the programme some of which may have involved interviews with 'located' correspondents. Thus where a single location is of hearable relevance to the topic of exchange between news reader and correspondent then the correspondent is very likely to interact with the news reader from that location. Of even more direct interest not only is the correspondent physically located in a 'relevant' location they are introduced in such a way that their location is formulated as relevant.

This notion of location formulation relates to Schegloff's (1972) work on 'formulating place'. Schegloff notes that for any location it is possible to provide numerous possible 'true' formulations - leaving the question as to how one version comes to be used rather than another; "Were I now to formulate where my notes are, it would be correct to say that they are: right in front of me, next to the telephone, on the desk, in my office, in the office, in Room 213, in Lewisohn Hall, on campus, at school, at Columbia, in Morningside Heights, on the upper West Side, in Manhattan, in New York City, in New York State, in the Northeast, on the Eastern Seaboard, in the United States, etc. Each of these terms could be correct (if that's where my notes were), were its relevance provided for. On some occasion of use, for some co-conversationalists, under some conditions, in some conversational context, each of these terms (and undoubtedly many others) could, not only 'correctly', but also 'rightly', relevantly, appropriately, be used to formulate that place, while others would not be used appropriately (or, if used, would be heard as possibly formulating some location, but in addition doing some other activity, such as 'name-dropping', being arrogant, silly etc.)." (1972a: 97).
In the eight extracts involving introductions to correspondents cited so far in this chapter a range of place formulations have been used including; Downing Street, Westminster, Tatton and Blackpool. For each of these different formulations are easily imaginable thus Downing Street is in an area of London known as Westminster and so could be referred to as such, alternatively both Downing Street and Westminster could be labelled “London” or the “South-East of England”. Schegloff (1972a) well aware of this openness explores something of the activity of speakers in selecting a ‘particular formulation’ of location and of a hearer in ‘analysing its use’. That is there is a skilfulness displayed on both parts in everyday conversation. A particular part of the skilfulness on the speaker’s part is in producing a recognisable formulation of location.

A cursory glance at the formulations of location used by ‘studio’ news-readers in introducing correspondents suggests a tendency to use distilled or abbreviated aspects of their address. Some of the aspects of the formulations used are touched on in considering extract 12 below.

**Extract 12**

*This extract is taken from the BBC’s Nine O’clock News broadcast on 1st April 1997, and concerns the state of the UK economy in the light of an economic report and the economic policy of the parties in the 1997 UK General Election - Michael Buerke is the studio news-reader.*

1 MB: well I’m joined now from 11 Downing Street
In extract 12 there appears to be a very high degree of specificity regarding the location of the correspondent. Thus taken simply in terms of information regarding where to find the correspondent it could appear that this formulation is more precise than “Westminster” or “Downing Street”. Indeed if the extract were understood merely in terms of conveying information about the geographical location of the correspondent then one might ask why more specific formulations of location are not used more frequently. These sets of concerns lead us to consider location not just in geographical or topological terms but with regard to what Schegloff (1972a) calls ‘recognizability’: “what we mean by ‘recognizability’ is that the hearer can perform operations on the name – categorise it, find it as a member of which class it is being used, bring knowledge to bear on it, detect which of its attributes are relevant in context, etc.” (1972a: 110). In extract 12 “eleven Downing Street” is (to an audience familiar with UK politics) hearably the residence of the Chancellor of the Exchequer - just as “Downing Street” signifies the London residence of the Prime Minister. The contrast between these two is interesting first because it signifies an orientation to what the audience is presumed to recognise i.e. that Downing Street means the location of the Prime Minister (with no need to specify number ten) and eleven Downing Street through specification locates the Chancellor’s abode. Second because in terms of physically locating the correspondent the difference between their location when outside number ten and number eleven is likely to be minimal if any. This second theme underscores the idea that the formulation of location is not simply to enable the audience to find the
correspondent but rather to recognise the *relevance* of where they are to the news being issued. Hence in extract 12 the correspondent is outside of the Chancellor’s residence whilst talking about economic news. Earlier in extract 11 no street number was used for the correspondents’ location in Cowley Street - being a far less prominent political street means that the ‘postal’ address would not be heard as recognisably relevant. Instead in extract 11 reference is made to “John Major’s campaign headquarters (...) in Cowley Street (...)” - this quite obviously constructs the correspondents’ location as relevant for the news story regarding John Major’s campaign for re-election as party leader. Thus the formula used stresses the topical *relevance* of where the correspondent is rather than the different sorts of information which would be required for postal correspondence or for ordering a cab to that address.

What is being stressed is that the words and format of the introductory segments foreground or make prominent the temporal and spatial immediacy of the interview to the events being talked about. The formulation of location can be considered not just as relaying the only possible version of where the correspondent is - but rather as skilfully shaped to emphasise that the correspondent is in close proximity to ‘where it is happening’ (or has happened). In most cases the location of the correspondent during their talk with the studio news-reader is unimportant in terms of literal newsworthiness except for rare instances where events are observably happening within camera shot of where they are or when through their location they have access to further information or interviews with ‘key players’. This leaves the vast majority of interactions between studio news-readers and correspondents where their appears to be no additional informational value to their location during their dialogue. Thus in extract 12 there is
arguably no information-driven requirement that Peter Jay stands outside number eleven Downing Street to talk about economic policy - however there is symbolically a sense that the correspondent is standing where economic policy is formulated. In this way the formulation of location can be understood as orientating to the issues of the authority and impartiality of the news in the same way as immediacy. Distance from the events both physically and temporally is hearable as providing a more overtly constructed version of events which contrasts sharply with the rhetorical potency of claiming “I was there” or better still “Robin Oakley is there now”.

In the case of both immediacy and location there is a sense in which the studio news-reader can be seen as ‘bestowing epistemological resources’ on the correspondent. To some extent if the correspondent had to introduce themselves as speaking live from the heart of the action this may cause a range of problems - not least that the claim to authenticity could become rather obvious and potentially challengable in such a direct assertion. However the news-readers’ introduction performs a relatively ritualised role of ‘introducing’ whilst at the same time attending to how the discourse of the correspondent is positioned and what sort of impartiality and authority it may be thought to reflect. Positioning the correspondent as close to the events temporally and physically renders the discourse that they produce as hearable as an authoritative and impartial account of what has taken place, it suggests an informed eyewitness speaking as the events unfold rather than a producing a removed, constructed version of reality.
3.5 Interaction as co-constructing the objectivity and authoritativeness of news discourse

So far the focus has been upon the way in which studio news-readers’ introductions can serve to position the correspondent and thereby their discourse in a particular way - what has been unexplored is the characteristics of their interaction. Thus it may be that the very manner in which questions and answers are managed in the interview between news-reader and correspondent orientates to the issues of ‘objectivity’ or ‘impartiality’ and ‘authoritativeness’ which have been mentioned earlier. The idea of co-construction with regard to positioning conversational participants has been explored in a number of different ways within what might be considered conversation analytic literature. Two examples which connect to the current focus will be briefly considered. Levinson (1988) in sketching out the complexities of participation status noted that in some cases it was co-determined by a speaker and recipient. That is in some cases the identity of the addressee of a remark may be determined not by the speaker or the utterance itself in isolation but by the response and lack of response to the remark - the person responding may in that very act become the addressee. Whilst the focus here will move away from questions of addressivity a parallel argument will be explored - namely that the treatment of correspondents’ talk serves to position it in a particular way. A second example is Clayman and Whalen’s (1988/89) consideration of the interviewee’s role in co-constructing the ‘neutrality’ of the interviewer. Clayman and Whalen note that whilst the interviewer can be heard as orientating to questions of neutrality in news interviews with politicians - the politicians themselves participate in constructing that neutrality. Clayman and Whalen argue that by withholding from speech at particular junctures
within the interview the interviewee’s can serve to establish the interviewer as the ‘neutral asker of questions’; “They are engaged in continuously ratifying, if only in an implicit and provisional sense, the neutralism being proposed through this turn structure. Accordingly, the successful achievement of a neutralistic stance is an interactional matter involving the concerted action of all parties to the encounter .. More generally, the maintenance of a stream of talk as “news interview talk” is similarly an achievement, the outcome of continuos collaborative work.” (1988/89: 247).

Some glimpse at these collaborative processes may be made possible by considering some of the differences between interviews with news journalists and politicians. There are quite obviously too many features present within such interactions to adequately detail them here - rather the following will attempt to highlight five recurrent aspects in the interviews between news-reader and politician which are handled differently when the correspondent is interviewed. These features of interviews with politicians which are different to interviews with correspondents include; producing (or orientating towards the possibility of) an accountable interviewee position, treating the interviewee’s response as problematic, making clear alternatives and challenges to the interviewee’s responses, managing the floor -or rights to speak - in a way which includes more overlapping and interrupting talk (especially from the interviewer) and the interviewees’ propensity to overtly problematise the questions asked.

(a) Interviewee accountability

The first of these - producing an accountable position for the interviewee captures the attempt by the interviewer to locate the personal, party or Governmental position on a
given issue. This indicates some of the issues raised by Edwards and Potter (1992) who
stressed in broader terms the centrality of accountability in discourse. The extracts below
suggest differences in the orientation to accountable interviewee positions for politicians
and correspondents.

Extract 13

This is taken from BBC’s Breakfast News broadcast on 28th May 1993. It concerns
Norman Lamonts removal as Chancellor and his replacement by John Redwood.
Nicholas Witchel is the studio news reader.

1 NW: now when the Cabinet gathers for its
2 next meeting there will be just one
3 newcomer at the Cabinet table (. ) he’s
4 the former Local Government Minister
5 John Redwood who joins us now from
6 his home in Berkshire (. ) mister Redwood
7 (. ) good morning to you
8 JR: good morning
9 NW: Sir Ivan Lawrence er said earlier that
10 he felt that Norman Lamont had been
11 made a scapegoat (. ) do you agree?
12 JR: no I don’t agree with that (. )
   ((response continues))

Extract 14

This is taken from BBC’s 9 O’clock News broadcast on the 1st April 1997. It concerns
the economic situation of the country in the light of an independent report and the general election campaign of that year. The studio news-reader is Peter Sissons.

PS: Well I'm joined now by our economics correspondent (.) Ed Crooks and from Westminster by John Sergeant (.) our chief political correspondent (.) Ed (.) the Prime Minister said today all the economic indicators are set extremely fair and now we have this independent research group lobs in a grenade and says (.) not so fast (.) whoever wins power after the next election is going to face some tough economic decisions (.) now who's right?

EC: well I mean it's certainly true to say that at the moment we've got a very mi (.) rare and favourable set of economic conditions (.) if you look at inflation (.) it's low and falling (.) unemployment is low by historical standards (.) recent historical standards and falling as well (.) but (.) what economists say not just these ones producing this report out today but a lot of economists (.) praps being (two syllables) gloomy people (.) they say it can't last ((answer continues))
At first glance extracts thirteen and fourteen seem to have a lot in common. Both extracts entail the studio news-reader citing a statement from a politician and seeking some form of response to it from the interviewee. However the very question itself suggests a difference which is reflected throughout the other extracts cited below; the politician is asked; “do you agree?” (extract 13, line 11) whilst the correspondent is asked “who’s right?” (extract 14, line 12). The politician is being asked to locate or position themselves in relation to the cited other - whilst the correspondent is to adjudicate upon two sources (the Prime Minister and an independent research group) who are themselves in conflict. Thus the politician is being asked to place themselves vis-à-vis a controversial statement such that they could be accountable whether they agree or disagree: should Mr Redwood agree then he has publicly endorsed a criticism of the Prime Ministers decision to sack Norman Lamont whilst his disagreement is rendered accountable at least insofar as the cited other can be seen to oppose it. The correspondent by contrast is commenting upon a dispute - he is being asked not to position himself but to declare the facts of the matter. The very presentation of contrasting opinions (between the Prime Minister and the independent research group) renders the area a disputable domain and acts as a justification for seeking informational clarity outside of the partisan positions reported.

The above comments focus very much on the studio news-reader’s question and could misleadingly imply that it is adequate to explore the exchanges simply in terms of isolated utterances. To do this would be to echo some of the shortcomings of Juckner’s (1986, cited Wilson, 1990) work which highlighted various face threatening acts (FTAs)
in the form of questions which an interviewer can ask of an interviewee. For Juckner this did usefully lead to an appreciation of differences between interviews with politicians, experts and correspondents and did entail some scrutiny of actual questions used but it failed to demonstrate the importance of the surrounding talk context beyond the question itself. An initial indication of the significance of wider talk context can be seen by the ways in which the interviewees treat the question in extracts thirteen and fourteen above. In extract 13 the politician responds by locating themselves personally; “no I don’t agree with that” (line 12). By contrast in extract 14 the correspondent treats the question as soliciting information about the real economic situation and his reply does not mention his personal stance but instead comments upon some of the contrasting evidence and opinion available (lines 13-25).

Taken together extracts thirteen and fourteen illustrate a difference which has been glossed in terms of accountability and which can be partly detected by the questions asked by the interviewer but also by the orientation to those questions by the interviewee. It could be objected that the above extracts illustrate cases of compliance particularly on the part of the politician (extract 13) who responded by positioning himself as requested. However the extracts below suggest that the different positioning of politician and correspondent can be heard even when there is resistance to the questions asked.

(b) Problematising interviewee responses

The second theme of treating the response as problematic includes all the instances of explicitly marking the response as failing to answer the interviewers question, the
reissuing of questions and the use of follow ups in various forms of pursuit. Greatbatch (1988) touched on this issue in his analysis of the turn taking systems used in interviews with politicians; “IRs, particularly in interviews with politicians and other public figures, often challenge, probe, and cast doubt upon the statements of IEs, who, in turn, usually respond by countering and resisting such investigative procedures.” (1988: 405). Some of these procedures could be understood as variations upon what Pomerantz (1984) termed a pursuit. Pomerantz developed the notion of pursuit to cover instances of ‘follow-up’ in everyday conversations when a response was not forthcoming or revealed a misunderstanding or was in some other way interactionally problematic. Thus if in mundane conversation participants note silence on the part of their co-interactant they may pursue a response by attending to possible misunderstandings, or filling in the requisite knowledge which the speaker had previously assumed the recipient to share or by the speaker changing their (perhaps controversial) position. In each of these cases the speaker reads their first utterance as problematic in the light of either a non-response, delayed response or other difficulty marker.

The most famous example of this in recent British television history was news journalist Jeremy Paxman’s interview with the former Home Secretary Michael Howard, broadcast on Newsnight on the 13th May 1997. In this encounter - for which Paxman won a Royal Television Society award - he asked Michael Howard the same question (concerning whether he threatened to overrule the director general of the prison service Derek Lewis) twelve times. Whilst this interview was unusual in the persistence it displayed the pursuit of a response which was involved is a regular feature of interviews with politicians. Extracts fifteen illustrates a relatively frequently occurring example of the studio news-reader’s pursuit of an adequate response whilst extract 16 illustrates one of the few cases found where news-readers use any form of follow-up when interviewing correspondents. A comparison between the two suggests that even in the rare case when a correspondent’s response does receive a follow-up question it is handled differently by
Extract 15

This is taken from BBC’s Nine O’ Clock News broadcast on the 23rd June 1995. Nicholas Witchel is the studio news-reader interviewing a politician who at that time was tipped to be the next Foreign Secretary - Malcom Rifkind.

1 NW: You said er mister Rifkind last month that entering a <single currency would> and I quote (. ) seriously reduce the capacity of the British Government and Parliament to control its own destiny ( . ) now if that is the case ( . ) should we not rule out joining such a currency for the foreseeable future?

9 MR: the Prime Minister’s made clear the position and I think <it’s a very> wise position and that is that you don’t try and rush judgements on these matters (. ) there’ll be a good time to come to a decision on these matters (. ) I don’t think I can improve on the Prime Minister’s own presentation at this point

17 NW: do you think that there should perhaps be a referendum on whether we should join a single currency?

20 MR: we’ve had referendums (. ) the Prime Minister hasn’t excluded that (. ) that clearly is an important question and it’s one the Prime
Minister will be addressing in the Cabinet [and what’s your personal feeling about it?]

MR: well I think tonight what we’re all concentrating on is getting the Prime Minister re-elected with a thumping great majority that’s what the party and the country want it’s what Members of Parliament want. I’ve just come from my own constituency executive unanimously endorsing John Major.

NW: [but of course that’s I think the crucial priority= people are also of course curious about your views on Europe now would you say that you are perhaps rather more sceptical about the European Union than Douglas Hurd?]

MR: [I doubt quite frankly I don’t think my views this evening are particularly relevant the crucial requirement and I’m not going to be deflected from it is to do all we can to ensure a decisive outcome an end to uncertainty about the leadership and ensure that John Major sh gets the leadership support he deserves]

Extract 15 opens with the studio news-reader (Nicholas Witchel) using a quote from the
politician (Malcolm Rifkind) as the basis for a question. This technique can be seen as orientating to issues of neutrality outlined by Clayman (1992) and discussed in chapter two - the premise of the question is overtly positioned as depending upon the claims of another rather than the ‘biases’ of the interviewer and so the interviewer can still appear neutral. However it can also be understood as orientating to questions of accountability. Pomerantz (1988/89) noted a number of different devices which can be used to engender audience scepticism. Amongst the four devices noted Pomerantz included the presentation of contradictory claims by the interviewee. Whilst Pomerantz was focusing primarily on footage shown prior to an interview between news reader and politician - the very act of citing claims made by the interviewee can be understood as sharing some similarities. In particular when a controversial quote is used as in the current example the interviewee is left with the choice of endorsing the quote and thereby aligning with the controversial stance or disagreeing with it and being held accountable for the change in stance.

In extract 15 the politician (Rifkind) neither endorses the quote nor distances himself from it but rather avoids the explicit thrust of the question by commenting upon and endorsing the Prime Minister’s position. This is followed by a more specific question (lines 17-19) regarding a possible referendum - which again the politician responds to by sketching out the Prime Minister’s position. This response is marked as inadequate by the use of a pursuit and by that pursuit being issued whilst the politician was still speaking. In this context the pursuit marks the reply as not addressing the intended focus of the question - this could be contrasted with for example the move to a new question topic which might implicitly suggest that an adequate response has been received. The problematic nature of the politician’s response is further signalled by the way in which the news-reader (Witchel) produces overlapping talk before its completion to pursue a response. This way of taking back the floor (as will be argued later) positions the response for both the interviewee and the audience as not going along the lines that the
question intended. The politician’s response to this is to sketch priorities which he positions as consensual “what we’re all concentrating on” (lines 26 & 27) “that’s what the party and the country want” (lines 29 & 30). In this way the politician makes use of consensus (Edwards & Potter, 1992) suggesting that his focus - in contrast to the studio news-reader’s - is endorsed by many others and hence a reflection of ‘real’ priorities rather than personal agendas. This response is again met with overlapping talk from the studio news-reader who justifies his pursuit of the politician’s personal stance by reference to a vague grouping of consensual others ‘people’; “[but of course (.) people are also of course curious about your views on Europe” (lines 34-37). It is at this point that the politician produces an overlapping response which orientates directly to the line of questioning being pursued and refuses to comply.

Thus extract 15 exemplifies something of the way in which studio news-readers can signal to politicians and audiences that there is something inadequate about the politicians’ responses. This signal can involved reissuing a question and interrupting a ‘problematic’ response in order to do so. But again this is mutually achieved, it is the sequence of; question - response - reissuing of question, which positions the response as problematic rather than any essential feature of the response itself. Likewise it is the politician’s responses to the questions and in this extract his overtly stated refusal to comply which enable us to hear the questions as seeking to establish an accountable position for the politician being interviewed.

Extract 16

This extract is taken from BBC’s Nine O’clock News broadcast on the 3rd April 1997 in the run up to the general election of that year. Michael Buerke is the studio news-reader with Peter Jay as correspondent.

1 MB: well joining me now is Peter Jay (.).

2 our economics editor (. ) Peter can
Labour afford what it’s promised?

PJ: well some things like the VAT cutting VAT on fuel (.) will cost (one syllable) part of billion which in this context is peanuts (.) starting the income tax at ten percent can cost anything from a skyscraping ten billion (.) down to less than nothing depending on how you define it ( (sixteen lines of response omitted) ) it’s really not very difficult once the election is out of the way for either party MB: so what are you saying (.) that Labour’s economic policies don’t actually add up? PJ: it all depends (.) on growth and Labour’s hopes of getting faster long term growth within five years are probably about as romantic as the Tories claims (.) that they have already done so (.) and without faster growth then almost inevitably Labour would either have to increase the tax burden over the next five years even more than Kenneth Clarke already plans in his figures to do ( . ) or they have to disappoint the people who think that a Labour Government will mean extra money for health ( . ) education and things like that and then they risk finding out that they have succeeded in persuading the City and business that they’ve nothing to
fear from Labour only at the price of persuading everybody else (.) they ha that they haven’t much to hope

**MB:** looking at the economic policies in the two manifests that have been published so far you’re struck more by the similarities than the differences (.) is it going to matter economically speaking (.) which of the two parties you vote for?

Of the thirty six interviews between studio news-readers and correspondents explored in this chapter extract 16 alone is the closest to marking a problem with the correspondent’s preceding answer. This occurs in lines 29 and 30 where the studio news-reader follows the correspondent’s reply with “so what are you saying (.) that Labour’s economic policies don’t actually add up?” Taken in isolation it would be possible to hear this as some potentially ‘face threatening act’ - the studio news-reader has formulated version of the correspondent’s response which is potentially controversial and which if assented to could render the correspondent accountable in terms of his failure to appear ‘neutral’ and free from ‘bias’ in his reporting. Furthermore the utterance “so what are you saying” potentially suggests a problem with the preceding turn of the correspondent - requiring revisiting by the studio news-reader for a re-statement. However these glimpses at an isolated question only show part of the picture. The correspondent’s response does not treat the studio news-reader’s question as either face-threatening nor as marking the inadequacy of his previous response. Thus the correspondent does not overtly avoid answering the question, nor does he explicitly state either that he has already answered that question or that he refuses to answer such a question. The correspondent’s response (lines 31-48) centres on sketching out the sorts of conditions which would determine whether or not the Labour’s economic policies add up rather than either justifying,
denying or redefining his own thoughts about them. As such the correspondent positions himself as providing information rather than disclosing an accountable personal position. This in turn is interactionally sanctioned by the studio news-readers next move which is to issue a fresh question (lines 49-54) implicitly treating the preceding response as adequately addressing the former question.

In contrast to the interviews between studio news-readers and politicians those between studio news-readers and correspondents show fewer signs that the interviewer’s question has been inadequately addressed. This is evident both on a simple count which reveals very few cases of any form of pursuit or comment on the adequacy of an answer given but it is also evident in how both interviewer and interviewee orientate to each other’s turns. Thus rather than being able to discern the nature of the interaction simply by seeing or hearing all kinds of connotations from a series of isolated utterances it is possible to explore how the interacting participants treat each others contributions. It is this perspective that illustrates still more sharply that the responses of politicians are treated as problematic (a reading sanctioned in part by the politician’s own response to that ‘treatment’) whereas those of correspondents are positioned as acceptable.

(c) Producing a contestable position for the interviewee

The third area delineated was that of formulating a contestable position. This includes producing a summary or ‘gist’ of the interviewee’s response which accentuates controversial or challengeable features and the various ways in which alternative versions of reality are juxtaposed with those offered by the interviewee. Extracts seventeen, eighteen and nineteen illustrate the way in which this is again more pronounced in interviews involving public spokespersons and politicians rather than those with correspondents.
Extract 17

This extract is taken from Heritage (1985), cited in Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998). The interviewee (C) is the chairperson of the Price Commission and is being questioned about a report on tea prices produced by the commission.

[TVN: Tea]

1 C: What in fact happened was that in the course of last year, hh the price went up really very sharply, hh and uh the blenders did take advantage of this: uh to obviously to raise their prices to retailers. (0.7) hhh They haven’t been so quick in reducing their prices when the world market prices come down. (0.3) hh And so this means that price in the sh- the prices in the shops have stayed up hh really rather higher than we’d like to see them.

10 (0.7)

11 Int: So you- you’re really accusing them of profiteering.

12 C: hhh No they’re in business to make money that’s perfectly sensible.=We’re also saying that uh: hh it’s not a trade which is competitive as we would like it.=There’re four (0.2) blenders which have together eighty five percent of the market .hhh and uh we’re not saying that they (.) move in concert or anything like that but we’d like the trade to be a bit more competitive.=

19 Int: =But you’re giving them: a heavy instruction (.) as it were to (.) to reduce their prices.

22 C: .hh What we’re saying is we think that prices could come down without the blenders losing their profit margins
In extract 17 as Heritage (1985) notes the interviewer produces two formulations which “restate the interviewee’s position” (1985: 110, cited in Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 153). This restatement or gist which is produced emphasises the controversial or newsworthy aspects of the interviewee’s response in some sense making explicit and ‘upgrading’ what was implicit and less controversial. Thus the interviewer is treating the spokesperson’s responses as open to reformulation in more confrontational terms; “So you- you’re really accusing them of profiteering” (line 11). This reformulation is treated as contestable by the spokesperson who resists the interviewer’s version of their position; “.hhh No they’re in business to make money that’s perfectly sensible.=We’re also saying” (lines 12 & 13). Heritage notes that the restatements which the interviewer uses emphasis some form of disagreement or conflict with another party; “...in this case and many others like it, the interviewee is invited to agree to a characterisation of his position that overtly portrays him as critical of, or in conflict with, some third party.” (1985:110, cited Hutchby and Wooffitt, 1998: 153). This ‘positioning’ of the interviewee not only renders their remarks newsworthy or controversial but also as open to question and subject to alternative positions. Extract 18 further exemplifies the juxtaposition of alternatives to the interviewee’s position.

**Extract 18**

*This extract is an excerpt broadcast on the 17th January 1980 and cited by Greatbatch (1992, p278).*

[WAO:17.1.80]

1  **IR:** But how does the government (. ) curb
2
3  inflation which was a central hhhh (. )
4  plank in its election policy: . =
5  **PH:** =It certainly wa:s and it will be:: a:nd
6  what is more the government is determined to
keep down the increase in the supply of money which is the: main determining factor which er- concerns prices,
that's wha-

IR: Mister Radi ce what's your answer to that.

GR: Well of course I don't agree with that,=bu-
er- as the: the: inflation rate has increased by seven per cent since the general election,=and hh much of this in fact about five percent of this is directly, hh attributable to what the government has done. =The fact that they increased.

Extract 18 is from a panel interview which - as Heritage (1992) notes - provides ample opportunity for the juxtaposition of claims. The interviewer can present a controversial or critical claim from a preceding interviewee whilst still appearing to be neutral. As Clayman (1992) noted in cases where all of the disagreeing parties are not physically present they can be cited as having expressed a particular view which challenges those who are present. In extract 18 the interviewer's task is in some sense easier as they can and do simply ask the second participant to respond to the claims of the first “Mister Radi ce what's your answer to that” (lines 10 & 11). The interviewee's response marks the claim as contestable and their own position as different to that of the first speaker “Well of course I don't agree with that,=bu-” (line 12).

The process of juxtaposing speaker claims (exemplified through the use of a panel interview in extract 18 but often achieved by means of citing claims of others) serves to
question the utterances of any one participant. Pomerantz (1988/89) in outlining devices used to engender audience scepticism discusses a range activities entailing actuality footage and correspondent narrative which can raise questions about an interviewee prior to their appearance on a news programme. These devices might entail highlighting ‘observably suspicious’ claims by the interviewee, or showing their claims to be directly contradicted, it could entail as mentioned above reporting on self-contradictory claims by the interviewee or reporting two “facts” with which the interviewee is associated and which are inconsistent with each other. In extract 18 another form of sceptical device can be seen at work and that is the juxtaposition of claims by one person or party with those of another, this device which was implicit in the formulation of ‘gist’ in extract 17, is overtly deployed here. In both instances the interviewees own claims are treated as contestable positions for which alternatives are readily available and explicitly or implicitly identified. A contrast to this pattern is found in extract 19 in which the studio news-reader interviews a correspondent.

**Extract 19**

*This extract is taken from the BBC’s 9 O’clock News broadcast in the UK on the 8th October 1993. The item concerned John Major’s speech at the Conservative Party Conference. The studio news-reader is Martin Lewis and the correspondent is Robin Oakley.*

1 ML: >Our political editor Robin Oakley joins
2 me now from Blackpool< (..) Robin what has
3 today's speech <and this week done> for Mr
4 Major's position and authority
5 RO: Oh it's certainly strengthened his
6 authority(.

((thirteen lines of response deleted))
Mr Major tapped into that vein very successfully and it will put pressure on his rebels at Westminster.

ML: to what extent do you feel that his small (relatively small) Parliamentary majority is really dictated by this swing to the Right?

RO: well he's err he faces >a difficulty all the time with having such a small majority< he has to tack and weave erm because he is forced to give way er >from time to time< to strong dissident groups within the party they have some influence on policy as they have shown over Maastricht over pit closures er er over rail privatisation >a number of issues like that< very difficult for a Prime Minister to look heroic and lead from the front all the time >when he's having to face those kinds of pressures< but the Right tend to be rather stronger than er at Conference than they are back at Westminster er and he's >certainly got a better chance of< >pushing some of those rebels into line< when he gets back

ML: he's he's overcome a difficult Conference but does that mean that err >all his troubles will be over when he gets back to
Westminster< (. ) even if he \textit{can} contain at
least \textit{some} of the rebels ?

\textbf{RO:} NO (. ) I think there \textit{are} plenty of tests
to come (. )

((ten lines omitted))

\textbf{RO:} John Smith and the \textit{Labour} Party are going
to work on (. ) potential Tory dissidents<
over VAT on fuel (. ) err (. ) get at them in
their constituencies trying to get them
to rebel on VAT [so there's=

\textbf{PS:} (Robin

\textbf{RO:} = that battle too=

\textbf{ML:} = thanks very much Robin

Extract 19 exemplifies the closest the studio news-readers get to producing a
reformulation of the correspondent’s response in the thirty six correspondent interviews
explored; “he’s he’s overcome a difficult Conference but does that mean that err (. ) > all
his troubles will be over when he gets back to Westminster< even if he \textit{can} contain at
least \textit{some} of the rebels ?” (lines 45-49). In contrast to the reformulation in extract 17
this ‘gist’ simply takes the reformulation as a premise for a subsequent question. The
reformulation itself does not accentuate controversial implications or rival perspectives
to that of the correspondent, there is no obvious point of dispute identified within the
reformulation nor are other perspectives brought in either through a panel interview or
by the studio news-reader citing competing claims. Furthermore the correspondent’s
subsequent reply is not subject to any follow up or further reformulation but sanctioned
as adequate by closing “thanks very much Robin” (line 69).
In this way across the interview the claims made by the correspondent are not implicitly or explicitly positioned as controversial and open to challenge, nor are they positioned as occupying a nameable perspective on the political world (e.g. representing an identifiable political ideology). This nameless or exnominated quality which marks a difference in the interaction sequences between news-readers and correspondents as compared to politicians can be looked at from Barthes (1973) perspective as providing a point of view which is difficult to challenge. Whilst Fiske (1987) usefully started to draw upon these concepts to make sense of the varied epistemological status’s within news discourse here it is suggested that the ideas can be most fully explored by looking at interaction sequences between participants within an interview situation. How they treat the claims of each other becomes an available resource for participants, analysts, and television news audiences. In this way the interaction sequence itself can be seen as orientating to the status of the participants’ talk.

(d) Interviewer’s floor management

The fourth area outlined was that of floor management - whilst issues of floor delegation have already been touched on earlier in this chapter here the emphasis will be on the use of overlapping talk, interruption and other devices by means of which the studio news-reader takes the floor back or in other ways controls the contributions of the interviewee. It is argued that with the exception of extract 19 above there is a marked tendency for studio news-readers to avoid interrupting correspondents - whilst the interruption of politicians is routine. Instead studio news-readers tend to more overtly communicate the length of turn or ‘available floor’ which the correspondent has in a manner which renders interruption less necessary.

Extract 20

This extract is taken from BBC’s Nine o’clock News broadcast on the 23rd June 1995. The studio News-reader is Nicholas Witchel and the politician is Malcom Rifkind who is
speaking at the time that the serving Prime Minister, John Major stood for re-election of the Conservative Party.

1 NW: and for there to be a decisive contest there has to be a credible challenger doesn’t there?
2 MR: not necessarily (.) I would be delighted if there was a unanimous re-endorsement of John Major (.) but if anyone 
3 does want to stand against him the Prime Minister’s made it clear let them do that and the parliamentary party will come to a 
4 decision an I believe that will be an overwhelming [endorsement
5 NW: (so (.)) so you would say to Norman Lamont forget it Norman (.) it’s not in the 
6 party’s interest (.) it’s not in your interest perhaps to challenge him?
7 MR: I think he should perhaps consult his own Party 
8 workers in his own constituency (.) I suspect they 
9 would give him some pretty good advice and I 
10 just hope he would take it

Extract 21

This extract is taken from Newsnight broadcast on the same evening as extract 20, the 23rd June 1995. The news-reader is Peter Snow and the politician is the Conservative MP Edward Leigh.

1 EL: we’ve got to get to grips with social 
2 security spending (.) welfare dependency’s out 
3 of control (.) so (.) someone like Norman Lamont 
4 (.) or another heavyweight li like that can
articulate those concerns [and in a secret ballot

PS: ] >but could Norman Lamont win<? you see his constituency chairman 

[says today he’s going in to get a <derisory>=

EL: [well I (. ) I wish

PS: ={vote on Sunday

EL: [yes I wish you (. ) you know (. ) there’s no

point asking me questions if you interrupt me (. )

what I’m (. ) what I wanted to end by saying was

a very important point (. ) is that a heavyweight

candidate like Norman Lamont (. ) or somebody of

that stature (. ) can articulate these concerns (. )

and then we will see in a secret ballot what Tory

MPs actually want (. )

Extracts 20 and 21 both illustrate the studio news-reader producing overlapping talk whilst the politician is still speaking. Sacks (1992, vol.2) noted the impact of overlapping talk; “when it happens that two people are talking at the same time in a single conversation, a first thing that happens is that one of them stops.” (1992, vol.2: 45). Whilst Sacks made this claim with regard to everyday conversations Schegloff (1988/89) illustrates the way in which an activity sequence including the instance of overlapping talk within news interviews “embodies and confronts us with more or less general features of talk-in-interaction” (1988/89: 237). Both extracts show the tendency for one speaker to stop talking - more specifically it is the ‘overlapped’ turn of the politician which stops (albeit briefly, as in extract 21). However it is worth noting as Bilmes (1997) points out - that a distinction can be drawn between ‘interruptions’ and overlapping talk. For Bilmes the difference hinges on whether; “participants treat it [the overlapping talk] as a violation of someone’s speaking rights.” (1997: 513). On this
basis the overlapping talk of extract 20 does not constitute an interruption as the studio news-readers turn is not displayed as a violation of the politician’s speaking rights. By contrast the politician in extract 21 makes a direct claim that they are being interrupted and as such the participants appear to orientate to the news-reader’s move as an interruption. Despite this important distinction - both extracts can be seen as instances in which the studio news-reader competes for floor space and does so in a way marks the politicians ‘overlapped’ response as potentially controversial or inadequate.

In extract 20 the overlapping talk takes the form of the production of the ‘gist’ of the politician’s response which in line with earlier considerations emphasises the controversial or challenging aspects of what is being said - in this case reformulating the turn as a criticism of Norman Lamont. Thus the preceding answer is positioned as being ‘glossable’ as a directly critical statement about the possibility of Norman Lamont’s candidature in the leadership election - a position for which alternative perspectives (not least Norman Lamont’s) are readily available. In extract 21 the overlapping talk does not reformulate the politician’s contribution but produces an issue to be addressed - marking the preceding contribution as failing to address the really important issue embodied in the news-reader’s original question. This is disputed by the politician who himself produces overlapping talk - here again the overlapping talk has the effect of stopping the other party (in this case the studio news-reader) from talking. Furthermore - in line with Sack’s (1992, vol.2) comments on the issue - the politician’s complaint about being interrupted is positioned after this second sequence of overlapping talk i.e. the complaint is not produced until only the complaining speaker (the politician) is speaking. In his complaint the politician overtly criticises the interruption and uses a claim to the importance of what he was about to say to justify both his objection to the interruption and his restatement of his interrupted point.

Thus the news-readers’ overlapping talk in extracts twenty and twenty one can both be
heard as taking back the floor in a manner which marks problems with the politicians’ prior responses. In extract 20 formulating the gist marks the politician’s ‘overlapped’ turn as controversial and disputable, whilst in extract 21 the news-reader’s talk marks the response as failing to address an important issue (which is then overtly disputed by the politician). Even when the politician objects to the overlapping talk (as with extract 21) the relevance or importance of his original response is still hearable as open to dispute - because the news-reader has positioned it as such. Furthermore, although the voicing of an objection by the politician can potentially raise questions about the news-reader’s own interview utterances - marking them as disputable - it also clarifies for participants, analysts and audiences that an ‘interruption’ has taken place. Thus whilst this complaint by politicians challenges the ‘right’ of the news-reader to interrupt it makes still more clear that their turn was subject to interruption.

Extract 22

This extract is from BBC’s Nine o’clock News - again from the 23rd June 1995. The studio news-reader is Nicholas Witchel and the correspondent is Robin Oakley.

1 RO: others say that mister Redwood want to show a
2 little bit of extra independence to some of those
3 on the Right to show that he can do something
4 for the Right as well as Michael Portillo and
5 the two don’t particularly get on
6 NW: >and finally Robin briefly< is err >Douglas
7 Hurd’s retirement< a help or a hindrance do
8 you think?
9 RO: overall it’ll help the Prime Minister in the
10 long term if he wins (.) ((reply continues))
Extract 23

This extract is taken from BBC's Nine O Clock News broadcast on the 18th June 1997. The correspondent is Robin Oakley and the studio news-reader is Michael Buerke.

1 RO: there'll be late night work er certainly
2 from both the headquarters to try and swing
3 the last few votes that might just make the
4 difference
5 MB: >Lady Thatcher's been very forthright in her
6 support of William Hague< (.)very briefly (.)
7 er Robin >how much influence< does she still
8 swing with the Party?
9 RO: I think we'll see that her influence has
10 waned (.)) ((reply continues))

Extract 24

This extract is taken from BBC's Nine o'clock News broadcast on the 8th April 1997. The interview between studio news-reader Peter Sissons and correspondent Robin Oakley took place during the run up to the 1997 UK general election at a time when independent candidate Martin Bell was preparing to stand against the sitting Conservative MP Neil Hamilton.

1 RO: and one can see people being drafted in to
2 err work for Martin Bell and the whole
3 thing remaining very high focus
4 PS: >just a< (. ) >just a quick one< (. ) can you
5 think of anything <the Conservatives can do>
6 to focus (. ) to refocus the campaign and
7 prevent the rest of the two (. ) and a half
8 weeks being spent in Tatton
9 RO: all they can do is to continue to focus as
10 they’ve tried to do already (.) on the economy
11 (.) ((reply continues))

In extracts 22 to 24 overlapping talk and interruption are not used but is potentially avoided by the time notification device which the studio news reader employs. In each case the time left is not explicitly stated but is implied in a clause immediately preceding the question: “.and finally Robin briefly,” (extract 22, line 6); “(.) very briefly (.) er Robin” (extract 23, lines 6 & 7); “>just a< (.) >just a quick one<“ (extract 24, line 4). Had the time left been explicitly stated e.g. “we have just one minute left on this item Robin” a number of problems may arise not least that the production aspects of the news would be accentuated potentially making its editorial and news construction aspects more evident and hence disputable, furthermore such a statement may be heard as a command to the correspondent and undermine some of the overtly displayed affinity or tie-signs considered earlier. Instead the time notification device is less overtly hearable in its own right and instead forms part of a question turn by the studio news-reader. Yet its presence has the effect of implying to the audience that the response will be brief and more important for the current concern it lessens the possibility that the correspondent will overrun the time allowed. By reducing the chance of exceeding the time available the possibility of an interruption is reduced - this could be understood as important because although such an interruption may be prompted merely by time constraints (as appears to be the case in extract 19) it may be hearable as denoting some potential problem with the correspondent’s interrupted turn.

(e) Interviewee’s problematising of questions asked by the interviewer
The fifth theme was that of interviewees problematising the questions posed by the interviewer extracts 25, 26 and 27 provide illustrations of this below. These are
contrasted with extract 28 which from the thirty six correspondent interviews explored is
the nearest example to a correspondent problematising a studio news-reader’s question.

Extract 25

This extract is taken from Channel Four News broadcast on the 13 April 1997, in the
run-up to the 1997 UK general election. The studio news-reader Jon Snow is
interviewing Labour MP and spokesperson on Trade and Industry Margaret Beckett, the
interview covered the issue of union recognition.

1 MB: that seems to us to be quite straightforward
2 and eminently justifiable
3 JS: and what will the penalties be if a company
4 persistently refuses to recognise (. ) a work
5 force (. ) who seeks to to join a union and
6 takes a vote of more than fifty percent to do it?
7 MB: well you’re now asking me to sar start to pre­
8 judge what will be the detail of the legislation
9 (. ) and I think it’s just a fraction early to do
10 that (. ) err (. ) the election hasn’t even been
11 held yet (. ) but what I think is quite clear is
12 that (. ) we’re looking to a new era (. ) both in er
13 constructive partnership between er British
14 business and a potential Labour Government (. )
((reply continues without reference to penalties
for non-compliant companies))

Extract 26

This extract is taken from Channel Four News broadcast on the 23rd June 1995, at the
time when Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd had resigned and the then Prime Minister
John Major had invited his challengers to stand against him in a party leadership election. The studio news-reader is Jon Snow who is interviewing the Conservative MP Edward Leigh.

1  EL: I think that this resignation is probably
2    irrelevant to this campaign because Douglas
3    Hurd was coming to the end of his career anyway
4    and it’s discounted (. ) we knew he was going
to resign (. ) I don’t think that mister
5    Major can replace him with a Eurosceptic [so I
6  JS:    [can he
do anything to to put mister Lamont off his stride?
7  EL:    well I think you must ask mister Lamont that (. )
8    I mean I’m not here as mister Lamont’s spokesman
9    (. ) err (. ) but err (. ) you must ask him
10   [that question
11  JS:    [despite catching you on the end of our lens
12    with him on the terrace of err the House
13    of [Commons
14  EL:    [well it’s no longer a crime is it to (. ) to
15    have a drink with a friend and a colleague
16  JS:    now is he going to stand? should he stand? do
17    you want him to stand?
18  EL:    I’m not going to get into the business of naming
19    (. ) names but what I will say to you is that
20    mister Major has called (. ) called this
21    leadership election

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Extract 27

This extract - like extract 26 above - is taken from Channel Four News broadcast on the 23rd June 1995. The studio news-reader is Jon Snow who is interviewing the Conservative MP Tony Newton. This exchange turns on the apparent lack of endorsement of the then Prime Minister John Major by the Welsh Secretary at the time John Redwood.

1    TN: well (. ) a statement has been issued making it
2    clear that John Redwood supports the Prime
3    Minister you can’t get clearer than that (. )
4    [now (syllables) I (. ) I accept
5    JS: [well except that somebody else has come out
6    and said it (. ) he says he’ll make it clearer
7    on Monday (. ) he needs two more days
8    TN: well I’m saying to you that this is a very clear
9    cut statement of John Redwood’s support for the
10   Prime Minister (. ) now I understand why you
11   have to engage in this kind of questioning
12   because it’s the kind of thing that (. ) that
13   helps you to make this kind of interview (. ) but
14   here is the statement and if you like I will read
15   it out
16   JS: well I (. ) I’m deeply grateful (. ) thanks very
17   much indeed mister Newton (. ) very good of you
18   to come in (. )

Extracts 25, 26 and 27 reveal a wealth of potential analytic material - here the focus will be narrowed to consider some of the ways in which the politicians problematise the questions asked by the studio news-reader. Each extract delineates a different basis on
which the studio news-reader’s question is problematised. Thus in extract 25 the question is glossed as asking about “the detail of the legislation (.)” (line 8) which is rendered inappropriate by juxtaposing it with a formulation of the timing of the question “and I think it’s just a fraction early to do that (. ) err (. ) the election hasn’t even been held yet (. )” (lines 9-11). Construing the question as being about “details” and juxtaposing that with a less disputable claim that the “election hasn’t even been held yet” positions the question as premature asking a level of detail which no-one could realistically be expected to provide at this stage. Responding to the question in this way acts as a justification for the politician’s subsequent response which makes no reference to the specific topic which was asked about - but it also allows the studio news-reader’s question to be heard as ‘problematic’.

In extract 26 it is not the detail and timing of the question which is marked as problematic but rather the addressee as the politician claims that the question should be asked of someone else;

9   EL:    well I think you must ask mister Lamont that (. )
10      I mean I’m not here as mister Lamont’s spokesman
11      (. ) err (. ) but err (. ) you must ask him
12      [that question

Here the politician (Edward Leigh) construes the news-reader’s question as not only better asked of Mr Lamont but also as positioning him as Mr Lamont’s spokesman - a footing which he explicitly denies. The studio news-reader produces overlapping talk which attempts to justify treating Edward Leigh as Mr Lamont’s spokesman;

12      [that question
13   JS:    [despite catching you on the end of our lens
This piece of talk could be seen of as orientating to several activities at once. First it provides an account for treating Edward Leigh as a spokesman for Mr Lamont. Second, together with Edward Leigh’s earlier denial about being Mr Lamont’s spokesman it constitutes a dispute over the footing status of Edward Leigh - that is who he can and cannot speak on behalf of is a matter of debate between news-reader and politician. Third, the justificatory remark of the studio news-reader (lines 13-15) renders the overlapped response (lines 9-12) an objection of some kind. This third point is particularly important for our current concerns because it illustrates that the way in which how participants and audiences hear a remark can hinge upon the treatment or response it receives. The question was treated as problematic by Edward Leigh’s response - this was treated as an objection in the news-reader’s act of justification. In this way the action orientation or functions orientated to in dialogue can be seen as not merely inherent within isolated utterances but as mappable across conversational sequences. This provides an analytic basis for claims - thus the analyst can (to some extent) take utterances to be the sorts of acts they are treated as being by participants. But it also suggests that what utterances actually achieve in terms of positioning participants (and the ‘epistemological’ status of their discourse) for each other and audiences can be seen as a co-constructed achievement. Extracts 26 and 27 above suggest that it is not the inherent property of the news-reader’s question alone which might position it as reasonable or problematic but that the treatment it receives from interviewees which can be key. The interviewee may implicitly endorse a question by merely responding - which in the overwhelming majority of cases is how correspondents respond - or as shown above they may position the question as inappropriate or illegitimate in some sense by non-co-operation or a direct challenge regarding its assumptions.
Extract 27 provides another illustration of this collaborative positioning of news-readers’ questions. In this extract the politician makes a move which is often used to undermine ‘rival’ versions of reality - that is he makes an attribution of stake or interest. This notion which was touched on briefly in chapter two when considering the ‘context of sceptical readings of political speech draws upon the work of Edwards and Potter (1992) who note that competing versions of reality can be undermined by suggesting that they are produced because of the aims, intentions and rhetorical needs of the speaker rather than the actual occurrence of the events they purport to describe. Edwards and Potter explore this device by reference to an extract from the parliamentary transcripts Hansard in which the then Chancellor of the Exchequer Nigel Lawson sought to undermine journalists’ account of a controversial policy (involving changes to benefits payable to old age pensioners) he is said to have raised in an ‘off-the-record’ briefing. In attempting to discredit the account which several different newspapers provided of his briefing the Chancellor produced the following account;

Extract 28


Mr Lawson: I am grateful to my hon. Friend. In fact, the statements, as I said - the statements that appeared in the press on Sunday bore no relation whatever to what I in fact said. What I have said to them [the reporters] is that, while we were absolutely, totally committed to maintaining -

Ms Clare Short (Birmingham, Ladywood): They will have their shorthand notes.

Mr Lawson: Oh yes, they will have their shorthand notes and they will know it, and they will know they went behind afterwards and they thought there was not a good enough story and so they produced that. They will know that I said that, while ...
As Edwards and Potter (1992) note there are a variety of rhetorical moves which can be identified in the above passage including the way in which the journalists’ consensus - potentially suggesting the facticity of their account - is reworked and undermined as some form of collusion “they went behind afterwards”. However what is particularly important for our current concerns is the implied motivation behind the version of events which the journalists produced; “and they thought there was not a good enough story and so they produced that.”. Edwards and Potter (1992) argue that this positions the journalists story as being “a product of their interests” (1992: 116) - their account is constructed as a mere reflection of their need to produce a ‘good story’. One rhetorically powerful aspect of this particular attribution of stake or vested interest is that reference to the motivation to get a ‘good story’ accounts for the headline grabbing or controversial aspects expressed within the story. Thus the very controversy surrounding Lawson’s proposals and the critical attention it attracted is easily construed as a ‘good story’ and is thus potentially reworkable as the product of journalists’ intentions to produce that sort of journalism regardless of what was said. Furthermore, the attribution of vested interests has as Edwards and Potter (1992) suggest an especially robust rhetorical feature; “Such undermining accounts are particularly difficult to rebut because any rebuttal can itself be heard as produced by the very same interests that underpinned the original account. That is, rebuttals are always vulnerable to Mandy Rice-Davies’ celebrated courtroom rejoinder: ‘he would [say that], wouldn’t he?’” (1992: 116 & 118).

In extract 27 the politician problematises the studio news-reader’s line of questioning by suggesting that it is motivated out of journalistic needs. Whilst there is not specific mention of the vested interests which the studio news-reader has in producing a ‘good story’ a very similar implication is made;

8 **TN:** well I’m saying to you that this is a very clear
9 **cut statement of John Redwood’s support for the**
Prime Minister (. ) now I understand why you have to engage in this kind of questioning because it's the kind of thing that (. ) that helps you to make this kind of interview (. ) but here is the statement and if you like I will read it out

JS: well I (. ) I'm deeply grateful (. ) thanks very much indeed mister Newton (. ) very good of you to come in (. )

In lines 8-15 the politician produces a formulation of the motives behind the questions of the studio news-reader by suggesting that “this kind of questioning .. helps you to make this kind of interview”. The questions are thus positioned as helping the studio news-reader in their need to produce a particular form of interview. The politician’s formulation of this challenge positions his own remarks as reflecting understanding rather than mere partisan disputation “now I understand” (line 10). Furthermore, he suggests that the news-reader is not choosing to be difficult but is constrained by their journalistic requirements “now I understand why you have to engage in this kind of questioning” (lines 10 & 11). In this way the politician positions their own remark such that they are less easily dismissed as merely ‘attacking the interviewer’ or ‘being defensive’ as they have the overt form of suggesting an some form of understanding regarding the interviewee’s predicament or journalistic constraints. As the constraints are implicitly journalistic they are hearable as quite different to the sorts of priorities and concerns which the news audience may be taken to have. In this way in extract 27 the politician problematises the studio news-reader’s question by implying that it does not reflect the pursuit of an issue which is important because of ‘the reality of the situation’ nor any sense of the public or even national interest (an area which chapter six explores) but that the questioning merely reflects the (narrow) journalistic constraints within which
the news-reader is operating.

More generally extract 27 with extracts 25 and 26 the features of a politician problematising the question or questions issued by the studio news-reader. In exploring these extracts it has been argued that the treatment of the studio news-reader's question can be important in terms of how the question and indeed interactional sequence is heard by participants and audience. Each of these extracts has emphasised the way in which the politician's response can treat the preceding question as doing something which is somehow flawed; asking for too much detail too early on, asking a question of the wrong person or asking out of journalistic constraints rather than a set of priorities which the audience share. Whilst these are clearly readable as orientated to accountability issues (an area which will be looked at further in chapter six) they can also be seen as to some extent undermining the objective and authoritative status of the studio news-reader's discourse. Rather than being a reflection of an in-depth knowledge and dispassionate engagement with social reality the news-readers' questions are positioned by such responses as inappropriate, displaying a lack of awareness of the situation and a concern with narrow journalistic priorities. This (as extract 29 shows) contrasts very much with the way in which correspondents treat studio news-readers' questions.

**Extract 29**

*This extract is taken from BBC's Newsnight broadcast on the 5th July 1995 amidst a Cabinet reshuffle in the Conservative Government in the UK. Francine Stock is the studio news-reader and is interviewing the correspondent Mark Mardell.*

1 FS: well it took seven hours between the first
2 Cabinet member being summoned and the final
3 list of the changes being announced today (.)
4 time enough for the rumour mill to go into
overdrive on just about everything (.) from
the alleged fury of Right wing rebels (.) to
whispers of a leadership stitch up between
Messrs Major and Heseltine (.) to separate
fact from fiction I’m joined from Westminster
by Mark Mardell (.) mark (.) what do the
Right really make of the reshuffle?

MM: I think many on the Right are doing their best
to be loyal (.)

FS: but you don’t think there’s any truth in the
idea that there was some kind of deal (.) some
kind of stitch up between Heseltine and Major

MM: well you said I was going to separate fact
from fiction and I I don’t really think I hrm
I wish I could (.) but it’s very difficult
when there’s so much rumour going around (.)

((reply continues for 14 lines illustrating
speculations on a possible deal))

From the thirty six interviews with correspondents which were explored extract 29
comes the closest to any sort of critical comment upon a question posed by the studio
news-reader. Indeed it constitutes the only instance of a direct comment by a
correspondent on a question which the news-reader asked of them. In the overwhelming
majority of interactions between studio news-readers and correspondents the
correspondents restrict their responses to addressing the questions raised by the
interviewer. The routine nature of this practice in which an answer simply complies with
the preceding question can lead to its significance being overlooked. Yet it is precisely
this sort of routine, everyday occurrence which Sacks (1992) was particularly skilled at addressing - pointing out the intricate interactional work which was attended to in the most mundane of exchanges. One feature of the correspondents’ tendency to ‘simply answer’ can be drawn out by contrast with the examples of problematising news-readers’ questions considered above. By responding to the questions without questioning their appropriateness or motive the correspondents implicitly sanction the questions positioning them as free from voiceable objections. Across the sequence between news-reader and correspondent this produces a hearable degree of co-operation further suggesting that neither party is making claims or acting out of motives which the other (and implicitly the audience) can reasonably object to.

Although extract 29 is exceptional it is worth considering in order to clarify the extent to which the correspondent does problematise the studio news-readers’ utterances - of particular importance is the point at which the correspondent makes reference to the news-reader’s remark;

33 MM: well you said I was going to separate fact
34 from fiction and I I don’t really think I hrm
35 I wish I could (. ) but it’s very difficult
36 when there’s so much rumour going around (. )
37 (reply continues for 14 lines illustrating
speculations on a possible deal))

At first glance the correspondent’s remark could be seen as raising some form of problem regarding the studio news-reader’s claim that the correspondent was there to “separate fact from fiction”. The correspondent treats the remark as worthy of comment and denies that he can fulfil that role. To this extent the extract seems to undermine the argument that the sequences of interaction between studio news-reader and
correspondent serve to warrant or corroborate the neutrality and objectivity of both participants. However on closer inspection the correspondent’s problematisation can be seen as quite different to those of politicians considered earlier. First, it is noticeable that the correspondent’s comments come some time after the remark was made by the studio news-reader. This delay in itself is hearable as suggesting that the correspondent did not have an intense reaction to the utterance and can be contrasted with the earlier examples in which the politicians immediately problematised studio news-readers’ claims. Second, coupled with the delay the content of the correspondent’s utterance suggests that it is the nature of the facts being reported upon that make it difficult to separate fact from fiction. Thus the correspondent is not immediately rejecting this depiction of his role nor in his response challenging the studio news-reader’s depiction but instead suggesting that he would like to be able to separate fact from fiction; “I wish I could” (line 35) but that events preclude this possibility; “there’s so much rumour going around” (lines 35 & 36). Finally it is worth noting that these comments are not treated as objections to answering the question asked by either the correspondent or the studio news-reader. Thus the news-reader does not reissue, justify or redefine the question (as was the case in extract 26) - likewise the correspondent does not cease giving a response - but continues to produce a fairly extensive answer. Furthermore in this response the correspondent does not make an overt departure from the question asked - which was found to be the case in extract 26, (lines 20 & 21); “I’m not going to get into the business of naming () names but what I will say to you is ...”; nor do they covertly avoid the topic of the question (as in extract 25).

Extract 29 suggests that even in the solitary case of the correspondent commenting upon a studio news-reader’s remark there is far less sense of it being problematised than with parallel instances involving politicians. Instead by complying with the questions issued by studio news-readers correspondent’s can be heard as to some extent legitimising or warranting both question and questioner. In turn the studio news-reader can be seen to
withhold any problematising comment upon the utterances of the correspondent. These observations suggest that the apparently mundane occurrence of a correspondent simply answering the question asked of them can be understood as marking a difference in the sequences found between news-reader and politician. Further this difference is such that the interaction between news-reader and correspondent can be heard as ‘bestowing epistemological resources’ upon both participants in a manner which is not found in news-reader-politician encounters.

3.6 Chapter Summary
To some extent this chapter could be seen as pursuing Fiske’s (1987) agenda of explicating the means by which television news can appear ‘objective’ and ‘authoritative’. Indeed, much of the focus has entailed revisiting Fiske’s concerns with immediacy, location and exnomination. The chapter has also followed up some of the issues in the work of Livingstone and Lunt (1994) regarding the idea that the ‘expertise’ of participants on audience discussion programmes is attended to both by their audiences and on the programmes themselves. However the approach taken in this chapter has involved close attention to a relatively wide range of actual instances of talk between news-readers and correspondents - with some consideration of how this might differ from the talk between news-readers and politicians. The perspective taken here has displayed some sympathy with Sacks’s (1992) concept of utterances being ‘designed with the recipient in mind’. Here the ‘recipient’ could include the indirect addressees - or television audience - as well as the interview participants themselves.

From this perspective it was argued that even the act of naming the correspondent could be approached as multi-faceted. It was suggested that the way in which news-readers viewed correspondents attended to the question of ‘addressivity’ (displaying who the direct recipient is) and at the same time connoted what Goffman (1971) termed a ‘tie-sign’, or, relationship between news-reader and correspondent. Furthermore, the news-
reader's reference to the time and place from which the correspondent spoke was approached in the light of Schegloff's (1972a) work as a skilful construction which emphasised the immediacy of the correspondent’s report and their proximity to the 'key' events. Thus each of these features of the introductory sequence was seen as serving to *favourably position* the talk of the correspondent such that it could be heard by the television audience as produced by a news-team member, ‘as it happens’ and close to the events being reported on.

However, focusing on the introductory sequences alone leaves to one side the co-construction of ‘impartiality’ and ‘authoritativeness’ - that is the way in which the interaction between news-reader and correspondent can serve to mutually position the participants' dialogue. Some indication of the importance of the interview sequence itself is present in the work of Clayman and Whalen (1988/89) who saw interviewee compliance as helping to construct the ‘neutralistic stance’ of the interviewer. Here again the interest was not in the actual degree of impartiality or bias - but rather the devices through which the dialogue might *appear* ‘unbiased’ and ‘authoritative’. This chapter echoed work implicit in Livingstone and Lunt (1994) and outlined in Clayman and Whalen (1988/89) in suggesting that the ‘epistemological status’ of broadcast talk can be seen to depend on the interactional sequence of talk rather than merely on particular, isolated utterances. However, whilst Clayman and Whalen (1988/89) focused on politicians’ observance of interview form - arguing that this bestowed ‘neutrality’ upon the interviewer - in this chapter the focus was broadened to consider a range of interactional features which distinguished interviews involving politicians from those with correspondents. It was argued that news-readers are inclined to hold politicians to account, to problematise their responses and to produce alternatives to the versions of reality which the politicians themselves produced - features which were all orientated to differently with correspondents. Even the issue of floor delegation was found to differ between politicians (who were more likely to have the floor unilaterally taken away from
them through overlapping and interrupting talk) and correspondents who were notified of the available time or ‘floor’ for their response.

In addition to the idea that the news-reader through their interaction ‘positioned’ the discourse of the correspondent it was also argued that the reverse could be true. Thus politicians’ propensity to problematise the questions they are asked could be understood as to some extent challenging studio news-readers’ impartiality or expertise - whilst correspondents’ compliance with the questions could be seen as endorsing it. More generally, across all of the interviews it was argued that each participant in responding to their co-participant’s utterances - positioned them in a particular way. Thus a response to an utterance may mark it as a controversial claim or an accurate version of reality. In this way the interaction itself becomes crucial - it marks the preceding utterances as hearably doing a particular sort of thing. This is available for participants in the midst of interaction and for analysts attempting to specify the action taking place - but it is also available for the over-hearing television audience. Thus the way in which news-reader and correspondent treat each other’s utterances is available as a tool through which the audience can have a sense of what sort of remark has taken place. If the news-reader responded to the correspondent’s remarks by providing a rival report then the correspondent has hearably offered a contentious version of events for which alternatives are available. Yet because correspondent and news-reader do not problematise each other’s utterances they are less readily ‘heard’ as problematic.

In this way the chapter has sought to use attention to interactional detail to address some of the broad issues which Barthes (1973) raised about the concept of exnomination being related to understandings of truth. Here it has been argued that it is across the sequence of interaction that processes akin to nomination and exnomination can be most clearly identified. Thus it is argued that the ‘authoritativeness’ and ‘objectivity’ of the news can be seen as a collaborative activity. The introduction of the correspondent and the way in
which news-reader and correspondent orientate to each other's utterances works not to
question but to reinforce the apparent truthfulness of their discourse.
Chapter Four; The various constructions of identity by news audiences

4.1 Chapter Overview
As the introduction to this thesis indicated media studies has tended to give little regard to audiences’ talk itself. Whilst talk has featured as a tool for analysis it has rarely been a focal point. Thus it has been touched on as displaying the phenomena of interest (such as the influence of social positioning, the ‘meanings’ which audiences ‘make’ regarding media and their media-orientated behaviour) rather than being the phenomena of interest. This chapter draws upon the work of both Bakhtin and Billig (1992) to suggest that audiences talk regarding their relationship to televised politics or their ‘viewer identity’ is a crucial aspect of interview discourse and that participants construct identities in the midst of meeting interactional requirements. Thirteen interviews were conducted with a total of nineteen participants each of whom watched a video segment of the Nine O’Clock News. Analysis of the interviews demonstrates that claims about the consumption of politics on the television, awareness of bias and impressionability were found to vary within individual participants according to the immediate dialogic context. It is argued that this variation problematises the tendency in much of media studies to rely on abstracted utterances to map out fixed essences of viewer identity. The very occurrence of variation problematises which utterance is selected as representative of a participant’s ‘viewer identity’ - furthermore it suggests that the talk could be explored in terms of the activity it accomplishes rather than the aspects of reality it refers to. This possibility of approaching audience-participants’ talk as activity orientated and tailored to talk sequences is touched on in this chapter and developed with regard to ‘contrasts’ in talk in chapter 5.

4.2 Background Literature
As some of the literature in the introduction suggested audiences’ talk about their meanings, attitudes or behaviour (what is glossed here as ‘viewer identity’) has been of
indirect importance in reception analytic and ethnographic research. For Morley (1980) talk was important as a means of assessing the impact of social context on audiences ‘readings’ of Nationwide. Thus the talk was treated almost as a dependent variable - it was equated with participants’ relations to the programme and understood as a consequence of their social positioning. The idea of variation within individuals’ talk was almost entirely ignored - whilst variation within groups of participants was taken as an interesting feature of that particular group and again related to issues of social positioning. For Morley, then, talk was a gauge from which audiences’ responses to television programmes could be noted and calibrated with the social group to which they were assigned. Considerable faith was placed in talk as providing accurate readings of audiences’ engagement and this itself was presumed to be relatively stable. Contradiction or variation tended to be seen as mere fluctuations around a reasonably determinate centre.

Ethnographic research to some extent paid more attention to local context than Morley’s early development of reception analytic research had done. In ethnographic research audiences were less often assigned to groups which reflected shared social categories and were instead frequently observed and interviewed at their own home on their own or with family members. Research in this tradition paid some attention to the details of when, where and with whom television was watched (Lull, 1980, Hobson, 1982 and Morley, 1986). Furthermore, as Moores (1993) and Morley’s (1992) more recent reflections suggest the analysis can be rather less rigidly framed in terms of participants’ social positions. Moores (1993) cites a passage from an interview (with a participant referred to as ‘Dave’) which formed part of his research into participants’ meanings regarding satellite television;

“When I’m watching Sky - because it’s from a European satellite - and when I’m looking at some of the other continental stations that are available, I very much
get the sense of being a European. A lot of channels are an hour ahead, they’re on European time. If you’re just channel-hoping, which is a bit of a sport for me - buzzing round eight or nine stations to see what’s going on - you do get the feeling of not being restricted in the good old British way. It’s quite something when you can sit down in your own front room and watch what’s on in another country.” (Moores, 1993: 110).

In his comments Moores draws from the talk a picture of the identities which are being drawn upon; “... I was genuinely surprised by Dave’s statement of identification. The opposition he constructs here between restriction and mobility is mapped on to another distinction in which ‘Britishness’ and ‘Europeanness’ are contrasted (‘not being restricted in the good old British way’). Even if his viewing pleasures take the form of a ‘touristic grazing’, it remains the case that satellite TV is helping him travel to new places and to re-imagine the boundaries of community. Of course, the image spaces produced by communications technology cannot reshape national subjectivities on their own. Only when those audio-visual territories are articulated with existing situations and discourses can a fiction like Europe be ‘realised’ by certain groups of people.” (1993: 110, 111).

Without wanting to dismiss the contribution of Moores (and indeed other reception analytic and ethnographic researchers) it is worth noting that the treatment of talk itself is still potentially problematic. The transcribed utterance which Moores draws upon although reasonably long does not show any interaction on the part of the interviewer. The impression given is that the interviewer made minimal contributions whilst Dave was talking and this has not been transcribed. This in itself treats acknowledgement tokens as unimportant and discardable - a point challenged in conversation analytic literature (Schegloff, 1982). Furthermore, there is no clear indication of the talk context - what was said prior to Dave’s turn - was a question asked? - what occurred after the
passage which has been reported on? Finally, one could question whether there were
other utterances in which Dave attenuates the ‘European identity attained by satellite
television viewing’ which Moores has noted from the above passage. If there were such
variation one could draw upon it to consider the talk not merely as reporting upon an
identity but accomplishing interactional work - that is the construction of ‘identity’
skilfully attends to the unfolding talk context.

One somewhat incomplete take on the notion of talk orientating to context is offered
from an impression management perspective. Here talk is seen as sometimes constructed
so as to produce a positive rather than an accurate impression of the participant. Some
work which has contemplated this possibility understands the activity orientation of
audiences talk as a stumbling block, a distortion which obfuscates their actual attitudes
and activity. An illustration of this tendency is found in Hagen's (1994) research into
news consumption patterns which includes a self-critical reflection that whilst his less
educated interviewees appeared 'honest' their educated counterparts may have been less
so and perhaps conjured an impression of themselves as 'ideal' news viewers. Implicit in
this particular version of impression management is the idea that all viewers are assumed
to be unproblematically aware of their actual viewing practices but some chose to
produce a picture which is a self conscious distortion in an effort to create an impression
of being an 'ideal', (or critically aware), news viewer.

Yet, the impression management perspective itself is a rather limited conception of
activity. Its deployment by Hagen suggested a limitation in prevalence - it was just some
of the news audiences (the educated ones) who engaged in talk which was attempting to
do interactional work (impress the interviewer). More broadly impression management
emphasises one activity - impressing others - and occasionally hints at the idea that this
is a conscious departure from an accurate 'true' report on self which could be produced.
The discursive approach adopted here questions the concept that there is such a readily
available single version of self or identity which participants can draw upon. It also leaves to one side questions of what is or is not occurring cognitively. Furthermore it emphasises something of the range of activities which talk can orientate to depending crucially on the surrounding talk context. From this perspective variation in participants' talk about their 'viewer identity' becomes a tool for pointing out the way in which their utterances are sensitive to the immediate, changing talk context.

These themes have some resonance with the work of Bakhtin (cited Dentith, 1995, Holquist, 1990, Morris, 1994, Morson, 1986, and Shotter, 1992) and Billig (1992). Bakhtin provides a perspective from which it is possible to critique the notion of a solid, fixed, mental self or identity lying 'beneath' the words we utter. Thus, Shotter drew upon Bakhtin's work to argue that our selves might indeed be viewable as the consequence rather than the cause of what we say; "many of our "inner" mental activities are only given form at the time of their expression, in a moment by moment process" (Shotter, 1992, p.11). These tantalising ideas suggest that self or 'identity' can be understood as constituted in language a theme which is cogently expressed in Tannen's rhetorical question; "is it correct to see language as expressing an identity which is separate from and prior to language?" (cited in Wooffitt, 1992, p194).

Billig's (1992) analysis of participants' talk about media coverage of the Royal Family. Like Hagen (1994) Billig (1992) found that some of the participants in his study depicted themselves as active, critical consumers of the media. However, rather than understanding such constructions as either straightforward reports upon actual activity or distortions from the truth Billig interpreted them as representing "moral methodologies" a means by which the participants could construct their values about how the media should be consumed. Thus Billig's (1992) perspective suggests that our understanding of the construction of viewer identity can be enhanced by paying attention to the interaction orientated nature of interviewees' responses. Although it would be
possible to suggest that Billig too could have further emphasised the importance of surrounding talk context - in his analysis he provides a perspective which enables interviews to be read as entailing live dialogic activity rather than purely a reading off from some fixed, separate, pre-formed mental image.

This perspective on participants' talk about their 'viewer identity' allows sense to be made of the contradictions which talk about self and others can be found to contain, (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Edwards and Potter, 1992, Antaki & Widdicombe, 1998). Rather than glossing over contradictions by picking up on one utterance and ignoring other discrepant ones, or, treating contradiction as a distinctive feature of the individual - the talk itself can be reconceptualised as an activity rather than a mere reporting. Approached in this way the apparent contradiction can be thought of as orientating to the changing talk sequence in which it occurs - that is it can be seen as skilfully enacting rather than merely reporting upon a static property of 'viewer identity'.

4.3 Data and analytic approach

(a) Data

The data for both chapters 4 and 5 draws upon a corpus of thirteen open ended interviews conducted with a total of nineteen participants who were interviewed either on their own or along with one or two known others. The interviews typically took place in the participants' home and each commenced with a video screening of a political item drawn from a recent episode of the Nine O' Clock News. Interviews proceeded in an unstructured manner by way of general questions about the means by which the participants assessed the veracity of claims made by both politicians and the news itself, discussions which arose between participants were, as far as possible, allowed to flourish. Each interview was tape recorded and passages were subsequently transcribed.
Beyond the gloss which has been given above the provenance of the main extracts used in chapters 4 and 5 can be variously constructed - indeed a variety of analysts’ categories could be used to contextualise the data. Thus it is possible to think of the extracts as arising from interviews in which participants were shown a videoed piece of recent BBC television news and then asked how they made sense of the competing claims found on the news. Another gloss on context would be to note the interesting time period in terms of UK politics the interviews were conducted in the first half of 1994 a time when the Conservative Government was unpopular and which saw the last weeks of John Smith’s leadership of the Labour Party and the first of Tony Blair’s. Other aspects of context could be constructed as relevant for example the extracts could be differentiated in terms of whether the participants are known to the interviewer or not and whether they are interviewed alone or with friends. Further glosses on differing categories could include references to the participants’ age, socio-economic status, ethnic identity and gender (which is often implied in the analysis of the extracts). The difficulty with relying too much on categorisations and glosses of context is that as Edwards (1998) and Schegloff (1997) note they can remain as analysts’ glosses on what is important for which alternatives are always available. A second problem is that the glosses can lead to crude conceptions of context replacing a more sensitive analysis of the context - created by and orientated to - in the participants’ talk.

These considerations lead to an emphasis in the current chapter not so much on an analyst’s conception of ‘what the talk is about’ or ‘how to categorise the participants’ but to an attempt to render transparent the actual observable surrounding talk context to which participants can demonstrably be seen to orientate. Yet this appeal to demonstrable members orientation – with its connotations of democracy and empiricism is open to legitimate challenge. In particular it could be argued that the analyst still decides what to focus upon and what to leave out, still employs analytic concepts, (Wetherell, 1998) and that the analyst’s rhetoric is open to debate rather than being a neutral depiction of reality,
Whilst keeping this narrow conception of context it is worth noting that the way in which the interview context played out in the talk could be seen as shaping the utterances. In that light some of the extracts used in the current chapter could be considered as orientating to accountability issues - perhaps made all the more acute by the predominantly one way flow of questions from the interviewer, by the very type of questions where accountability is hearable as a more explicit issue (e.g. “How do you make sense of it?” rather than “How was it yesterday?”) and by the overt tape recording of their answers. Certain of these concerns are highlighted by Hutchby & Wooffitt (1998) who problematise over-reliance on monologic unstructured one to one interviews and indicate the usefulness of ‘naturally occurring’ data. Orientating to such issues it is worth noting (notwithstanding the problematic nature of such glosses and of defining ‘natural’) that extracts 5 and 6 involved an interview with two friends and in chapter 5 there is further use of supplementary material and sequences of discussion between participants.

(b) Analytic Approach

The analysis of the resultant transcripts focused on three aspects of participant's constructions of their viewer identity; their interest in watching televised political coverage, their awareness of bias and their impressionability. Attention was paid to the specific formulation of viewer identity which was offered at particular points within the interview. In line with a variety of discourse analytic approaches, (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, Wetherell and Potter, 1992, Burman & Parker, 1993), contradictions and tensions within a participant's talk were used as a tool for explicating the various functions towards which the participants may have been orientating at different points in the interview. Thus variation in the construction of ‘viewer identity’ within any one interview was used as a means of exploring the occasioned nature and functional deployment of identity construction. In this way the approach taken placed particular
emphasis on exploring participants’ talk as activity-orientated moves which attended to
the particulars of the surrounding talk context.

4.4 Analysis

(a) Interest in watching televised political coverage

Had the interviews been understood as straightforward reports upon actual activity,
(what Billig, 1992, characterised as 'empirical tales'), there would have been
considerable difficulty in deciding exactly how to classify even the participants' interest
in and extent of political news consumption. Within a single interview participants were
found to imply that they were both engaged in regular and reflective consumption of
political news and current affairs and that they were relatively uninterested in such
matters. Their talk can perhaps best be understood within the specific context in which it
is occasioned.

This tension between an identity of engagement and disengagement with the
consumption of politics on the mass media is illustrated within extract 1 where the
interviewee, ‘L’, produced an ‘identity’ of being relatively uninterested in watching
politics whereas in extract 2 ‘L’ displayed that he consumed a wide range of televised
politics. This variation in the identity which is produced may create problems if we
wished to use the interviews to categorise interviewees in terms of their level of interest
in televised politics. However, the occurrence of this inconsistency suggests that we can
fruitfully attend to the specific turn by turn context in which the different identities are
produced.

Extract 1

1 P: I mean that's interesting what you've said
2 about that you get (0.5) on that news item
3 in particular >one of the reasons I chose it
was because you had this umm if you like Tony Blair's little piece on it or the description of that and then you had a criticism from the Lib Dems and a criticism from the Conservatives (0.5) erm and an endorsement from the NUT (0.5) umm how do you make sense of it when you when you confronted with that either (0.5) in this example or other examples how do you make sense of it when you've got them all conflicting

L: I think its basically a bit of a sham really (0.5)
P: yeah
L: because umm (1.5) yuheh (0.5) li like I said you you got three different parties all saying what they believe (0.5)
P: [yeah
P: yeah
L: then one of them comes round and says oh perhaps you've got a point there and you know they they don't sort of say (1.0) you know (0.5) well done we sort of errr >we agree with you and stuff like that< they [say Labour are being=
P: [yeah
L: =really silly because they are sort of coming around to say what we're saying in the first place so [it's a point to us
P: [yeah
L: it just sort of (0.5) it makes a bit of a sham of it I think of it's (0.5) I'm I'm not really into
politics really in the sense of err watching=

P: [no

L: =and sort of err studying it or whatever you .

know [but err it just seems err (0.5) they’re=

P: [sure

L: =all as silly as each other and by the same token

I'm sure (0.5) umm Tony Blair would do exactly the

same thing if err John Major err or Paddy Ashdown
did another U-turn in their policies and
come towards Labour there so they're=

P: [yeah [yeah

L: =all as hehe bad as he each hehe other as far as

I'm concerned

P: yeah that's a very good point (0.5) yeah

A straightforward 'realist' reading of extract 1 would suggest that 'L' is disinterested in televisied politics. Indeed L's claim not to be “into politics really” (lines 31 & 32) is similar to some of the utterances which Morley (1980) used in illustrating the way in which his group of “mainly white school boys aged 14 with a working class background” related to politics on the news; “they’re not interested in everyday life and things like that ... they just wanna know about Politics. The World Cup ... they really look above it. It's Politics, Politics ...” (1980: 69). For Morley the utterance was indicative of the group's dismissal of television news because it (unlike Nationwide) focuses too much on politics. However, this approach treats the utterance as merely a reporting of a fixed viewer identity - it ignores the possibly different ways in which participants might construe their engagement with televised politics and the activity entailed in any construction of 'viewer identity' and preferences.
To some extent as a ‘one to one unstructured interview’ there is the need for considerable care in the sorts of interpretations which might be offered. The issue of using such material is addressed in the concluding discussion of their thesis - for now it can be noted that the prior allocation of speaking roles - interviewers to issue questions and direct topics - inevitably leads to a skewed interaction and some uncertainty over how both participants orientate to each other’s turns. Thus, because the interviewer confines themselves to asking questions and producing minimal responses (Schegloff, 1982, Jefferson, 1984b) and the interviewee to answering questions there is less sense of how they are orientating to each other’s turns. The pre-allocated roles may thus blunt some of the overt displays by participants of what sort of activity a prior turn is taken to be.

With these caveats very much in mind it could be tentatively noted that the formulation of being relatively uninterested in televised political coverage comes shortly after the self reference "like I said" (lines 15 & 16) and immediately after this L repeats the formulation which he began with "it just sort of (0.5) it makes a bit of a sham of it I think of it's (0.5) I'm I'm not really into politics really" (lines 30-32). The uninterested identity which is produced could be read as giving account, not for some prior activity - but rather for L’s current discourse, Edwards & Potter (1992), Antaki (1994). Thus his claim not to be "into politics really" could be understood as orientating to P’s presumed expectations and evaluations by accounting for the limited scope of the answer given and exonerating the L from the need for any further elaboration.

Extract 2

The following extracts are drawn from various points within the interview with L. A range of extracts are used to illustrate that despite having claimed not to be "into politics" L also claimed to have watched a wide array of televised politics.
2 (a)
(From an exchange about the extent to which the media influences the interviewees political views.)

P  do you ever come across anything in the news or or whatever that errm persuades you or or or challenges (0.5) your your ideas that you've got (1.0) or or do they come from elsewhere
L  errmm >I think programmes like Question Times are quite revealing< (1.0)
P  yeah
L  when whe [when they actually
P  [yeah
L  (0.5) and and Walden as well I I like watching Brian Walden's sort of interviews he really sort of err (0.5) you know scrutinises them really [puts them
P  [yeah
L  under (0.5) there's others a bit sort of wishy washy doesn't really get much out of them lets them say
L  what they want to say

2 (b)
(In response to a question about the sources of news relied upon.)

L  I watch (0.5) the the Nine o'clock News I watch
P  the Ten O'clock News as well (0.5)
P  yeah (0.5)
L  [[and
(From a discussion about L's preference for television news over newspapers.)

1. **L** if you actually see them being interviewed live on television and they're asked a specific question and they give a specific answer [then you can actually judge them on what they're saying]

(From a discussion about party political broadcasts.)

1. **L** I usually sort of sit down listen to all parties listen to what they've got to say

(At the end of the interview.)

1. **P** anything else that comes to mind that you just want to add cause that's been really helpful what you've said so far thanks
2. **L** errm what generally or [or specifically errm [yeh
3. **L** ttchh I sometimes wat enjoy watching Newsnight c'cau[se th[at sometimes gives enough
4. **P** [yeah [yeah
5. **L** reflection on things
Extracts 2 (a)-(e) display a range of utterances which were noted above as challenging or subverting the image of being uninterested in televised politics which was formulated in extract 1. Thus despite claiming that he was "not really into politics" (extract 1, lines 31 & 32), the same participant claimed to watch a wide array of televised political coverage, (extracts 2 (a)-(e)), and expressed a particular interest in programmes which provided an opportunity for him to arrive at his own judgement upon the issues, (extract 2 (c)) those which scrutinised politicians, (extracts 2 (a) & 2 (c)) and those which reflected upon the news which they presented, (extract 2 (e)). Taken together they convey a viewer identity which could well have been constructed as being; 'very into politics in the sense of watching it'. At one level each of these responses may be more in line with what we might expect participants to produce when talking about the extent of their engagement with televised politics, they are consistent with the portrayal of 'active viewing' which Billig (1992) encountered. Thus they could be seen as means by which participants construct themselves as embodying the virtues of 'active engagement', which could be understood as a cultural value which is particularly salient within the interview context, (in which participants are called to account for their viewing practice).

However it is worth noting that such context requirements can be far more subtle, realised in and varying across the turn by turn exchange of utterances. This theme is alluded to in Holquist's appraisal of Bakhtin's work; "Discourse does not reflect a situation, it is a situation. Each time we talk we literally enact values in our speech through the process of scripting our place and that of our listener in a culturally specific social scenario." (1990, p.63). This theme is of central importance in conversation analysis which explores talk as activity sequences (Schegloff, 1995) and which approaches all talk - including that which refers to identity - in terms of the interactional work it is accomplishing (Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998). From this perspective construction of 'viewer identity' can be seen as dealing with not just the general context of an interview but also local interactional concerns which are occasioned on a turn by
Whilst extracts 2(a)-(e) can be considered collectively, (each constituting a claim regarding aspects of televised politics which are consumed), it is worth focusing on one extract in some detail in order to explore the way in which the construction of identity found at a particular point within the interview fits the specific exchange of utterances in which it occurs. Once again caution must be taken in the interpretation of these interview extracts but it is possible to hint at the ways such talk may orientate to talk-context. In extract 2 (a) L claims that *Question Time* is "revealing", (lines 5 & 6), and that he likes Brian Walden's interviews because he puts politicians under scrutiny, (line 12), whereas others let the politicians "say what they want to say", (lines 15 & 16). The question which elicited these utterances, (extract 2 (a) lines 1-4), follows an earlier exchange in which L was asked how he worked out where he stood on political issues. He had responded that he worked out where he stood by comparing politicians to his "set of views", and he would vote for "the party that comes closest to my range of ideas." L's previous utterance could be seen as orientating to the need to construct a credible, rational identity. By making reference to "my range of ideas" he avoided adopting an impressionable, easily influenced identity. However L's response could be interpreted as displaying a degree of closed-mindedness on his part. The question issued in extract 2 (a), (lines 1-4), gave the opportunity for his viewer identity to be further defined. If L asserted that he did not come across anything which persuaded or challenged his ideas then he would perhaps be accomplishing an identity which connoted that his ideas were somewhat entrenched, perhaps even prejudiced, and not open to rational argument. Conversely, if he asserted that his ideas were entirely influenced by any televised politics then he would be producing a rather fluid viewer identity which may problematise his claim to a "set of ideas" and raise issues about the extent to which he scrutinises the different stimuli he is exposed to.
The response in extract 2 (a), (lines 5-16), shifts the focus away from whether televised politics persuades or challenges L's ideas and moves it onto his critical appreciation of particular programmes. This change in focus has some parallels with the phenomenon Jefferson (1984a) referred to as 'the stepwise transition'. The stepwise transition specifically refers to attempts by an interactant to move from one, (uncomfortable), topic of conversation to another without explicitly announcing the closure of one topic and the initiation of a new one. In extract 2 (a) there is a parallel subtle shift, not so much over the topic itself but rather in the frame or focus which the question had set. Crucial to the movement is a pivotal utterance which facilitates the transition of focus by dealing with the preceding question whilst allowing for a new direction to be explored. In extract 2 (a), lines 5 & 6 display a form of pivotal utterance; "I think programmes like Question Times are quite revealing". Here the participant does not directly claim that Question Time persuades him or challenges his ideas but rather more generally asserts that it is "revealing". By employing the word "revealing" L has allowed for the shift from influences to preferences, a transition which he subsequently secures. The utterance; "and Walden as well I like watching Brian Walden's sort of interviews", (lines 10 & 11), has changed the frame of reference from a question about persuasion or influence to one of preferred programmes.

Within the new frame of reference L constructs an identity of intelligent engagement which could be seen as orientated towards the latent challenges of being 'closed minded' and yet avoids stepping into a new identity of being easily influenced. This is achieved by choosing just two programmes and through providing 'rational' grounds for the choice. The very selection of two preferred programmes in itself helps to 'do' intelligent engagement, avoiding both the 'indiscriminate' connotation which might accompany the selection of a wide range of programmes and the closed mindedness which may have be implied had no programmes been selected. This selectivity is itself made all the more vivid by the contrast with other programmes, (lines 14-16), which makes it clear that the
two programmes were chosen from and contrasted with a pool of other alternatives, rather than being offered because they were the only instances of televised political coverage which L could recall. Furthermore the grounds which are given for preferring Question Time and Walden are that they are revealing and that they scrutinise politicians. In claiming to prefer programmes which are revealing and which scrutinise politicians L is implicitly adopting an identity of one who wishes to delve beneath the surface of televised politics suggesting that they are an active, critical, scrutinising viewer.

Whilst there are limitations to the weight which can be put on these particular readings of extracts 1 and 2 - they do at least suggest that there are problems with analysis which are based on isolated utterances. From the extracts above a range of different positions for L’s engagement with televised politics could be suggested - the reliance on any one would be an arbitrary analysts choice. Furthermore, extracts 1 and 2 suggest that the variation which seems meaningless in isolated quotes can be seen as more meaningful if considered as a (talk) situated activity rather than a simple report upon viewer preferences. L is thus accomplishing interactional work through the construction of his engagement and disengagement with televised politics. Finally, this activity can be understood as orientating not to a remote context away from the talk situation but rather to the immediate talk context.

(b) Awareness of bias

Extracts 3 and 4 are both drawn from the same participant, K, and yet as with extracts 1 and 2 above, rather than comprising an entirely consistent picture regarding the awareness of bias they hint at tensions and variations which may be best understood in terms of the immediate discursively created context.
at the end there you had >I think it was Nicholas Jones this time< and sometimes you have Robin Oakley or John Sergeant or someone doing a sort of summary saying um (0.5)
yep
(1.0) sort of putting together the situation um and and err there he was saying things such as you know the Tory Right feel that they're setting the pace for the Government and so on umm how do you feel about that that situation (0.5) that role (2.5) of (0.5) what the [sss:::::::]
of the sort of summary statement (1.0) are there ever any claims made that [(3 syllables)]
well I suppose that there can be an element of bias in that [umm (0.5)]
sure
and political reporters I suppose try and be unbiased but sometimes (1.0) >there is a bias<
I [mean there are always claims by one (0.5)
[mnm::
party or another that that the umm [media is being [yeh biased and that isn't fair and that isn't fair
[umm:]
yeh
In extract 3 we find the claims that "there can be an element of bias", (lines 16 & 17), and that ">there is a bias<", (line 20), whereas in extract 4 there is the potentially contrary claim "I've never actually err (0.5) felt (1.5) bias", (lines 5 - 8). The tension between the utterances in extracts 3 and 4 is perhaps heightened by the fact that extract 4 captures the interchange in the interview which followed twenty six seconds after that.
given in extract 3. Relying on either utterance in isolation could be problematic - hinting at a differing picture of the participant's perception of bias. Yet, (as with extracts 1 and 2 above) it is possible to hear the claims in terms of their activity orientation and their sensitivity to the unfolding talk context.

The claims that "there can be an element of bias" (extract 3 lines 16 & 17) and that "there is a bias" (line 20) occur in response to a question issued by P asking how K felt about the 'summary statement' on the news item shown (lines 1-11). In issuing the question P might hearably set up an imperative for some response to be given, which K could be asked to justify or held accountable for. Had K claimed to have no particular feeling regarding the summary statement he could potentially be perceived by both himself and P as a rather 'uncritical' possibly 'naive' viewer. K's claims about bias could be heard as dealing with the need to provide an accountable response to the question issued and accomplishing an identity for K as a viewer who is sufficiently critically aware to recognise some degree of bias.

In extract 4 the utterance "I've never actually err (0.5) felt (1.0) bias (0.5)" (lines 5-8) follows a request for an example of anything which K found to be "too biased" (lines 1-4). The claim not to have felt bias could be seen as exonerating K from having to produce a more detailed response. Through claiming not to have felt bias he has side stepped the need to furnish a particular instance of bias. Following K's claim not to have felt bias there is a substantial pause within his response, with eight seconds elapsing between P's acknowledgement tokens and K's next utterance. Such extended intervals in 'mundane' or 'ordinary' conversation often indicate some problem with the preceding utterance, Pomerantz (1984). Once again it is potentially problematic to map everyday talk patterns on to interview talk - also a question could be raised about the non-vocal activity such as eye contact and gestures which may have played an interactional role during the silence. Despite these misgivings it is still possible that as the preceding
utterance, (acknowledgement tokens excepted), was issued by K himself, his pause may indicate some problem with his own prior utterance.

Immediately after the interval a reformulation of "felt (1.0) bias" is produced. The possible ambiguity of the word felt is exploited and its meanings reworked. Whilst 'felt' could potentially be understood as meaning 'noticed' K implicitly reworks 'felt' in his subsequent utterances to mean 'affected by'. The reformulation; "I don't phh I don't know umm (2.5) whether people who are more easily led phh (0.5) might (four seconds delay interspersed with minimal continuers) might actually be led in a biased fashion", (extract 4 lines 11-15), manages to maintain the possibility of a bias and is thus consistent with the participant's earlier response in extract 3, but the bias which is acknowledged is constructed as one which affects others with whom K explicitly contrasts himself "but err I don't consider myself to be easily led I come to my own conclusions" (lines 18-20). This contrast itself has been approached in a number of ways including Davison's (1983) work on the third-person effect and Billig's (1992) consideration of the construction of 'others' as impressionable or gullible can position the speaker themselves favourably. These issues are pursued in more detail in chapter 5 where it is argued that contrasts take various forms - including self-deprecation - to suite the sequence of talk in which they occur.

(c) Impressionability

As mentioned earlier, Billig (1992) found that impressionability was typically a characteristic ascribed to others from whom the current participant claimed to differ. Whilst the data explored in this chapter and chapter 5 suggest that this is the case there were also some interesting exceptions, thus certain participants acknowledged that they were easily influenced by televised politics at one point in the interview but within the same interview they subsequently moved away from such claims. In this way impressionability can be understood not as some accurate empirically derived typology
by which audiences can be categorised but rather as a resource which audiences draw upon to construct their identity in the midst of attending to the interaction in hand. Extracts five and six both centre around the same participant, S, who produces a complex picture regarding the extent to which she is influenced by televised politics.

**Extract 5**

1. **S:** so I understand people swinging actually (0.5)
2. I I do understand that (0.5) I mean
3. **T:** I mean I understand some bits of it but I'm just know (.)
4. **P:** yeah
5. **T:** that I'd never ever vote Conservative [I mean yeah
6. **S:** [yeah
7. **T:** I'd be like you know (1.5) just (0.5) feel so lack of genuine care and understanding coming from them=
8. **S:** =no I would say that that television does affect me but then I would say in some ways >(one syllable) probably it's like I've been saying this today< [that I'm <not that political>=
9. **T:** [hhehhe
10. **P:** [[]=yeah
11. **T:** [[]=no I'm not
12. **S:** >I had a father who was very left wing
13. [and was
14. **T:** (((two syllables)))
15. **S:** erm (2.5) he worked for the police force and he was you know he was really involved and even when
he retired he was still sort of coming up to London
for various NALGO meetings< and (1.0) when I worked
in the hospital I had lots of dealings with unions
>and I wasn't anti them at all because I feel that
in the health service [there was at
P: [mm:::
S: that stage there was a lot of need for emm
representation because they really did have a poor
deal< even though they were working against me used
to make my life hell (0.5) erm so I I feel that I
can see it from <both points of view> (0.5) you know
perhaps in my life I've seen it from [both points of
P: [mm:::
S: view father was too left wing so I would probably go
more right (0.5) I went to a grammar school which
was sort of of very much you know the middle class
thing to do rather than (0.5) erm so I would say the
media does effect me quite a lot

The interactional sequence detailed in extract 5, (involving two friends, participants T and S, and interviewer P), follows a question issued by the interviewer several turns, (140 seconds), earlier; "yeah so how doesss (0.5) err say television news feed in to your
em political opinions is it that you've got your political opinions and they're fairly stable
(0.5) erm or >or does< what you see on the news or other programmes feed in to it in
any way". At the risk of presenting an analyst’s gloss on the data it might be worth a
brief appraisal of some of the preceding turns. Prior to the sequence detailed in extract 5
T responded to the question constructing her political opinions as "reasonably stable"
and expressing that she was "continually amazed" at people who seemed to switch
political allegiances during election campaigns as she construed political preference as reflecting a "basic philosophy". S attempted to challenge this by citing the possibility that Conservative voters may have switched because they felt that recent leaders were "letting them down badly".

Against this interactional backdrop S expresses that she does "understand people swinging" (extract 5, line 1). In response T suggests that it is not so much the switching away from the Conservatives that seems illegitimate but rather the switch to voting Conservative, which she constructs as something which she would never do due to the "lack of genuine care and understanding coming from them" (lines 9 & 10). It is at this point in the exchange of utterances that S talks of herself as one who is easily influenced. In issuing the utterance "I would say that that television does affect me" (lines 11 & 12), S legitimates her entry and her subsequent extended response. Part of the interactional strength of this utterance is that it directly addresses the question which the interviewer had issued several turns earlier. In this way the turn is legitimated as fulfilling the overarching interactional task of completing an interview - which could be construed as an effective means of 'getting the floor' or having a turn in the exchange. The specific content of the claim not only achieved an entry for an extended turn but perhaps managed to do so in a less challenging way because of what could be considered the slightly self deprecating connotation, Pomerantz (1984), of a claim to be 'easily influenced'. In this way the construction of an 'impressionable viewer identity' by S can potentially be understood as occurring in the midst of the interactional work of finding an entry for an extended turn which attenuated the possible challenge to the co-participant T.

This talk of being easily influenced is followed by an instance of what Potter & Wetherell (1987) refer to as a 'disclaimer'; "(one syllable) probably it's like I've been saying this today< that I'm <not that political<" (lines 13 & 14). The claim not to be
"that political" may function in a slightly different way to the claim not to be really "into politics" which was encountered in extract 1. Whereas in extract 1 the construction of being uninterested in politics perhaps exonerated the participant from producing an answer, here the claim by S that she is "<not that political>" provides a means by which the co-interactants, (T and P), can 'read' or understand S's utterance that "television does effect me" (lines 11 & 12). Thus, the impressionability can be understood as reflecting S's disengagement with politics. This claim is partly warranted by S's reference to the fact that this utterance had been issued earlier; ">(one syllable) probably it's like I've been saying this today<", (lines 13-14). Announcing that the impending utterance has been issued previously can provide some sense that it is a stable reflection on her position is a is politics and thus something more than a 'spurious construction' designed to suit the moment.

At three points throughout her turn S produces some form of summary message, she produces the point or gist of her response, each utterance is marked as a synopsis of the preceding discourse by the commencing with the word 'so'. These summary utterances could be seen as an example of what Heritage & Watson (1979) term a 'formulation' in which the speaker produces the gist of their previous speech. The formulations "so I I feel that I can see it from <both points of view>" (lines 32 & 33) and "so I would say the media does effect me quite a lot" (lines 39 & 40) could both be seen as specifically attending to the interactional issues brought about by S's fairly extended and extensive turn. These formulations do not just blandly restate previous claims but instead could be seen as being rhetorically occasioned, that is they display a sensitivity towards the listeners' concerns and interests. They have the appearance of being based upon or derived from the preceding sequence and in that way may appear to be warranted by or grounded in the previous discourse. The first of these formulations "so I I feel that I can see it from <both points of view>" implies that switching political allegiance can be understood not in terms of a lack of integrity or concern for others but instead could be
construed as some form of open mindedness and thus challenges the earlier constructions which T had produced. The second formulation; "so I would say the media does effect me quite a lot" ends S's turn by returning to the point of entry "no I would say that television does affect me" (lines 11 & 12). In returning to the essence of the earlier utterance S provides a cue that her turn has ended, she also implies that the preceding can be heard as having been orientated to a point which related directly to the earlier question about influences on political ideas, in this way S legitimates her extended turn implying that her interactional activity has been appropriate falling within the terms set by the interviewer's question.

Extract 6

1 P: so you you say that the media affects you or may
2 affect you errmm could you say any (0.5) any more
3 in which way or what sorts of programmes in
4 particular might feed in to that (0.5) or is it
5 Party Political Broadcasts< or
6 S: no not the broadcasts 'cause I mean not
7 those they talk out of their rear end [no I mean
8 P: [he hehhe hehe
9 S: well sorry we know so er[mm (four syllables)
10 T: [I mean they're so well
11 S: scripted aren't they?
12 S: em (0.5) I mean I actually like programmes< (1.0)
13 emm that you know are documentaries that are
14 hopefully as factual as you can like Panorama or
15 World in Action something that might cause issues
16 which that are erm
yeah

S: (0.5) you that they've *researched* carefully and

hopedly not *too* biased but is rather hard (1.0)

emm (1.5) errrm I suppose most of the papers I read

are right wing

Extract 6 follows thirty four seconds after extract 5 and commences with the interviewer, P, asking about S’s claim to be affected by the media, (extract 6, lines 1-5). In her response it is feasible that S might have directly denied that she was easily influenced by the media or alternatively produce examples of programmes which had influenced her. Either sort of claim could be seen as having attendant difficulties. A direct denial of impressionability might be hearable as contradicting her preceding claim and she may be held to account for such a readily apparent inconsistency. However, to furnish examples of programmes which had influenced S would perhaps solidify a ‘viewer identity’ which had served its interactional task in the exchange of utterances explored in extract 5. To provide examples at this stage might not be merely a self deprecating act but would legitimate the construction implicit within the interviewer’s question that S is easily influenced. In her response S demonstrates to some extent that she can be construed by all participants, herself included, as an *astute* rather than an *impressionable* viewer. In lines 6 and 7 S displays scepticism about Party Political Broadcasts: "not the broadcasts 'cause I mean not those they talk out of their rear end". This utterance demonstrates in vivid terms a scepticism which challenges or shapes the way in which "easily influenced" is read, now T, P and S need not understand the utterance as meaning that S is so impressionable that Party Political Broadcasts have some form of influence upon her.

Subsequently S shifts the focus of her answer: "I mean I actually like programmes< (1.0) emm that you know are *documentaries*" (lines 12 & 13). This transition is similar to that
found in extract 2 (a) where the respondent when asked about programmes which persuaded or challenged his ideas provided an answer which referred to those programmes that he liked. Once again the process could be seen as parallel to what Jefferson (1984a) termed the ‘stepwise transition’ in that the interactant has found a way of shifting the interactional focus, with lines 12 and 13 forming the pivotal utterance. However rather than simply changing the topic of conversation S’s response provides a particular way of ‘reading’ or understanding her earlier utterance that "television does effect me" (extract 5, lines 11 & 12). In answering a question about influences by reference to her preferred programmes, the utterance reconstrues what was meant by "affect". Implicitly S has provided the possibility of reinterpreting her earlier claim that she is ‘affected’, perhaps that can now be understood as a claim that certain aspects of televised politics ‘appeal’ to her.

Again in a similar way to extract 2 (a) the specific selection and discussion about preferred programmes which is produced manages to accomplish an active, critical, astute viewer identity. Thus S selects two specific programmes *Panorama* and *World In Action* and provides rationally accountable grounds for choosing these two over others "they've researched carefully", (line 18). She also produces an awareness that bias is hard to transcend in both television and the print media "but is rather hard (1.0) emm (1.5) errmm I suppose most of the papers I read are right wing" (lines 19-21). In this way S has not so much directly claimed an identity which contradicts the ‘impressionable viewer’ which was offered earlier, but instead she has demonstrated that she is politically astute through the way in which she has framed her response. Thus her reported choice of preferred programmes, her grounds for such preference and her reference to the near ubiquitous nature of bias could be seen as not mere reports upon activities or attitudes but as *actively accomplishing* an astute non-impressionable ‘viewer identity’.
Extracts 5 and 6 could again have been used to provide isolated and potentially misleading quotes implying an impressionable or an astute 'identity'. The variation problematises treating the talk as mere reporting - if it is the analyst may have to arbitrarily choose a particular utterance as representative of the participant’s position or provide a summary gloss which attempts to construe the common essence beneath the variation. Instead the variation invites the analyst to explore the action-orientation of the talk in its context. That is it suggests a perspective in which the participant is understood as construing reality in a manner which attends to what their talk is doing or can do at a particular point in the talk sequence.

4.5 Summary Discussion

This chapter has employed a discourse analytic perspective in order to cast new light upon the responses gleaned from interviews with audiences following a screening of a television programme. Thus to some extent it has attempted to address certain aspects which have been somewhat neglected in much reception analytic research. Whilst specifically the focus has been upon the construction of ‘viewer identity’ the ideas covered raise more general issues about the status of participant's discourse within interview situations. The discourse analytic approach challenges a naive realism which sees interview responses solely as accurate or inaccurate, that is truth-referenced, reports upon actual behaviour or attitudes, (presumed to exist outside of the words used to express them). It also moves beyond narrow versions of impression management which understand a participant's discourse as potentially a deliberate distortion from a known reality. Instead discourse analysis provides a different perspective which might supplement or substitute other approaches - in particular it enables us to understand participants’ contributions as interaction-orientated, construction-in-action. Furthermore it sees this action not as context-free but sensitive to the unfolding talk sequence in which it occurs. Thus versions of reality can be understood as being accomplished in the midst of attending to various interactional requirements defined on a turn by turn basis.
To some extent this perspective brings to reception analysis themes which have been important in other aspects of media research touched on in the introduction. Thus ethnographic emphasis on the context of television viewing, (Morley & Silverstone, 1991, Moores, 1993), can be broadened to consider the context of asking and answering questions about viewing behaviour - that is the talk context. Just as viewing television can be best be understood as a contextually located activity, so to talking about viewing behaviour can be fruitfully explored with reference to the context in which it occurs, that is amidst the turn by turn exchange of utterances. Similarly, just as television news is understood as constructing the reality it purports to represent so too audiences who talk about their consumption of the news can be understood as producing a constructed version of their activity, one for which many equally plausible alternatives may be available and one which occurs in the midst of dealing with the interactional requirements defined by the exchange of utterances. These themes are further developed in chapter 5 where particular attention is given to the various ways in which contrasts drawn by participants between themselves and others are considered in terms of their orientation to the talk context in which they are positioned.
Chapter Five; “But I’m different to them”: Constructing contrasts between self and others through talk-in-interaction

5.1 Chapter overview
Contrast occurs as an important theme across a range of post-structural, conversation and discourse analytic and ‘traditional’ social psychological work. Some approaches link contrasts to identity issues - thus self-categorisation theory argues that identity arises in part through self assignment to particular categories - which is done on the basis of one’s perception of similarities and differences with others. This chapter explores contrast in identity talk from a different vantage-point - one which has the strengths and shortcomings of an emphasis upon talk in interaction rather than on cognition in isolation. In so doing it draws upon a corpus of extracts largely derived from unstructured interviews with television news audiences but supplemented with some published data of relevance to the deployment of contrast with others. The chapter illustrates some of the different ways in which contrasts with others can be constructed and deployed, which may challenge a category assignment, construct a generic category of others against whom self is favourably positioned, or act as an interactionally astute self-deprecation. In each case the contrast is understood as tuned in to the interactional issues at hand. In this way contrast is conceptualised as a live talk-in-interaction activity which can be fruitfully explored from the perspective of the participants themselves.

5.2 Background literature
Contrasts have been explored across different disciplines as crucial features of constructing reality, doing talk and arriving at an identity. Within the discursive and conversation
analytic traditions drawn upon in this thesis contrast has taken many different guises as a rhetorical tool for cueing audiences applause, Atkinson (1984); as a means by which contradictory evidence can be presented in cross-examinations, Drew (1992); as a means of conceptualising a divergence between an expected and received reply in conversation, Sacks (1992); and as a resource through which the 'exceptional', 'abnormal' and 'deviant' qualities of a third party are produced (by contrast with 'normative' others) in written reports of talk, Smith (1978) and in conversation itself, Hester (1998). However these particular takes on contrast structure differ from the concerns of this chapter because they are not focused on instances where the speaker directly draws a contrast themselves and others - it is that particular form of contrast which will be explored here. The argument is made that such contrasts can be explored as flexible conversational resources which are variously deployed so as to attend to the interactional work at hand.

In order to clarify the focus of the chapter some further points of comparison and contrast will be drawn first by briefly sketching some relevant background work found in post-structuralism and social psychology. Second, by considering the sorts of problems which a discursive approach to identity construction can raise for popular approaches within social psychology in particular self-categorisation theory. Third, by drawing upon conversation analytic and discursive research which sets up some important questions regarding the exploration of a speaker’s contrast between themselves and others.

(a) Varieties of contrast

Within ‘post-structuralist’ work the notion of contrast has occurred in various guises. Foucault (1982) in producing a reflection on some twenty years of his work referred to
the importance of institutionally sanctioned dichotomies e.g. 'mad' versus 'sane', 'criminal' versus 'good' and 'sick' versus 'healthy'. For Foucault each such dichotomy was not a reflection of neat divisions within reality but rather a 'mode of objectification' or means by which our very sense of subjectivity can be arrived at. This emphasis upon the constructive, reifying function of contrast has some resonance with Derrida's (Kamuf, 1991, Derrida, 1995) work concerning 'binary assignments', 'oppositions', 'duality', 'division' and of course the neologism 'différance'.

Some writers within the social constructionist tradition explicitly draw upon Derrida's notion of différance to develop ideas about the construction of identity. In this vein Sampson extrapolates an explicitly Derridian concept regarding problems with the 'trace' or written word into the orbit of identity construction; “presence is built on absence, identity on difference” (1993: 90). Likewise Hall draws upon ideas Derrida developed regarding the unfinal and unfinished aspects of meaning to think of identity as “a 'production', which is never complete, always in process” (1997:51). These appropriations are potentially problematic firstly because the subtlety and the linguistic-epistemological focus of the original work can in some cases be lost in abbreviated glosses and secondly because such arguments - like the work of Derrida itself - are not always pursued in the light of relevant discursive data. However Wetherell (1998) demonstrates that this need not be the case and that it is possible to pursue post-structuralist concerns such as positioning in the light of talk-in-context. This possibility remains true for the particular issues of identity and differentiation – thus Edley & Wetherell (1997) have demonstrated that post-structuralist work which directly addresses issues of identity arising through differentiation (e.g. Said, 1978) can be used as an effective perspective from which actual instances of talk
can be analysed. In this chapter these post-structuralist themes are acknowledged as important but remain a background consideration.

The link between contrast and identity has also been approached in different ways within ‘mainstream’ or ‘traditional’ or ‘experimental’ social psychology with different sorts of theories often sharing some cognitive emphasis. Festinger (1954) looked upon comparisons with others as a form of a ‘reality test’ which provides information regarding one’s opinions and proficiencies. Tajfel’s (1982) categorisation identity comparison theory and subsequently social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, Brown, 1988) argued that categorisation is a crucial aspect of identity. From these ‘intergroup’ perspectives contrasting one’s own category or group with other groups is an antecedent of a sense of positive or negative identity for individuals within groups and of potential conflict between groups. Turner’s (1987) self-categorisation theory develops this theme by stressing that the category through which one constructs one’s identity is activated by the perception of similarities and differences between and within categories - that is the meta-contrast ratio.

In developing self-categorization theory Turner et al (1987) make it clear that the intention is to provide a theory consistent with but “more general” than social identity theory - a theory which captures the role of contrast in the activation of relevant self-assigned categories. In sketching the vast range of possible self-categorisations Turner notes the different levels at which categories can operate. Thus self-categorization might occur at the superordinate level (which concerns one’s identity as a human being) the intermediate (group) level or the subordinate (individual difference) level. The category which becomes relevant is described as “a function of an interaction between the characteristics of the
person and the characteristics of the situation” (1987: 46). Across all levels the process of self-categorisation is understood as linked to the ratio of intra and inter category differences - the meta-contrast ratio. This has an impact on the individual's perception of categories discrete categories are thought to exist where inter-class differences exceed intra-class differences. At a slightly less abstract level the category to which an individual assigns themselves is thought to depend upon the process of comparison between self and others where relevant similarities exceed differences then self-categorisation occurs.

Self-categorisation theory brings the phenomenon of contrast centre stage as the mechanism by which an individual’s assignment to a particular category is achieved. In doing so it does usefully stress something of the multiple possible ways in which we can define self and it touches upon the idea that in some way the situation plays a role in achieving an identity. Furthermore as Terry, Hogg and Duck (1999) (referred to in the introduction) suggest self-categorisation theory challenges the ‘monolithic’ conception of ‘other viewers’ implicit in Davison’s (1983) work on the third-person effect. Thus an individual may differently contrast themselves with ‘outgroup’, ‘ingroup’ and ‘general’ others. Terry, Hogg and Duck argue that the tendency is for individuals to position themselves and their ‘own group’ as less easily influenced than ‘out-group’ and ‘generic’ others - except when the material presented outlines a position which the ‘ingroup’ advocates. In this way self-categorisation theory hints at the diversity of others against whom self might be contrasted and it also indicates something of the different positions which could be adopted with regard to the extent to which the media is claimed to influence a participant. Yet self-categorization theory is open to criticism as the introduction to this thesis suggested particularly with regard to its purely cognitive focus,
its mechanical and causal emphasis and the focus upon an analysts’ perspective on the data.

(b) Limitations of self-categorisation theory

In Turner’s (1987) outline of self-categorisation theory the overtly cognitive stance is evident from the first of the nine general assumptions which he outlines; “That the self-concept is the cognitive component of the psychological system or process referred to as the self. The self may be understood at least in part as a cognitive structure, a cognitive element in the information-processing system.” (1987:44). This cognitive emphasis is positioned as the heart of self-categorisation which hinges upon “the perception of intra-class similarities and inter-class differences” (1987: 44). The mechanically causal focus is also apparent in Turner’s outline of self-categorisation theory with the third assumption being that; “particular self-concepts tend to be activated (‘switched on’) in specific situations producing specific self-images” (1987: 44). Finally Edwards (1998) notes that while at one level the theory tackles issues such as context and variability they are tackled as aspects which analysts need to incorporate into a causally determinate generic model - that is they are treated as variables which analysts need to identify in order to causally explain participants’ behaviour.

In contrast to the emphasis upon cognitive issues, causal-mechanical models and analysts’ perspectives found within self-categorisation theory Edwards (1998) argues the case for a language-in-interaction, description of the activity which members demonstrably orientate to. This discursive approach links to ethnmethodological work (Zimmerman & Weider, 1971) and conversation analytic work (Schegloff, 1997) which emphasises the importance
of describing the skilful ways in which members orientate to the interaction at hand. Such a perspective challenges the use of analysts’ assumptions to identify variables of interest and to ‘model’ or reconfigure material into an abstracted causal scheme. It also draws upon the conversation analytic emphasis on language not as a system of information exchange but as ‘talk-in-interaction’ (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1995). Using this approach to explore category use Edwards (1998) demonstrates that even the apparently most mundane of categories such as ‘girls’ or ‘married women’ can be seen as used by participants in ways which display interactional sensitivity; “It’s use attends to local, rhetorically potent business in their talk.” (Edwards 1998: 30).

Thus rather than a mechanical ‘switched on’ response to a priori cognitive calculation the deployments of even mundane categories can be seen as demonstrating the participants skilful orientation to context. In this way context is something which the participants produce and orientate to through the activity of talk. From this perspective the unit of analysis need not be the perceiving separate mind of individuals - but can instead be the talk-in-interaction itself. Rather than seeking to trace a presumed cognitive causal essence behind or beneath or before the talk - the talk activity as displayed can be sensitively laid open. These themes often found in the work of Sacks have been used to provide a subtle yet powerful challenge to social psychology’s relative neglect of talk-in-interaction, (Edwards, 1995, 1997, 1998, Potter, 1996). Such work also provides a tantalising sense of how the phenomenon of contrasts between self and others may be important.

(c) Issues in the discursive approach to contrast

Work which approaches the issue of contrast and comparison between self and others
suggests that there is much to be harvested. Three brief soundings of such work will be provided. First, Sacks’ comments on ‘things we don’t do’ (1992, vol. 1: 570) will be drawn upon to suggest the activity orientation of such talk. Second, mention will be made of Buttny’s (1993) work on consensus in which similarity rather than difference between self and others is stressed. Third, McKinlay & Dunnett’s (1998) work which has started to explore contrast between self and others will be considered.

Turning first to the work of Sacks - in his comments on things we don’t do he makes use of a brief extract of talk taken from a group therapy session;

**Extract 1**

Roger: Kids don’t drive long. They start of when they’re si-

by the the time - when they’re sixteen, by the time

they’re eighteen they’re back walk(hh)ing hehh:

It is worth noting here that the ‘they’ (‘kids’) transpires to be a category into which the speaker subsequently places themselves - thus the speaker is talking about things that they and other ‘kids’ do not do. Sacks approaches this formulation not as a sharing of information but as an activity - noting that such talk might frequently form part of a complaint or boast. For our current concerns it is worth noting that Sacks highlights that such talk about ‘things we don’t do’ is quite evidently ‘indefinately extendible’ - Roger could formulate what he and other ‘kids’ do not do in numerous ways. This very openness makes such talk a wonderfully flexible resource - a feature which it shares with talk about
'others from whom I differ'. The formulation of what we do not do - or who we are not - can be read as crystal clear examples of constructions which take their shape in the midst of orientating to the particular interactional issues at hand.

Second, it is worth noting that drawing contrasts between self and others is interesting precisely because there are a range of interactional benefits in the opposite course of action. Thus Buttny (1993) in exploring blame account sequences in couple therapy considers the way in which an alignment with others can 'normalise' the speaker’s behaviour. This works similarly to Edwards and Potter’s (1992) concept of consensus - by allying with what ‘most’ people think or do some warrant for claims or actions may be achieved. Yet this raises the question as to why people would engage in differentiating themselves from others a question touched upon in the work of McKinlay & Dunnett (1998).

McKinlay & Dunnett (1998) note that one such function of contrast is to act in a similar way to building consensus - that is the contrast can be made between the speaker (or their group) and ‘abnormal’ others. In their analysis of interviews with gun owners McKinlay & Dunnett noted that contrasts can be used to favourably position the category to which the speaker is assigned (in this case gun owner). To this effect contrasts are drawn with both those who do not own guns and more explicitly with those who are depicted as “criminals” “fringe groups” and “citizens’ militia”. As McKinlay & Dunnett note “By contrasting gun-owners with criminals and vigilantes, the implication is that while the activities of the latter are unacceptable, the activities of the former are not.” (1998: 40). McKinlay & Dunnett argue that this contrast positions ‘typical’ gun-owners (a category in which the speaker includes themselves) as ‘average’ people and they thereby could be seen as “normalising a

This chapter seeks to extend our understanding of contrasts drawn between self and others - particular attention will be paid to the ways in which contrasts attend to the particular interactional issues at hand - which it is argued can involve using contrasts to contest category assignment, positioning self in a favourable or self-deprecating light and reconstruing a contrast to orientate to the changing context of surrounding talk activity. These themes will be pursued by laying open the phenomenon being explored in a way precluded by abstracted notions of cognitive activity.

5.3 Data and Analytic Perspective

(a) Provenance of data used

The provenance of the data used in this chapter has already been outlined in chapter 4. As was mentioned there numerous analyst’s glosses could be given to explain the ‘context’ of these interviews including the socio-geographic, political, religious and ethnic categories which each participant may be thought to occupy. In addition to participant categorisation it would be possible to attempt to codify the socio-political-broadcasting context of the first half of 1994 when the interviews took place. Even the type of talk generated can be variously categorised - extract 3 in this chapter could be read as an interview about the media or talk between five friends about politics - both glosses are ‘true’ and the version produced may well be a construction which itself orientates to its context.
Despite this problematisation of such global categories this chapter, like chapter 4, can to some extent be criticised in line with Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) for those aspects which rely on unstructured interview data. However here, although one to one interviews are used (extracts 2 and 4) some use has been made of previously published conversation material (extracts 1 and 5) and some attention placed on interactions between participants. (extract 3).

(b) Analytic approach

This chapter explores some of the instances in which participants drew contrasts between themselves and others. This includes reference to the influence of the media on self and others but is not limited to it. Thus the contrasts explored cover issues of nationality and strength of political convictions as well as the influence of the media on the participant and others. The common theme is across the extracts is that they all feature an explicit contrast produced by a participant between themselves and others (who might be general or specific). As the extracts were analysed interest developed in exploring the different ‘type of work’ or activity orientation that contrasts with others could entail. In each case the focus was on the question ‘why is this formulation of contrast produced at this particular place in the talk sequence?’ In order to address that question scrutiny was made of the detail of the talk, its treatment by participants and previous literature. The literature was used in a number of distinct ways, first, previously published analysis of different sets of data were used to identify some of the sort of activity orientations which were present in the current data. Second, as mentioned above published data was drawn on so as to consider something of the possible restrictions and scope of the claims made.
Third, previous literature was itself used as a point of contrast - in that particular attention was paid to aspects of contrast (such as self-deprecation) which appeared to be relatively neglected. Out of this interface between previous work and the current data the analysis sought to appreciate the various activities which contrast orientate to in attending to the specifics of the talk context in which it occurred.

5.4 Analysis

(a) Contrast with own group

Extract 2 illustrates the way in which a contrast can be made with the speaker’s own group.

Extract 2

1    P    you were saying earlier about your involvement in the
2         Mosque [here
3    I    [mmmm
4    P    does that erm (.) effect your views of politics (.) or
5         of the news >or anything like that< or or is it
6    entirely separate
7    I    no (.) I am actually er er (.) I'm very broad-minded
8         in that sense (1.0) err I feel like (.) >you know for
9         example< (.) I feel one hundred percent British and
10    I'm totally against (.) many of my colleagues doesn't
11    agree with me (.) I'm totally against having a dual
12    nationality (1.5) I said this makes you vulnerable and
13    your thinking is not in right path either you are
14    loyal to a British either you are a Pakistani (.) you
15    have to (decide)
In extract 2 the contrast with others is inserted into the midst of a claim about I's attitudes towards dual nationality. I begins to describe his attitude "I'm totally against (.)" (line 10) but breaks off to directly contrast this with what his colleagues think about the issue "many of my colleagues doesn't agree with me" (lines 10 & 11) - before recommencing the description of his own attitude "I'm totally against having a dual nationality" (lines 11 & 12). At first glance it is possible to miss the significance of the contrast - the description of I's attitude seems to be achieved without it "I'm totally against having a dual nationality" (lines 11 & 12). The speaker’s change of tack part way through a sentence could be seen as an instance of self-repair. As Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks (1977) note these self-repair moves can be understood as displaying the speaker’s preference for self-correction rather than having the interlocutor intervene. In extract 2 the repair is not orientated to the correction of a misunderstanding or the production of an erroneous or disputable claim but rather to the inclusion of additional information. The additional information here produces a contrast between the speaker and a category constructed as ‘many of my colleagues’.

In self-categorization theory terms the utterance could be interpreted as the result of a cognitive calculation in which variation within the relevant group category exceeded variation between group categories hence a personal category was activated. A key issue with such a reading is that it ‘solves’ the utterance by finding its cognitive cause rather than opening up a descriptive appreciation of the activity performed by the utterance. Indeed it is possible to read the contrast as attending to an attempt by the interviewer P to impose a group category - follower of Islam - as a framework for explaining I’s reaction to televised news. I’s response challenges the appropriateness of using a crude group category for interpreting his behaviour. This has some resonance with Widdicombe (1998) who found
that interviews could entail contestation of interviewer assigned categories. Thus Widdicombe found that when one interviewee was asked “so what sort of punk do you (. ) associate yourself (wi’)” it produced a problem with being categorised ‘punk’ at all “but I’m not a punk at all” (1998:64). For Widdicombe such activity displays category ascription as an “accomplishment rather than something which can be assumed” (1998: 67) - something which interviewees can skilfully orientate to rather than mechanically accept.

In extract 2 I’s challenge entails a claim to being ‘very broad minded in that sense’ and an alternative group category ‘I feel one hundred percent British’. It is at this point that the contrast with his ‘colleagues’ is produced. From I’s subsequent talk ‘colleagues’ can be heard as referring to those he knows from Pakistan who live in Britain a group who could be seen as constituting part of the Islamic identity implied in P’s question. It is with this very group that I produces the contrast, thereby problematising the attempt to assign I to a single group category - and staking a claim to an independent personal stance on the topic of national identity. I’s claim itself becomes more powerful for having been contrasted with the group the interviewer implicitly invoked and with whom I might be expected to agree. I makes the contrast all the more vivid by citing an implied conversation with his colleagues “I said this makes you vulnerable” (line 12). This use of reported speech suggests an episode or episodes of disagreement rather than a vague feeling of differences. In this extract the contrast demonstrates that categories can be seen as socially or interactionally applied and contested - that is these issues are orientated to in the unfolding conversational activity and need not simply be solved as mere reflections of a generic cognitive calibration.
(b) Constructing contrastive categories

Extract 3 (a)

1. N  that Margaret Margaret what's her name? Margaret=
2. ?  =Beckett
3. N  Margaret Beckett I think is a (. ) is an idiot
4. M  well she made an idiotic remark I think (. ) by saying
   that the 'government's clapped out'
5. S  well anyone can say that (. ) Joe Bloggs on the street
6.   can say that really=
7. M  =yeah hehehe ((colloquial dialect)) 'gavernment's
8.   clapped awt' (. ) I mean what does that
9.   mean really? (. )
10. ?  ((laughter))
11. M  I mean tha's why I thought it was biased in that sense
12.   against Labour because it was just making them out to
13.   be name callers (. )
14. P  sure
15. M  but perhaps for Joe Public he'll probably relate to
16.   that (. ) but for me it made me turn (3 syllables)
17.   I didn't (. ) I thought well a bit naff really

While extract 2 demonstrated a contrast within a category which the speaker had been
assigned to, extract 3(a) entails a contrast with a rather less clearly defined and more
generic grouping of others 'Joe Public'. An immediate feature of the contrast in lines 16-18
is that 'Joe Public' are positioned as probably relating to features which 'M' saw as 'a bit
naff'. This contrast in which 'Joe public' is construed as relating to aspects of the media
which the speaker ‘M’ deems ‘naff’ has some resonance with Billig’s (1992) notion of “gullible others”. Billig (1992) found in interviews which touched on press coverage of the Royal Family interviewees would draw a contrast in which “The other’s gullibility is .. contrasted with the speaker’s claimed self (1992: 156). Indeed the extract suggests the idea of contrasts being used to favourably position the speaker which was referred to earlier when considering the work of McKinlay & Dunnett (1998). A further example of a (locally) positive positioning of self through contrast with others is hearable though unexplored in Sacks’ group therapy data (1992; vol. 1: 270) in which Roger draws a contrast between his ‘faster’ driving and ‘everybody else’. However it is worth reflecting on the detail of the specific formulation offered in extract 3 itself. The comments about contrastive others could be heard as deprecating - that is ‘Joe Public’ are constructed as relating to aspects of the media which ‘M’ considers ‘a bit naff really’. In this state of affairs where others are being criticised one possible issue at stake is who the targets of the criticism are considered to be.

If ‘M’ had formulated the criticism in very different terms such as; “perhaps you all relate to that but for me it was a bit naff really” he could be heard as deprecating others present for which he may be held accountable in subsequent exchanges. However the formulation of the contrastive category ‘Joe Public’ manages to hang the criticism on a grouping which is hearable as excluding the other participants and relating to some ‘other’ grouping of people. As such the deprecating of this particular category is less accountable, indeed the utterance can be seen as interactionally astute.

These features of interactional sensitivity come into sharper relief when we consider the
positioning of 'Joe Public' within the conversational sequence. The reference to 'Joe Public' occurring where it does acts as a reworking of 'Joe Bloggs in the street' which 'S' had produced earlier. Because of 'S's' earlier formulation of a very similar category 'Joe Bloggs in the street' 'M's' formulation of 'Joe Public' could be heard as needing less justification - it is produced in the context of a similar category already having been mobilised. This resistance is all the more strong because of what Drew & Holt (1989) refer to as the 'idiomatic' nature of the utterance. Thus the very clichéd, familiar nature of the expression 'Joe Public' could be seen as rendering it less open to dispute. If 'M' had made reference to 'lots of other viewers' or 'typical others' the idiomatic quality of the utterance would be lost and possibly the existence and characteristics of the categories may be rendered more disputable. But the virtue of the 'Joe Public' category is that the membership and characteristics of this category are unclear.

Thus as a contrastive category 'Joe Public' opens up enormous scope in terms of the constructed characteristics - it is difficult to challenge not just because of its idiomatic nature but also and relatedly because it is difficult for anyone to claim what Pomerantz (1984a) refers to as "better access" to knowledge of the membership and characteristics of 'Joe Public'.

The actual aspects of contrast that are emphasised could themselves be seen as skilfully orientating to the interaction at hand. That is the contrast in 3(a) relates to an earlier passage (extract 3 (b), below) in which 'M' had claimed that the news item watched was biased against Labour;
Extract 3(b)

This prior unsupported claim is deftly revisited in the current contrast of extract 3 (a). One feature is that ‘M’ provides a way of maintaining his claim of bias as that is how he currently reports perceiving the ‘name calling’ aspects of the news footage on the Labour Party. A second feature is that ‘M’ provides a way of reading the other participants’ apparent lack of support for the claim of bias - because ‘M’s’ new formulation allows for the idea that the report need not be seen as biased when account is taken of what ‘Joe Public’ will ‘relate to’.

In this way the formulation of the category ‘Joe Public’, its deprecation and the nature of the contrasts drawn can be seen as tuned to the interactional issues at stake. That is the utterances can be seen as parts of an activity sequence which cannot be abstracted from their conversational positioning. The utterances display considerable interactional sensitivity and can be seen to orientate to precisely the issues at stake at that particular part
of the interactional sequence. That is certain aspects of what the utterances are doing are lost if we merely abstract ‘bite sized’ pieces and reduce them to consequences of the firing of a mental trigger or even to an entirely pre-mapped cognitive strategy. The sensitive interaction in action is almost too sensitive and intricate to be seen as so carefully schemed and too subtle to be reduced to the crude firing and jettison of cognitively activated and (pre)determined categories.

(c) Producing self-deprecating contrasts with others

Extract 3 demonstrated a contrast with others in which self was positioned quite favourably a phenomena often reported in research which touches on contrasts with others (Billig, 1992, McKinlay & Dunnett, 1998) - however in extract 4 below the case is argued that self-other contrasts are not always made to this effect - sometimes self can be deprecated through the contrast.

Extract 4

1  P  but you you >sound fairly convinced< that you wouldn’t
2  vote for the Conservative Party still(.) how how what
3  feeds into that (3.0) decision
4  J  well I mean (five syllables) ermm I hate (3.0) I don’t
5  know what it is I ((tape cut briefly))
6  (two syllables) she’s ninety two
7  P  right
8  and has got the most (0.6) amazing grip on
9  politics and and her when you know was with
10  the Pearly Tories (one syllable)
11  P  oh right [yes yes
12  J  [>you Know<  and I think has been
permanently disillusioned by me:: >you know<
because she can’t really believe she thinks=
[ sure
=I’m a closet Tory really=
=mmmmm=
=>you know< and although I say all this <when it
comes to the cross> I couldn’t possibly not do it
[yeah

and err we have (1.2) *↑<incredible> *arguments *there
(0.5) *yeah
really
oh yes >she’s a hang ‘em beat ‘em burn ‘em< [you see
[okay

and she brings out in me now if YOU (.) SHE were
sitting there I could HEH HEH GET IT A::HEH:LL OUT
because [some=
[uhah
[of the things she says make me so so angry=
=sure
‘send them all home’ and [all this ‘people in council=
yeh (. ) yeh
=homes ought not to be here’ (.) [and (.) all that (.)
yeh
but (. ) >she’s [of a generation isn’t she<
yeah (. ) yeah
and perhaps probably more admirable because at least
she sticks by her principles where I tend to
41 vacillate
42 P mm:
43 J well not too far but you know I in
44 P yeah (.) yeah
45 J if someone says something speaks well and is
46 convincing on the point their making then I think
47 'well you've got a point there'<
48 P mmm

In extract 3 and the speaker could be seen as using contrasts with others to position themselves in a favourable light. As was shown this is in tune with rhetorically and discursively orientated research in which contrast with others is touched upon (Billig, 1992, McKinlay & Dunnett, 1998). However in extract 4 rather than seeing positive contrasts with others we see a somewhat more self-deprecating contrast being produced. This raises further issues for aspects of self-categorisation theory which argues that “self-categories tend to be evaluated positively” (Turner, 1987, p.57). Extract 4 entails a rather less positive position of self in relation to others. The contrast involves the speaker positioning an elderly relative of theirs as “probably more admirable” than herself because “at least she sticks by her principles” (lines 39 & 40). The approach adopted in this chapter is not to reduce these utterances to a crude conception of context e.g. an open ended interview about media consumption nor to see them as mere reflections of a cognitive calculation which is separate from the interaction at hand - instead the mildly self-deprecating remarks can be considered in terms of their orientation to context.

These self-deprecating remarks occur immediately after J’s comments about her ninety-two-year-old relative. Thus tracing the trajectory of the conversation it is possible to see J’s
mention of incredible rows as being treated as accountable as P expressed surprise at such rows “reaály” (line 24). J accounts for these rows by outlining the sorts of extreme opinions which her relative is thought to hold. It is worth noting here that the relative is described by the use of an idiomatically formulated category - “hang ‘em beat ‘em burn ‘em” is a familiar cliché and as noted earlier the work of Drew & Holt (1989) usefully highlights the rhetorical potency of such formulations -being familiar and clichéd they are resistant to challenge. Here “hang ‘em beat ‘em burn ‘em” is treated as a category a grouping to which the elderly relative belongs a formulation which provides some account for why J might engage in arguments with her.

Yet such work could be seen as a delicate process whilst J may want to justify having arguments with the elderly relative she may not wish to be heard as being entirely critical of her. Thus whilst J’s categorisation of her relative (line 25) could be seen as justifying the arguments between them such utterances set up their own issues of accountability which might take two distinct forms; firstly J may need to account for her relative’s extreme views and secondly J may be held to account for painting such a bleak picture of the elderly relative. It is here that the counter position is developed “but (.)” (line 37) this marks a change in trajectory and an account for the relatives extreme views are given “but (.) she’s of a generation isn’t she” (line 37). There is then a self-repair (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977) after which J produces the first explicit contrast “and perhaps probably more admirable because at least she sticks by her principles where I tend to vacillate” (lines 39-41).

It is worth noting that the ‘other is positive’ type contrast is a very effective device in
orientating to the possibility of being heard as overly critical - as the contrast not only positions the other as having positive features but also produces them as features which the speaker themselves could be seen as lacking. This has some resonance with a contrast found in one of Pomerantz’s extracts (1984a: 94)

Extract 5

(80) (SBL:2.2.3.-7)

B: I like ‘er very much.
B: But she still has that silly chatter about ‘er.
A: Mm hm,
B: That is like a
(1.0)
B: Oh, I’m not much of a teaser
(1.0)
B: Well now this is my fault. I don’t like teasing.
A: Mm hm,
B: And I know people love it.

Pomerantz takes B’s remarks “Oh, I’m not much of a teaser” to be an instance of self-deprecation – her key focus being on the way in which B orientates to the silence which follows this remark. This orientation typically involves an extended turn by the self-deprecating party which may entail “admissions, justifications, explanations, laughter, and the like” (1984: 93). Yet the extract also serves to illustrate the way in which a mildly self-deprecating contrast with others is invoked following a critical assessment of a third party. That is B complains about a non-present third party then having been met by silence produces a self-deprecating comment and subsequently following another silence she
reformulates the complaint as a unique or special feature of B herself. This is achieved through the use of a contrast between the speaker and a generic grouping “people” – this serves to construe the issue of teasing as B’s distinctive problem which typical contrastive others do not share. In this way the ‘admission’ which can be heard as taking place is effectively achieved through the use of a self-deprecating contrast with ‘typical’ others.

With extract 4 the issue of agreement with the critical assessment of the relative is perhaps less pertinent because P has never met and has no independent knowledge of the relative being described yet the issue of orientating to the possibility of being seen as overly critical could still be seen to be at work. In extract 4 this is attended to by a contrast not with “people” but even more pertinently with the very relative being criticised themselves. Thus in extract 4 the speaker is heard as relativising any sense of blame-worthiness that she may have produced - whilst the ninety two year old could be held accountable for her opinions the speaker overtly displays an awareness that from another point of contrast the speaker herself could be held accountable. That is the speaker can no longer be treated as occupying a blame producing position hence the contrast effectively orientates to the speaker being held to account for such talk. Furthermore the contrast renders criticism of the relative by the other speaker P difficult in two respects. First in terms of the interaction between P and J any criticism by P would no longer be an alignment with J as she has now produced praise of her relative. Second at a rhetorical level the praise produces a counter argument for the likely target of criticism, thus the distasteful opinions are themselves also the evidence of stability which J has produced.

Thus extract 4 has suggested that contrast can address some of the difficult interactional
business entailed in criticising associated others. In extract 4 the criticism of a relative’s opinions could entail the speaker being held to account either for the unpalatable opinions of a relative or for the activity of criticising a relative. The contrast device can be seen to orientate to both of these issues – particularly when the contrast is of a self-deprecating nature and positively positions the previously criticised associate. It relativises criticism and change the speaker alignment regarding the previously criticised other – making it more difficult for the interlocutor to further criticise the contrasted other or hold the speaker to account for the views of someone associated with them. Furthermore it repositions the speaker as ‘even-handed’ not only able to note that the criticised other has strengths but that they have strengths which the speaker themselves lacks. As such the contrast actively orientates to the dilemmas of the conversational context in a way that mere attenuation of criticism would not.

5.5 Summary Discussion

The specific ways in which contrast has been seen to operate in this chapter partly reiterates aspects of contrast between self and others suggested in previous work. Thus the current data offers support for the idea in Widdicombe (1998) that contrast can be used to distance oneself from certain assigned categories. Furthermore the idea that contrast can be used to position self favourably, (Billig, 1992, McKinlay & Dunnett, 1998), has also received corroboration. In addition to these aspects touched on in previous work the chapter has outlined some other relatively unexplored aspects of contrast. One aspect is that even the familiar forms of contrast can be seen as attending to the particulars of their conversational context. Thus in extract 3 the contrast not only positively positions the speaker but it entails a skilfully constructed ‘deprecated’ other and it attends to nuances of
interactional alignment in the surrounding talk context. A second aspect is that contrasts with others can take forms which have been little considered in previous research, in particular they may be used in a way which deprecates self in contrast to others. Thus in contrast to some discursive and conversation analytic work the current chapter does not arrive at a single type of activity which the phenomena of contrast between self and others can be seen to accomplish. To produce such a formulation with the current data set may involve moving to a level so abstract that it is of limited use (e.g. suggesting that all of the contrasts are instances of speakers giving some form of account for themselves).

In this way the exploration of contrast between self and others here displays that a semantically similar utterance (drawing a contrast between self and others) can perform different sorts of activity (e.g. enhancing or deprecating self) which can be made sense of only in terms of the surrounding talk-activity context. In this it has some parallels with Sacks’ exploration of contrast and contrast class of terms which were seen to be a multi-purpose conversational tool rather than a more function specific structure. Yet such contrasts with others emerge as a fascinating interactional phenomena as they reflect Antaki’s idea that identity talk is a wonderfully flexible interactionally potent activity “occasioned by the specifics of their interaction.” (1998:85).

This perspective raises a number of specific challenges to self-categorisation theory questioning its cognitive, ainteractional, and causal-mechanical focus. But it does this not so much by raising a rival theory but by suggesting a different frame for understanding which is genuinely interaction focused, so much so that it is the explication of this (regardless of cognitive machinations) which is the analysis. It is possible to look through
the extracts and still question ‘but what are the participants really thinking’ - perhaps beneath their words the key cognitive features within self-categorisation theory are at work. This chapter does not question the fact of mental activity but rather its treatment as readily accessible, necessary and the prime cause in the explanation of interactional phenomena, (Potter, 1998, Edwards, 1997). It argues that talk activity or talk-in-interaction can be taken as important in itself - not merely as a product of individual perception and calculation. The bottom line is no longer the cognitive schema separate from the action of interaction but rather the talk as interaction itself. Thus the perspective adopted here entails a reconfiguration of the very phenomena of study.

In this way the various interactional functions of contrasts between self and others are accomplished not in a crude mechanistic manner but in a way which demonstrates intricate orientation to the particulars of the talk context. From the perspective adopted in this chapter such skilful orientation is not a surface veneer beneath which the real individual-cognitive business of self-categorisation takes place but rather it is the overt business of constructing identity in/as interaction. The radical implication of the perspective adopted here is that the talk business explored is no longer construed as a surface manifestation of underlying cognitive activity - but rather it is the focus and the irreducible unit of analysis.

It is worth briefly reflecting that some of the above analysis can be turned back on the current chapter. Thus whilst it is possible to look at and critique the mechanical and cognitive - perceptive metaphors used in self-categorisation theory (and as Soyland, 1994, notes in much of psychology) this point can prompt the question as to whether metaphors can be side-stepped and more pertinently which ones recur in the discursive formulation.
drawn upon here. The current chapter employs the language of 'skilfully', 'orientating', and 'positioning' and at this level at least is tentatively in line with Aronsson's (1998) metaphor of 'social choreography'. Finally whilst contrast is the purported object of study in this chapter it also appears as a rhetorical tool deployed to position itself as different from and implicitly or explicitly better than 'those others.' Like all contrasts this too can be seen as a tentative version of reality orientating to a particular context rather than a final claim to truth.
6.1 Chapter overview

Much of this thesis has problematised perspectives on talk which have failed to take account of its *activity orientation*. In this chapter a discursive perspective is developed which raises questions for an approach which *does* refer to the action-potential of talk - namely the ‘account giving’ perspective. As the introduction to this thesis noted the account giving literature has explored talk - particularly explanatory talk - in terms of taxonomies of utterances which are assumed to exonerate. Hence its interest in talk activity centred largely on categorising the types of utterance which might exonerate the speaker. Whilst potentially useful this approach has sought generalised principles at the expense of exploring the details of talk and the context in which it occurs. This chapter has employed a discursive perspective in the analysis of six extracts which refer to 'the national interest' drawn from a pool of examples of politicians' televised discourse broadcast in the UK and the US between March 1992 and May 1996. The analysis illustrates that ostensibly similar extracts which each draw upon the repertoire of 'the national interest' can on close inspection be seen to accomplish a number of diverse functions which may be interaction orientated such as exoneration and blaming or 'ideological' - constructing political reality in a particular way. It also highlights the way in which talk about 'the national interest' has to orientate towards potential challenges regarding both the truth and the desirability of the sentiments it expresses. Thus the chapter argues that a discursive perspective can reposition intention talk as an issue which participants orientate to - and that it is through an exploration of detail and context that the functions of such talk and their embeddedness in interactional sequences can be
6.2 Background literature

Talk about intent has long been a crucial battleground in rhetorical struggles. From the
days of Milo, Brogicarus and Cicero through to those of Major, Blair and Clinton
persuasive discourse has often orientated to the intentions proported to lie beneath the
surface of observable behaviour. One reason for the enduring focus upon intent is its
polysemy or many-sidedness. Whatever the external manifest behaviour of the person
under discussion their intent is open to multiple constructions. This chapter explores
talk about intent from a discursive perspective - an approach which emphasises the
constitutive nature of all talk - including talk about intent - and which explores the
context and diverse functions of such talk. The particular focus for this chapter is
politicians' televised talk about one particular form of intent - namely 'the national
interest'. In order to best appreciate the discursive approach adopted it is worth first
considering how it differs from another prevalent conception of talk about intent touched
on in the introduction to this thesis, that is the 'account giving' perspective.

The account giving literature has explored talk about intent under the broader remit of
investigating exonerating utterances. One strand of this research has attempted to
classify the various 'types' of exoneration, in this vein Semin & Manstead (1983)
distinguish an 'appeal to values' "I did it for the nation" from 'an appeal to the need for
facework' "I did it to save face". Other strands of research have involved more direct
empirical measurement of either the effectiveness or simply the occurrence of particular
types of exonerating utterance. Thus Langer, Blank & Chanowitz (1978) attempted to
assess the effectiveness of justificatory utterances which prefaced a request to queue
jump whilst Cody & McLaughlin (1988) worked from reports of courtroom interaction
in an attempt to classify recurrent types of exoneration.

Whilst research within the account giving tradition has approached talk about intent as a
topic for investigation it could be seen as a rather limited excursion. Work concerned
with constructing taxonomies used talk merely as imagined 'typical' utterances -
exemplifying a particular category of account. Where experimental research has taken
place talk has often comprised the stilted - pre-selected 'justificatory utterance' - which
leaves unexplored the actual words used and the surrounding talk context of naturalised
or everyday talk. The small amount of research which does leave the laboratory to
explore actual utterances - uses second hand summaries of speech and is keen to code
them up quickly rather than explore their detail or the surrounding talk context in which
they occurred.

In this way the account giving literature has treated both detail and context as relatively
unimportant. Detail of expression has been understood as merely a surface feature -
instead the type of account produced has been the central focus. The use of the taxonomy
both reflects and perpetuates a view of language which stresses the underlying essence
or essential meaning of an utterance rather than the particulars of form. Thus the
account giving work has tended to deal with "broad glosses of the phenomenon"
(Buttny, 1993, p.30). Furthermore it has been assumed that the function of a given
utterance is always evident in the utterance itself - independently of any surrounding
talk context. Thus as Antaki (1994) notes attention is entirely placed upon "'the'
exoneration utterance" (1994, p. 57) regardless of any precipitating or subsequent utterances. These two assumptions - that detail and context are relatively unimportant are directly challenged by discursive psychology as expressed in the Discursive Action Model.

6.3 A discursive perspective upon intent

The Discursive Action Model (DAM) as outlined in the introduction to the thesis was developed by Edwards & Potter (1992) who provided a discursive approach to 'psychological categories' such as intent, emotions and motivation. In this way such categories are recast as rhetorical resources which participants draw upon in constructing and contesting versions of reality "situated within activity sequences", Edwards & Potter (1992, p.154). Thus discursive psychology shares with the account giving approach an interest in talk about intent - rather than seeing talk as merely a reflection of underlying cognitive reality. Furthermore, both approaches recognise that talk can be understood as performing or accomplishing certain functions. Yet for discursive psychology the accomplishing or action aspects of utterances are far more complex than the account giving research has suggested. In particular the details and context of utterances which were ignored or placed into crude categories by the account giving approach become the focus of a discursive analysis.

Whilst account giving researchers have often dismissed surface details in their quest to uncover the shared essence of a particular category - it may well be that participants themselves orientate to such details as important. That is the very particulars of an utterance may crucially shape the functions it accomplishes. Similarly any one utterance
could be seen as 'doing' or 'accomplishing' quite different things depending upon the surrounding talk context within which it occurs. Thus a statement which appears to exonerate in one context may shift topic or blame in another.

This chapter draws upon the approach encapsulated in the DAM and expressed within much of discursive psychology to provide an exploration of the detail and context of a selection of talk about intent. It also uses -albeit loosely- the notion of 'interpretative repertoires' (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). Interpretative repertoires (as indicated in the introduction) have been conceptualised as broad frameworks of vocabularies often including metaphors through which participants construct their world. Thus repertoires could be understood as organising resources which participants draw upon in constructing reality through everyday talk and which analysts hope to uncover. One specific interest which has arisen with regard to repertoires is the way in which participants may be found to draw upon diverse perhaps contradictory repertoires orientating to the interactional work at hand. Gilbert & Mulkay (1984) identified the way in which biochemists could construct their own research activities in terms of objective, rational method based activity that is they could be depicted as drawing upon an 'empiricist repertoire'. When the same biochemists were asked to talk about the contradictory findings of rival researchers they did so in very different terms referring to personal motives, social settings and biases and so could be conceptualised as drawing upon a 'contingent repertoire'. Thus interpretative repertoires serve as an analytic tool which capture content aspects of participants' various constructions of reality and enable an analysis of the function which different repertoires serve.
Whilst interpretative repertoires can be used to capture competing or contradictory constructions of reality - in this chapter the concept is used as a loose framework to denote a single recurrent point of reference which politicians were found to draw upon - namely 'the national interest'. This approach serves two purposes; firstly, it enables some attention to be given to the content of talk -that is the ways in which talk about 'the national interest' constructs politics and politicians. Secondly, rather than looking for different functions and context orientations between repertoires it enables an analysis of the diversity within a single repertoire. Thus the current chapter explores the diverse functions and the contextual locatedness of a range of extracts in which politicians account for the behaviour of themselves and their rivals by drawing upon a repertoire of 'the national interest'.

6.4 Data and analytic approach

The analysis began by compiling more than 50 extracts of televised political discourse (broadcast in the UK and US between March 1992 and May 1996) in which politicians referred to the intention behind their own or others' actions. From this the idea of constructions of a loose repertoire of 'the generic good' started to develop - this led to further sampling of other examples of politicians' intention talk resulting in a total of more than 80 items. From this pool 39 extracts were selected for detailed analysis on the basis that they appeared to make some reference to the issue of 'the generic good' in talk about intentions, this included reference to doing what is "right", good for "the British economy" and in "the national interest". 

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At this stage the emphasis was on over-rather than under-inclusion; this allowed for a further narrowing of focus to take place through repeated listening to the extracts. From a broad interest in talk about "the generic good" attention began to crystallise around the notion of 'the national interest'. Thus a preliminary analysis was used to do two things; first to help determine how widely or narrowly the repertoire under investigation should be defined and secondly to begin to consider the content, context and function of talk about 'the national interest'.

Some talk seemed to fall quite easily into the emerging repertoire of 'the national interest' e.g. extracts which appealed to what is; "right for the country", "the British nation" or "the national interest" itself. Likewise some talk was fairly easy to exclude because of its points of reference - thus talk which referred to doing things for specific groups such as "the miners" was excluded because it made reference to particular rather than generic interests. Other decisions were a little less clear cut and therefore exemplify more clearly the ever-present active constructing role of the researcher (Billig in press a, b). Thus reference to "the British economy" was thought to overlap considerably with the notion of 'the national interest' but just considered to fall outside for the current analysis because it was not quite as diffuse as certain other talk equated with 'the national interest' referred to above. Other talk including reference to generic ideas of "duty" and "the right thing" were generally excluded because they lacked reference to the country or nation. The one exception to this was in extract 3 where there is mention of "our long term interest" with this particular passage it was felt that the surrounding talk suggested that "our" could be read in terms of 'national interest'.
In this way a group of extracts were collated which in content terms shared a broadly coherent frame of reference, albeit one in which the researcher’s constructions were evident. Six extracts were selected to further explore the diversity of function and the importance of detail and context in talk which shares the surface similarity of drawing upon the loose repertoire of 'the national interest'.

6.5 Analysis

(a) Interactional functions of talk about the national interest

Extracts 1 and 2 point to some of the diverse functions which talk about the national interest can accomplish. With both extracts attention has been paid not just to locating the 'key', 'account giving' utterance - but to taking into consideration some of the surrounding talk context. The notion of 'interactional' functions is used to group the concerns of exoneration and blaming and in the organisation of this chapter is treated as separate from 'ideological functions'. Yet this is primarily of heuristic use ‘interpersonal’ and ‘ideological’ are both analyst’s labels on the data - social reality does not neatly carve itself into any such dichotomy.

(i) Using the 'national interest' to accomplish exoneration

Extract 1

This extract is taken from BBC TV’s 'Breakfast With Frost' programme, broadcast on 17th March 1996 - shortly after the publication of 'The Scott Report' - which examined the culpability of former Conservative Ministers regarding the illegal supply of arms equipment. David Frost is interviewing former Defence Minister Alan Clark.
and you didn't mind him, the words about inaccurate, misleading, manipulating the guidelines and all that, that's fair comment...

no I certainly...

what he says about you?

no I certainly tried (try) to manipulate the guidelines, I never made any secret of that, they weren't law I mean I am a Minister I have got my obligations to, to the electorate of this country. I do my best to follow them, I mean there's never any suggestion in the whole of that report that anybody was doing this for reasons other than their own interpretation of what was right for the country. We weren't taking backhanders and so on and an interesting example, we were staying with a mutual friend of ours in France a short while ago, there were some French politicians there and our host said "well Alan's having a bit of trouble at the moment because a report's been published about arms to Iraq" and one of the Frenchmen said to me, completely seriously, "I hope you made a lot of money from this", completely seriously, he expected me to have taken you know $50 million out of it, I mean that is the way most other countries and most other administrations would think about a
Extract 1 occurs in the context of the publication of 'The Scott Report' on the supply by the UK Government of arms to Iraq. David Frost cites the report as criticising Alan Clarke MP who had been the Defence Secretary during the period on which the report was based (lines 1-3). In his response Alan Clarke defends against the accusation of manipulating the guidelines not by denying having done so but by appealing to intent. Clarke claims the report doesn't suggest that anyone did so "for reasons other than their own interpretation of what was right for the country" (lines 12 - 14). This construction of intent exonerates by claiming that the actions which were undertaken were not done for ignoble reasons but rather for the participant's interpretation of the country's interests. Interestingly the focus for Clarke's exoneration is not a claim to have acted in the national interest - which would be disputable - but rather a claim to have intended to act in what he thought was the national interest - a claim which is much more resistant to challenge as it rest upon the hidden aspects of private intention and interpretation. The claimed intention of seeking what was right for the country is fashioned up in extract 1 by contrasting it with the intention of seeking personal financial advantage which Clarke equates with "the way most other countries and most other administrations would think about a scandal" (lines 25-27).

The case that this is how other countries understand a scandal works to nominate (or
position) the concern generated by and expressed in the Scott report as something peculiar to Britain. This idea is reinforced by a 'footing shift' (Goffman, 1979) and also by 'an appeal to consensus' (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Edwards & Potter (1992), Clayman (1992) have drawn upon Goffman's notion of 'footing shift' which was considered in chapter two in exploring the way in which participants in political talk draw upon reported speech e.g. "Dr Smith has argued that...". Such deployment of cited others in political contexts could be understood as accomplishing neutrality or corroborating the speaker's version of reality. That is using cited others can manage the issue of interest - the claims made are less easily dismissed as merely reflecting the interests of the speaker, Edwards & Potter (1992). Clarke demonstrates this by moving from expressing his own ideas (that is being both the source or author and the animator) to reporting or animating ideas which he attributes to another "one of the Frenchmen said to me" (line 21). In this way he orientates to possible audience scepticism regarding his claim that the events he was involved in do not constitute a 'scandal'.

Rather than just Clarke himself denying the label 'scandal' the comments of another source are cited to imply that imply that a 'scandal' is a rather different sort of event. Clarke subsequently warrants the cited Frenchman's claims by what Edwards & Potter (1992) term an 'appeal to consensus'; "that is the way most other countries and most other administrations would think about a scandal." (lines 25-27). In this sequence Clarke draws upon the implied belief embodied within certain models of causal attribution, (Kelly 1967), that if many people agree then the claim is likely to be perceived as an objective reflection of reality rather than merely a subjective opinion.
By building up a clear picture of a very different sort of intent (seeking personal financial advantage) which is clearly associated with a scandal - a clearly defined, non-scandalous exonerating intent is constructed. The notion of 'acting for self' enables ideas about 'acting for the country' to appear more clearly defined and more real. Thus the contrast could be seen as both staking a claim about the existence of the 'good' intent and as serving to construct what sort of entity doing what is "right for the country" actually is. The idea that the intent was not for personal financial benefit acts to imply that their must have been some other intention at work, in this way participants could be seen as orientating to the sorts of issues which are embodied within Kelly's (1972) discounting model of attribution. That is not to endorse the cognitive aspects of Kelly's model but rather to suggests that participants' talk treats their audiences as if they were discounting causes for behaviour. Furthermore the contrast with such an obviously corrupt alternative motivation as personal financial betterment helps to constitute an altogether different sort of intent which does not serve the narrow material interests of an individual but is somewhat more altruistic reflecting a concern for 'the country'.

(ii) Drawing on the national interest in accomplishing blaming

Extract 2

This extract is taken from BBC TV's 'Breakfast With Frost' programme, broadcast in January 1996 - shortly after National Union of Mineworkers President Arthur Scargil left the Labour Party and when the Conservative party formed the Government of the UK. The extract shows the Labour leader Tony Blair's response to an earlier question by David Frost.

(T.B. = Tony Blair)
now the real problem for the Conservatives is that they don't have that vision >I mean it's just not there< and the problem you get into for the country (.) and you ask me when the election's going to be (.) if we go on for another eighteen months like this >I mean< I seriously wonder (.) how the country is going to be governed properly (.) because the decisions aren't there >I mean I err< I mean I hope you will take this as more than just a sort of boring political point (.) but I I genuinely believe that the Conservatives are in such a state now that the decisions that they make first they have to consider the internal questions of the Conservative Party and only then can they move on to the interests of the Country

Extract 2 occurs after a question from David Frost regarding whether Blair expects there to be an election within the year. In his reply Blair claims that the Conservative Government was "in a state of disintegration" and that they cannot claim to be both "Thatcherites" and "One Nation Conservatives". Frost suggests that perhaps they can to which Blair responds that it is important "that those on top and in charge of the party give it a clear sense of direction".

It is worth noting that Blair couches his subsequent talk in extract 2 in such a way that he displays sensitivity to potential accusations, "I mean I hope you will take this as more than just a sort of boring political point" (lines 8-10). This formulation could be seen as
functioning as a disclaimer which orientates to possible scepticism (on the part of both his interlocutor and the wider television audience) concerning the reasons for Blair's criticism. An opposition leader's criticism of the Government can easily be dismissed as merely reflecting vested political interest, Edwards & Potter (1992), by naming and disclaiming such a charge Blair could be seen as denying the ground for this sort of criticism. This is further reinforced by the tone of Blair's criticism of the Government - which implies that his remarks are prompted by concern or worry about the country rather than 'bare-faced' partisan dislike of the Conservative Government; "I mean I seriously wonder (.) how the country is going to be governed properly" (lines 6 & 7). In this way Blair manages what Edwards & Potter (1992) term an "indirect" blaming - that is he blames the Government whilst appearing to display concern about the 'national interest'. Thus Blair's charge against the Government is less easily dismissed as merely a reflection of party-political interest - instead he positions himself as being concerned with the 'worthy' issue of 'the national interest'.

Implicit in extract 2 is the notion that putting party political interests before the interests of the country can be seen as evidence for the country being in "such a state" - and is something for which parties and Governments can be held accountable. Thus extract 2 demonstrates the way in which talk can be understood as both drawing upon culturally held ideas and accomplishing interactional moves. That is in extract 2 Blair draws upon (and maintains) the notion that governments should think of the national interest before party interest - yet he puts these ideas to work in a specific interactional context to achieve a particular function - in this case a blaming.
Extracts 1 and 2 illustrate that talk about intent can be seen as something other than a mere reporting upon an inner mental state. The constructions of intent by Clarke and Blair could be seen as argumentative acts - tailored to the specific rhetorical setting in which they occur. That is their talk about the national interest can be seen as making a bid for a particular version of reality and attempting to undermine other versions. In both extracts the notion of intending to pursue the national interest was contrasted with an alternative construction of intent - this echoes chapter 5 in which contrasts between self and others were explored. In chapter 5 it was argued that contrasts could be seen to attend to a variety of situationally specific functions. The ‘contrast structure’ (Smith, 1978, Edwards, 1997) in this chapter could be conceptualised as a rhetorical tool which in this context of producing contesting and disputable utterances may orientate to possible audience reactions to the claims being made. With regard to the current data the contrast structures could be seen as accomplishing a number of functions; first they might serve to voice and dispute possible challenges to the version of intent which is being produced. Second they could define some of the distinctive properties of acting in the 'national interest'. Third they perhaps help to reify the notion of the 'national interest' - thus by contrast with other forms of intent the potentially nebulous, slippery concept appears rather more clear and solid.

Extracts 1 and 2 certainly demonstrate marked similarities, they both show an orientation to argumentative context, both deploy contrast structures and both refer to the 'national interest'. Yet these surface similarities belie the context and detail dependent nature of function. Thus talk about 'the national interest' may achieve exoneration - yet it may also achieve a blaming or some other function such as a topic shift. The account giving
perspective was keen to iron out such confusion assuming that function is inherent within the utterance itself and a crude conception of situation (e.g. speaker being required to explain a deviant act) - as such it focused predominantly on the various utterances which were depicted as 'exonerating'. Viewed from a discursive perspective the above extracts demonstrate not only diversity of function (for utterances which on the surface have similarities) but more important they illustrate the way in which the function of an utterance is shaped by the detail of the talk (rather than the essential 'type' it exemplifies) and the surrounding talk context in which it occurs.

(b) The construction of intent and 'ideological' functions of talk about the national interest

In the analysis of extract 3 - some attention is given to the way in which intent and more generally politics is constructed and some of the ideological implications that this particular version of the world may have are considered.

Extract 3

From BBC TV's 'Newsnight' broadcast 5th May 1995 in the context of poor local election results for the Conservative Party. John Major - who was Prime Minister at the time - is speaking to a press conference which he hosted on the lawn at Downing street. (J.M. = John Major)

1  JM: To those who may suggest as some have done that the Conservative Party has its back to the wall I would simply say we will do precisely what the British Nation has always done all through its history when
it had its back to the wall and that is turn round
and fight for the things it believes in (. ) and
that’s what I shall do [. . ] We have had to take some
very difficult decisions (. ) I know those decisions
hurt but I have to say to you I believe it was in
our long-term interest to take those decisions (. )
if they have concerned people we have paid an
electoral price for them in the short term but I
believe in the long term they will prove to be right
and I am prepared (. ) er to defend the policies I’ve
adopted for precisely that reason and I still
continue to do so up to the election I believe we
shall win

[..] = tape edited.

Notwithstanding the problems of importing analyst’s glosses to make sense of ‘wider context’ (Schegloff, 1997, in press) it can be noted that the talk in extract 3 occurred after poor local election results for the Conservative Party and that the speech from which it was taken was delivered on the 50th anniversary of the allied forces 'Victory Over Europe'. Given this context the historical allusions "we will do precisely what the British Nation has always done all through its history when it had its back to the wall and that is to turn round and fight for the things it believes in" (lines 3 - 6) could be read as connoting and constructing the role of the UK during the Second World War. The explicit parallel between the situation of the Conservative party and that of the UK during the Second World War lifts the analogy of war as a vehicle or tool for
understanding political life - a device which Fiske (1987) cites as quite prevalent in televised political talk. Here it's specific terms of reference introduce an added feature - it's not just the language of battle and fighting but of fighting in the way that Britain did in the Second World War. For a British audience such an analogy could be seen as connoting a positive value - fighting on the 'right' side, for principle; "for the things it believes in" (line 6).

Extract 3 reveals some orientation to issues of 'warranting' - that is Major provides grounds for believing that his intent was genuinely to act in 'the national interest'. In particular the unpopularity of the Government is highlighted - by reference to "difficult decisions" (line 8) which have "concerned people" (line 11) and for which the Conservative party has had to pay "an electoral price" (line 12). By highlighting the unpopularity of the decisions Major implies that party or individual motives were not at work and that instead he acted out of some higher value. Beyond this warranting function (which is returned to in more detail in the analysis of extract 5) it is possible to suggest certain ideological functions in the talk.

First, the "turn round and fight" (lines 5 & 6) analogy personifies and individualises the nation (in a manner parallel to newspapers personification of the economy in Rae & Drury, 1993) - that is the UK is construed in terms often associated with individuals 'turn round', 'fight'. In personalising the concept of nation it is also to some extent homogenised - implicitly if the nation can be thought of as an individual then it can be perceived as sharing the unity and common interests which an individual is often assumed to embody (Sampson 1993). The idea that the nation has shared mutually
compatible interests - as opposed to diverse mutually exclusive ones has been conceptualised by Hall (1973) and subsequently Fowler (1991) as the 'ideology of consensus'; "Consensus assumes that, for a given grouping of people, it is a matter of fact that the interests of the whole population are undivided, held in common" (1991: 49). Such construction of consensus - in this case shared interests - could be seen as crucial to maintaining an acceptance of the political and economic status quo. Thus if all share a common interest then it is entirely appropriate for others to represent and pursue "the nations interest" - we don't need a voice of our own to raise our own separate perhaps conflicting interests.

Second, reference to 'the national interest' in this context could be seen as serving to construct politics in a way which emphasises the notion of the courageous individual. This is evident in the passages in which Major draws a parallel between the personified nation of the past and his actions and intentions in the present: "and that's what I shall do" (lines 6 & 7) "I am prepared (.) er to defend the policies I've adopted" (lines 14 & 15). This emphasis on fighting for and defending the things he "believes in" (line 6) illustrates a pattern of speech which both Silverstone (1984) and Livingstone & Lunt (1994) associate with the romantic genre. The notion of a 'romantic genre' acts as a means of conceptualising certain features of the talk and can enable certain features such as the emphasis upon a courageous or heroic individual to be brought into sharp relief. Within the current context Major could be seen as constructing a narrative in which he is in some sense heroically pursuing 'the national interest' whatever the obstacles or difficulties.
This reference to the possible ideological functions of extract 3 echoes Rucinski's (1992) analysis of news which suggests that journalists also emphasise individual actors and human interest angles at the expense of others constructions of news. Such personalisation of politics could be seen as important in ideological terms both because of the potential pacification of the audience and the diversion of attention which it serves to provide. With regard to pacification of the audience Bennett (1988) argues that personalised news "encourages people to take an egocentric rather than a socially concerned view of political problems. Moreover, the focus on attractive political personalities encourages a passive attitude among a public inclined to let those personalities do their thinking and acting for them." (Cited Rucinski (1992, p.93). On the issue of diverting attention Edelman (1988) suggests that personalisation can protect ongoing institutions "To personify failure .. is to minimise the chance that public restiveness or protest will force institutional change" (cited Rucinski 1992, p.93).

Extract 3 illustrates the way in which reference to 'the national interest' can be analysed at a level which takes into account certain macro or ideological implications of the construction of political intent. Clearly there is a danger that a priori conceptions such as 'personalisation of politics' or the use of the 'romantic genre' can be emphasised at the expense of analysing the data itself. On its own such an approach is problematic because it can rely far more on the researcher's own conceptions than any evidenced and inspectable data. That is theories can be cited and deployed rather than focusing attention on the extract against which readers can assess the merits and demerits of any interpretation offered. These issues are returned to in the concluding discussion but for now it can be noted that in this chapter 'ideological' aspects have been referred to so as...
to indicate a possible layer of analysis within a chapter which otherwise attends more to the local or interaction orientated dimensions of talk about 'the national interest'. Without doubt the talk in extract 3 itself could be explored in terms of a wide range of other functions or activity orientations - although its monologic form may make them a little more difficult to analyse.

However a sensitivity to the particular details of talk and its implications beyond the immediate interactional interface can further enhance our sense of both the range of functions and the multiple layers of context within which discourse is produced.

(c) Orientating to challenges to talk about the national interest

The preceding extracts have stressed that context shapes the function of talk about 'the national interest'. Extracts 4 and 5 develop this emphasis upon context by exploring how interlocutors can problematise claims to have acted in the national interest - and how speakers can orientate to such challenges.

(i) Orientating to charges of nationalism

Extract 4

This extract is taken from ITV's 'Sunday Programme' broadcast on the 26th May 1996 when the Conservative Party formed the Government of the UK. The interview occurs in the context of the Labour opposition party adopting a broadly similar policy towards Northern Ireland as the Conservative Government. Mo Mowlam - then Labour spokesperson on Northern Ireland - is being interviewed.
but don't you worry sometimes that you might be over
doing the 'her Majesty's Loyal Opposition' bit and
shadowing the Government too much

well that accusation would (. ) hit me harder in
Northern Ireland than anywhere else (. ) errm but I
don't (. ) think that's the case whether it be Beef
we put our opposite viewpoint we've argued that the
Government has made a mess up of it we've argued
they should have strategic err plans in place to get
us out of this problem and over Northern Ireland
we've had our differences >over prisoners over
marches over the economy< so I don't think we are
overdoing it what we are doing is trying to put the
interests of the country first and not in this kind
of tail end this kind of rump of this

but all this talk Mo

>I'm sorry to interrupt you< all this talk
of putting the country first that sounds
like you're wrapping yourself in the Union Jack
the same as the Government

no I'm not wrapping myself in the Union Jack I
actually want what's best for Britain and I don't
find any trouble in saying that I don't kind of see
union jacks flying around me as I say it >but I do
want what's best for the country I do want what's best for the peace process I don't think that's craven nat nationalism I think that's doing what's best what people need at this point which the Government isn't delivering

In extract 4 a consideration of the surrounding talk context serves to illustrate that talk about 'the national interest' should not be seen as simply a rhetorical tool which can be used in any context to persuasive effect. If the extract had been edited such that only lines 1-14 appeared the danger would be that 'the national interest' may be understood (in line with the account giving approach) as some form of context-free argumentative device. However a consideration of the surrounding talk context enables us to see the disputable nature of talk about the interests of the country.

In lines 13 and 14 Mo Mowlam draws upon the notion of putting the "interest of the country first" to exonerate the Labour Party from the charge of "shadowing the Government too much" (line 3). Subsequently the interviewer reconsrues the claim to put the interests of the country first as "wrapping yourself in the Union Jack the same as the Government" (lines 20 &21). Here talk about seeking the interests of the country has not been accepted as an honest report upon prior intent but instead has been reworked as an attempt at nationalistic and populist rhetoric which implicitly could be seen as ‘interested’ (Edwards and Potter, 1992) - motivated out of a desire to be popular with the audience.
Mo Mowlam subsequently challenges this accusation by deploying what Pomerantz (1986) terms 'an extreme case formulation'; "I don't kind of see Union Jacks flying around me as I say it" (lines 24 & 25) - "I don't think that's craven nat nationalism" (lines 27 & 28). Thus the challenge is itself reworked as implying extreme nationalism which is more easily denied. However whilst Mo Mowlam challenged the accusation of "wrapping yourself in the Union Jack the same as the Government" (lines 20 & 21) - the very fact that such a connotation was offered has made talk about "the interests of the country" disputable. Thus a consideration of talk context serves to further illustrate that whatever repertoire is drawn upon there is as Billig (1987) argues no completely final, last word - instead all formulations can be rendered disputable.

(ii) Warranting claims to have acted in the national interest

Across several of the earlier extracts in different ways the issue of warranting has appeared. In particular it has been argued that politicians claiming to have acted in 'the national interest' are vulnerable to the charge that "they would say that" (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Extract 5 below explores in detail one particular example of how politicians can orientate to sceptical readings of their utterances.

Extract 5

This extract is taken from Independent Television's 'Channel Four News' 7th December 1994 - when the Conservative Party formed the Government of the UK and more specifically the day after the Conservative Government's defeat in a vote on legislation seeking to increase VAT on domestic fuel. Emma Udwin is interviewing the Conservative Prime Minister John Major.
but the voters don't seem to thank you for it
and you may come back and say 'oh well time will
they will in time' but only today you were
talking about the need to slow down the recovery
(so they're not going to

[no I won't answer I won't answer in that
fashion if if >you were to put that point to me<
what I would say to you about that is
we have had to take some very difficult and
very painful long term decisions a little bit of
inflation is often quite popular electorally
people get bigger wages or bigger social security
err payments what we're trying to do is create a
low inflation economy for the long term and that
means hard decisions very good for the future
very good for Great Britain as a country but
in the short term involves many unpopular and
difficult decisions now we have pursued those
consistently over the last fourteen years that's
why our economy is doing so much better than the
others that's why unemployment is falling
but because we've taken those unpopular decisions
of course it reflects upon the Government's
standing in the short term
This extract is taken from a subsequent passage in the same interview.

EU but you are now in effect a minority Government how can you do anything (. ) I think people seeing this Government see it limp from one crisis to another how do you rise above that=

JM =well is that may well be how you err present it and how you see it (. ) but if you're limping from one crisis to another (. ) please explain to me why the economy is doing so much better than anybody else (. ) please explain in this limping how we uniquely across Europe have got unemployment falling by well over four hundred and fifty thousand (. ) please explain why inflation has come down to two percent (. ) that's not limping along (. ) that's taking decisions that are uncomfortable (. ) difficult (. ) where lots of people will ask you to take short term decisions that may seem expedient and popular today or tomorrow (. ) but pushing them to one side (. ) because the long term outcome is right for this Country and that is what we're going to go on doing

Extract 5(a) occurs after an exchange in which John Major was asked whether he thought the Conservative Government looked "like a Government at the moment". In his reply immediately prior to extract 5(a) Major listed a variety of 'achievements' which he attributed to the Government.
In extract 5(a) Major directly addresses the interviewer's projection of his possible response and in so doing provides some form of contrast between the reply the interviewer predicted he might give "oh well time will (.) they will in time" (lines 2 & 3) and his own acknowledgement of unpopularity. Thus Major does not challenge the charge of unpopularity but instead he reworks it as evidence of a particular sort of long term vision. This rests on what Montgomery (1991) refers to as a generic maxim that is a global claim about 'the way the world is'. In extract 5 (a) this takes the form of a claim about what is popular electorally "a little bit of inflation is often quite popular electorally" (lines 10 & 11). This is contrasted with what the Government has been trying to do "what we're trying to do is create a low inflation economy for the long term" (lines 13 & 14). Such a contrast can be understood as reifying and defining the qualities of the intent which did influence the Government that is as with extracts 1 and 2 earlier the contrast with seeking personal or party advantage can be seen to further clarify the existence and properties of 'the national interest' or what is "good for Great Britain as a country" (line 16).

In his response Major overtly displays an awareness of the unpopularity of the decisions which his Government has taken. This is evident in the generic maxim referred to above; "a little bit of inflation is often quite popular electorally" (lines 10 & 11). In this formulation Major presents an awareness of the popularity of inflation as axiomatic, it is presented as a generic truth rather than a matter of political opinion - this implies that he was well aware of the notion that inflation would be a more popular course of action than that which he and his Government chose.
The idea that his chosen course of action might result in unpopularity is again displayed as obvious to Major later in the extract; "of course it reflects upon the Government's standing in the short term" (lines 23-24). Producing an awareness of the consequent unpopularity of Government decisions could be seen as usefully orientating to and answering the potential charge that Major had not envisaged the unpopularity of his decisions. This is further displayed by reference to; "many unpopular and difficult decisions" (lines 17 & 18) - describing the decisions as such implies that at the time of making the decisions there was an awareness of their unpopularity and it was this that made them "difficult". Demonstrating an awareness of the unpopularity of the decisions at the time they were taken helps to suggest that Major chose his course of action for reasons other than political expediency - that is it serves to discount (in a manner similar to that considered in extracts 2 and 4) political interest as a motivation behind the decision and instead suggests that something like 'the national interest' may have been at work.

In extract 5(b) Major first challenges the idea that the Government is limping along - positioning such a construction as reflecting the point of view of the individual interviewer and using a series of 'rhetorical' questions that suggest evidence to the contrary. Having done so he directly re-construes the Government's *modus operandi* - "that's not limping along (.) that's taking decisions that are uncomfortable (.) difficult (.)" (lines 37-38). As with extract 5(a) the notion of 'difficult' decisions is foregrounded to suggest that the Government is consciously risking unpopularity in the pursuit of some greater principle or goal. Major subsequently names this goal as pursuing a long term
outcome which "is right for this country" (lines 42 & 43).

In extract 5(b) Major also makes reference to "lots of people" (line 39). To some extent this could be seen as sharing a surface similarity with Alan Clarke's reference to "most other countries and most other administrations" in extract 1 considered above. Whilst the terms of reference are certainly more inclusive in extract 1 - both extracts 1 and 5 could be seen as demonstrating the deployment of some form of consensus. However there is a marked difference between the two with regard to the discursive function of the 'consensus device'. In extract 1 consensus was used by Clarke to corroborate his definition of a 'scandal' - such that Clarke's conception was not seen as merely idiosyncratic or self serving but instead as shared by many others. In extract 5(b) however the consensus of "lots of people" (line 39) is used as a point of contrast to highlight the distinctive principled intent of the Government. The fact that "lots of people" asked Major to take "short term" decisions provides a point of contrast which makes Major's action appear more deliberate, principled and courageous. Hence consensus works here to highlight Major's refusal to bow to pressure and his commitment to principled action. This is made all the more vivid in the subsequent phrase "pushing them to one side (.)" (extract 5(b) line 41). Here a graphic analogy is used which perhaps draws upon and connotates discourses of physical courage - of 'fighting for worthy causes' and thus echoes some of the 'personalising' features referred to in extract 3.

Despite the strong implications of courageous action there is still the possibility that standing against "lots of people" could be seen as reflecting principles of an
idiosyncratic nature - Major orientates to this by reference again to the long-term good of
the country explaining his defiance as rational and well placed "because the long term
outcome is right for this country" (lines 42 & 43). In this way the principled "pushing"
aside of "lots of people" who suggest apparently "expedient and popular" decisions is
presented as evidence of a resilient pursuance of the "long term" good of the country
whatever the prevailing circumstances may be.

In extract 4 Mo Mowlam orientated to the direct challenge from the interviewer
regarding the desirability of talk about 'the national interest'; whereas in extract 5 Major
orientated to the potential challenge regarding the evidence for his claim to have acted in
'the national interest'. Yet both serve to question the assumption of the account giving
perspective that producing an isolated utterance is sufficient to accomplish the function
at hand. By contrast extracts 4 and 5 suggest that any such utterance is open to dispute -
implicit or explicit - and that speakers demonstrate an orientation to such challenges in
their construction of intent.

6.6 Summary discussion

This chapter shares with the account giving perspective both an interest in intention talk
and an emphasis upon the notion that talk can be explored in terms of what it does rather
than merely what it refers to. However the account giving approach could be held
accountable for the charge that which Edwards & Potter (1992) and Edwards (1997)
bring against much of psychology - namely a treatment of language which is "sanitised
and shorn of context" (1992, p.157). That is the account giving approach preferred to
work with abstracted categories rather than intricate details - it chose simple isolated utterances over troublesome contextually embedded discourse.

By contrast the discursive approach adopted throughout this thesis takes seriously the often discarded issues of detail and context. Whilst this chapter has drawn loosely upon the notion of interpretative repertoires - this was not to suggest a homogeneous, core content to the talk explored - but rather to both serve as a workable framework for selecting extracts and to hint at the importance of talk content and context. In this way the selection of extracts dealing with 'the national interest' was not the straight-jacket that account giving typologies had been - instead it was simply a starting point leading to an appreciation of the situated nature of such utterances. Thus whilst each of the extracts shared a surface similarity of referring directly or indirectly to 'the national interest' - it was the particulars of detail and context which served to elucidate whether the utterances functioned as blamings or exonerations.

The concept of an interpretative repertoire also gave a framework for thinking about the constitutive content of talk about 'the national interest'. That is it clarified an analytic perspective which understands talk as producing but one version of reality for which others could be substituted. This starting point enabled some tentative thoughts about the ideological implications of constructing political intent in terms of 'the national interest'. Such a frame of reference moves beyond consideration of interlocutory functions - and thus opens up areas left entirely to one side by the account giving literature. Whilst such work is prone to the charge (and practice) of importing a priori ideological assumptions into the interpretation of texts - it may usefully hint at the multiple layers of function for
a given piece of text and indeed the way in which readings of function reflect not only the text but also the researcher's unavoidably 'constructing' role in analysis (Billig, in press, a, b).

The very attempt in this chapter to explore talk context served to highlight aspects of participants' talk which would have been missed had the analysis simply tracked down 'the key utterance'. In addition to revealing the diversity of function the wider talk context demonstrated that intent acts as a live argumentative issue to which participants orientate. One aspect of this was displayed in the deployment of specific warranting devices e.g. the use of consensus, generic maxims and cited others. Another was evidenced in the way seeking 'the national interest' was contrasted with other possible intentions, such a 'rhetorical contrast structure' could be seen as voicing and disputing alternative constructions whilst defining and reifying claims regarding 'the national interest'. Furthermore, exploration of the talk context within which constructions of intent occurred suggested that a claim to have acted in 'the national interest' may not be the final or the only utterance in an exchange but may have to deal with potential challenges regarding the truth or even the very intent behind making such a claim.

Questions could be raised regarding the applicability of the current analysis to 'more general' or 'everyday' contexts. Such a concern does have some grounds - it is easy to envisage that constructing ones intent in terms of the national interest is a more likely point of reference for a politician asked to account for party policy within a televised studio than for a partner asked to account for a pile of unwashed dishes in a private
domestic kitchen. Yet whilst it may be appropriate to bear in mind this generalised context in which all of the extracts occurred the impact or 'effect' of this generalised context will never become so discrete that it can be measured and completely taken into account. Thus one cannot simply identify 'the' effects of television or being a politician such that they can be removed leaving behind an underlying context free 'law' regarding intention talk. Nor indeed is there the possibility of substituting the current data for an alternative range of 'context free' data - whose findings would transcend the context in which they occurred - thus material from courtrooms, domestic arguments or interviewees in a research project are all instances of talking located within specific contexts - although these issues are given further consideration in the concluding discussion. Furthermore the core finding of this chapter is that context is much more fined grained than crude categories of person (politician) and situation (talking on television) allow for. Instead the chapter suggests that to understand intention talk the talk itself has to be taken seriously in all its detail and in all its surrounding talk context.

Thus the current chapter has sacrificed the deference for solid abstracted essences and a quest for generic laws which has dominated the diverse perspectives upon intent within psychology. However if held to account for such a shift in emphasis one might seek exoneration by reappraising the balance sheet; although solid essences and generic laws have been lost- textual detail and contextual sensitivity have been gained. Whilst this may disappoint high hopes of concrete laws - it can still excite with the possibility of a creative and never-completed exploration of participants' improvised orientation to an ever-shifting context.
7.1 Review of the Chapters

This thesis has explored some of the ways in which the discourse of politicians, news journalists and audiences can be approached in terms of their activity orientation. In doing so it has used Goffman’s notion of footing as a starting point from which to consider how talk is positioned by speakers and co-participants and how this positioning can enable the claims made appear more truthful. Thus attention was paid to the ways in which politicians could skilfully cite others to endorse their ideas and how news journalists through their interactions were able to mutually position their talk as objective and authoritative. The thesis has also considered the discourse of participants who were interviewed having watched an extract of televised political news. Although this talk covered a vast array of areas and is therefore infinitely classifiable attention was paid to talk which related to issues of viewer identity and also passages in which contrasts were drawn between the speaker and others. Whilst these two themes could be glossed as being about the participants’ identity, the focus was critical of any attempt to either classify or cognitivise the utterances - instead they were explored in terms of the interaction orientation they displayed. That is the talk was seen as pulling off a variety of (inter)actions rather than simply revealing (or concealing) a fixed, cognitive, inner identity. The thesis also drew upon talk of politicians to explore a recurrent piece of talk content - that is talk which made reference to ‘the national interest’. Here the analysis suggested that mere emphasis on the activity potential of isolated utterances could be misleading as attention needed to be placed on talk within its context. Looked at in this way it was argued that apparently similar utterances could be seen as accomplishing
different actions because of the different talk contexts in which they are produced. These themes will be expanded upon in reviewing the contributions of the five empirical chapters.

Chapter two explored the way in which politicians warrant their claims by the skilful deployment of cited others. Such citation of others can be seen as a footing shift - that is a device which enables speakers to position and reposition their relationship to the utterances they produce. Hence to use Goffman's (1979) terms politicians often shift from voicing ideas or opinions which are positioned as simply their own to animating those which others for which others are constructed as author (producing the very form of words used) or principal (sharing the sentiments expressed). Clayman (1992) illustrated that the citation of others can be an important means by which news journalists achieve neutrality. By citing challenges or controversial claims which are explicitly attributed to others (who are positioned as author and principal) the news journalist can be seen as merely animating the sentiments of others and hence appear neutral. In chapter two it was argued that politicians citation of others differs to that of news journalists considered by Clayman, rather than using citation to appear as the neutral animator of others’ claims politicians cite others to corroborate the claims which they themselves are making.

From this perspective it was argued that politicians’ talk could be understood as citing others so as to orientate to the potential charge of merely constructing reality so as to suite their vested party-political interest. The citing of others was not positioned as some context free law or persuasive tool - but was instead understood as a contextually
sensitive move which could itself be challenged in the wider talk context. Thus chapter two provides three challenges to experimentally driven social psychological takes on persuasive communication. First, it suggests that exploring non-manipulated data - such as politicians actual talk - is valuable in allowing us to arrive at a better description of the process of persuasive talk. Rather than seeking to prove the causal efficacy of variables about which the experimenter already has a strong hunch (e.g. source expertise) it is fruitful to deepen our understanding of what actually happens in political talk which is treatable as a persuasive attempt. Second, chapter two suggests that by exploring the actual talk of politicians the flexibility of speakers footing is revealed. Whilst experiments in persuasive communication implicitly equated animator, author and principal an exploration of actual talk reveals that animators may draw upon other authors or principals - as such they may variously construct and position their talk. Third, rather than arriving at concrete laws of persuasion which are assumed to operate in a relatively context-free manner, chapter two illustrated the ways in which the citation of others both orientates to the particulars of the talk context in which it occurs and can be challenged and undermined by surrounding talk. Thus instead of a persuasive tool which can be mapped into a context free model the device of citing others to corroborate claims is a context sensitive move which is open to various forms of rhetorical challenge and reconstruction.

Chapter 3 developed the ideas on footing within the work of Goffman (1979) and Clayman (1992) in the light of Hartley’s (1992) and Fiske’s (1987) interest in the ways in which the news comes to appear objective and authoritative. In chapter three attention was paid to the way in which studio news-readers introduce and interact with news
correspondents. It was argued that studio news-readers' introductions could be understood as not only attending to issues of addressivity (indicating who are the intended recipients of the utterances) but more important as a means of positioning the correspondents’ talk. Through the use of introductions which emphasise the team membership of the correspondent, the immediacy of their report and their proximity to the events to be talked about the introductions could be understood as positioning the correspondents’ talk such that is more readily hearable as a reflection of ‘the way things are’ rather than a mere consequence of the processes, limitations and needs of constructing a news story. In this way the processes could be understood as exemplifying what Potter (1996) drawing on Woolgar (1988) calls ‘externalising devices’ - that is the emphasis upon news team membership, immediacy and proximity to the events being talked about can each be understood a working to position the events themselves - rather than the correspondent or studio news-reader - as determining the way in which they are reported upon.

In exploring the interaction between studio news-reader and correspondent Clayman and Whalen’s (1988/89) emphasis on news interviews as mutual achievements was used as a starting point. Clayman and Whalen (1988/89) had made reference to the way in which politicians can be understood as largely co-operating with television news journalists in accomplishing an interview and in tending to position the news journalist as occupying a relatively ‘impartial’ position. Chapter three echoed this interactional focus but suggested that there was a far greater degree of mutual endorsement between studio news readers and correspondents than between studio news-readers and politicians. An analysis of interaction sequences suggested that when politicians were interviewed
issues of their accountability were foregrounded, their responses were problematised, their position was rendered contestable and the ‘floor’ (or right to speak) was handled differently when compared to interviews involving correspondents. Furthermore politicians were more likely to problematise a question asked by the studio news-reader than correspondents. Collectively these differences in talk sequences were understood as orientating to the co-construction of the correspondents (and to an extent the news-readers) as ‘impartial’ and ‘authoritative’. Links were drawn between aspects of this warranting talk and Barthes’ (1973) concept (tapped into by Fiske, 1987, and Hartley, 1992) of exnomination which emphasised the apparent ‘truthfulness’ of claims which seem to be free from a particular ‘point-of-view’. It was argued that studio news-readers’ introductions and interactions served to ‘nominate’ or ‘position’ the contributions of politicians such that they were hearable as representing a particular, contestable point-of-view which was thus easier to challenge and dismiss. News-readers’ introductions and interactions tended to show less signs of ‘nominating’ the contributions of correspondents - positioning them as potentially less easy to challenge with alternative points of view. Above all chapter 3 that the aspects of ‘truthfulness’ or warranting which the interviews between news-reader and correspondent could be heard as orientating to were not ‘achieved’ within isolated utterances issued by the speaker themselves but instead took the form of sequences of talk which orientated to the co-construction of ‘objectivity’ and ‘impartiality’.

Chapters 4 and 5 explored aspects of the talk of participants who were interviewed following a screening of an item from television news. The corpus of talk data generated by unstructured interviews was found to encompasses an enormous breadth of topics and
demonstrated a vast array of conversational moves. As such the particular focus taken could not be easily attributed to the content of the data itself but instead was a somewhat arbitrary analytic move. In chapter 4 attention was paid to the way in which audiences talk about their viewing attitudes and behaviour could be seen to vary considerably such that one interviewee could within the course of a single interview adopt a variety of positions which defy the ready classification present within some media studies work. Rather than developing a new improved classificatory scheme chapter four sought to understand participants’ talk about their viewing behaviour or ‘viewer identity’ as astute interaction sensitive moves. In this way chapter 4 shared with Bakhtin the notion of identity being constructed in language rather than talk being a mere reflection of some separate, fixed essence. However this constructionist theme was developed in a way not fully explored in Bakhtin’s work - that is consideration was given to the way in which the ‘constructions of identity’ produced could be understood as activity orientations. That is rather than been understood simply as reports (accurate or inaccurate) upon ‘inner’ ‘meaning -making’ or ‘outer’ behaviour - participants’ utterances were understood as activities which are shaped for and reshaped by - or orientated to - the ever changing talk context.

Chapter 5 explored the same corpus of talk data as chapter 4 - but rather than considering the contradictory claims of participants it explored the ways in which they produced contrasts between themselves and others. In developing this argument an alternative understanding of contrast - offered by self-categorisation theory - was critiqued particularly with regard to its assumptions that contrast was ‘essentially’ a cognitive operation. Billig’s (1992) concept of the construction of other media consumers as
'gullible' was found in some of the talk explored - however other ways of contrasting self and others were also evident including contrasts which distance the speakers from an assigned category and contrasts which are self-deprecating. Taken together this work suggests that the construction of contrasts between the speaker and others cannot be easily squeezed into one homogeneous, 'most prevalent' type but instead takes a number of forms each of which can be understood as orientating to different types of activities which suite the particular talk context. Thus chapter 5 in common with chapter 4 understands talk concerned with identity issues not as a symptom of interesting social or cognitive phenomena - but as interesting in itself. Rather than being seen as a mere reporting the talk is seen as activity orientated - attending to the interactional issues presented by the surrounding talk context. Furthermore approaching talk in these terms - as sequences of activity - enables us to see something of the subtlety and complexity of its operation.

Chapter 6 analysed a corpus of politicians' talk about intent. In particular it focused on a recurrent construction of intent which concerned talk about 'the national interest'. Instances of talk involving reference to 'the national interest' were treated as drawing upon a common 'interpretative repertoire' that is they were each understood as sharing certain metaphors, figures of speech and other content features. The concept of repertoires acted as a fruitful organising device in the collection of the data - but were not seen as prescribing the activity orientation or function of the politicians' talk. Instead different instances of talk about the national interest - despite their similar content - were seen as attending to different functions including exoneration and blaming. Some consideration was also given to possible 'ideological' functions which talk about 'the
national interest' may hearably orientate to. The key focus however, was on the way in which the surrounding talk context could be understood as shaping what sort of activity talking about the national interest could be taken to be. Context was found to be important in a second sense also - talk about the national interest could be challenged, reworked or de-constructed by the surrounding talk - thus far from being entirely contained in individual utterances talk about the national interest was intertwined with the context in which it occurred.

7.2 Recurrent themes

Across the various chapters outlined above the thesis has touched upon a number of recurrent themes some of which will be outlined below. In particular attention will be paid to the ways in which claims are warranted (especially with reference to footing and positioning of talk), the deployment of contrasts, the emphasis upon talk context, the action-orientation of talk and the appeal to talk detail to make claims about the data. Each of these will be considered in turn before developing some of the implications which the thesis may have for social psychology, media studies and conversational and discourse analysis.

(a) Warranting of claims

First, with regard to the ways in which participants may seek to warrant their claims the thesis has paid particular attention to the positioning of talk and footing - suggesting that the 'truth status' of a piece of talk can be attended to by how the talk is positioned. To some extent (as outlined above) this amounts to an extension of Clayman's (1992) work. Clayman (1992) explored the way in which news journalists could achieve neutrality by
exploiting the fluidity in the ‘production format’ (or issuing of an utterance) - that is rather than the speaker having to accept that they are fixed as the sole author and principal of what they say they can cite claims which they attribute to others. This thesis in applying the perspective to the claims of politicians argued that further functions could be realised by citing others - notably that the ‘citing device’ could be understood as orientating to the corroboration or endorsement of the claim made. Thus politicians were often found to cite recognisably ‘expert’, ‘impartial’ or counter-intuitive sources (such as political opponents) as corroborating their claims.

Some further aspects of citing others relate closely to Edwards and Potter’s (1992) ‘appeal to consensus’ - that is the move which politicians and others make in warranting claims, positions or actions by claiming that large numbers of others say, think or do likewise. In a number of cases throughout this thesis this appeal to consensus could be seen as sharing some similarities of form and function with other types of footing shift considered above. That is the appeal to consensual others as sharing a point of view expressed by a particular politician (or news journalist) can be understood as having a similar appearance and activity potential as the citation of a particular source may have. Both can be seen as (in slightly different ways) attending to the ‘truth’ status of their utterances through reference to others who can be taken to share the sentiments expressed (or in some cases formulate or co-formulate the words issued).

In exploring something of the way in which citation has been skilfully deployed by speakers the thesis is not arguing that the device has a particular function independently of the surrounding talk context - still less that it acts as a context-free causal law with...
citation effecting persuasion. Instead it argues that the act of citation displays speaker sensitivity to the idea of endorsement of their own claims by attributing them to others as formulating the words used or sharing the views expressed.

The concept of footing also relates to more general consideration of the interaction between studio news-readers and correspondents. Whilst it would be somewhat stretching the concept of footing to try and include this within its remit it could be argued that the concept of *positioning* is relevant. In particular it was argued that news-readers’ introductions to and interactions with correspondents could be seen as displaying a sensitivity to issues crudely glossable as ‘objectivity’ and ‘authoritativeness’. Once again the focus was not on uncovering any causal law of persuasion - nor was it on the cognitive intentions or the levers of power presumed to operate ‘behind’, ‘beneath’ or ‘before’ the news-journalists’ talk. Instead an attempt was made to highlight some recurrent features of introductions and interactions and to explore some of the ways in which these may be understood as orientating to the apparent ‘truthfulness’ of their talk. That is attention was paid to versions of reality and modes of address used by studio news-readers in introducing correspondents and also the way in which they treated each others remarks. In this way the ‘positioning’ of talk was considered an interactional or mutual accomplishment - the interview sequence itself displaying sensitivity to the ‘truth status positioning’ which it provides.

**(b) Contrast**

The notion of contrast appeared in the thesis as both an analysts’ and a participants’ resource. In exploring audiences talk it was noted that individuals produced varying and
to some extent contradictory constructions of their viewer identity. Here contrast was deployed by the researcher as a tool for exploring participants discourse. Different versions of viewer identity produced by a single participant were juxtaposed to both challenge notions that there was an identifiable, fixed, essence of ‘self’ or behaviour represented (or even concealed) in the talk. It was argued that the contradictory claims defied easy classification and that any attempt to make sense of them involved speculation on the part of the analyst - not to mention an *a priori* assumption that talk *should* reveal a unitary identity. Instead of concocting some single identity the variation itself was explored in terms of the activity orientation which it ‘hearably’ revealed. Thus rather than claims about viewer identity being treated as merely conveying information (or misinformation) they were considered as ‘actions-in-interaction’ that is as accomplishing (or orientating to the accomplishment of) interactional work. From this perspective a participant who constructs themselves as ‘easily influenced’ may be seen as performing a particular interactional move within a conversation rather than being understood simply in terms of either a ubiquitous tendency towards impression management or a definitive appraisal of their identity. This theme - which will be picked up later - suggests that frequently, in a quest to get at a solid picture of identity, detail and contradiction are ignored and talk is treated as a mere window upon inner thoughts or outer behaviour rather than a site of inter-action in itself.

Contrast was also explored as a participants’ resource - that is a feature explicitly drawn upon in their talk. This was briefly touched upon in considering the ways in which politicians sometimes contrast their claimed motive of acting in ‘the national interest’ with other ‘lesser’ motives such as personal or party political gain. It was suggested here
that the contrast can be considered in terms of the sorts of (rhetorical) activities it attends to - that it may serve to stake, define and (to some extent) reify a claim for acting out of 'honourable' motives. However more attention was given to the deployment of contrast as a feature of 'audience/interviewee's' talk. Thus 'audiences' were found to use contrasts with others in positioning themselves.

To some extent this echoed the work of Billig (1992) which considered the way in which media consumers (of features concerning the royal family) would often contrast themselves with 'impressionable other'. Thus Billig was interested in the way in which participants would favourably contrast their own sophisticated media consumption with the gullibility of others. Whilst this was partially echoed in this thesis it was also extended. That is contrasts with others were explored across a range of topics which went beyond just media consumption and, more important, they were considered to entail far more than simple favourable positioning of self. Thus contrasts with others were considered as interactionally sensitive moves which could take a variety of forms, accomplish a range of activities or functions and which attended to the conversational sequence in which they occurred. In this way it was argued that participants could deploy contrasts in a manner which attends to the surrounding talk context, and that this process could be seen as the site of important activity itself rather than a mere derivative of inner cognitive processes.

(c) Talk context

The issue of talk context emerges and re-emerges through each chapter as crucial for an adequate understanding of the talk explored. Thus the thesis has emphasised the
importance of exploring talk in context rather than isolated utterances. That is, emphasis has been placed upon an appreciation of the way in which utterances orientate to and are shaped by their surrounding talk context. Their context This line of thinking was pursued along a number of inter-related paths.

First, this perspective has been used to critique the notion of attempting to identify ‘the’ context free ‘laws of persuasion’. Thus were attention was drawn to warranting devices care was taken to stress that the types of utterance identified could not be plucked from their context as a simple persuasive tool. First, the whole concept of exploring the effects of a given utterance other than those which are observable from or demonstrably present in the talk itself were (as to a great extent) avoided. Second, it was argued that in exploring talk context it was possible to explore the way in which any rhetorical move, such as citing others or claiming to act in ‘the national interest’ could be seen as one move in an ongoing exchange. Thus co-participants can and did challenge, subvert or otherwise recast such devices in the ensuing talk context - suggesting that such warranting devices are not prepossessed of a particular self-contained, rhetorical potency.

A second way in which context has been found to be important is that (as mentioned earlier) it helps to make sense of contradictory claims. This was particularly evident when considering the ways in which participants variously constructed their ‘viewer identity’. Attention to context enabled the contradictory claims to be recast as contextually sensitive interactions. By taking context into account the clash of isolated utterances can be looked at more deeply.
Third, and closely related to the first two points, the emphasis on context challenges the notion that an isolated utterance can be adequately identified as having or performing a particular function. This point poses potential problems for some of the more ‘monologic’ extracts used in parts of this thesis - a theme which will be picked up later - however it does echo an important strand evidenced elsewhere. In looking at the deployment of a contrast device it was argued that there was not one simple function which it could be seen as accomplishing but that instead it was a flexible resource whose activity potential could best be understood through exploring the device in the context in which it was used. Likewise claims to have acted in ‘the national interest’ were not readily packaged as accomplishing or orientating to one particular type of activity or function - instead the talk context served to shape the sort of inter-action that was taking place. In this was neither discursive device nor the talk content of a single utterance could be understood as entirely determinate of the activity performed in talk - instead that action-accomplishment is co-determined by and identifiable in talk context.

These perspectives on talk context suggest that it is sequences of talk which form the talk-activity rather than simply isolated utterances. Thus it is often across the tapestry of turns that a particular type of activity can be seen to be taking place. This is apparent in considering the interaction between news-readers and correspondents and the comparisons which were made with interactions involving politicians being interviewed. It was across sequences of talk that features such as pursuit or interruption could be heard as present rather than within a single utterance itself. The talk context here could be understood as providing grounds for considering that a particular type of event is
present - that is by observing how an utterance is treated one can consider what sort of activity-event participants treat it as being. In this way talk context encompasses participants' responses to particular utterances and thereby provides an available analytic resource which can be used to some extent to justify a particular type of interpretation of an utterance. But it is also possible that the sequence of is the activity - that the activity is not done in an utterance sandwiched between bits of context but that the sequence itself can be reconfigured as collaboratively (even if antagonistically) pulling of a certain type of inter-action such as interruption, exoneration and problematising or sanctioning answers given. In this way the very use of the word 'context' becomes problematic- because it sets a contrast with an implicitly self-contained, separable, isolated utterance. Instead one stream running through parts of this thesis suggests that sequences themselves are forums of activity.

(d) Activity orientation of talk

In each of the chapters the talk explored whether that of 'politician', 'news-journalist' or 'audience' is understood in terms of its functions or its activity orientation rather than in terms of what it conveys about an 'inner' (cognitive) or 'outer' (behavioural, economic or socio-political) reality. From one perspective this upsets and problematises certain social science conventions of using talk - whether collected by interview or from 'naturally occurring' sources - to get at other dimensions of social reality. In one form common within social psychology this entails viewing talk as only interesting or important insofar as it tells us about the 'important' social phenomena of cognition and behaviour. Sometimes this leads to talk being ignored altogether as too unreliable, in other cases it results in talk being codified or otherwise analysed as some form of
indicator (or even obscurer) of the speakers inner world or outer behaviour. From a
different stance - exemplified in various aspects of media studies literature - talk has
been explored as either revealing audiences’ ‘meaning making’ or behaviour or as
pointing to wider power infused cultural processes. From both perspectives there is
comparatively little attention to what the talk is hearably orientating to or what sort of
activity it entails.

In this thesis the emphasis has been less upon using talk to get at non-talk features and
more upon bringing such features and functions centre-stage. Thus the ‘audience’ talk
which was explored was not used to map a picture of ‘identity’ or behaviour but instead
was examined with regard to what it could be understood as doing or accomplishing
itself. Likewise the talk of politicians and journalists was investigated not in terms of
cognitive or broader social processes but with regard to the functions or activities to
which it attended with various forms of warranting claims being a particularly important
point of focus. Even when talk content was explored as with the analysis of claims to
have acted in ‘the national interest’ it was argued that a range of functions such as
exoneration and blaming were at work.

In each case the action orientation could be approached as dependent upon, identifiable
by and accomplished across a talk sequence rather than being a product of an isolated
utterance. Thus in emphasising action the thesis has to some extent attempted to avoid a
tendency within the account giving literature and speech act theory more generally
which understands action as inherent within a given phrase or sentence (which in itself is
often hypothetical and devoid of context). Instead the thesis shares some of the thrust of
Schegloff’s (1995) comments; “. . . Discourse involves not just action, but action in interaction and the consequential eventfulness of its absence. Once again, then, co-construction may be most critical to our analysis of discourse when one of the participants is not producing talk or doing anything else visible or hearable. . . . It is the action import of utterances and not just what they are about or what they impart - the action import or non-action import - that regularly drives the interactional construction of extended spates of talk, or discourses.” (1995: 202).

From this perspective even non-talk can be seen as an interaction-orientated move which may hearably problematise or sanction the preceding utterance and which plays a role in the unfolding inter-action trajectory. Thus the focus on action within this thesis attempts to encompass something of the ‘action-within-interaction-sequences’ emphasis which Schegloff (1995) offers. More broadly this stance offers a reconsideration of the role ascribed to talk in social science (or other) research. Rather than talk being understood as a mere tool for accessing the ‘real’ data, a mere conveyor of information about the social world talk is recast being the data of interest, as enacting the social world.

(e) Appeal to talk detail

A further theme running throughout this thesis is some level of orientation to demonstrably present features of talk rather than an over-reliance upon theoretical assumptions. Aspects of this claim can (and subsequently are) challenged but there are at least some grounds for arguing that the thesis pays attention to the detail of utterances and interaction sequences rather than relying on an analyst’s gloss of what was said or the removal of talk from the talk context in which it is embedded.
One aspect of this reliance on talk detail is the ethnographic concept of a members' or participants' perspective on the data. This stance which Schegloff (1997, 1998) enthusiastically advocates entails using the 'talk participants' themselves as a clue to what is actually taking place within a conversational sequence. Aspects of this were present in exploring some of the ways in which studio news-readers sanctioned the discourse of correspondents and problematised that of politicians. Rather than simply being visible within the content of an isolated turn - it was how the participants treated each others' turns which cast light upon what sort of activity had taken place. This echoes (and indeed drew upon) the work of Bilmes (1997) who notes it is the treatment of overlapping talk in a particular way that enables us to claim that an interruption has taken place. The same can be applied to a range of talk activities. That is that by exploring how participants treat each others utterances and sequences - do they hold the other accountable, do they change topic, do they reissue the same utterance - we can produce some measure of a members' perspective on what sort of activity has transpired.

It must be noted (as is mentioned below in considering the limitations of the thesis) that some aspects of the thesis make less overt use of participants treatment of each others remarks as a warrant for claims about the sort of activity which is taking place. However, there is still some level of emphasis of utterances - even minimal continuers and acknowledgement tokens issued by an interviewer - as forming part of an interactional sequence. Further attempts are made to engage with the details of the talk - considering the functions accomplished by the particular formulation of reality offered and noting how these activity orientations can be shaped for and by and accomplished.
across conversational turns. This appeal to the detail of the talk leads away from bald claims about the operation of cognitive or social forces which are merely revealed in the text and instead works from the text and its specific features to consider the activity orientation which it evidences. Furthermore it questions the quest for causal laws found in certain social psychological and (to a lesser extent) media studies perspectives. The warranting devices and modes of constructing intent which this thesis highlights are not seen as context-free tools, but rather it is emphasised that all such discursive moves can and are often upset, challenged and over-turned when surrounding talk content is brought into the picture. As such each of the claims made even about relatively monologic utterances stress the importance of talk detail and recognise that like all utterances such claims should be understood as contingent upon and co-determined with co-participants.

7.3 (Some of the) Limitations with the present thesis

Any list of limitations within a thesis can be understood as attending to several different types of activity. This list is a partial outline of some of the shortcomings which are apparent within the present thesis and at various points inter-link with ideas found elsewhere in this concluding discussion.

One quite apparent feature is that the transcripts are of vastly uneven quality. Whilst some provide considerable detail - others are rather more limited providing far less detail
regarding pauses, intonation, speech cadence and so on. This limitation is not merely aesthetic - instead it provides less scope for alternative detailed readings of what is taking place. Thus certain types of alternative analysis may be precluded by the absence of available transcript detail. A further problem is that the thesis has made no use of non-verbal material which Goodwin (1984) and Heath (1984) have used to good effect and which Bilmes (1997) shows can be of relevance to considering instances of interruption in news interviews. Thus the emphasis on talk can potentially lose important features of interaction data and imply that talk in itself is sufficient and complete.

A further set of problems relate to the indications of the strength of patterns used in the thesis. Here two rather different sorts of challenges could be raised. First, most of the thesis tends to gloss patterns in vague terms - making references to ‘tendencies’, ‘often’ and so on. This can be criticised for its lack of precision - a regularity is implied but not measured. One part of the thesis (chapter 3) orientates to these potential charges by making reference to the frequency of occurrence of particular types of talk activity, such as the use of first name, indications of immediacy and reference to location. Yet this opens up a different line of criticism - that is that measures of prevalence can imply (or even presume) that the item measured can be unproblematically reported upon. A glimpse of this problem can be seen in the convoluted reference to prevalence found in parts of chapter 3 - even apparently clear-cut speech items can become a little less clear when attempts are made to measure them (a problem which is echoed in chapter 6 where repertoires of ‘the national interest’ slip from an unproblematic definition when one is attempted). In this way counts of the occurrence of a particular discursive move - which Schegloff (1993) refers to as the ‘numerator’ - can be problematic to the extent that the
identification of that move is contestable. Whilst this issue is apparent in a detailed
analysis of talk and it is readily obscured in the presentation of a simple number.

Likewise the very ‘pool’ of data in prevalence claims - labelled the ‘denominator’ by
Schegloff (1993) - can on inspection appear to be open to various formulations. Thus in
chapter 3 reference was made to the number of interviews out of the 36 between news
reader and correspondent which revealed a particular pattern. Yet the very constitution of
the 36 is unclear - are they to stand for the total pool of such interviews? Although no
part of this thesis would condone such a claim one can question exactly what the
prevalence figures suggest - what are we told when it is claimed that there is one
exception to a particular discursive move in the sample available? The danger is then
that the use of numbers can imply a level of certainty about the entity being counted and
that the frequency of its occurrence in the pool of available data is indicative of its
prevalence within the total set of relevant talk sequences. Some awareness of these
possible dangers may mitigate such interpretations - encouraging the figures to be seen
as indicative of patterns to be further investigated.

A further limitation to be briefly considered is that some of the categorising terms used
are rather reified - being treated as if they reflect some stable, identifiable, underlying
reality. One aspect of this is partly evident in the way in which repertoires of ‘the
national interest’ could be seen as being positioned as a discrete entity which can be
spotted and abstracted from its talk context and which shares features with other such
repertoires. Whilst there may be some validity in this as a criticism of interpretative
repertoires more generally it could be noted that the emphasis of the chapter attending to
interpretative repertoires (chapter 6) was very much on diversity of function of what may
seem to be similar looking discursive content and that far from being able to be shorn of
context the operations of the repertoire are co-determined in context.

Perhaps a more telling criticism can be made in questioning the way in which the
sources of talk are identified and segregated. That is the various chapters separate out
and label talk as being issued by ‘politicians’, ‘news-journalists’ and ‘audiences’. These
labels can imply a homogeneity within the groups - that in approaching politicians talk
for example we are essentially dealing with a broadly similar type of talk. They can also
suggest that the significant feature of the talk - what the reader has to know - is captured
in these broad categories. It is quite possible to question whether the utterances of
politicians, news-journalists and audiences can be assumed to have certain properties
simply because of these conventional categories which have been imposed. Thus
politicians being interviewed could equally be dubbed ‘interviewees’ with news-
journalists often being ‘interviewers’, audiences could equally be categorised as
‘interviewees’ and in some cases ‘strangers’ in other cases ‘friends’ in their relationship
to each other or the ‘interviewer’. The problem of applying a relevant category becomes
still more complex when it is noted that in sequences of talk (where more than one
person is interviewed) participants may converse with each other. In the midst of that
conversation (found in ‘audiences talk in chapters 4 and 5) the applicability of the label
‘audience’ or ‘interviewee’ can be seen as more problematic as the audience may
hearably orientate to other sorts of participant positions.

The thesis could also be criticised for its lack of attention to ‘wider’ issues of context.
Some categories of context could easily be seen as potentially relevant but are largely absent. Thus the audience participants could be classified in terms of their; gender, age, occupational status, political affiliation, religious convictions, previous ‘viewing’ experiences, ethnic identity, educational background, personal wealth and relationship with the interviewer and fellow interviewees. Likewise the talk of politicians and news-journalists could be presented with a range of context factors such as; the news stories to which their talk attends, other dominant news items, the broader patterns of social and political life in the country or internationally, economic conditions, prior claims made by a politician, previous interviews undertaken by an interviewer, previous occasions of interviewer and interviewee meeting and the circulation of the arguments, metaphors and phrases appealed to in the participants’ talk. This outline itself of context could be interpreted as a rhetorical move in that the lists of missing context factors (some of which are referred to in the thesis but not used) displays its own limitations, in particular as Schegloff (1997, 1998, in press) suggests ‘relevant’ context can be infinitely expanded. However merely referring to this problem does not entirely address what may be a limitation of much of the thesis from a particular perspective - the issue of context is explored in further detail subsequently.

From a different point of view the thesis could be criticised for its reliance on interview material. Hutchby and Wooffitt (1998) note that this can be problematic both in terms of the scope of applicability of any findings and the availability of members’ orientations to talk as an analytic resource. Thus interview talk can produce devices which are; “an artefact of the interview situations” (1998: 196). Likewise interviews can lack the ‘proof procedures’ available to ordinary conversation where; “an analytic claim about an
utterance can be supported by reference to the ways in which co-participants themselves respond to it.” (1998: 185). News interviews although argued to have identifiable differences with ‘ordinary conversation’ (Greatbatch, 1988) could be seen as less prone to these criticisms. Such interviews tend to - as this thesis has to an extent - be treated as instances of ‘news interview’ talk rather than applied to ‘ordinary’ talk. Furthermore in news interviews as chapter 3 suggested it is still possible to explore how participants orientate to each other. Finally news interviews have been analysed from the conversation analytic perspective to such an extent that a corpus of ‘findings’ with regard to the ways in which the institutional structure has an impact are widely available.

A more serious target of Hutchby and Wooffitt’s (1998) critique is the unstructured one-to-one interview. It is here that the possibility of seeking to make claims beyond the interview situation may arise and that with the researcher often restricting themselves to minimal continuers (mmhm, yeah etc) helps to co-construct a rather more monologic interaction. In this thesis this problem has been partially addressed in several ways. First with regard to lacking a members’ perspective on the data some use has been made (in chapters 4 and 5) of group interviews where two or more interviewees (known to each other) have been involved - this serves to provide the participants’ own set of reactions to each others utterances. Second with regard to scope of claims where a suggestion is made (as in parts of chapter 5) that conversational moves spotted might occur more widely than the interview alone an attempt has been made to draw upon a broader set of analytic data from previously published sources. Third, whilst not entirely addressing the skewed nature of the interaction in unstructured interviews the researcher’s minimal talk and silences are still recognised as part of the interaction.
7.4 Implications for social psychology

Much of social psychology has little direct interest in the sort of talk data that this thesis has gathered - hence there is not one single social psychological perspective which this thesis can be contrasted with. Instead it is possible to consider positionings with regard to several different social psychological perspectives each of which may take a somewhat different view on the data which has been considered. Here three areas will be considered, the social psychology of persuasion, self-categorisation theory and account giving approaches.

As Billig (1987) notes the social psychology of persuasion has had a strong emphasis on seeking generic laws as to who can persuade whom and how. Much of this links in to the historical development of persuasive research which is connected to the US military seeking effective propaganda devices during the Second World War. Yet the quest for the 'laws of persuasion' still shapes current research, this is (as Billig, 1987, notes) reflected in the experimental approach adopted which seeks to control extraneous variables and identify the context-free essences which can be formulated as causally inter-related variables, readily translated into numerous particular situations. The devices identified in this thesis are conceptualised in a very different manner. Thus politicians' orientation to the warranting of their claims - by citing others (chapter 2) - is not explored in terms of its causal efficacy nor is it investigated in a series of experiments but rather the emphasis is on outlining a description of the patterns found in their 'everyday' (non-manipulated) televised talk. Furthermore the (talk) context is considered as co-constructing (or de-constructing) the warranting move. In this way the thesis offers
an approach in which 'generic laws' are replaced with an interest in concrete particulars. This perspective challenges the essentialist quest of persuasive communications research and highlights an area very much neglected by social psychology - namely that of talk in context.

A second area of social psychology touched on in this thesis is that of self-categorisation theory. Generally this perspective would seek to collect quantitative data derived from experiments and questionnaires rather than the sort of interview material used in parts of this thesis (chapters 4 and 5) - however it is still possible to scrutinise self-categorisation theory in the light of talk data. From the stance of self-categorisation theory talk about identity and contrast would be understood as at best a mere reflection of the 'underlying' cognitive calculations where the business of identity really happens. Thus talk which involves contrasts between a participant and others (evident in chapter 5) could be explained by reference to 'inner' cognitive activity - a particular class of category distinction being cognitively 'activated'. This thesis shows how an alternative reading challenges this and instead suggests that talk is intrinsically linked to the context of its production. To assume that talk is simply a symptom of inner cognitive activity is to miss the intricate interaction-work, the careful orientation to talk context which it displays. From the cognitive stance of self-categorisation theory it would be mere coincidence that the formulation of self and other happens to attend to the interaction at hand because it is 'really' or 'essentially' just a product of inner, cognitive activity. Even self-categorisation theorists who would not see such talk data as useable would find it difficult to account for. If they concede that such a piece of talk demonstrates interaction-orientation then a new light is cast on other pieces of talk relating to issues of
identity and contrast and even on the responses given in the (unusual) contexts of questionnaire completion and experimental participation.

As Potter (1998) suggests the *a priori* presumption of cognitivism and its assumed causal status, common in social psychology, can be questioned and indeed re-visioned as an ‘analysts’ category’. This as Potter (1998) notes does not mean that a claim is being made that no cognition is taking place before, during or after talking - nor indeed that our language can easily escape the connotation of cognitivism - even in this thesis the frequent use of ‘orientation’ may for some hint at some ‘strategic’ move. But in line with Potter (1998) it is not necessary to reduce an account of the complexities of language to a ‘cognitivism’ which presumes the importance and easy representation of mental phenomena and potentially detracts from the detailed unfolding of the talk-in-interaction. Instead talk-in-interaction can be considered as a site which is not merely a derivative (accurate or inaccurate) of cognitive calculations - but is instead an active medium in which identities are constructed and contrasted in the midst of attending to interactional issues at hand.

A third aspect of ‘social psychology’ which was considered (in a broad conceptualisation of this institutional definition) - is the work on account giving. To some extent this overcomes some of the shortcomings of the earlier two approaches. There is in the account giving approach a little less emphasis on establishing context-free causal laws (although some is present). Perhaps more significantly this perspective offers a view of language as activity orientated rather than merely a tool (good or bad) for accessing mental life and transferring information. Thus the account giving perspective in seeking
to understand how we explain or account for actions understands talk as accomplishing certain types of action-orientated moves such as exoneration, justification and excuses. The research associated with this tradition has been introduced earlier (chapters 1 and 6) - here it is worth noting some of the features which this thesis has problematised. One limitation of the account giving perspective is that it has often relied upon hypothetical utterances - thus researchers have produced prototypical examples of the various ‘types’ of account which were organised into ever more complex taxonomies. In another strand of the accounts literature research, experiments were used which attempted to measure the effectiveness of various types of accounts which an experimenter (or confederate) would deliver in contrived circumstances. A third aspect of accounts literature considered actual instances of account-giving talk - but these tended to be coded up in researcher’s glosses of the talk in which details and context were easily lost.

This thesis explored the actual talk of politicians who were seen to draw upon an apparently similar type of utterance - concerning ‘the national interest’ (chapter 6). It was argued that despite its similar appearance it could be heard as orientating to a range of functions - including exoneration and blaming. In this way it was suggested that the action-potential or function was not determined simply by the isolated utterance but that it was necessary to consider the talk-context in which it occurred. This problematised typologies which attempt to determine ‘the’ function of an abstracted utterance. Furthermore any sense of the ‘effectiveness’ of an account was not measured in this thesis - but by encompassing the surrounding talk context it was possible to see accounts as collaborative activities occurring in or across sequences of talk. Thus it was argued that context may serve to co-construct or de-construct any account giving utterance -
suggesting that account-giving function should not be considered as self-contained within isolated utterances. Furthermore it was posited that the emphasis on context could not be accessed by crude summaries of the general pattern of the talk but by careful transcription of the particulars of the talk. Thus whilst the thesis endorsed the attention to the action-orientation of language found in the account giving perspective it questioned the treatment of hypothetical or crudely glossed, isolated utterances and stressed the value of exploring the multiple functions of utterances in their talk context.

Across the three areas of social psychology touched on the thesis is critical of the explicit and implicit methodological and ontological commitments. The experimental and questionnaire methods are inter-linked with a conception that particulars, surface details and ‘context’ can be brushed aside in the quest for ‘underlying essences’. These commitments often lead social psychology to ignore language altogether or to treat it as important only in terms of the presumed underlying cognition - or in the account giving case the ‘essential’ type of account it represents. This thesis echoes some of Billig’s (1987) concerns in challenging the commitment to ‘underlying’ essences, the disdain for particulars and the quest for determinability. One difficulty being that the essences often seem to lie elsewhere ‘under’, ‘behind’, ‘beneath’ or ‘before’ language. Even in experiments and questionnaires the data which are gathered are assumed to be mere symptoms of the key target - the cherished cognitive and mental components. The disdain for particulars found in much of social psychology ascribes some greater or more fundamental truth to the ‘underlying’ essence - yet this thesis suggests that the particulars of language are the social phenomena of interest - rather than shadows or reflections of ‘the truth which lies elsewhere’. Finally the quest for determinability -
most marked in the social psychology of persuasion but also present in aspects of self-categorisation theory and (to a lesser extent) account-giving approach - sees ‘context’ as something to be formulated. Thus more sophisticated models of social behaviour are thought to be able to encompass context as effecting persuasion in a particular way or triggering a certain sort of categorisation - whereas this thesis has sought to embrace the unsettling properties of context and to recognise talk itself as context. Whilst identifiable devices may be present in utterances the surrounding talk can co-construct or deconstruct their activity potential. Indeed the talk itself is accomplishing not only within or against the backdrop of a measurable and separate ‘talk context’ - but it is across the turns of talk that the interaction is occurring. That is the context - the talk context - is the phenomena of interest - not reducible to a variable or measurable in its impact but intricately related to any utterance that one might attempt to isolate. Thus the thesis offers a reconceptualisation which urges social psychology to be aware of the assumptions implicit within ostensibly ‘neutral’ and ‘data-driven’ research methods. Also it seeks to celebrate talk not as a vague symptom of interesting social phenomena which lie elsewhere - but as social life itself - being the mode of action and interaction across sequences in patterns which are open for inspection.

7.5 Implications for media research

This thesis has certain implications for media perspectives on both audiences’ and broadcast talk. Whilst certain reception orientated approaches ‘gave audiences a voice’ by collecting audiences responses to programmes in focus groups and interviews the treatment of the pool of discourse was very different to the approach which this thesis has employed. In Morley’s (1980) case ‘wider’ or ‘message-extrinsic’ aspects of context

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such as educational, ethnic, gender and occupational categories were employed to classify the focus group talk which was generated. This provided a way of organising the vast tracts of talk data but did so in a way which relied upon *a priori* concepts of ‘important social categories’ and which subsumed the details and contradictions of the talk into these large groupings. Furthermore any sense that the talk occurred in sequences of interaction was entirely lost in the emphasis upon talk as essentially an accurate (or even sometimes as Hagen, 1994, suggests ‘distorted’) informing or *telling about non-talk phenomena* (such as implicitly *inner*, cognitive material in the form of attitudes and opinions or *outer* behaviour).

This thesis problematises this approach in several ways. First, the heavy reliance upon ‘wider’ issues of context is challenged by considering that such variables are infinitely expandable. Thus whilst one could ask why certain ‘wider’ context issues are not referred to in this thesis it is possible to question what is selected as relevant - occupation, age, sexuality, political affiliation, previous experiences with television news programmes, geographic location, socio-political backdrop against which the interviews were occurring etc. If these sorts of context features are relied upon then any formulation of context is necessarily highly selective. Furthermore the very categories themselves can to some extent be seen as open to various constructions rather than simply and unproblematically assignable. Second, the thesis questions the relative inattention to the actual detail of the talk - the specifics of formulation and the occurrence of contradiction are easily lost when data is glossed and squeezed into an *a priori* category. Third, the occurrence of talk in talk-sequences is neglected in those reception approaches which rely on abstracted utterances of audiences talk. Once talk is
approached as intrinsically related to its surrounding talk context then taking a sequence of talk and carving out particular quotes can be seen as changing the very data itself.

These critiques of Morley (1980) and other similar reception analytic research could be seen as an unfair - focusing on a specific piece of research which at the time of writing is nearly twenty years old. Yet the thrust of the criticism hinges on the way in which language is treated. Certain ethnographically orientated approaches have displayed an interest in aspects of ‘local context’ - but these have been the contexts of viewing television. Thus attention has as Moores (1993) points out encompassed the natural, everyday situations in which audiences engage with television. This thesis argues that when talk itself becomes the focal point it is possible to explore the (talk) context of *talking about* television. That is as chapters 4 and 5 suggest audiences talk about their own and others ‘viewer identity’ can be seen as discursive moves which are intricated within sequences of talk. Such talk need not be treated as simply referential - imparting information or misinformation about viewers behaviour, instead it can be considered as a construction (just as media researchers readily accept that news discourse is constructed) and furthermore that it is activity orientated. In this way the talk is not related to in terms of what it tells about other aspects of the viewers social world but rather as a version of reality issued with an orientation to the action potential of its formulation. Because ‘viewer identity’ or behaviour can be variously constructed it is possible to (as chapters 4 and 5 do) inspect the talk data with the question ‘why is this version produced here and to what effect?’ Yet it should be acknowledged that the critique which this thesis provides of audience research entails a shift in which the attempt to access audiences ‘real’ behaviour or engagement is relinquished. To some extent then the critique this
thesis provides amounts to a different research agenda - one which explores the audiences talk itself as the phenomena of interest rather than perceiving it as a tool to dig out underlying patterns of engagement with television. By putting talk and its operations centre stage other foci - regarding patterns of audiences consumption of the mass media slip from our grasp and if returned to are seen with rather less certainty and 'solidity' than we may have previously experienced.

With regard to broadcast media this thesis picked up some of the broadly semiotic/constructionist concerns of Barthes (1973) as developed by Fiske (1987) and Hartley (1992). In different ways Hartley (1992) and Fiske (1987) drew upon Barthes (1973) concept of *exnomination* to suggest something of the way in which television news can attend to the apparent 'truthfulness or 'objectivity' and 'authoritativeness' of its own telling of events by positioning itself as providing a 'nameless' or 'positionless' point of view. For Hartley (1992) the camera angles employed by television news are done so in a way which suggests that the news is providing a less obviously mediated version of events because the 'point-of-view' of the camera is not made apparent. In a related vein Fiske (1987) drew upon exnomination to suggest that naming contributors may 'nominate' them making their contribution less obviously attributable to a particular person or grouping - whilst unnamed contributions (such as those provided by the studio news reader) allows the claims made to be hearable as *exnominated* - not attributable to a particular (disputable) perspective. Indeed as noted in chapter 3 Fiske's focus on naming seems unnecessarily narrow and suggests that the introductions given by studio news readers to correspondents serve to in some sense undermine them because of their reference to the correspondent's name. Instead this thesis argues that sequences of
interaction can be usefully explored, a theme implicit in Lunt and Livingstone's (1994) consideration of the various positionings of 'experts' on audience discussion programmes. In particular by focusing on the sequences of news readers' interaction with correspondents it attempted to illustrate something of the inter-relation between the very broadly sketched issues of nomination and exnomination and the specific of talk detail.

In this way the thesis suggested that close scrutiny of news discourse enables specific discursive features to be identified - an example being the various ways in which studio news readers may problematise the responses of politicians and sanction those of correspondents. This can then be used as a vantage point upon broader issues of social theory - thus Barthes's (1973) concept of exnomination can be tentatively pinpointed - recognising the ways in which politicians' talk can appear more nominated than that of correspondents and having a sense of the sorts of 'devices' through which talk might be positioned or co-constructed as nominated or exnominated. Whilst there is a danger of overly limiting attention to areas mapped by the aspects of social theory that one has encountered - there is the possibility of (as Hutchby, 1996, and Wetherell, 1998, illustrate) of engaging some dialogue between broad theoretical perspectives and the specifics of talk data.

This thesis has emphasised an approach to audiences' and broadcast talk which recognises the constructed nature of both. Rather than attempting to locate a singular true essence 'beneath' the talk (such as what audiences 'really' think) the talk has been explored in a way that considered something of the functions or action orientations
which it displayed. Furthermore these activity orientations were understood as shaped to fit and intricated in sequences of interaction - a perspective which challenges the abstraction of isolated utterances. The thesis provides a rather radical alternative for audience research in which talk moves from being the humble tool for accessing the target phenomena to being the focus of the analysis the, the site where social activity is happening. This could be understood as an abrupt departure which painted in these stark terms has little to offer an approach committed to explore something other than the talk which it has collected. To these media researchers perhaps the best the thesis can offer is a point of reflexivity - some caution against carelessly glossing and grouping talk data and an encouragement to be aware of the actual talk detail which is so easily overlooked.

The thesis also engages with some of the ideas which are connected to constructionist perspectives on broadcast talk. Here the thesis again argues for attention to be paid to the specific of talk detail - but this need not entirely substitute the research agenda instead it may breathe new life by encouraging a dialogue between broad social theory concepts and the concrete particulars of talk.

As noted above this thesis has very much down-played many perspectives popular within media research. One aspect of this is that in exploring audiences talk there was no mention of their social status, thus the fact that many of the interviews took place in the homes of participants who lived in a comparatively affluent area of south-west London is left unexplored as is the relatively educated profile of other participants. The work of Morley (1980), referred to in the introduction very much stressed how understandings of social positions and political allegiances could help to make sense of audiences responses to news programmes. From Morley’s perspective these wider macro-
contextual issues provide a framework out of which we can understand the contributions of an individual. Thus belonging to a particular strata of society by ethnic identity, gender and occupational role may provide a set of discourses or frameworks through which the individual finds a way of reading or orientating themselves to the programme.

At one level the orientation of this thesis has been very different not only have wider social issues been ignored also there has been a more detailed exploration of individual constructions. Furthermore this thesis has perhaps further down played the notion of the audiences engagement with the meaning and orientation to the text of the news - rather than providing some level of explanation for the processing of news media the thesis has explored the functions of various constructions which audiences produce. However despite these important differences the thesis shares with Morley’s work a move away from interest in individual difference - or profiling of individual sense making. Instead the picture moves towards a construction of the rather more impersonal flow of language in talk about viewing. To some extent the focus within this thesis develops ideas important within ethnographic audience research in a new direction. Whilst ethnographic researchers have stressed the importance of the viewing context so this thesis has emphasised the importance of the context of talking about viewing behaviour.

Likewise in exploring the talk of news journalists and politicians there has been comparatively little emphasis upon ideological concerns which have been crucial to much of mass media research. It would be quite possible within a broadly discursive framework to explore something of the way in which the media’s construction of reality serves ideological or power infused interests, perhaps maintaining the socio-political
status quo. Indeed some such themes were briefly touched on in chapter six where the repertoire of the ‘national interest’ was seen as part of a homogenised and personalised construction of national identity and political reality. In this thesis the emphasis has been upon the sorts of functions which are familiar with interaction orientated work, thus the emphasis upon warranting, affiliation, blame and exoneration seem at first glance to leave on one side important questions about broader power structures. Whilst this approach could be seen as avoiding the potential pitfall of producing what Antaki (1994) terms ‘culturally thick’ readings of ‘empirically thin’ slices of data it does however leave some such broader questions of context unexplored.

Some of these issues around the unexplored aspects of media discourse are at least in part a matter of analytic emphasises thus issues of warranting on news broadcasts clearly play ideological roles. More broadly the micro-macro distinction could be questioned or even dissolved - all conversations occur within wider contexts and all wider ‘macro’ issues find particular instantiated expressions. Even talk about self and others in an audiences living room reproduces ideologies of self and other at the same time that it attends to the interactional issues at hand. Thus there is a two-fold aspect to talk in terms of both its context and in terms of its functions or implications - the micro-macro distinction represents the emphasis placed in the analysis of any given utterance rather than on some property of the utterance, speaker (politician or audience) or conception of the context in which it occurred (television studio or living room). Whilst this thesis has emphasised interactional aspects of the construction of reality by politicians, news journalists and audiences it is through demonstrable interaction that ideology can be seen as played out.
7.6 Implications for discursive approaches

This thesis touches on a range of issues which relate to discursive and conversation analytic approaches. As with the other implications considered above there is not one homogeneous body of discursive theory against which this thesis can straightforwardly position itself. Here four inter-related themes are outlined; interpretative repertoires, the exploration of talk function, context and the basis for analytic claims.

(a) Interpretative repertoires

As was noted in the introduction the concept of interpretative repertoires was outlined in Gilbert and Mulkay’s (1984) research. An ‘interpretative repertoire’ is a term used to capture recurrent ‘content features’ of talk - which can include metaphors, figures of speech or phrases which suggest a ‘broadly similar’ set of constructions with regard to some aspect of social reality. In this thesis (in chapter 6) the idea of a repertoire of intent was explored in the talk of politicians - this was labelled as a repertoire of ‘the national interest’.

In common with certain other research which explores interpretative repertoires there was some attempt to consider the functions of the repertoire from the talk content. This was perhaps particularly marked in the consideration of the ‘ideological’ functions of talk about the national interest (chapter 6, extract 3). Here an entirely monologic utterance was explored in terms of the version of reality it produced. Attention was placed very much on the individualising, homogenising and personalising constructions of reality which were arguably detectable in the detail of the talk. The interpretative
processes on the part of the analyst are especially clear in this approach to data analysis - thus the possible frames of reference (e.g. with regard to ‘relevant’ social theory) are vast and one can ask ‘why use these sets of ideas and not others?’ - a question which Schegloff (1997, 1998, in press) has frequently pursued. To some extent the approach could be defended - by suggesting that the analysis did entail a level of engagement with the detail of the talk. Furthermore it may be possible as will be touched on later to give some reflection on whether there is an ‘ideologically’ or ‘theoretically’ free or impartial way of approaching any talk data.

However both of these lines of argument may take attention away from a broader emphasis in this thesis with regard to interpretative repertoires. That is that their function can to some extent be explored with regard to the talk context in which the repertoire occurs. In this way it was argued that rather than necessarily attributing discrete functions to different repertoires - any one repertoire (such as that of ‘the national interest’) could be seen to have a range of possible functions. Thus talk about ‘the national interest’ may orientate to exoneration in some talk context and to blame in others. At one level this approach might be seen as problematising the very notion of an interpretative repertoire - if similar patterns of content can be understood as functionally different then the value and appropriateness of approaching talk in terms of broad content issues can be questioned. Furthermore (albeit from a different set of concerns) criticism can be brought about the range of functions which attention to talk context provides - exoneration and blaming tending to be associated more with local interactional work than with ‘broader’ ideological issues.
Yet whilst these misgivings are both legitimate it may be argued that aspects of talk content need not be entirely ignored it could lead to new avenues of enquiry for more ‘critical’ and more ‘conversation-orientated’ perspectives. From a conversation analytic point of view it may be possible to approach those aspects of talk content which are identified as such by members or participants themselves. To some extent this may overcome problems of ‘reifying’ a piece of talk as a repertoire which was considered earlier. Those who adopt a ‘critical’ stance could consider something of the way in which any ‘ideologically loaded’ talk is still uttered in particular contexts. These talk contexts may challenge, reformulate or endorse the utterance but it is collectively - repertoire and surrounding talk context together - that they produce a sequence of construction-in-action. These arguments may problematise an analysts definition of a repertoire (as was used in this thesis) and a tendency to overly abstract a target utterance from the flow of talk in which it occurred (an issue with some aspects of the analysis adopted) - but they do provide considerations for the future which inter-relate with other themes which are approached below.

(b) Exploration of talk function

As noted above this thesis in its exploration of ‘activity orientation’ has touched briefly upon ‘ideological’ functions - this however was a somewhat transitory point of focus, the majority of the thesis drawing attention to what could be dubbed ‘interaction-orientated’ and ‘warranting’ functions. With regard to interaction orientated functions the focus has been upon some of the ways in which participants talk activity can be seen as shaped for the local talk context in which it occurs. Thus the contradictory constructions of viewer identity could be made sense of - not as ‘conflicting reports’
upon a stable essence but rather as construction-in-interaction - versions of identity produced with a sensitivity to the action potential of the utterances, (for our current concerns it does not matter what sort of cognitive components, machinery or representations are or are not involved). As already mentioned this points to an array of functions which can not be determined by a type of content (or repertoire) or a type of device (such as that of contrasting self and others) - instead the talk-in-talk context needs to be explored.

This theme of emphasising talk context as a means of explicating the function or activity potential of a given utterance also occurs some of in the consideration of warranting functions. The notion of warranting has been used to try and capture something of the diverse ways in which the truthfulness of an utterance may be orientated to - that is how claims are made to appear ‘impartial’, ‘corroborated by others’, ‘well informed’ or ‘authoritative’. It is acknowledged that the differences between these strands are worthy of investigation - indeed the thesis hints at politicians being relatively more concerned with ‘corroboration’ and news journalists with ‘impartiality’ although the grounds for this distinction could itself be further explored. Much of the focus on warranting functions has in various ways approached the talk in terms of how it is ‘positioned’. In some cases this overtly draws upon the concept of footing posited by Goffman (1979), developed by Levinson (1988) and utilised by Clayman (1992) - that is that one means of warranting a claim is to attribute its words or sentiments to others. Whilst Clayman (1992) considered the ‘neutrality function’ in the use of fairly direct citation by newsreaders in bringing challenges to political and public figures - this thesis considered various ways in which citations by politicians could be seen not to deny a particular
political perspective but to endorse or corroborate it. Yet this move itself is recognised as tied to its talk context at the very least by being open to challenge and debate.

A still more profound sense of talk activity or function being linked to its talk context is found in the analysis of news-journalists’ co-construction of the truthfulness of their discourse. Here context was not invoked as something which could simply unsettle an attempt to warrant a claim - rather the talk sequence itself was emphasised as the trajectory across which the work of warranting was attended to. This was especially evident in exploring the interaction between studio news readers and correspondents and contrasting them to that found were politicians were involved. The positioning of the talk of news reader and correspondent was seen as a mutual product of sequences of talk rather than simply a discrete property of an isolated utterance. Furthermore it was this attention to collaborative warranting of claims which was found to inter-link with Barthes (1973) concept of exnomination.

In the introduction it was noted that Barthes (1973) had provided a cultural critique which pointed at the way in which nameless, positionless or *exnominated* claims, ideas or symbols appeared more true and were harder to challenge as their alternatives were less readily apparent. Hartley (1992) developed this in one direction by considering how television camera angles may imply either a ‘point of view’ or may appear to lack that identifiable visual perspective. Fiske (1987) developed these concepts in another way by emphasising that television news may label or name some contributors and not others - those named were treated by Fiske as being nominated with those unnamed being exnominated. In this thesis the broad concept of exnomination acted as a useful device.
for becoming sensitive to the warranting functions of talk that was not readily positioned as representing a particular perspective and for pulling together a number of identifiable features of the talk. It was argued that the various ways in which news-readers elicited and treated contributions from politicians served to construct the politicians utterances as nominated as positioned and positionable as a particular perspective for which others were available. By contrast it was noted that the interaction with correspondents had markedly different talk features and collectively amounted to positioning their talk as rather more free from any identifiable perspective - that is it was (comparatively) exnominated.

In this way in explicating functions the thesis has hinted at an approach which need not entirely ignore social theory - which can potentially add to sensitivity to the sorts of activities that talk may be engaged in and may provide a means of conceptualising those functions. However a priori theory need not (and perhaps should not) be taken on trust - instead the avenues which it suggests can be explored with regard to what is demonstrably present in the data. Furthermore as has been stressed throughout this thesis much can be gained from an acute awareness that the surrounding talk context - which not only has an impact upon the potential functions of a given utterance - but it together with any target utterance can be understood as co-constructing and co-accomplishing that function across an interactional sequence.

(c) Context

The theme of context which has already been re-visited and emphasised many times in this concluding discussion feeds in to various debates within discursive and conversation
Even how context is conceptualised can be seen as a far from value-free move the various dichotomies such as; talk and non-talk, local and wider, narrow and wide, message-intrinsic and message-extrinsic, micro and macro, participant’s and analyst’s and interactional and ideological, each connote slightly different sets of boundaries and can imply a particular value judgement.

One ‘camp’ on the various debates about context is represented by those who problematise importing into the analysis aspects of context which are invoked because the analyst takes them to be important. This position, (which Schegloff, 1997, 1998, in press, advocates) tends to emphasise the ‘infinite expandability’ of possible classifications of ‘relevant context’. From this perspective an analyst could with any given discourse make reference to a matrix of demographic, geographic, social, political, religious, ethnic, age and gender categories even in making sense of who the participant is let alone when they are speaking, what has gone on between the participants previously and what aspects of the social world are mentioned, alluded to or ignored. For Schegloff (1997) this infinitely expandable set of context references can result in an analysts arbitrary prescription of ‘relevant context’; “Discourse is too often made subservient to contexts not of its participants’ making, but of its analysts insistence.” (1997: 183). This approach is echoed by Antaki (1998, transcript of discussion in Tracy, 1998) “One of the reasons to be aware of context .. is an extraordinarily small range of things certain scientists take upon themselves as context given the infinity of things people can do with each other to make different things happen.” (1997: 24).

A sense of a commitment to a different ‘wider’, or ‘message-extrinsic’ context is found
in an Dijk's (1993) outline of what constitutes critical discourse analysis. For van Dijk (1993) drawing upon aspects of participants power infused relationships between each other and with regard to 'wider society' usefully informs this approach to discourse analysis. Furthermore the outcome of this approach (if successful in its own terms) is to outline the often subtle ways in which power may be found to operate; "Critical discourse analysis can only make a significant and specific contribution to critical social or political analyses if it is able to provide an account of the role of language, language use, discourse or communicative events in the (re)production of dominance and inequality." (1993: 279). Thus the tools and agenda of critical discourse analysis are - at least on first inspection - rather different to those of more conversation-orientated approaches. The critical approach emphasises aspects such as the participants' power positions - which lie beyond the 'local' or 'narrow' talk context - and explicates talk function with reference to the operation of power in society.

With the dichotomy sketched out in these rather stark terms this thesis would seek to position itself as not entirely restricted to one of the two poles - although it could be placed tentatively as somewhat closer to the former than the later. From one glance the thesis only briefly touches on broader or message-extrinsic aspects of context in considering one (rather monologic) extract of talk about 'the national interest' (chapter 6, extract 3). More generally the thesis appears to emphasise local talk context because it is here that some sense can be made of contradictory claims, that the various activity orientations can be unpacked (even from similar looking devices or talk content) and that functions can be understood as collaborative productions. Yet despite this other aspects of context have either covertly or overtly played a role in the analysis. One example of
this is that in attending to the talk of politicians certain ‘message-extrinsic’ sets of claims were made regarding the ‘context’ of their talk. Thus the sense of context was ‘borrowed from’ other published work or extracts and played a role in developing the argument that politicians orientated to potential sceptical readings of their talk. The potential difficulty here being that observations in other literature may have been treated as general characterisations of features which are then applied without an adequate warrant in the current talk. A second example is that whilst not strictly context - message extrinsic ideas - such as exnomination were imported into some of the analysis of news-journalist discourse, again a practice which could be challenged by those preferring the idea of a more local-data-driven analysis. Despite the quite different stances which have been drawn on the issue of context there is an awareness within the thesis that it can be overly limiting to too readily preclude the potential benefits of either an eclectic position or approaches which have sought to integrate aspects from both traditions.

One appeal to a broad vision of context which very much pre-dates the work of Schegloff and van Dijk is offered by ‘the Bakhtin circle’. Whilst this work itself is open to considerable debate (including the identity of the attributed authors) in it can be found indications of an inclusive agenda. Thus Bakhtin (1952) argues;

“The utterance proves to be a very complex and multiplanar phenomenon if considered not in isolation and with respect to its author (the speaker only), but as a link in the chain of speech communication and with respect to other, related utterances...” (1986: 93 [1952]).

What the Bakhtin circle provide is some sense of the difficulty in entirely capturing a phenomena as multifaceted as utterances. The Bakhtin circle are quite overt in their
sense that talk not only fits into historical, social and cultural contexts but that in some sense it carries its history within it. That is utterances often comprise words or phrases which have a prior context of usage and thus have a particular ‘currency’ when deployed within a given conversation. Furthermore a position expressed in an utterance is understood as positioned against an array of alternative utterance-positions which are culturally available, historically located and may have particular ideological implications. Yet the Bakhtin circle also hint at the local context in which an utterance is used - recognising that utterances can be responsively inter-linked a concept partly reflected in the circle’s somewhat idiosyncratic term ‘living conversation’. This recognition of the complexity of any given utterance is orientated to in Voloshinov’s (1929) formulation of what aspects of talk should be studied; “the connection between concrete verbal interaction and the extraverbal situation - both the immediate situation and, through it, the broader situation.” (Voloshinov, 1973: 95 [1929]).

This detour into the work of Bakhtin and Voloshinov perhaps does not provide a final solution to the various opposing stances on context. At the level of researcher reflexivity it may amount to an argument to recognise something of the ‘unfathomability’ of the utterance. Its prescription for researching both ‘local’ and ‘broader’ aspects of context in its formulation with its reference to ‘the extraverbal situation’ may be more appealing to more critically inclined researchers than to those located in a more conversation analytic stance. Furthermore whilst committed conversation analysts might not object to the idea of ‘extraverbal’ or ‘broader’ contexts they may well problematise the accessing of it - that is how can the analyst demonstrate that a given aspect of context is important in the particular piece of text being explored - a debate which will be returned to in considering
However it is worth noting that Hutchby (1996) and Wetherell (1998) have in different ways and from different positions attempted analyses which to some extent transcend the barriers which have been constructed above. Hutchby (1996) uses a conversation analytic analysis focusing on talk in its local talk context to explore features of Foucault's work on power. In this way Hutchby seeks to make more concrete and analytically available aspects of Foucault's work; "While Foucault's work is often pitched at the broadest theoretical level, the empirical analysis in this article goes some way towards demonstrating how two of his central ideas can be located in the analysis of power in the details of talk-in-interaction." (1996: 495). This echoes something of the use in the current thesis (referred to above) of the work of Barthes' (1973) concept of exnomination - wherein specific local talk details have been used in exploring meta-theoretical concepts. Wetherell (1998) also employs attention to talk detail which she uses to develop a "more grounded view" (1998: 401) on post-structuralist perspectives on subject positioning. For Wetherell (1998) though the critique of (Schegloff's, 1997, brand of) conversation analysis is more explicitly developed. In particular she raises the point that it is not simply 'extraverbal' context that should be explored but rather that an overly narrow conception of talk context leaves aspects of 'argumentative threads' ignored. Thus we can ask not just what sort of activity has taken place e.g. exoneration - but why a particular type of claim might work to effect exoneration in a given piece of talk within the context of a larger passage of conversation (or interview) against a set of cultural and ideological concepts regarding 'being a young man'.
Some of these themes will be revisited in considering the basis for analytic claims subsequently - but for now it is worth noting that the context debate need not be approached in quite the partisan terms that it sometimes has been - giving the impression that a choice is to be made between two quite separate, competing schools. The debate has been extremely useful in highlighting the various problems such as; what aspects of context are formulated as relevant, how we are to attend to the power issues relating to a piece of discourse, how we can tackle the multifaceted dimensions of any given utterance (let alone conversation sequence), how we can link social theory to the specifics of conversation analysis, how do we explain why a particular conversation activity has a given effect in a specific exchange and how much actual talk data (from a single interview, speech or conversation) do we need to explore. Yet this thesis arrives at a position of being open to the uncertainty that these conflicting points engender. Thus it is keen to recognise the multiple aspects of context yet also the possibility that (without wanting to sound too positivist) attempts to engage with broad conceptions of context can become a little ‘ungrounded’. In a sense this thesis suggests that the context choice is resolved at the level of a particular analysis - that is it is through engaging with what we hear to be present in a piece of data that a position on the ‘broad’ or ‘narrow’ context spectrum is (momentarily) arrived at. Attempts to arrived at a solidified position may remove a layer of uncertainty but could also limit the sort of engagement with the data at hand.

(d) The basis for analytic claims

Finally it is worth considering two inter-related threads in the basis for analytic claims which are particularly prevalent in conversation-analytic aspects of ‘discursive’
approaches; the emphasis upon ‘ordinary conversation’ and the use of participants’ own orientation to each other to ‘ground’ claims. Drew and Heritage (1992) illustrate the commitment to ‘ordinary conversation’;

“CA research has, in part, been inspired by the realisation that ordinary conversation is the predominant medium of interaction in the social world. It is also the primary form of interaction to which, with whatever simplifications, the child is initially exposed and through which socialisation proceeds. Thus the basic forms of mundane talk constitute a kind of bench mark against which other more formal or “institutional” types of interaction are recognised and experienced. ... A clear implication is that comparative analysis that treats institutional interaction in contrast to normal and/or normative procedures of interaction in ordinary conversation will present at least one important avenue of theoretical and empirical advance. “ (1992: 19).

For Schegloff (1997) one of the virtues of such ‘ordinary conversation’ is that it enables one to use participants’ perspectives to guide analysis of what is taking place;

“But ordinary talk-in-interaction, it seems to me, offers us leverage. The interaction embodies and displays moment-to-moment the products of its own, endogenous mechanisms of interpretation and analysis, both of the utterances and action which compose it and of the orientated-to context. These are the understandings of the participants.” (1997: 183,184).

This thesis has and does partly endorse these sentiments regarding the basis for analytic claims. The perspective reflected in the quotes does usefully signal some of the problems
of determining which aspects of context are to be drawn upon as relevant to the interpretation of data. In emphasising 'mundane' talk conversation analytic work has usefully emphasised an often ignored but clearly crucial aspect of social life. Furthermore this point of view problematises analysts' reliance upon *a priori* theoretical commitments and directs attention to the detail of the talk. Finally it encourages attention to be paid to sequences of talk in recognising the co-construction of talk-in-interaction. Yet whilst this thesis has considerable sympathy with this perspective it is also seeks to encompass certain misgivings about the claims both with regard to 'ordinary conversation' and 'participants' perspective'.

As Billig (in press a, b) notes the 'bedrock' status of 'ordinary conversation' can be challenged - why, how and on what basis are certain types of talk treated as more 'normative' than others? Whilst some of this may hinge on features such as the allocation of turns (are they *pre* or *locally* allocated) this very scheme may lead to a continuum rather than a dichotomy of 'ordinariness'. The very category 'ordinary' if it is indeed treated as a category is implicitly vast yet in the assignment of a single category label 'ordinary' implicitly there is a referable or recognisable degree of commonality amongst its members. The fruitfulness of implying or staking a commitment to the idea of a discrete entity known as 'ordinary conversation' can thus be questioned. Indeed the very opposition between ordinary and formal or institutional talk can be understood as an analyst's 'meta-resource'. That is it is not simply a tool used by analysts to unpack pieces of talk data (in the way that contradiction was used in chapter 4) but is rather an organising scheme which through an oppositional pairing suggests some element of solid, identifiable 'essence' which can orientate analysts to the landscape of talk. As with
many contrastive devices (including de Saussure’s distinction between la langue and parole) one often appears to be given a more central or normative status than the other - in this case ‘ordinary conversation’ seems to be favourably positioned.

The use of participants’ orientation to ground analysis is also a perspective which this thesis has benefited from, yet here too questions can be raised - as Billig (in press a, b) does - regarding the implied epistemology of this position. Thus in various ways questions can still be raised about the constituting role of the researcher even when they explicitly draw on ‘endogenous’ or ‘participants’ readings of talk data. First, as Wetherell (1998) notes even the bit of a transcript selected for an extract can be seen as an analyst’s (rather than participants’) decision; “In restricting the analyst’s gaze to this fragment, previous conversations, even previous turns in the same continuing conversation become irrelevant for the analyst but also, by dictat, for the participants.” (1998: 403). Second, the reliance on a participants’ perspective can fall foul of the problem of ‘infinite-regression’ - in which we can never arrive at the solid ground we so desperately seek. Thus whilst we may decide that a certain type of utterance has occurred because of the way in which a participant responds - how do we arrive at an understanding of what the response itself is? We may then move to the next sequence of talk to see if our judgement of the response was legitimate - but again this subsequent turn is being labelled by the analyst. This in itself is not a problem - indeed from a constructionist position it could be understood as largely unavoidable - yet the difficulty arises as Billig (in press b) notes when the interpretative stance itself is entirely denied.

In Schegloff’s (1998) appeal to the data there is something of a sense in which the data
itself is depicted as the determining factor - guiding the theory; "...what is needed is not readings in critical theory, but observations - noticings about peoples’ conduct in the world and the practices by which they are engendered and understood.” (1998: 414).

Whilst this perspective does usefully point attention to the data there is a danger (as Billig, in press b points out) that this can be followed unreflexively assuming that the process of analysis will be driven by the data without noticing who or what shapes the ‘noticings’. Indeed it may be that the framework of conversation analytic research ‘sensitises’ us to certain features of the talk data, encourages us to express those features in a particular sort of language and identifies for us particular, distinct ‘other’ approaches which we can safely critique. These seemingly ‘critical’ points are raised to argue the case that some degree of researcher reflexivity about the limitations of the claims made can be exceedingly helpful in that it recognises the complexity of the phenomena of talk and avoids implying that a ready solution is immediately at hand.

7.7 Concluding thoughts

This thesis has explored a corpus of talk by politicians, news-journalists and audiences against a backdrop of several approaches within social psychology and media studies. The discursive perspective developed challenges the way in which talk has either been entirely ignored or treated as a mere derivative or symptom of ‘the real area of interest’ - often cognitive activity or ideological processes. Instead this thesis brings talk itself centre-stage, seeing it as the site of crucial social activity and as interesting in its own right. Analysis has revealed something of the wealth of activity orientations within the talk of politicians, news-journalists illustrating just some of the ways that politicians and news-journalists may orientate to the warranting of their claims and considering the
activity potential of audiences and politicians talk about their identity and intent. In this way talk was seen neither as a derivative of mental or social processes nor as a mere conveyor of information - instead talk was understood as *activity in interaction*. That is sequences of talk were seen in terms of the sorts of activities which they could together orientate to - in cases of overt collaboration this is particularly clear and may lead to the participants' co-construction of the 'authoritativeness' of each other. Yet even where talk is antagonistic or argumentative - it is the *sequence* which shapes the sorts of activities which transpire - rather than any single isolated utterance. Indeed the very concept of a challenged or problematised claim depends on sequences of talk just as much as endorsed or sanctioned ones do.

In this way talk context has been seen as important not just as a background to target utterances - but as an integral part of sequences across which interaction orientated moves are made. This perspective enabled warranting moves to be seen as sequences rather than self-contained in separate utterances. Furthermore it has enabled some sense to be made of the contradictory versions of 'viewer identity' which audiences were found to produce - the different versions can each be understood as orientating within changing talk contexts. Finally, this perspective has enabled an apparently similar - device, (such as contrasting self and others), or talk content, (such as referring to 'the national interest'), to be explored in terms of the range of different functions which they may realise - according to the sequence of talk in which they occur.

The thesis argues that attention to the detail of the talk not only highlights important features of talk which are easily missed but that it also supports an analysis which has
some grounding in the data itself. This entailed an analysis which took into account even minimal interaction turns within an exchange and paid attention to the specific features of the talk rather than generalised glosses. In some cases it meant paying attention to participants’ treatment of each others utterances - that is using a members’ perspective to guide the interpretation of what had taken place. It was argued that this approach was promising in that it provided some form of empirical basis for the claims made and imposed some form of analytic rigour enabling both researcher and reader to check claims against the presented data extracts. However it has also been recognised that this does not present direct access to a world free of construction, nor does it allow the researcher to jettison all reflexivity about their own interpretative role - like all of the perspectives considered it does not present a final purchase on truth. Instead the thesis has sought to encourage a recognition that all approaches to the talk data considered can be seen as problematic - and indeed that all can make some form of contribution - discursive work would be the poorer if there were only one line of enquiry. Exploring local talk context reveals a fantastic array of easily missed aspects but this does not mitigate the possibility - fraught with difficulty though it is - of exploring various aspects of social theory.

In the light of these considerations this thesis has hinted at three potentially promising lines of research in the activity orientation of politicians’, news-journalists’ and audiences’ talk. One might entail the mapping out of local talk features as they are ‘noticed’ - as uncluttered by a priori agendas as possible - in its development this may be inter-related to other ‘intensely empirical’ data analysis. This approach could include a level of reflection on some of the factors which were felt to shape the ‘noticings’. A
second line of research could interrogate some of the claims within social theory by exploring the local talk detail - the social theory might organise or prompt the research but may be clarified, challenged or unpicked by the investigation of detail. Here the importing of certain aspects of context, ideology or other theory may be made overtly available for the reader - such that they can judge whether the ‘sensitising’ it may have afforded is fruitful. A third line of research would be to think through the positionings within discursive approaches, questioning the epistemology of conversation orientated perspectives, the assumptions of critical approaches and considering further ways of doing justice to the complexity of language in interaction.

This thesis has attempted to bring the discursive perspective to aspects of social psychology and media studies where language has often been ignored. In doing so it offers the challenge to engage seriously with talk detail and the possibility of using this to rethink key areas of theory. However it also recognises something of the different positions within discursive perspectives including the tension between those who seek to make some use of social theory and those who prefer to approach their work as grounded in the data. It argues that the site of this debate can be particularly fruitful as it can cause greater reflexivity amongst both sets of analysts helping to guard against both theoretical fog and the mirage of naive empiricism. Furthermore it can shed some light on the potential strengths of each perspective with literature helping to sensitise possible readings which can be used as part of a dialogue between theory and data. In a sense this dialogue always takes place to some extent - but rather than denying it or formulating it in rather narrow ways this thesis argues for an opening up of that dialogue, an attempt to start to map out some of the lines of influence and an openness to the mutuality of
influence in the shaping and reshaping of perspectives. Denying \textit{both} that the data can or does ‘tell all’ \textit{and} that theory can completely grasp the intricacies of a particular situation may sound a pessimistic research stance - but it is one which welcomes voices from all directions and especially the dialogue between them.
References


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Research on Language and Social Interaction, 26, 99-128.


74b.


Appendix One - Brief Description of the Programmes referred to

**BBC's Breakfast News** - a daily rolling news programme broadcast in the UK which includes both current news stories and live interviews with politicians.

**BBC's Breakfast With Frost** - a weekly news and current affairs programme broadcast in the UK which involves a review of the Sunday newspapers, interviews and news headlines.

**BBC's Newsnight** - a nightly news programme, broadcast in the UK, which includes in-depth coverage and interviews on certain topics occurring in the day's news.

**BBC's Nine O'clock News** - one of the UK's most prominent evening news programmes.

**BBC's Question Time** - a weekly audience discussion programme, broadcast from different locations within the UK, in which panel members, which usually includes representatives of the three main political parties in the UK. The studio audience ask questions of panel members which are mediated by a host.

**Channel Four News** - a daily UK news programme which (at just under one hour in length) is approximately twice as long as most other daily and evening news programmes in the UK. It often features live interviews with politicians.

**ITN's News at Ten** - a prominent evening news programme in the UK.

**ITV's Sunday Programme** - a weekly news and current affairs programme.
ITV's Granada 500 - a one-off programme hosted by presenter Sue Lawley and broadcast in the UK three days prior to the 1992 General Election. The programme involved questions, largely taken from the studio audience, which the host put to the leader of each of the three main political parties in the UK.

NBC's MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour - a US news programme featuring interviews by the hosts.

NBC's 1992 Presidential Debates - A series of three televised debates broadcast live in the US and the UK. The first and third debate involved questions from both the host and a panel of journalists, the second debate, (for the first time in the debates' history), involved questions from a studio audience of 209 'undecided' voters.

Nightline - a nightly news programme, broadcast in the US, and used by Clayman (1992).
Appendix Two - *The transcription conventions used*

This thesis has used a simplified version of conversation analytic transcript notation, a more complete outline can be found in Atkinson & Heritage (1984). The following notes are restricted to those aspects of transcription found in the extracts used throughout the paper. Following Atkinson & Heritage (1984) the symbols are grouped with reference to the conversational phenomena they represent.

1. Simultaneous utterances

Utterances which start simultaneously are linked together with double left hand brackets:

P: "[[yeah
T: "[[oh I'm not"

2. Overlapping utterances

Overlapping utterances, (which do not start simultaneously), are marked with a left hand bracket at the point where the overlap begins on each line:

NK: in the view of this [independent
SL: [right let

3. Contiguous utterances

When an utterance immediately follows, but does not overlap, a preceding one issued another speaker the utterances are linked with equal signs:

MH: apparent triumph=
TB: =he's a Tory

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4. Conversation intervals

Where there is a pause or interval within the conversation an approximate timing in seconds has been inserted in round brackets at the point where the interval occurred.

Where there is simply a full stop in parenthesis the interval whilst hearable was not measured:

P: (0.5) yeah (1.0) yeah
K: (8.0) phhh I mean I don't phh I don't know umm

The above example indicates a variety of intervals with speaker P displaying a half second and a single second pause within their own turn. There is an eight second pause before speaker K commences their turn.

(.) untimed pause

5. Speech delivery

A range of notation devices have been used to denote aspects of how the talk is ‘hearably’ delivered;

a. Where parts of an utterance are delivered at a different pace to the surrounding talk they are surrounded by either "less than" signs << or "greater than" signs >>.

Parts of an utterance which are delivered at a faster pace are enclosed by "less than" signs, (because they take less time):

BC: hundreds of business people >including a lot of Republicans said<
Parts of an utterance which are delivered at a slower pace than the surrounding talk are enclosed by "greater than" signs:

**GB:** we can do (0.5) *<much much better>*

b. Where a word or phrase is delivered with particular emphasis this is signalled by underlining:

**FS:** Conservative propaganda *perhaps*

c. Where parts of a word or utterance are delivered more loudly than surrounding talk it is placed in capitals:

**M:** =IT DEPENDS HOW YOU SEE IT REALLY

d. Where a word or part of an utterance is delivered with a marked shift in intonation it is represented by either an upward arrow (for rising intonation) or a downward arrow (for a falling intonation).

**J:** if someone ↑says some↑thing

e. Where talk is delivered as reported speech or verbatim thoughts it is placed in single quotes:

**M:** 'gawernment’s clapped owt'

f. Where talk is delivered in a notably different tone it is marked by asterisk; in this thesis the only substantial shift recorded was a move to a quivering, almost tearful voice.
and err we have (1.2) \*↑<incredible> *arguments *there

Where there is an extended sound it is noted by the appearance of one or more colons immediately after the vocalisation which is extended.

I could HEH HEH GET IT A::HEH:LL OUT

6. Transcription doubt

Where words or phrases within an utterance are audible but not recognisable the number of syllables is noted and enclosed within brackets:

or >can we (three syllables)<

7. Transcriber’s gloss on non-lexical and ‘summary’ items

Double brackets are used for conveying to the reader items which have not been transcribed.

Untranscribed laughter

An indication of the approximate amount of data which has been excluded

8. Speaker Identification

Question mark in the left hand column; speaker not identified:

Beckett