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Talk at work

Interaction in institutional settings

Edited by PAUL DREW

University of York

and JOHN HERITAGE

University of California, Los Angeles



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“defensive” or even overdefensive description the use of litotes may be regarded by the recipient as an invitation to substitute a more “offensive” or direct one.

7. An early formulation of this view within the tradition of sociology can be found in the work of Georg Simmel, for example in his essay on the poor:

From a sociological perspective it is not the case that poverty is first given and thereupon benefit is effected. This is nothing else than fate in its personal form. Instead, he who gets benefit or should get it according to his sociological constellation, even if by chance it fails to come, he is called the poor.

(Simmel 1908: 371; my translation, JRB)

Footing in the achievement of neutrality: the case of news-interview discourse

STEVEN E. CLAYMAN

1 Introduction

In the course of talking interactants encounter a variety of assessable matters, matters about which they may express a viewpoint, interpretation, or perspective. But rather than straightforwardly commit themselves to a particular perspective, interactants may choose to be more cautious or circumspect; for example, by systematically delaying their assertions in various ways (Maynard 1989a, 1991a, this volume; Pomerantz 1984a), or producing them as comparatively modest statements of experience rather than strong declarations of fact (Pomerantz 1984b), speakers can exercise varying degrees of interactional caution when expressing their views. In the process, they can achieve a variety of practical ends, such as minimizing interpersonal disagreement while maximizing agreement (Pomerantz 1984a; Maynard this volume) and mitigating critical, accusatory, and other sensitive actions (Pomerantz 1984b).

There is one setting in which expressive caution is practiced with extraordinary consistency: the television news interview. Like other journalists, news interviewers are supposed to be objective in their work. This means, among other things, that they should not allow their personal opinions to enter into the interviewing process; to the best of their ability, they are supposed to remain neutral as they interact with public figures (Lewis 1984: 122–4). While neutrality is a concern for reporters generally, it is a particularly pressing issue for those who interview for television. Their work practices are commonly broadcast “live” without the benefit of editorial review, and are thus open to the immediate scrutiny of fellow journalists,

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government officials, social scientists, and a mass audience with diverse interests and ideological sympathies. Many viewers have a practical interest in monitoring news programming for the presence of bias. Accordingly, news interviewers continually face the problem of sustaining the accountability of their conduct under widespread critical scrutiny.

This chapter is concerned with one interactional practice and its role in addressing this problem within the television news interview. The practice in question involves altering what Goffman (1981b) has referred to as a speaker's interactional "footing." The end it achieves is the maintenance of a formally neutral or "neutralistic" posture for news interviewers (see also Clayman 1988: 482–7).¹ This analysis represents an extension of a growing body of research on the organization of news-interview discourse, research that has been concerned with a wide range of conventional interviewing practices, including those that figure in the process by which interviewers maintain a neutralistic stance in interaction with their guests (Heritage 1985; Clayman 1988; Greatbatch 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991).

Since the footing concept derives from Goffman's work, I will first briefly outline the concept's origins and discuss its relevance to the phenomenon of neutralism. Footing will then be examined empirically in news-interview discourse, beginning with interviewers' management of footing to achieve a neutralistic posture. I will also consider the role of the interviewees in this process, paying particular attention to how they can collaborate to preserve interviewers' neutralism. Finally, I will explore how the credibility of the interviewers' assertions can become an issue for both parties, with interviewers commonly working to enhance the credibility of their claims while interviewees seek to cast doubt on them.

2 The concept of footing

A preliminary discussion of footing can be found in Goffman's *Frame Analysis* (1974: 496–559), and the spirit of the concept – if not its literal application – appears much earlier in his writings (e.g. in the notion of "role distance"; see Goffman 1961b). Yet it received its most focused treatment in his 1979 paper by that name, later reprinted in *Forms of Talk* (1981: 124–57; see also Levinson

1988). Goffman introduced the footing concept in order to explore the nature of involvement and participation in social interaction. For Goffman participation in interaction is not a simple either/or affair in which one party speaks while another listens. There are varying forms and degrees of participation, and the roles of speaking and hearing can be broken down analytically into more specific interactional "footings." Speakers, for example, may take up various footings in relation to their own remarks. By employing specific "production formats" (1981: 145) they may convey distinctions between the (a) animator, (b) author, and (c) principal of what is said. The "animator" is the person who presently utters a sequence of words. The one who originated the beliefs and sentiments, and perhaps also composed the words through which they are expressed, is the "author." Finally, the "principal" is the person whose viewpoint or position is currently being expressed in and through the utterance.

It is not uncommon for a single speaker to embody all three of these identities simultaneously.

(1) [West 16:3:27]

A1: So I figured it'd be a good class to take.

As the speaker of this utterance, BD is self-evidently its animator. He also appears to have composed these words (author) to express a personal viewpoint (principal). BD thus exhibits all three of these identities through his turn.

In contrast, interactants may act primarily as animators when they speak, deflecting the other identities away from themselves and (commonly) onto some other party. The following extract contains several illustrations of this practice (arrowed), beginning with a comparatively mild footing shift that is subsequently upgraded.

(2) [Frankel:TC:I:1:25-26]

1	G:	→	... <u>w</u> e don't wanna see one another, (.) 'hh
2			on a weekend where we just have (.) <u>y</u> 'know
3			two da:ys if <u>e</u> ven <u>th</u> a :t.
4	S:		[Right,
5			(.)
6	S:		tch I <u>t</u> don't blame you.]
7	G:		[<u>t</u> uh <u>r</u> elate tuh o'ne another. 'hh <u>Y</u> 'know
8		→	we'd like- (.) a little bit longer than tha:t.
9			(0.2)

- 10 S: Right,=
 11 G: =I mean I don't (.) really care that much.
 12 → But he does.

G first speaks on behalf of herself and her boyfriend by using the pro-term “we” (lines 1–3, 8). She thus indicates that she is not solely responsible for the viewpoint she is reporting; she is expressing the sentiments of the couple as a unit, with both parties sharing the identities of author and principal. Notice that this footing also becomes an issue for S, who in the course of expressing sympathy and affiliation (at line 6) must indicate with whom she is affiliating. Thus, S uses the pro-term “you,” which can refer to G and her boyfriend as a collection (although it can also refer exclusively to G). At any rate, G eventually distances herself further from this perspective (lines 11–12) by observing that it reflects her boyfriend’s feelings more than her own. The segment ends (line 12) with a more decisive footing shift in which G is animating the sentiments of her partner.

Speakers can also shift footings in a less direct manner, without overtly stating that another party authored or endorses what is being said. For example, by using transparently imitative phrasing (e.g. aphorisms, renowned quotations, or other statements known in common), or by adopting a mocking style of speech, interactants can show that their words are not entirely their own (Goffman 1981: 150; see also Sacks 1992 [1966]). Both of these resources are employed in the following (see lines 8–16).

(3) [HG II:26]

- 1 N: ...I still think he might write you.
 2 (0.3)
 3 N: It just takes 'm awhile,
 4 (.)
 5 H: 'h-hh-hhe writes one word a day, hhih_hn
 6 N: } yeahhh
 7 (.)
 8 N: Dear? hh nex' day. Hanna,=
 9 H: =h h 'hhh
 10 (.)
 11 N: Ho:w?
 12 (.)
 13 H: 'hhi:nh_}heh-heh,
 14 N: }A: }re?
 15 (.)
 16 N: You.

Speaker N mocks the opening of a hypothetical letter from Hanna’s friend (lines 8, 11, 14, 16), and she does so in part by using stereotypical letter-writing words. She also alters the rhythm of her talk to satirize the idea of a letter being written at the rate of “one word a day.” Thus, after saying “nex’ day” between the first and second words (line 8), she inserts a little space between each of the succeeding words (lines 9–10, 12–13, 15) to evoke the image of a painfully slow process of composition. The imitative character of this action is also projected at the outset by her comment that he “writes one word a day” (line 5), but these mocking lexical and rhythmic features within the talk further contribute to its intelligibility as a shift of footing.

Goffman called attention to the existence of diverse speaker footings, and he commented on their presence in formal lecturing and radio announcing (1981: 173–86, 280–314). However, he did not examine how they operate in more interactive circumstances. This is significant, because by conceptualizing footing analytically, and examining it empirically in lectures and other monologous forms of talk, interest in footing came to focus quite naturally on the actions of individual speakers. Witness, for example, Goffman’s suggestion that speakers achieve specific footings by designing their utterances in accordance with particular “production formats.” Similarly, while some studies of news-interview talk have called attention to the fact that interviewers shift footings (e.g. Greatbatch 1986b: 106–7; Harris 1986: 67–8; Jucker 1986: 134–6), these analyses remain speaker-centered in focusing on production formats. What has not yet been examined is how footing operates in interaction: the ways that recipients may orient to a speaker’s footing during its production (see Goodwin 1984) and in their subsequent responses to it (see Zimmerman 1990) by either ratifying it, contesting it, or ignoring it, thus shaping the trajectory of the interaction. What is needed, then, is an analysis of the interactional organization by which footing is achieved, sustained, and altered over the course of an encounter.

The television news interview is a fertile setting in which to examine this phenomenon, partly because interviewers shift footings with some regularity, and also because this practice seems to be bound up with matters of neutrality and professionalism that journalists routinely face. As we shall see, it is in part because interviewers have the ability to shift footings that they can maintain a

neutralistic posture even during the production of strongly evaluative or opinionated statements. Hence, these data can yield insight into the organization of a generic interactional device, while showing how this device may be wielded to accomplish a specific institutional task indigenous to the context of broadcast journalism.²

3 How interviewers shift footings

News interviewers usually ask questions of their guests. This practice is characteristic of the interview as a speech-exchange system, for that system specifies that interviewers (henceforth IRs) and interviewees (henceforth IEs) should restrict themselves to producing turns that are at least minimally recognizable as questions and answers, respectively (Greatbatch 1988; see also Clayman 1988). This form of turn-type preallocation does not mean that IRs cannot produce statement-formatted utterances, such as assertions, assessments, and the like; but when they do, they usually embed them within questioning turns and only occasionally allow them to stand freely. In either case, IRs commonly shift footings during their production, thereby placing some degree of distance between themselves and their more overtly opinionated remarks. For example, in the following the IR produces a nonquestioning assertion (lines 9–12) regarding the manageability of nuclear waste; but before doing so he attributes the statement, and the point of view it expresses, to a third party (lines 6–9).

(4) [Nightline 6/6/85: 19-20]

1 JS: ...And if you look et- simply thuh record in
 2 thuh low level waste field over thuh last
 3 fifteen tuh twenty years... thuh record is
 4 not very good (0.3) an' it doesn't give one
 5 a cause for optimism.=
 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,
 10 and that ultimately that radioactive material
 11 can be reduced, to manageable quantities,
 12 'n put in thuh bottom of a salt mine.
 13 JS: Thuh p- thuh point that she was making earlier
 14 about (.) reprocessing of: thuh fuel rods goes
 15 right to thuh heart (.) of thuh way a lotta
 16 people look at this particular issue...

In this case the cited party is another IE ("Doctor Yalow"), whose previously expressed views are now being animated by the IR in a new context. The IR does not merely attribute a set of words to Yalow; by saying that "she'll have an opportunity to express her own opinions again," he makes a special point of indicating that the viewpoint being expressed through these words "belongs" primarily to this third party and thus is not necessarily his own.

3.1 Footing in pursuit of neutralism

IRs shift footings at specific junctures as a way of adopting a locally neutralistic posture. Part of the evidence for this stems from the fact that IRs frequently take such measures when making assertions. But stronger evidence can be marshalled to demonstrate that neutralism is specifically at issue, and that footing is an oriented-to resource for achieving this posture. This will require examining the footing shift in somewhat finer detail. In this regard, several observations are in order.

1. *Footing shifts tend to be restricted to relatively controversial opinion statements.* This pattern is observable in the following, where an initial "factual" statement is asserted directly (beginning at arrow 1), while the more contentious assertions that follow (arrows 2–3) are produced on a different footing.

(5) [Meet the Press 12/8/85:18] (The IE here is Robert Dole, then Senate majority leader for the Republican party.)

1 IR: 1 → Senator, (0.5) uh: President Reagan's elected
 2 thirteen months ago: an enormous landslide.
 3 (0.8)
 4 2 → It is s::aid that his programs are in trouble,
 5 though he seems to be terribly popular with
 6 the American people. (0.6)
 7 3 → It is said by some people at thuh White House
 8 we could get those programs through if only we
 9 ha:d perhaps more: 'hh effective leadership
 10 on on thuh hill an' I suppose indirectly=
 11 RD: [hhheh]
 12 IR: =that might (0.5) relate t'you as well:. (0.6)
 13 Uh what d'you think thuh problem is really.
 14 is=it (0.2) thuh leadership as it might be
 15 claimed up on thuh hill, er is it thuh
 16 programs themselves.

The initial statement (arrow 1, lines 1–2) that Reagan was elected “thirteen months ago” in “an enormous landslide” has the character of a relatively concrete declaration of historical fact; its content is a matter of public record. By way of contrast, the subsequent claim that Reagan’s programs are “in trouble” (arrow 2, lines 4–6) and the suggestion that the IE is to blame for this (arrow 3, lines 7–10, 12) are both evaluative in character, and are thus arguable by comparison. As might be expected, the IR distances himself from these more contentious assertions by prefacing them with an attributive verb in the passive voice (“It is said ...”). He thus indicates that they derive from another source which remains unnamed in the first case (arrow 2), but which is loosely identified as “some people at thuh White House” in the latter (arrow 3).

It would be incorrect to view the controversial character of these items as something that is purely intrinsic to their “nature,” for their contentiousness becomes visible in part through the special manner in which they are treated. Consider that the IR shifts footing at particular points within his talk, and like any action this is accountable in terms of its sequential placement. Hence, observers can notice that he is selecting particular items from the turn for special handling by taking extra care to distance himself from them. These items might well be contentious or objectionable in themselves, but the move to an animator stance works reflexively to mark them as such. The footing shift thus achieves more than neutralism for its speaker; it simultaneously endows the attributed item with qualities that would otherwise threaten that posture.

2 *Footing shifts are renewed during specific controversial words.* In the following, for example, the IR begins (at arrow 1) by attributing an upcoming assertion in its entirety to a third party (“the Ambassador”). This footing is later renewed within the assertion itself (arrow 2) just prior to a specific descriptor (“a collaborator”) which is reattributed to that party.

(6) [Nightline 7/22/85: 17] (Discussing violence among Blacks in South Africa)

1 IR: 1 → Reverend Boesak lemme a- pick up a point uh
2 the Ambassador made.
3 What- what assurances can you give u:s 'hh
4 that (.) talks between moderates in that
5 country will take pla:ce when it see:ms thet

6 any black leader who is willing to talk to
7 thuh government is branded
8 2 → as the Ambassador said a collaborator
9 and is then punished.=
10 AB: =Eh theh- thuh- thuh Ambassador has it wrong.
11 It's not thuh people who want to talk with
12 thuh government that are branded collaborators

As a way of characterizing Black leaders who negotiate with the South African government, “collaborator” has strong morally judgmental overtones. The IR is thus going to extra lengths to disavow any personal attachment to strategic items within the assertion even though he had already altered his footing at the assertion’s beginning.

3 *IRs execute self-repair to shift footings.* It is not uncommon for IRs to abort their utterances in midstream and revise them so that they are attributed to a third party (arrowed in the following extract).

(7) [MacNeil/Lehrer 6/10/85a:CT:4] (Discussing the U.S. decision to continue to honor the SALT II arms control treaty with a Reagan administration official.)

1 IR: How d'you sum up thuh me:ssage. that this
2 decision is gending to thuh Soviets?
3 KA: 'hhh Well as I started- to say:: it is ay- one
4 of: warning an' opportunity. Thuh warning
5 is (.) you'd better comply: to arms control::
6 agreements if arms control is going to have
7 any chance of succeeding in thuh future.
8 Unilateral compliance by thuh United States
9 just not in thuh works...
10 ((Four lines omitted))
11 IR: → But isn't this- uh:: critics uh on thuh
12 conservative- side of thuh political argument
13 have argued thet this is: abiding by thuh
14 treaty is: unilateral (.) observance. (.)
15 uh:: or compliance. (.) by thuh United States.

IR begins to respond to KA’s assertion by producing an interrogative preface (“But isn’t this ...”), which is commonly used by news interviewers prior to assertions of various sorts (Clayman 1988: 476). The turn-initial *but* indicates, more specifically, that a disagreement is about to be produced. In this instance, however, employing the standard format for correcting errors (Jefferson

1974), IR aborts the turn and restarts on a different footing, such that the subsequent viewpoint is attributed to “critics uh on thuh conservative- side of thuh political argument.” This revised version is no longer formatted as a question, the interrogative preface having been omitted; it is now a free-standing assertion, one that disputes the IE’s previous point, but now does so on someone else’s behalf.

A more complex instance of self-repair to shift footings is the following (arrowed).

(8) [Nightline 7/22/85: 7] (Allen Boesak, a black South African spokesperson, is explaining blacks’ involvement in recent violence in that country.)

- 1 AB: ... what you find in thuh black townships it
 2 seems to me is thuh kind of reaction of thuh
 3 people to thuh violence of thuh police and
 4 this is thuh situation in which we find
 5 our selves.
 6 IR: [h h h h] Well you- you may argue that
 7 it- that it is a result of apartheid thuh
 8 violence, it certainly was not s- uhhh
 9 apartheid is uh- is uh- system (.) imposed
 10 by thuh government but
 11 1 → thuh violence itself was not started by thuh
 12 government,
 13 2 → thuh violence now st- (.) thuh violence thuh
 14 government now says has to be stopped ‘hh
 15 before ANYthing else can happen an thuh state
 16 of emergency is necessary (0.3) tuh do that.
 17 (.)
 18 AB: hhh Well I donno what they me:an you see...

After reformulating the gist of AB’s prior turn (“Well you- you may argue that it- that it is a result of apartheid thuh violence”), the IR proceeds to challenge this point of view. He packages the challenge in the form of a common rhetorical device: the contrast (Atkinson 1984; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986; Clayman 1988: 478). The first part of the contrast is initiated at arrow 1 in negative form, while the second positively formatted part begins at arrow 2 with “thuh violence now st-.” Given the parallel lexical and intonational constructions, this appears to have been designed to complete the contrast, and is presumably leading towards blaming the current violence on Blacks rather than the government. That is, he seems to have been about to say that “the violence now started *because of*

the actions of blacks,” or words to that effect. This counterassessment could be heard as a personal attack here, given that the IE is himself a Black South African and is present to speak under the auspices of that categorical identity. It is not completed, however, for IR aborts the utterance in midstream (notice the glottal stop at “st-”), and revises it so that the point is weakened (in the new version, Blacks are not overtly blamed for the violence), and is ascribed to “thuh government.”

As Jefferson (1974) has observed, self-repair is not merely directed to problems of correctness and grammatical coherence. It is also aimed at repairing “interactional errors”; that is, mistakes in the attempt to speak appropriately to particular recipients in particular circumstances. The issue here is clearly not the correctness or coherence of the utterance, but its properly neutralistic footing.

4 IRs avoid affiliating with or disaffiliating from the statements they report. By means of the footing shift, IRs are able to indicate that the viewpoints they report originated elsewhere; in Goffman’s terms, “authorship” is overtly deflected. But in addition to this basic action, IRs also systematically refrain from either endorsing or rejecting these views, so that the attributed party is nominated as the sole “principal” across the turn. A cursory examination of extracts (4)–(8) above will demonstrate that IRs simply do not comment on the views that they animate. This contrasts with what occurs in other contexts, where speakers may affiliate with or against opinions that ostensibly originated elsewhere. For example, in the following extract, taken from an ordinary conversation about windows, a speaker first asserts that a type of sliding window is “just as effective” (line 1), after which she animates the similar views of a third party who owns such windows (line 2). Hence, the animated assertion is introduced as evidence to support a position that the speaker has already taken (see also Pomerantz 1984b).

(9) [Rah:C:2:JSA(18):3]

- 1 J: It’s (.) just as effective isn’t it.
 2 At least these people said it was,

And in the following (taken from a psychiatric intake interview) the speaker *first* animates the words of her husband (lines 1–2) and *then* exhibits equivocal agreement/disagreement (line 3).

(10) [PI:1]

- 1 C: An he says that my place is home with thuh
 2 children.=
 3 =I agree:. But I w- I need a rest.

News interviewers, in contrast, systematically refrain from aligning with or against the opinions they report. They do not reveal their own views before invoking the views of others, and they do not follow such views with their own comments. Accordingly, by declining to affiliate with/against statements involving others as principals, IRs do not project themselves as principals in their own right.

Of course, viewers may assume that the IR actually agrees (or disagrees) with what is reported. Such assumptions may be founded on impressions that the IR has “given off” (Goffman 1959: 2ff.) through facial expressions or tone of voice, background knowledge of his or her opinions, or even on the basis that “everyone agrees with that.” But by virtue of the footing device, the IRs own position is (a) not stated, (b) not officially “on record” in the discussion, and, as a consequence, (c) the animated viewpoint is not something for which the IR or the employing news organization can be held responsible.

3.2 Contexts and uses of footing shifts

IRs make opinionated statements in a variety of contexts to accomplish a range of distinguishable activities. The footing device enables them to perform these tasks while maintaining a neutralistic posture. I shall briefly examine the most common activities for which the footing shift is used.

1 *Initiating a topic.* On many occasions, IRs make provocative statements to open the discussion, or to initiate a new topical line of talk. The following interview is opened by this procedure. In the taped “sound bite” that preceded this opening segment, Bishop Desmond Tutu expressed his view that the state of emergency recently imposed by the South African government would inhibit the achievement of peace. After introducing an IE (line 1–3) (who plainly represents the “other side,” the position of the White South African government), the IR uses a particularly contentious assertion by Tutu (lines 5–6) to lead up to an opening question (line 7) concerning the state of emergency.

(11) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85:1]

- 1 IR: 'hhhhh We hear fi:st from thuh top South
 2 African official in thuh United States. the
 3 ambassador designate, Herbert Beukes. 'hhhh
 4 Mister Ambassador, (.)
 5 → Bishop Tutu jus' said you cannot get peace
 6 at the end of a gun.
 7 Why is the state of emergency so necessary.

Bold assertions of this kind are convenient resources with which to establish the relevance of an opening question and, by virtue of the footing shift, IRs can utter them without being responsible for the positions that they embody.

2 *Presenting the other side.* IRs also produce opinion statements to counter an IE's previously stated position. These actions occur within an IE/IR/IE turn sequence. In the following, HB's claim that the intent of the state of emergency is to curb violence (lines 13–21) is subsequently countered by the IR (lines 23–8), who invokes the perspective of “thuh critics” (arrowed) to suggest that the real purpose is to “suppress political dissent.”

(12) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a: 5]

- 1 IR: tch 'hhh Why was it necessary to impose uh:
 2 restrictions on thuh press both inside South
 3 Africa an' outside South [Africa.]
 4 HB: ['hhhh] Uh- (0.4)
 5 it is: uh- (0.3) not- anything unique...
 6 ((6 lines omitted))
 7 ... we have similarly considered those
 8 [necessary.]
 9 IR: ['hhhhhhh] Under thuh theory that uh:
 10 information causes people to act more
 11 violent? or- or what is thuh the [ory there.=
 12 HB: [hhhhhhhhhh (um)]
 13 HB: =W- w- we have eh seen on: uhm- f- film footage
 14 'hh where people would be exploiting those
 15 circumstances. Pa- participants in violence.
 16 'hh that at times it is not clear whether some
 17 of those 'hh uh innocent people might become
 18 victims 'hh uh because of circumstances
 19 created by eh- publicity. 'hh and we would
 20 just want to avoid any possible 'hh uh
 21 situation that might lead to more violence.
 22 IR: Fin'lly Mister Ambassador as you know

23 → tuh critics say that tuh purpose of tuh
 24 state of emergency tuh real purpose of tuh
 25 state of 'merjuh- uh state of emergency is to
 26 suppress political dissent. those who are
 27 opposed to the apartheid government of South
 28 Africa. Is that so
 29 (.)
 30 HB: I would haff to: uh- take issue with that
 31 premise. because...

By counterbalancing IEs' opinions with divergent and contrasting points of view, IRs give voice to "the other side" of controversial issues. This practice is consistent with traditional standards of fairness in broadcast journalism (Epstein 1973: 59–77; Gans 1979). The footing shift enables IRs to perform this task without jeopardizing their neutralism.

3 *Generating disagreement between interviewees.* IRs also animate opinion statements to generate disagreement between IEs. Hence, after one IE has finished speaking, IR may formulate the gist of that response (or some aspects of it) and address it to a co-IE to solicit a contrasting response. These actions occur within an IE₁/IR/IE₂ turn sequence. In the following, after NM (a Black leader in South Africa) explains recent violent resistance to apartheid, IR encapsulates the gist of his account to solicit a disagreement from HB (a representative of the South African government) (arrowed).

(13) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a: 13-14] (Simplified)

1 NM: Tch 'hhhh WE have ha:d (0.6) many many year:s
 2 (0.8) of peace in South Africa. (1.1) Thuh
 3 present unrest (.) is of recent origin. (1.2)
 4 Since nineteen twelve (1.3) at thuh time of
 5 union: (.) when (0.3) thuh white minority.
 6 (0.3) took power (0.8) to thuh total exclusion
 7 of (0.4) people who're not white (0.9) thuh
 8 African National Congress (.) has petitioned
 9 (0.7) has campaigned peacefully (1.0) for MOre
 10 than forty years now. (0.5) in an attempt
 11 (0.3) to ame:nd thuh constitution. (1.3) in
 12 an attem' to get (.) POver sharing for thuh
 13 black majority. (0.6) they have been totally
 14 unsuccessful. (0.4) An' one hass to take this
 15 into acCO:unt. (0.4) when on:e (0.2) speaks
 16 about (0.2) thuh present spate of violence
 17 in South Africa.

18 (0.4)
 19 IR: → Peace has not worked he says Mister
 20 Ambassador,
 21 HB: 'hhhh Well he's referring to: uh=ay- (0.2) ay
 22 duh (.) period of time in: (.) uh f:ar distant
 23 h past. 'hh What I'm concerned about and what
 24 we should be concerned about Doctor Motlana
 25 and uh (0.2) myself is here and now....

Such practices are common in "debate interviews," where IEs are present to represent contrasting points of view (Clayman 1987: 150–200; Greatbatch, this volume). In this context the footing shift enables the IR to generate an informal debate between IEs without collaborating with either side (see Maynard 1986). Moreover, by mediating the debate through such animated assertions, IRs can also exercise a degree of control over their topical development. Unlike simple response invitations (e.g. *How do you respond to that?*), animated statements or "formulations" (Heritage and Watson 1980; Heritage 1985) can be used selectively to target specific aspects of the previous answer for subsequent discussion, while focusing those aspects into a single dramatic point (Heritage 1985: 102–3). Hence, by manipulating footing, IRs can actively shape the course of the debate without entering it as a participant.

Thus far, virtually all of the examples have contained overt attributions placed prior to the animated item (e.g. *X says* + assertion). Yet in this particular context attributions are a little more flexible; as the previous example illustrates, they may follow the focal item. Overt attributions may even be omitted altogether when soliciting disagreement. Consider the following, where the IR animates aspects of DM's answer to invite a disagreement from LH (arrowed).

(14) [MacNeil/Lehrer 6/11/85a:7]

1 DM: ... In the pa:st I don't believe the
 2 administration's clearly indicated what their
 3 policy is. 'hh Now:- I believe they're
 4 making concessions. uh they gave ih- gave in
 5 on Salt Two:, they're givin' in on the MX,
 6 'hh an I think ther givin' in on: uh:: thuh-
 7 thuh kontras....
 8 IR: You don't believe, Congressman Hamilton, that
 9 → thee administration is making concessions or
 10 → has clarified its aims
 11 LH: hhem Well let me:: (.) point ou:t that uh:

12 the administration's objectives (0.3) have
13 never been crystal clear...

What appears to be at work here is the transparent visibility of a footing shift when the original version is proximately available. Given that the IR is making a point that has just been expressed in the immediately preceding turn, his remarks are self-evidently analyzable from the outset as “belonging to” the preceding speaker. Moreover, IR takes steps to secure this analysis by preserving some of DM's original words (“making concessions,” a formulation which DM used in line 4). Notice that this differs from the previous example – extract (13) above – which does not preserve any of the IE's original words, but which contains an overt attribution. The local availability of the original version, together with the preservation of its specific words, are resources that enable speakers accountably to report another's views without explicitly naming the responsible party (see Sacks 1966; Goffman 1981: 150).

4 *Defending against criticism.* Finally, IRs shift footings in hostile environments in order to defend themselves against critical attacks. In the following, this strategy is used to respond to an accusation that IR has “demeaned” the president. The IE making the accusation is Pat Buchanan, who was recently appointed White House Director of Communications for Ronald Reagan. Buchanan's accusation is occasioned by IR's initial question (lines 6–10) concerning a much-quoted line from a Reagan speech that morally equated the Nicaraguan Contras with the founding fathers of the United States. IR asks PB if he wrote that line for Reagan. Before asking the question, however, he indicates in a preliminary statement (lines 1–6) that he is interested in whether or not Buchanan's own ideology is influencing the tone of White House rhetoric. This occasions the following exchange.

(15) [Nightline 6/3/85: 5-6]

1 IR: Arrigh. 'hhh let's- let's talk a little bit
2 about uh:: about Pat Buchanan's ideology and
3 how that is reflecting itself now::, in:: what
4 wur seeing coming outta thuh White House,
5 'hhh or to what degree you're simply a
6 reflection o' thuh President. 'hhh that li:ne
7 about the: uh thuh moral equivalent of our

8 founding fathers you're talking about the-
9 (er-) thuh President was talking about thuh
10 contras there was that your line?
11 PB: 'hhh No:, that was uh Pres'dent's own lin:e.
12 Ted, I didn't put it into his spee:ch....
13 ((18 lines omitted))
14 ...nobody puts wor::ds intuh thuh mouth of
15 Ronald Reagan he goes over every single speech
16 he delivers. 'hhh An' when 'e delivers it 'hh
17 those words are what he belie::ves. 'hh And
18 I think it is rilly uh- 'hh it deme:ns thuh
19 President tuh suggest that someone say Pat
20 Buchanan or anyone el:se 'hh is running down
21 there at night sneaking phrases or (lines)
22 'hhh intuh speeches and thuh President
23 doesn't know what he's sayi-ng. 'hhh
24 IR: [No Pat] I don't
25 → think anyone's sug-gest-ing that, I think=
26 PB: [(sure)]
27 IR: → =what people are suggesting is that thuh
28 President of thuh United States perhaps more
29 than any other man or woman in thuh country
30 is terribly terribly busy cannot possibly
31 write every speech of 'is own, 'hh or for that
32 matter go over every speech line by line as
33 you suggest. ['hhh Uh- an when that happens,=
34 PB: [Mhm]
35 IR: =then people in positions such as your own,
36 'hh can sometimes get some of their own
37 ideas across.

PB denies authorship of the “founding fathers” line, attributing it to Reagan instead (lines 11–12). He then accuses IR of “demeaning” the president (lines 18–23) by suggesting that “someone say Pat Buchanan or anyone el:se 'hh is running down there at night sneaking phrases or (lines) 'hhh into speeches and thuh President doesn't know what he's saying.” In response, IR denies the accusation by first negating it (lines 24–5) and then recharacterizing his prior action (lines 27–37) so as to mitigate its “demeaning” character; in the process, he places it on a different footing. Thus, he presents himself as merely the animator of his previous words, which he now attributes to people in general; the IR says that he does not think that “anyone's suggesting that” (lines 24–5) and that “what people are suggesting ...” (line 27). Through these words he invokes the

professional journalistic identity of one who speaks on behalf of the citizenry when interacting with government officials. Hence, insofar as his prior question could be heard to express a point of view, the footing shift deflects ownership of this viewpoint away from the IR personally and onto people in general. Furthermore, insofar as the expressed view could be heard to “demean” the president, responsibility for that action is similarly deflected.

It would appear, then, that the footing shift can serve a crucial defensive function precisely because of the manner in which it shields IRs from having to accept responsibility for their words. This defensive function may be observed “in action” when IRs invoke the footing shift to respond to informal criticisms and complaints from IEs. But even when no criticisms are actually voiced within the encounter, the footing shift may be regarded as defensive in a more general sense, since its use presumably furnished IRs with plausible grounds to deflect criticisms that may arise at a later time.³

4 The interviewee’s response

It was argued at the beginning of this chapter that footing is properly understood as an interactionally achieved phenomenon. While a speaker may advance a particular footing within a given turn, its subsequent fate is contingent on other parties to the encounter and how they choose to respond. In light of this observation, we turn now to consider how IEs deal with footing shifts in their responses.

Given that IRs regularly animate contentious and challenging assertions, it is not surprising that IEs typically seek to counter or refute them. But what is less obvious is that while doing so they ordinarily refrain from treating the focal assertion as expressing the IR’s personal opinion. The standard response, then, is to preserve the IR’s neutralistic posture. To this end, three alternative courses of action are employed with roughly the same frequency. These practices range in character from those that officially validate and advance the IR’s proposedly neutralistic stance, to those that merely avoid undermining that footing.

4.1 *Attributing the antecedent assertion to the same third party*

In the most validating type of response, the IE duplicates the attributional pattern that the IR had initiated; that is, by overtly ascribing

the focal assertion to the same third party. IEs commonly do this when referring to the previously animated assertion just prior to refuting it, as in the following.

(16) [Nightline 7/22/85: 17-18]

- 1 IR: Reverend Boesak lemme a- pick up a point uh
 2 the Ambassador made.
 3 What- what assurances can you give u:s 'hh
 4 that (.) talks between moderates in that
 5 country will take pl:ace when it see:s that
 6 any black leader who is willing duh talk to
 7 thuh government is branded
 8 as the Ambassador said a collaborator
 9 and is then punished.=
 10 AB: → =Eh theh- thuh- thuh Ambassador has it wrong.
 11 It's not thuh people who want to talk with
 12 thuh government that are branded collaborators
 13 it is: those people 'hh who are given powers
 14 by thuh government that they use in an
 15 oppressive fashion 'hh within thuh township
 16 that are branded collaborators....

In this case the IE’s initial response is to negate the antecedent assertion, first by declaring it to be “wrong” (line 10), and then by reformulating it in negative form (“It’s not thuh people . . .”) (lines 11–12). Only then does he proceed to produce a contrasting version of his own (lines 13–16). But in the process of negating the previously animated assertion, he himself animates it and attributes it to the same person (“the Ambassador”) that the IR initially cited (compare lines 1–2, 8).

A similar outcome is achieved in the following example, although in this case the IE does not negate the antecedent assertion. He merely reformulates it as a way of highlighting which specific points will be rebutted (lines 9–12), and to express token agreement with some aspects of the viewpoint (lines 13–16), before countering it with an alternative (lines 17–20).

(17) [Nightline 6/6/85: 19-20] (Discussing efforts to dispose of nuclear waste)

- 1 IR: You heard what Doctor Yalow said earlier in
 2 this broadcast she'll have an opportunity to
 3 express her own opinions again but she seems
 4 to feel that it is an Eminently soluble
 5 problem, and that ultimately that radioactive
 6 material can be reduced, to manageable

7 quantities, 'n put in thuh bottom of a
 8 salt mine
 9 JS: → Thuh p- thuh point that she was making earlier
 10 about (.) reprocessing of: thuh fuel rods goes
 11 right to thuh heart (.) of thuh way a lotta
 12 people look at this particular issue. 'hh If
 13 → ya look at reprocessing thuh points she made
 14 earlier were I think very good in terms of
 15 'hh thuh problems we had with reprocessing in
 16 this country. 'h being the economic factors...
 17 What (.) was also true in thuh reprocessing
 18 venture we had in west valley 'hh is thuh
 19 fact that reprocessing was a technological
 20 failure....

But once again, in the course of referring to the IR's animated assessment, the IE ends up attributing it to the same person (arrowed) that the IR had originally cited (cf. lines 1–3). This type of response maximally ratifies and advances the IR's proposedly neutralistic footing.

The previous extract has an additional feature relevant to the preservation of footing. The IE's reformulated version of the focal assessment preserves little of IR's animated version (which makes the general claim that radio-active material can be reduced), returning instead to the original version to resurrect specific points that IR had merely adumbrated (that waste reduction, as the original speaker characterized it, involves reprocessing fuel rods). This is in direct contrast to what occurred in extract (16), where the IE's reformulated version preserves the same points as the IR's version, and even repeats many of his specific words. Returning to the above example, when the IE modifies the wording and focus of the assertion in this way, he provides further evidence that what is being addressed in the rebuttal is not the IR's viewpoint, but rather a viewpoint that was originally advanced at an earlier time.

4.2 Referencing the antecedent assertion without attributing it to anyone

IEs can preserve the IR's neutralistic stance without going so far as to ascribe the focal assertion to a third party. A similar outcome may be achieved by referring to the assertion without attributing it to anyone in particular (arrowed in the following extracts).

(18) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a: 5]

1 IR: Finally Mister Ambassador as you know thuh
 2 critics say that thuh purpose of thuh state
 3 of emergency thuh real purpose of thuh state
 4 of 'merjuh- uh state of emergency is to
 5 supress political dissent. those who are
 6 oppoed to the apartheid goverment of South
 7 Africa. Is that so
 8 (.)
 9 HB: I would haff to: uh- take issue with
 10 → that premise. because...

(19) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a: 21-22]

1 IR: But all thuh people around the world, the
 2 Common Market foreign ministers today:, thuh
 3 Secretary: uh General: of thuh forty seven
 4 member: uh British Commonweal:th, uh members
 5 of thuh af- banned African National Congress,
 6 'hhhh our guest Doctor Motlana, all say that-
 7 an' the American statement we've just heard,
 8 'hhh that thuh reason for thuh violence that
 9 thuh state of emergency: is designed to sto:p,
 10 thuh reason for that violence, is thuh policy
 11 of apartheid.
 12 HB: → 'hhhh Now if: that is being said 'n for the
 13 argument it's being accepted, 'hh then:...

When the IE in extract (18) negates the antecedent assertion, he refers to it as “that premise.” Noticeably absent here is a possessive pronoun that would attach it to the IR or to anyone in particular. Extract (19) has an added feature: an attributive verb is formulated in the passive voice (“Now if: that is being said”), thereby leaving its agent unspecified.

This kind of anonymous treatment might initially appear to be a simple reflection of the form of the original attribution. In both of the above extracts the IR cited a collectivity rather than a specific individual (“thuh critics” in extract (18), lines 1–2, and “all thuh people around thuh world . . .” in extract (19), line 1) (see Hal-kowski 1986), making an anonymous treatment by IE particularly appropriate. However, the IE may deal with the assertion anonymously even when a specific individual was previously cited, as in the following (arrowed).

(20) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a:9-10]

- 1 IR: 'hhhh Mister Ambassador? How d'you respond
 2 to thuh- to Mister Motlana's last point, thet
 3 thuh real issue: is: (0.3) political power
 4 for thuh blacks an' until thuh government
 5 gives it to 'em there's gonna be violence.
 6 (0.3)
 7 HB: → tch It is 'n: issue, (0.3) it is a valid one,
 8 (0.2) is very legitimate. (0.2) thuh question
 9 of uh (.) participation in thuh political
 10 process of thuh country, by: blacks. 'hhh But
 11 th:is is not at issue (.) at duh mo:ment...

Accordingly, the use of an anonymous response form is not limited to occasions when IRs use an anonymous attribution. Rather, it constitutes a generic means of doing strictly “impersonal” disagreement; that is, designing a disagreeing turn so that it is countering an anonymous point of view, a perspective in general, rather than one that belongs to any particular person. In the present context this implicitly ratifies the IR's animator stance, for the target assertion is not attached to the IR or to anyone in particular.

4.3 Withholding any reference to the antecedent assertion

Finally, IEs may simply produce a contrasting assertion without referencing the prior assertion in any way. In this way, they refrain from exhibiting any official orientation to whose position is being countered.

(21) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a:4]

- 1 IR: What d'you say to Bishop Tutu and others who
 2 have said since the state of emergency was
 3 declared that this will cause even more
 4 violence rather than t'stop thuh violence
 5 that's in effect
 6 (0.4)
 7 HB: Well- (0.2) it is pretty clear that something
 8 has to be done. h'hh in order to stop thuh
 9 violence. 'hh Now thuh state of emergency: uh
 10 is inTENDED 'hh to clamp down on that
 11 violence. h'hh Uh to stop it somehow to (0.3)
 12 p- uh protect hh innocent people's lives. 'hh
 13 To protect dem: as being thuh victims: of uh-
 14 uh radicals who (.) do not see any 'hh reason

- 15 for participating in a process 'hh that can
 16 hopefully lead h'h to a solution of thuh
 17 country's (.) political problems.

Unlike the response forms examined previously, this one cannot properly be characterized as validating, explicitly or implicitly, the IR's supposedly neutralistic stance. But it does not undermine that stance either, and this it shares with the other response forms. In each case IEs refrain from taking actions that would imply that the prior assertion is an expression of the IR's own point of view.

The only exceptions to this pattern occur when the IR did *not* shift footings, or when the IR's footing might be construed as ambiguous. An example of the former is contained in extract (22) below, in which the IR follows an interrogative preface (lines 1–2) with a direct assertion (lines 3–6), which the IE in turn treats as expressing the IR's own views (line 7): “I do not agree with you . . .”

(22) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a:19] (FW is Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs in the Reagan administration.)

- 1 IR: But isn't this (.) d- declaration of thuh
 2 state of emergency:: (0.3) an admission that
 3 the eh South African government's policies
 4 have not worked, an' in fact that the um-
 5 United States (0.4) administration's policy of
 6 constructive engagement (0.2) has not worked.
 7 FW: I do not agree with you 'hhh that the approach
 8 we have taken (.) toward South Africa is- ay-
 9 is an incorrect approach. 'hhhhh We want.
 10 (0.8) tuh see that s- system change....

And in the following extended turn the IR's footing seems somewhat equivocal, and the IE chooses to ascribe the assessment to him personally. The IE here is the South African ambassador to the United States, and just prior to this exchange he had justified his government's imposition of a state of emergency by arguing that it was intended to stop violence of Blacks against Blacks.

(23) [Nightline 7/22/85:3-4]

- 1 IR: Arright lemme talk about this question then
 2 fer a moment of violence (.) of blacks against
 3 blacks. 'hh We live here in thuh United States
 4 in a country that was 'hhh eh founded on a
 5 revolution 'hh and I suppose looking- eh at
 6 that revolution that occurred in- in- in our

7 country an back at th- in the eighteenth
 8 century 'hhh I suppo:se thuh British could've
 9 said there was violence occurring at that time
 10 an they could've dismissed it as saying this
 11 is violence of Americans against Americans.
 12 'hhh But thuh point was there was violence at
 13 that time 'hh uh between: what we now call
 14 Patriots 'hh an people in this country who
 15 were considered to be allied with thuh
 16 British. 'hhh And so when there is violence
 17 of blacks against blacks ih- it may be
 18 ocCURring that way but nobody questions what's
 19 causing it. 'hhh What is causing the anger an
 20 thuh violence in South Africa is apartheid.
 21 An that is something 'hh over which your
 22 government obviously ha:s (0.2) control.
 23 HB: 'hhhh Uhm (0.4) uh Charlie I will not quarrel
 24 with you: that an important uh hh aspect here
 25 an important issue 'hh 's thuh question of
 26 dealing with thuh political situation....

The IR here is drawing an analogy between Black violence in South Africa and political violence in revolutionary America. In detailing the American case (lines 3–16), he produces several relatively non-controversial or “factual” statements (that the United States was founded on revolution [lines 3–5], and that there was violence then between patriots and those allied with Britain [lines 12–16]) in an unmitigated fashion, while he attributes a more evaluative assessment (that US violence amounted to violence of Americans against Americans [lines 8–11]) to “thuh British.” When he arrives at the extended upshot of the analogy (lines 16–22), his footing is equivocal. He first notes that “nobody questions what’s causing” the present violence (lines 18–19), setting up a kind of puzzle that works to slightly distance himself from the subsequent assessment (“What is causing the anger an thuh violence in South Africa is apartheid”) (lines 19–30) by implying that it is believed by “everyone” (the contrast category for “nobody”). However, the final statement (lines 21–2) is asserted directly, without attribution. In response to this equivocal footing, HB produces a “personal” form of rebuttal (“Charlie I will not quarrel with you: ...”), thereby selecting out one possible interpretation of the IR’s assessment (as representing the IR’s own views) and incorporating that interpretation into his own turn.

As contrasting cases, these two examples further demonstrate that IEs, by commenting implicitly on the footing of the previous turn, contribute to its developing sense as “neutral” or otherwise. This is one implication of the standard response types examined in this section: they help to constitute and sustain retrospectively the footing of the antecedent turn by declining to treat it as expressing the IR’s personal beliefs. Indeed, the first two response forms examined above actively deal with the prior assessment either as belonging to a third party or as belonging to no one in particular. As a result, the visibility of the footing shift, and the neutralism it proposes, is extended across the interaction by incorporating it presumptively into subsequent turns. It might be said that IEs actively collaborate to preserve the IR’s neutralistic posture.

5 Constituting credibility

Although IRs ordinarily refrain from affiliating with their more opinionated statements, this does not mean that they produce such statements with equal weight. They can influence the truth value or epistemic weight of what they report by the terms used to characterize the responsible party.⁴ Since there are a large variety of ways that any individual or collectivity may be formulated (see Sacks 1972a), IRs can select those formulations that either enhance or detract from the source’s credibility. Note that this does not necessarily entail a departure from neutralism; IRs can comment on the party advocating a position without personally aligning with or against the position itself. But it does mean that positions may be endowed with varying degrees of credibility as they are animated. As we shall see, it is more common for IRs to enhance (rather than detract from) credibility in this manner, thereby placing IEs in the position of having to respond to compelling alternative points of view. Moreover, this proposed credibility often becomes an issue for IEs, who frequently attempt to undermine it in the course of responding.

5.1 Commenting on the source’s authoritativeness

IRs may weight the credibility of a position by commenting on the authority of its source. Generally speaking, cited third parties in news interviews tend to be government officials, certified experts, or other authoritative spokespersons, and they are usually referenced

by their official titles (e.g. *Senator X*, *Doctor Y*). Other spokespersons tend to be referenced as *Mr./Ms.* where their authoritative status has already been established. However, the IR may go to extra lengths to comment on the authoritativeness of the source.

In the following, a critical assessment of the US government's failure to join the Soviet Union's moratorium on nuclear-weapons testing (lines 13–14) is endowed with credibility in this way (lines 8–12).

(24) [Nightline 10/6/86: CT5]

1 FG: ...We don't like hh (.) uh (.) having:
 2 arguments made which we feel are 'hh uh (.)
 3 not only not (0.9) contributing to: (0.3)
 4 positive and effective arms control, 'hhh
 5 uh but we of course don't like having people
 6 (0.3) e- misrepresenting: our view of what
 7 would constitute (.) effective arms control.
 8 IR: We'll now when a former President of the
 9 United States, and a man who knows a little
 10 something about nuclear weapons, having
 11 ser:ved on a nuclear subma:rine and was
 12 himself an engineer, when Jimmy Carter calls
 13 it an embarrassment. 'hhh tuh have thee
 14 United States not (.) match the ba:n, uh:
 15 not exactly a lightweight.
 16 FG: 'hhh Thuh President of the United States
 17 today:, is Ronald Reagan. and the President
 18 (0.3) has seen our problem very clearly, 'hh
 19 as one of ensuring:, (0.4) as long as we have
 20 to rely upon nuclear weapons for deterrence,
 21 'hh that we: (.) can do so with confidence.
 22 and that requires testing them

Here an overt reference to the source's status as a former president (lines 8–9), a formulation of his knowledge of the issue (lines 9–10), and an enumeration of the experiential bases of that knowledge (lines 11–12) each precede the reported assessment (lines 13–14). Further, the assessment is followed by a statement (line 15) summarizing the cumulative upshot of these character descriptions: "not exactly a lightweight." The negative characterization is the "least" that can be said, given the prior descriptions, and thus stands as an accountably understated assessment of competence, which the IR has shown to be substantial.

This displayed credibility is not without its interactional consequences. As the IE constructs his rebuttal, he attends to the authority proposed through this device and attempts to outdo it by ascribing his own counterassessment to the current president (lines 16–17). One president's views are thus invoked to counter another. Indeed, the IE engages in a bit of one-upmanship here by noting, prior to the counterassessment, that his presidential source is *pre-sently* in office (note the stressed temporal formulation "today" in line 17), thus implying that the counterassessment to follow is perhaps a little more authoritative. In addition, when the IE actually begins to deliver the counterassessment ("and the President has seen our problem very clearly . . ."), he formulates its author as "the President", thus choosing the full categorical reference form which maximally accentuates the person's official status (cf. "President Reagan," "he," etc.).

Now it could be argued that this move is not necessarily tied to the credibility issue, since the IE is a defense department official and is being interviewed as an administration spokesperson. But this interactional identity does not require that IE's statements be attributed specifically to the president. It is perfectly possible for him to speak on behalf of the administration by using the pro-term "we," which he employs in his previous turn (lines 1–2, 5–6). Hence, reference to the president here appears to be responsive to the IR's prior attribution, and the credibility exhibited through it, by proposing that the counterassessment is endorsed by someone who is at least as authoritative, if not more so.

5.2 Commenting on the range of persons endorsing a position

Overt competence displays like the above are rare, and it is more common for IRs to influence the credibility of what they report by commenting on the range of persons who believe it. This procedure plays on the common-sense dichotomy between the subjective and variable nature of "mere impressions" versus the objective reality of "hard facts." Given such a dichotomy, the number of persons aligned with a given statement can be seen as an index of its facticity. Thus, a widely endorsed viewpoint is not easily dismissed as the idiosyncratic artefact of a particular person's understanding, for

such support endows it with a certain intersubjective validation (see Pomerantz 1986).

In practice, animated assessments are often attributed to a single individual, where the range of persons who might agree is left unstated. However, assessments are sometimes ascribed to a collectivity, the nature of which can be indicative of the position's popularity and, consequently, its facticity. For example, assessments may be downgraded by indicating that they are not widely held (arrowed in the following extract).

(25) [Nightline 6/5/85: 3]

- 1 WA: ...Business Week uh just about a week aGO:
 2 'h uh had a front (.) page story entitled 'hh
 3 do m:ergers really work 'h An' the answer was
 4 'h n:ot very oft. en.
 5 IR: [Ya-]they- they clearly don't
 6 believe it does, but Mister Forbes let me turn
 7 to you because I must tell you in- in uh:
 8 doing our research today we found very other
 9 → (.) I=mean very few other people, 'hh uh- who
 10 believe that it is in any way BA:d.
 11 Now do you believe that it- I me- uh- let's
 12 forget about bad for a moment=d'you believe
 13 its GOO:d. (0.4) Does it do anyone any good.
 14 (0.3) Does it do thuh public any good. Does
 15 it do thuh consumer any good.
 16 (0.7)
 17 MF: Sure it uh:- ub- 'hh eh:: thuh PA:ST eh-
 18 you can learn from it....

In this example WA has been building the argument that corporate mergers tend to be unproductive; he concludes by citing as evidence a *Business Week* article making just this point (lines 1–4). The IR solicits a response to this position from MF (lines 11–15), but he first comments on the unpopularity of WA's position (lines 5–10). His initial statement (“they- they clearly don't believe it does”) emphasizes the word “they,” thus implying that others would probably disagree. He then says as much explicitly (lines 8–10) before asking MF to respond.

In advocacy interviews, it is exceedingly uncommon for IRs to downgrade the credibility of an expressed position in this manner. More commonly, IRs enhance what they are saying by indicating that the position has more general support. In the following an

assessment that South Africa is on the brink of violent disorder or revolution (lines 7–9) is attributed to a collectivity of recent program guests (lines 5–6, arrowed).

(26) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/25/85a: 6] (SD is advocating economic sanctions against South Africa.)

- 1 SD: ...and we've got to try: thuh remaining
 2 steps that are open.
 3 (0.2)
 4 IR: 'hhhh Mister Chettle what d'you say duh those
 5 → who: people who've said this on our program
 6 → several times now:: uh in thuh last uh few
 7 weeks, that 'hh TIME is running out in South
 8 Africa. >that something must b- must be done:
 9 (.) or thuh whole thing is gonna go up
 10 JC: Well- eh that's been said fuh thuh last
 11 twenty five years:: and I've heard it pretty
 12 continuously ever since then:: uh: I don't
 13 (.) uh think that that's true....
 14 ((9 lines omitted))
 15 ...Freedom House issued (.) a statement uh::
 16 the annual (.) survey of freedom around thuh
 17 worl:d 'h which showed that South Africa 'h
 18 >had only got< on:e country in thuh whole of
 19 Africa that=had more freedom in it....

The generality of this view is subtly highlighted by several devices. The IR appends a numerical formulation (the phrase “several times now::” [line 6]) to characterize the “people who've said this on our program”, and this phrase is stressed intonationally. Moreover, it is followed by a temporal formulation (“in thuh last uh few weeks” [lines 6–7]) indicating that these convergent assessments have emerged recently. Considered as a whole, the resulting attribution proposes that the animated viewpoint is becoming increasingly popular, and may represent an emerging consensus.

In rebutting this viewpoint, JC first orients to the credibility proposed through the “emerging consensus” attribution and attempts to undermine it (lines 10–13). He does not actually deny that there is something of a consensus on the imminence of revolution, but he casts doubt on its credibility by noting that people have been saying that South Africa is on the verge of violent disorder or revolution “for thuh last twenty five years:.” The upshot, which remains implicit, is that since revolution has plainly not occurred during this time, such predictions have regularly been misguided,

and the more recent predictions that the IR is referring to are apt to be misguided as well. Note that this way of casting doubt is designed specifically to show that the sheer number of persons endorsing a position is no guarantee of its facticity. It is only after JC has undercut the credibility of the “consensus” view in this manner that he proceeds to counter it substantively (lines 15–19).

Finally, notice that in spite of the fact that the IR has upgraded the credibility of the initial assertion, he has not personally affiliated with it; and JC treats it “anonymously” (lines 10–13), that is, as an anonymous point of view and not one that is held specifically by the IR.

In a more extreme upgrading, the IR may straightforwardly claim that a viewpoint is universally held. This occurs in the following (see especially line 7), when the IR animates a viewpoint to dispute the explanation for the state of emergency in South Africa offered by the South African ambassador to the United States (HB).

(27) [MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85a: 22]

- 1 HB: ... And that is thuh issue of (0.2) violence.
 2 'hh An' if we can get out of that cycle
 3 exactly to break hh that cycle. 'hh I think
 4 it'll be:- uh in the interest of everybody 'h
 5 to get then to thuh point (0.3) of dealing
 6 with peachful reforms.=
 7 IR: =But all thuh people around thuh world
 8 the Common Market foreign ministers today:
 9 thuh Secretary: uh General: of thuh forty
 10 seven member: uh British Commonweal:th uh
 11 members of the af- banned African National
 12 Congress, 'hhhh our- our guest Doctor Motlana
 13 all say that- an' the American statement we've
 14 just head 'hhh that thuh reason for thuh
 15 violence that thuh state of emergency: is
 16 designed to sto:p, thuh reason for that
 17 violence, is thuh policy of apartheid.
 18 HB: 'hhhh Now if: that is being said 'n for the
 19 argument it's being accepted. 'hh then: (0.3)
 20 uh- to do so: an to deal with it in ay
 21 peachful manner. (0.4) you haff to get away
 22 from thuh point of violence. (0.2) As long as
 23 thuh violence 'uh cycle violence continues
 24 (0.2) there is no hope (0.3) to deal with
 25 it in any rational way.

After asserting the upcoming viewpoint is believed by “all thuh people around thuh world,” the IR goes on to enumerate a list of five parties (lines 8–14) who “all say that-” apartheid is at the root of the current violence. Note that after the fourth party the IR begins to launch into the assessment component (line 13) but cuts off to add a fifth before proceeding. In one sense this list works to support the initial assertion that the viewpoint is universally endorsed by providing concrete instances of its adherents. But the listing format also seems to be a particularly strong way of doing this, in part because it plays off the rhetorical force associated with listlike constructions (Atkinson 1984; Heritage and Greatbatch 1986); the collection reads like a litany and is significantly longer than the three-part structure that lists ordinarily have (Jefferson 1990). Furthermore, by listing, the IR is also able to display each party's official status. But what is particularly interesting is that the resulting credibility is apparently consequential for HB's response. Notice that HB does not attempt to dispute the assessment directly; he “grudgingly” allows it (lines 18–19) and then resists its larger implications (that the state of emergency would not be necessary if apartheid were dismantled).

And like the previous examples, even though the IR has enhanced the credibility of this viewpoint quite dramatically, he has still not gone on record with a personal endorsement. Correspondingly, HB treats the assertion anonymously (“if: that is being said ...”) (line 18), thus sustaining the IR's proposedly neutralistic footing.

6 Discussion

This analysis has implications for the nature and practice of journalistic neutrality within the framework of a news interview. More generally, there are ramifications for our understanding of the relationship between footing as a generic speaking practice and as a resource that can be adapted to, and is constitutive of, the work of professional journalism. I shall address these issues in turn.

6.1 Formal neutrality within the news interview

This has been a study of one method by which a neutralistic posture is produced and sustained in news interviewing. In pursuit of this

stance, interviewers can shift footings when producing evaluative or controversial assertions. But this generates what is best understood as a provisional posture whose fate is contingent on how the interviewee subsequently deals with it. On occasion, an interviewee may treat the antecedent assertion as a reflection of the interviewer's own opinions; in the present data, this only happens when the interviewer does not shift footings, or when the interviewer's footing is recognizably ambiguous. Ordinarily, in the course of responding, interviewees decline to treat the antecedent assertion in this manner, thereby implicitly preserving the interviewer's neutralistic footing and extending its visibility across the interaction. This means that neutralism, insofar as it becomes a sustained feature of the encounter, requires the cooperation of the interviewee. Correspondingly, the footing through which it is achieved is also a collaborative production.

This analysis runs contrary to common-sense notions of neutrality as a trait inhering in interviewers as individuals, or an attribute of their conduct in specific situations. From an analytic perspective, the visibility of this journalistic "trait" is a joint achievement of interactants acting in concert to preserve a professional posture for interviewers. In other words, neutrality is a socially organized, or more specifically an interactionally organized phenomenon, something that parties to an interview "do together."

It is possible to conceive of the footing shift as a strategy that permits interviewers to smuggle their own beliefs into the discussion while claiming that they belong to someone else. Plainly, the footing shift *can* be used strategically in this sense; but it cannot be used with impunity, precisely because of the genuine resources that interviewees have to shape the interaction as it develops. Put simply, interviewers cannot say just *anything* and get away with it, for they are necessarily constrained by the interviewees and how they choose to respond. This should provide a corrective to the viewpoint that news interviewers are inherently powerful and able to dominate their guests at will (e.g. Owsley and Scotton 1984). Such work ignores the concrete opportunities that interviewees have to participate in the interaction and fashion whatever course it eventually takes.

It would be equally misleading to hold that interviewers are subservient to public figures, either those present as interviewees or those whose accounts are regularly imported into the encounter. It is

sometimes argued that since professional standards of objectivity require that journalists ground all contentious assertions in the statements of institutional news sources, news inevitably comes to reflect official interpretations of events. While this does indeed capture an important and pervasive fact of journalistic life, it tends to overlook some important subtleties inherent in the news-production process. Although journalists are largely dependent upon source accounts, they determine precisely how those accounts will enter into the final news product, including the credibility with which they are endowed. Thus, in news interviews, the accounts of copresent interviewees are frequently subjected to challenge, while third-party accounts are frequently "weighted" as more or less credible. Hence news interviewers are dependent on the accounts of authoritative public figures, but they are not wholly subservient to them (see also Tuchman 1972; Fishman, 1980: 109–33). A comprehensive analysis of the news-production process must take into account not only the structural constraints that journalists confront, but also their enabling strategies and resources for achieving a measure of working autonomy.

6.2 *Footings as interactional practice and journalistic skill*

The footing shift is by no means restricted to the domain of journalistic practice. Across a variety of settings, interactants have the option of speaking on their own behalf, or on behalf of another or a collection of others, or on behalf of themselves and others jointly; and there are more or less standard ways of indicating which of these is being done. But the formal properties of this practice, and the fact that it is not setting-specific, should not blind the analyst to the diversity of specific tasks that may be pursued in and through it. For example, it is precisely because interactants are able to report the words and views of others that they can tell stories involving others as speakers; they can as a consequence recount a conversation, pass gossip, and so on. They may also act as the official or unofficial agent of a third party by representing that party in an ongoing negotiation; as a consequence, one member of a family can express the dining preferences of a nonpresent member, a lawyer can plea bargain on a client's behalf (Maynard 1984: 55–76), and so on. Finally, in the context of interpersonally "delicate" actions like disagreements,

criticisms, and accusations, interactants can be cautious or circumspect by attributing such actions to others (Pomerantz 1984b). What specific activity is involved in any instance is discoverable by examining the detailed manner in which the footing shift is deployed in its local context. The challenge for the analyst of news interviewing (or any other institutional form of talk involving the footing shift) is to determine its particular function for the practitioner, and what, if anything, is “institutional” – or in this case “journalistic” – about it.

Even within a setting like the news interview, a variety of stable and recurrent activities may be distinguished. Interviewers commonly shift footings to display provocative viewpoints for subsequent topical development, to counter an interviewee and thus give voice to “the other side” of an issue, and to generate disagreement between interviewees. Such distinctions notwithstanding, these are all standard interviewing tasks, and they share one feature in common. Without the footing shift, they would each show the interviewer to be taking a position on a controversial public issue; with it the interviewer remains personally disengaged from the substance of what he or she is saying. By virtue of these practices, interviewers are able to give voice to controversial points of view without going on record as endorsing such views. They can introduce opinions to challenge an interviewee, but not as a matter of personal expression. Accordingly, they can fulfil the complex journalistic requirement, put forth in the standard interviewing textbooks (e.g. Lewis 1984: 117–28), of being interactionally “adversarial” while remaining officially “neutral.”

Further evidence that neutralism is specifically at issue can be gleaned by reconsidering the precise manner in which such shifts are actualized. When they are restricted to controversial opinion statements, when they are reiterated during specific evaluative words, when interviewers self-repair to shift footings, and when they decline to align themselves with or against the reported statements, they methodically exhibit a concern to avoid the overt expression of opinion. Correspondingly, interviewees appear to operate under the auspices of a default assumption that interviewers’ own opinions are not at issue; hence, they regularly decline to implicate interviewers or hold them responsible for what was said, thereby validating the “journalistic” character of what is taking place. While recipient responses to footing shifts have not yet been examined systemati-

cally in mundane conversation, it seems unlikely that such a default assumption of neutrality would be operative.⁵

So it is not the case that a generic practice like the footing shift can be straightforwardly imported into an institutional setting like the news interview and be expected to do that institution’s distinctive work. If that were possible, then talking would be akin to laying bricks, and institutional talk would be a mere aggregate of immutable speaking practices. Such practices must be adapted and specialized in subtle ways, used in concert with other relevant practices, and thus tailored to the particular tasks at hand. Accordingly, it is through the context-sensitive deployment of formal interactional practices that a sequence of talk betrays its “institutional” character. And it is precisely through such specialized sequences of talk that social institutions are incrementally constituted.

Notes

1. By characterizing this as a *formally neutral* or *neutralistic* posture, I am following a usage initiated by Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) to distinguish descriptive analyses (like this one) from efforts to pass judgment on interviewees’ neutrality in a *substantive* sense. Interviewers use certain formal speaking practices to avoid overtly expressing an opinion, and thus propose that they are being neutral, but whether this would hold up “in court” in light of all other aspects of program content is a matter that I do not claim to be addressing. It can be argued that “bias” enters in through a whole range of other channels: though the selection of topical agendas and interviewees, through differential treatment given to various categories of interviewees, through facial expressions and tone of voice, and so on. Nevertheless, it is possible to examine specific speaking practices that interviewers routinely employ to construct at least an appearance of neutrality as they interact with their guests, while making no ontological claims about whether such practices can be equated with neutrality in an absolute or ideal sense. Studies by Heritage (1985), Clayman (1988), Greatbatch (1988), and Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) approach the news interview from a similar analytic perspective. For complementary analyses of “objectivistic” practices in other arenas of journalistic work, see Tuchman (1972), Fishman (1980: ch. 5), and Robinson and Sheehan (1983).
2. The data were gathered from a variety of US network television news-interview programs in 1985. The primary corpus consists of ten full interviews taken from five different programs, for a total of approximately three hours of interviewing time. These interviews were transcribed in accordance with a system devised by Gail Jefferson. This

primary corpus was itself drawn nonsystematically from a much larger set of recordings amounting to thirty-three full programs. While only the three-hour subset was selected for detailed transcription and analysis, less detailed commercially prepared transcripts were obtained for the balance of the collection, and these were consulted on an *ad hoc* basis for exploratory purposes, and to verify the generality of particular phenomena.

3. For example, this practice might also be useful to address formal attacks that can be mounted after the occasion of the interview, such as legal charges of libel. On this point, see Tuchman (1972).
4. In a complementary analysis, Sacks (1992 [4 March 1971]) observes that when speakers are engaged in quoting others verbally, they can imply their own alignment towards what they are saying through the tone of voice they choose to adopt. In such cases, the speaker's views are conveyed without being stated explicitly.
5. Research on preference organization generally supports the idea that neutrality is not the operative assumption in ordinary conversation. Minimal and equivocal responses to invitations, offers, requests, and proposals are often *not* taken to be evidence of recipient's neutrality; such responses are instead hearable as constituting actual or potential rejection (Davidson 1984). Similarly, equivocal responses to assessments are treated as disagreement implicative (Pomerantz 1984a). As Paul Drew and John Heritage suggested to me in a personal communication, conversationalists seem to operate around a polarity of affiliation/disaffiliation, such that each acts under the assumption that the other is either "with me or against me."

Displaying neutrality: formal aspects of informal court proceedings

J. MAXWELL ATKINSON

1 Introduction: formality, informality, and conversation analysis

Debates about the relative merits of different types of court procedure are regularly based on assessments of the degree of "formality" involved at different points in the processing of cases. Such discussions are predominantly evaluative in character, and recent years have seen a number of moves, such as the introduction of various kinds of arbitration and conciliation procedures, which reflect a fairly widespread view that it is desirable to establish less formal methods for settling disputes.

Whether their interest in the relationship between formality and informality is evaluative or analytic, there are at least three important issues which are often ignored or taken for granted: the first is the question of just what it is about certain actions, events, and arrangements that gives rise to their being designated as "formal" rather than "informal"; the second has to do with why it is that participants sometimes produce actions which are instantly recognizable to others as "formal"; and the third is the question of what relevance, if any, such ways of behaving have for the just and efficient conduct of cases.

These questions have been central to the development of a program of empirical research into courtroom language and interaction at the Oxford Centre for Socio-Legal Studies. As has been discussed in more detail elsewhere (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Atkinson 1981, 1982; Pomerantz and Atkinson 1984), this work has depended heavily on a model for the analysis of "formal" interaction which derives from the discussion by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974: 729) about the potential for using the