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Reporting Talk

Reported Speech in Interaction

Edited by
ELIZABETH HOLT AND

REBECCA CLIFT

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his study of medium–sitter interaction and by Holt (1996) in ordinary conversation. The analysis has shown that, in legal testimony, that function is highlighted by the frequent sequential location of DRS in the expansions of the answers. In witness responses, DRS often provides detail and context for information already introduced in the first part of the answer. The specificity of the witnesses' use of DRS as an evidential resides in its being not only a useful device for objectifying and proving assertions, but also an important device for the activation of the lay witnesses' status. Lay witnesses are requested to prove that they have a first-hand knowledge of facts, and the ability to reproduce past conversation by quoting the exact words – in court, as in ordinary conversation – is treated as proof that the speaker heard directly that conversation.

Another important function of DRS in legal testimonies is that of accomplishing moral work. This function refers to the possibility of using what is apparently the most objective form of representation of past dialogues; that is, the activation of voices, to convey evaluations of those dialogues and of the people who participated in them. Different aspects of speech, including content, structure and prosody, can contribute to conveying a moral evaluation of people and events that serve to support or counter a special version of the events. In the trial context, this function is particularly important because it permits witnesses to express their opinions and impressions without explicitly violating the rule that prevents them from doing so. By using DRS, witnesses can objectify personal opinions and evaluations. They can, furthermore, avoid being questioned and challenged as to the significance thus conveyed. Interrogators cannot, in fact, question or dispute what has only been alluded to, but not stated.

9

Speaking on behalf of the public in broadcast news interviews

Steven Clayman

9.1 Introduction

When interviewing their prominent guests, broadcast journalists will sometimes present themselves as asking questions on behalf of the public. Such questions are framed as being raised not – or not only – for the journalist's own benefit, nor for the benefit of some elite individual, but on behalf of a larger collectivity such as the broadcast audience, the citizenry, or the populace more broadly conceived.

This basic phenomenon can take a variety of distinct forms. One way of 'speaking on behalf of the public' involves the use of direct reported speech attributed to the public in some formulation (arrowed below). This example is from an interview with a basketball player who had physically attacked his own coach ('PJ'). Note that 'IR' and 'IE' below denote interviewer and interviewee, respectively.

(1) [CBS *60 Minutes* 8 March 1998: Spreewell]

- 1 IE: ... You don't talk to people the way .hh PJ: talked to me
 2 IR: → People might be saying Hey kid. .hh You ear:n (0.2)
 3 → millions and millions of dollars, .hh Live with it.
 4 (0.2)
 5 IR: Forget the respect, take your money,
 6 IE: When you're dealing with respect: uh: money is not
 7 a issue.

After the IE (at line 1) defends and justifies his violent conduct by reference to his coach's disrespectful remarks, the IR counters (lines 2–3, arrowed) by pointing out that, given the 'millions and millions of dollars' earned by the IE, he should be able to 'Live with it.' This

counter is framed as something that ‘people might be saying’. Correspondingly, the ensuing talk is designed specifically as direct reported speech, the onset of which is marked by the use of a turn-initial particle and summons in mid-turn position (‘Hey kid’), and by the shift to a more idiomatic register and a heightened level of animation in the delivery of the subsequent remark (Holt, 1996).

A similar footing can be achieved without the use of direct reported speech per se, as when questions are framed as an expression of the public’s *views*, *attitudes*, or *concerns*. For instance, when an official investigator of Americans missing in action (MIA) in Vietnam is asked whether he thinks remains might be found, this issue is cast as a primary concern both to the families of MIAs as well as to ‘all Americans’ (arrowed).

(2) [PBS *MacNeil/Lehrer* 23 October 1992: Missing in Action]

- 1 IR: General obviously as you know there are two mm
 2 → basic concerns here: that the families have, and- and
 3 → all Americans have, the ‘c-course the remains of
 4 people who are dead and where they .hh >do you think
 5 there may be remains foun:d? They’ve been bur:ied,
 6 in various places and (thuh/their) records may
 7 reflect where they are, is th[at co[rrect?]
 8 JV: [tch [.h h h] h Well.
 9 In a- in addition: (.) uh:: (0.5) thuh photographs
 10 that- f’r example the photographs that we have now:...

Here the public is portrayed as responsible – not for the actual words that the IR is saying, but for the underlying agenda being pursued in and through them.

In yet another variant of this phenomenon, a question can be portrayed as being *produced for the public* without necessarily expressing either their words or their underlying concerns. Consider this question from an interview with US Senator Bob Dole. Before asking Dole whether he would support a tax reform bill (lines 4–5), the interviewer (IR) offers a prefatory comment on the purpose of the question. He first suggests that he is seeking clarification for himself (lines 1–2), but he subsequently modulates that footing by noting that it’s also for the benefit of ‘those people who’re watching the programme’ (arrowed).

(3) [NBC *Meet the Press* 8 December 1985: Bob Dole]

- 1 IR: ...Senator? .hhh (.) u::mI wanna get- (.)
 2 clear:: in my own mind and hopefully
 3 → for those people who=watching the programme,
 4 Do you support (0.5) the:: bill that came outta
 5 the House Ways ‘n Means Committee on tax reform.
 6 (1.4)
 7 BD: Well I’m a=little like th’ presiden’.=I support the
 8 process, ‘n I think uh:: .hh thuh bill itself ...

This question is framed as motivated by the goal of informing the public, here formulated as the broadcast audience who will be enlightened by what will follow.

In general, then, ‘speaking on behalf of the public’ encompasses a family of allied practices of the sort analysed by Erving Goffman (1981) under the rubric of ‘footing’. These practices, although distinct in their particulars, nonetheless share a common property – they enable journalists to distance themselves from, and deflect responsibility for, the substance of their remarks, and they do so in a very particular way. Such practices cast the journalist, in effect, as a ‘tribune of the people’ who is acting primarily for the benefit of some broader populace. That questions are framed in this way may at first seem quite natural and unremarkable, a straightforward reflection of the journalist-interviewer’s actual professional role. The ideal of public service is deeply ingrained in the culture of journalism as a profession (Schudson, 1978), and it is commonly understood that the interviewer’s job is to serve the public by functioning as its surrogate when confronting elected officials and other elites. Indeed, when broadcast journalists reflect on the craft of interviewing, they frequently portray themselves as striving to ask questions on behalf of the public – or at least the segment that is tuning in. In a recent book about the prominent *Nightline* programme, Ted Koppel characterised his role this way:

My assumption is always that the audience is listening closely. When I ask a question, it’s something I think the viewers want asked. I’m their representative. (Koppel and Gibson 1996: 157)

A similar view was expressed by Mike Wallace, of *60 Minutes* fame, in a documentary on classic television interviews.

Television interviewers, folks like me, are a kind of surrogate for you... None of us could keep our jobs for a day if we didn't ask the questions that you out there wish that somebody had the common sense or the nerve or the foolishness to ask.

However, the relationship between the professional culture of journalism and actual journalistic practice is complex and by no means straightforward. A line of thinking running from Mills (1940) through Garfinkel (1967) to studies of contemporary journalism (e.g. Tuchman, 1972) demonstrates that lofty ideals get invoked and implemented in thoroughly practical ways that enable actors to manage various contingencies and problems that arise in everyday life. Correspondingly, when journalists formulate themselves as public servants, they are not simply playing out a preordained cultural script. This is plainly apparent in the selectivity with which this practice is deployed. Interviewers overtly frame their questions on behalf of the public only occasionally and in a limited range of interactional environments. Thus, far from being a straightforward reflection of unadulterated professionalism, this practice is best understood as a mode of self-presentation – a style of questioning employed methodically to manage specific contingencies and problems that arise in the course of the interviewer's work.

This chapter examines the journalistic practice of overtly 'speaking on behalf of the public' in broadcast news interviews. Data are drawn from a wide range of news interview material, most of which was broadcast in the United States over the past twenty years. The analysis focuses on the main questioning environments in which this practice is deployed, and what it accomplishes therein. As we'll see, this practice draws on generic properties of direct reported speech and related phenomena (Goffman, 1981; Li, 1986; Clark and Gerrig, 1990; Holt, 1996, 2000), but in a way that furthers a set of specialised tasks intrinsic to the institutional context of broadcast journalism. Moreover, an adequate understanding of this practice and its functions requires attention to both the position of the public-framed question within the overall structure of the interview, and the substance of the question itself in relation to its immediate sequential context.

9.2 Opening and resumptive questions

Interviewers explicitly frame their questions on behalf of the public in an occasional and non-random manner, so that the practice tends

to 'cluster' in certain interactional environments. One such environment involves the launching of an interview or a major section of it. Some public-framed questions appear as the very first question that opens the interview, as in the following:

(4) [ABC *Nightline* 5 June 1985: Corporate Mergers]

- 1 IR: Joining us now live in our New York studios, Malcolm
2 Forbes. Chairman and editor in chief of Forbes magazine,
3 one of thuh nation's best known business journals. (.)
4 .hh And from our affiliate WXYZ in Detroit.
5 Professor Walter Adams, professor of economics, and
6 former president of Michigan State University.
7 → .hhhh Professor Ada:ms to: those millions of people out
8 → there who=uh never hope to control a billion dollar
9 → corporation, an' frankly don't care one way or another,
10 → why should they.
11 (1.5)
12 WA: .hhh Well thee: uh- problem with these megamergers...

Others appear midway through an interview, when new IEs are brought in to join the discussion in progress. For example:

(5) [ABC *Nightline* 6 June 1985: Nuclear Power/Waste]

- 1 IR: With us now live in our San Francisco bureau is
2 Doctor Jacob Fabricant. (.) Professor of Radiology at
3 the University of California Medical School, .hh and a
4 medical advisor to the: cleanup committee:, for the
5 Three Mile Island nuclear plant. .hh And in our
6 Washington bureau Robert Pollard. a nuclear safety
7 enginee:r? who resigned from the Nuclear Regulatory
8 Commission .hh in nineteen seventy six .h because he
9 felt the agency was not adequately protecting .h the
10 public's health an' safety.
11 .hh Mister Pollard uh:: that's (.) kind of a
12 fascinating .hhh background because I'm sure
13 → people are er- particularly concerned what would
14 cause someone to resign. Whaddayou mean: .hh when
15 you say you felt the agency was not adequately
16 protecting thuh public's health 'n safety.
17 (0.2)
18 RP: .hhh ((clears throat)) Well I certainly believe

Finally, on commercial broadcasts, public-framed questions also follow commercial breaks that occur midway through the interview, where they are used to resume the interview in progress. The first excerpt, involving Senator Bob Dole, followed just such a hiatus.

(6) [NBC *Meet the Press* 8 December 1985: Bob Dole]

- 1 IR: We are back on Meet the Press, with the:
 2 Senate majority leader, Bob Dole of Kansas.=
 3 =Senator? .hhh (.) u::m I wanna get- (.)
 4 clear:: in my own mind and hopefully
 5 → for those people who=watching the programme,
 6 Do you support (0.5) the:: bill that came outta
 7 the House Ways 'n Means Committee on tax reform.
 8 (1.4)
 9 BD: Well I'm a=little like th' presiden'.=I support the
 10 process, 'n I think uh:: .hh thuh bill itself

These public-framed opening/resumptive questions share several common features. First, such questions tend to be both open-ended and relatively innocuous. They are open-ended in that they solicit responses at a rather coarse level of granularity (Schegloff, 2000a). Excerpts (4) and (5) both invite the interviewee to comment on a broadly focused issue (problems with corporate mergers, problems with the Nuclear Regulatory Commission). Only the resumptive question in excerpt (6) – a ‘yes/no’ question asking whether the IE supports a specific piece of legislation – is more tightly focused. Correspondingly, such questions are also comparatively benign in that they do not express or imply anything critical of or hostile toward the IE.

Second, across these questions ‘the public’ takes on a consistent sense and reference. It is not the population in general that the IR is referring to, nor the citizenry or voters, but rather the *broadcast audience* that is presently tuned in. This is most explicit in excerpts (4) (‘to: those millions of people out there’, lines 7–8) and (6) (‘for those people who’re=watching the programme,’ line 5), but it is also the case (albeit less explicitly) in excerpt (5). Here the IR, after introducing the IE as a nuclear safety engineer ‘who resigned from the Nuclear Regulatory Commission’, comments that this is a ‘fascinating .hhh background’ (line 12) because

‘people are er-particularly concerned what would cause someone to resign’ (lines 13–14). Since this particular IE is not at all well-known, reference to ‘people’ here is to be understood as the immediate broadcast audience who has just been informed of the IE’s resignation.

Third, the questions do not express or imply any specific attitude or stance on the part of the public toward the issue, only puzzlement or an information gap that the subsequent discussion is projected to resolve.

Why is it that these particular questions are affiliated with the public in this particular way? A clue may be gleaned from the talk that immediately precedes each question. This prior talk is occupied with the task of introducing – or, in the case of excerpt (6), reintroducing – the IEs to the audience. Introductory talk appears in excerpt (4) on lines 1–6, excerpt (5) on lines 1–10, and excerpt (6) on lines 1–2. A hallmark of such preliminary talk is that it is addressed directly to the audience, and indeed this is the only juncture in a news interview that is formally audience-directed (Clayman and Heritage, 2002: Chapter 3). This audience-directed pattern of address embodies a distinctive participation framework that contrasts sharply with the bulk of news interview talk. Most of the time, IRs and IEs address their remarks to each other, while treating the audience as a party of ‘overhearers’ who are indirect recipients of the talk in progress (Heritage 1985; Clayman and Heritage, 2002: Chapters 3, 4, and 8). Thus, while the audience momentarily becomes a more central player in the participation framework during the interview’s introductory phase, they recede into the background during subsequent talk.

The introductory talk is constituted as audience-directed through both non-vocal and vocal means. At the non-vocal level, IRs face the camera and talk into it during most of the introductory talk. Even when the guests are co-present within the studio, IRs do not gaze toward them during this phase of talk. Correspondingly, they refer to their guests in the third person when introducing them, deploying their full names (often with titles) for this purpose.

Excerpt (4), line 5: ‘Professor Walter Adams’

Excerpt (5), line 6: ‘Robert Pollard’

Excerpt (6), line 2: ‘Senate majority leader, Bob Dole’

By virtue of such practices, IRs are plainly addressing the audience in a direct way.

By contrast, when IRs proceed from the audience-directed introductions to the interviewee-directed questions (or question prefaces), they mark the transition by redirecting their gaze away from the camera and toward the IE, and by using a reduced person-reference form.

Excerpt (4), line 7: 'Professor Adams'

Excerpt (5), line 11: 'Mister Pollard'

Excerpt (6), line 3: 'Senator'

In conjunction with the IE-directed gaze, the reduced form is analysable as an address term which treats the IE as the second person target of the talk. This shift in address is subsequently maintained and reinforced when the IR begins speaking on behalf of, rather than to, the audience.

Accordingly, the tendency for opening/resumptive questions to be framed on behalf of the audience can be understood in relation to this reconfiguring of participation frameworks. On the one hand, this practice is a lingering remnant or trace of a prior direction of address and the participation framework that it embodies. That is, the IR's heightened orientation toward the audience appears to 'bleed into' opening/resumptive questions, where it takes a new form consistent with the new participation framework at hand. What previously involved directing remarks toward the audience becomes, within the question, a matter of speaking on the audience's behalf.

But this practice is not merely a residue of what came before; it is also a constitutive feature of the current framework. It furthers the reconfiguration whereby the audience is relegated to the role of 'overhearer' of an interaction taking place primarily between IR and IE.¹

¹ This gaze shift is not always visible on camera. In some cases, just as the IR winds down the introduction and launches into the question or question preface, the camera cuts to a close-up of the IE. In such cases, the new participation framework is evident to the audience mainly through changing person-reference forms within the talk itself.

9.3 Sensitive and aggressive questions

Other usages of the practice seem tied not to the position of a given question within the overall structure of the interview, but rather to the substantive particulars of the question itself in its immediate sequential context. IRs often invoke the public when raising questions that are in some way sensitive or aggressive.

The following instance occurred in an interview with ousted Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos, when Marcos was asked about his wife Imelda's enormous shoe collection. Prior to this interview, Imelda's shoe collection had been widely reported in the news media, and was treated as emblematic of the extravagance and excess of the recently ousted Marcos regime. Consequently, what might otherwise be regarded as an extraneous personal matter had become, by the time of the interview, a well-known and deeply symbolic political issue. The infamous character of this issue is apparent in the brief and elliptical way it is introduced (line 5) – the shoe collection is merely referred to without elaboration – and the way in which Marcos anticipates the thrust of the question before it is completed (lines 6 and 8).

(7a) [ABC *Nightline* 4 April 1986: Ferdinand Marcos]

- 1 IR : → Whe:n people heard I was coming out (.) to do an interview
 2 → with you (1.0) you know what most people are interested in?
 3 FM: Mm mm.
 4 (0.4)
 5 IR : Your wife's:: three thousand pairs of shoes.
 6 FM: How many shoes
 7 IR : How many sh[oes
 8 FM: [can you wear: (0.2) in (.) twenty years.
 9 IR : Exactly (.) how many can you?

Notice that, as the IR first begins to raise this sensitive issue (lines 1–2), he makes a special point of indicating that it is 'what most people are interested in'.

None of the previous questions to Marcos were framed in this way. The IR began with comparatively open-ended and sympathetic questions regarding Marcos's own experiences, opinions and plans for the future.

These questions are offered straightforwardly, without any overt reference to the public. It is only with the distinctly unflattering matter of the shoe collection that the IR makes a point of emphasizing that this is a matter of broad public concern.

(7b) [ABC *Nightline* 4 April 1986: Ferdinand Marcos]

IR: President Marcos, you're a very proud man. I think even your enemies recognise that. Tell me a little bit about what it has been like for you these past few weeks...

IR: Where can you go? I mean, it must be a terribly humiliating experience. At one point you were thinking of going to Spain...

IR: So what you're really saying is that in some fashion the American government was helping the rebel forces against you...

This practice is not limited to political interviews. The next example is from an interview with a gay couple, one of whom was then dying of AIDS. At one point the IR asks them to explain why they love each other (see line 17).

(8) [ABC *Nightline* 19 September 1986: AIDS]

- 1 IR: You know (.) in one sense (0.4) this story: your story has
 2 been a story of w:atching (0.3) a dise:ase take its toll:.
 3 But in another sense, (.) it has been (0.8) very much a:
 4 chronicle of a love story. (0.4) You two love each other
 5 very mu:ch don't you.
 6 (0.3)
 7 KM: Yes indeed.
 8 JS: .hhh .hhh ((sniffing, possibly tearful))
 9 KM: .hhh ha ha.
 10 IR: → That's: somethin:[g also: that (.) a lot of people in the=
 11 KM: [come on
 12 IR: → =straight community, (0.3) have a great deal of trouble
 13 → understanding, I'd I don't know whether it's I (.) you know
 14 if someone said to me explain why you love your wife (0.3)
 15 I'm not sure uh I could d- (.) could do that to their
 16 satisfaction either but let me .hhh ask you both (0.6)
 17 w:hy (1.6) why do you love each other. (0.3) Jack?
 18 (2.4)
 19 JS: This is the most special human being I've ever met in my life...

The delicacy of this question stems not only from its deeply personal character, but also because it asks the IEs to explain

something that ordinarily requires no explanation. As a general principle, explanatory accounts are called for when behaviour is unanticipated or out of the ordinary (Scott and Lyman, 1968; Heritage, 1988). Accordingly, by asking them to account for their loving relationship, the IR could be taken to imply that the relationship is abnormal or deviant.

Much of the lead-up to this delicate question (lines 10–16) is an effort to soften or mitigate what is to come. The IR observes (lines 13–16) that the question would be difficult for a 'straight' person such as himself to answer – this not only exhibits a modicum of empathy, but it also normalises the question by casting it as one that could in principle be asked of anyone. More importantly for our purposes, the IR frames the question as having been motivated by the puzzlement of 'a lot of people in the straight community' (lines 10–12, arrowed). He thus presents himself as speaking on behalf of the majority. By way of contrast, a prior question (lines 1–5) asking them to confirm what had been implicit in the discussion thus far (that they love each other) is comparatively innocuous and contains no overt reference to the public.

In the context of sensitive/aggressive questions like those in excerpts (7) and (8), speaking on behalf of the public has, from the IR's standpoint, certain practical advantages. Consider first the issue of professional neutrality. By invoking a responsible third party – whether elite or public – IRs distance themselves from the line of questioning and the views being expressed within it, thus taking up a formally neutral or 'neutralistic' posture (Clayman, 1992; Clayman and Heritage, 2002: Chapter 5). IRs present themselves, not as pursuing a purely personal agenda, but as impartially relaying the concerns of others.

Invoking the public has the additional benefit of legitimising a line of inquiry. By claiming that the public wants or needs to know about some matter, IRs imply that it is appropriate and justifiable to ask about it. In this connection, notice that the IR is not referring to the viewing audience per se in these examples, but rather some broader populace. With the public offered as the primary rationale for the question, the reason why it is being raised of a given IE at a given moment, the question is thus presented as legitimate.

Finally, this practice increases the pressure on IEs to be forthcoming in response. It is more difficult for an IE to sidestep or evade

a question that has been legitimated in this way, because that could be taken as an offence not merely to the IR but to the broader public that he or she claims to represent.

To further illustrate these points, let's consider a range of cases involving transparently adversarial questions. We begin with questions that counter or disagree with something an IE has just said. A comparatively mild example of this sort took place during an interview with Larry Spreewell, the basketball player who had physically attacked his own coach. We already touched on this case in example (1) above; an expanded excerpt appears below (excerpt (9)). Here Spreewell seeks to defend his action by portraying it as a justifiable response to the harsh and offensive style of his coach 'PJ' (lines 1–13). As he put it, 'It was about PJ disrespecting me as a ma:n' (lines 6–7), and he concludes by invoking a general moral rule ('You don't talk to people the way .hh PJ: talked to me' in lines 12–13) that casts the coach's conduct as improper.

(9) [CBS 60 Minutes 8 March 1998: Spreewell]

- 1 IE: It was all about .hh- (0.2) the: the respect
 2 factor with me. I mean I (don'-) I think with
 3 PJ his- .hh his coaching style is (such) that
 4 (0.5) ya know he likes to get- he likes to
 5 discipline you=(n) get on guy:s. And I'm
 6 saying we're men. .hh It was about my: It was
 7 about PJ disrespecting me as a ma:n.
 8 (.) (A[n' it-)
 9 IR: [Pperson to person.
 10 IE: Person to person.
 11 (0.2)
 12 IE: Person to person you (don:') .hh you don:'t talk
 13 to people the way .hh PJ: talked to me.
 14 IR: → People might be saying Hey kid. .hh You ear:n (0.2)
 15 millions and millions of dollars, .hh Live with it.
 16 (0.2)
 17 IR: Forget the respect, take your money,
 18 IE: When you're dealing with respect: uh: money is not
 19 a issue.

In response to this exculpatory account, the IR (lines 14–17) proposes that, given the 'millions and millions of dollars' Spreewell

earns, he should be able to 'Live with it.' This response directly undermines Spreewell's account, and thereby casts his violent actions as unjustified. Significantly, the IR delivers this pointed riposte, not on his own behalf, but as something that 'People might be saying' (arrowed).²

IRs do not invoke the public merely to dispute something an IE has said; ordinarily, something more than a simple disagreement is involved. Oppositional responses containing this practice also tend to embody a hostile commentary on the IE's moral character – in the vast majority of cases they are derogatory or incriminating. This element is present, albeit somewhat indirectly, in the preceding example, and it is even more apparent in the next one. This is excerpted from an interview with a convicted child molester who has served out his sentence but remains in confinement because he has been judged a continuing threat to society. The IE, arguing for his release, makes an impassioned claim to have been cured of his propensity to molest (lines 1–5), and he begins to cry at this point (lines 5–6).

(10) [CBS 60 Minutes 12 January 1998: Stephanie's Law]

- 1 IE: Well the law was the one that brought me here. (0.5)
 2 But it was me that decided that I wanted to stop ()
 3 .hh I want to stop the molesting, I want to stop the
 4 offending, I want to stop the hurting? (0.2)
 5 ((sniff)) I want to heal myself. ((crying))
 6 (2.5) ((sniff::))
 7 (2.5)
 8 IR: → Do you know that there're people watching (0.7) who
 9 will say: that that's: part of the deal he's doing=
 10 ya know.
 11 IE: Oh I know. But I was an em{osh-
 12 IR: [That's part of the act.
 13 IE: ((sniff))=Well- (0.5) .h I wish they'da known me before...

At this emotionally charged moment, just when the IE appears to be highly vulnerable, the IR counters by proposing, in effect, that he

² The IR's reference to 'people' echoes the IE's parallel usage in the prior turn (line 13). This may explain the IR's choice of this specific term over other broadly-synonymous terms such as 'the public', 'viewers', etc.

is merely faking it (lines 8–10), presumably as a ploy to win release from prison. And when the IE attempts to respond (line 11), the IR cuts him off to reiterate this point (cf. Jefferson, 1973), characterising the IE's emotional plea as 'part of the act' (line 12). Once again, this disparaging retort is framed as something that 'people watching... will say' (arrowed).³

In a more extreme variant of this practice, the IR steps back from the specifics of what has just been said by the IE to mount a broader attack on the IE and his or her profession. A global denunciation of this sort occurred in an interview with a 'dog psychiatrist' who uses psychiatric principles to treat canine behavioural and emotional problems. At the opening of this segment, the IE is praising a dog at his side (line 1).

(11) [NBC *Dateline* 16 December 1997: Dog Psychiatry]

- 1 IE: Goo:d boy:.
 2 IR: → A lotta people would hear: (.) about your profession.
 3 IE: Ye:s.=
 4 IR: =and say that's a bunch o'poppycock.
 5 IE: Ye:s,
 6 (0.2)
 7 IR: And you say:?
 8 (.)
 9 IE: I say they're entitled to their opinion. .hh And I would
 10 also say to those people that they'll believe that (0.9)
 11 .h right up until their very favourite dog growls at them.
 12 (0.2) .hh And then you'd be surprised at how quickly .hh
 13 people can suddenly become a convert.

The IR asserts that the IE's profession is 'a bunch o' poppycock' (line 4). Obviously this denunciation is neither responsive to nor targeted at the previous turn at talk; it is aimed at the entire profession as it has been represented by the IE over the course of the encounter. And once again, this remark is cast as something that 'A lotta people' would say (arrowed).

³ The IR's reiteration in line 12 syntactically parallels the original formulation in line 9, and this makes it hearable as a reiteration and thus still an expression of what the 'people watching' will say.

In all three of the preceding cases, just as the IR launches into a question that is both oppositional and derogatory, he adopts a *tribune-of-the-people* stance that both neutralises and legitimates what is to come. Moreover, it is notable that in these more aggressive cases the footing shift is achieved specifically through the vehicle of direct reported speech. This is not coincidental; the use of direct reported speech enables the IR to employ idiomatically colourful and affect-laden expressions ('Hey kid... Live with it', 'part of the act' and 'bunch o'poppycock') that would otherwise be a jarring departure from the formal register normally employed by broadcast journalists. When responsibility for such expressions is deflected onto the public, IRs can use them to heighten the oppositional character of the action while at the same time retaining a posture of professionalism.

Finally, it should be noted that the neutralising/legitimising import of 'speaking on behalf of the public' is exploited not only within interviews as they unfold; it can also be exploited after the fact, as the interview is being replayed, analysed and discussed. In Ted Koppel's book about the *Nightline* programme (Koppel and Gibson, 1996), there are extensive transcripts depicting noteworthy interview moments. In the midst of one such excerpt from a highly adversarial interview, just before a particularly hostile question is delivered, Koppel-the-narrator interrupts Koppel-the-interviewer to point out that 'When I ask a question, it's something that I think the viewers want asked. I'm their representative' (1996: 157). This isolated quotation was featured at the beginning of this chapter – now re-embedded in its textual context, its immediate practical import becomes transparent. It invites readers of the book to analyse the upcoming antagonistic question as having been properly motivated.

9.4 Defending and pursuing

If IRs invoke the public when taking the offensive, they also do so when the initiative is reversed and they are defending themselves against an IE's criticism or attack. Here the neutralising and legitimising character of the practice has a defensive import, and it enables the IR to continue to pursue a line of questioning in the face of objections.

For example, when Pat Buchanan was interviewed after he became President Reagan's Director of Communications, he was questioned about his influence on the increasingly ideological tone of the President's speeches. Buchanan strongly objects to the idea, and he accuses the IR of having 'demeaned the President' (line 1) by suggesting that Buchanan was 'running down there at night sneaking phrases or (line:s) .hhh into speeches an' the president doesn't know what he's saying' (lines 2–5).

(12) [ABC *Nightline* 3 June 1985: Pat Buchanan]

- 1 PB: ... It demea:ns the President to suggest that someone
 2 say Pat Buchanan or anyone el:se .hh is running down
 3 there at night sneaking phrases or (line:s) .hhh into
 4 speeches an' the president doesn't know what he's
 5 sayi[ng] .hhh]
 6 IR: → [No Pat] I don't think anyone's sug[gest] ing=
 7 PB: [(sure)]
 8 IR: → =that, I think what people are suggesting is that the
 9 President of the United States perhaps more than any
 10 other man or woman in the country is terribly
 11 terribly busy cannot pos[sibly] write every speech of=
 12 PB: [Mhm]
 13 IR: =his own .hh or for that matter go over every speech
 14 line by line as you suggest. [.hhh] Uh- an when that=
 15 PB: [Mhm]
 16 IR: =happens, then people in positions such as your own,
 17 .hh can sometimes get some of their own ideas across.
 18 PB: .h Well sure. you could get ideas in but look every
 19 speech in the White House Ted .hhhh go:es through a process...

In response to this attack, the IR pursues two lines of defence (lines 6–17). First, he characterises his previous question in a way that detoxifies it, reducing much of its 'demeaning' character. That is, he grants how 'terribly busy' the president is, suggesting that it is perfectly understandable and indeed inevitable that Buchanan would be wielding increased influence. More importantly for our purposes, he presents the line of questioning (arrowed) as having been motivated by 'what people are suggesting'. He thereby defends his prior conduct, while also justifying his continued pursuit of the matter.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of this sort occurred in Dan Rather's infamous interview with Vice President George Bush during the 1988 presidential campaign. The agenda for the interview was Bush's involvement in the Iran–Contra scandal. This agenda was set from the very beginning – it was the main focus of the hard-hitting taped segment that preceded the interview, as well as the IR's opening question. The agenda projected by this opening elicited a strong reaction from Bush – he registered a series of complaints against Dan Rather and the CBS *Evening News* team, accusing them, among other things, of having previously misrepresented the purpose of the interview. Specifically, he charged that he was led to believe that it would be a broad 'political profile' rather than a narrow investigation of his involvement in Iran–Contra. Following these accusations, he calls for 'fair play' (lines 1–3), and he bids to broaden the agenda of the interview as he claims he was promised.

(13) [CBS *Evening News* 25 Jan 1988: Bush–Rather]

- 1 GB: ...I'm asking for: (0.3) fair play:, and I thought I was
 2 here to talk about my views on educa:tion, or on
 3 getting this deficit down=
 4 IR: =Well Mr Vice Preside[nt we wanna talk about the re[cord o]n=
 5 GB: [Yes. [Well let's]
 6 IR: =this .hh because it-
 7 GB: Well let's talk
 8 abo[ut the (full) record, that's what I wanna talk about] Dan,
 9 IR: → [th-the framework he::re: , is that one third of-]
 10 IR: → one third o'the Republicans in this poll[: , one third=
 11 GB: [Yeah
 12 IR: → =o'the the Republicans .hh and- and one fourth of the
 13 → people who say:: that- eh y'know they rather like you;
 14 → .hh believe y[ou're hi]ding something.=Now if you=
 15 GB: [(wha-)]
 16 IR: =[are: here's a ch-]
 17 GB: [I am] hid[ing something]
 18 IR: [here's a ch]ance to get it out.

Rather simultaneously defends himself and justifies further questioning on Iran–Contra by reference to poll results (arrowed), indicating that a substantial segment of Bush's own supporters believe he's 'hiding something' (line 14). The concerns of the citizenry

are thus offered as the rationale behind the adversarial line of questioning that Rather, despite the objections, continues to pursue.

9.5 Interactional consequences

To recap, journalist-interviewers sometimes present themselves explicitly as speaking for the public, but they do so in a highly selective manner, mainly during opening/resumptive questions, sensitive/aggressive questions and defensive/pursuing questions. In the latter two environments, a tribune-of-the-people stance has the effect of neutralising and legitimating IRs' more aggressive conduct, thereby increasing the pressure on recalcitrant IEs.

Are such efforts actually successful? In other words, does the practice 'work'? The evidence indicates that for the most part it does, at least within the framework of the interview itself.

Consider first the problem of maintaining a formally neutral or 'neutralistic' posture. This is a generic problem that IRs face, but it becomes particularly acute when an IR does not come to a grammatically formatted question (as in excerpts (9) and (11) above). While interrogatives have a neutralistic quality, unvarnished declarative assertions threaten to undermine the IR's neutralism (Clayman, 1988; Heritage and Roth, 1995). By invoking the public at such moments, IRs present themselves as relaying the concerns of the populace rather than pursuing a personal agenda. One indication of the effectiveness of this claim to neutralism is that it is almost never challenged by IEs; indeed, IEs often respond in such a way as to validate the claim. This is perhaps most striking in excerpt (11), when the dog psychiatrist disputes the IR's 'poppy-cock' characterisation and – like the IR – attributes that viewpoint to the public: 'I say they are entitled to their opinion. .hh And I would also say to those people'. He thus presents himself as disagreeing, not with the IR per se, but with the public on whose behalf the IR was ostensibly speaking. (A similar pattern may be observed in excerpt (10), line 13.) In this way, IEs tacitly validate and reinforce the IR's neutralistic posture.

In a similar vein, IEs appear to accept the fundamental legitimacy of questions framed in this way, although once again this acceptance is registered tacitly rather than on an explicit level. In probing or adversarial environments, IRs are always in danger of

being seen as exceeding their professional mandate, and in some cases they actually are criticised for overly aggressive questioning. However, when such questions are cast as responsive to the concerns and interests of the public, IEs generally proceed to answer them – or at least they present themselves as 'answering'. Acquiescent responses occur even when the line of questioning was previously the object of complaint. Consider excerpt (12) above – although Pat Buchanan vociferously attacked the question (lines 1–5) when it was initially raised, he subsequently gives in and answers it without complaint (lines 18–19) when it is reissued as something that 'people are suggesting'. There is only one exception to this general pattern of cooperation – George Bush continued to resist Dan Rather's Iran–Contra questions (following excerpt (13) above) even after Rather mobilised opinion poll statistics to justify his line of inquiry. That may well be the exception that proves the rule, since the resulting interaction was so argumentative that it became a major news story in its own right (Clayman and Whalen, 1988/89).

Of course, what impact all of this may or may not have on the viewing audience remains an open question which cannot be resolved with the present data. But at least within the confines of the interview itself, a tribune-of-the-people stance is remarkably effective in rendering a question defensible, thereby encouraging IEs to acquiesce – or at least feign acquiescence – even to highly aggressive interrogations.

9.6 A single case

The import of a tribune-of-the-people stance, and the effort IRs expend to achieve it, are richly illustrated in an episode from David Frost's famous 1977 interview with former President Richard Nixon. That widely anticipated interview focused on the Watergate affair and its aftermath, which culminated in Nixon's resignation of the presidency. At the time, there was much speculation concerning what Nixon would say about the events of Watergate. Would he accept responsibility for what transpired? Would he admit to wrongdoing? Or would he remain unrepentant?

As the interview unfolded, Frost succeeded in getting Nixon to admit to having made 'mistakes.' At one critical juncture, however,

Frost tries to induce Nixon to go further than this, pointing out that the word 'mistakes' seems 'not enough for people to understand' (lines 1–2). Thus, this initial push for a stronger admission of guilt is presented as being done on behalf of 'people' in general.

(14a) [Nixon–Frost]

- 1 DF: ...Would you go further than mistakes:: (.) the wor::d (0.9)
 2 that seems n- n- (.) not enough for people to understa:nd.
 3 (1.5)
 4 RN: What wor::d would you:: (.) express,
 5 (3.8)
 6 DF: My goodness that's a:: hhh (0.2) I:: think (.) that
 7 there're (.) three things. (.) since you ask me, (0.2)
 8 I:: would like to hear you sa:y >I think the
 9 American people would like to hear you say
 10 ((question continues))

However, when Nixon invites Frost to indicate what word he would prefer (line 4), Frost momentarily strays from the safety of a tribune-of-the-people stance. Frost begins an extended question by indicating that there are three things that 'I:: would like to hear you sa:y' (lines 6–8), emphasising the first person pronoun 'I' and thus framing the question-in-progress as an expression of his own personal preferences. Notice, however, that he carefully modulates this stance just as he launches into it, pointing out parenthetically that he is expressing his preferences at Nixon's request ('since you ask me') rather than on his own initiative.

Even this modulated stance is not maintained for long. Although Frost does not perform a complete about-face, he adds that this is also what 'the American people would like to hear you say' (lines 8–9). Frost seems to treat the addition of this reference to the public as something of a priority – he speeds up (denoted in the transcript by the '>' symbol) just as he launches into the clause containing this attribution.

All of this manoeuvring to achieve a tribune-of-the-people stance is explicable given the gravity of the question that is eventually delivered. Frost pointedly asks Nixon to make three extraordinary admissions of guilt – the beginning of each is arrowed below.

(14b) [Nixon–Frost]

- 8 DF: I:: would like to hear you sa:y >I think the
 9 American people would like to hear you say. .hh (.)
 10 1→ Q:ne is::, (0.7) the:re was probably mo::re (0.2) tha::n, (0.4)
 11 mista::kes there was:: (0.7) wro:ngdoing (0.2) whether it
 12 was a cri::me >or not=yes it may have been a crime< too: (0.6)
 13 2→ Secondly:: (0.8) I did h (0.6) and I'm saying this without
 14 (.) questioning the motives alright. I di:d h (0.2)
 15 abu:se the power I had as President. (0.2) or:: ha::ve
 16 (.) not fulfilled it (.) totality, .h (0.2) (eh)the
 17 oath of office that- that's the second thing, (0.2)
 18 3→ And thir::dly, (0.7) I: put the American peo-people
 19 through two years of needless agony >an' I apologize for
 20 that. (0.9) And I: say that- (.) you've explai:ned your
 21 motives, (.) I think tho:se >are the categories.<
 22 (0.7) And I kno:w how >difficult it is for anyone,< and
 23 most of all you: but I: think h (0.8) that (.) people
 24 need to hear it, (0.4) and I think unless you say it,
 25 (0.6) you're gonna be hau:nted >for the rest of your life.<
 26 (0.8)
 27 RN: I well remember: uh h (0.2) that (.) when I::...

Frost asks Nixon to admit: (1) that some of his actions were wrong and possibly criminal, (2) that he abused the power of the presidency, and (3) that he put the American people through two years of needless agony. Frost also asks Nixon to apologise for the latter offence. Frost himself acknowledges the magnitude of what he is requesting when he subsequently notes 'how >difficult it is for anyone,< and most of all you:' (lines 22–23). But as he completes this question, he reiterates that this is something that 'people need to hear' (lines 23–24). In so doing, he strives to neutralise and legitimate what is an extremely face-threatening and incriminating set of requests, while increasing the pressure on Nixon to comply with them.

Nixon's response is far too long and complex to analyse in detail here. It will suffice to observe that, while he doesn't actually do what Frost is requesting, he does at least gesture in the direction of an admission of guilt. Thus, he begins his response by recounting the story of the resignations of staff members Haldeman and Erlichman,

noting that he told his speechwriter that perhaps he (Nixon) should resign too 'because I feel responsible' (arrowed).

(14c) [Nixon–Frost]

- 1 RN: I well remember: uh h (0.2) that (.) when I: (.) let
 2 Haldeman and Erlichman (0.4) know that they were t'
 3 resign (0.6) that I: (0.4) had Ray Price bring in the:
 4 final dra:ft of the speech that I was t' make th' next
 5 night. (0.6) and I said to him Ra::y, hh I said if you
 6 think I oughtta resign I said put that in too:
 7 → because I feel responsible

This certainly implies a modicum of responsibility, in a general way, for the events of Watergate.

On the other hand, Nixon's response falls short of a full-throated admission in a variety of ways. First, the assertion of responsibility at line 7 is markedly qualified – it is designed not as a straight factual assertion, but a statement about his subjective 'feelings' on the matter. Second, since this comment is embedded within a story, it is supposed to reflect his feelings as they were expressed years ago, at an interpersonally difficult moment in his administration, when talking to a staff member. Thus contextualised, the remark is available to be interpreted as a gesture of solidarity with his beleaguered staff, rather than a literal admission of guilt for what transpired. Finally, by launching into this story as a way of responding to Frost's question, Nixon does not address any of the specific issues (criminality, abuse of power, causing needless public agony) that were raised in the original question. Although the story culminates in a highly general and unspecified admission, this is deferred until line 7, and the delay tends to obscure its lack of fit with the original question (cf. Clayman and Heritage, 2002: Chapter 7). Accordingly, while public-framed questions exert demonstrable pressure on IEs to answer in a particular way, they do not ensure a compliant outcome.

9.7 Conclusion

When interviewers present themselves as speaking on behalf of the public, they invoke a powerful symbolic resource. This practice both neutralises and legitimates lines of questioning, and exerts

pressure on interviewees to be genuinely forthcoming. It thus facilitates sensitive and aggressive modes of questioning, as well as providing interviewers with resources for responding to criticisms when they arise. For all of these reasons, the practice has a strategic importance in the kind of adversarial questioning that has become a hallmark of contemporary broadcast journalism (Clayman and Heritage, 2002: Chapter 2).

While the import of the practice in dramatically conflictual episodes can be readily appreciated, it is equally important to recognise its more mundane uses. Sometimes interviewers invoke the public simply to navigate from one phase of an interview to another, or more specifically to manage the transition across, and reconfiguration of, distinct participation frameworks.

Whatever its institutionally specific functions in the context of news interviews, this practice is best understood as a specialised variant of a much more general family of practices (e.g. direct reported speech, indirect speech, footing shifts) that have the effect of diffusing responsibility for what a speaker is saying. 'Speaking on behalf of the public' exploits the basic properties and affordances of these general practices of interaction, but it does so in a highly distinctive way. By invoking a singular responsible party – 'the public' – with broad professional and cultural resonance, this practice furthers certain specialised tasks associated with broadcast journalism.