

*Complaining and Arguing
in Everyday Conversation*

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the formulation of argumentative talk, by adults, in everyday, non-institutional conversational environments. Using the analytical methodology of conversation analysis, I begin by investigating the ways in which responses to complaints are typically constructed. I show that, in most cases, such responses contain both concessive and self-justificatory elements. I also investigate the varying forms of conversational trajectory that different types of complaint response tend to generate. A significant finding, here, is that, in the great majority of cases, complainers are not exonerated on the basis of their self-justifications. I note, however, that this can be made apparent in a variety of ways. I show that some forms of non-exonerative response tend to generate escalations in the disputatiousness of complainers' subsequent talk, while others do not. I then go on to examine three complaint-initiated arguments that end when one of the interactants 'walks out'. Here, I am principally concerned with identifying the types of conversational environment within which such events occur. In the final chapter I review and summarise the findings of the empirical chapters of the thesis in order to identify some of their broader implications. In some earlier studies it has been claimed that 'oppositional' utterances like complaints usually generate responses that are, themselves, oppositional. It has been claimed, therefore, that disputants orient to a normative preference for disagreement. Elsewhere, it is claimed that justificatory accounts typically result in the resolution of conflict. I conclude that, since detailed, empirical research reveals that complaint responses generally contain concessive elements, and that complainers' subsequent utterances are usually non-exonerative, such claims are not substantiated. In the final part of the chapter, I describe several similarities that exist between the interactional environments in which walking out occurs and those that become physically violent. I conclude that by walking out, those who leave prevent the occurrence of this even more socially divisive type of outcome.

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Author's Declaration

This thesis represents original work in which the analysis of its materials was performed solely by the author.

From the start the "spirit" is afflicted with the curse of being "burdened" with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, of language. Language is as old as consciousness, language *is* practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.

(Marx and Engels, 1974 [1846]:51)

Chapter One

Introduction

1. Research into everyday argumentation

In recent years a small but growing number of studies has sought, like the present work, to examine the organisation and construction of argumentative interaction. A sizeable proportion of this body of literature uses or, in the case of some sociolinguistic studies, is significantly informed, by the analytical methodology of conversation analysis (hereafter 'CA') (see, for example, Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987; Schegloff, 1988; Whalen, Zimmerman and Whalen, 1988; Coulter, 1990; Vuchinich, 1984, 1990; Garcia, 1991; Hutchby, 1996; Horowitz, 1996; Al-Khatib, 1997). Various topics have been investigated within this literature. Some studies, for example, consider disputatious talk as it is formulated by children (e.g. Goodwin, M., 1982, 1983, 1990; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987; Maynard, 1985a, 1985b). Other research has investigated the termination of adult argumentative conversation and the ways in which non-disputatious interaction may be resumed subsequently (Vuchinich 1990). Still further CA research has focused on disputatious talk in various types of institutional and/or formal setting. Instances of these 'context-specific' studies include Garcia (1991), which examines a particular type of turn pre-allocation system and its use in some forms of dispute mediation session, and Hutchby (1996), which examines disputes as they occur in radio 'phone-in' programmes. This is an environment in which argumentation is sometimes implicitly encouraged. Other potentially disputatious settings that have been investigated include 'candid camera' type television programmes (Al-Khatib, 1997) and intra-familial conflicts (Horowitz, 1996).

Studies such as these have had much to tell us about the ways in which conversation is organised in differing types of interactional context. More importantly, they have also revealed that social contexts can actually be shaped and constituted by the forms of interactional organisation that are used within them. Hutchby (1996), for example, demonstrates that certain types of talk radio programme rely heavily upon the ability of their 'hosts' to employ conversational strategies that are designed to create and maintain a disputatious conversational environment. They may, for instance, reformulate or 'misrepresent' claims or assertions made by callers. They also sometimes employ 'validity challenges' like 'so' or 'what's that got to do with it' by means of which they 'oppose a claim on the grounds of its relevance to the matter in question' (*op cit*:50 - 51). By using strategies such as these, the hosts are enabled to maximise the probability that argumentation will occur. Whalen *et al* (1988), on the other hand, examine an encounter that occurs in a context within which argument is far less desirable. This study is concerned with identifying the ways in which a dispute develops during a conversation between a nurse/ ambulance dispatcher, who is staffing an emergency telephone line, and a caller who is seeking assistance for his stepmother, who is seriously ill. By studying this telephone call in detail, the researchers are able to demonstrate that the dispute arises as a consequence of a series of misalignments between the conversational actions that each of the interactants attempts to perform. In particular, attempts by the nurse to elicit information about the nature of the problem for which assistance is required are interpreted by the caller as requests for diagnostic information, which he does not have the professional competence to provide. When the nurse insists that the caller must provide the requested information, he becomes irritated and abusive. It is at this point in the conversation that the interaction becomes disputatious. It becomes evident from their talk that, as far as the nurse is concerned, the caller is acting in an uncooperative way while, for the caller, the nurse is delaying the provision of a service that he urgently requires. Here, then, a discrepancy occurs between the

interactional roles that each of the speakers perceives themselves and the other party to occupy. The nurse constructs her talk in a way that is fitted, in the particular conversational environment 'emergency call', to the role of interrogator. By failing to answer her questions, the caller, as far as she is concerned, also fails to occupy the role that is fitted to him in this setting - that of 'information provider'. The caller, by contrast, constructs his talk in a way that is appropriate to the interactional role 'service requester'. It becomes evident that, for him, the nurse is failing to respond in a way that is appropriate to the corresponding role of 'service provider'. As a consequence of the delay that is caused by the resulting argument, the sick woman dies. This study reveals that the orientation of speakers to the forms of talk by means of which particular interactional settings may be constituted can be fundamental for the successful organisation of social action.

Amongst the literature mentioned above, Vuchinich's (1990) study has had a significant bearing on aspects of the present research. Vuchinich identifies a number of interactional structures by means of which disputants are able collaboratively to terminate sequences of argumentative talk. These structures consist of adjacently positioned utterances the first of which proposes, and the second of which assents to the termination. These exchanges usually also facilitate the resumption of non-argumentative conversation subsequently. Although I will refer to this study on several occasions in the course of this discussion, it is of particular relevance to chapter four. Here, I focus on sequences of disputatious talk that are terminated in less collaborative ways than those described by Vuchinich, and which do not lead to a resumption of non-argumentative talk. These are conversations that culminate with one of the disputants unilaterally 'walking out'. This research project was initially conceived, in part, as a result of my interest in investigating the differing forms of interactional organisation that can lead to such widely disparate types of outcome.

In addition to the CA and sociolinguistic studies that have been referred to, quite a wide variety of research into forms of argumentative talk has also been

undertaken within a range of other specialisms. Such research includes a substantial body of work that has emanated, over the past several decades, from within the fields of social psychology and psycholinguistics. Here, a primary focus of study has been the types of response that are performed by speakers when the legitimacy or acceptability of actions that they have taken is questioned. This is a particular area of concern within what Antaki (1994) refers to as the 'accounts literature' (see, for example, Sykes and Matza, 1957; Scott and Lyman, 1968; Harré, 1977; Schönbach, 1980; Antaki, 1981, 1994; Hale, 1987; Riordan, Marlin and Kellogg, 1983; Semin and Manstead, 1983; Cody and McLaughlin, 1990; Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981; Schlenker and Darby, 1981). The 'accounts' that are referred to here generally consist of such things as self-justifications, explanations, excuses, apologies and the like. Some of these studies (e.g. Sykes and Matza, 1957; Scott and Lyman, 1968; Schönbach, 1980) are essentially taxonomic in nature. Schönbach (1980), for example, lists almost fifty types of account under just four headings - 'concessions', 'excuses', 'justifications' and 'refusals'. Other studies (e.g. Riordan *et al*, 1983; Hale, 1987; Semin and Manstead, 1983) are concerned with what is described as the 'honouring' of accounts. That is, they attempt to identify the extent to which accounts are accepted as legitimate explications of, or for, actions that have been treated as accountable. These are concerns that I, too, will address in the course of this thesis.

Amongst these studies, that by Schlenker and Darby (1981) is particularly worthy of note. Here, it is observed that the utterances that speakers construct when their actions have been treated in this way are commonly designed to fulfil more than one interactional function. The authors note, for example, that the performance of an apology may:

Allow an actor to admit blameworthiness for an undesirable event but also to attempt to obtain a pardon from the audience by convincing the latter that the event should not be considered a fair representation of what the actor is really like as a person.

(op cit:272)

Because such utterances may seek to achieve a range of interactional 'goals' they are often composed of a number of components. Schlenker and Darby observe that apologies may consist of up to five such component parts including:

(1) a statement of apologetic intent' such as '*I'm sorry*', (2) expressions of remorse, sorrow, embarrassment, etc., to indicate the actor knows he or she has transgressed and feels badly about it, (3) offers to help the injured party or make restitution in an attempt to redress the damage, (4) self-castigation, in which the actor disparages the "bad" self that misbehaved, and (5) direct attempts to obtain forgiveness, such as saying, '*please forgive me*'.

(ibid)

The authors also note that a correlation exists between the number of such components that may be incorporated within a given apology (i.e. its 'fullness'), and the seriousness of the offence by which it is instigated. Although apologies occur very rarely within the corpus of data that has been consulted during the current research, it will be noted, particularly in chapter two of this discussion, that other types of complaint response, such as justifications, are also commonly designed to fulfil more than one interactional function. These utterances, too, are most typically composed of multiple components.

While the data focused upon in many of the sociolinguistic studies and all of the CA investigations that have been referred to are naturally occurring, those that are addressed within the accounts literature tend not to be. Rather, the data that are concentrated upon here range from contrived 'vignettes', within which potentially disputatious social encounters are either acted out or described, and upon which observers are invited to comment by means of questionnaires, to examinations of

the formal pleas entered by defendants in legal proceedings. However, although the types of argumentative data that have been examined within these various fields are fairly wide-ranging, it is noticeable that very few studies have undertaken detailed and sustained investigations of naturally occurring, ongoing, adult, argumentation as it appears in everyday, mundane interaction. Where CA research is concerned this has been the case because, although many investigators have 'touched upon' interaction of this type, they have done so for comparative purposes whilst in pursuit of a variety of other analytical goals. An exception, here, is Coulter's (1990) study which, although somewhat brief and schematic, describes an 'elementary form' of argument sequence. Such sequences, the author claims, are composed of pairs of utterances. The first of these is the 'declarative assertion'. These are utterances that are 'designed to make some point to be addressed by one or more interlocutors' (*op cit*:185). In response, a second speaker then performs a counter-assertion. This type of sequence, Coulter observes, may be expanded into a four part structure consisting of 1), a declarative assertion, 2), a disagreement, 3), a solicit (in which the first speaker seeks some form of explication for the disagreement) and, 4) a counter-assertion. It is noticeable that within such sequences, disagreements, for Coulter, typically pre-figure counter-assertive moves at fourth position. This type of construction, however, has not been found to be typical where complaints are followed by disagreement components in the data that have been consulted in the present study. As we shall see in chapter two, in my data disagreement components are more commonly followed by utterances within which the disagreement is mitigated. Such mitigation may be achieved in a number of ways but usually consists of some form of concession that aspects, at least, of the initial complaint are valid.

Investigations of naturally occurring argumentative talk are also noticeably absent within the 'accounts literature'. Indeed, here, many of the studies are not concerned with conversation at all, or they focus on talk that is produced in the context of role play experimentation of the type described above. In asking,

somewhat despairingly, 'what is the evidence that people use the excuses and justifications so painstakingly classified?', with reference to the more taxonomic accounts literature, Antaki (1994:50) acknowledges the scarcity of research into the use of such things as justifications and excuses in the context of naturally occurring conversation. Moreover, Schlenker and Darby (1981:277), whose own study is based on role play experiments, point out that findings that are obtained from such data 'raise special considerations of generalisability'. They note that:

Subjects' responses in role play studies may often represent how they think they might or should behave instead of how they actually would behave.

What the researchers are alluding to, here, are discrepancies that may sometimes exist between the ways that subjects 'believe' they would act and the ways that they might actually behave in 'real life' social encounters. Potential discrepancies of this type may have profound implications regarding the reliability of findings that are arrived at by the examination of role play data.

It was largely with reservations of these kinds in mind, about some aspects of the existing literature, and in response to the overall scarcity of empirically based research into naturally occurring, adult argumentation in everyday contexts, that the present study was initially conceived. This was particularly the case since, as a result of the shortage of this type of investigative work, I was forced to conclude that what is known about the organisation and construction of everyday argumentative talk is strictly limited. Moreover, since, as Drew and Heritage (1992:4) put it, CA is principally 'associated with the analysis of ordinary conversation between peers in everyday contexts', the limited amount of CA research into mundane, argumentative interaction in such settings appeared somewhat surprising. It was also, then, partly in the hope of taking a small step towards the rectification of this 'oversight' that the current project was initially undertaken.

2. Objectives of the research

Why, though, should we bother to investigate argumentative interaction in the first place? This is a question to which all the researchers who have engaged in such work will, presumably, have their own answers. For Vuchinich (1984:220) the study of argumentative talk is of particular significance because such interaction:

Provides a format for the display and maintenance of social relationships. The boundaries and positions within the group must have some stability for social order to be maintained. If such positions are to be maintained, at least in part, through oppositional interchanges then the transfers of boundary information and hostility should reflect the relationships between positions in the group.

Social psychological considerations of this sort, however, are beyond the scope of the current project. The principal motivation that instigated this work was a certain curiosity about everyday argumentation as a form of discourse that appeared, intuitively, to be different to virtually all other forms of everyday interaction in one very significant respect. A major finding within CA, which has consistently been supported by detailed analytical observation, is that mundane talk is systematically constructed in ways that promote sociability and social solidarity (Heritage, 1984a:265-270). Sacks (1987 [1973]) and Pomerantz (1984), for example, observe that the talk of second speakers is customarily in agreement with the preceding utterance/s of their co-participants. Thus, where, for example, an assessment is performed by a first speaker, the second speaker's utterance is most commonly built in a way that displays agreement with that assessment. Such agreements are normally performed without delay and may also incorporate features whereby the initial assessment is upgraded. However, where responses are performed that are in disagreement, these utterances are typically preceded by delaying components such as pauses, partial repetitions of the initial assessment, requests for clarification and so on. Indeed, such responses may begin with agreeing components while

overt disagreeing components may be absent. A second assessment that features a number of these characteristics can be seen in example one, below. It can be

1. [SBL:2.1.7.-17] (Pomerantz, 1984:73-74)

B: ... well a sense of humour, I think is something yer born with Bea.

A: Yea. Or it's c- I have the- eh yes, I think a lotta people are, but then I think it can be developed, too.

inferred from these differences in the ways in which agreeing and disagreeing utterances are formulated that agreement constitutes a preferred type of response, while disagreement constitutes a dispreferred response. Thus, constructing talk in ways that either display agreement, or that mitigate disagreement, is one way in which speakers orient to a preference to foster social solidarity. In a similar vein, speakers wishing to decline invitations commonly do so not by performing overt rejections, but by apologetically describing circumstances that prevent them from accepting (Drew 1984). In this way they display social solidarity by intimating that they are not declining as a matter of personal choice or preference but as a consequence of external constraints. Moreover, like disagreements, these types of utterance, too, are typically accompanied by delaying components. Explicit refusal components are often not performed. Refusals that are performed in response to requests are commonly accomplished using similar forms of construction (Davidson, 1984). In a number of ways, then, and in a far wider range of interactional contexts than has been described in these few examples, speakers normatively construct their talk so as to promote or maintain bonds of social cohesion with their co-participants.

What appeared to be 'different' about argumentative interaction was that, to a greater or lesser extent, these bonds seemed to have broken down. Here was a form of social intercourse within which speakers could be seen, for example, to

disagree with each other overtly and sometimes forthrightly. People sometimes oppose and/or invalidate each other's utterances, their talk sometimes becomes increasingly disputatious over sequences of turns and, on occasions, they even abandon interaction completely by 'walking out'. The three principal objectives that have guided my research were initially informed by a concern to investigate interactional phenomena of these, apparently, socially divisive kinds. These objectives were, firstly, to explore the procedures by means of which argumentative talk is constructed. My intention, here, has been to determine whether it is possible to identify forms of organisation and methods of construction that appear recurrently and that are distinctive to argumentative talk. Thus, the types of issue that I investigate are, for example, whether the recipients of oppositional utterances have characteristic ways of responding to them. Also, do different forms of response influence the trajectories of subsequent talk in different ways? My second main objective is directly connected to the first. This has been to determine, from this initial exploratory work, whether the apparent abandonment of sociability in argumentative interaction is really as comprehensive as it sometimes seems to be. Here, it was my intention to ascertain, from any systematic procedures that could be identified, whether there are occasions upon which social solidarity really does cease to be an underlying concern in the talk of participants. In addition, I intended, if this did appear to be the case, to identify what kinds of interactional outcome may be achieved under such circumstances and, more importantly, the ways in which such outcomes can be accomplished. I have also sought, where the talk of disputants does appear to be oriented to a concern to maintain social cohesion, to determine the ways in which this is constructed. How, for example, do speakers organise the production of talk that is oriented to such a concern when, at the same time, it is recognisably argumentative? My third objective has been to determine whether the investigations outlined above can reveal anything about the types of dynamic through which argumentative talk is informed and motivated. As we have already seen, much of everyday, non-argumentative talk is systematically

constructed in ways that orient, on a normative basis, to a preference for agreement. However, as we shall see a little later in this chapter, some earlier studies propose that, where argumentative interaction is concerned, the talk of disputants is oriented to a normative preference for disagreement. It has been my intention to determine whether detailed, empirical analysis can substantiate such a claim or, alternatively, whether it can demonstrate that other forms of preference organisation are observed.

3. *The data*

This study is designed to concentrate on aggravated argumentation rather than lower level divisions of opinion. In consequence, where I subsequently employ such terminology as 'argumentative conversation' and 'disputatious interaction', it is this more aggravated type of discourse to which I am alluding. This type of conversation can be difficult to obtain in a recorded form. This difficulty arises, principally, because it is rarely easy to predict when and where such aggravated disputes will occur. This may, in fact, be one reason why research in the field is as uncommon as it is. One way in which I have attempted to overcome this problem is by collecting data from 'fly on the wall' type television documentary programmes. A number of such programmes has been produced in recent years which have concentrated on argumentative interaction in various everyday settings. These have included contexts like intra-familial conflicts and neighbourhood disputes. These data were collected in audio-visual format. Further data, consisting of audio-recordings of six argumentative conversations, were donated from two sources. Three of these conversations were obtained from an academic colleague, while the remaining three were donated by an acquaintance who had recorded them in the context of an ongoing dispute in which he was involved. None of these audio recordings were made at my request or, indeed, for the purpose of studying argumentative interaction.

One problem that can be associated with collecting data from television broadcasts is that such material frequently tends to be heavily edited. In consequence, the discursive flow of talk that is collected in this way can often be interrupted. For this reason, the video-taped material had, initially, to be examined to identify where such disruptions existed and to assess their extent. From this initial review it was possible to identify five extended conversations from which no talk appeared to be 'missing' or which did not seem to be edited in a way that would create analytical problems of any significant kind. These conversations and the six audio recordings that had been donated, which are un-edited, constitute the principal data corpus upon which the study has focused. This corpus is of around 60 minutes in duration. In addition to this, there remained, after the initial process of reviewing the video-taped data had been completed, a significant secondary body of material that had not been selected for inclusion in the main data corpus. The data of which this was composed ranged from extended conversations that had been heavily edited, but within which sequences of un-edited talk existed, to 'snippets' of data consisting of just a few contiguous utterances. These data were collected together into a separate, supplementary corpus. This was referred to as and when features, characteristics and other phenomena that were gradually identified from within the main data corpus required further substantiation or clarification. Also, there were one or two occasions when the clearest available examples of features that were first identified within the main data corpus were to be found within this supplementary corpus. This secondary body of material is of around forty minutes in duration so that, in all, around 100 minutes (one hour and 40 minutes) of argumentative interaction were available for consultation.

Numerous sequences of talk from these materials appear in the subsequent chapters of the thesis. Each of these sequences is preceded by an 'example number'. These have been allocated consecutively. Thus, the first example to appear in a given chapter is example 1, the second to appear is example 2, and so on. Following this example number, each extract of talk is allocated an identification

reference. This consists of a series of letters, numbers and colons, for example, IAD:KR1:1B:2:1. The principal purpose of this is to enable these, usually, short sequences of talk to be easily located within the collection of data. All of these identification references begin with the prefix 'IAD'. These are simply the initial letters of my name. These are followed either by two further letters or by two letters and a number. These function as a 'shorthand' reference system and consist of the initial letters of the names of the two principal interactants in any given sequence of talk. Thus, in the example referred to above, the letters KR would refer to Kevin and Rob, two individuals with whom the reader will become acquainted later in the thesis. Where these letters are immediately followed by another number ('KR1:' in the example quoted) this indicates that more than one conversation between these people is present within the data corpus. Thus, by consulting this part of a sequence's identification reference it is possible immediately to identify from which conversation within the data corpus it was extracted. The remaining parts of the identification reference refer to the audio or video tape upon which the conversation is to be found and the page number upon which the sequence of talk appears in written transcripts of the conversations that have been created. I have included these parts of the identification references for my own convenience and they need not be of concern to the reader.

3.1. *Summaries of the Data*

Having described the data reference system that is employed in the thesis, it is now possible to provide a brief summary of the conversations which make up the main data corpus. These are not, in any sense, detailed analyses of the conversations or of their argumentative characteristics. Rather, they are 'thumbnail sketches' from which it should be possible for the reader to obtain a flavour of the interaction that will be under consideration later in the thesis. I shall begin by describing the video-taped material. This consists of five conversations:- 'MC' (Milly and Clara); 'CM' (Colin and Mum); 'JM' (Joel and Mum); 'SA', (Sam and Anne); and

'TD' (Torville and Dean). The duration of each conversation is indicated in minutes and seconds.

MC (Milly and Clara). 2'.50"

These people are sisters and are aged about twenty-one and eighteen respectively. They enter the kitchen of what appears to be their family home. It is evident from the outset that some kind of continuing and acrimonious interaction has occurred between them immediately before the video record begins. Their dispute revolves around claims by Milly that Clara belittles her, and others, in order to 'pick' arguments. One way in which it is alleged that she does this is by persistently occupying chairs that Milly has left only temporarily and refusing to vacate them when Milly returns. Milly claims that Clara instigates these quarrels so that she can then formulate interpretations of them that portray her as an innocent and 'victimised' party. In this way, she says, Clara attempts to generate sympathetic reactions in observers. Clara denies these claims and, in other ways, defends herself against them throughout the conversation. The interaction terminates when Milly 'walks out'.

CM (Colin and Mum). 2'.29"

This argument between Colin, who is aged around thirty, and his mother begins when he complains that she has been 'blinking out' (i.e., ignoring) her daughter (his sister, who is also an adult). Mum, who is in the process of making preparations to emigrate, defends herself against this complaint by claiming that she is 'busy'. Subsequently, however, Colin goes on negatively to assess the way in which Mum brought her children up, claiming that this was unsatisfactory because she was always busy working. When Mum seeks to defend herself against this complaint, Colin responds by claiming that his own personal experience of the way he was brought up by Mum was unsatisfactory. He then goes on to claim that Mum's tendency to work excessively is responsible for problems that she has experienced

in her relationship with another of her children, Joel. Mum eventually admits that she does work when it is unnecessary for her to do so but claims that she does this because she experiences feelings of guilt when she does not work. The conversation ends when Mum begins crying and is comforted by a third party.

JM (Joel and Mum). 3'.21"

In this conversation Mum is the same individual who participates in the 'Colin and Mum' data described above. Joel is another of her children and is aged around 18. It is Joel to whom Colin refers in the later parts of the previous argument. The interactants are sitting in a parked car. Despite some elements of disagreement between them in the early stages of the conversation, they do not begin to argue until around forty seconds of interaction have elapsed. The argument begins when Mum asks Joel, who is not currently living with her, if he intends to re-enter full-time education. Doing so, apparently, would involve him moving in with her. He indicates that he is reluctant about this prospect and goes on to describe in an adverse way Mum's upbringing of him when he lived with her, as a child. She responds by adversely assessing various behaviours of his during this time and claiming that he was and continues to be 'ungrateful' for her efforts on his behalf. He then claims that his unsatisfactory behaviour resulted from the way in which she treated him. As the conversation proceeds, these become the core argumentative positions that the disputants adopt. The conversation ends when Joel 'walks out'. He leaves the car in a state of emotional upheaval and walks quickly away from it.

SA (Sam and Anne). 6'.50"

This argument centres on a neighbourhood dispute. Anne is a prostitute who is in the habit of soliciting immediately outside Sam's home. At some point prior to the conversation, an altercation of some kind has occurred between these two individuals as a result of Sam having demanded of Anne that she cease her activities outside his house. This earlier incident, which is the principal topic of the

treated. He then goes on to complain that he has been allowed insufficient time to prepare witness statements for the disciplinary hearing which is pending. He also complains, on behalf of a third employee who is sympathetic to Kevin's cause, that Rob has failed to return her telephone calls. None of these complaints are resolved to Kevin's satisfaction. He returns to the topic of the telephone disconnection and again tries to find out when this occurred. Rob refuses to tell him and Kevin makes further complaints about the treatment he is receiving. Rob pointedly refrains from discussing these complaints and the conversation is again ended abruptly.

KR3 (Kevin and Rob). 6' 50"

In this final telephone conversation between these two participants, Kevin is attempting to obtain an audio-recording from Rob. This is a recording of the meeting at which he is alleged to have behaved in an unsatisfactory way. It is to be used in evidence against Kevin at the disciplinary hearing referred to earlier. Kevin has already been provided, by Rob, with a written transcript of this recording, but he doubts the accuracy of this and wishes to hear the tape itself. The argument revolves around various complaints that Kevin makes about Rob's refusals to give him access to the tape recording. It ends when Rob agrees to seek advice regarding this matter from his immediate superior. The implication here is that this individual may agree to allow Kevin to have a copy of the tape.

DW1 (Dave and Wife). 4'.22"

In both of the 'DW' conversations the interactants are co-present. These recordings have been made surreptitiously by Wife. When the data commence it would appear from acoustic characteristics of the recording that Wife is in the room in which the recording equipment is situated while Dave is in an adjacent room. The speakers are already involved in a conversation that is clearly argumentative. This ends after just a few turns at talk when Wife begins speaking to the couple's young daughter, Gemma, who is also present. During this conversation Wife alludes to a

visit that Gemma is to make to the home of a third party on the next day. Wife asks Dave, who by this time has entered the room, if he objects to this visit. When Dave replies that he does not because it will give him 'a rest', Wife interprets this as a complaint about the amount of child-care for which he is responsible. She goes on to compare the amount of work that she performs on the family's behalf with the amount that Dave performs. During this talk it becomes apparent that she runs the family business. This initiates an extended argument in which Dave, who, it appears, provided the financial capital to set up the business, claims that Wife earns far less from it than she should. Wife replies that this is as a result of circumstances that are beyond her control and that it is Dave who should be the 'breadwinner'. She claims that he is failing in this respect because he does not work. As it proceeds, this argument becomes increasingly acrimonious. Dave, for example, criticises Wife's abilities as a business-person while Wife accuses him of being obsessed with money. Dave then claims that he feels that he has been 'robbed, cheated and abused' by her. Wife is in the process of defending herself against these complaints when the recording comes to an end.

DW2 (Dave and Wife). 4'.40"

When this recording begins the interactants are, again, already engaged in argument with each other. It quickly becomes apparent that, on this occasion, they are arguing about a plan of Dave's to buy what both of them describe as 'a castle'. It is Dave's intention, it would appear, that this should become the family's home. Wife indicates that she is not at all attracted by this proposition. From this beginning, the topics of the argument become wide-ranging. Wife describes the property in a highly derogatory way; both interactants perform personally insulting utterances; they argue about various considerations, such as Gemma's education, that need to be taken into account if Dave's plan is to be put into action, etc. As the conversation proceeds, the utterances that the participants perform become more acrimonious and the assessments that they make about each other become increasingly

insulting. A noticeable shift occurs when Dave refers to Gemma in an insulting way and Wife comes to her defence. She then adversely assesses Dave's abilities as a father and claims that these are limited because his relationship with his own father was unsatisfactory. She goes on to perform various complaints about his family. Dave responds by describing, in a highly disapproving and insulting way, actions that Wife took as a teenager. He claims that Wife, herself, knows nothing about 'family life'. He goes on to make a number of other complaints against her in response to which she performs various counter-complaints. When the recording terminates the speakers are arguing about what time it is!

PP (Policeman and Pete). 15'.21"

This is the longest of the conversations in the data corpus. In consequence, it will only be possible to describe its principal concerns. The recording has been made surreptitiously by Policeman. Pete is the owner of a scrap-yard from which premises he also operates a used car business. Policeman has come to the premises in search of a car that has been involved in a 'hit and run' accident. A large part of the conversation is concerned with Pete refusing to allow Policeman and his colleague, who is also present, access to his premises without a search warrant. A variety of argumentative interludes occur during this part of the conversation. In one interesting sequence of talk, for example, Policeman accuses Pete of going to a number of car dealerships where, it is alleged, he poses as a 'person of substantial means'. He does this, Policeman claims, in order to gain access to a variety of 'high quality cars'. Pete objects to the claim that he is merely *posing* as person of means. In doing so he contrasts his own financial position with that of Policeman, which he describes in a thoroughly contemptuous way. This part of the conversation ends with Pete accusing Policeman of 'grovelling'. This is an accusation that Policeman denies. In another sequence, Pete accuses Policeman of making allegations against him that he is, as yet, unable to substantiate. This results in a series of claims and counter-claims about whether Policeman has or

has not 'jumped the gun'. Eventually, Policeman agrees to obtain a search warrant, but at this point Pete decides to allow the police officers into the yard, which they proceed to search. Finally, they leave without having found the car in question.

Virtually all of the sequences of talk that are examined in the thesis have been extracted from the eleven conversations described above. One sequence of talk, however, (example 7, chapter 2) which appears on page 48, was not obtained from this data corpus. This extract involves a conversation between myself and my two children. This was not recorded, which is why it has been transcribed using standard orthography rather than the transcription conventions that appear elsewhere in the thesis. (For an explanation of these conventions see page 269.) This short sequence of talk was written down immediately after it had occurred.

The principal foci of this research are short or comparatively short sequences of interaction that I have extracted from the argumentative conversations described above. All of these sequences commence with the performance of a complaint of some kind by one of the interactants against the other. Within these utterances, various types of complainable behaviour or activity are attributed to the other participant. I have selected these 'complaint-initiated' types of sequence for examination for two main reasons. Firstly, it became obvious, at a very early stage in the project, when relevant material was still in the process of being collected, that the corpus of data that was to be consulted was likely to be particularly rich in sequence-initial utterances that were categorisable as 'complaints'. Within the conversations of which the corpus is composed these types of utterance are performed with considerable regularity. Thus, one reason for selecting complaint-initiated sequences of talk as the focus for a study of argumentative interaction was that plenty appeared to be available for examination within the developing corpus.

Secondly, the 'accounts literature', referred to earlier, is principally concerned with the production of such things as self-justifications, excuses and explanations in particular types of conversational environment. Thus, for Hale (1987:117), 'account

an explicit negative; (3) make a countering move, such as an alternative proposal or a substitution for the desired object; (4) temporize, i.e., postpone compliance or agreement; or (5) evade or hedge by addressing the propositional content of the antecedent, rather than acknowledging its illocutionary force.

Maynard (1985a), too, focuses on the initial phases of children's argumentation, and notes that a wide variety of 'arguable moves', which are actions of a first speaker that are opposed by a second speaker, may lead to the creation of disputes. Vuchinich (1984:218) notes that disputatious sequences of talk in adult argumentation also tend to be instigated by 'oppositional moves'. He observes that:

One important type of move occurs when one person opposes an utterance, action or self of another person. Known as disagreements, accusations, insults, challenges and the like, these moves all involve one person negating some aspect of another person's behaviour or self.

In the present study it has been possible to incorporate many of the oppositional types of utterance referred to above, such as the disagreements, accusations, insults and challenges to which Vuchinich refers, within the category of 'complaints'. It has also been possible, however, to include under this heading other additional types of oppositional move. These include such things as proscriptions, adverse assessments, criticisms and 'noticings' of allegedly complainable behaviour. The term 'complaint' then, for the purposes of this discussion, constitutes a generic category which incorporates a range of moves by means of which speakers characterise or treat as complainable actions that their co-participants have taken. I have intended, by focusing on this somewhat malleable category, to expand upon the types of dispute-initiating, 'oppositional' utterance that have come under analytical scrutiny within the more cognate fields of research. In doing so, I also examine specific types of interactional context within which accounts, of the sorts investigated within the accounts literature, may become relevant next actions. It is

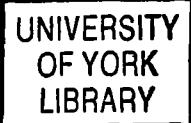
hoped, in this way, both to maintain coherent links with earlier research into argumentative interaction, and to build upon it.

4. Methodology

I did not approach these data, initially, with the aim of testing particular theories from within the existing literature. Neither was it intended to apply existing taxonomies of utterances to them. Although I thought it probable that detailed analysis of complaint-initiated talk would uncover characteristic features, mechanisms and structures that appear systematically and other regularities of organisation, I had no pre-existing expectations about the forms that these might take. Even where claims exist, within the literature, about what are characterised as normative patterns of interaction (some of which I will examine later in this chapter), these claims were not permitted to shape the initial forms of enquiry that were undertaken. This was particularly the case since, as already noted, such claims are not supported by a great deal of detailed empirical research. By conducting the study in this comparatively 'agenda-free' way it has been possible, subsequently, to assess the extent to which these earlier findings are borne out by detailed, empirical investigation. This has proved to be not only an interesting way of proceeding but to be one that, in my view, has led to findings that contribute significantly to our understanding of the ways in which argument may be organised and constructed. It is to describing these findings, and some of the conclusions that can be drawn from them, that this thesis is principally devoted.

Like much of the work referred to earlier, the analytical methodology that has been utilised during this research has been that of conversation analysis. This is a way of approaching data about which a great deal has now been written (see, for example, Goodwin and Heritage; 1990; Drew, 1996) and an extensive discussion of its methodological precepts and practices will not be undertaken here. However, a brief outline of its principal concerns and methods is in order.

The primary concern and focus of CA research is the actions that speakers perform through their talk and the ways in which these actions inform and constitute their social interaction. Such actions include, amongst an indefinite number of possible examples, such things as 'complimenting', 'inviting', 'assessing', 'disagreeing' and, as in the present research, 'complaining'. Here, then, speakers are seen, quintessentially, as *social* actors who seek, through the utterances that they construct, to engage in *social* intercourse with each other. This concentration on the social practices through which conversation is constituted is a defining characteristic of the CA approach. As Drew (1996:65) puts it, this is a perspective within which people are not 'segregated as autonomous speakers and listeners'. In making this observation, he is attempting to contrast the CA approach with other 'monologicistic' perspectives which, he says, include 'mainstream linguistics, psycholinguistics and some forms of sociolinguistic research' (*op cit*:64). We have seen earlier, for example, that within the 'accounts literature', justifications, excuses, apologies, and the like, tend to be viewed in isolation from the preceding utterances by which they are generated. In some cases, moreover, the connections that may exist between accounts and the talk by which they are followed are also disattended (see, for example, Sykes and Matza, 1957; Schönbach, 1980). In making this observation, however, Drew also pinpoints further central and inter-connected precepts of CA methodology.



To begin with, not only are interactants 'unsegregated', they are seen as 'unsegregatable'. Conversation cannot take place in isolation. Thus the utterances that are performed by individual speakers become meaningless unless they are viewed in the context of the particular sequential location that they occupy, specifically to the utterances by which they are preceded in any given conversation. One reason for this is that, in order to maintain discursive coherence, speakers are constrained to construct turns at talk that are oriented to these preceding utterances. This is one sense, then, in which conversational speakers unlike, for example, lecturers or other public speakers, are not autonomous actors. Psycho-

emotional considerations about their feelings, wishes or interactional 'agendas' are seen as being secondary to the requirement to construct talk that is 'fitted' to the local interactional context within which it is being performed.

This is not the only sense, however, in which the autonomy of the individual speaker is seen as a subordinate consideration in the construction of talk. To maintain discursive coherence, speakers need to construct utterances that constitute 'fitted' responses to their co-participants' preceding utterances. In most cases, however, this means that more than one type of response is available to them (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). Thus, for example, having received an 'invitation', a recipient may perform an 'acceptance' or a 'declination'; in response to a 'request' they may perform a 'granting' or a 'refusal', etc. Now, a further thing to note here is that actions such as invitations and requests are not performed just anywhere. One location at which they tend not to appear, for example, is at the beginnings of conversations. Rather, interaction is normally expected to commence with such things as reciprocal greetings (Schegloff, 1968, 1986). Moreover, they are not normally performed in circumstances where the invitation or request is likely to be met with a declination or refusal (Levinson, 1983). So although something like the proffering of an invitation may, as far as its instigator is concerned, be the principal 'purpose' underlying, for example, a telephone conversation, restrictions are oriented to as to where such an action can be performed within the conversation. Moreover, it may also turn out that circumstances are not auspicious for an acceptance and that, in consequence, the invitation may not be performed at all. Thus, the interactional agenda of the 'inviter' is also subordinated to such considerations as the contextual relevance of particular conversational actions and to normative expectations about their sequential ordering. A further thing that should be noted is that although more than one type of response may be fitted to a given preceding conversational action, the responses that are available are often not equivalent. That is, and here we return to a theme has been referred to earlier in this chapter, amongst those that are available, certain types of response can be

normatively preferred by interactants, while others are normatively dispreferred. The response types that are preferred are those that are most compatible with the creation or maintenance of social cohesion and/or solidarity between the interactants (Heritage, 1984a). Thus, in response to invitations, acceptances are preferred, in response to requests, grantings are preferred, and so on. This is the case regardless of whether the responding party is psychologically or emotionally predisposed towards producing the preferred utterance in any given set of interactional circumstances. It is also the case even on those occasions upon which they choose the dispreferred option. Thus, as we have seen, where speakers perform utterances that are, for example, in disagreement with those of their co-participants, such utterances are systematically prefaced by delays. These take the form of pauses, partial repetitions of preceding utterances, delaying components such as 'well' and 'uhm', and other features by means of which their dispreferred status is made apparent (Sacks, 1987 [1973]; Pomerantz, 1984). In other words, even where speakers opt to perform utterances that are dispreferred, they do so in ways that take account of normative forms of preference organisation.

Within the conversation analytic perspective, then, sequences of interaction commence with turns at talk that are delicately positioned and which, in turn, define the context within which the subsequent utterance becomes relevant. In addition, in the course of producing such talk, interactants systematically orient to various types of normative interactional behaviour. What conversation analysis seeks to identify are the systematic methods by means of which interconnections are built between conversational actions and the utterances by which they are preceded and succeeded. From these it is sometimes possible to determine normative types of interactional behaviour, such as those mentioned above.

Research of this kind requires painstaking attention to detail. This is so for a number of reasons. It is not at all uncommon, for example, for the connections between turns at talk to be subtle, oblique or implicit. In addition, even minute features, such as pauses, hesitations and other forms of delay are sometimes of

great significance. This is the case, for instance, where they turn out to indicate the dispreferred status of a given turn at talk. For these reasons, the conversation analytic approach usually begins, as was the case in the current research, with the production of detailed, written transcriptions of the conversations that are to be subjected to analysis. In this study, as is usual in conversation analytic research, the transcript notation that I have used has been drawn from that developed by Jefferson (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1984:ix-vi). This is a modified version of standard orthography which uses various symbols to represent characteristics that are present within the talk that is under examination. A description of Jefferson's transcription conventions, as they have been applied in this study, can be found on page 269.

In accordance with usual conversation analytic procedure, this process of transcribing the interaction that was to be investigated was followed, in this study, by extensive and repeated observation of the data. This was performed in conjunction with the written transcripts of the conversations in question. To begin with, I concentrated on two of the conversations from within the data corpus ('Torville and Dean' and 'Joel and Mum'). I examined the entire conversations in close detail, focusing particularly on sequences of talk within them that were initiated by complaints of varying kinds. Special attention was paid, during these investigations, to three central considerations. Firstly, the systematic ways in which turns at talk display analyses and interpretations of the utterances by which they are preceded. Secondly, the ways in which their formulation is structured and organised so as to take into consideration, and to conform to such analyses and interpretations. Thirdly, the ways in which they, themselves, then act as foci for analyses which go on to be displayed and oriented to in the subsequent turn at talk. On the basis of this observational work it was possible to identify various structures and forms of organisation that appear recurrently. Following this, the remaining conversations within the corpus were examined. The purpose, at this point, was to locate similar types of feature to those identified within the two conversations initially examined or,

alternatively, to identify other types of feature by means of which similar interactional outcomes were brought about. The sequences of talk within which these various characteristics appear were then extracted from the transcripts of all the conversations. These extracts were formed into collections of sequences that appeared to contain similar types of feature or to fulfil similar interactional roles. Detailed comparative analysis of these sequences then allowed clearer pictures to emerge of the similarities and dissimilarities that exist between the various features. This work enabled types of interactional procedure to be identified that tend to appear regularly within argumentative interaction. Some of the functions that these procedures seem to fulfil, and the outcomes that tend to result when alternative types of procedure are utilised, have also been identified. In addition, it has been possible to glimpse, within the data, what may be normatively preferred organisational formats.

4.1. *Ethical considerations*

In the course of the transcribing phase of the project, one or two ethical considerations were taken into account. Where the data that existed in audio-taped format were concerned, proper names (e.g. the names of participants and places) have been altered. I did this in order to prevent particular individuals from becoming identifiable. This is a precaution that is commonly adopted in the writing of CA transcripts. There are occasions, however, when this procedure may have some adverse consequences for the research process. Some place-names, for example, may possess special significance. A report that some individual has paid a visit to some named, well-known 'red-light district', for example, may convey a very different set of implications to those contained in a report that they have taken some more potentially innocuous type of journey! Considerations such as these notwithstanding, the view is normally taken by CA researchers that transcripts should be weighted in favour of protecting the privacy of the individuals whose talk is the subject of our investigations. Another difficulty that may be encountered by

altering proper names is that some characteristics of the talk, such as details of prosodical emphasis, may be lost. This difficulty has been overcome in this study by selecting substitute names that contain the same number of syllables as those contained in the originals. In this way it has been possible simply to transfer symbolic representations of particular performance characteristics (e.g. underlining and capitalising) to the appropriate syllable/s in the substitute name. Since they have already been the subject of public transmission, these considerations were not taken into account where the data were collected from TV programmes.

5. Themes of the thesis

In this final section of the introductory chapter I will briefly describe the issues that each of the subsequent chapters will address. In addition, where findings that are described in one chapter inform the investigations that are conducted in another, such findings will also be outlined. Major connections that exist between the concerns that are addressed within these various chapters and those that have been considered in earlier studies will also be described. I hope that by providing this initial summary of the contents of the thesis, I will enable the reader both to gain some sense of the overall shape of my research and to identify those aspects of the existing literature to which it is of particular relevance.

Chapter two of the study will consider complainers' initial responses to complaints. Here, I shall describe the basic response types that appear in the data corpus. These range from *unmitigated invalidations*, which overtly deny or contradict complaints (e.g. 'I didn't put anyone down') on the one hand, to *admissions and apologies* (e.g. 'yeah, sorry') on the other. It is noticeable, however, that the overwhelming majority of the complaint responses correspond to neither of these two extremes. What are more typically forthcoming are intermediate types of response which contain both concessive and self-justificatory elements. It may be acknowledged, for example, that whatever form of behaviour has been complained about has occurred, but this behaviour may also be characterised as justifiable (e.g.

'whenever I hit you it was because you lied'). Clear parallels exist between these types of utterance and the types of account that have long been the focus of research within the 'accounts literature'. As long ago as 1957, for example, Sykes and Matza observed that what they rather quaintly refer to as 'juvenile delinquents' typically admit to their 'deviant' behaviour in the context of criminal proceedings. They also note, however, that such individuals seek to deny responsibility for their activities or to justify them. The five categories of account that Sykes and Matza identify all consist of variations on these themes. Thus, external social factors, such as 'un-loving parents', may be blamed; it may be claimed that the behaviour has not resulted in adverse consequences of any kind; it may be claimed that the behaviour was justified as a result of some transgression on the part of its victim, who may also occupy the role of 'accuser'; or it may be claimed that the behaviour was of benefit, or was performed out of sense of loyalty, to some other individual or group. It is fascinating to find that versions of most of these types of concessive/self-justificatory response, which were first identified over forty years ago in the context of criminal investigations, can also be located within the data corpus that has been the subject of the present research. In the intervening decades these types of account have been the subject of further investigation. Following Austin (1970a [1956-57]), Scott and Lyman (1968) distinguish between two types of self-justificatory account - excuses and justifications. They identify four principal types of 'excuse' which they categorise as 'appeals to accidents' (*'it was an accident'*); 'appeals to defeasibility' (*'I didn't know it would happen'*); 'appeals to biological drives' (*'that's the way men are'*); and 'scapegoating' (*'it was her fault that I did it'*)¹. Where 'justifications' are concerned, the typology referred to by Scott and Lyman is similar to that of Sykes and Matza, described above. These kinds of typology have been further extended and elaborated upon since Scott and Lyman's study. As we have already seen, by 1980, Schönbach, for example, had constructed an entire taxonomy of such utterances. In none of these studies, however, are justificatory accounts considered in the context of actual talk, be it naturally occurring, everyday,

or otherwise. Within them, the attention that is paid to the connections that may exist between accounts of these kinds and the preceding events by which they are generated is particularly scant, as has been noted earlier.

As well as focusing on initial responses to complaints, chapter two will also examine some of the forms of conversational trajectory that tend to be generated subsequently both by complaint responses of the types described above, which contain both concessive and self-justificatory elements, and by those that do not contain concessive elements. Those of the latter type are much more uncommon. Here, I will concentrate on four types of trajectory. Firstly, those that tend to be instigated by complaint responses within which complainees make explicit concessions to complaints (e.g., '*exactly, because you scare me*'), rather than implicit concessions (e.g. '*well, I'm not used to it*'). Secondly, those that tend to be generated when they attempt to re-attribute responsibility for their allegedly complainable behaviour back on to the original complainer (e.g. '*well, you said don't do it the other way*'). Thirdly, those that tend to be generated when they attribute responsibility to external causal factors (e.g. '*there's a recession on, you can't do it all the time*'). Fourthly, the types of subsequent trajectory that tend to occur when complaint responses contain no concessive elements, as in the case of *unmitigated invalidations* of the type described earlier. Amongst the issues that I will examine during this part of the discussion are the ways in which some types of complaint response tend to polarise the argumentative positions of disputants, while others tend to result in the adoption of new argumentative lines or even in reversals of complainer/complaineer roles.

In chapter three the focus of the discussion will shift more directly to the types of utterance that are performed by complainers following complainees' initial complaint responses. Here, I shall note that four basic types of such utterances are most commonly performed. I will examine an example of each type, in detail. One issue that I will consider, here, is the extent to which the justifications and other forms of account that complainees normally perform in their complaint responses are

accepted by their co-participants. In this respect, a finding that is of particular interest is that none of the response types performed by complainers exonerate the complainees either of having performed the initially complained of behaviour or of culpability for having done so. Indeed, remarkably, no example of such an exonerative response could be found within the data corpus. This finding is of direct relevance to an ongoing debate within the accounts literature. In a significant body of this research (see, e.g., Scott and Lyman, 1968:46; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981:166; Riordan *et al*, 1983; Hale, 1987:129), it is claimed that, where the legitimacy of some action has been 'called into question', the performance of an account by the 'miscreant' usually results in an acceptance of the account and a resolution of conflict. Other studies, however (see, for example, Semin and Manstead, 1983:114) claim that this tends not to be the case. Vuchinich (1984:219), who approaches the subject from a more conversation analytic perspective, comes to a similar conclusion. Since the resolution of conflict, as a result of the performance of a justificatory account, is not something that happens at all in the sequences of talk that I examine, my findings tend to support the latter of these views.

Chapter three will also consider what turn out to be the interconnected issues of dispute escalation and the types of response that complainees perform following complainers' non-exonerative utterances. Here, I shall note that particular types of non-exonerative formulation tend to provoke escalations in the disputatiousness of complainees' subsequent talk. This examination of the ways in which disputes may become more escalated and aggravated in the course of their production is an area of research that has been the subject of virtually no previous investigation.

Chapter four will be concerned with examining a particular form of dispute termination - that which occurs when one of the parties *unilaterally terminates* interaction by 'walking out'. This is a form of conversational closure that only seems to occur when argumentation has become particularly disputatious and acrimonious. There, I shall begin by reviewing Vuchinich's (1990) paper on the

subject of dispute termination. This demonstrates, principally, that arguments are normally brought to a close in ways that are collaboratively organised and which facilitate the subsequent resumption of non-disputatious interaction. I will then go on to analyse, in detail, the terminal sequences of three argumentative conversations within which the interaction becomes particularly 'heated'. Each of the terminal sequences in question concludes with one of the disputants 'walking out'. From this analytical work it is possible to identify, with some precision, a type of conversational environment within which walking out tends to occur. It is also possible to identify both a series of interactional moves by which such events appear, typically, to be preceded and to determine what types of outcome walking out may be designed to achieve. It will be concluded that *unilateral termination* is a form of closure that is unlike the types of dispute terminations examined by Vuchinich in several significant respects.

In chapter five, after some preliminary remarks, the principal findings that are reported in the preceding chapters will be summarised. The remainder of the chapter will then be concerned mainly with determining the more generalisable conclusions that can be drawn from what has gone before. I will begin this review by noting that much of the existing CA literature stresses the central significance, in argumentative conversation, of what has been termed 'oppositonality' (see, e.g., Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987; Coulter, 1990:185; Vuchinich, 1984:218; 1990:120-123; Garcia, 1991:819 and 821; Hutchby, 1996; Maynard, 1985a). This has been described as a mode of interaction wherein contending parties in disputes are said to 'place themselves in symbolic positions that are opposed to one another' (Vuchinich, 1990:120). This type of interactional polarisation, it is claimed, constitutes a key and defining characteristic of argumentative talk, where it is manifested by the performance of what have been termed 'oppositional interchanges' (Vuchinich, 1984:118) and 'adversative episodes' (Hutchby, 1996; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981; Vuchinich, 1984:118, 1990; Garcia, 1991). Within these, disputing parties are said to 'oppose the utterances, actions or selves of one

another in successive turns at talk' (Vuchinich, 1990:118) by making a variety of 'oppositional moves'. Amongst these, as we have seen earlier, are included disagreements, challenges, denials, accusations, threats and insults (*op cit.*:123).

It is also commonly accepted within the literature that these types of interactional exchange are organised on the basis of what Schegloff and Sacks (1973) have called 'adjacency pairs' (see, e.g., Garcia, 1991:819, 828; Atkinson and Drew, 1979:57; Schegloff, 1988). To summarise briefly, this means that the performance by one participant of, for example, an accusation, imposes constraints upon their co-participant to respond in the immediately subsequent turn, either with some kind of denial, counter-accusation, etc., or an admission of some sort. It is widely held, moreover, that the preferred response to 'oppositional' turns like accusations is denial, rather than admission (see, e.g., Atkinson and Drew, 1979:60; Garcia, 1991:821, 828; Antaki, 1994:86; Heritage, 1984a:269). In consequence, it is said, it is this type of response that is most typically forthcoming. This view is summarised most succinctly by Garcia (1991:821) who claims that, generally, 'accusations engender return accusations, counter-assertions, or denials'. It is sometimes claimed that this is the case because, when responding to oppositional utterances, recipients orient to a normative preference for disagreement (Garcia, 1991:821, 828; Antaki, 1994:86).

In chapter five I will consider the implications that the findings of my research may have for claims of this sort. Firstly, I shall note that the vast majority of complaint responses observed in chapter two do not, as has already been pointed out, correspond straightforwardly with 'return accusations, counter-assertions, or denials' as Garcia and others have claimed. Rather, they are typically constructed in ways that are both concessive and self-justificatory. I will conclude, from these observations, that the view that speakers typically reply to 'oppositional' utterances simply by performing return oppositional utterances is not substantiated by the present study. Neither is the view that their talk is normatively oriented to a preference for disagreement. However, I will also consider the possibility that other,

perhaps more complex forms of preference organisation may be in operation. In certain types of conversational environment, recipients have been found systematically to construct their talk in ways that appear to orient to more than one form of response option constraint. Following compliments, for example, preferences to avoid both disagreement and self-praise are usually observed (Pomerantz, 1978a). I will consider the possibility that, in constructing responses to complaints that are, at the same time, both concessive and self-justificatory, complainers, too, may be attempting to orient their talk to more than one type of preference.

Chapter five will also turn its attention to *unilateral terminations* and *pre-walking out sequences*. I shall note that a number of similarities exist between these types of sequence and a series of interactional moves that is described in Luckenbill's (1977) study of criminal homicide. Luckenbill finds that, on occasions, such sequences may, rather than instigating a unilateral termination of interaction, lead to bouts of physical combat between disputants. In the cases examined by Luckenbill, these violent interludes ultimately result in the death of one or other of the combatants. I will conclude that by opting to walk out, rather than adopting the courses of action chosen by Luckenbill's subjects (i.e. throwing a punch, finding and using a weapon, etc.) those who walk out avoid these unfortunate types of outcome.

Chapter five will conclude by making some general observations about some problematic aspects of the methodological approach adopted in this and other studies of argumentative talk. Here, I shall note that, because such studies tend to concentrate entirely on interaction that is disputatious, it is difficult to identify, definitively, what may be normative forms of interactional behaviour. This is because data that are non-disputatious are not considered. As a result of this exclusion, such issues as the types of response that are typically performed to 'oppositional' utterances in conversations that do not become disputatious are not examined. One possibility is that the non-disputatious character of such

conversations may result from a tendency for oppositional utterances to receive non-oppositional responses, such as admissions and apologies. Schlenkar and Darby (1981:276) make some interesting observations in this respect. These researchers note that, in their study:

Apologies were by far the favoured strategy for dealing with the predicament; the accounting tactics of excuses and justifications were not endorsed with high likelihoods of occurrence.

By concentrating exclusively on argumentative talk, researchers into such interaction, myself included, may be overlooking the possibility that non-oppositional types of response occur more commonly than our 'dispute heavy' corpora may lead us to believe.

Chapter Two

Responses to complaints in argumentative conversation

This chapter will begin by focusing on responses as they are performed by speakers in everyday conversational environments who have been the target of one of the most commonly deployed forms of 'oppositional move', the complaint. Focusing on instances selected from a collection of around 100 sequences of complaint-initiated talk, it will attempt to identify the principal ways in which recipients organise their responses when their activities are treated as, or are oriented to as being, complainable in some sense or another. Before beginning this project, however, it is necessary to establish, in broad terms at least, what is being referred to by the term 'complaint'. This is particularly the case because, within the discussion that follows, it is a term that will sometimes encompass a wider range of conversational acts than it is customarily considered to include.

1. Complaining - the imputation of culpability.

Antaki (1994:74) observes that 'blaming [...] is a routine part of life'. While its 'routine-ness' may be open to question where non-argumentative conversation is concerned, it is certainly evident, even from the most casual perusal of the data collected for the purposes of this study that, when arguing, speakers very frequently construct complaints against their co-participants. Recurrently, they treat actions, behaviours, perspectives, attitudes, etc., that they allege their co-participants have performed or exhibited, as complainable. More specifically, they build turns that attribute activities to their recipients and organise their talk in ways that treat these

attributed actions as shortcomings and faults, etc., by indicating that they are disapproved of in some sense, i.e., that they are considered to be unsatisfactory, undesirable, unacceptable or blameworthy.

However, in categorising these types of conversational move as 'complaints' it is not intended to imply that this term necessarily denotes a specific type of conversational 'event' that is systematically constructed in a particular kind of way and which, consequently, can be isolated from a variety of other types of conversational event. On the contrary, complaining may be achieved through an enormous and diverse variety of turn shapes. Schegloff (1988), for example, notes that complaints are commonly formulated as 'noticings' (e.g., *'I see you left the fire on all night'*). Questionings (*'why do you have to go on the way you do?'* [see also Atkinson and Drew, 1979]), assessments (*'I consider that drastic, unacceptable action'*), warnings (*'don't you dare correct me'*), and denials of 'right' (*'you can't buy anything without my permission'*) constitute just a few more examples of the many other kinds of format that are used quite routinely in argumentative interaction for this purpose.

Moreover, within this extensive range of culpability imputing formulations, other types of variation are commonly found. Complainable matters are treated as complainable with varying degrees of overtness, for example, while the extent to which the nature of their complainableness becomes explicit (i.e. what it is about them that renders them complainable, from the complainer's point of view) also varies from instance to instance. These types of difference can best be illustrated by direct examination of argumentative data. Instance 1 provides an example of an

1. [IAD:TD:1A:5:1]

((Participants are ice-dancing))

1. Chris: Lift

2. (1.3) ((both participants lift left leg))

3. Chris: Li:ft

4. (1.5) ((both participants lift right leg))

5. Chris: >No ↓no- °n'-° ↓no:<
6. (0.4) ((participants separate - C performs exasperated
toss of head))
[((inclines head to left - gestures to left
[twice with left hand))
[
7. Jane: I can't [lift 'n' lean roun' th[ere
8. Chris: [I- nob'dy said t' do that.

overt complaint in which the nature of the shortcoming that is being alluded to is left implicit. Here, the participants are practising an ice-dance manoeuvre. At lines 1 and 3 Chris gives instructions to Jane ('lift') which are designed to help her to coordinate her movements with his own. She responds by moving in what appears to be the required manner (lines 2 and 4). Despite this, it is evident from Jane's response at line 7 ('I can't lift and lean round there') that she interprets Chris' turn at line 5 ('no, no, no, no'), which constitutes a form of adverse assessment, as a complaint about some aspect of her performance. Although, in this example, no overt attempt is made at all by the complainer to specify what it is that he is complaining about or why he is complaining about it, the repeated negative formulation that he uses very explicitly treats whatever it is as complainable. Consequently, although she is unable to identify the matter precisely (at least, as far as Chris is concerned - see his turn at line 8 ['I, nobody said to do that']), Jane is in no doubt that *something* that she has done or omitted to do is being treated with disapproval.

In a second complaint, which is performed by the same speaker later in the conversation (see example 2, lines 116 - 117 and 119), an action of Jane's (a

2. [IAD:TD:1A:5:5]

116. Chris: D'y'- did Q:NE th-en
117. DROPPED it on Q:NE=
118. Jane: =Ye:h I [did- the:n
119. Chris: ['n' it looked STUpidid

subsequent performance of the same manoeuvre) is again very explicitly treated as complainable, this time through the use of high amplitude, intonational emphasis and the negative assessor 'stupid'. ('Dropped it', here, [line 117] refers to the lowering of Jane's leg from a raised position, which forms part of the manoeuvre in question.) In this case, however, the speaker also indicates, in a number of ways, both the matter that he is complaining about and what it is about this matter that he finds complainable. Most explicitly, he extends his complaining turn at line 119 and overlaps Jane's response in order to claim that the way in which she performed the manoeuvre 'looked stupid'. Also, other less obvious and more implicit allusions are made to the supposed complainableness of Jane's effort. The use of the phrase 'dropped it', rather than, for example, 'lowered it', seems to suggest that, as far as Chris is concerned, she has lowered her leg too quickly and, perhaps, in an ungainly fashion. Also, the phrases 'you did it on one' and 'dropped it on one' appear to be designed to point out shortcomings in the tempo of her performance. Jane's qualified validation of Chris' complaint - 'yeah, I did then' (line 118) seems to indicate that it is formulated in a way that is sufficiently explicit for her interpretative purposes. The expression 'you did one then dropped it on one' appears to constitute, for her, the specification of identifiable matters. Consequently, no sense is gained that Jane is in any way uncertain about which of her actions are the focus of his disapproval. She knows precisely what it is that she has done that is being complained about. Here, then, both the allegedly complainable matter and the nature of its complainableness are indicated much more explicitly and specifically than was the case in example 1 and we can tell that this is so because in the second example, unlike the first, the complainees are provided with sufficient resources not only to identify which of her actions are being referred to but also to infer what it is about them that her co-participant finds unsatisfactory.

It can be seen, then, from these two examples, that the term 'complaint' constitutes a rubric that can incorporate varying turn types, that may fulfil a range of interactional functions, but which possess the shared characteristic of imputing fault,

61. (0.4)

62. Joel: I w's a litt-le chi:ld I d'n know w'- I w's doin'

63. maybe I w's (0.7) vacuumin' 'n (0.4) (from) 'oo:ps I

64. did-n mean t' do that-

65. (0.9)

→ 66. Mum: look (.) whenev' I hit you- >i' w's becau'< y' lie y' know.

Prior to the interaction shown in extract 3, the 'complainer' (Joel) has been complaining to his mother, in general terms, about her treatment of him as a child. At lines 57 - 58 he provides an example of the kinds of treatment that he is referring to by complaining about what may be a specific occasion on which, he alleges, she 'cuffed him up in the head'. When responding (line 66), Mum is non-committal about this specific occurrence. Instead, she refers, in a much more general way ('whenever I hit you'), to incidents of the *type* he has described and acknowledges that incidents of this kind took place. In doing so she implicitly acknowledges that there were occasions on which she hit him. However, although she makes this implicit concession to the complaint, she also attempts to justify her behaviour on these occasions ('it was because you lie you know'). Her hitting of Joel, she claims, was always ('whenever') instigated by him 'lying' to her and was, for this reason, always justified. There is an implication here, of course, that the same is true of the alleged instance to which Joel has referred.

Examination of the data corpus has revealed that a very large proportion of complainees' turns subsequent to complaints, (about 85%), are organised in similar ways. Although they employ a variety of strategies and turn shapes in order to do so, complainees recurrently organise their responses in ways that a) make concessions to complaints that have been made against them, i.e., by implicitly or partially validating them, acknowledging that some *version* of the complained of action has occurred, etc., and, b) in ways that provide accounts for their allegedly complainable behaviour or, in other ways, treat it as being excusable or justified in some sense.

2.2. explicit validation.

4. [IAD:JM:1B:4:2]

- 66.Mum: look (.) whenev' I hit you- >i' w's becau'< y' lie y' know.
 67. (0.9)
 68.Mum: you' a l::ia' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody
 → 69.Joel: [e x a c'l y be ca us e
 70.Mum: lyin' t' m e]
 → 71.Joel: I' m scared]
 72. (0.3)
 73.Joel: because I a[m s c a :]r:ed.
 74.Mum: [scared what.]
 75. (0.6)
 76.Mum: scared f' what
 77. (0.4)
 78.Mum: scared f' whAt!
 79. (0.2)
 80.Joel: the feeling of hatred an'
 81. (fear)ness of you comin' t' hit me

In example 4, Joel, having been accused of 'lying' (line 66) and, more generically, of being 'a liar' (line 68) responds, with an initially positioned confirmation marker - 'exactly', which acknowledges the validity of these allegations, absolutely and explicitly. Like Mum, however, he seeks to justify his behaviour. He lied, he claims, because he 'was scared' and, when he is pressed (lines 74, 76 and 78), it becomes apparent (lines 80 and 81) that this reference to his fear constitutes a veiled continuation of his earlier complaints about Mum's treatment of him. It was his fear of her 'coming to hit' him, he claims, that 'caused' him to lie.

Several other instances can be found within the data corpus (in around 3% of the responses) in which complainees respond in this kind of way. Unlike the complainees in example 3, rather than implicitly validating the complaints made against them or implicitly acknowledging that versions of them are valid, etc., the

complainees in these cases confirm, quite incontrovertibly, that they have behaved in *precisely* the way that has been attributed to them. They unequivocally validate the *specific* complaints that their co-participants make. Having done so, however, they, too, then go on to account for their behaviour or, in other ways, to claim or imply that it was justifiable or excusable for some reason.

2.3. *unmitigated invalidation.*

5. [IAD:MC:2A:4:1]

1. Clara: watch (.) ↑ME GET OFF ME!!!
 2. (1.0)
 → 3. Milly: °([]° (thats not f°ai::r:°)=
 4. Mum: [>ge' back out there<
 → 5. Milly: =I didn' ↓touch (you)

Here, the disputants who, as we have already seen, are sisters, are entering the kitchen of their family home from some external area, a garden perhaps. In the first turn (line 1) Clara complains that Milly is engaging in some kind of unwanted physical contact with her and demands that she discontinues doing so. The phrase 'get off me', together with the vehement manner in which it is performed, implies that this contact is of a kind that is more overt and, perhaps, more deliberate than, for example, an inadvertent 'brushing against' her. Her reaction seems to be commensurate, for instance, with an action of a deliberate kind, such as being pushed. Note, also, that the use of present tense implies that the unwanted contact is ongoing.

Milly's initial response to the complaint (line 3) claims that it is unjust ('that's not fair'). She then, quite explicitly, denies the allegation that has been made - 'I didn't touch you' (line 5). This formulation (unlike, for example, '*I hardly touched you*') claims not just that no contact of a *significant* kind has taken place but that no contact of *any* kind has occurred. Milly also opts for past ('I didn't touch you') rather

than present tense (e.g. *'I'm not touching you'*), thereby implying not merely that she is not currently touching Milly but that she has not done so at any point during the encounter. Her response seems, then, to be designed in a number of ways that quite overtly and comprehensively deny the validity of Clara's complaint.

Responses of this kind, which attempt to invalidate complaints completely, especially by denying that the complainable action or behaviour that has been cited has occurred, without making concessions of any kind, were found to comprise only around 5% of the responses in the corpus of data consulted. Although complainees occasionally chose not to concede that they had behaved in a way that had been attributed to them, they did not normally use explicit denials, contradictions, etc., that claimed that they had 'no case to answer' at all, in order to do so. In around 72% of the responses that sought to invalidate complaints, other, less contentious and more mitigated strategies were employed (see sub-section 2.4 below).

2.4. mitigated invalidation

This most commonly involves the performance of responses within which the complainees concedes that they have engaged in *some type* of behaviour that the complainer considers to be complainable. In other words, they usually acknowledge that they have done 'something' rather than 'nothing'. However, the 'something' that they acknowledge having done normally consists either of a re-interpreted or re-characterised version of the complainable behaviour cited by the complainer, or a version of it that is, in other ways, treated as reasonable, unproblematic or innocent.

In instance 6, for example, Colin is complaining about the way in which Mum

6. [IAD:CM:1B:3:1]

6. Colin: you wer- j's (0.2) y' know sort- of (.) blanking her
 7. out I dun understan' [(you)
 → 8. Mum: [I'M NOT BLANKIN' 'ER OUT I'M
 → 9. BUSY

has treated his sister (lines 6 - 7). 'Blanking her out' here is interpretable as meaning something like 'ignoring her', not 'taking notice' of her or not 'paying attention' to her. Thus, what is being complained about is not so much a complainable behaviour as the complainable absence of an appropriate or expected behaviour - that of attentiveness to another. Although Mum responds to this complaint with a denial ('I'm not blanking her out' [line 8]), this is mitigated inasmuch as she acknowledges ('I'm busy') that she has engaged in *some* behaviour that Colin is describing in this way. Rather than claiming, then, that nothing has taken place, she acknowledges that *something* has occurred but disputes Colin's description of what it is. By re-characterising her behaviour as being symptomatic of her 'busyness', she attempts to disconfirm that it is complainable. The implication here is that she is prevented from being attentive because she is preoccupied by other matters. This is a line of argument that her co-participant might be expected to have difficulty in disputing since the speaker is in the process of emigrating, is quite likely to have a number of distractions 'pressing upon' her, in consequence, and may therefore be able to characterise herself as being preoccupied for 'legitimate' reasons. This, like the justifications performed in examples 3 and 4, functions as a legitimising account. In this case, however, the account is organised in a way that is referred to by Backman (1976:101) as 'conventionalisation'. This, he claims:

Occurs when the account involves a transformation of the definition of the situation so that the behaviour in question is no longer seen as contravening a moral dictate.

This, Backman observes, frequently involves the 'rhetorical transformation' of that behaviour.

In example 7, a complainees again claims, in this case quite literally, to have

7. [IAD:DH:1]

1. ((banging sound from rear of car))
2. Harry: No David
3. ((banging sound from rear of car))
4. Harry: No David
5. Ian: David, what are you doing to Harry
- 6. David: Nothing. I was just pretending to hit him with the
- 7. newspaper

done 'nothing' in response to a complaint that is made against him. This conversation takes place during a car journey and the participants are David (aged eleven), Harry (aged 3) and Ian, the 'responsible adult', who is driving. It is evident, here, from the sounds emanating from the rear of the car (lines 1 and 3) and Harry's subsequent responses (lines 2 and 4) that David is behaving in some way that the latter finds objectionable. Ian's interrogative, 'David, what are you doing to Harry?' (line 5), treats David as directing this behaviour at Harry himself. David begins his response (line 6) with 'nothing', thereby denying having behaved complainably. He immediately mitigates this denial, however, by providing an account of the activity that he has just been performing ('I was just pretending to hit him with the newspaper'). Here, although denying that he has behaved in a complainable way, he acknowledges that he has been *pretending* to do so. Again, then, the complainees concedes that he did 'something' but treats the 'something' that he has done as non-complainable.

2.5. admission.

As has been seen, complainees routinely respond to complaints, a) by acknowledging, either implicitly or explicitly, that they have behaved in the way that has been alleged or, b) by acknowledging that they have behaved in some way that is being interpreted as complainable. It has also been noted that they recurrently seek to excuse or justify their behaviour, typically by providing accounts for it. Only one occasion was found within the data corpus (see instance 8) in which the first of

8. [AD:PP:1B:5:3]

79. Pete: we 'ave never 'ad a audi (.) here

80. (4.8)

81. P 1: .hhhh whats th- what is that (.) you say the's an

82. au:d- you 'ad an au:di that w- that v[ehicle w's an]

83. Pete: [Q:::h no]

84. P 1: [audi]

85. Pete: [no] no don't [jump th' GUN (.) I said we have

→ 86. P 1: [no

87. Pete: NEVER had a audi (.) 'ere (.) and we have NOT=

→ 88. P 1: =sorry

these two moves was made - a concession -, that was unaccompanied by the second - a justification, a legitimising account, etc. Significantly, the concession that is made here is accompanied, instead, by an apologetic component. In this example P 1 is a police officer who is attempting to locate a missing car. He is asking Pete about its whereabouts, but not in the context of a formal police interview. At lines 83, 85 and 87, Pete complains that P 1, at lines 82 and 84, has misinterpreted his prior turn (line 79), in which he claims that the car in question has never been on his premises. Pete formulates his complaint as a correction of P 1's prior turn - 'I said we have never ...'. P 1 begins his response with the negative confirmation 'no' (line 86), which acknowledges that he has proposed an interpretation of Pete's earlier turn that is markedly at variance with its actual content, thus validating Pete's complaint. This acknowledgement, as noted, is not accompanied by an account and, instead, the complainees next move consists of an apology - 'sorry' (line 88), which is also unaccounted, e.g., '*sorry, I misheard you*'. Atkinson and Drew (1979:60) have noted that, where apologies are performed, they are usually of this accounted type. Such formulations, they observe, are designed 'so as to avoid self-blame'. In the case in question, however, the complainees admits that he has behaved in the way alleged, without attempting to excuse or justify having done so or taking other steps to avoid self-blame.

Instead, he performs an unaccounted apology, thereby further acknowledging his culpability.

In summary, then, the data corpus reveals that, when complaints are made against them, complainees tend, in the overwhelming majority of cases, to formulate responses that make concessions to the allegations that are made or implied. Most commonly, they implicitly acknowledge having behaved in whatever way has been attributed to them (as in example 3), but on some occasions they do so quite explicitly (as in example 4). Again, in the vast majority of cases, they also attempt to legitimise their behaviour by performing some kind of excuse or justification or, in some other way, treating it as excusable or justified. Furthermore, even on those less common occasions where they deny allegations, complainees rarely do so uncompromisingly, as in example 5. Concessions of some kind are usually made. We have seen how, in sequence 6, the respondent acknowledges having behaved in a way that constitutes a re-characterised version of the behaviour that has been attributed to them and that, in instance 7, the complaineer vacillates between denial and concession. Admissions, where complainees respond by conceding to complaints without attempting to legitimise their behaviour, and which may also be accompanied by apologies (as in example 8), are found to be extremely rare conversational events.

Some of these findings quite evidently have implications for the concept of 'oppositonality' as it has been handled within much of the literature described in the previous chapter. The high incidence of concession making moves, for example, found amongst the responses to complaints in the corpus of data examined in this study, clearly do not correspond with the more straightforward counter-accusations, counter-assertions and denials that such 'oppositonal' turns have sometimes been claimed typically to engender. These are matters that will be returned to in more detail in chapter five of this discussion.

For the moment the two elements most frequently found amongst the responses in the data corpus - concessions and justifying accounts - will be examined in a little more detail. To begin with, in the following section (sub-section 3.1), some consideration will be given to the kinds of conversational trajectory that are typically initiated when complaints are responded to with unmitigated invalidations (e.g. outright denials, contradictions, etc.) of the type illustrated by example 5. The ways in which responses that make concessions to complaints (like those in examples 3 and 4) may facilitate the initiation of alternative types of conversational trajectory will then be examined. The final part of section 3 (sub-section 3.2) will give some thought to the types of interactional outcomes typically arising when complainers respond by *explicitly* acknowledging that they have behaved in the complained of way, as opposed to those arising when they do so *implicitly*. The ways in which complainers seek to justify their complainable behaviour will then be examined in section 4.

3. Concessions to complaints

3.1. invalidation, validation and subsequent conversational trajectories

As has been shown, speakers to whom culpability has been imputed respond, quite recurrently, by organising their subsequent talk in ways that confirm, to a greater or lesser extent, that they *have* engaged in *some* activity of a potentially untoward kind. Whether this confirmation is manifested implicitly, as in example 3, overtly, as in example 4, or whether it modifies the initial allegation in some way, as in example 6, complainers appear, systematically, to respond in ways that confirm that some version of the alleged behaviour did, in fact, take place. In the great majority of cases, then, this kind of concession is made.

Now, when speakers systematically organise their interaction in a given way this frequently results in some consistently observable interactional outcome. As we have seen previously, for example, Pomerantz (1984) has pointed out that in non-argumentative, everyday conversation, disagreements are usually organised in

particular ways. The organisational forms that are used, she notes, typically result in the disagreement not taking place at all or, where it does occur, in minimising the extent to which it finds its way to the conversational surface. Is it possible, then, that in a similar fashion, the systematic performance of concessions when complaints are made results in some consistent interactional outcome?

One way of investigating this possibility is by examining what kinds of conversational trajectories tend to be initiated subsequently when complainers do not respond in this way and comparing them with those that are generated when they do. An instance in which concessions are not made to a complaint, example 5, has already been referred to. Example 9 shows the complete sequence of

9. [IAD:MC:2A:4:1]

1. Clara: watch (.) ↑ME GET OFF ME!!!
2. (1.0)
3. Milly: °([])° (thats not f°ai::r:°)=
4. Mum: [>ge' back out there<
5. Milly: I did[n' ↓t o u c h] (you)
6. Clara: [°°(tou)ch me?°°]
7. (0.2)
8. Clara: (you ↑did ↓[(j's) ↓touch ↓(me)
9. Milly: [will you ((gesturing to camera))
10. j's go a[way
11. C.O.* [(what)
12. (.)
13. Mum: j's get out the[re
14. Milly: [I didn' ↑touch: [ch y:ou
15. Clara: ((upset voice)) [touching me::
16. Milly: clara ↑i let you speak

* camera operator

conversation from which this instance was taken. Even though the interaction here is complicated by the participation of third parties, it is evident that, from line 5 onwards (the point at which Milly makes her initial denial - 'I didn't touch you'), the issue of whether or not she 'touched' Clara becomes a point of contention beyond which both interactants seem unable to move for an extended period of talk.

Because Milly completely denies behaving in the way Clara has alleged, the latter finds herself in a position in which, if she does not re-assert her complaint, which she does at line 8 ('you did just touch me'), she might appear to be acquiescing to Milly's denial, i.e., to be conceding that she did not, in fact, touch her. Because Clara re-asserts her complaint at this point, Milly finds herself in a similar position so she, in turn, repeats her denial ('I didn't touch you') at line 14. Clara's response at line 15 ('touching me') again alleges that Milly touched her.

Similarly, in example 10, a complainee responds to a complaint by explicitly

10. [IAD:PP:1B:5:19]

512. Pete: (see) th' problem is th[is sir
 513. P 1: [go on
 514. (0.3)
 515. Pete: y've jumped th' gun again 'avn't you sir=
 516. P 1: =no=
 517. Pete: ='n' its backfired on you=
 518. P 1: =↑no
 519. (0.5)
 520. Pete: yes it 'a[s.
 521. P 1: [>>↑oh no no no n[σ.<<
 522. Pete: [yes it 'a[s:
 523. P 1: [no- .hh well
 524. lets explain things (.) lets see if- le-

denying its validity. At line 515 Pete complains, idiomatically and interrogatively ('you've jumped the gun again, haven't you sir'), that his co-participant, P 1, has

acted precipitately. Prior to this sequence, P 1 has indicated that he suspects Pete of having been involved in illegal activity. What Pete is complaining about at line 515 is that, as far as he is concerned, P 1 has made these implications without having gathered sufficient evidence to support them. There is also an implication here ('...again...') that this is not the first occasion upon which P 1 has made allegations against Pete that he is unable to substantiate. P 1 responds to this 'charge' with an unmitigated denial, 'no' (line 516). Continuing with his idiomatic style, Pete then goes on (line 517) to claim that acting in the way alleged has resulted in untoward consequences for P 1 ('and its backfired on you'). Note that, in making this claim, Pete clearly indicates that he has not abandoned his initial position that P 1 has 'jumped the gun'. P 1 again responds with an unmitigated denial, 'no', at line 518 which is followed by 0.5 second pause (line 519) subsequent to which Pete re-asserts his position ('yes it has' - line 520). P 1, in turn, reformulates his denial at line 521 in a much more emphatic way, the additional emphasis being provided by an extended repetition of the denial component and an initially positioned emphasis marker ('oh no no no no no'). Pete, undeterred, repeats his re-assertion at line 522 ('yes it has'). At lines 523 - 524 P 1 finally attempts to move the conversation on by proposing that he will clarify his position ('... well lets explain things'). Before doing so, however, he again indicates, with a cut-off, initially positioned denial component ('no-'), that this proposal is not designed to function as an abandonment of his previously stated position or as a concession to that of his co-participant. At this point in the sequence each participant has done little more than assert and re-assert his position within the dispute on no less than four, separate occasions.

It is apparent in both these cases that the unmitigated invalidation of a complaint initiates an extended sequence of what Coulter (1990:189) refers to as 'sterile' talk, which does not 'go' anywhere. Now, it was noted earlier that complainers rarely respond to complaints in this way, i.e., by attempting to invalidate them completely. It may be significant, however, that when they do, extensive sequences of talk in

which the participants do little more than repeat the position that they adopted at the outset are very commonly initiated, as in the two cases looked at above¹. Two further examples of this type of denial initiated sequence are provided below (examples 12 and 13). In fact, instances in which this type of conversational

11. [IAD:MC:2A:4:5]

100. Milly: people don't like you putt-in' down o↑ther people

((Lines 102 - 108: Clara's face close to Milly's and moved progressively closer as each of Clara's turns is spoken so that Milly is forced to back away))

101. [t' make yourself look good

→ 102. Clara: [I did not ((slow deliberate prosody))

103. (.)

→ 104. Clara: put= ((slow, deliberate prosody))

→ 105. Milly: =yes you [did

→ 106. Clara: [ANYONE ((slow, deliberate prosody))

107. (0.3)

→ 108. Clara: DO[WN

→ 109. Milly: [thats ↑what ↑you [did= ((sing-song intonation))

→ 110. Clara: [NO

111. (.)

[[Milly raises right hand, Clara ducks back as though expecting a blow]]

→ 112. Clara: =[I DIDN' [I ((slow, deliberate prosody))

113. Milly: [clara ['cause your ↑still playing on th' fact

12. [IAD:TD:1A:5:2]

45. Chris: w' you- j's acting like its not my responsi-bilty (.)

46. I-'m not chang'n- it- I-'m not- g-onna- do anything==

→ 47. Jane: = I am tryi[ng t' change it-.

→ 48. Chris: [I'm leaving it- no you're not=

→ 49. Jane: =I a:im

→ 50. Chris: You're no:t=

→ 51. Jane: =b'i's not- g'nna go li' that-is it.

impasse is generated, following denials and contradictions of complaints, occur sufficiently regularly within the data corpus that the generation of such a trajectory constitutes a predictable potential outcome of these types of move. This appears to be the case because the complete invalidation of a complaint by a complainee tends to make it apparent, at the surface of the interaction, that the respective argumentative positions of the interactants have become overtly and diametrically opposed. It may well be the case, of course, in any sequence of argumentative interaction, that at certain points - probably quite frequently, the positions adopted by the speakers will become polarised. However, when this polarisation is made overt in this way, interactants often seem to experience difficulty in doing much more than reiterating their own positions in the dispute and, thereby, invalidating those of their 'opponents'. Each participant is repeatedly constrained to re-assert their own position, by the denials and contradictions that are performed by the other party. This may be because if some other type of move is made, whichever speaker makes it may appear to be relinquishing their position and conceding to that of the other². These exchanges engender further re-asserting/invalidating exchanges and so the interaction seems to proceed.

How, though, does the making of a concession to a complaint make it less likely that this type of overt polarisation, and the consequent reiteration of diametrically opposed positions, will occur? In order to address this issue it is necessary to examine, in closer detail, what tends to happen subsequently when concessions are made. This will be approached, initially, by taking another look at one of the instances of complaint 'validation' that was cited earlier as a representative example of the kinds of response most commonly found in the data corpus.

It will be recalled that, although Mum does not address the specific instance of 'hitting' to which Joel seems to be referring in example 3 (see also example 13), she

13. [IAD:JM:1B:4:2]

57. Joel: .hh look (0.2) I- I- mnight- a' broke a window y'

58. did-n' 'ave t' cuff me up in the head

59. (2.0)

60. why::

61. (0.4)

62. Joel: I w's a litt-le chi:ld I d'n know w'- I w's dgin'

63. maybe I w's (0.7) vacuumin' 'n (0.4) (from) 'oo:ps I

64. did-n mean t'do that-

65. (0.9)

66. Mum: look (.) whenev' I hit you- >i' w's becau'< y' lie y' know.

67. (0.9)

68. Mum: you' a l::ia' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody

69. Joel: [e x a c'l y be ca us e

70. Mum: lyin' t' m e]

71. Joel: I' m sca:rr:ed]

72. (0.3)

73. Joel: because I a[m s c a:]r:red.

74. Mum: [scared what.]

75. (0.6)

76. Mum: scared f' what

acknowledges ('whenever I hit you' [line 66]) that hitting him was an action that she sometimes took. This is a matter that she makes absolutely no attempt to deny.

What is achieved by this concessionary move that would have been less likely to have been achieved had she simply denied hitting him altogether?

Firstly, because Mum responds in this way, the likelihood that her behaviour will become a 'bone of contention' diminishes considerably. Consequently, the issue of whether she hit Joel does not become a disputed matter. Instead, the focus of the conversation shifts to her justification for hitting him - 'it was because you lie, you know ...' (lines 66 - 68), and then onto Joel's confirmation and justification - 'exactly, because I'm scared ...' (lines 69 - 73). This would probably not have been the case

had she attempted an outright denial. Had she done this the conversation could easily have developed into an extended 'wrangle', of the type seen earlier, about whether she did or did not hit him on this occasion, and possibly on others as well. So, because Mum's response to Joel's complaint goes some way towards acknowledging that she hit him, he is provided with little incentive to insist that she did. One probable consequence of Mum's concession, then, is that it makes it less likely that this kind of interactional *impasse* will develop, and this is an observation that can be made about concession-making responses to complaints in general. Where these kinds of responses are performed, direct disputes as to whether some event did or did not take place and the reiteration of diametrically opposed positions regarding these kinds of issue rarely occur. Rather, alternative types of conversational trajectory are generated, as we shall see if we pursue Joel and Mum's talk a little further.

As noted above, Mum is able, because of the concession that she makes to Joel's complaint, to shift the focus of the conversation onto her justification for her behaviour - the fact that, as far as she is concerned, her co-participant 'lied' to her (lines 66 - 68). One consequence of this shift of focus is that, as can be seen at lines 69 - 73, Joel, who was initially complaining about Mum's behaviour, now finds himself in a position in which a relevant next move consists of a defence of his own behaviour - 'exactly because I'm scared'. It is this matter - Joel's behaviour - that subsequently becomes the central focus of the conversation (see lines 74 - 76). In short, what happens here is that, by making a concessionary move, the original complainee is enabled to shift the focus of the conversation away from her own allegedly complainable behaviour onto the allegedly complainable behaviour of the original complainer.

Again, in the following dispute Wife complains, indirectly ('officially' it is 'Maureen'

14. [IAD:DW1:1B:6]

244. Wife: Even Maureen said the other night y'robssessed with

the counter-complaint that has been made against her, on Wife's part. This is what she does at line 253 ('robbed?'), where she seeks to question, and thereby dispute, Dave's characterisation of actions that she has taken as 'robbery'. Now, by topicalising the fact that Dave has accused her in this way, Wife selects an issue that could, potentially, still be related back to her own, original complaint. She could, for example, go on to characterise this accusation as a further instance of his alleged obsession with money. Nevertheless, his obsession and, hence, his behaviour, ceases to occupy the central focus of the conversation. Instead, the talk begins to concentrate on the issue of whether or not Wife 'robbed' Dave. This subsequently becomes the matter upon which the conversation concentrates.

So, in each of these cases, the complainees are enabled, by making concessive moves in response to complaints, both to avoid the initiation of repeated accusation/denial sequences and to raise other matters, by way of justification, that provide alternative bases upon which conversation can proceed. What these observations appear to be indicating, then, is that the making of concessions to complaints does enable complainees to achieve particular and identifiable interactional ends. By doing so, firstly, they diminish the extent to which the diametrically opposed nature of their and their co-participants' respective positions becomes overt. This, in turn, decreases the likelihood that their conversation will run into the kinds of interactional 'knots' that otherwise seem commonly to develop. Secondly, the concessive moves that they make also allow them to divert the trajectories of their conversations away from the potentially contentious issue of whether they did or did not behave in a particular way and onto their 'reasons', justifications, etc., for behaving in that way. The making of concessions by complainees, then, not only guides argumentative conversation away from the kinds of interactional blockages that often seem to occur when such moves are not made, but also enable the provision of alternative 'pathways' along which it can proceed.

3.2. explicit validation and the substantiation of earlier argumentative lines

It was observed earlier that the kinds of concessions that complainers make to complaints fall into two main categories - implicit validations, which are used in the great majority of cases, and explicit validations, which occur much less frequently. It has also been established that concessive moves of these kinds can enable complainers to achieve particular interactional outcomes. However, these observations introduce the interesting question of why it is that, on some occasions, the concessions that are made are implicit while, on others, they are explicit. More specifically, the problem that is being raised here is why is it, given that both types of concessive move can enable the same interactional outcomes to be achieved, that complainers sometimes choose to confirm, in absolute terms, that they have behaved in some way that their co-participant finds complainable? Do these explicit validations of complaints tend to serve some additional, as-yet-to-be-identified purpose?

A clue may lie in the fact that complainers frequently validate complaints explicitly in circumstances in which the validation enables them to attempt to substantiate, evidence or, in some other way, support some claim or argumentative position that they, themselves, have previously adopted. As we have seen earlier, for example, in the following sequence (instance 15) Joel responds to Mum's

15. [IAD:JM:1B:4:3]

68. Mum: you' a l::ia' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody

69. Joel: [e x a c' l y b e c a u s e

70. Mum: l y i n ' t ' m e]

71. Joel: I ' m s c a r e d]

72. (0.3)

73. Joel: because I a [m s c a r e d] r e d .

74. Mum: [s c a r e d w h a t .]

75. (0.6)

76. Mum: s c a r e d f ' w h a t

77. (0.4)

78. Mum: scared f' whAt!

79. (0.2)

80. Joel: the feeling of hatred an'

81. (fear)ness of you comin' t' hit me

complaint at line 68 by performing an explicit validation ('exactly'). He then begins to account for his behaviour. The reason that he 'lies', he claims, is that he is 'scared'. Initially, he does not explicate what it is that he is fearful of, even though Mum seeks clarification on three, separate occasions (lines 74, 76 and 78) but, eventually, he claims that what he fears is her behaviour towards him and the feelings that it engenders (lines 80 and 81). What is implied here is that the speaker is frequently afraid to speak truthfully for fear of incurring his co-participant's wrath. In consequence, he is constrained, when accurate or truthful accounts of events are likely to anger her, to formulate versions of them that are untruthful.

Now, as we have already seen, one of Joel's main arguments, only a little earlier, is that, when he was a child, Mum's behaviour towards him was unsatisfactory - principally that she behaved violently towards him. In the current sequence, he treats his tendency to lie as a way of behaving that results from his fear of this violence and, thereby as providing evidence that substantiates his claim that she behaved violently towards him when he was younger. In fact, Joel's failures to respond at lines 75 - 77 are, themselves, interpretable both as indexing a reluctance to run the risk of angering Mum and as treating the confirmation marker 'exactly' as providing a sufficiently clear connection between his claim that he is 'scared' and Mum's alleged violence. In other words, they treat 'exactly' as constituting a sufficiently clear allusion to his earlier complaints for Mum to be able to recognise the reference that is being made for herself, without further clarification.

In the following instance (example 16), Joel's complaint - 'you weren't there'

16. [IAD:JM:1B:4:3]

86. Mum: =whEn we were in England th-ere w's nobody i-n de-

87. house< so you can't say the' w's ha:tred °.hhh° an' there
 88. was this an' th-at .hh an' all you did (0.2) w's lie t' me
 89. (0.6)
90. Mum: you spent a lot a' time IYin'? [°.hh° (0.7) an' doin'
 [((Joel nodding))
91. ev'ry evil thing you can to- me
 92. (0.6)
93. Joel: ((°unvoiced snort°))
 94. (0.3)
95. Mum: an' all I w's doin' (0.3) w's >doin' th-e best< I can
 96. (0.4)
97. Mum: b't it- ↑WA:S N'T good enough fo' you.
 98. (1.8)
99. Joel: you were n't th-ere
 100. (0.8)
101. Mum: PRECISELY!
 102. (0.3)
103. Mum: if I w's not if I w's there (1.0) there would n' a' been
 104. no money 'n' we'd a' been on th-e- goddamn' do::lie

(line 99) - appears to be designed to contradict Mum's claim at line 95 - 'all I was doing was doing the best I can' - by claiming that, in fact, she failed to observe her parental responsibilities satisfactorily. She was frequently absent from the family home ['there']. Mum responds by explicitly validating this complaint, on this occasion with the confirmation marker 'precisely' (line 101).

As in the previous example, this response alludes to argumentative lines that the speaker has adopted previously. Earlier in the conversation, in data not yet examined, Joel describes his upbringing in a very negative way (see sequence 17),

17. [IAD:JM:1B:4:2]

45. Joel: ... living in a house with having hatred in it (1.0) it
 46. j's breaks you- down

47.

(1.5)

48. Joel: living in a house (0.4) where there is anger and49: pain (0.4) it- breaks you- down no matt-er what- °.hh°

the implication being that Mum was responsible for his allegedly unhappy childhood. At the point at which he makes these claims, Mum does not respond. She does allude to these turns of Joel's, however, at lines 86 - 88 (example 16) - 'when we were in England there was nobody in the house so you can't say there was hatred and there was this and that...'. What she claims here is that the circumstances that Joel describes in this earlier sequence of talk, and his implication that she was responsible for them, cannot be justified because, most of the time, she was not at home. She uses an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) - 'nobody', in order to emphasise this point.

Following this rejection of Joel's claims, Mum performs a number of turns. In these she circumscribes her complaint (reformulating 'all you did was lie to me' [line 88] as 'you spent a lot of time lying' [line 90]); extends it ('and doing every evil thing you can to me' [lines 90 - 91]); characterises her own behaviour as being as satisfactory as was possible under the prevailing circumstances (line 95) and characterises Joel as being 'ungrateful' for what she has done for him (line 97). Joel makes no reply or responds only minimally to these turns of Mum's until the point at which he performs his counter-complaint 'you weren't there'. This response, however, is certainly interpretable as substantiating Mum's claim that Joel's description of his childhood experiences is invalid because 'nobody was in the house', and this is exactly the way in which Mum does interpret it. By validating Joel's complaint - 'precisely' - Mum seeks to substantiate her own earlier claim that 'nobody was in the house ...'. Additionally, this validation, by acknowledging that she was frequently absent from home, seeks to substantiate the speaker's claim at line 95 - 'all I was doing was doing the best that I can'. The implication here, which is later made overt at lines 103 -104, is that she was regularly absent from home

because she had to work to support her family. It was in this sense that she was 'doing her best'.

It is noticeable that, like Joel in the previous example, Mum does not, initially, build an overt connection between her explicit validation of his complaint, and her earlier argumentative positions. In fact, the relationship between her validation and her earlier claim that 'nobody was in the house' remains implicit while its connection with her claim that she was 'doing the best that I can' is not explicated until lines 103 - 104 - 'if I'd have been there, there wouldn't have been no money ...' - following a pause (line 102) which would have been an appropriate place for Joel to have assumed speakership. Until this point Joel is left to make the connection between Mum's explicit validation of his complaint and this earlier argumentative line of hers for himself.

In this third example (example 18), which has been looked at earlier, Mum

18. [IAD:CM:1B:3:1]

6. Colin: you wer- j's (0.2) y' know sort- of (.) blanking her
 7. out I dun understan' [(you)
 8. Mum: [I'M NOT BLANKIN' 'ER OUT I'M
 9. BUSY
 10. (0.3)
 11. Colin: exac'ly
 12. (0.7)
 13. Colin: I mean tha's what you bin doin' f' your entire life

responds to Colin's complaint (lines 6 - 7) by re-characterising what he describes as her 'blanking out' her daughter as being symptomatic of her preoccupation with other matters (lines 8 - 9). There is also a sense here, however, in which, by disputing Colin's description of what has occurred between herself and the daughter, Mum orients to his description as a complainable matter. She treats it as imputing fault to her when such an imputation is not, as far as she is concerned,

justified. In his response, Colin explicitly validates Mum's claim that she is busy, with the confirmation marker 'exactly' (line 11), but then goes on, at line 13, to claim 'that's what you've been doing for your entire life'. The deictic component 'that's' clearly refers to Mum 'being busy'. So, what Colin seems to be claiming is that 'being busy' is a generic tendency of Mum's, that it is common for her to 'be busy'. The implication here is that, as far as he is concerned, she is commonly too busy to pay sufficient attention to the needs of others and specifically, as it later transpires, to those of her children. This, of course, is precisely the kind of complaint that he is making against Mum in the first turn of the sequence. So, by explicitly validating Mum's claim that she is 'busy', Colin also seeks to substantiate his earlier complaint that she is 'blacking out' her daughter. Again, the explicit validation here is built in a way that displays an expectation that its recipient will be able to infer the connection that it seeks to make with its performer's initial complaint. It is only after a 0.7 second pause (line 12), where Mum might have been expected to assume speakership, that Colin makes that connection overt - 'I mean, that's what you've been doing for your entire life' (line 13).

It is noticeable that, in none of the cases looked at here, do the the initial complainers overtly interpret the explicit complaint validations that are performed by their co-participants as substantiating earlier arguments and claims of theirs. Although, in each case, the complainees displays an expectation that the initial complainer will be able to infer these matters for themselves, further explication and clarification are required before the connection makes its way to the surface of the conversations. Indeed, in one case (example 15) the complainer (Mum) indicates quite overtly that she has not inferred a connection between her co-participant's explicit validation and earlier claims that he has made - 'scared for what' (line 76).

This apparent resistance of complainers notwithstanding, it would appear that, by validating complaints, complainees can, in appropriate circumstances, seek to substantiate or evidence lines of argument that they have previously adopted. This is particularly the case where explicit validations are concerned. By utilising this type

of response, complainers can treat complainers' adverse characterisations of their behaviour as entirely authentic when they (the complainers) choose to use those characterisations to support argumentative positions that they have previously adopted. Implicit validation, by contrast, tends to authenticate complaints more equivocally and this is clearly disadvantageous when complainers are seeking to treat those complaints as evidencing their own, earlier claims. Moreover, as we shall see in the next section, implicit validation tends to facilitate shifts of conversational focus into 'new', previously undiscussed areas or into areas that are, or are characterised as being, unconnected with prior talk.

So far this discussion has concentrated, mainly, on the concessions that disputants typically make when faced with complaints, the kinds of choices that they make in formulating them, and some of the interactional consequences of the various choices that they make. Concession-making, however, is only the first of the two responsive elements that were earlier found to figure consistently in the formulation of responses to complaints. The focus of the discussion will now turn to the second of these elements, the provision of accounts and justifications.

4. *Self-absolution - justifying accounts and the rejection of culpability.*

Scott and Lyman (1968, following Austin (1970 [1956-57]a) note that accounts:

Are likely to be invoked when a person is accused of having done something that is bad, wrong, inept, unwelcome, or in some other of the numerous possible ways, untoward.

As has previously been mentioned, accounts of this type have been the subject of a good deal of investigation. Antaki (1994) observes that much of the work that has been done has been taxonomic and has taken as its starting point a philosophical distinction, postulated initially by Austin (*op cit*), between 'excuses' and 'justifications'. Particular attention, however, will not be paid to this distinction here. Neither is it intended to extend the taxonomic 'project' any further. This is particularly the case because, within this literature, excuse and justification subtypes have

proliferated to such an extent that, as Antaki (1994:49) comments, there is a 'danger that empirical verification' of them will 'always be trumped by further elaboration'. This is so much the case, in fact, that his hope that, at some point, it will be possible to ascertain whether the 'current list' is 'exclusive or exhaustive' (*op cit*:51) seems somewhat forlorn.

This section of the present study will endeavour, instead, to gain some understanding of the functions that are fulfilled by post-complaint accountings in those responses of the majority type, i.e., those in which some type of explicit or implicit concession is made to the original complaint.

It was noted earlier that, within the accounts that they perform, complainers usually attempt to treat or characterise whatever 'misdeed' has been attributed to them, as justified, excusable, unproblematic or innocent. Typically, they do this by claiming or implying that the behaviour concerned was necessitated, (i.e., that they were constrained to act in this or that way), or was justified, etc., as a result of circumstances that were prevalent, either at the time, or at some time prior to that at which it was engaged in. It is noticeable, within the data corpus, that the types of justification that complainers use to make these moves fall into two broad categories. In the first of these connections are alluded to between the behaviour that is being accounted for and actions, behaviours, attitudes etc., that are attributed to the original complainer. Here, complainers incorporate accounts into their responses in which what can loosely be categorised as counter-complaints, counter-accusations, etc., are made against their co-participants. These types of response are referred to below, generically, as '*counter-accounts*'. In the second of these categories of justification, connections are alluded to between the accountable behaviour and circumstances that are not attributed to the original complainer but which, generally, are of a type that are, or are treated as being, also beyond the control of the complainers. Here, complainers perform accounts in which responsibility is not attributed either to their co-participants or to themselves. These are referred to below as '*extrinsic accounts*', since, although their performers

acknowledge having behaved in whatever way has been attributed to them, they cite circumstances that are beyond their control in mitigation of their behaviour. Some of the forms that each of these types of response can take will now be examined.

4.1. Counter-accounts - 'blaming the blamers'.

A number of instances exist within the data corpus in which complainees, in the course of justifying their own behaviour, allege that original complainers have themselves engaged in complainable behaviour, of some kind, prior to the occurrence of the matter currently being complained about, or have themselves displayed undesirable qualities or characteristics, etc. As we have already seen, for example, when attempting to justify 'hitting' Joel, Mum claims that he lied to her ('... you lie you know' [example 13]). He, in turn, attempts to justify 'lying' by implying that Mum often behaved in a way that made him fearful of speaking truthfully ('... I'm scared' [example 15]). In another of the cases looked at earlier Dave, when attempting to justify his 'obsession' with money, implies that Wife has 'robbed' him ('... I've been robbed out by a dickhead' [example 14]). Instance 19, provides a

19. [IAD:DW2:1B:7:5]

128. Wife: b't
 129. why're you so obsessed
 130. (0.3)
 131. Gemma: ((creaky voice)) yes ehehehehe[heh
 → 132. Dave: [because
 133. Gemma: huhnhuhnhuhm
 134. (.)
 → 135. Dave: . YOU (0.2) are a rat

further example of a 'counter-accounting' type of response, which is also taken from this second conversation. Here, in response to Wife's complaint at lines 128 - 129,

Dave justifies being 'obsessed' by performing a generic and utterly condemnatory assessment of her - claiming that she is 'a rat'.

In making these claims about actions or characteristics of their co-participants, the complainers in these cases are not simply making observations or performing reports about them. Neither are they simply complaining about the actions, etc., to which they are alluding, even though these types of responses often do function as counter-complaints. Rather, within 'counter-accounting' moves of this type, recognisable attempts are made to establish *causal relationships* between the allegedly complainable behaviour of the original complainer and that of the original complainer. In each of the examples mentioned above, the connection that is built between the two sets of behaviour is quite explicit and is established through the use of the explanatory conjunction 'because'. Thus, Mum claims 'whenever I hit you it was *because* you lie'; Joel claims that he lied '*cause* I'm scared' and Dave claims that he is obsessed about money '*because* I've been robbed out by a dickhead' and '*because* you are a rat'. So, the complainers in these types of account claim that they behaved in whatever complainable way has been attributed to them, or were justified in doing so, because the complainer had previously behaved in a complainable way. Some preceding action, pre-existing characteristic, etc., of the original complainer, it is claimed, has initiated or instigated the behaviour about which they, themselves, are complaining.

Of course, counter-accounts do not conform, as these observations may seem to imply, to some predetermined or invariable template. Although the four cases looked at above share the similarities that have been identified, they also show that a considerable degree of variation exists in the way that counter-accounting moves are constructed. Their dissimilarity can be demonstrated by examining the following three parameters of potential variability. Firstly, whether the complainable behaviour or attribute that is imputed to the original complainer is 'named' or, in other words, made specific (a1) or is left implicit (a2). Secondly, whether the complainable behaviour or attribute is treated as a generic characteristic of the original complainer

(b1) or as a non-generic characteristic (b2). Thirdly, whether the imputation is made implicitly (c1) or explicitly (c2). If these parameters are examined in detail it becomes evident that, in fact, none of these counter-accounting responses are formulated in an identical way.

Beginning with Mum's response - 'whenever I hit you it was because you lie, you know' - (example 13), here a specific type of complainable behaviour is attributed to Joel - that of 'lying'. This behaviour is treated as generic, through the use of present tense, which implies that it is current and ongoing, and it is attributed explicitly, through the personal pronoun 'you'. Thus, referring to the parameters of potential variability mentioned above, this response corresponds to a1; b1; c1. Joel's response - 'cause I'm scared' (example 15), by contrast, does not attribute a 'named' complainable matter to its recipient. Instead, it alludes, implicitly, to the violent way that Mum behaved towards him in the past. Mum is treated as being able to infer this for herself. In this case, the complainable behaviour that is being referred to is treated as generic in nature, through the use of present tense - 'I'm scared' - but it is not made explicit that the complainable matter that is being alluded to is being attributed to Mum. This, again, is a matter that Mum is left to deduce. Joel's response here corresponds to a2; b1; c2. Similar variations are observable in the other two examples examined. When Dave says 'I know, because I've been robbed out by a dickhead' (example 14), he cites a specific complainable behaviour - 'robbing'. However, this response has both non-generic and generic characteristics. While he does not imply, here, that he has been 'robbed' systematically, i.e., on more than one occasion, he does use the generic assessment 'dickhead', in reference to his co-participant. However, it is not made explicit that it is to her that the expression 'dickhead' is referring or, consequently, that it is to her that the complainable activity of 'robbing' is being attributed. As in the previous example, these matters are left implicit. This response corresponds to a1; b1/b2; c2. In the final example, in which Dave responds with 'because you are a rat' (example 19), no specific complainable behaviour or attribute is imputed to Wife,

62. Joel: I w's a litt-le chi:ld I d'n know w'- I w's dgin'
 63. maybe I w's (0.7) vacuumin' 'n (0.4) (from) 'co:ps I
 64. did-n mean t'do that-
 65. (0.9)
 66. Mum: look (.) whenev' I hit you- >i' w's becau'< y' lie y' know.
 67. (0.9)
 68. Mum: you' a l::ia' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody
 → 69. Joel: [e x a c'l y be ca us e
 70. Mum: lyin' t' m e]
 → 71. Joel: I' m scared]
 72. (0.3)
 → 73. Joel: because I a[m s c a :]r:ed.
 74. Mum: [scared what.]
 75. (0.6)
 76. Mum: scared f' what
 77. (0.4)
 78. Mum: scared f' whAt!
 79. (0.2)
 80. Joel: the feeling of hatred an'
 81. (fear)ness of you comin' t' hit me

comprehensively about Mum's behaviour (lines 57 - 64), abandons this 'project' in order to respond (lines 69 - 73) to her counter-complaints (lines 66 - 68), his own extensive complaint having barely been addressed, and then only implicitly ('whenever I hit you...' - line 66). The focus of the conversation shifts onto Joel's tendency to lie and his reasons for doing so and he does not resume his own complaint explicitly until line 80 ('... fearness of you coming to hit me') and only then in order to respond to Mum's demands that he explicate his previous turn.

Similarly, in example 21, as a result of Joel's initially implicit counter-complaints

21. [IAD:JM:1B:4:3]

66. Mum: look (.) whenev' I hit you- >i' w's becau'< y' lie y' know.

67. (0.9)
68. Mum: you' a l:ia' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody
 → 69. Joel: [e x a c' l y b e c a u s e
 70. Mum: lyin' t' m e]
 → 71. Joel: I' m scared]
72. (0.3)
- 73. Joel: because I a[m s c a :]r:ed.
 []
 → 74. Mum: [scared what.]
75. (0.6)
- 76. Mum: scared f' what
77. (0.4)
- 78. Mum: scared f' whAt!
79. (0.2)
80. Joel: the feeling of hatred an' =
81. =(fear)[ness of you comin' t' me hit
 []
 → 82. [nobody hA:tes YOU!
 83. (0.4)
- 84. Mum: you (.) l:isten you- wanna put me on a guilt trip or what-
85. (0.2)
86. Joel: ah-'m not- sayin' th-a' =
- 87. Mum: =whEn we were in England th-ere w's nobody i-n de-
- 88. house<so you can't say the' w's ha:ted °.hhh° an'
 89. there was this an' th-at °.hh° an' all you did (0.2)
 90. w's lie t' me

(lines 69 - 73, which become more explicit at lines 80 - 81) Mum abandons her argumentative line, about Joel lying, these complaints having been addressed directly by only one component of her co-participant's response - 'exactly' (line 69). It is his claim that he is scared and, later, his claim that her actions have caused him to feel this way, that become the central focus of the conversation (lines 82 - 88) and Mum does not return to her previous argumentative position until lines 89 - 90

simply reporting a prior sequence of interaction in a straightforward or dispassionate way. What she is claiming is that the way in which she performed the manoeuvre is consistent with this earlier instruction and, in the course of making this claim, she also highlights an apparent inconsistency between the instruction and the position that Chris adopts in his complaining turn. Here, then, as in the examples looked at previously, the complainees attributes responsibility for the fact that she has behaved in a way that the original complainer finds complainable, to a previous action of his - his earlier instruction. She performed the manoeuvre in the way that she did in order to comply with this instruction. However, in this case the original complainer's previous action - the instruction that he gave her - is not treated or characterised as being complainable in itself.

Jane makes a similar kind of move in the following example (instance 24). This

24. [IAD:TD:1A:5:4]

80. Jane: No:: I havn- I've done it- twi:ce

81. (0.6)

82. Jane: I's: not- matching

83. (3.3)

84. Jane: ((sniff))

85. (1.2)

86. Chris: [Le's d_o i' a million times then
[((returning to ice))

87. 'n' see if we c'n [do it

88. Jane: [('s 'ow we- n- 'ow) many we did the
[((returning to ice))

89. other way?

90. (0.2)

91. Chris: Parden?

92. (1.0)

93. Jane: Did- it- the oth-er way: a- million times?

sequence and the other extracts of Chris and Jane's interaction that we have been looking at have been taken from a conversation during which, as we have seen, they have been attempting to modify a component of a dance routine. Prior to this conversation they have, for some time, been performing an unmodified version of this manoeuvre in professional competitions. At line 80 Jane implies that the amount of practice that she has had has been insufficient for her to perfect the modification ('... I've done it twice'). Chris responds to this implication with a sarcastic and exaggerated proposal - that they should 'do it a million times' (line 86) - and thereby complains, implicitly, that she is requiring an excessive amount of practice. In her response, Jane turns this line of Chris' against him by objecting that, when they learned the original version of the manoeuvre (what Jane refers to as 'the other way' at lines 88 - 89 and 93), they did so by practising it repeatedly. The implication here is that by proceeding, on this earlier occasion, in precisely the way, (and it's noticeable that she chooses to use exactly the formulation that he has used - 'a million times'), about which Chris is complaining at lines 86 - 87, (i.e., by practising the manoeuvre extensively), they eventually arrived at a version of it with which they were both satisfied. Thus, by treating extensive practice as a method of learning dance manoeuvres that has previously proven to be successful, she treats her need for further practise of the manoeuvre currently under discussion as reasonable. The corollary of this is that Chris' complaint at lines 86 -87 is unreasonable. More than this, however, in citing this precedent for her current behaviour, and implicitly acknowledging that she is requiring a lot of practice, Jane refers to an occasion upon which both she and her co-participant practised the manoeuvre extensively. So another claim implicit within her response is that the amount of practice that she currently requires is commensurate with the amount of practice that he, as well as she, needed in order to learn how to perform the manoeuvre in the first place. Again, then, as in the previous example, the complaine'e's response alludes to behaviour - repeatedly practising the manoeuvre - in which the original complainer participated on an earlier occasion, but this is not

participant, Rob, has been suspended from work, pending a disciplinary hearing into his activities at a meeting that he attended on behalf of the organisation in which the interactants are employed. The tape that is referred to during the interaction is an audio recording of this meeting, which is to be used in evidence against Kevin in the hearing. During a long sequence of talk immediately prior to that shown here, Kevin has been attempting to obtain a copy of this tape from Rob and the latter has resisted. Kevin treats this resistance as a complainable matter at lines 149 and 151 with a confirmation-seeking summary of the position that Rob has adopted during this earlier sequence of talk ('... so you're actually refusing to hand over that tape'). In fact this summary, and particularly Kevin's 'gloss' (Jefferson, 1986a) that Rob is 'refusing' to give him a copy of the tape, rather overstates the position that the latter has adopted earlier in the conversation. Although he has made it clear, on a number of occasions, that he is not prepared to do so, Rob has done this by providing grounds for his reluctance rather than by refusing, overtly, to comply with Kevin's request. Thus, Kevin's turn at lines 149 - 151 explicitly designates Rob's earlier talk as a refusal, i.e., makes it 'official' that this is what Rob is doing, even though he is doing it covertly.

Rob begins his response (lines 152 - 154) by confirming that he is not going to provide Kevin with a copy of the tape ('yeh...'). He goes on to account for his non-compliance with the latter's request by claiming, twice, that his actions are constrained ('... I can't, I can't ...') and then identifying the source of this constraint by introducing a 'new' referent - 'the panel'. This is the committee that is responsible for organising and hearing Kevin's disciplinary case. What he appears to be claiming here is that he is unable to provide Kevin with a copy of the tape in question, presumably because he does not have the necessary authority to do so. So, while he acknowledges that he is acting (or rather, refraining from acting) in the way that Kevin would like - he is not providing a copy of the tape - he attempts to diminish the extent to which this is interpretable as blameworthy by claiming, in

mitigation, that it is a matter that is 'beyond his control'. He is not, he implies, withholding the tape as a matter of his own, personal volition.

The complainee in the next sequence of talk (example 26) makes a similar type

26. [IAD:DW1:1B:6:4]

100.Dave: forty-five a day.

101.Gemma: uh °uh°

102. (0.7)

103.Dave: 'ats what you yourself shoul' be making (0.3) profit

104. (0.2)

105.Gemma: °uh°

106. (2.6)

107.Wife: the's a recession on at the moment [y' don't do it all

108.Dave: [I kno:w yeah

109.Wife: the ti:me?

of claim. Here, Dave complains (lines 100 - 103) that Wife should be making forty-five pounds a day in profit from a family business, the implication being that she is not doing so. It transpires, later in the conversation (data not provided) that, as far as Dave is concerned, this is because she is financially incompetent. In her response (lines 107 - 109), Wife concedes that she is not making this much by observing 'you don't do it all the time', the implication being that *she* doesn't 'do it all the time'. It is noticeable that this formulation leaves open the possibility that there are occasions upon which she does 'do it'. Before making this concession, however, she describes the economic environment within which the business is operating ('there's a recession on'). What is implied here is that she is not making as much out of the business as Dave says she should, not as a result of any shortcoming of her own, but as a consequence of an inauspicious financial climate. Again, then, the complainee in this instance concedes that she is failing to achieve what her co-participant says she should be achieving but attempts to diminish the

extent to which this failure can be deemed blameworthy, by citing circumstances that are beyond her control in mitigation of her failure.

4.2.2. converting deficiencies into virtues

Extrinsic accounts can also enable complainees who acknowledge having behaved in some allegedly complainable way, to characterise their behaviour not merely as justified or unblameworthy, as in the previous examples looked at, but to focus, instead, on positive outcomes that they claim have proceeded from it. In this way they are enabled to characterise activities of theirs that have been treated as complainable by their co-participants, as desirable or even, as in the following two examples, as laudable actions.

As we have seen before, in this sequence (example 27), the complainee (Mum)

27. [IAD:JM:1B:4:4]

99. Joel: you were n't th-ere

100. (0.8)

101. Mum: PRECISELY!

102. (0.3)

103. Mum: if I w's not if I w's there (1.0) there would n' a' been

104. no money 'n' we'd a' been on th-e- goddamn' do:llie

responds to a complaint by claiming that she has acted in a complained of way in order to 'take control' of adverse circumstances that might otherwise have been beyond her control. What Joel's complaint (line 99) implies is that, because Mum was frequently absent from home, she failed to observe her parental responsibilities satisfactorily. As we have also seen, Mum responds by explicitly validating Joel's complaint (line 101). She then goes on, however, to account for her frequent absences (lines 103 - 104) by claiming that if she had not been absent, i.e., if she had been at home ('if I'd have been there'), the family would not have had an income ('there wouldn't have been no money'). The adverse consequence of this, she claims, would have been that it would have had to have relied on state benefits

for support ('we'd have been on the goddamned dole'). The implication here is that she was absent from home for much of the time because she went out to work in order to support her family which was, thereby, enabled to avoid living in more straightened financial circumstances. What the complainees claims here is that her absence was caused by the extrinsic circumstance of having to provide for her family. More than this, however, by accounting for her absence in this way, she re-characterises it, not as a complainable matter, but as having been motivated by 'laudable' intentions. It becomes clearer still, in her subsequent talk (see example

28. [IAD:JM:1B:4:4]

107. Mum: I hhad to- go- out t' earn money

108. (0.5)

109. Joel: °mhm°

110. (.)

111. Mum: because ah'm NOT a taker. (.) an' I don' sit an' let

112. people- .hhhh (0.2) GIVE me

113. (0.3)

114. Mum: I work f' my money

115. (1.2)

116. Mum: you have no appresh-iation of what I ever did fo' you boy

28), that this kind of claim is facilitated by her extrinsic account. At lines 111 - 113, it having been implied that she neglected her family, she attempts to regain the moral 'high ground' by claiming that her actions were, in fact, highly principled ('I'm not a taker and I don't sit and let people give me' and 'I work for my money'). She then goes on to imply that she took the actions referred to for her co-participant's benefit and that, rather than complaining, a more appropriate reaction on his part would, in fact, be one of gratitude to her for acting in the way that she did ('you have no appreciation of what I ever did for you boy').

In this next sequence (example 29) the complainees (Kevin) again cites extrinsic

29. [IAD:KR1:2A:1:7]

184. Rob: given your conduct and beha[viour on Saturda[y
 185. Kevin: [.hhhhhhhhHHHHHH [WHAT!=
 186. Rob: =(I would) prefer [to ()
 187. Kevin: [MY CONDUCT AND BEHAVIOUR W'S
 188. EXEMPLARY I: did my (0.5) my UTmost to preVENT (.)
 189. VERY SERIOUS VIOLENCE taking place there YOU: know
 190. that rob (0.2) .hhh

factors in order to characterise actions of his that have been deemed complainable by his co-participant, both as highly desirable and as having resulted in very positive consequences. Here, Rob refers to Kevin's behaviour during a meeting that he attended 'on Saturday' (line 184) and implies that it was complainable in some unspecified sense. This meeting, it would appear, came close to culminating in what Kevin later refers to (see example 30) as 'serious disorder'. It is to this extrinsic circumstance - the near riot situation in which he found himself - that Kevin refers in his extrinsic account. Here, he quite explicitly characterises his 'conduct and behaviour' at the meeting, not as complainable, but, on the contrary, as having been 'exemplary' (line 188). He then goes on to substantiate this assertion by claiming that one reason that his actions could be assessed in this way is that they were designed to have the desirable effect of preventing 'very serious violence' from occurring (lines 188 - 189). As in the previous example, it becomes clearer, a little later in the interaction (see sequence 30), that the performance of extrinsic

30. [IAD:KR1:2A:1:7]

204. because I- as YOU KNOW .hh I did everything in my
 205. power (.) t' prevent (.) serious disorder taking
 206. place (0.2) everything
 207. (0.4)
 208. Kevin: .hhh IF: (.) I had I: feel that if I had not done
 209. that

210. (0.4)
 211. Kevin: ((swallowing)) serious disorder (0.3) would 'ave
 212. taken place .hh with reSUltant injuries .hhh to
 213. d u a b members (.) some of whom (.) .hhh ah may
 214. well have been in uh elderly and so forth

accounts of this type can facilitate the re-characterisation of allegedly deficient activities as 'virtuous' forms of behaviour. At lines 204 - 206 Kevin again claims that actions that he took at the meeting in question were designed to moderate what is characterised as a potentially turbulent occasion. He then goes on to assert a belief that his actions were successful in quietening the situation down ('I feel that if I had not done that serious disorder would have taken place' - lines 208 - 212) and that the result of this was that the well-being of 'DUAB members, some of whom may well have been elderly' (lines 213 - 214), who were at risk of being injured, was safeguarded. Thus, the extrinsic account that Kevin performs here enables his allegedly complainable 'conduct and behaviour' to be converted into the virtuous activity of protecting elderly people from the risk physical of violence.

5. Summary and conclusions.

At the beginning of this chapter it was observed that, when replying to complaints, complainees typically opt for one of five main responsive strategies: - *implicit validation*, wherein an implicit concession of some kind is made to the complaint but the complained of behaviour is also characterised as justified or, in other ways, unblameworthy; *explicit validation*, wherein it is acknowledged, unequivocally, that the complainees performed the complained of behaviour, but the behaviour is again treated as justified, etc.; *unmitigated invalidation*, wherein the occurrence of the complainable behaviour is overtly disputed; *mitigated invalidation*, wherein the occurrence of the complained of behaviour is disputed but it is acknowledged that 'something' of the sort described by the complainer did occur; and *admission*, wherein the complainees validates the complaint by acknowledging that they have behaved in the way complained of, without attempting to

this as a justifiable way of behaving. Admissions of this sort may be accompanied by apologies. Of these response types, invalidations occur with much less frequency than validations and, where they are performed, they are usually of a mitigated kind. Unmitigated invalidations occur only occasionally and admissions are extremely rare. In by far the majority of cases the responses that are performed to complaints consist of implicit validations and, occasionally, of explicit validations.

One outcome of the concessive moves made in complaint-validating responses can be that the polarised nature of the interactants' positions is prevented from becoming overt and this, in turn, can prevent the interaction from 'deteriorating' into a series of reiterations of their initial argumentative lines. Additionally, explicit validations can, in appropriate circumstances, enable complainers to substantiate argumentative lines that they have previously adopted. It may sometimes be a worthwhile strategy, for example, for a complainer to fully authenticate a complaint, e.g., that they 'are a liar', by validating it explicitly, if doing so will enable them then to substantiate some earlier claim that they have made about a potential adverse consequence of speaking truthfully.

It is also evident that a range of formulations is available to complainers with which they can account for complainable behaviour that has been attributed to them. These include 'counter-accounts', such as counter-complaints, counter-accusations, etc., within which prior, complainable behaviour of the original complainer is treated as being causally related to the complained of behaviour of the complainer. One outcome of this type of move can be that the subsequent conversational focus shifts away from the original complainable matter and onto the allegedly complainable behaviour of the original complainer. *Counter-accounts* may also consist of other types of counter-claims; for example, those within which responsibility for allegedly complainable behaviour is attributed to non-complainable actions of the original complainer. On other occasions, extrinsic accounts are performed within which external justifications, causations, etc., are cited.

What, though, do these observations tell us about the more general interactional orientations of complainers? To begin to answer this question it will be necessary to return, briefly, to ground that has already been covered. As has been noted on several occasions in this chapter, it is only on very rare occasions that complainers respond to complaints by acknowledging that they have behaved in a way that is complainable, without making any attempt to justify their behaviour with some kind of account. It was also observed that, where unaccounted moves of this type are made, they are usually interpretable as 'admissions', as shown in example 8.

Now, the possibility that they may be admitting guilt is clearly not the kind of impression that the complainers in any of the examples that have been looked at in this chapter (with the exception of example 8) are attempting to convey. The same is true of all the other cases in the main data corpus. As we have seen, complainers usually build their responses in ways that make concessions to the complaints of which they have been the target. Usually on these occasions, however, an admission of guilt does not form part of their interactional project as well. One property of the accounts that they recurrently perform is that they possess the potential to deflect complainers from interpreting, in this way, any concessive work that has been done.

So, it is now possible to begin to build a picture of the ways in which, in the great majority of cases, complainers organise their initial responses to complaints. It seems, a) that when doing so they typically orient to what may be two response option preferences and, b) that these orientations relate to the two response elements that have been focused upon in this chapter - concessions and accounts. Firstly, they generally formulate their responses in ways that confirm that they have behaved, in some way, at least, in the manner that is being deemed complainable. In other words, they do not, usually, claim that they have done 'nothing'. One outcome of this is that the overt polarisation of their positions *vis a vis* those of their co-participants tends to be avoided and, in consequence, the subsequent talk tends

not to become embroiled in argument re-asserting, mutually contradicting interactional entanglements of the kind that were illustrated earlier (examples 9 - 12). Avoiding this type of entanglement may be one of the central functions of the concessive elements of responses to complaints.

Secondly, they also seek, typically, to reject culpability. They normally do this by incorporating accounts into their responses that attempt to legitimise or justify whatever behaviour they 'admit to' within their concessive moves or by treating it, in other ways, as reasonable, valid, innocent, etc. In other words, by formulating accounts of these kinds, they claim that they have not behaved in a way that is culpable or, to be more precise, that the way in which they *have* behaved is non-culpable. The regularity with which this concession/culpability-rejecting pattern occurs raises the possibility that these two elements of typical responses to complaints may constitute response option preferences to which complainees normatively orient. If this is the case, and we cannot yet be certain, of the two candidate preferences identified here - conceding that there is 'a case' of some sort to answer and rejecting culpability, it is the latter that seems to be most commonly observed and, consequently to be the most pressing. As has been demonstrated, complainees are usually prepared, for sound interactional reasons, to concede to complaints to some extent, and on occasions they acknowledge, outright, that they have behaved in whatever way has been attributed to them. Nevertheless, albeit infrequently, they occasionally construct responses that totally invalidate the complaints that have been levelled at them and risk the interactional outcomes that often seem to result when this kind of polarisation becomes overt. What they almost invariably seem unprepared to admit, however, even when they do acknowledge having acted in some way that is being treated as complainable, is that, by acting in this way, they have behaved culpably.

Chapter Three

Third and fourth position responses in complaint-initiated argumentation

The focus of the previous chapter centres on the structure and organisation of complainers' initial responses to complaints. Within it complaints and responses to them are, with some exceptions, respectively treated as the first and second position moves of dyadically constructed interactional exchanges. Complaint-initiated sequences of talk, however, are usually more extended than this. This chapter, therefore, will begin by examining the relationship or, in some cases, the apparent absence of a relationship, between the types of second position response looked at earlier and the utterances which follow at third position. Our concern will be the various ways in which complainers respond, at third position, to what has been said at second position in reply to their original, first position complaints. As we have seen, these second position utterances commonly incorporate justifying accounts of various kinds by means of which complainers seek to absolve themselves of responsibility, or to reject culpability. A major area of concern for the first part of this chapter will be the extent to which they are 'successful' in doing so. To what extent do complainers' third position responses display acceptance of the defences undertaken at second position by their co-participants?

The existing 'accounts literature' is inconclusive regarding this issue in that individual studies arrive at different and, frequently, conflicting conclusions. Scott and Lyman (1968:46), for example, observe that accounts are 'linguistic devices

employed whenever an action is subjected to valuative inquiry'. They are, the authors claim:

A crucial element in the social order since they prevent conflicts from arising by verbally bridging the gap between action and expectation.

Even though Scott and Lyman do not examine actual instances of conversational interaction and do not make this claim overtly, an implication of this observation is that the subsequent talk of the *original complainer* is likely to be built in ways that accept that the action 'subjected to valuative inquiry' was, after all, justified, innocent or unproblematic. It is difficult, otherwise, to see how accounts can be said to be implicated in the avoidance or resolution of conflict. Similarly, for Eisenberg and Garvey (1981:166), who examine children's argumentation:

A justification or reason or a countering, positive suggestion is significantly more likely [than a 'bare *no* response'] to lead to a termination of the [disputatious] episode.

Such moves, they observe, are 'frequently successful' and, even when they are not, are 'at least likely to be responded to with a recognition of the opponent's viewpoint' (*ibid.*). Again, if we assume that the 'terminations' and 'successes' alluded to here constitute resumptions of non-disputatious interaction, then it appears that the subsequent talk of the original complainer commonly treats whatever is being accounted for as no longer complainable. Riordan *et al* (1983) and Hale (1987:129) draw similar conclusions, although Hale distinguishes between 'justifications' and 'excuses' and reports that, in her study, the former:

Emerged as the most powerful form of account, doing a far better job than any other account in creating a positive definition of both the [accountable] act in question and the person who committed that act.

By contrast, however, Semin and Manstead (1983:114), reviewing a number of studies, report that:

While it is possible to influence reactions to offensive acts by the provision of accounts, the extent of this influence is limited.

Vuchinich (1984:219), who examines a large corpus of argumentative data and focuses on the various ways in which dispute sequences are terminated, goes further still, reporting that 'a resolved conflict is the exception rather than the rule in our data'.

As we shall see, the findings of the present study are rather closer to those of Vuchinich than they are to those of Scott and Lyman and Eisenberg and Garvey. Around 90% of the third position responses in the corpus of complaint-initiated talk are *non-exonerative*, i.e., they do not accept that the accounts of the complainees excuse or justify the complained of behaviour. In the remaining 10% of the sequences in the corpus, conversation tends to be shifted onto matters other than those raised at second position, or to become dissipated in other ways, without the second position account having been addressed. *Exonerative responses*, that is those which *do* accept that second position accounts exonerate complainees, are virtually unrepresented within the data corpus. In consequence, this chapter will focus on *non-exonerative responses* and will examine some of the ways in which they are organised. It will become apparent that a variety of organisational formats is used. However, one strategy occurs persistently. In around 83% of the third position responses in the data corpus (constituting about 92% of all the non-exonerative responses) complaints that were initially performed at first position continue to be pursued at third position, despite the defensive work that has been undertaken at second position. By far the most common way, then, in which complainers demonstrate that second position accounts are *not* considered to exonerate complainees is by continuing to pursue their original complaints after those accounts have been performed.

The chapter will begin by outlining various types of non-exonerative response that have been identified within the data corpus. In this part of the discussion, because of its prevalence, the further pursuit of first position complaints at third position is a theme that will be returned to repeatedly. It will be noted that first position complaints are often pursued in ways that expand upon them by extending the scope of what is being complained about. It will also be noted that, unlike the second position responses in these sequences, which, as we saw in chapter two, very commonly make concessions to complaints that have been formulated at first position, these third position utterances often *do not* incorporate concessive moves of this type. It will be argued that the inclusion or non-inclusion of concessive moves and of expanded or extended versions of first position complaints influences the extent to which third position responses appear confrontational and acrimonious. However, even where third position responses *do* acknowledge the validity of aspects of what has been said at second position, such moves are almost always formulated in ways that, nevertheless, substantiate or support the original complaint. This is commonly achieved by the performance of more circumscribed versions of those complaints, which are *less vulnerable to challenge* by complainees. Some examples of these circumscribed versions of first position complaints will also be examined.

Following this, in the second part of the chapter, I examine the influence of non-exonerative third position responses on the subsequent trajectories of these sequences, i.e., to what typically happens at fourth position and, projectably, beyond. It will be observed that non-exonerative moves made by complainers at third position tend to generate fourth position responses within which complainees do not continue to pursue the lines of argument that they have adopted at second position. In the concluding part of the chapter evidence *will be introduced* to demonstrate that more overtly disputatious third position responses tend to generate fourth position responses that are, themselves, more overtly disputatious. Concomitantly, it will be argued, those third position responses that do not

incorporate these kinds of feature tend *not* to generate this type of escalation in the argumentative tenor of the interaction.

As noted earlier, there is a significant body of opinion within the 'accounts literature' that holds to the view that accounts are commonly implicated in the resolution of conflict. It is of particular interest that virtually none of the sequences of interaction found in my corpus of data result in this type of outcome. Despite these findings, however, the current research is not intended to question those of the earlier studies that have been referred to. Although some of the *conclusions* that have been drawn in this earlier work will be challenged in the final chapter of this discussion, the observation that accounts commonly *do* contribute to the resolution of conflict in some types of interactional encounter is perfectly consistent with the observation that, in other types of encounter, they do not. All this indicates is that some types of encounter in which accounts are performed are less disputatious than others. The significance of the present work is that, in undertaking a sustained examination of sequences in which accounts are not accepted, it throws analytical light on a type of disputatious interaction which, until now, has largely been ignored. In the course of doing so it *uncovers some of the precise ways in which sequences of talk can become disputatious and some of the ways in which they can become even more disputatious subsequently.*

1. *Non-exonerative third position responses.*

Most of the third position moves within the data corpus do not accept that the accounts that have been performed at second position exonerate their co-participants of whatever complainable behaviour has been attributed to them at first position. These moves fall into four broad categories. We will begin by examining *account-disattending responses*. These are utterances that do not respond directly, or which respond only minimally, to the justifications formulated by complainers at second position. Attention will then be turned to *sarcastic or account-ridiculing responses*. These are utterances that respond to what has been said at second

position, but which do so in ways that do not treat it as meriting serious consideration. Next, *account-attending responses* will be considered. These are utterances that treat issues raised at second position as meriting, or even as *requiring*, some kind of serious and direct rebuttal. Finally, *account-curtailing responses* will come under consideration. These are utterances within which complainers seek to avoid or 'close down' further discussion of matters that have been raised by their co-participants at second position. They may be formulated, for example, as refusals, postponements, etc.

1.1. account disattending responses

This category consists of third position responses in which what is said by complainers at second position in reply to first position complaints is simply not addressed (i.e., is disregarded or 'ignored').

1. [IAD:DW2:1B:7:8]

```

{ 197. Wife:                                     I- say
|
| 198.      you were- not allowed t' mix with your fa:ther even
|
| 199.      when y' were- fifteen [y' had t' knock on th'
|                                     [
1} 200. Gemma:                                  [ehh
|
| 201.      do:ir (0.3) f' 'n' appointment t' see: him
|                                     (0.2)
|
| 202. Wife: so- you don't know what fam'ly life is
|
| 203.                                     (0.3)
2}
| 204. Dave: 'n' you do?
|
3} 205. Wife: I blame your ↑pa:rent-

```

Prior to the sequence of talk shown in example 1, Wife has claimed that Dave has acted harshly towards their young daughter, Gemma, who is present. She then goes on, at first position, to allege that, because his childhood relationship with his

father was unsatisfactory, 'you don't know what family life is' (lines 197 - 202). What she claims here is that he behaves in ways that are unsatisfactory in the context of the family and she attempts, by making this claim, to substantiate her earlier claim about the way he has treated Gemma. The implication is that he has not acted in a 'fatherly' way towards her. Dave responds at second position with 'and you do?' (line 204), implying that Wife 'doesn't know what family life is' either and that she is not, therefore, in a position to make assessments about the way in which he behaves. Wife responds at third position with the incomplete turn - 'I blame your parent' (line 205). It transpires, a little later (see lines 210 and 212 in example 2), that what she 'blames' Dave's parents for is 'the way you've been brought up'. It is a statement of this sort, which continues to characterise Dave's upbringing as unsatisfactory, that she appears to be beginning to formulate at line 205. This turn does not respond in any way to Dave's preceding talk at line 204. Indeed, it does not acknowledge or recognise that he has spoken. Rather, it simply continues with and expands upon her first position complaint - characterising Dave as being inadequately oriented to 'family life'. Now, however, she begins to blame both of Dave's parents for this alleged shortcoming, rather than just his father. Thus, Wife's third position response entirely disattends what Dave has had to say at second position and continues as though what she has said at first position has not been disputed. Moreover, this disattention continues and becomes even more evident in the subsequent interaction (see example 2) where Wife continues to pursue her first

2. [IAD:DW2:1B:7:8]

3 { 205. Wife: I blame your ↑parent-
 206. Dave: [you pissed OFF WHEN Y' WERE- SIXTEEN
 207. [(you total shit)
 208. Wife: [ah bl[ame-
 209. Gemma: [(DON'T START THAT)
 210. Wife: your ↑parents are t' blame f' [th' way you've bin
 211. Gemma: [(DON'T ST-HART

212. Wife: brought up position complaint (see lines 208, 210 and 212) as though it has not been disputed, despite the performance, by Dave, of a counter-complaint - 'you pissed off when you were sixteen' (line 206) - and an adverse and abusive assessment - 'you total shit' (line 207).

Two more instances of this type of disattention in third position can be seen below. In extract 3, the interactants are Louise, a holiday company 'rep', and Carlos,

3. [IAD:V1:1]

- 1} 1. Louise: don't touch ma guests=
 2} 2. Carlos: =okay okay (.) now I'm just speak[ing
 { 3. Louise: [don't touch ma
 3} {
 { 4. guests

the owner of the hotel in which she and her party are staying. Just prior to the sequence of talk shown here, Carlos has physically assaulted a member of this party. At first position Louise's injunction is constructed in a generic way that proscribes any form of deliberate physical contact between Carlos and any of her 'guests' but it also censures him for the specific action that he has just taken against this particular individual. At second position, Carlos' initially positioned 'okays' accede to Louise's demand and he follows them by announcing that he is now restricting his activities to 'speaking'. This further demonstrates his compliance with Louise's demand. However, it is also projectable from this response that Carlos has more to say, i.e., that he has something to 'speak' about - some explication of his action, perhaps. As in example 1, the complainer's third position response in this case is built in a way that disattends what has been said at second position. Louise's third position response discounts Carlos' displays of compliance. She simply repeats her injunction in its entirety as though they have not been performed. Moreover, this turn begins at a point at which, as already noted, Carlos' turn is

recognisably projecting further talk on his part. It can be seen, then, that Louise's talk does not only disregard the content of Carlos' current turn. It also pre-empts further talk on his part in order to re-focus the conversation back onto the behaviour originally complained about.

4. [AD:DW1:1B:6:6]

```

    { 155.Dave: I FEEL ROBBED (.) CHEATED (0.6) and bloody abused
    {
    { 156. (0.3)
    {
    1 { 157.Dave: THE REASON (.) WHY (.) I'[m >the reason- I've
    { [
    { 158.Wife: [I'M THE ONE THAT'S
    { 159.Dave: been left?<]
    2 { 160.Wife: BEEN ABUSED]
    { 161. (0.3)
    { 162.Wife: YOU'VE ABUSED [ME:
    { 163.Gemma [hahaHAHAHA=
    3 { 164.Dave: =I have been left

```

In example 4 Dave complains that he feels 'robbed, cheated and bloody abused' by Wife. He then begins to extend this complaint by giving his 'reason' for feeling this way (lines 157 and 159) but Wife's second position response - the counter-complaint 'I'm the one that's been abused' - overlaps his talk. Wife's incursion here is interruptive inasmuch as it is not commenced at a point at which a change of speakership is fitted and it is continued even though Dave carries on speaking. He eventually cuts out (line 159). Wife then goes on to perform a version of her counter-complaint that is directed explicitly towards Dave - 'you've abused me'. At third position (line 164) Dave disregards these claims of Wife's and, instead, re-initiates the explication that he has abandoned at first position. This is recognisable because he retains a phrase that he has used in his earlier explication - 'I have been left'. In opting to retain this particular part of his previous turn it is

noticeable that he repeats that part of it that he was in the process of performing at the point at which Wife interrupted him. By re-initiating his explication in this way he conveys an impression that the discursive 'flow' of his talk has been unaffected by his co-participant's incursion at second position. These utterances of her's are simply not taken into account as he resumes his project of explicating the initial complaint.

The three third position utterances that have been examined here are recognisable as *account-disregarding responses in three main ways*. Firstly, within them complainers refrain from addressing what are clearly addressable moves, (e.g., challenges, counter-complaints and even a concessive response in the case of example 3) that are made at second position. Secondly, rather than addressing these moves, they continue to pursue their original complaints and in doing so they indicate that what their co-participants have said at second position has not deflected or disrupted the projects that they were originally embarked upon. Thirdly, these responses are constructed, quite pointedly, as 'ignorings' of the second position utterances which precede them, rather than as turns that simply disattend what has been said. This is achieved through the use of two main strategies. Firstly, in example 3 the third position response begins at a sequential location at which it is inferable that the complainees has more to say at second position. Secondly, in examples 3 and 4 key elements of the first position complaints (e.g., phrases or even whole turns) are retained at third position, further indicating the inconsequentiality of the intervening material.

1.2. sarcastic responses

All the sarcastic third position responses within the corpus take a particular form. Complainers build their talk in ways that purport to accept the accounts that have been performed by their co-participants at second position. The recognisability of these utterances as sarcastic hinges centrally on it also being made apparent that what has been said is not 'really' being accepted. Complainers achieve this by

including other components within their responses that display non-acceptance. These non-exonerative components, typically, are somewhat 'over-constructed', including such things as exaggerations, overt verbal abuse of the complainee and extreme case formulations (Pomerantz, 1986). It is by virtue of the 'over-built' nature of these formulations that it becomes evident that what might otherwise appear to be exonerative responses are, in fact, non-exonerative. The use of this type of sarcastic strategy can be seen in the two following examples. As we saw in the previous chapter (see example 26), at first position in instance 5 below (lines

5. [IAD:DW1:1B:6:4]

```

1 { 100.Dave: forty-five a day.
   |
   | 101.Gemma:          uh °uh°
   |
   | 102.                (0.7)
   |
   | 103.Dave: 'ats what you yourself shoul' be making (0.3) profit
   |
   | 104.                (0.2)
   |
   | 105.Gemma:          °uh°
   |
   | 106.                (2.6)
   |
2 { 107.Wife: the's a recession on at the moment [y' don't do it
   |                                     [
   | 108.Dave:                               [I kno:w yeah
   |
   | 3 { 109.Wife: all the t[i::me?
   |   |
   |   | 110.Dave:          [>an' any< ↓fool c'n do anything f' nothing

```

100 - 103), Dave is complaining that Wife makes insufficient profit from the family business, which she runs. She replies at second position (lines 107 - 109) by citing a circumstance that is beyond her control - 'there's a recession on at the moment' - in mitigation of this acknowledged shortcoming. She also attempts to mitigate her failure by implying that she does, sometimes, earn as much as Dave thinks she should - 'you don't do it all the time'. The beginning of Dave's third position response

- 'I know, yeah' (line 108) appears, initially, to validate Wife's account by agreeing that there is, indeed, 'a recession on' as she has claimed. This response could have prefaced an un-contentious subsequent turn. Dave could, for example, have commiserated (*'I know, yeah, its not easy for you'*), or offered assistance (*'I know, yeah, perhaps I should help a couple of days a week'*). In the event, however, he completes his response with the idiomatic expression 'and any fool can do anything for nothing' (line 110). Here it becomes apparent that 'I know, yeah' is a component that only purports to validate *Wife's account while the response, as a whole, is a* sarcastic utterance that seeks to discount it. The initial word of line 110 - the conjunction 'and ...' - is also implicated in this sarcastic project. It treats what is about to be said - 'any fool can do anything for nothing' - as though it is compatible with Wife's account - 'there's a recession on' - when, transparently, it is not. So here, even though Dave's initial utterances - 'I know, yeah' - appear to validate Wife's account, the idiomatic formulation that he uses makes it readily apparent that this validation is, in fact, disingenuous. In their study of idiomatic expressions in the construction of complaints Drew and Holt (1988) observe that utterances like these often make explicit complaints that might otherwise remain *implicit* and that they tend to summarise and emphasise the 'egregious' nature of the matter that is being complained about. This is recognisably the case in the current instance in which the initial complaint - 'forty-five a day, that's what you should be making profit' is replaced, at third position, with an overt and abusive characterisation of Wife as a 'fool' who is working 'for nothing'¹. Here, despite the performance of a component ('I know, yeah') that appears, initially, to validate it, *Wife's account is clearly not treated* as exonerating her. On the contrary, Dave's third position response both exaggerates the initial complainable - he now accuses her of working 'for nothing' - and implies, in a more overt and more directly abusive way than was previously the case, that she is responsible for this shortcoming.

preceded by non-verbal activity (lines 83 - 85) that clearly displays scepticism and disdain for what Jane has said. Secondly, his talk at lines 86 - 87 is intoned in a way that displays weariness and exasperation with her. Thirdly, and most explicitly, by juxtaposing the exaggerated estimation of the number of attempts that Jane will require - 'a million times' - with her claim only to have 'done it twice' he indicates that, as far as he is concerned, Jane is requiring an excessive amount of practice. This, in turn, implies that he has already got the step 'right' and that responsibility for the current, unsatisfactory state of the manoeuvre lies *solely with her*. *Again, then*, while elements of the original complainer's interaction appear, superficially, to validate his co-participant's second position account, he also makes it manifestly obvious that this is not really what he is doing. Even though Chris initiates further dancing, Jane's account, and particularly her implication that they are jointly responsible, are not treated as meriting serious consideration.

1.3. account-attending responses

This section of the discussion will examine the organisation of third position utterances which, unlike the *account-disattending responses* looked at earlier, *do* address matters that have been raised at second position. Unlike the *sarcastic responses* that we have seen, these utterances also treat the matters that have been raised at second position seriously. Account-attending responses may be constructed in a great many ways. The section will begin by examining *dismissals*, responses which overtly invalidate second position accounts by using explicit dismissive components. These include such things as outright denials or contradictions and other overt forms of rejection or rebuttal. In addition to these types of component, dismissals are also commonly accompanied by accounts or other types of utterance by means of which speakers attempt to substantiate their invalidations of second position utterances. In the second part of the section attention will be turned to *non-dismissive responses*. These are responses which indicate that what has been said at second position is not considered to exonerate

the complaine, but which do so without having recourse to dismissive components of the types mentioned above. They usually contain accounts or descriptions of disputed events or of matters that are related to those events. These accounts typically seek to demonstrate the inadequacy of second position accounts without dismissing them explicitly. The next part of the section will consider *complaint-circumscribing responses*. These are responses that make concessions of various kinds to second position accounts but which, like the other types of third position response that are examined, also indicate that these accounts are not considered to justify the originally complained of behaviour. On the contrary, it is found that the concessions that are made to second position responses tend to make the versions of first position complaints that are performed at third position less vulnerable to challenge. In the final part of this section we will examine *account-curtailing responses*. These are utterances that overtly seek to discourage complainees from further pursuing matters that they have cited in defence of their behaviour by, for example, explicitly refusing to discuss them, attempting to postpone further discussion of them, etc.

1.3.1. dismissals of second position accounts

In example 7 the complainer (Kevin) works from home where he has a

7. [IAD:KR2:2A:2:1]

{ 25. Kevin: .hhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh (0.3) YOU: told me: if I got
 | 26. calls (.) I'd pass them on t' th' d u a b office:::
 | 27. people trying t' get through to me: (.) on that
 | 28. official line (.) .hh (0.2) end up with a line
 | 29. thats (0.2) thats not available .hh thats hardly
 | 30. professional when we're dealing with the media
 | 31. [and so forth
 | [
 { 32. Rob: [>>well if anybody- if anybody<< contacts: .hhh is

2 { 33. unable t' contact you they'll contact the ↑office↓
 { 34. no doub[t.
 { 35. Kevin: [no they- don't! (.) they don't know the
 { 36. office number- you should know that and the LEAST
 3 { 37. you could do is have the courtesy t' tell me that
 { 38. you've switched my my line off

telephone line belonging to 'the DUAB', the organisation in which he and his co-participant, Rob, are employed. Rob, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, is Kevin's workplace supervisor, has had Kevin's phone disconnected. At first position (lines 25 - 31) Kevin complains that this action is not commensurate with an instruction he was given, by Rob, in a previous conversation, to refer any calls that he receives to 'the DUAB office' (line 26). Clearly, he is unable to receive calls if his telephone has been disconnected. Secondly, he claims that, for this same reason, prospective callers 'end up with a line that's not available'. At second position (lines 32 - 34), Rob denies that his action is problematic in the ways that Kevin has claimed. Callers unable to contact the DUAB through Kevin, he says, will 'contact the office, no doubt' (lines 33 - 34). Kevin responds to this, at third position, with a dismissal - 'no they don't' (line 35) - which overtly contradicts Rob's account. This phrase also constitutes a significant shift of tense. Rob's use of future tense - '... they'll ...' (i.e., 'they will' [line 33]), is well fitted to the conditional formulation of his account ('if anybody ...'). Kevin, however, responds in present tense - 'they don't' (line 35). In this way, he does not merely seek to invalidate Rob's account, but to rebut the conditional way in which it is constructed. In other words, it is evident from this tense shift that, as far as Kevin is concerned, callers to the DUAB *are* being prevented from contacting the organisation as a result of the action that Rob has taken. This dismissive component is followed by a justification of the dismissal. One reason that Rob's account is invalid, Kevin claims, is that prospective callers ('they')

are unlikely to 'know the office number' (lines 35 - 36). Rob's evident unawareness of this is, itself, treated as a shortcoming - 'you should know that' (line 36). In the final part of his response (lines 36 - 38) Kevin re-topicalises the issue about which he was originally complaining - the disconnection of the telephone - by identifying a way in which, he claims, Rob has exacerbated the complainableness of this action. Not only did he have the phone disconnected but he did so in a discourteous way - without telling Kevin. Thus, as far as Kevin is concerned, it is not simply the case that Rob has performed a complainable action. The way in which he has performed it, i.e., without advising him, is, itself, also deemed complainable. The turn design that Kevin uses here is an initially positioned dismissive component followed by a justification of the dismissal followed, in turn, by further pursuit of the complainable matter raised at first position. This is a design that is often found in the dismissive responses in the data corpus. It can be seen again in the following sequence (example 8) from another conversation between Kevin and Rob. Here, Kevin

8. [IAD:KR1:2A:1:8]

```

1 { 216. Kevin: so I cannot understand (.) I cannot understand why
  |
  { 217.      you've taken this [drastic action
    |
    { 218. Rob:      [then you've (nothing) t' be
  2 {
  | { 219.      concerned about Ke[vin have you.
    |
    { 220. Kevin:      [.hhhhhhHHHHHH I AM (0.3)
  3 {
  | { 221.      concerned >>about i'<< because YOU'RE STOPPING ME
    |
    { 222.      DOING MY WORK ON BEHALF OF LABORATORY ANIMALS!!!
  }

```

complains, at first position, about Rob suspending his (Kevin's) employment in the DUAB. This is the 'action' to which he refers, and which he characterises as 'drastic', at line 217. At second position, Rob replies by making the rather 'flip' claim that if the reason that Kevin 'cannot understand' why he has been suspended is, as he has implied, that he has done nothing to warrant this kind of action being taken

against him, he need not 'be concerned'. The implication here is that if Kevin is 'innocent' of any 'wrongdoing' he will be reinstated by a disciplinary hearing that is pending. Kevin again responds, at third position, with a dismissal that uses the dismissive component + dismissal justification + initial complaint re-topicalising format. The first part of the response - 'I am concerned' (lines 220 - 221) - overtly dismisses Rob's claim that Kevin has 'nothing to be concerned about'. In the second part of the response, Kevin seeks to justify this dismissal by explicating what he characterises as a cause of his concern - 'because you're *stopping me* from doing my work on behalf of laboratory animals' (lines 221 - 222). It is noticeable that, in two ways, the justifying move that Kevin makes here itself constitutes a re-topicalising of the original complaint. Firstly, it was Rob's action of 'stopping him from doing his work', i.e., by taking the 'drastic action' of suspending him, about which Kevin was originally complaining. Secondly, as in the previous example, the complainer pursues his initial complaint by citing additional grounds for finding the originally complained of action complainable. At first position in this sequence Kevin appears to be complaining about what he treats as the unwarranted nature of the action that Rob has taken. At third position he again alludes to this action, on this occasion by citing an adverse consequence which, he claims, arises from it - he is prevented from 'doing my work on behalf of laboratory animals'. Thus, it can be seen that, in both the examples that have been examined so far, the dismissive responses that are performed at third position precede further references to the first position complaints of the respective sequences. Moreover, these references are constructed in similar ways. In both cases the parameters of the initial complaint are shifted to encompass additional complainable matters and an expansion of its field of reference occurs. In other words, at third position, following the complainees' justificatory accounts, their actions are characterised as being 'more complainable' than was the case in the original versions of the complaints. As we shall see later in this chapter, this tendency of some third position

responses to expand the scope of complaints often generates escalations in the disputatiousness of the subsequent interaction.

Of course, the formulation of dismissive responses does not always involve the use of the dismissive component + dismissal justification + complaint re-topicalising format seen in the two preceding extracts. In sequence 9 we see an instance in

9. [IAD:DW2:1B:7:3]

```

1 { 74. Dave:  you want t' jus' live [on it
   |         [
   | 75. Gemma:         [.uh
   |
   | 76.         (0.3)
1 }
   | 77. Dave:  and watch it go
   |
   | 78.         (0.3)
   |
   | 79. Dave:  and in a year you'll have nothing
80.         (.)
   | 81. Gemma: you're [a dickhead
   |         [
2 { 82. Wife:   [I'm cert'nly not int'rested in a castle
   |
   | 83.         out[side brighton
   |         [
3 { 84. Dave:   [you're so::: thick

```

which an alternative type of dismissive construction is used. At lines 74 and 77 in this sequence 'it' refers to the interactants' financial capital. Earlier in the conversation it has become apparent that Dave wishes to invest this money by buying a property that both participants have described as a 'castle'. Wife has indicated that she does not wish to invest it in this way. At first position Dave complains 'you want to just live on it and watch it go'. In a number of ways this is characterised as an unsatisfactory course of action to pursue - most obviously through the citing of an undesirable outcome that it would be likely to cause - '... in a year you'll have nothing'. In her second position response ('I'm certainly not interested in a castle outside Brighton'), Wife indicates that Dave's proposed

investment of the money is undesirable to her. This response opens up the possibility that using the money in the way that Dave has claimed she would prefer to use it *would* constitute a more attractive proposition to her than Dave's proposal to buy a castle. At third position, Dave replies with an abusive assessment of Wife - 'you're so thick' - which rejects both what she has said and Wife personally. This response is fitted to be both a continuation of the original complaint (i.e., an assessment of Wife for allegedly wanting to 'live' on the money and 'watch it go', etc.), and an assessment of her that is based on her 'disinterest' in 'a castle outside Brighton'. It is noticeable that unlike the responses observed in examples 7 and 8, that performed in example 9 does not dismiss what has been said at second position and account for the dismissal in separate components within the turn. However, in this case the single component - 'you're so thick' - does both these things. It rejects Wife's aversion to investing the money in the castle and her alleged preference to 'just live on it' and, simultaneously, accounts for the rejection. It does so by characterising Wife, and hence her preferences, as 'so thick'. Now, it is also evident in this case that, unlike the dismissive responses observed in examples 7 and 8, the third position response in example 9 does not explicitly reassert the initial complaint. However, as we have seen, Wife is assessed as 'so thick' partly at least, because her response at second position is interpretable as confirming the claims that Dave makes in his original complaint. Thus, Wife is assessed in this way because her second position response tends to confirm that she 'just wants to live on it and watch it go'. In treating this alleged preference as a warrant for adversely assessing Wife, then, Dave implicitly continues to uphold the original shortcoming that he found in her. Moreover, by formulating his response in the insulting and prosodically reinforced way that he does he, in fact, emphasises Wife's complainable qualities. Here, then, as was the case in examples 7 and 8, the third position response continues to treat the matter originally complained about as complainable and it does so in a way that extends the complaint. Wife, herself, is now explicitly assessed in an adverse way whereas, at first position, it is only her

alleged preference for 'living on' the money in question and her 'disinterest' in buying the castle that are overtly treated as complainable.

1.3.2. non-dismissive responses

Like third position dismissals, non-dismissive responses also seek to dispute what has been said at second position, but they do not use overtly dismissive components. Instead, they provide alternative accounts that are designed to undermine those that have been performed at second position. Within these some (usually) specific issue is raised from which it becomes inferable that, as far as the complainer is concerned, the complainees's second position account does not exonerate them of culpability for the originally complained of action. In some cases these alternative accounts are constructed in ways that provide opportunities for complainees to determine, for themselves, the bases upon which their accounts are being treated non-exoneratively, as in examples 10 and 11 below, while, in others, these are matters that are made more explicit, as in example 12.

10. [IAD:KR3:2A:3:8]

```

1 { { 220.Kevin:                [what you're
   |                                     [
   | 221.Rob:                    [°sure°
   |
   | { 222.Kevin: doing is you're de- nying me access to uh- material
   | |
   | | { 223.          evidence which I think ↑would ↑be
   | | |
   | | | { 224.          ↑relev[ant t o m y c]as:e
   | | | | [
   | | | | { 225.Rob:          [ >>no we're givi-<< ]
   | | | |
   | | | | 226.                (0.2)
   | | | |
   | | | | 227.Rob:  no >>we are giving you<< the >material evidence<
   | | | | {
   | | | | | 228.          as in the transcript
   | | | | |
   | | | | | 229.                (0.2)

```

2 { 230. Rob: and thats in [a format thats
 [
 | 231. Kevin: [.hhhhhhhhhhh .hhh[hh
 [
 | { 232. Rob: [thats there f'
 | {
 | { 233. everybody t' easily a- assimilate=
 |
 | { 234. Kevin: =wel- y- n- for example I might hear d- uh s:o-
 |
 | 235. eh- you've got me saying resign resign I might say
 | {
 | { 236. (.) well thats somebody:: (.) that that is the
 | {
 | { 237. voice of somebody I know
 3 { 238. Rob: but [()
 | [
 | { 239. Kevin: [and this person is here t'daily
 | |
 | | 240. (0.3)
 | |
 | | { 241. Kevin: you know to- to state that .hh but I'm not able to
 | | {
 | | { 242. say that if I can't hear the tape in advance

In example 10, we examine data from a third conversation between Kevin and Rob. Once again, it is Kevin who occupies the role of initial complainer (lines 220 and 222 - 224). The 'material evidence' to which he refers at first position (lines 222 - 223) is an audio taped recording of a mass-meeting, his alleged activities at which have instigated the disciplinary action that is being taken against him. As we saw in the last chapter (example 25), this tape is to be used as evidence against Kevin at a hearing, and he has been attempting to obtain a copy of it from Rob. Rob has consistently resisted conceding to this request. It is this resistance about which Kevin complains at line 222 - 'you're denying me access ...'. Rob's second position response (lines 227 - 228, 230 and 232 - 233) begins with a denial component 'no' which overtly invalidates Kevin's complaint. This is followed by a justification of the invalidation that overtly contradicts the complaint - 'we are giving you the material evidence' (line 227). However, it transpires that what Rob is referring to is not the tape itself, but a written transcript of it that Kevin has already been given. Rob

characterises this as a more satisfactory 'format' (lines 230 and 232 - 233). It will be 'easy', he claims, for 'everybody' (this, presumably, refers to everybody present at the disciplinary hearing) 'to assimilate'. The corollary of this, of course, is that the tape recording would *not* be easy to assimilate. At third position (lines 234 - 242), Kevin attempts to undermine Rob's argument, but his response does not contain any overt, account-invalidating components of the kinds found in the *dismissals* looked at earlier. Rather than overtly invalidating it in this way, he seeks to *demonstrate* to Rob that, in one important respect, his withholding of the tape *does* constitute 'denying me access to material evidence that is relevant to my case'. More specifically, he attempts to dispute Rob's claim that the transcript of the tape is preferable to the original version by constructing a detailed account (lines 235 - 241). Here, he raises the possibility that somebody else may have said things that he is being accused of saying, and points out that he will not be able to use such information at the disciplinary hearing unless the tape is made available. The central 'thrust' of this argument is that it is not possible, where the identity of a speaker is a matter of dispute, to determine who is speaking by consulting a written document. By building his response in this way Kevin provides his co-participant with the opportunity to conclude, for himself, that his account is not being treated as exonerating his actions, and that it is being treated in this way because it does not address the type of problem that Kevin alludes to. In doing this he conveys the impression that he is conducting his side of the argument in a more 'reasoned' and 'logical' manner than would probably have been the case had he constructed a more dismissive response, of the types seen in examples 7 - 9. In consequence the sequence appears less overtly confrontational and rancorous than in the latter types of case.

A similar approach is used by the complainee in the following sequence (example 11). Here, the interactants are A, a prostitute, and S, the occupant of a

11. [IAD:SA:V1:1:1]

1} 1.A: 'oo ar- you t' tell me to move
 { 2. (0.4)
 | 3.S: pt1. ((tongue click))
 2} 4. (0.8)
 | 5.S: well (.) i'm a resident (1.0) i live there (0.8) [and
 { 6.A: [I live
 3} 7. there (0.4) I live on th' highfield estate

house outside which she has been soliciting. It would appear, from later parts of the conversation (not shown here), that, at some point prior to the current interaction, an altercation has occurred between them as a result of S having demanded of A that she should cease her activities outside his house. It is this earlier dispute that the participants are currently discussing. At line 1 in this sequence A complains about S telling her 'to move' on this earlier occasion. She begins her turn with the idiomatic interrogative 'who are you' (which may also be rhetorical) which challenges S's right (or, perhaps, his authority) to make this demand. S's second position response to this is formulated in two parts. In the first of these he cites his status as 'a resident'. Here, then, he states 'who he is', in response to A's interrogative at first position. However, in doing so, he is obviously not simply 'identifying' himself. Rather, by characterising himself as a resident, he implicitly lays claim to the right to have a say in what goes on near his home. This implication is re-iterated and further clarified in the second part of the response - 'I live there'. It is noticeable here that, in the first part of the response, the first syllable of the word 'resident' is emphasised and that, in the second part, 'live' is also emphasised. These stress patterns create a contrastive emphasis which implies that, while S is a 'resident' who 'lives there', A, as far as he is concerned, does not have an equivalent status. This is also implied by the repetition of the personal pronoun 'I' ('I'm a resident, I live there'). Thus, implicitly, S is claiming that he has a right, on the

basis of his status as a resident, which is not shared by A, to have a say in what happens outside his home. He attempts, in this way, to justify having told her 'to move'. S begins to continue his response with 'and' but he cuts out in response to A's overlapping talk at line 6. She begins her third position response by making a claim that is identical to that just made by S - 'I live there'. Here, she claims to have exactly the same status as a resident that *he has just implicitly claimed exclusively* to possess. She emphasises this point both by stressing the initial component of her response - 'I' - (as well as the second component - 'live') and by selecting precisely the same formulation that S has used rather than, for example, 'so do I'. Although she goes on to circumscribe this observation a little with the modification 'I live on the Highfield Estate', which concedes that she does not live at the *precise* location under discussion, A, by claiming that she, too, is a resident, implicitly claims that she has similar 'rights' to those possessed by S. Thus, what is also implied here is that, contrary to the implications of his second position response, S does not have the right or authority to tell her to move. In this sense, then, A's reply to S's second position turn continues to uphold the validity of her initial complaint. However, as in example 10, the third position response in this sequence does not include any components that overtly dismiss what he has said. Instead, A provides S with a basis on which he can infer, for himself, that his account is not being treated as exonerating his behaviour, without her having to say so explicitly.

The non-dismissive responses seen in examples 10 and 11, as has been noted, are built in ways that provide complainees with recognisable bases for inferring that their second position accounts are not being accepted. However, it is not always the case, in non-dismissive responses, that complainees are left to deduce these matters for themselves, as we can see in the following sequence of talk (instance 12). This is taken from an earlier place in a conversation that we have looked at

- that Chris seems to be 'going' before she is - Chris acknowledges that this may, indeed, be the case. Implicitly, however, Chris' turn, as well as validating Jane's turn, also re-attributes blame to her. 'The leg needs to work quicker to get to the place ...' implies that she is not moving quickly enough. What Chris appears to be accepting, here, is that he may be 'going' before Jane. What he does not accept, however, is her possible claim that *he may be beginning the manoeuvre too early*. As far as he is concerned he is 'going' before Jane because she is beginning the manoeuvre too late. *If she moves her leg 'quicker', he implies, this will enable her to co-ordinate her movement with his so that they both 'go' simultaneously*. An implication of this is that he is starting the move at the 'right' point. As in the original complaint (lines 10 - 11), responsibility for the shortcoming that has been identified continues to be attributed to Jane in Chris' third position response. However, unlike the complainers in examples 10 and 11, Jane is given little opportunity to recognise this for herself. Here, she is told quite overtly what it is that she is doing 'wrong' - she is not moving her leg quickly enough. Nevertheless, she is told this in a way that acknowledges that what she has said at second position may be valid. In consequence, the extent to which Chris' turn conveys a sense of overt confrontation or rancour is diminished, when compared with the more dismissive approaches that are evident in examples 7 - 9.

1.3.3. complaint-circumscribing responses

A certain amount of similarity may sometimes exist between the types of third position utterance that fall within this category and the *non-dismissive responses* seen above. *Complaint-circumscribing responses*, for example, do not contain overtly dismissive components. On the contrary, they, too, are built in ways that tend to validate what has been said at second position or in ways that, at least, are consistent with the possibility that what has been said is valid. Despite these concessive moves, however, they, too, still seek to demonstrate that second position accounts do not exonerate complainers. What these similarities reveal is

that the various categories that are alluded to within this discussion are not always composed of entirely discrete, readily distinguishable types of response. Rather, responses that share a similar type of orientation to second position utterances may be constructed in similar ways. Thus, *dismissive* and *sarcastic responses* may sometimes share certain types of characteristic while *non-dismissive* and *complaint-circumscribing responses* may sometimes have other types of feature in common.

Complaint-circumscribing responses are non-exonerative inasmuch as, as well as the concessive components that have been mentioned, they also incorporate modified versions of initial complaints. More specifically, the modified complaint retains aspects of the original complaint or cites other complainable matters that are closely allied to it while, at the same time, no longer treating as complainable the issues that have been validated. Instances of this type of response can be seen in the two following sequences (examples 13 and 14).

13. [IAD:PP:1B:5:21]

```

      { 604. P 1: you:re approachin' various traders
      |
      | 605.                (0.2)
      |
      | 606. P 1: .hhhh giving various pretexts
1  { 607.                (0.4)
      |
      | 608. Pete: yes=
      |
      | 609. P 1: =that you: a:::::r:::e .hh a person of substantial
      |
      | 610.    means et etra et etra.hh[h and acquiring
      |
      | 611. Pete:                [I've got more
      | {
      | {
      | { 612.    th'n you'll ever 'ave sir
      |
      | 613.                (0.4)
      |
      | 2 { 614. P 1: nyeah
      |   {
      |   { 615.                (0.3)
      |   |
      |   | 616. P 1: I understand that=
  
```

|
 { | 617. Pete: =make no mistake about that
 |
 | 618. (0.3)
 | { 619. P 1: b't (.) you still: (.) u::h (0.8) approach these
 | { 620. (0.2) traders (.) u:h wi- th- on th' pretext of
 | 621. .hh[h
 | [se[e
 3 { 622. Pete: [se[e
 | [pur[cha s i n g]
 | { 623. P 1: [pur[cha s i n g]
 | [WHE:re]
 | 624. Pete: [WHE:re]
 | 625. (0.2)
 | 626. Pete: now let me (0.3) ↓te[ll you something
 | [audi quattros[:
 | { 627. P 1: [audi quattros[:
 | [whe:re y[ou
 | 628. Pete: [whe:re y[ou
 | [an'
 | { 629. P 1: [an'
 | {
 | { 630. other high class cars:

At first position in example 13, P 1, the police officer who we came across in the previous chapter (examples 8 and 10), begins to build an accusation against his co-participant, Pete - 'you're approaching various traders, giving various pretexts that you're a person of substantial means, etc., etc., and acquiring' (lines 604 - 610). The claim that Pete is giving 'pretexts' is clearly interpretable as implying that he is attempting to convey an impression of himself that is false. P 1 discontinues this first position move at line 610 in response to Pete's second position response - 'I've got more than you'll ever have, sir' - which he begins in overlap at line 611. Pete underlines this claim at line 617 with 'make no mistake about that'. What he is claiming here is that he is wealthier than P 1. In drawing this comparison he seeks to demonstrate that, contrary to P 1's implication, he *is*, in fact, 'a person of substantial means'. P 1's third position response to these claims of Pete's is

performed over a number of turns (lines 614 - 616, 619 - 620, 623, 627 and 629 - 630). Despite the somewhat extended nature of his talk here, P 1 is recognisably attempting, both syntactically and discursively, to construct a single response to what Pete has said at second position. This response, however, is interspersed by a number of interruptive incursions by his co-participant, which P 1 'talks over' and/or disregards (lines 622, 627, and 629). Thus, P 1's talk at this point in the sequence constitutes a single third position response even though it is performed over a number of turns. He begins (lines 614 - 616) by confirming the validity of the claim that Pete has made - 'nyee:h (0.3) I understand that'³. However, although confirming in nature, this response is built in a way that does not seek to stimulate further discussion of the relative wealth of the respective interactants. By saying 'I understand that' rather than, for example, '*I know*', the *speaker indicates, in precise terms, that he has assimilated the full import of what has been said and, therefore, that further discussion is unnecessary.* P 1 then goes on to reformulate and complete the accusation that he commenced at first position - 'but you still approach these traders on the pretext of purchasing Audi Quattros and other high class cars' (lines 619 - 620, 623, 627 and 629 - 630). Here, he circumscribes that part of the original accusation to which Pete has 'taken exception' and ceases to imply that he cannot afford the cars in which he is evincing interest. However, he claims, instead, that Pete purports to be interested in buying these cars when, in fact, he does not have a genuine interest in doing so⁴. In doing this he completes the accusation that he was about to make in his original complaint. So, by conceding to Pete's first position account, but indicating that the issues that it addresses are not directly relevant to the complaint that is being made, and then performing a version of the complaint that is circumscribed in a way that no longer raises these issues, the speaker seeks to focus the attention of the conversation onto other matters that, all along, have been of more central concern to him. This reformulation is constructed in a way that demonstrates that, despite the concessions that have been made to the second position account, the first position

| 51. (1.1)
 | 52. Colin: not much of y'self y' jus' gave me
 | 53. (0.2)
 | 54. Colin: well y' j's y' j's provided (0.7) y' know th'
 | 55. necessaries

extract the sequential organisation encountered in most of the examples that we have looked at so far is disrupted to some extent. Nevertheless, the talk is formulated in a way that closely approximates this type of organisation inasmuch as it begins with a complaining turn (lines 32 - 33) which is shortly followed by an account in which the complainees attempts to defend herself against the complaint that has been made against her (lines 36 - 38 and 41). This is followed, in turn, by a series of utterances in which the complainer treats this account as not exonerating the complainees (lines 42 - 55). Since it is the complaint-circumscribing characteristics of this later part of the sequence that are of principal concern at the moment, these three 'sections' of the talk can be treated, for the purposes of the discussion, as first, second and third position moves even though, in some respects, they are non-contiguous and are interspersed by other utterances and pauses (see, e.g., lines 34 - 35, 37, 39 - 40).

At first position (lines 32 - 33) Colin complains that, other than catering for their material/physical needs ('you just provided for them'), Mum gave her children 'nothing'. Then, following a long pause (line 34), he observes that Mum 'felt' that she was adequately fulfilling her responsibilities as a parent ('and you felt, well, that was what your duty is' [line 35]). Although this acknowledgement that Mum believed she was 'fulfilling her duty' by providing what she did may attempt to mitigate the potential hurtfulness of the complaint, the turn's initial component - 'and ...' - clearly shows that it still stands. Mum begins her second position response with a denial component ('nah', [line 36]) and she continues with 'I gave you all more than' (line 38), following the completion of Colin's turn (line 35) and another long pause (line

37). This starts to claim that she provided more than Colin has described. She completes her response with 'I gave money, money in the bank' (line 41). Thus, what Mum claims in response to Colin's complaint is that something else she 'gave' the children, besides 'providing' for them, was financial security. Colin's third position response (lines 37 - 55) is noticeably extended. One reason for this is that delays and other displays of hesitancy and procrastination that are more typical of non-argumentative disagreements, (e.g., pauses, cut-offs, re-starts, repetitions, etc., [Sacks, 1987; Pomerantz, 1984]) are incorporated throughout it. Consequently, a comparatively clear statement of the position that he is adopting is delayed until the end of the sequence - 'you didn't give me (1.1) not much of yourself, you just gave me (0.2) well you just, you just provided, you know the necessities' (lines 50 - 55). This response, like the third position response in the previous example (example 13), constitutes a circumscribed version of the initial complaint. The speaker now complains only on his own behalf, rather than on behalf of all the children, and the extent of the shortcoming that is attributed to Mum is diminished. Rather than it being claimed that she provided 'nothing' the narrower claim is made that she did not provide 'much of yourself'. However, although examples 13 and 14 are similar, inasmuch as they both include circumscribed versions of their respective initial complaints, these circumscriptions are dissimilar in several respects. Some of these similarities and dissimilarities will be identified as the analysis of the sequence proceeds.

To begin with, it is noticeable that, whereas it was inferable in example 13 that the third position response sought to discourage further pursuit of the matters raised at second position, in example 14 it is not formulated in such a way. It is also noticeable that, unlike that in example 13, the third position response in example 14 does not incorporate an account-validating component. The issue of whether Mum did or did not provide the children with financial security is not addressed overtly. However, the possibility that she did more than simply 'provide' for the children, as she has claimed, is *left open* in the way that Colin constructs his response. In his

original complaint, he claims 'you didn't give them nothing ...' (line 32). In the reformulated version this becomes 'you didn't give me not much of yourself'. The substitution of the quantifier 'nothing' with 'not much', here, constitutes a concession that something more than 'nothing' was 'given'. So, although the second position account is not validated overtly, as it was in the previous example, a significant shift is made which narrows the 'gap' between Colin's original claim that Mum provided 'nothing' and her claim that she provided more than this.

By citing the issue of Mum's alleged lack of personal involvement with him, Colin raises a matter that appears to constitute an aspect of the *'non-provision' about* which he complains at first position. This, again, is similar to a move that is made at third position in example 13 where P 1 shifts the focus of the conversation away from the peripheral issue of Pete's financial position onto his attempts to acquire 'high class cars'. However, the shift of focus that Colin performs is also significantly different to that performed by P 1 inasmuch as, whereas P 1's reformulation of his initial complaint focuses on a matter that was recognisably the principal concern of his original complaint, Colin, equally recognisably, 'narrows' the scope of his original complaint at third position. Firstly, he mitigates the definitive claims that he makes, at first position, about the way Mum acted, by using the 'personal opinion formats' 'for myself' and 'I felt' (lines 44 - 47). This, like other features of his response, noted earlier, is a move that is more typical of disagreement sequences than of the argumentative ones that we have been looking at. Secondly, as has been noted, rather than complaining on behalf of all the children, he now complains only on his own behalf. Thirdly, as has also been noted, at the beginning of his third position response he complains that Mum did not give him 'much of yourself' whereas, at first position he complains that she gave the children 'nothing' other than providing for them. This narrowing of the scope of a complaint is a third position move of a type that we have not come across before. It is a move that is characteristic of many types of disagreement sequence in conversation (Pomerantz, 1984, Sacks, 1987 [1973]) but one that is not characteristically found at this sequential location in

complaint-initiated sequences of argumentative talk. However, even though Colin reformulates his complaint in this more qualified way, no sense is gained that he is diminishing the extent to which he is characterising Mum's actions as complainable. Rather, he now claims to feel that his co-participant has acted in a complainable way towards him, personally. It is likely that this claim will be less open to challenge than was the original version of the complaint since Colin's 'feelings' are a matter about which he could legitimately claim to have unique knowledge and authority. Thus, at third position in this sequence, the speaker defends and substantiates his initial, more general complaint about the allegedly inadequate way in which Mum provided for all the children by making more restricted but less refutable claims about his own, personal experience of what she provided. So, although Colin's response is interpretable as conceding that Mum provided the children with more than was originally claimed at first position, the impression is not conveyed that the extent to which Colin considers Mum culpable is diminished. Moreover, this is not only the case because his response substantiates his initial complaint in the ways described. In addition to this, the response also ends by making a *similar complaint* to that made at first position - 'you just, you know, provided the necessaries' (lines 54 - 55). As in example 14, this reformulation of the initial complaint retains modified versions of some of the design features of the original version. Thus, 'you just provided for them' (line 33) becomes 'you just provided the necessaries' (line 54). Similarly, 'you didn't give them nothing ...' (line 32) becomes 'you didn't give me not much ...' (line 50 - 52). This again indicates that key features of the original complaint are being reasserted.

It can be seen from the two examples that are examined here that, even when they incorporate features into their third position responses that make concessions to second position accounts, complainers' talk still tends to be built in ways that treat those accounts as not exonerating complainees of culpability. This seems to be true even if the scope of the initial complaint is narrowed. It is also true when other strategies more commonly used in non-argumentative disagreement sequences, to

minimise divergences of viewpoint or perspective between interactants, are used. This is because the circumscribed version of the complaint usually focuses the attention of the ongoing conversation more precisely onto the originally complained of behaviour, or onto specific details of it (e.g., 'you didn't give me much of yourself' [example 14]). This commonly results in a reformulated version of the complaint that is less vulnerable to whatever defensive moves have been made at second position. In this sense the circumscribed version of the complaint is often more resilient to challenge than was the original version.

1.3.4. account-curtailing responses

Like the *complaint-circumscribing responses* discussed above, *account-curtailing responses* do not, necessarily, dispute the accuracy or veracity of second position accounts. Rather they overtly seek to avoid further discussion of matters raised within them. This may be attempted by the performance of refusals to talk about issues that complainers have cited in defence of their behaviour, attempts to postpone further discussion of them, etc. These types of move are normally accompanied by further utterances within which the complainer explicates their grounds for refusing or postponing talk about these matters. An account-curtailing response can be seen in example 15. Here, an overt refusal is performed.

15. [IAD:MC:2A:4:2]

```

    { 46.Milly:((threatening voice)) don't you (.) da:re correct me
    |
1 { 47.                                     (0.3)
    |
    { 48.Milly:[don't you da:re
    |
    { 49.Clara:[oh b't its (.) alright f' you t' do it t' me?
    |
    | 50.                                     (.)
2 {
    | 51.Milly:((slow, deliberate prosody)) [let me
    |                                     [
    { 52.Clara:                             ['cause you do

```

53. (.)
54. Milly: finish (.) speaking ((slow, deliberate prosody))
55. (0.2)
56. Milly: please ((slow, deliberate prosody))
57. (1.0)
- 3 { 58. Milly: THIS ARgument is not about correcting english 'n'
59. i'm not g'nna (0.2) be drawn in t' arguin' with you
60. about stuff (0.2) that is not involved with this
61. 'cause thats what y're tryin' t' do t' make me look
62. e[ven worse
- 4 { 63. Clara: [no: I::'M NO::[:T
64. Milly: [I:::
65. (0.3)
66. Milly: have asked you (.) on numerous occasions (th't)

At third position in this sequence the complainer (Milly) overtly seeks to 'close down' the complainees (Clara's) second position account in which the latter attempts to justify 'correcting' Milly by implying that Milly 'corrects' her. Milly begins by demanding speakership ('let me finish speaking please' - [lines 51 and 54 - 56]), and thereby implies that Clara has assumed speakership before she has completed her previous turn. She then characterises Clara's claim that she (Milly) corrects *her* talk and, indeed, the entire topic of 'talk correction' as being non-salient to the ongoing conversation - 'this argument is not about correcting English' (line 58). Following this, she overtly refuses to topicalise this issue - 'I'm not going to be drawn into arguing with you about stuff that is not involved with this' (lines 59 - 60). Here she implies that Clara is attempting to induce her ('I'm not going to be drawn in ...') into co-operating with a shift of conversational focus away from the matters that were being talked about before Milly's first position complaint. Milly then attributes a

motive to Clara for attempting to initiate this shift of focus. She is doing this, Milly claims, in order to make her (Milly) 'look even worse' (lines 61 - 62). What seems to be being implied here, is that Clara has organised her talk in ways that have made Milly look 'bad' in some sense. By shifting the focus of the conversation onto an alleged tendency of Milly's to 'correct' Clara, it is claimed, the latter is now attempting to make her look 'even worse'. By refusing to discuss the justification for her behaviour that Clara performs in her second position response, and treating it as being irrelevant to the ongoing conversation, Milly clearly attempts to close this line of argument down. Then, by performing the additional complaint 'that's what you're trying to do to make me look even worse', she introduces a further accusation that Clara is likely to be constrained, to some extent, to address. If she does not this could be interpreted as an implicit concession to the accusation that has been made. Consequently, Clara does address the 'new' complaint at fourth position, with the denial 'no I'm not'. Thus, it is not only observable that Milly's third position response *attempts* to close down the line of argument that Clara has commenced at second position, it is also observably successful in doing so.

None of the typical third position response types that have been examined above accept that the account that has been performed by the complainees at second position exonerates them of culpability for their allegedly complainable actions. In examples 1 - 4, in which the accounts are disregarded, the original complainers respond, at third position, by pointedly ignoring what has been said at second position and by continuing to pursue the complaints that they raised at first position. In the two *sarcastic responses* that have been examined (examples 5 and 6), although elements of the third position responses performed by the complainers *do* appear to accept what has been said at second position, it is also made clear that this is not 'really' being taken seriously. In both these cases the original complaint continues to be pursued and/or other unmistakable indications are given that it still stands. Where *account-attending responses* are concerned, second

position accounts are either overtly rejected, as in the *dismissals* seen in examples 7 - 9, or undermined, as in the *non-dismissive responses* seen in examples 10 - 12. Where second position accounts are validated it is only in the context of utterances that continue to pursue initial complaints, or versions of them, as in the *complaint-circumscribing responses* seen in examples 13 - 14. Finally, in *account-curtailling responses* (e.g., example 15) attempts are made to avoid further discussion of second position utterances and they are not permitted to impinge upon the initial complaint.

However, while an inherent commonality of all the various response types that have been examined is that they are non-exonerative in respect of second position accounts, it is also evident that the way in which their non-exonerative character is constructed varies considerably. It has been noted during the analyses of some of the sequences that have been examined, for example, that responses within which overtly dismissive components are found possess a more disputatious quality than those in which such features are absent. To put it another way, complainers may, by choosing whether or not to perform explicitly dismissive components, be enabled to regulate the extent to which their talk appears confrontational or rancorous. Now, the extent to which a third position response is or is not interpretable as overtly disputatious is a significant matter. As we will see in the concluding part of this chapter, where we will examine some of the responses that are generated at fourth position by various types of third position utterance, it is one that serves to shape the type of response that is forthcoming. For this reason the next part of the discussion will examine some further characteristics of the non-exonerative response types that we have been looking at which may also be significant in regulating the subsequent trajectories of these sequences.

2. Disputatiousness and its regulation

Non-dismissive responses in third position appear less overtly confrontational and rancorous than *dismissals*. In other words, where the direct dismissal of second

position accounts is avoided, and particularly where responses are formulated within which it simply becomes *inferable* that they are considered inadequate, the extent to which the interaction appears overtly antagonistic tends to be diminished. However, there are additional, major reasons why *non-dismissive responses* tend to convey such an impression while *dismissive* and *sarcastic responses* do not. Two features in particular - the extension/expansion of first position complaints and the absence of concessions to second position accounts - appear systematically to accompany dismissive and sarcastic responses. These features, too, contribute to the extent to which such turns appear overtly antagonistic or confrontational. Concomitantly, the absence of such features from non-dismissive responses appears to be implicated in *diminishing* the extent to which they have such an appearance. This is also true of *complaint-circumscribing responses*. These types of variation in third position response require further consideration.

2.1. extensions of first position complaints at third position.

It was mentioned earlier that in around 83% of the cases in the data corpus the third position response continues to pursue the complaint that was performed at first position. This is a tendency that has been reflected repeatedly in the various sequences of talk that have been examined. However, as noted above, there are marked differences between the ways that complaints tend to be pursued at third position in *dismissals* and *sarcastic responses* and the ways found in *non-dismissive responses*. It can be seen, from the examples of dismissive and sarcastic responses examined earlier in this discussion, that utterances of these types are commonly accompanied by further talk that either extends the scope of first position complaints or enhances them in some way. This includes, as we have seen, the performance of adverse and, especially, insulting assessments of complainers on the basis of their allegedly complainable actions (e.g., '... any fool can do anything for nothing' [example 5] and 'you're so thick' [example 9]); exaggeration of the initial complainable (e.g., '... anything for nothing' [example 5]

and 'lets do it a million times ...' [example 6]); the identification of additional senses in which the original complainable matter is deemed complainable (e.g., '... the least you could do is tell me ...' [example 7]); and the identification of undesirable consequences arising from the original complainable action (e.g., '... you're stopping me from doing my work on behalf of laboratory animals' [example 8]). From this, it can be seen that where second position accounts are responded to at third position either dismissively or sarcastically, first position complaints are not, usually, simply re-stated. Rather, these particular types of response are accompanied by intensified, expanded or extended versions of first position complaints. This is a feature of dismissive and sarcastic responses that contributes to their non-concessionary/confrontational character.

In contrast, this kind of complaint extending process tends not to appear in the *non-dismissive responses* that have been dealt with in the discussion. In sequence 11, for example, C's 'I live there (0.3) I live on the Highfield Estate' pursues her original complaint - 'who are you to tell me to move' - which challenges her co-participant's right to prevent her from soliciting outside his house - simply by asserting her own right to be there. Similarly, in example 12 Chris' third position response - 'well the leg has to work quicker to get to the place then' - merely re-attributes responsibility for the fault that was identified at first position - 'by lifting your leg two inches higher means you can't suddenly do the cha-cha?' - back onto his co-participant. In neither of these cases is the original complaint expanded or extended in any significant way and this contributes to the comparatively non-rancorous flavour of the interaction at these points in the respective conversations.

2.2. concession and non-concession in third position responses.

Around 90% of the third position responses found within the data corpus do not accept that second position accounts exonerate complainees of having acted or behaved in a complainable way. Moreover, third position responses often do not make concessions to second position accounts. However, even when concessions

are evident, as is the case, for example, in the *sarcastic responses* that we examined, the concessive work that is done is frequently 'undone' by the performance of additional turn components that, effectively, 'retract' it. Unmistakable indications are given that the accounts performed at second position are not being taken seriously.

More 'genuine' concessions are, however, sometimes made at third position. Some instances of this were encountered, for example, in the *complaint-circumscribing responses* that were examined. There are occasions, then, when second position accounts may be explicitly validated or partially validated even though it is extremely rare for them to be treated, overall, as exonerating complainees. Additionally, there are also occasions when, although they do not incorporate overt concessions, third position responses, nevertheless, implicitly treat aspects of second position accounts as valid. These are responses that do not dispute the validity/accuracy of second position accounts but which, like the other responses that we have examined, do not treat them as exonerating the complainees of the complainable behaviour of which they were originally 'accused'.

It is noticeable, however, that concessive moves or formulations that do not dispute the validity or accuracy of second position accounts have appeared only in *non-dismissive* and *complaint-circumscribing responses*. Moreover, they have appeared in *all* the examples that have fallen within these categories. Thus, in example 10/13, Kevin's account at third position does not dispute that he has been given a transcript of the tape under discussion or that this transcript may constitute 'a format that's there for everybody to easily assimilate', as Rob claims. Similarly, in example 11, C's third position response - 'I live there' - does not dispute S's claims - 'I'm a resident' and 'I live there'. Rather, it implicitly concedes that possessing this status may endow him with certain rights. She acknowledges this in claiming that a similar status confers similar rights on her. Again, in example 12, Chris' response - 'well the leg needs to move quicker to get to the place then' - concedes that Jane's claim - 'seems like you're going before me' - is a valid observation. He merely draws

an alternative conclusion to that drawn by Jane as to the cause of the discrepancy that she has noticed. The *complaint-circumscribing responses* that we have looked at have also either explicitly validated what has been said at second position (e.g., 'yeah, I understand that' [example 13]) or have done so implicitly as in example 14.

In *dismissive responses*, however, concessions and other types of move that leave open the possibility that second position accounts may, in some respects, be valid, are noticeably absent. Thus, in example 7, Kevin's third position response - 'no they don't, they don't know the office number...' - entirely rejects Rob's claim - 'if anyone is unable to contact you they'll contact the office, no doubt'; in example 8, Kevin's third position response - 'I am concerned about it because you're stopping me doing my work on behalf of laboratory animals' - entirely rejects Rob's claim - 'then you've nothing to be concerned about, Kevin, have you?'; and, in example 9, Dave's third position response - 'you're so thick' - clearly rejects Wife's assertion - 'I'm certainly not interested in a castle outside Brighton'.

It is evident, then, that the extent to which a given third position response does or does not appear overtly rancorous, confrontational, and antagonistic may be determined, at least partly, by the presence or absence *within it of the particular* types of move referred to above⁵. Thus, *dismissals*, which include explicit dismissive components that expand and/or extend the scope of original complaints, and which make no concessions to the second position accounts to which they are responding, are more likely than *non-dismissive responses* to convey an impression of overt confrontation.

Now, the types of response that are being described here clearly constitute polar opposites as far as the display of overt confrontation is concerned. Complainers sometimes, however, opt to formulate responses that are 'intermediate' in this respect. On occasions, for example, they may select some of the 'confrontation displaying devices' that have been alluded to while not using others. Also, as was noted earlier, complainers sometimes choose to provide complainees with opportunities to infer, for themselves, that their second position

accounts have not been accepted, (e.g., examples 10/13 and 11), whereas on other occasions (e.g., example 12) they may explicitly 'inform' complainees of these matters. These different techniques contribute to subtle variability in the extent to which their talk conveys a sense of confrontation or rancour.

In the next section of the discussion we will examine the kinds of response that are generated at fourth position in complaint-initiated sequences of argumentative talk. Before doing this, however, it would probably be useful briefly to summarise the principal observations that have been made so far. At first position in these sequences some complainable action or behaviour is attributed to the complaine by the complainer. Complainees usually respond at second position by making some kind of concessive move, (e.g., by acknowledging that they have performed whatever complainable action has been attributed to them), but they also perform accounts which seek to legitimise or mitigate their behaviour. At third position, complainers typically respond in ways that demonstrate that they do not accept that these accounts exonerate their co-participants and that the original complaint still stands. These *non-exonerative responses* may be constructed dismissively, non-dismissively or sarcastically. Alternatively, what has been said at second position may simply be disattended, disregarded, or discounted. Moreover, the scope of the original complaint may be expanded or compounded, it may be retained or, occasionally, it may be diminished. In these latter, comparatively uncommon cases, in which the field of reference of a complaint is 'narrower' at third position than was the case at first position, this rarely means that the extent to which the complaine is deemed culpable is diminished. Rather, the modified version of the complaint is usually constructed in a way that is likely to be less vulnerable to challenge than was the original version. We have also seen that by opting or not opting to perform dismissive, non-concessive third position responses and/or responses within which the scope of the initial complaint is expanded, complainers are enabled to regulate the extent to which their talk is confrontational.

The upshot of these various observations is twofold. Firstly, at third position, complainees usually continue to 'stand accused' of performing the original complainable act or some modified version of it and, sometimes, they are also accused of behaving in additional complainable ways. Secondly, the third position response is often built in a way that projects either an escalation or a de-escalation in the disputatiousness of the subsequent talk. The focus of the discussion will now turn towards the implications that these dimensions of third position responses may have for the subsequent trajectories of the sequences.

In the next section I examine the kinds of response that tend to be generated at fourth position by non-exonerative third position responses. We begin by identifying one thing that complainees tend *not* to do at fourth position, namely to pursue the lines of argument upon which they embarked at second position. Following this, in the concluding part of the chapter, some consideration will be given to the types of response that tend to be generated at fourth position by *dismissive*, *sarcastic* and *account-disattending* third position utterances. These will be compared with the types of fourth position response that tend to be generated by third position utterances that appear less overtly confrontational.

3. Fourth position responses.

3.1 non-pursuit of second position responses

In the data corpus, one type of response occurs comparatively infrequently at fourth position. In only about a third of the cases do complainees respond at fourth position by continuing to pursue the defensive lines of argument that they have adopted at second position. In other words, one common outcome of the non-exonerative moves made by complainers at third position is that, at fourth position, complainees do not continue to cite whatever matters were raised in their second position accounts in defence of their behaviour. In sequence 16, for example, Jane

second position, Rob responds by claiming that Kevin has been provided with the 'material evidence' (which is the way in which Kevin has referred to the tape) in the form of a written transcript. At third position, as we also saw earlier, Kevin's response attempts to demonstrate, among other things, that this written version of the evidence will not permit him to pursue one of the lines of defence that he wishes to use at the hearing - that someone else said the things that he has been accused of saying. As in the previous example (instance 16), the complainee does not respond, at fourth position, by pursuing his second position account. Here he responds, instead, with 'well that's a point you'll have to bring to the meeting then'. This response attempts to postpone further discussion of the matters that Kevin has raised at third position until the hearing itself (the 'meeting' to which Rob refers). Thus, rather than continuing with his second position argument, e.g., '*well I still think it would be easier for the hearing to have the transcribed version*', he seeks, instead, to terminate further discussion of the topic.

The preceding instances (examples 16 - 17) exemplify two of the response types that complainees may perform at fourth position which do not continue to pursue the arguments that they adopted at second position. Others include the citing of alternative reasons why the originally complained of behaviour is justifiable (alternative to those cited at second position), the performance of counter-complaints and attempts to initiate shifts of topic to related issues. However, although, in around two thirds of the cases in the data corpus, the line of argument used at second position is no longer pursued at fourth position, there clearly remains a substantial body of fourth position responses within which a topical connection *is* retained with these earlier arguments.

It can be seen, within the data corpus, that one location at which these types of connection are often retained is subsequent to third position responses which disattend or disregard what has been said at second position. Several *account-disattending* third position responses were examined at the beginning of this

chapter (examples 1 - 4). In the next section we will return to a couple of these instances to examine the kinds of response that are generated subsequently.

3.2. fourth position responses following account-disattending third position utterances

When we first examined the sequence of interaction shown in example 18 (see

18. [IAD:DW2:1B:7:8]

```

{ 197. Wife:                                     I- say
|
| 198.      you were- not allowed t' mix with your fa:ther even
|
| 199.      when y' were- fifteen [y' had t' knock on th'
|                                     [
1} 200. Gemma:                                     [ehh
|
| 201.      do:~r (0.3) f' 'n' appointment t' see: him
|                                     (0.2)
|
| 202. Wife: so- you don't know what fam'ly life is
|
| 203.      (0.3)
2}
| 204. Dave: 'n' you do?
|
3} 205. Wife: I blame your ↑p[arent-
|                                     [
| 206. Dave:                                     [you pissed OFF WHEN Y' WERE- SIXTEEN
4}
| 207.      [(you total shit)
|
| 208. Wife: [ah hl[ame-
|                                     [
| 209. Gemma: [(DON'T START THAT)
|
| 210. Wife: your ↑p[arents are t' blame f' th' way you've bin

```

examples 1 and 2) we saw that, at first position, Wife complains that Dave is inadequately oriented to 'family life', a shortcoming for which, she claims, his father is responsible. Dave responds, at second position, by implying that Wife, too, is 'guilty' of this same shortcoming. Wife's reply, at third position, is not responsive to this second position move of Dave's. Instead, it pursues and expands upon the initial complaint. Here, as we can see from her later turn - 'your parents are to blame

...' (line 210)' - she begins to blame both of his parents whereas, at first position, it is his father, alone, who is held to be culpable. It is noticeable that, at fourth position, unlike the majority of utterances in the data corpus that are performed at this sequential location, Dave's response does retain a topical connection with the line of argument that he has adopted at second position. His counter-complaint - 'you pissed off when you were sixteen' (line 20) - is designed both to evidence and to function as a continuation of his earlier implication at line 204 that Wife, too, is inadequately oriented to 'family life'. It is also noticeable that, just as Wife's third position utterance disattends what Dave has had to say at second position, his fourth position response disattends what she has had to say at third position. This is evident inasmuch as it begins in overlap at a point at which it would not be possible for him to be able to predict what his co-participant *is in the process of saying in her preceding turn* (line 205). *This counter-complaint is followed by a personally abusive, adverse assessment of Wife ('you total shit')*. These utterances clearly retain a topical connection with the speaker's second position response. However, it is quite evident that they do not simply reformulate it. Rather, they constitute both a considerable *expansion in its scope and a marked escalation in the disputatious character of the interaction*. The complainees shifts from implicitly re-attributing a complainable that has just been attributed to him, back on to his co-participant, at second position, to performing an overt, detailed and potentially interruptive counter-complaint against her together with an assessment of her, herself, that is both abusive and aggravated ('total shit'), at fourth position.

Example 19, below, contains another sequence of Dave and Wife's interaction

19. [IAD:DW1:1B:6:6]

```

{   155.Dave: I FEEL ROBBED (.) CHEATED (0.6) and bloody abused
|
|}  156.                (0.3)
|
|}  157.Dave: THE REASON (.) WHY (.) I'[m >the reason- I've been
1}
| { 158.Wife:                [I'M THE ONE THAT'S

```

```

| |
| { 159.Dave: left?<
|
2 { { 160.Wife: BEEN ABUSED
| |
| { 161. (0.3)
| |
| { 162.Wife: YOU'VE ABUSED [ME:
| |
| 163.Gemma [hahaHAHAHA=
3 { 164.Dave: =I have [been left
| |
4 { 165.Wife: [DON'T YER KNOW WHA' ABUSE MEANS?

```

that we have examined previously (see example 4). Here, as in the previous example (extract 18), the second position response re-attributes the *complainable* that is attributed to the complainees at first position back on to the complainer. Thus, Wife asserts that, rather than her having behaved in an 'abusive' way towards Dave, as he has claimed, it is he who has behaved in an *abusive way towards her*. His third position response (line 164) disattends this claim of Wife's. He simply re-initiates the part of his initial complaint that he was in the process of performing prior to Wife's second position utterances so that what she has said is pointedly 'ignored'. The fourth position response that is generated subsequently ('don't you know what abuse means?') is similar to that performed in the previous example in three respects. Firstly, inasmuch as it focuses principally on the subject of 'abuse', it retains a topical connection with the argument that the complainees has adopted at second position. Secondly, like the complainees's third position utterances, it, too, is disattentive, i.e., it begins in overlap at a point at which the speaker is unlikely to know what her co-participant is about to say. Thirdly, it is more overtly contentious than the response that is performed at second position. While it remains consistent with the claim that it is Dave who is the 'abusing' party it also implies that he does not even understand the meaning of the terminology that he has used.

Three main observations can be made on the basis of these analyses. Firstly, as has been noted previously, although, in the majority of cases, fourth position responses do not usually continue to pursue the accounts that have been

performed at second position, this tends not to be true of those that *are performed* following *account-disattending* third position responses. Secondly, the examples that have been examined here also illustrate what appears to be another distinctive characteristic of the fourth position responses that tend to be generated by disattentive third position utterances. They, too, tend to be disattentive. Thirdly, as we have seen in the detailed analyses of the cases that have been examined, the turns that are performed at fourth position are recognisably more overtly contentious, disputatious, etc., than those that are performed at second position by the same speaker. Thus, it can also be seen that disattentive third position utterances tend to generate fourth position responses *in which the argumentative dimensions of the interaction are escalated.*

Now, it was argued earlier in this discussion that particular types of third position response, namely those that extend initial complaints and are overtly dismissive and non-concessive, appear more disputatious than *certain other responses*. It can now be seen that *account-disattending responses* can also be added to this list of more disputatious utterances. The evidence for making such a claim is provided within the data itself inasmuch as the fourth position responses that complainers tend to perform in reply to these types of utterance are themselves, as we have seen, more overtly disputatious or contentious than was their preceding talk. In the final sections of this chapter it will be demonstrated that the other types of third position response that have been characterised as being overtly disputatious, mentioned above, also tend to generate these kinds of fourth position response.

3.3. fourth position responses following dismissive and sarcastic third position utterances

It was claimed earlier that complainers are enabled to regulate the extent to which their talk appears overtly confrontational by opting either to include or not to include three particular types of feature within their third position responses. The three features referred to here are, i) overtly dismissive components such as

denials, contradictions and explicit rebuttals, ii) components that expand the scope of the initial complaint and, iii) components that are concessive in respect of second position accounts. Dismissive components of the type i) kind tend to co-occur with the presence of type ii) components and the absence of type iii) components. Whereas, type ii) components tend to be absent and type iii) present where *non-dismissive* and *complaint-circumscribing third position responses* are concerned. In short, then, because they tend to incorporate certain types of feature, dismissive and sarcastic third position responses tend to appear more overtly disputatious and confrontational than those that are non-dismissive or complaint-circumscribing. This argument is further substantiated, empirically, by the fourth position responses that these types of third position utterance tend to generate. As these fourth position turns tend to be more disputatious and contentious than the kinds of actions performed by the same speakers at second position, it can be concluded that dismissive and/or sarcastic third position responses tend to be oriented to by complainers, themselves, as conversational moves that warrant escalations in the disputatious or confrontational character of their contributions to the *ongoing* interaction. To demonstrate what is being claimed here the fourth position responses that follow one or two of the dismissive and sarcastic third position utterances that we have looked at earlier will be re-examined. Particular attention will be paid to the types of conversational move made by complainers at fourth position as compared with the types of move that are made by the same speakers at second position.

We shall begin by taking a look at two sequences of talk (examples 20 and 21), each of which we have seen before, in which the complainers perform a *dismissal* at third position. In each of these cases the dismissive response also expands the scope of the initial complaint while making no concessions to what is said at second position.

20. [IAD:KR1:2A:1:8]

- 1 { 216. Kevin: so i cannot understand (.) i cannot understand why
 { 217. you've taken this [drastic action
 [
- 2 { 218. Rob: [then you've (nothing) t' be
 { 219. concerned about Ke[vin have you.
 [
- { 220 Kevin: [.hhhhhhHHHHHH I ↑AM (0.3)
 | 221. concerned >>about i'<< because YOU'RE STOPPING ME
 3 { 222. DOING MY WORK ON BEHALF OF LABORATORY ↑ANIMALS:!!
 | 223. (0.3)
 | 224. Kevin: AS FROM (.) NO:W!!
 { 225. (0.2)
 {
- 4 { 226. Rob: yes [as from now kevin [(now (.) y've bin given)=
 [[
- { 227. Kevin: [.hhhhhhhhHHHHHHHH [I HAVE BEEN DOING IT-
 | 228. Rob: =that instruction=
 { 229. Kevin: =SEVEN and a half years rob

It will be recalled from the earlier analysis of the sequence of talk shown in example 20 (see example 8) that, at second position, Rob's response - 'then you've nothing to be concerned about Kevin, have you' - implies that if, as is intimated in the initial complaint, Kevin has done nothing to warrant being suspended, he will be reinstated by a disciplinary hearing that is pending. Although this appears to be a somewhat disingenuous response, since it is made apparent at first position that it is the speaker who has instigated Kevin's suspension, it is, nevertheless, built in a way that purports to accept the possibility that Kevin is 'innocent' of any wrongdoing. Kevin's third position response is dismissive, inasmuch as it contradicts Rob's claim that he has nothing to be concerned about - 'I am concerned'. It also expands the scope of the initial complaint by complaining, in addition, about an adverse consequence which, it is claimed, arises from the initially complained of action - 'your stopping me doing my work on behalf of laboratory animals'. It makes no

concessions of any kind to what Rob has said at second position. The response is concluded with 'as from now' (line 224). One function that this fulfils is to further emphasise that the action that Rob has taken does constitute a cause for concern. The adverse consequence to which Kevin has alluded will take effect immediately. At fourth position, Rob responds with 'yes as from now Kevin (.) now you've been given that instruction'. The first part of this response ('yes as from now Kevin ...') is built as a confirmation of Kevin's preceding turn ('as from now'), inasmuch as it begins with a confirmation marker ('yes ...') and then repeats the prior turn *in full*. However, the second part of Rob's response refers to this earlier utterance as 'that instruction' (line 228). This gives rise to two questions. Firstly, what is it, precisely, that Rob is confirming here and, secondly, in what sense can 'as from now' be characterised as an instruction? The answers to these questions appear to be interconnected. Two things that Rob's response is *interpretable as confirming* is that the undesirable outcome that Kevin has referred to *will* occur and that it will occur immediately. However, his expression 'that instruction' appears to refer to the earlier part of Kevin's prior turn - 'you're stopping me from doing my work ...' as well as to the later part - 'as from now'. So Rob also seems to be confirming that Kevin is to stop working 'as from now' and the instruction that he refers to appears to be this suspension of Kevin's employment. Overall, then, Rob's fourth position response seems to constitute a type of 'officious' confirmation that this suspension still stands. This is an openly defiant and uncompromising type of move inasmuch as it also confirms that this will immediately result in an adverse consequence for 'laboratory animals', as Kevin has claimed. This turn marks a major shift in Rob's orientation to the complaints that Kevin has been performing. His response at second position (lines 218 - 219) is built as being in alignment with Kevin's implied 'innocence', at first position, since it purports to accept that he may have done nothing to warrant being suspended. This is in marked contrast to Rob's fourth position response in which he defiantly confirms that Kevin's suspension is to take effect immediately *in spite* of what are treated as accurate concerns on the latter's part. Here, the type of

'pretence' seen at second position is entirely abandoned and the non-alignment between the respective positions of the disputants is starkly exposed. It can thus be seen that the dismissive, non-concessive and complaint-expanding response that Kevin performs at third position generates a further escalation in the confrontational nature of the interaction at fourth position.

In this next sequence (example 21) the complaine (Wife) responds, at second

21. [IAD:DW2:1B:7:3]

1 { 74. Dave: you want t' jus' live [on it
 | [

1 { 75. Gemma: [.uh
 | [

1 { 76. (0.3)
 | [

1 { 77. Dave: and watch it go
 | [

1 { 78. (0.3)
 | [

1 { 79. Dave: and in a year you'll have nothing
 | [

1 { 80. (.)
 | [

1 { 81. Gemma: you're [a dickhead
 | [

2 { 82. Wife: [i'm cert'nly not int'rested in a castle
 | [

2 { 83. out[side brighton
 | [

3 { 84. Dave: [you're sooooo thi[ck
 | [

3 { 85. Gemma: [ehh
 | [

3 { 86. Wife: [actu'lly- lets ju[s' say
 | [

3 { 87. Dave: [you
 | [

3 { 88. Wife: a round (.) tower
 | [

4 { 89. Dave: tried t' take that-
 | [

4 { 90. (0.4)
 | [

4 { 91. Wife: with no roof with trees growing through it
 | [

4 { 92. (0.4)
 | [

4 { 93. Wife: that is what y're- talking of buying

position, to her co-participant's first position complaint with 'I'm certainly not interested in a castle outside Brighton'. This indicates that the proposal that he has made earlier in the conversation - that they should buy a castle - is one that she finds unattractive. He responds, at third position, with the insulting assessment 'you're so thick'. This expands the scope of the initial complaint. At first position, it is an alleged preference of Wife's to 'live on' the financial capital 'and watch it go' that is treated as complainable, while at third position Wife, herself, is adversely assessed in a more generic manner. No concessions of any kind are made to the position that Wife has adopted in her preceding turn. Wife's fourth position response commences with a detailed re-description of the property that Dave is proposing to buy. It is evident, from the outset ('actually lets just say ...') that this may describe the property in a less flattering light. She then goes on to refer to it, much more modestly, as a 'round tower' rather than as a 'castle', which is how it is referred to at second position. Its structural condition is then also denigrated. The response culminates by explicitly referring to Dave's wish to buy this property whereas this remains implicit at second position. This, again, marks a clear escalation in the contentious nature of the complainees talk at fourth position when compared with her previous turn. Thus, it can be seen that the dismissive response performed by the complainer at third position generates a shift in the complainees talk from a confirming type of response, within which any counter-complaint against her co-participant remains entirely implicit, at second position, to an overt and detailed accusation against him at fourth position.

This sort of escalation is also evident in the fourth position responses that tend to be generated by *sarcastic* third position utterances. As we have seen before (examples 1 and 5), in example 22 Dave's third position talk responds sarcastically

22. [IAD:DW1:1B:6:4]

```

{ 100.Dave: forty-five a day.
|
| 101.Gemma: uh °uh°

```

1 {
 | 102. (0.7)
 |
 | { 103.Dave: 'ats what you yourself shoul' be making (0.3) profit
 |
 | 104. (0.2)
 |
 | 105.Gemma: °uh°
 |
 | 106. (2.6)
 |
 | { 107.Wife: the's a recession on at the moment [y' don't do it all
 | | [
 | { 2 { 108.Dave: [i kno:w yeah
 | |
 | { 109.Wife: the t[i:i:me?
 | | [
 | { 110.Dave: [>an' any< ↓fool c'n do anything f' nothing
 |
 | { 111. (0.5)
 | |
 | | 112.Wife: well i'm wo:rrking you're not wo:rrking
 | { 4 { 113. (1.4)
 | |
 | | 114.Wife: at least at least i mean i know today ah've tax'n
 | |
 | | 115. a- few quid?

to Wife's claim that her failure to earn as much as he thinks she should is a result of 'a recession'. It begins by validating this justification ('I know, yeah') but then goes on overtly to characterise Wife, herself, as a 'fool', thereby expanding the scope of the initial complaint which focuses only on matters related to her low earnings. Although the initial components, at line 108, appear concessive in respect of what has been said at second position, it is subsequently made quite apparent that this is disingenuous and sarcastic. This sarcastic response, like the responses described above, generates an escalation in the confrontational character of the complainees talk. The turn that Wife performs at second position seeks to 'defend' her own behaviour but it also acknowledges that she is earning less than Dave would like - 'there's a recession on, you don't do it all the time'. At fourth position, by contrast, she treats her own actions as preferable to Dave's alleged inaction with the counter-complaint - 'well I'm working, you're not working'. This counter-complaining type of

response clearly constitutes a much more 'offensive' kind of utterance than the defence that the same speaker has performed at second position.

Of course, it can only be claimed that it is these particular types of more disputatious third position utterance that generate escalations in the level of disputation at fourth position if it can also be demonstrated that *less* disputatious third position talk does not generate this type of escalation. In the final section of the chapter, therefore, we shall return to a couple of the *non-dismissive* and *complaint-circumscribing* third position turns that were looked at earlier. Here it will be shown that the fourth position responses that are generated by these less disputatious types of utterance *do* tend to be less confrontational and acrimonious.

3.4 fourth position responses following non-dismissive and complaint-circumscribing third position utterances

As we have just seen, subsequent to third position utterances that are dismissive, that expand the scope of the initial complaint and that are non-concessive towards second position accounts, fourth position responses tend to be more contentious and confrontational. Thus, utterances that contain these types of feature tend to be interpreted by complainers, themselves, as disputatious formulations. We will now examine the responses that are generated at fourth position by two of the third position utterances that were looked at earlier which *do not* incorporate these types of feature, that is by *non-dismissive* and *complaint-circumscribing* responses. It will be shown that these types of third position utterance tend *not* to generate disputatious fourth position responses. This will provide further evidence to support the claim that complainers tend to interpret *dismissive* and *sarcastic* responses as more disputatious types of utterance.

The third position response in the following sequence of talk (example 23)

23. [IAD:KR3:2A:3:8

{	220. Kevin:	[what you're
		[
	221. Rob:	[°sure°

- 1 { 222. Kevin: doing is you're de-nying me access to uh-
 { 223. material evidence which i think ↑would ↑be
 { 224. ↑relev[ent t o m y c]as:e
 []
 { 225. Rob: [>>no we're givi-<<]
 { 226. (0.2)
 { 227. Rob: no >>we are giving you<< the >material evidence<
 { { 228. as in the transcript
 { 229. (0.2)
 2 { 230. Rob: and thats in [a format thats
 []
 { 231. Kevin: [.hhhhhhhhhhh .hhh[hh
 []
 { 232. Rob: [thats there f'
 { { 233. everybody t' easily a- assimilate=
 { 234. Kevin: =wel- y- n- for example i might hear d- uh s:o-
 { 235. eh- you've got me saying resign resign i might say
 { { 236. (.) well thats somebody:: (.) that that is the
 { 237. voice of somebody i know
 3 { 238. Rob: but [()
 []
 { 239. Kevin: [and this person is here t'da:vy
 { 240. (0.3)
 { 241. Kevin: you know to- to state that .hh but i'm not able to
 { 242. say that [if i can't hear the tape in advance=
 []
 { 243. Rob: [wel-
 4 { 244. Rob: =well thats thats a point that you'll have t' bring
 { 245. to th' meeting then

attempts to demonstrate to the complaine (Rob) that his second position utterance is not considered to legitimise the complained of behaviour ('denying' Kevin access

to 'material evidence'). It contains no explicitly dismissive components. The response also makes no attempt to dispute Rob's claims that Kevin has been provided with a 'transcript' and that this is 'in a format that's there for everybody to easily assimilate' (lines 228 - 233). This less disputatious third position response generates a fourth position move that is, itself, less disputatious. Here, although Rob attempts to postpone further discussion - 'well that's a point that you'll have to bring to the meeting then', no attempt is made to dispute what Kevin has said at third position. Indeed, the turn is shaped so as to leave open the possibility that what has been said may be valid. It is compatible with the possibility that Rob is opting to defer the matter to the disciplinary hearing on the grounds that Kevin's third position response has been recognised as a cogent argument. Of course, one thing that Rob refrains from doing here is to exonerate Kevin on the basis of what he has said. However, his response, rather than continuing to focus on the differences that exist between the positions of the respective speakers, provides Kevin with an avenue by means of which he may come to be exonerated, that is, by 'the meeting'. This is clearly a far less confrontational type of response than that performed by the same speaker at second position in which the first position complaint is overtly invalidated - 'no, we are giving you the material evidence ...'. Here, then, a less disputatious third position response is seen to initiate a de-escalation in the disputatious character of the complainees' talk from second position to fourth position.

Finally, in this next instance (sequence 24) we return to one of the examples of

24. [IAD:CM:1B:3:2]

1 { 32. Colin: and- you di'n' give them nuffin- (0.2) except °hhh°
 1 {
 1 { 33. buvin' you j's provided f' them
 34. (1.1)

35. Colin: and you felt well- that w's wh[at YOUR DUTY IS
 { 36. Mum: [nah
 { 37. (1.2)
 { 38. Mum: i gave you all more than u-
 2 { 39. (1.4)
 { 40. Colin: ah- weel- y' [gave
 { 41. Mum: [ah gave (money-) [money in dee bank,]
 { 42. Colin: [uh f' m y self]
 { 43. (0.3)
 { 44. Colin: I can tell you for m'self
 { 45. (0.8)
 { 46. Colin: that you >y' did-n'< give me (0.5) wha' I:
 { 47. felt (0.4) that i felt uh-i felt you- >y- y- y-<
 { 48. sort of
 3 { 49. (0.5)
 { 50. Colin: y' di'n' give me
 { 51. (1.1)
 { 52. Colin: not much of y'self y' jus' gave me
 { 53. (0.2)
 { 54. Colin: well y' j's y' j's provided (0.7) y' know th'
 { 55. necessaries
 → { 56. (0.4)
 { 57. Colin: thats how i feel
 → { 58. (0.2)
 { 59. Colin: f' m'self
 4 {
 → { 60. (0.3)

85. Mum: I'm supPosed t' BE OUT THERE
 86. (1.1)
 87. Mum y' know (0.2) why 'm I not out there
 88. (0.8)
 89. Mum: I suffer with some serious guilt y' know
 90. (0.7)
 91. Mum: when I don- go- t' work

though she does not have to (line 79) and then goes on to admit that she is driven to do this by feelings of guilt (lines 81 - 89). These *are concessive* types of move that seek to excuse, rather than to deny, the behaviour about which Colin has complained. Later still in the conversation she admits to a third party, in Colin's presence, that his view of the way in which she has behaved is valid (see sequence 26). Implicit within her turn 'I never saw it the way he say' (line 120) is an admission

26. [IAD:CM:1B:3:5]

118. Mum: .hhhh ((sob))
 119. (1.0)
 120. Mum: I never saw it th' way he say

that she now does accept that her behaviour has been interpretable in the way that Colin has described. It can be inferred from these later turns (lines 81 - 89 and 120) that Mum's lack of response following Colin's third position utterances (example 24) recognise the cogency of the argument that he has put forward. It is thus evident that, like the non-dismissive third position response seen in sequence 23, the complaint-circumscribing response that Colin performs in sequence 24 generates a de-escalation in the disputatious character of the subsequent interaction.

What is beginning to emerge here, then, is a distinct pattern within which third position responses that are overtly dismissive and non-concessive *vis a vis* second position accounts, and/or that expand the scope of the initial complaint, tend to generate fourth position responses that are more disputatious, confrontational and contentious than the utterances performed by the same speakers in response to

the initial complaints. Concomitantly, third position responses that do not contain these kinds of feature tend to generate fourth position responses that either are *not* more disputatious or that are actually less so. Thus, it would appear that one way in which escalations or de-escalations in the disputatious character of complaint-initiated sequences of argumentative talk may come about is through the inclusion or non-inclusion of the kinds of feature that have been identified above. It can also be seen that third position responses may often be centrally implicated in determining the subsequent trajectories of these sequences. *Since, as we saw in the previous chapter, complainees often respond to complaints with moves that are both self-justificatory and concessive, at second position, it seems likely that it is often the third position turn which shapes the extent to which the argumentative dimensions of the interaction become more or less escalated.*

4. Summary and conclusions.

In the previous chapter it was established that, where argumentative interaction is concerned, complainees, when initially responding to complaints, rarely claim that they have not taken whatever complainable action has been attributed to them. Moreover, it was also found that where such claims are made, they are customarily accompanied by mitigational work. This may involve, for example, an acknowledgement that *something has been done that is being interpreted*, by the complainer, as complainable. In by far the majority of cases, though, complainees concede, either implicitly or explicitly, that they have taken whatever action is originally complained about. One outcome of this kind of concessive work may be that they are able to avoid their and their co-disputants' respective positions *vis a vis* disputed matters from becoming overtly polarised. It was also found, however, that as well as making these concessive moves, complainees also usually respond by attempting to characterise their allegedly complainable behaviour as reasonable or justified. Typically, they do this by performing justifying accounts. Thus, they acknowledge having behaved in whatever way is being complained about but treat

that way of behaving as uncomplaining - they acknowledge the act but deny culpability. It was concluded that it is this latter concern - the rejection of culpability - that appears to constitute the central focus of their second position responses, and to be the principal dynamic underlying and informing the way in which their talk is organised at this stage.

The present chapter has attempted to examine the ways in which these second position moves are handled by complainers at third position, and some of the ways in which complainees then respond at fourth position. As we have seen, at third position, complainers customarily respond non-exoneratively. They indicate that their co-participants' justifications are not considered to exonerate them of culpability. Most commonly, these second position utterances are disregarded, as in examples 1 - 4; ridiculed, often through the use of sarcasm, as in examples 5 and 6; dismissed, as in examples 7 - 9; or undermined by the performance of alternative accounts, as in examples 10 - 12. Moreover, the kinds of concessive move normally found at second position are found less commonly at third position. Where such moves are made at third position they are usually formulated in ways that buttress the complaint that was made at first position, as we saw in the instances of complaint circumscription in examples 13 and 14. We also saw that, as well as operating in these ways, typical third position responses seek to invalidate second position accounts by continuing to pursue first position complaints. In all of these ways complainers indicate to their co-participants that the justificatory work that they have performed at second position has not been accepted as legitimising their behaviour or as exonerating them of culpability.

Following these kinds of move, complainees typically respond in two main ways. In a large minority of cases they attempt, at fourth position, despite the discouragement they have received at third position, to defend or, in other ways, to allude further to the arguments they have constructed at second position. Third position responses within which what has been said at second position is disattended or disregarded appear to be particularly prone to generating fourth

position responses of this type as in examples 18 and 19. In the majority of cases in the data corpus, however, complainers do not pursue the arguments they have adopted at second position any further, choosing instead to initiate alternative conversational trajectories. They may, for example, opt to topicalise matters that have been raised at third position by their co-participants, as in example 16; to terminate talk about those matters, as in example 17; to construct counter-complaints, or to initiate other shifts of conversational focus or topic.

We have also seen that some responses performed by complainers at fourth position appear to be more disputatious than was their talk at second position, while others appear less so. It was observed that a *correlation seems to exist between* third position utterances that are non-concessive and dismissive towards second position accounts and which also expand the scope of initial complaints, and more disputatious fourth position responses. A correlation also seems to exist between third position utterances that are concessive and non-dismissive towards second position accounts and which do not expand the scope of the initial complaint, and fourth position responses in which the disputatious character of the interaction is either not escalated or de-escalated.

Having thus summarised some of the shapes that argumentative, complaint-initiated sequences of talk may take, it is now possible to begin to attempt to draw a few more general conclusions about some of the dynamics that underlie them. Where second position responses to complaints are concerned, these kinds of issue were addressed in the previous chapter. Here, consequently, the later, third and fourth position utterances of these sequences will be concentrated upon.

As has been seen, complainers usually seek, at second position, to reject culpability for actions that they acknowledge having taken. What kind of interactional priority is this likely to raise for complainers, who normally find that the actions about which they have complained at first position have been characterised as legitimate, inoffensive or unproblematic at second position? Now, one possibility that is made relevant by the justificatory accounts performed by complainers at

second position is that complainers have performed complaints in circumstances where legitimate grounds for them to do so do not exist. This could be an invidious interactional position to occupy. Speakers who, having made a complaint, subsequently find, for example, that they *really* have directed it at the 'wrong' recipient, or who discover that the complained of event did not, after all, take place, typically find themselves guilty of committing an interactional *faux pas*. As anyone who has found themselves in this kind of position will doubtless be aware, the work that is undertaken to repair such gaffes is often extensive - apologies may be profuse, self-deprecating utterances may be performed, and so on. Such events, moreover, are often considered to be reportable matters, even by those who have committed the infraction, and accounts of them may be accompanied by *reports of 'embarrassment'*, (e.g., '*I wanted the ground to swallow me up*'). It seems probable, for these reasons, that the possibility that an unwarranted complaint has been performed is one that complainers *are likely to resist*. It is also one, as we have seen, against which they recurrently seek to defend themselves. *Second position* accounts are treated as non-exonerative and further pursuit of the arguments raised within them is discouraged, while original complaints continue to be pursued, sometimes in an expanded form. Even on those rare occasions in which the scope of an initial complaint is diminished at third position, it still tends to be circumscribed in a way that makes it less open to whatever challenge has been mounted at second position. So, complainers who are confronted, at second position, with some move that makes relevant the possibility that they have complained without due cause, systematically respond at third position in ways that are designed to defend, justify or substantiate their initial complaints, to undermine the lines of argument that have been adopted at second position and to diminish the likelihood that they will be pursued subsequently. For these reasons it seems highly probable that it is these dynamics - an overriding concern to defend their initial complaints and to undermine and deter further pursuit of the possibility that they were unwarranted - that drives complainers' third position responses.

This view is supported, to quite a large extent, by the kinds of response made by complainees at fourth position inasmuch as the strategies adopted by complainers at third position are often 'successful'. In the majority of the cases in the corpus of data, complainees do not continue to pursue the lines of argument that they adopted at second position any further and this would, indeed, seem to suggest that third position responses have the effect of deterring further pursuit of them. However, this tendency of complainees not to continue with their lines of defence obviously militates against them achieving what has already been identified as their primary objective - the rejection of culpability. One way in which they overcome this, in a large minority of cases, is by continuing to pursue the lines of argument that they adopted at second position despite the tendency of most third position responses to deter them from so doing. By doing this, these complainees continue to treat their allegedly complainable behaviour as justifiable or uncomplainable and, thereby, to reject culpability. However, in those cases - the majority - in which complainees choose not to pursue the arguments that they have previously adopted, the possibility is once more made relevant by their co-participants' third position responses that their behaviour was complainable, after all. As has been noted, this, clearly, is not commensurate with a concern to reject culpability. However, as we have seen, the fourth position responses performed by complainees who opt *not* to pursue their second position arguments customarily and recognisably seek to 'head off' this possibility in other ways. In some cases matters that have been raised at third position may be addressed, so that a shift of conversational focus away from the initial complaint and the issue of whether the complaineer has behaved culpably takes place. In others, complainees go onto the offensive, incorporating new counter-complaints into their fourth position responses so that it is they who come to assume the role of complainer. In still further cases, fourth position responses appear to seek to 'close down' the lines of argument adopted by complainers at third position. Thus, even when they choose to pursue the arguments that they have adopted at second position no further, complainees

seek, in a range of other ways, to continue to avoid accepting culpability at fourth position. This principal concern would seem, then, to continue to be an influential motivational force underpinning the organisation of their talk. We can thus conclude that these principal concerns of the respective interactants - the concern of complainers to reject culpability and, in response, the concern of complainers to defend their initial complaints - remain a constant, displayed pre-occupation throughout the four-part sequences of talk that we have been examining.

Chapter Four

Unilateral termination: 'walking out' of arguments

1. Dispute Termination

In the two preceding chapters we have been examining the organisation and construction of complaint-initiated, argumentative interaction. Following the detailed analysis of sequences of talk that have been extracted from conversations of this type, various observations have been made and from these observations it has been concluded that, for the most part, interactants formulate their talk in ways that orient to two central concerns. In the case of complainees, the principal concern to which their talk seems to be oriented, subsequent to a complaint having been made against them, (i.e., at second and fourth positions in the sequences examined), has been characterised as the 'rejection of culpability'. As far as complainers are concerned, their talk at third position appears usually to be oriented to the central concern of defending the legitimacy of their first position complaints. They do this in circumstances in which these complaints have been treated as unwarranted, by complainees, at second position. Although it has been constructed and organised in a variety of ways, we have seen that the talk of the disputants whose interaction we have been studying has, repeatedly, arrived at a point at which it conflicts in these ways.

In this next chapter the focus of the discussion will turn to the termination of arguments of this kind. One type of termination format will be concentrated upon in

particular - that comparatively rare, but in conversational terms, highly significant and occasionally devastating interactional event commonly known as 'walking out'. The chapter will attempt to identify some of the ways in which these kinds of move are organised. It will closely examining the terminal sequences of three of the protracted arguments from which a number of the sequences of talk that were studied in the preceding chapters were extracted. Each of these conversations is terminated, unilaterally, by one of the disputing parties who brings about termination by departing, physically, from the vicinity in which conversation has been taking place. As a way, then, of bringing sequences of argumentative talk to a close, these individuals 'walk out' and in doing so they elect not only to take the exceptional step (no pun intended) of closing down conversation *in toto*, but to do so without recourse to the sequential mechanisms that are available to *achieve consensus*, compromise or to 'save face' (Vuchinich, 1990).

The termination of disputatious conversation, *whether unilaterally or otherwise*, is not a matter that appears to have exercised the minds of researchers to *any* great extent, at least until recent years. Vuchinich (1990:118) *finds, for example*, that very little work exists within the literature that focuses specifically upon the strategies and resources employed by disputants in bringing their arguments to a close. This is particularly true where everyday argumentation is concerned since, with the exception of his (1990) work, the studies *that are available concentrate on* dispute termination in settings that are mediated and/or institutional, (e.g., news interviews [Greatbatch, 1992] and divorce mediation sessions [Greatbatch and Dingwall, 1996]) or that use turn pre-allocation systems, (e.g., mediation hearings in some parts of America [Garcia, 1991]). As Vuchinich also observes, however, certain aspects of dispute termination are considered, tangentially, in some studies of verbal conflict. Most of these, though, examine the interactional practices of children when terminating arguments (Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981; Genishi and di Paolo, 1982; Goodwin, 1982:87, 1990:156-158). As Goodwin (1983:665-670) notes, these practices can contrast widely and in a variety of ways with those used

by adult speakers in similar conversational environments and cannot, therefore, be automatically generalised to them. Of the remaining studies, almost all consider dispute termination as an event that takes place within the context of *ongoing* conversation and which occurs when disputants manage to negotiate accommodations, concessions, 'back downs', 'stand-offs', etc., (Coulter, 1990:189-190; Schiffrin, 1984:329; Turner, 1970:147-150; Vuchinich, 1984:219). Labov and Fanshel (1977:64-65) and Vuchinich (1990:118, 130, 132) are alone in recognising that arguments are sometimes concluded in ways that are not collaboratively achieved. Such terminations can become interactionally disruptive inasmuch as they do not adhere to the kinds of procedure normatively oriented to, to ensure the maintenance of social cohesion between participants (*Heritage:1984a:265-269*). They are much less likely, then, to occur in the context of ongoing interaction.

Although not investigating the matter in any great depth, Labov and Fanshel observe that an unexplained refusal to comply with a request may create a conversational environment within which the 'requester' chooses to withdraw entirely from interaction. They characterise this type of withdrawal as 'a break in social relations' intimating, thereby, that it does not accord with what Heritage describes as an intrinsic 'bias', within the normative constructional practices of communicative interaction, towards the maintenance of bonds of social solidarity between interactants.

Unlike Labov and Fanshel, Vuchinich (1990) undertakes a more sustained examination of the sequential organisation of 'verbal conflict closings' (p 118) using as a basis for his study Schegloff and Sacks' (1973) analysis of 'adjacency pairs' (which we first encountered in chapter two) and, more specifically, 'terminal exchanges' as they occur in everyday, non-disputatious conversation.

As Sacks and Schegloff (*op cit:236*) (see also Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974) observe, in ongoing conversation:

It is within any current utterance that possible next speaker selection is accomplished, and upon possible completion of any current utterance that such selection takes effect and transition to a next speaker becomes relevant.

They identify the achievement of a co-ordinated 'lifting' of transition relevance as a central problem for conversants wishing to terminate conversation. They conclude, in essence, that this problem is resolved by the use of 'terminal exchanges'. These are pairs of adjacently positioned utterances (adjacency pairs), e.g., 'good-bye - 'bye'. The first of these (the first pair part) can be identified, by its recipient, as proposing termination (and, thereby, the lifting of transition relevance). The second pair part can be identified by the first speaker as a *recognition of and preparedness to accept their proposal* (transition relevance being lifted on completion of the second utterance).

Vuchinich (1990) proposes that forms of terminal exchange are also regularly used to terminate argumentative sequences of talk, *and that they do this by co-ordinating the arrival by disputants at a point at which*

one speaker's oppositional turn will not elicit an oppositional turn from the other'.

(op cit:121).

He identifies five categories of termination format that use terminal exchanges: 1) oppositional turn - assent, in which the second pair part consists of a turn that acknowledges the validity of the argumentative line proposed in the first pair part; 2) compromise - acceptance, which involves the performance of a first pair part that proffers a position that is intermediate to those contended previously, and a second pair part that signals acceptance of and/or preparedness to continue, non-argumentatively, on the basis of the compromise position; 3) oppositional turn - topic shift, which permits the second speaker to display their unpreparedness to continue along an argumentative trajectory without conceding to the first speaker's

line (unlike 1 above) and, 4) '*dominant third-party intervention*', in which termination is mediated by some third party, e.g., a parent, a news interviewer, etc., and need not concern us here.

Terminations 'in which one disputant physically leaves the area' - which are referred to in the current discussion as 'unilateral terminations' - are included, by Vuchinich, within his fifth category of termination formats which he designates as 'withdrawals'. Within this same category he also includes instances in which termination is achieved either by the performance of an oppositional first pair part and a second pair part that explicitly refuses further argument, as in extract 1, or by

1. [Vuchinich, 1990:132] (*sic*)

103. Husband: NOOO:O- ahh- just statin' the facts.

→ 104. Wife: I don't (even wanna) talk about it

(6.00)

105. Daughter: It looks like its gonna rain.

non-response to oppositional turns, in which case termination is accomplished by the withholding of a second pair part, as in extract 2. In such cases the 'withdrawing turns', e.g., line 104 in extract 1, and non-responsive silences (e.g., that subsequent

2. [Vuchinich, 1990:133] (*sic*)

112. Father: Well hell you coulda done it last evening.

113. Mother: I'd a been up til about midnight.

114. Father: Huh?

(12.0)

115. Son: Sun tried to come out for a while.

to line 114 in extract 2), are devices that facilitate co-ordinated withdrawals, i.e., both participants are enabled, by the displayed unpreparedness of one to continue along a current conversational line, to cease mutually from conversing along that

line. On the performance of a withdrawing move, the option remains open to its recipient to refrain from withdrawing by continuing to talk to the contentious issue. Thus, when conflict termination does occur following a 'withdrawal' move by one participant, this is a collaborative outcome. One participant, regardless of the vehemence with which they may do so, merely proposes the abandonment of an argumentative line and their co-participant, regardless of whether they 'really' wish to abandon it or not, concurs with this closure simply by discontinuing further talk about it. By opting, jointly, in this way, to close down a contentious topic, the participants are then enabled to resume interaction on a non-disputatious basis.

It is evident, then, that the kind of collaborative moves that Vuchinich draws to our attention in these sequences can facilitate the continuation of interaction, on a non-disputatious basis, in circumstances where it might otherwise proceed disputatiously. One function of this chapter is to attempt to determine whether there is any sense in which 'walking out', which Vuchinich includes within this same category of events, fulfils a similar kind of objective. In the first part of the chapter the three instances of 'walking out' referred to earlier are analysed separately and in close detail, and a range of observations are made about the ways in which they are each organised. In the second part of the chapter, more generalisable observations are made on the basis of these analyses. This enables a more comprehensive picture to emerge of the organisational 'shape' of the three sequences, as representatives of this particular type of argument terminating format. Finally, conclusions are drawn about the kinds of function that moves of this type may serve. It is concluded, centrally, that 'walking out' tends, at the very least, to obstruct further interaction, rather than to facilitate it, and that it tends to be performed unilaterally rather than collaboratively. For these reasons interactional moves of this type appear to be readily distinguishable from the 'withdrawals' with which they are included in Vuchinich's otherwise enlightening discussion. In consequence, they require separate consideration in their own right.

2. *The data.*

As has already been mentioned, the analytical section of this chapter will focus on the terminal sequences of three of the argumentative conversations from which extracts were examined in chapters two and three. These data were all collected in video format from 'fly on the wall', 'documentary' television broadcasts and take place between co-present interactants. Although the general shape of these conversations has previously been described in chapter one, this is a point in the discussion at which this can usefully be outlined once again. In the first of the terminal sequences (see example 3) the participants are Jane and Chris who are professional ice dancers. Much of the interaction during the conversation that terminates with this sequence occurs while they are skating. As is apparent from the extracts from this conversation that were examined in the two previous chapters, their argument focuses on a particular dance manoeuvre which they are attempting to perfect. Chris holds Jane responsible for difficulties that they encounter in doing so. He complains that she is not accepting responsibility for these problems and that she is not trying to overcome them. Initially, Jane does not accept that she is entirely to blame but as the conversation proceeds she changes her argumentative position. She begins to accept that her performance of the manoeuvre is not satisfactory but claims that this is because she has not had the opportunity to practice it sufficiently. What she implies, here, is that Chris is being unreasonable because he is expecting her to perform the manoeuvre perfectly without giving her enough time to rehearse it.

As may have been noticed in earlier chapters, these data are unusual inasmuch as the pauses contained within them are frequently much longer than might normally be expected and this can be accounted for in part by the dancing activities in which the speakers are engaging at various points during the interaction. They both routinely orient to these dancing interludes, which are particularly extended during certain points in the terminal sequence, as periods during which conversational interaction is suspended. The speakers begin to argue almost from

the commencement of the conversation which ends just over four minutes later when Jane leaves the rink in tears. This withdrawal, strictly speaking, is an instance of 'skating' rather than 'walking' out.

The second terminal sequence concludes a conversation that takes place between Joel (who is aged around eighteen), and his mother ('Mum'). The interactants are sitting in a parked car. Although some elements of disagreement occur between them in the initial parts of the conversation, they do not begin to argue until around forty seconds of interaction have elapsed. This dispute starts when Mum asks Joel, who does not live with her, if he intends to enrol in a course of full-time education. In order to do so, it seems, it would be necessary for him to move in with her. Joel indicates that this does not appeal to him and he goes on, as we have seen in previous chapters, to assess negatively Mum's upbringing of him when he lived with her, as a child. As we have also seen, she responds by adversely assessing his behaviour during this time. She also complains that he was and continues to be 'ungrateful' for her efforts on his behalf. In response, Joel then claims that he behaves unsatisfactorily *because of the way in which she treated* him. As the conversation continues, these are the core argumentative lines that the disputants pursue. The conversation ends when Joel leaves the car in a state of emotional upheaval and walks quickly away from it.

The final termination sequence brings to a close an argument between two sisters, Milly and Clara, who are aged about twenty-one and seventeen respectively. As can be seen from example 5 in chapter two, this argument already appears to be in 'full flow' as they enter the kitchen of their family home from what seems to be some exterior area. It is evident from the outset that some kind of continuing and acrimonious interaction has occurred between them immediately before that for which data are available. Their argument concerns allegations by Milly that Clara belittles her, and others, in order to 'pick' arguments. One way in which it is claimed that she does so is by persistently sitting in chairs that Milly has left only temporarily and refusing to her have them back when Milly returns. Milly

- [((both parties return to the ice.))
 142. Chris: [W'- I've bin doing it Jane (.) I've bin doing it
 143. (0.3)°Th° problem is th't you havn't even buthered t'
 144. ↑try 'n' ↓do [it
 145. [(8.2) ((As the pause commences the conversants attempt to perform the manoeuvre again but this attempt is abandoned by Jane before it is completed. Subsequently, they skate a short distance side by side - Jane has her left hand on Chris' right shoulder. Their right hands are disengaged but Jane's remains raised and extended, approximately in dance position.))
 146. Chris: Its no good (fuck)in' cryin' (.) I've got [no sympathy
 [((disengages and moves away, turning sharply to the left. This is accompanied by a dismissive gesture with the right hand. Jane's left hand remains on his shoulder and her right arm remains extended as he turns.))
 147. (0.5)
 148. Chris: [No (0.6) do:nt cry: on me
 [((Dismissive gesture with right hand, back to Jane, skating away from her.))
 149. (11.6) ((As Chris skates away, Jane's arms remain raised and extended in dance position for 2.0 seconds. She then half lowers them and holds them in this position for 2.0 before dropping them to her sides. She watches Chris both as he skates away from her and then skates around the rink, apparently aimlessly, at a distance from her and in a studiously disengaged manner. She then diverts her gaze.))
 ((lines 150 - 157. Chris continues to skate idly about in a disengaged fashion. During this period, Jane skates towards the exit with her gaze diverted. She glances at him very briefly as he crosses her line of vision as she passes him at a distance. His gaze is diverted.))
 150. Jane: ((sniff))
 151. (2.4)
 152. Jane: ((sniff))
 153. (4.0)
 154. Jane: ((crying)) HHH .hh .h .h .hh
 155. (3.0)
 156. Jane: ((sniff))
 157. Jane: ((exits))

As we have seen earlier, during the conversation that precedes this sequence of talk the speakers have been attempting and, as far as they both seem to be concerned, failing to perfect a manoeuvre that is a part of a dance routine that they are rehearsing. Chris has blamed Jane for this failure throughout the conversation. This is evident once again in his interrogative turn at lines 134 - 135 - 'do you want to go home and come back and see if we can start again?' It is unlikely that this idiomatic formulation is intended literally. Although Chris may, possibly, be proposing a break of some substantial kind from the rehearsal and a 'fresh start', it seems improbable that his faintly ludicrous proposal that Jane could 'go home and come back ...' is intended as a serious suggestion. Rather, this turn seems to be principally concerned with conveying a sense of Chris' frustration or exasperation with what he appears to see as Jane's continued failure to get the manoeuvre 'right'. It does this by implying that all reasonable solutions to this problem have been tried without success and that, in consequence, only more outlandish possibilities, such as this one, remain. Once again, then, Chris blames Jane for the difficulties that are being encountered. The turn also implies that what has been done in the rehearsal up to now should be abandoned, as though it has been inconsiderable or 'worthless'. Since Chris suggests that it is Jane who might want to 'go home', etc., it is evident that, as far as he is concerned, this is a state of affairs for which she is also to blame.

Jane rejects this proposal of Chris' with a double negative - 'no, no' (line 137). Her unwillingness to pursue this course of action becomes still more evident in her next turn 'do it with me' (line 140). This imperative formulation is performed, both intonationally and syntactically, as a plea and it appears to constitute an alternative proposition to that made by Chris in his preceding turn. On one level, what Jane seems to be suggesting is that they should attempt a further performance of the manoeuvre. Here, then, she again indicates that she needs more practice than she has currently had and this implies that she accepts that her previous performances have been unsatisfactory. At another level, however, 'do it with me' also seems to

function as a 'plea' both for assistance and co-operation, which implies that the speaker has come to view the prevailing conversational environment as one within which neither can be taken for granted. This view may be partly based on Chris' apparent unpreparedness to treat her need for more practice as legitimate. It is also evident, however, particularly from the stressing of 'with', that she has inferred some basis for assuming that her proposal that they should perform the manoeuvre again is likely to be met with reluctance, at least. Her basis for making this inference may be that Chris' preceding turn, as has been noted, implies that solutions to the problem that have been tried previously, including performing the manoeuvre repeatedly, have been unsuccessful. Thus, Jane may be interpreting this turn of Chris' as indicating that he is likely to be unwilling to try the manoeuvre again at this point. At any rate, it is evident that something within her co-participant's interactional demeanour towards her has been interpreted by the speaker as indicating that he is unwilling or that, for some other reason, it is not his intention to perform the manoeuvre again.

The positions that Jane adopts in this turn - that her performance is, as yet, imperfect but that this is because she has had insufficient practice, are ones that she has adopted earlier in the conversation. In extract 4, for instance, she 'admits'

4. [IAD:TD:1A:5:4]

75. Chris: HH'ahm doing it-

76. Jane: hI know [y're doin' it- b't I'm not-

77. Chris: [Your changing it t' such a- degree:

78. th't y' can't change it-

79. (0.6)

80. Jane: No:: I havn- I've done it- twi:ce

that she is not 'doing it' 'properly' (line 76) but she also claims (line 80), in mitigation of her culpability, that she has had insufficient opportunity to learn how to. Here she complains that, while Chris may be warranted in assessing her performances up to

now as unsatisfactory, he is acting unreasonably inasmuch as he is expecting her to 'get it right' when she has had insufficient time to do so. Her turn at line 140 ('do it with me') recycles this earlier position and shows that it is one from which the speaker has not significantly shifted. Chris' assessment of her efforts is warranted but she considers her need for more practice to require reiteration, despite it having been drawn to his attention on this earlier occasion. This proposes that Chris is still not taking this matter into consideration.

Whether unwillingly or otherwise, Chris complies with Jane's plea by performing the manoeuvre. While complying in this way, however, his accompanying verbal response (lines 142 - 144) rejects Jane's implied proposition that further, joint attempts at the manoeuvre will enable them to overcome the problems that they are having with it. His repeated 'I've been doing it Jane, I've been doing it', in the first part of the response, implies that, because previous attempts have not resulted in a satisfactory outcome, further attempts at it are unlikely to. In this way he rejects the proposition that Jane has made while, at the same time, complying with her plea that he should participate in a further attempt. Thus the impression is conveyed that he is joining in with this further attempt only reluctantly. In the second part of his response Chris provides an alternative definition of the source of the problems that they have been having by explicitly blaming Jane for them - 'the problem is that you haven't even bothered to try and do it' (lines 143 - 144).

Chris' response also appears to be instigated by an interpretation of Jane's prior turn as implying that he has not performed the manoeuvre 'with her' previously; that this has prevented them from improving their performance and that responsibility for resolving the problem therefore lies with him. This is made apparent in four ways. Firstly, as noted, he qualifies his non-verbal response (resuming dancing) by absolving himself of responsibility for the difficulties (line 142). Moreover, characteristics of the way in which the turn is performed, e.g., the repetitive emphasis, the address term, the cut-off 'well' in initial position, which functions in this instance as a contrast marker, and the stressing of 'bin doing', all reinforce his claim

46. I-'m not chang'n- it- I'm not- g-onna- do anything==
47. Jane: = I am tryi[ng t' change it-.
48. Chris: [I'm lea:ving it- no you're not=
49. Jane: =I am
50. Chris: You're not=
51. Jane: =b'i's not- g'nna go li' that-is it.
52. Chris: Wel' you j's got- 'n' at-it~~ude~~ already that- y're
53. not- go-nna try:

in performing the direct accusation at lines 143 - 144, Chris makes explicit an adverse characterisation of his co-participant's actions that could have been left implicit had he ended the turn on completion of line 142.

Thirdly, the accusation is constructed in a number of ways that are avoidably contentious and confrontational. It could, for example, have been formulated as a personal opinion rather than as an outright assertion, i.e., '*I don't really feel that you're trying*'. Also, the moral undesirability of Jane's alleged failure 'to try' to correct her shortcomings is amplified by the inclusion of 'bothered', which implies everything from laziness to disinterestedness. This, in turn, is given additional force by the emphasiser 'even'. The *undesirable nature of the 'attitude'* that Chris has ascribed to Jane earlier in the conversation (see extract 7, line 52) is both raised again and delineated more precisely and explicitly here. Her 'attitude' is characterised as one of 'not even being bothered'. Fourthly, by juxtaposing his adverse characterisation of Jane's contribution to their endeavours with his characterisation of his own efforts as unproblematic, Chris more effectively highlights the unsatisfactoriness of her contribution.

It is evident, then, that in a number of ways, Chris' attribution of blame re-cycles and, in some respects, extends argumentative positions that he has adopted earlier in the conversation. It is also noticeable that he refrains from using the kinds of strategies observed by Pomerantz (1978b), that enable speakers who wish to do so to attribute blame in more indirect, less confrontational ways. Centrally, these involve the 'distancing' of recipients from whatever complainable matters are cited.

This is usually achieved by the raising of (a) complainable matters as unattributed 'events' and, (b) the attribution of responsibility for them to a specific actor/agent, in separate turns, as in extract 8. This not only enables blamings to be achieved more

8. [D.Z.:1, Pomerantz (1978b)]

(a) D: An hhI went up there'n it was freezing co:ld, an the
stupid thing was closed.

D: [I was

Z: [Tuh*n*ight?

D: -pisstih[h

Z: [I though it was open on Friday night

(.)

Z: Oh well

(b) D: Yeh that's what yih told me.

(b) D: Thanks a lot ha ha hhh

obliquely (since, as in extract 8, the complainable can be cited, initially, without implicating the recipient at all), but also provides recipients with the opportunity, subsequent to (a), to cite themselves as the responsible actor/agent. This can provide an opportunity for apologies, etc., to be performed and create a conversational environment in which the interactants are in agreement, while the performance of a blaming by the complainer can be completely avoided.

As noted above, one thing that Chris' turn focuses on is the alleged 'deliberateness' (Austin, 1970b [1956-57]) of Jane's actions. As far as Chris is concerned, she is 'wilfully' performing the manoeuvre in an unsatisfactory way by 'not even bothering to try' to perform it satisfactorily. This involves the making of a 'moral' assessment on his part. Jane has explicitly claimed, earlier in the conversation (see example 7, line 47), and she has implied, more recently (line 140), that she is trying, but failing, to perform the manoeuvre satisfactorily. By characterising her failure as 'deliberate' Chris implies, concomittantly, that Jane's claims that she is trying to perform it correctly are disingenuous. In other words,

when he says 'you haven't even bothered to try and do it' Chris treats Jane's 'I am trying to change it' and 'do it with me' as making dishonest claims about her efforts. Thus it is implied that Jane is behaving in a morally reprehensible way. She is deliberately performing the manoeuvre in an unsatisfactory manner while claiming to be trying to perform it correctly. As Drew's (1993) work makes clear, the characterisation of actions as morally undesirable is normally reserved for reports about the allegedly complainable actions of absent third parties. On those rare occasions when co-participants' actions (and, particularly, moral dimensions of them) are cited as complainable, a wide range of strategies is available to enable these matters to be alluded to less confrontationally. These include, for example, humour, laughter, various personal opinion formats and suppositionals, etc., as well as mitigational components. Chris, however, opts for none of these, but, as detailed earlier, aggravates rather than mitigates his characterisation of Jane's actions as unacceptable, particularly on moral grounds.

Jane refrains from making a verbal response following Chris' turn and an 8.2 second pause (line 145) ensues. During this period, the interactants begin to dance again. This appears to be an occasion, of a type mentioned earlier, upon which the interactants orient to the commencement of dancing activity as a point at which transition relevance is temporarily lifted and this quite probably explains Jane's lack of response. Indeed, Chris may have opted to perform his turn at this point, where the imminent resumption of dancing is anticipatable, in order to obstruct the performance of a response. It is also possible that Jane refrains from responding because she is close to tears and is attempting to hold them back. In either case, her choice not to participate directly in the conversation at this point does not, for the reasons outlined, constitute a 'noticeable absence' of speakership assumption.

Jane abandons the dance manoeuvre before the problematic step is reached and only Chris performs the target move. Having done so he relinquishes the dance configuration that the interactants adopted at beginning of this dancing 'phase' by removing his right hand from Jane's waist and releasing her right hand with his left.

At this point, he diverts his gaze from her. This suggests a degree of irritation but the participants continue to skate side by side. There is nothing, then, about the demeanour of either at this point to suggest anything other than that a temporary suspension of the dancing activities has occurred, albeit somewhat to Chris' displeasure. His disengagement, furthermore, is an action that is appropriate to, and warranted by, Jane's non-completion of the manoeuvre which is inferable as being the cause of the suspension.

After Chris has disengaged, Jane's left hand remains on his right shoulder and her right hand remains raised approximately in dance position, displaying that, despite having abandoned the attempt on this occasion, she is prepared to continue dancing, presumably with the intention of making another attempt at the problematic manoeuvre. During this period she is facing away from the camera equipment but it is apparent from Chris' next turn (line 146) that she has begun to cry.

As in her previous turn, opportunities are clearly provided by these actions of Jane's - most particularly her displayed preparedness to continue and her emotional display - for Chris to re-establish 'diplomatic relations'. One way in which this could have been achieved would have been through some sympathetic move but this is an option that he specifically excludes ('I've got no sympathy'). Instead, he opts to repudiate Jane's actions by *characterising her emotional display both as futile* ('its no good') and, with the intensifier 'fucking', as contemptible (line 146).

It is noteworthy that Chris selects an expletive at this point. While there are, of course, environments within which vulgarisms and profanities are used routinely and unproblematically, there is no evidence prior to this to suggest that these kinds of utterance are part of the lexicon normally used by either participant or, therefore, that when they are used they are used lightly. By introducing this element of 'bad' language at this point, the speaker demonstrates that he is abandoning what are quite probably norms of social acceptability that are usually shared by the interactants.

Far, then, from making any kind of conciliatory or affiliative move, Chris orients to Jane's emotional display as a further complainable matter for which she is responsible. He then goes on to treat it as a warrant for disengaging more fully from the interaction. While Chris is speaking, the interactants are continuing to skate side by side and Jane retains the dance posture referred to earlier. As the turn approaches completion, however, Chris, in a sudden, unanticipatable, non-verbal display of dismissal and disengagement, separates from her with a dismissive hand gesture, turns his back and skates away.

Until this point and, more specifically, after Jane's abandonment of the dance routine, Chris displays a preparedness, in the ways previously described, to continue dancing. It would appear, then, particularly given its verbal accompaniment, that this separation is prompted by and responds to Jane's emotional display - her crying. The dismissive hand gesture, the suddenness of the move and the distance that he puts between them, furthermore, indicate that this is a separation of a more acrimonious and extensive kind than a simple, temporary suspension of dancing activity. With it Chris now demonstrates an *unpreparedness* to continue dancing.

This response tends to polarise the interactants' respective interpretations of the immediately current events. By retaining the dance posture, Jane indicates that, although she is crying, she is prepared to continue dancing as the primary focus of their current endeavours, i.e., that *her tears neither affect her willingness nor are intended to seek a response that might interrupt their practice of the dance manoeuvre*. Chris' response, by contrast, treats them both as an additional obstacle to further dancing and, consequently, as a warrant for his own disengagement. Furthermore, by shifting the overt topic of the conversation away from their shared activities and topicalising and repudiating Jane's emotional display, i.e., her own, personal behaviour, the turn brings about a marked personalisation of the argument and a concomitant escalation of its contentiousness.

Chris underlines his position at line 148, the initial component of which - 'no', together with the dismissive hand gesture, appear to respond to, and reject Jane's retention of her hand on his shoulder. The turn also, therefore, constitutes a refusal to participate in the activities proposed by this gesture of Jane's - more dancing - and thereby re-affirms his unpreparedness to dance at this point. His demand - 'don't cry' - is forthright (note, for example, that the negative imperative is not mitigated with a 'please') and the final components of the turn 'on me' characterise her crying as an undesirable action that is being done 'to' him. The impression created is that, as well as the 'burdens' of her alleged unsatisfactory performance and her unwillingness 'to try' or to accept responsibility, she is now placing upon him the additional 'burden' of an emotional display.

Chris' disengagement at this point is very much in the mould of Vuchinich's (1990) 'withdrawals', which were described earlier. It displays his unpreparedness to engage in *any* further interaction at this point (but, specifically, the kinds of interaction that he presumably infers Jane's tears to project, for example, some display of sympathy, etc.) but he stays in the rink thereby displaying a preparedness to resume (presumably, when she has stopped crying).

It was noted earlier that at line 145 Jane keeps her arms in a position that demonstrates that she is prepared to continue. However, after Chris has disengaged they remain in mid-air, conveying an impression of unanticipated abandonment. This, together with her gaze diversion, also displays uncertainty as to a next, appropriate move. (It is also possible, since Chris has his back to her and his gaze is diverted at this point, that these non-verbal actions of Jane's are intentionally designed for the benefit of the watching cameras, to portray herself as the 'victim' of an un-premonitored, unilateral, unwarranted and un-negotiated disengagement on Chris' part.)

Subsequently, Chris skates away from Jane and begins to move around on the ice at some distance from her. She spends some time watching him as he does so. This, presumably, constitutes a form of 'monitoring' for signs of orientation towards

her and, consequently, an attempt to assess the likelihood, or otherwise, of interaction being re-engaged by him. Jane could, of course, re-engage interaction herself at this point, by assuming speakership. While a further request/demand/plea to resume dancing (i.e. further to that performed in her previous turn) might have appeared somewhat demeaning, a wide range of appropriate, more remonstrative or complaining formulations could have been directed to Chris following his disengagement. In fact, Jane refrains from making any further verbal moves for the remainder of the conversation. What function could this *systematic* disengagement from interaction be designed to fulfill?

It would appear that, for any of a number of possible reasons, Jane comes to perceive the prevailing conversational environment as one in which 'not speaking' is an appropriate move. Chris has not only initiated the disengagement but also refrains, for an extended period, from orienting to Jane in any way. In one sense, then, her non-assumption of speakership corresponds directly with one dimension of his non-orientation 'policy', i.e., she responds to him refraining from speaking to her by not speaking to him. In another, by not speaking to him, Jane is enabled to display both an unpreparedness to re-initiate interaction herself and a resolution that, if interaction is to be re-initiated, Chris will have to make the 'first move'. He, meanwhile, skates around, apparently aimlessly, with his gaze directed away from her, suggesting that he is not engaging in a 'monitoring' process similar to hers. Effectively, in fact, he 'ignores' her presence *entirely in a way that clearly requires* any renewed interaction to be initiated by her. This provides Jane with a basis for inferring that he does not intend to re-initiate interaction himself and in response she begins to skate towards the side of the rink. This move both consolidates the break in communication that has occurred and again suggests that, as far as she is concerned, any renewal of interaction will *have* to be initiated by him. The disputants appear, then, to be adopting entrenched, diametrically opposed positions - both being unprepared to re-initiate interaction. Once it becomes apparent to her that Chris is not going to resume interaction, Jane, too, diverts her gaze and then begins

to 'walk' out, presumably treating Chris' extended 'ignoring' of her as a warrant for doing so.

It is not possible to determine the precise point at which she begins to make for the exit because her progress towards it simply extends her current trajectory. In effect, she was heading in that direction already, but at an unidentifiable point she begins to make for the exit. Several seconds elapse as she approaches it and, once she gets beyond a certain point, it is clear that this is the only place for which she could be heading. It becomes quite apparent during this period, therefore, that she is about to 'walk' out. She glances at Chris, fleetingly, once. There is nothing about this, however, that seems actively to seek re-engagement. Rather, it seems to be a brief resumption of the monitoring process in which she was engaging earlier. This may be an attempt to ascertain whether her progress towards the exit is 'having any effect', i.e., an attempt to determine from Chris' demeanour whether her imminent departure seems likely to prompt him into initiating some interactional re-engagement. Chris, however, makes no attempt to intervene. This is despite the 'advance notice' of her intention to leave that Jane's extended departure provides. Thus, this final opportunity for the interaction to be salvaged from complete rupture is not taken up.

At this point, any attempt to interpret Chris' inaction as Jane leaves the scene must be purely conjectural. However, as has already been pointed out, it is Chris who has taken the initial step in the terminating sequence by disengaging from interaction so forthrightly at lines 146 - 148. As it becomes evident that Jane is about to walk out he has two interactional options from which to choose. He can either intervene, and thereby risk 'losing face' by abandoning the position that it is Jane who should 'make the first move', or, and this is the option that he selects, he can refrain from intervening, thereby 'sticking to his guns' but further contributing to the resulting breakdown in communication.

3.2. Joel and Mum.

9. [IAD:JM:1B:4:5]

126. Mum: an' stop actin' like a- big arsehole th-at y' seem t'

127. be doin' right now-

128. (1.3)

129. Joel: that's what- I am (0.3) that's the- correct- word

130. (.)

131. Mum: (w'-) yes you' geETTIN' ON LIKE ONE!

132. (0.9)

133. Joel: [w h y : : :]134. Mum: [AND YOU HA]VE [BETTER I' GET ON TH-[AN TH-AT-][((emphasising hand
gestures))135. Joel: ((turns head to display discomfort)) [DO:~N' shout mum
[((emphasising
hand gesture))136. [don' shout.=
[((emphasising hand gesture))137. Mum: =BECAUSE Y'TELLIN' ME- [SHIT!138. Joel: [do:~n' SHOUT!
[((emphasising hand gesture,
head inclined away
displaying discomfort))

139. (1.8)

140. Joel: y' see this is what- I don' like is when you'start-(ed-141. raisin' your- voice! ((upset voice, hand emphasis
throughout))

142. (0.2)

143. Joel: .h .h[THAT'S WHAT]- HURTS ME!((very upset, hand
emphasis))

144. Mum: [()]

145. (0.5)

146. Mum: NO! [I can('t j's-)147. Joel: [↑↑I [↑CAN'T ↑↑TAKE ↓IT-!! ((screaming voice))
[((Joel leaves car))

148. (0.7)
149. Joel: CAN'T FUCKIN' TAKE IT-!!!((walking away from car - screaming voice))
150. (0.2)
151. Mum: ((co-participant no longer present)) ah-oh- don't take
152. it then slam out!

In this conversation the terminating sequence begins with Joel's turn at lines 135 - 136 and it is this that will be focused upon. However, the preceding interaction (lines 126 - 134), which the terminating sequence directly relates to, is complex and this also, therefore, requires detailed examination.

This argument, as has been noted, begins much earlier in the conversation when Joel adversely assesses his mother's upbringing of him. She counters by adversely assessing various childhood actions and behaviours, etc., of his towards her, among them his alleged 'ingratitude' for what she has done for him. However, as the argument proceeds, she begins to characterise his current 'criticisms' about his upbringing as providing evidence of both a generic and ongoing tendency of his to be 'ungrateful' and of a continuing propensity, on his part, to act 'badly'. These propensities, particularly his alleged 'ingratitude', become the core topic of the conversation, and she describes them, in line 126, as 'acting like a big arsehole'.

It is noticeable here that, despite the somewhat offensive nature of this assessment, the speaker chooses to use the less accusatory formulations 'stop acting like' (rather than, for example 'stop being') and 'that you seem to be doing right now' (as opposed to, for example, 'like you are right now'). At line 129 Joel appears to validate the assessment in absolute terms but he does not moderate it as his co-participant does in her assessing turn. Also, in the next part of the turn ('that's the correct word') he specifically characterises her assessing component ('arsehole') as an apposite description of him.

Nevertheless, despite these apparent concessions, Joel's response also introduces a number of interpretative difficulties into the interaction, both for the observer and, apparently, his co-participant, as we shall see. Firstly, it is formulated

in a way that does not quite 'fit' the environment within which it is being performed, i.e., the context of a mother/son conversation in which the former is berating the latter. This is particularly true of the second part of the turn, 'that's the correct word', which seems to be a formulation that would be more appropriate to some kind of 'official' or 'institutional' context - the kind of response, perhaps, that a school teacher might make when a pupil has given a correct answer. There is, then, a form of 'mis-matchedness' about Joel's response that sits uneasily with the overtly confrontational stance that Mum adopts in her prior turn.

Secondly, as we saw in chapter two and as Garcia (1991) and Vuchinich (1990) also note, the unmitigated acceptance of culpability is an option that is rarely chosen subsequent to an explicit accusation or blaming. Where such turns appear they are often collaborative events occurring, as noted earlier (see pages 173 - 174) within a particular kind of sequential organisation in which complainables are not directly attributed to the complainees by the complainers. This facilitates self-blaming by the complainees and avoids the performance of outright accusations or blamings by complainers. This is clearly not what happens at lines 126 - 127 in the current instance where the complainable is cited in a way that explicitly accuses the complainees, and the attribution of culpability is therefore unavoidable. Under these circumstances the performance of some kind of apologetic turn would seem more appropriate, if culpability is being accepted, rather than simply a confirmation of the validity of the complaint.

Thirdly, in describing Joel's actions as being like those of an 'arsehole', Mum characterises them in a way that is particularly forthright and denigrating. In his response, Joel not only validates this characterisation of his actions but asserts that this is also an apposite description of him, himself, thereby describing himself in 'worse' terms than his accuser has. As well, then, as being self-incriminating, inasmuch as it is culpability accepting, Joel's turn is also self-denigrating and this is clearly not the kind of stance typically adopted by those whose behaviour has been characterised as complainable.

In three ways, then, Joel's response is of a type that Mum has a quite legitimate basis for not expecting. Firstly, it is formulated in a way that is not well fitted either to the overall or local conversational environment. Secondly, it accepts culpability at an untypical sequential location, i.e., at which some kind of apologetic and/or explanatory move would be more fitting if culpability is 'genuinely' being accepted (as in the '*admission*' examined in chapter two [example 8]). Thirdly, it reformulates her denigrating description of his actions as a description of him, himself.

Mum appears to interpret this response of Joel's as some form of ironic disagreement or other non-alignment with her assessment of his actions. This is evident inasmuch as her next turn (line 131) re-affirms the assessment¹. It is also noticeable that, prosodically and amplitudinally, this turn is more heavily stressed than the initial assessing turn. Overall, then, it is constructed in a way that 'defends' the stance that she has adopted as though Joel had disagreed with it.

Subsequently, Mum performs a reformulated version of her assessment - 'you have better to get on than that' (line 134) in which she claims that her co-participant is capable of behaving more satisfactorily than he currently is. This turn is even more heavily stressed than the prior and appears to display anger. This may indicate that she has interpreted her co-participant's non-assumption of speakership at line 132 as being disagreement implicative (Pomerantz, 1984). In a range of ways, then, Mum's responses to Joel's apparent acceptance of culpability treat it as disingenuous.

Why, though, if Joel is 'genuinely' admitting culpability at line 129, does he do so in a way that is open to this kind of interpretation? A sequence of talk that we looked at in chapter two (extract 10 below), which occurs earlier in the conversation, may be

10 [IAD:JM:1B:4:3]

68. Mum: you' a l*ie*' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody
69. Joel: [e x a c'l y be ca us e

70. Mum: lyin' t ' m e]
 71. Joel: I 'm scarrred]

illuminating in this respect. Here, too, (line 69) Joel assents to an adverse characterisation of his actions in absolute terms but, as was noted previously, by doing so he is then enabled to justify them in a way that incriminates his recipient (lines 69 and 71). He lied/lies, he claims, because he was/is 'scared' of her. Here, then, the speaker accepts his co-participant's characterisation as precisely apposite but only in order then to cite her as the cause of the 'misdemeanours' with which she has reproached him.

A similar kind of move is being made at line 129. As has already been outlined, Joel evidently shares, at least to some extent, his co-participant's view that he and some of his actions tend to be unsatisfactory. However, it is also evident that he has his own view about the causes of these deficiencies. Centrally, he claims at various points during the conversation that the way in which his co-participant brought him up is to blame for his unsatisfactory behaviour. This is a position that he initially adopts at lines 69 and 71 (extract 10) and which he subsequently re-affirms at lines 80 (extract 11) and 99 (extract 12). It is noticeable that, despite conceding that his

11. [IAD:JM:1B:4:3]

68. Mum: you' a l::ie' y' know (.) [an' I will: not have anybody
 69. Joel: [e x a c'l y b e c a u s e

70. Mum: lyin't ' m e]
 71. Joel: I 'm scarrred]

72. (0.3)

73. Joel: because I a[m s c a :]r:red.
 74. Mum: [scared what.]

75. (0.6)

76. Mum: scared f' what

77. (0.4)

78. Mum: scarred f' whAt!

79. (0.2)
 80. Joel: the feeling of hatred an' (fear)[ness of you comin'
 81. t' hit me

12. [IAD:JM:1B:4:4]

97. Mum: b't it- ↑WA:S N'T good enough fo' you.
 98. (1.8)
 99. Joel: you were n't th-ere

co-participant's view of him is accurate, both in these earlier stages of the conversation and latterly, and although he has many opportunities to do so, the position that it is his co-participant who is responsible, in a sense, for his tendency to act in *unsatisfactory ways is one that he does not relinquish at any point.*

Now, it was noted earlier that in extract 10 the speaker immediately follows his validation of Mum's prior turn with an attempt to incriminate her. He makes no such move immediately after line 129 in the sequence currently under examination. Instead, he performs an explanation-seeking interrogative - 'why' (line 133). What he appears to be seeking from his co-participant with this turn is an explanation for his own shortcomings. Now, since he has consistently refrained from withdrawing his own explanation of their cause, it is likely that he is attempting, with this interrogative turn, to elicit from Mum an explanation for his undesirable behaviour that confirms his own view, i.e., he is seeking from her an understanding of the cause of his behaviour that is similar to his own. In a sense, then, although he does not attempt to incriminate her himself, he invites her to confirm his contention that she is, to some extent, responsible for the undesirable ways in which he behaves.

Having failed, then, to convince Mum of her culpability earlier in the conversation, Joel unreservedly accepts her account of his behavioural deficiencies (line 129). Furthermore, by accepting her description as one that also fits him, himself, i.e., by admitting to it in advance, he pre-empts one potential trajectory along which her account could be further developed. He may be attempting, in these ways, to undermine the extent to which his own shortcomings constitute

that she does so more quietly. Again, as in the previous exchanges, the actual content of Mum's immediate prior (line 137) is not responded to in any way.

Mum does not assume speakership after Joel repeats the demand and an extended pause occurs (line 139). Here, again, she declines an opportunity to conciliate. It seems quite possible that, had she assumed speakership at this point, in a way that complied with Joel's demand, the interaction would not have culminated in him walking out. What engenders the pause is difficult to determine. Mum may be orienting to Joel's lack of response to the content of her two priors and withholding further talk to provide him with an opportunity to respond by continuing his turn at line 138. It may also be, however, since line 138 does not project continued speakership by him, that Joel is simply providing Mum with an opportunity to continue to talk about the prior topic. It is also possible that some confusion has arisen about who can legitimately assume speakership, since the previous exchange has been terminated in approximate overlap, with both of the interactants assuming the role of speaker.

At any rate, by refraining from assuming speakership herself, Mum provides Joel with an opportunity, in his next turn (lines 140 - 141) to shift the trajectory of the conversation completely onto the issue of the level of amplitude that she has been using so that this now becomes its central topic. Until now he has raised this matter only parenthetically, i.e., as a 'side-issue' that was originally intended neither to develop into a topic *per se* nor to re-direct the ongoing conversational trajectory.

It is noteworthy, however, that although Joel focuses on Mum's amplitude here, he still manages to respond obliquely to the content of her prior turns (lines 131, 134 and 137). Due to his unclear enunciation it is not possible to determine whether he uses present continuous in the first part of the turn and then switches to straightforward past tense in the second, or whether he uses present continuous throughout. In either case, however, the current instance of Mum 'raising' her voice is characterised as not being an isolated or exceptional occasion. Furthermore, it is noticeable that the turn begins with an illustration marking component - 'y' see'.

second part of it - 'is when you start(ed) raising your voice' - reformulates the first part in ways that increase the 'seriousness' of the 'charge' that is being brought. Firstly, it specifies the topic of the turn more clearly than the previously used deictic reference. Secondly, it implies that the use of complainably high levels of amplitude in conversation with the speaker is a recurrent practice of the recipient. This is an implication to which the generic formulation 'raising you voice' (rather than 'shout') is well fitted. The turn therefore constitutes a second, 'strengthened' reformulation of the original complaint/demand at lines 135 - 136.

It also marks a significant shift in the trajectory of the conversation. Firstly, as noted above, it focuses, as the core topic, upon the manner in which Mum is conducting her side of the argument. Secondly, it is more explicitly formulated as the articulation of a complaint. Previously, Joel has been demanding a decreased level of amplitude and, within this formulation, he characterises the level she is currently using as complainable only implicitly. In the current turn, however, he explicitly characterises the level of amplitude used as complainable but seeks a decrease only implicitly. Thirdly, also as noted above, Joel shifts, in this turn, from complaining about a currently performed action (Mum 'shouting' here and now) to complaining, more generically, about an alleged propensity of hers to 'shout' while speaking to him. Fourthly, and possibly of even more significance to the outcome of the conversation, by shifting to this more generic type of complaint, he moves the conversation into an environment in which resolving the amplitude issue becomes more problematic. The demanding format that he uses initially possesses the capacity to instigate such a *resolution inasmuch as*, by identifying a currently performed complainable action, it provides recipient with an opportunity for rectification in subsequent turns. The more generic complaint, however, does not provide such an opportunity since, even if Mum does rectify in subsequent turns, the issue of her claimed *tendency* to 'shout' would remain. Fifthly, as the turn continues it is voiced in a manner that increasingly displays emotional upheaval. In

addition, then, to displaying irritation and exasperation with Mum's argumentative line and manner of delivery, Joel also appears to be close to tears.

This turn is followed by a 0.2 second pause (line 142). This is a transition relevance place at which it would be appropriate for Mum to assume speakership but she does not do so. Again it is possible that, had she performed a turn that complied with Joel's demand for decreased amplitude at this point, the imminent breakdown of the conversation would have been more avoidable. Again, then, she declines an opportunity to direct the conversation onto a more conciliatory trajectory.

Mum's lack of response provides Joel with an opportunity to continue talking about the level of amplitude that she has been using (line 143), although again, this is just one of a variety of interactional options that are open to him. The initial component ('that's') refers not only to Mum 'raising' her voice currently but also to her alleged tendency to do so. The two final components - 'hurts me' - explicitly 'name' an 'injury' that is done to Joel by this alleged tendency of Mum's, and thereby clarifies why he 'dislikes' it. It is not the case that he simply objects to her 'raising' her voice. He now claims to be actually 'hurt' when she does so. This turn, then, marks a further developmental shift in the articulation of Joel's complaint as he begins to characterise Mum's activity as not merely complainable but as having undesirable consequences for him. Thus, the turn both clarifies and intensifies his prior and, for a third time (see also lines 138 and 140 - 141) '*strengthens*' the demand/complaint initially performed at lines 135 - 136.

It is followed by a 0.5 second pause (line 145). Like the two earlier pauses (lines 139 and 142) this occurs immediately after a transition relevance place at which Mum could be expected to assume speakership. As she makes clear at line 137, she does not accept that the complaints that Joel has been making against her are valid. Given that this is her view she can legitimately assume that her use of high amplitude is warranted, as a display, perhaps, of anger, and it is not surprising, therefore, that she does not comply with his demands to speak more quietly.

Mum takes over speakership at line 146 but her response is only partially decipherable due to Joel's high amplitude overlap (line 147). Her turn begins with a negative term ('no') that is emphasised amplitudinally and which appears to be utterly unaccommodating. It is interpretable as a direct refusal to comply with Joel's demands for decreased amplitude and, as such, it constitutes a dispreferred adjacency pair second pair part (Heritage, 1984a, Sacks, 1987 [1973]) that refuses to comply with the first pair part 'request' performed by Joel. This refusal implies an intention not to comply with his demands as far as the remainder of the current turn is concerned (which is substantiated by the high level of amplitude that she uses) or, inferably, where her subsequent talk is also concerned.

The subsequent cut-off utterances ('I can't just') appear to characterise the speaker as constrained, in some sense, not to perform some action that would, presumably, display some kind of alignment with Joel's demands. Although incomplete, the turn conveys a sense that Mum is claiming that high amplitude talk is warranted because Joel is making allegations, the validity of which she disputes. These are circumstances, the turn appears to be about to claim, under which it is unreasonable for him to expect her not to display her annoyance by 'shouting'.

Joel's response (line 147) overlaps Mum's refusal. Since it begins as the initial component of that turn ('no') is completed, it can only be to this that it responds. The turn and its non-vocal accompaniment - the walking out - thus display a sequential connectedness with Mum's refusal to comply with Joel's demands for decreased amplitude and, therefore, appear to be directly responsive to it. Again, at line 147, Joel, for a fourth time, reformulates his complaint at lines 135 - 136 in a way that intensifies the extent to which Mum's actions are characterised as complainable. The four initial words - 'I can't take it' - characterise her continued 'voice raising' as an activity that he finds intolerable. The turn also functions, however, as an explication and justification for him walking out. He characterises this disengagement as a move that he is constrained ('I can't') to make by Mum's 'intolerable' activity. The walk out is itself, then, implicated in Joel's characterisation

of her activity as intolerable since it implies that it is so unbearable that it prohibits him from continuing with the interaction. The turn is also voiced in a way that displays an order of emotional upheaval that is well suited to this latter characterisation.

Finally, Joel exits at a point that seems unpredictable by Mum and her opportunity to intervene is limited. An 'element of surprise' is apparent both from the subsequent 0.2 second pause (line 151) and the exasperation marker/'change of state' token (Heritage, 1984b) with which she initiates her 'parting shot' (lines 151 - 152), as he departs.

3.3. Clara and Milly

14. [IAD:MC:2A:4:4]

100. Milly: people don't like you putt-in' down o↑ther people

((Lines 102 - 108: Clara's face close to Milly's and moved progressively closer as each of Clara's turns is spoken so that Milly is forced to back away))

101. [t' make yourself look good

102. Clara: [I did not ((slow deliberate prosody))

103. (.)

104. Clara: put= ((slow, deliberate prosody))

105. Milly: =yes you [did

106. Clara: [ANYONE ((slow, deliberate prosody))

107. (0.3)

108. Clara: DQ[WN

109. Milly: [thats ↑what ↑you [↓did ((sing-song intonation))

110. Clara: [NO=

111. (.)

((Lines 113 - 122: Milly hand-gesturing towards recording equipment throughout))

- [((Milly raises right hand, Clara ducks back as
 [though expecting a blow))
 = [
112. Clara: [I DIDN'T ((slow, deliberate prosody))
113. Milly: ['cause you're ↑still playing on th' fact [that
114. Clara: [NO
115. Milly: on [sunday=
116. Clara: [I: 'M NOT= ((slow, deliberate prosody))
117. Milly: =you had an ↑argument ↑on camera an' so y're usin' it
118. a↑ga[in
119. Clara: [WHAT ↑ARE ↑YOU [↑↑TALK↓ING= ((shrieking voice))
120. Milly: [t' make you=
121. Clara: [ABOU:::T.
122. Milly: [look like a put down (.) little (.) kid
123. ['n' i'm fed up with it=
124. Clara: [WHAT ARE YOU TALK-
- [((Milly begins to walk towards exit))
- 125 (.)
126. Clara: WHAT ARE YOU TALKING A[BOUT
127. Milly: [you know what=-
128. Milly: =i'm talk[in' about ((back to Clara walking to exit))
129. Clara: [NO I DON'T HAVE A ↓CLUE ((emphatic voice))
- ((Milly exits followed immediately by Clara))

In this sequence, Milly accuses Clara of 'putting down other people' to make herself 'look good' (lines 100 - 101), i.e., of belittling others for the purpose of self-aggrandisement. Clara denies this accusation twice (firstly at lines 102, 104, 106 and 108 and, secondly, at lines 110 and 112). Milly responds by re-affirming the accusation twice (lines 105 and 109) and then (line 113), in order to justify and thereby defend her claims, begins to explicate them. She seeks to defend and justify the position that she has adopted *vis a vis* Clara's behaviour by explicating it, a move that is instigated by the latter's denials.

These utterances of Milly's develop into an extended, accusatory account that is performed over seven lines of the transcript (lines 113; 115; 117 - 118; 120; 122 - 123). That it, like Milly's previous turns, will also be accusatory is evident well before the main complaint ('you're using it again to make you look like a put down little kid - lines 117 - 118; 120 and 122) is cited. The formulation 'you're still playing on' (line 113), immediately begins to build a characterisation of Clara's actions that is adverse. The idiomatic expression 'playing on' claims that Clara is, in some way that is not specified, manipulating the fact that an event has occurred - an argument that she is alleged to have had - to which Milly later refers (line 117). This claim has moral connotations. It implies that the circumstance of having had this argument is one that Clara is using, covertly, for an ulterior and self-seeking motive. This alleged motive is explicated in the main complaint in which Milly claims that Clara is using 'having arguments' as a strategy for the purpose of portraying herself in a particular kind of way. This sense that she is 'purposefully' (Austin, 1970 [1956-57b) engaging in actions for reasons other than those for which she appears (or possibly has claimed) to be engaging in them, impugns not only the actions, as morally undesirable, but also recipient herself, as a deliberately culpable actor. Milly expresses the idiom in present continuous but she augments this with the adverb 'still'. This combination enables her to claim that Clara is not only currently engaging in the kinds of undesirable behaviours described but that she has been doing so over a period, i.e., since 'Sunday', which, in her next turn (line 115), she specifies as the day on which the previous argument occurred. This claim is one that is anticipatably more likely to be contentious than would have been the case had the complainable been cited as a single, isolated instance.

It is noticeable that 'on Sunday' (line 115) constitutes the first part of a three-part construction (see extract 15). This has interesting parallels with observations that

15. [IAD:MC:2A:4:115/117(*detail*)]

[----1----] [-----2-----] [----3-----]
 Milly: on sunday you had an ↑argument ↑on camera...

have been made about the interactional uses of lists, and of three-part lists in particular (Atkinson, 1984; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986). It has been noted that such formulations can be used to add weight or emphasis to points or claims that are being made (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986:125-126). While the formulation in the current instance does not constitute a list *per se* it is a 'list-like', tripartite construction which 'unpacks' the event that is alleged to have occurred 'on Sunday' and draws out similarities between it and the currently ongoing interaction which also constitutes an argument that Clara is having 'on camera'. Thus, the three-part formulation, which implicitly suggests that Clara's current behaviour is similar to that in which she engaged on this earlier occasion, lends weight to Milly's earlier claim that Clara persistently behaves in complainable ways.

The next utterance, 'and so you're using it again' (lines 117 - 118), is designed in a way that is consistent with the account's earlier claims. The expression 'using it' reformulates the earlier implication that Clara is manipulating circumstances and this, too, is augmented with an adverb - 'again'. This, once more, alludes to the alleged persistence of Clara's 'offences' and underlines their moral undesirability. It is also interesting that the expression 'and so' is used rather than the more straightforward 'and'. 'So', here, appears to function in a way that is similar to that in which the word 'therefore' would function in the same location. It proposes that Clara is 'using it again', i.e., is having another argument on camera, 'because' or 'as a consequence' of having engaged in a similar activity 'on Sunday'. This, in turn, proposes that she achieved some advantageous outcome from Sunday's incident that she is currently attempting to repeat. 'So' appears, then, to be implicated in a claim that Milly goes on to make, explicitly, that Clara is having arguments purposefully, i.e., for the specific purpose of achieving an advantageous end. Again, this implication underlines the moral undesirability of her actions.

The penultimate part of Milly's accusatory account - 'to make you look like a put down little kid' (lines 120 and 122) - attributes to Clara a motivation for her allegedly complainable behaviour. It is here, through the expression 'to make you look like' that Milly accuses her of attempting to create a particular impression of herself. The expression 'put down' claims that she is portraying herself, in some way, as someone who is belittled or victimised by other members of her family, while 'little kid' (line 122) claims that she is acting in some way that emphasises her status as the youngest member of the family. What this implies is that she is attempting to 'make capital' out of her youth, i.e., that by portraying herself as the 'baby of the family', she is attempting to inflate the extent to which the actions of those who allegedly victimise her appear morally undesirable. This phrase is also constructed as a three-part structure - 'put down/little/kid' - which again emphasises and lends weight to the claims that are being made.

The main 'thrust' of the accusatory account that Milly constructs, then, is that Clara uses 'having arguments' as a way of giving an impression that she tends to be belittled or victimised by other, unspecified family members and that she becomes involved in arguments while attempting to defend herself. Furthermore, by acting in some unspecified way that emphasises her youth, she attempts to portray her alleged 'persecution' as even more undesirable, on moral grounds, than would be the case if she was a 'fully fledged' adult. The allegation that this impression is, in fact, false implies that this is not the way in which she is really treated. Clara appears, then, to be being accused of portraying herself in a way that is designed to engender sympathy, i.e., as one deserving of such a reaction because she is an innocent youngster who is treated unjustly by some or possibly all the other family members. Bearing in mind that Milly builds this account, at least initially, as an explication of her earlier accusation that Clara belittles others, it would seem that, overall, the claim that is being made is that she does this to 'pick' arguments so that she can formulate interpretations of them that portray her as an innocent party and thereby engender a sympathetic reaction in others.

In the final part of the turn (line 123), 'and I'm fed up with it', Milly makes her own feelings about Clara's alleged activities explicit. ('It' presumably refers to something like the 'pretence' in which she claims Clara is engaging.) Now, there can be very little about the complaint that Milly has been constructing or its syntactic or intonational characteristics that can have left Clara in any doubt that Milly is 'fed up' with her alleged activities. However, this complaint has been formulated in a way that treats Clara's actions as a 'subterfuge' that Milly has 'seen through', and which describes what it is about them that is complainable. The 'position taking' utterance (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1986:133) that Milly performs at line 123 develops the turn, explicitly, into the articulation of a complaint. However, Milly's subsequent, non-verbal activity is also of great significance here because, immediately on completion of the turn extension, she begins to walk towards the exit. Secondly, then, the turn extension and the walking out seem to relate directly to the kinds of moves that Clara has been making while Milly has been speaking. Clara's various responses to Milly's turns (lines 114 and 116, 119 and 121 and 124) will be examined in detail later but it is important to note at this point in the discussion that they are all designed to deny that Clara has behaved in the ways that Milly has described and, therefore, to claim that she is being accused unjustly. Clearly, since, as far as Milly is concerned, Clara has a generic propensity for 'picking' arguments so that she can interpret them in ways that portray her as an innocent and 'victimised' party, there is scope here for her to interpret Clara's responses as further instances of this generically complainable behaviour. For Milly, then, Clara's responses appear to constitute further actions of precisely the kind that she has just been complaining about. She cites this as a cause of irritation and discontentment and treats it as a reason for abandoning further participation in conversation with her.

The extensiveness of Milly's turn has been noted earlier. While it is being performed, however, Clara, as is noted above, attempts to respond on three occasions (lines 114 and 116; 119 and 121; and 124 and 126) but Milly refrains from relinquishing speakership on each and disregards her utterances. Her

38. Milly: ['n' makin' me
 =
 39. Clara: [I'm not putt-in' y[ou down
 40. Milly: [SHUT (.) UP!!

that Clara 'puts down'. Although in the later part of the conversation the scope of this complaint is extended to include a number of unspecified others, the connection between the two claims is clear. It is evident from Milly's turn at line 40 (extract 17) - 'shut up' - that, as far as she is concerned, Clara's assumptions of speakership at lines 36 and 39 are not legitimate and that she has not yet completed her turn. The trajectory of the conversation is shifted for a while as this matter is pursued, but Milly returns to her theme a little later (see extract 18). Here, she recounts what she

18. [IAD:MC:2A:4:3]

64. Milly: I...

65. (0.3)

66. Milly: have asked you (.) on [↑]numerous occasions (th't)
 (b't)

67. as [↑]soon as i get up (.) ↓you're in my seat

68. (0.4)

69. Milly: an' i say t' you please move an' you don't

70. (.)

71. Milly: okay?

" "

((12 lines omitted))

" "

84. Clara: DID [YOU NOT
 [
 [((Milly turns sharply, with a dismissive hand
 gesture and walks away as though leaving. Then
 turns back))

85. (0.4)

86. Clara: COME IN HERE (.) AND SIT [DOWN AND (.) [START

87. Milly: ((shrieking voice)) [I DID [I DID

88. Clara: sewi[ng

89. Milly: [you havn't finished

90. (0.3)
91. Milly: you ha[vn't LET ME FINISH
92. Clara: [SO I DIDN'T THINK [YOU WERE COMING BACK I N]
93. Milly: [YOU DIDN'T LET ME FINISH]
94. (.)
95. Milly: =WHAT [I W'S SAYING
96. Clara: [ALL YOU HAD T' DO WAS ASK

claims is a propensity of Clara's to occupy her (Milly's) chair when she has vacated it only temporarily (lines 64 - 69). Although it is not explicitly formulated as such, the recounting of these alleged instances functions as an explicatory defence of Milly's earlier claim that Clara 'puts her down' (extract 17). What is claimed is that one way in which Clara 'puts down' Milly (and, presumably, 'picks arguments' with her) is by persistently denying her 'right' to re-occupy chairs that she has vacated only temporarily. It is evident from Clara's response (lines 84, 86, 88, 92 and 96) however, that Milly's citing of this alleged propensity is responsive to some specific incident and that Milly is characterising this as being typical of Clara's behaviour.

To summarise, then, judging by Clara's talk (lines 84 - 86, 88, 92 and 96), at some unspecified point, an incident has occurred that Milly has interpreted as Clara 'taking' her chair. Milly appears to be referring to this incident, implicitly, at line 34 (extract 17), where she complains about what she claims is a generic propensity of Clara to 'put her down'. Clara, in turn, responds with two denials at lines 36 and 39 (extract 17). Milly responds to Clara's denials at lines 64 - 69 (extract 18), by claiming that the specific incident of 'chair taking' to which she has implicitly referred is typical of a generic tendency of Clara to act in this way, (i.e., Clara persistently 'takes' her chairs). What she seems to be claiming here, then, is that Clara persistently 'puts her down' and one way in which she does so is by persistently 'taking' her chairs.

Clara's response (lines 84 - 86, 88, 92 and 96, extract 18) refers to the specific instance of 'chair taking' that has been cited and claims that, on this occasion, her occupation of the disputed chair was legitimate because Milly had moved to a different room and was occupying another chair. In this way, Clara attempts to undermine the 'thrust' of the accusations that Milly has been making against her and, thereby, to deny their legitimacy. It is at this point that Milly, in order to defend these claims, reformulates her original 'charge' that Clara 'puts her down' into a broader complaint that she puts down 'people' (lines 100 - 101). As described earlier, Clara responds by performing two denials (lines 102, 104, 106 and 108 and 110 and 112) and Milly moves, again, to defend the position that she has taken, by performing her extended accusatory account. It is evident, then, that this account serves not only to defend the particular claim that Milly makes at lines 100 - 101, against Clara's denials, but to defend what has been the central 'thrust' of her argumentative line throughout the conversation (which Clara has also denied consistently). It does so by characterising the specific incident of 'chair taking' referred to by Clara and the incident that occurred 'on Sunday', as constituting further instances of Clara's generic propensity to 'pick arguments' and to do so by 'putting down' Milly and others. In her extended account, then, Milly attempts to defend her earlier claims by citing what she alleges are further instances of Clara's complainable behaviour.

Clara's first response to Milly's account/accusation, 'no I'm not', occurs at lines 114 and 116 and is formulated as a denial that appears directly to contradict some assertion that Milly has made. It is performed almost entirely in overlap and is begun at a point at which only the first few words ('you're still playing on the fact') of Milly's turn have been performed. Two alternative conclusions can be drawn from Clara's attempted incursion at this sequential location. She is either able to predict, for some reason, what the thrust of Milly's argumentative line is going to be, or she is denying some matter that has been raised within Milly's turn so far. Since, in her next turn, Clara professes incomprehension of the line that Milly is pursuing, it

seems most probable that the latter conclusion is the more apt. Her response seems to be designed, then, to deny the claim that she is 'playing on' something. Furthermore, since Milly has yet to explicate what it is that Clara is 'playing on', the latter's response denies that she is 'playing on' anything. It rejects *any* claim that Milly is about to make, regardless of what it might be and, thereby, denies that Clara is 'guilty' of any wrongdoing at all.

The turn begins in interjacent overlap (Jefferson, 1986b), at a point at which the overlapped turn is clearly neither complete nor approaching completion, and is interruptive in a sense similar to that complained about earlier by Milly (extract 16). This may also go some way towards explaining the latter's unpreparedness to yield the conversational floor or to respond to Clara's denial. Unlike overlapped speakers in everyday conversation, who are often prepared to cut out, and, indeed, to topicalise overlappers' conversational lines (Jefferson, 1986b), speakers engaged in confrontational interaction are often too intent on pursuing their own arguments to permit speakership to be 'hijacked' at a transitionally non-relevant point by an unwarranted interloper (Hutchby, 1992; 1996). This is also likely to be a consideration worth remembering where Milly's other two declinations to concede speakership are concerned.

Clara's next response (lines 119 and 121), as mentioned earlier, professes *incomprehension and purports to seek clarification*. More than this, however, it is an idiomatic formulation that treats *Milly's argumentative line as unintelligible or nonsensical*. It is evident, even from the viewpoint of the outside observer, that interpretative difficulties, which have been detailed earlier, are associated with the talk that Clara is overlapping here and it is probably upon these that her claim is initially founded. However, it is also evident that the speaker has again attempted to respond at a point that is not transitionally relevant. Although it is evident, syntactically, that a transition relevance place is imminent, it is quite clear from Milly's upward intonation and stressing of 'again' (line 118) that she has more to say and that this subsequent talk may substantiate the claims that she is in the process

119 and 121 are overlapped by Milly's turn continuation ('t' make you look like...'). Thus, the ending of Clara's 'what' and her next two words - 'are you' - (line 119) are not performed in overlap because Milly, briefly, stops talking. It would appear from this that Milly delays her turn continuation while briefly attending to what Clara is saying. It is significant that Milly is about to cite her core complainable in the next 'leg' of her turn (lines 120 and 122). This brief delay may provide her with an opportunity to ascertain whether Clara's ongoing talk shows any signs of alignment with the position that she has been building, e.g., for some kind of concessive move. It is quite evident, however, from the portion of the latter's turn that is not performed in overlap, that no such move is imminent and Milly does not respond. Instead, she resumes prior business by pressing ahead and performing her main complaint.

Clara's third response (line 124) is performed immediately this has been done and at a point at which she has a legitimate basis for assuming that Milly's turn is complete. Its formulation as a partial repetition of her preceding turn draws attention to Milly's lack of response on this previous occasion. It also implies that nothing that Milly has said since Clara last performed the turn has rendered her claims any more intelligible or valid. This turn is overlapped by Milly's turn extension (line 123) in which she asserts how Clara's alleged actions make her feel (as detailed earlier). It is sequentially appropriate that this assertion of Milly's is appended to her account/accusation. This may explain her unpreparedness to hand over speakership at this point. It also seems likely, however, since the turn extension also constitutes a citing of Milly's warrant for walking out, that her retention of speakership indexes her unpreparedness to facilitate continuation of the interaction by providing Clara with an opportunity to respond.

Clara cuts out but repeats her turn again (line 126). This once more draws attention to Milly's lack of response but on this occasion, although her prosody and amplitude remain unchanged, she modifies her intonation and, consequently, the turn purports, at least, to be less rhetorical and more 'genuinely' explication seeking.

This may be designed to place additional constraints on Milly to perform a responsive second pair part because, by this time, the latter is on her way to the door and it is quite apparent that she is about to walk out. It is noteworthy, however, that Clara does little to modify her stance, even at this point where Milly has just cited it as being her warrant for leaving.

Milly's response (lines 127 - 128) is performed as she exits. It begins in overlap but at a point at which the conclusion of the overlapped turn (line 126) - a third repeat of Clara's previous utterances - is readily predictable. Her verbal response orients to Clara's prior and treats it as an inquiry for clarification regarding matters about which she is already clear. Thus, it treats this turn of Clara's as being disingenuous. In doing so it denies Clara's implication that her argumentative position is unintelligible to her and, thereby, implies that Clara is fully aware that she has been acting in the ways that have been alleged. This implication, in turn, treats Milly's own argumentative position as not in need of repair, clarification or defence.

At line 129 Clara responds by attempting to 'head off' Milly's termination. She does this by continuing to talk about the topic that Milly is attempting to abandon. By doing so she seeks to extend the conversation beyond the point at which Milly displays her disinclination to continue. The turn begins in overlap with the previous utterance, the conclusion of which is predictable, since it partially repeats Clara's own immediate prior. This sequential location is probably also selected to ensure that Clara can complete the turn before her recipient leaves the room. The response denies and contradicts the prior and constitutes an upgraded reformulation of Clara's previous positions - that the line of argument that Milly has been pursuing is unintelligible to her and that it is invalid. Clara, once more, asserts her guiltlessness and it is inferable that the activities that Milly has been complaining about are likely to continue, unabated. Milly, displaying her unpreparedness to be drawn back into conversation, refrains from responding and leaves the room. At the point, then, at which Milly terminates the interaction unilaterally, Clara is displaying not only the incompatibility of her own position *vis a vis* hers, but also her reluctance

to accede to the termination. This reluctance clearly demonstrates that the termination is an action that is executed unilaterally, i.e., by one interactant only.

4. Common themes

It is evident from the analyses of these three terminal sequences that they differ in two significant respects from the 'withdrawal' terminating formats identified by Vuchinich (1990) which were referred to in the opening section of this chapter. Firstly, while it is probably the case that withdrawals may sometimes result in the cessation of further talk, continued conversational interaction is, nevertheless, *maintained as an option that the interactants may take up should they choose to*. Indeed, since they remain co-present, unless both interactants choose to adopt 'stony silence', indefinitely, (i.e., to maintain an acrimonious environment without actually 'doing' arguing) the most probable outcome is that, eventually, conversation will be re-instigated, either re-topicalising the previously abandoned issue or selecting some new, less problematic topic. This is clearly not the case where the 'walkings out' considered in this chapter are concerned. Here, having absented themselves from the other's presence, one party is simply no longer available for talk and conversation is manifestly unable to proceed under such circumstances. In this major sense, then, walking out is an action that is deeply and irrevocably socially disruptive in a way that withdrawals, in which conversation is usually postponed rather than completely extinguished, are not.

Secondly, as Vuchinich points out, withdrawals seem, characteristically, to utilise a terminal exchange format that enables the co-ordinated abandonment of conversational topics or lines of argument by both interactants. The 'withdrawer' displays their unpreparedness to continue along a current trajectory, as the first pair part of an adjacency pair structure. The recipient then gives a preferred second pair part response, either verbally or non-verbally, by refraining from pursuing the problematic line any further, or a dispreferred response, by continuing to talk to the

contentious issue. Terminal exchanges of this type, however, do not appear in any of the walking out sequences examined earlier. Furthermore, while Vuchinich observes that terminal exchanges are implicated in withdrawals from argumentative sequences of talk within ongoing conversations, Schegloff and Sacks (1973) have noted, as we have already seen, that they are also routinely used to achieve conversational closure. They do so by collaboratively facilitating a 'lifting' of transition relevance. This is not the only way, however, in which the collaborative organisation of conversational closure is discernible. It has also been noted (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Button, 1990) that terminal exchanges are themselves usually produced within closing sequences that are initiated with 'pre-closing' devices. These are performed where discussion of a given topic is recognisably complete and, although they may be formulated in a variety of other ways, frequently consist of short turns, (e.g., 'okay', 'right', etc.) which do not initiate a new topic upon which subsequent interaction could be based. With turns such as these a speaker is able to indicate that they do not, currently, have further matters that they wish to raise.

On the performance of such a turn, the option remains open to its recipient to initiate a new topic themselves. Where this occurs, interaction may continue subsequently and may do so for an extended period. However, on receipt of a pre-closing move, recipients are also enabled, by performing some similar kind of turn, to indicate that they, too, have no further matters to raise. These are circumstances within which conversation closure may be deemed appropriate and that are therefore conducive to the initiation of a terminal exchange. Pre-closing sequences, then, enable interactants to display a mutual state of 'readiness' to terminate interaction and terminal exchanges enable them to negotiate, again on a mutual basis, the specific point at which transition relevance is to be lifted.

Where the instances of walking out that have been examined are concerned, however, conversational closure is *not* pre-monitored by the performance of pre-closing moves of this type, closing sequences or terminal exchanges.

Consequently, these seem to constitute terminations that are performed unilaterally rather than on a negotiated, co-ordinated or collaborative basis. This is particularly demonstrable where Joel and Mum's interaction is concerned, where Joel departs at a point that is clearly interruptive (line 147), and that of Clara and Milly, where the former attempts to extend the conversation (line 129) beyond the point at which the latter attempts to terminate it, (i.e., at a point at which she is actually in the process of exiting). In these cases, then, termination is not so much proposed and co-operated with as 'executed' as a *fait accompli*, without the collaboration or, in the case of the ice skaters, any other kind of contribution to the interaction by the remaining parties.

This does not mean, however, that walking out *cannot* be organised in a collaborative and co-ordinated way. It is important to recognise, in fact, that it *can* be a negotiated outcome. Such is the case, for example, if participant A says 'if you do that again I'll leave', participant B, in response, then does 'that' again and participant A leaves without B attempting to forestall them, perhaps by making some sort of conciliatory or compromising move. Also, while none of the cases involved in the current discussion are constructed with anything like this level of premeditation, it is not inferable from their un-premonitored nature that these departures are entirely unpredictable by the 'remainers'. Jane's departure, for example, takes some time, in interactional terms, during which her ultimate destination - the exit - becomes obvious. Similarly, Mum repeatedly refrains from complying with Joel's demands for decreased amplitude even though he formulates them in increasingly strengthened terms and displays an increasingly heightened state of emotional distress while doing so. These, too, are circumstances in which at least the possibility becomes apparent that some form of interactional breakdown may occur.

It is evident, then, that the extent to which walking out is premonitored by devices that are specifically designed to negotiate closure, and the extent to which it may be anticipatable, by 'remainers', in other ways, can vary from instance to instance. This very variability, however, suggests that neither negotiation nor the

provision of 'advance notice' of their intentions are considerations that are oriented to by 'leavers' on a systematic, *normative* basis. These moves, then, do not normatively observe the procedures usually oriented to where other forms of conversational closure are concerned. Consequently, they are not 'organised' in a similar way to the terminating sequences described by Schegloff and Sacks or to the 'withdrawal' sequences discussed earlier. Even though 'leavers' may, in a variety of ways, provide 'remainers' with a legitimate basis for recognising that walking out is an option that they may choose, this would nevertheless seem to be a move that is quite distinct from other classes of termination. It is for this reason that, rather than being referred to as 'withdrawal' during the course of this discussion, it has been referred to as 'unilateral termination'. This designation could also probably include 'hanging up', as a way of unilaterally terminating telephone conversations.

However, while it seems possible to describe the ways in which walking out is *not* organised, is it possible to determine whether it is organised at all and, if so, in what ways? Clearly, the walking out sequences under discussion are 'organised'. Hopefully, if nothing else, the extensive analyses of the data that have been undertaken have demonstrated that the disputants are attempting to formulate their contributions to the interaction in ways that are co-ordinated appropriately to the ongoing interactional 'business' of arguing. Most of the time, furthermore, they are successful in doing so. Jane, Joel and Milly's walk outs appear to arise out of the immediately preceding and, projectably ongoing argumentative process in which they each are involved. What is meant by this is that these walk outs occur because walking out is the way in which these individuals each react to moves that are made in the immediately preceding argumentative interaction by their co-participants. There is nothing within the data, however, to suggest, and it is not to be proposed, that the moves in question are *designed* to elicit or initiate this kind of reaction, e.g., through the use of interactional mechanisms like pre-closing sequences, terminal exchanges, etc. So, while the interaction that precedes these walkings out is

'organised', it is organised for the purpose of pursuing a particular activity - arguing. It does not appear to be organised for the purpose of 'building towards' a walking out.

Nevertheless, the three terminal sequences still manage to convey a sense, at an almost intuitive level, that they incorporate similar types of move. One possibility that was therefore examined, as observations were gathered for this section of the discussion, was whether they possessed *shared* characteristics that, together, created a conversational environment within which walking out could be considered an appropriate next move. To put it another way, it was evident that, in each of the three cases, the argumentative interaction between the disputants created a conversational environment within which one of them came to deem walking out to be an appropriate next move. Could it be, then, as seemed possible, that the argumentative interaction that created this type of environment was organised in a similar way in each of the three cases? Did it constitute a generalisable 'pre-walking out sequence'?

Attempting to answer this question proved, initially at least, to be a somewhat elusive endeavour. It was evident from the analytical work that had been undertaken that there was a tendency for speakers to reiterate argumentative lines and to re-state or reformulate argumentative positions that they had pursued earlier in the conversations. It was also apparent that these re-statements seemed to focus on actions that those who were eventually walked out 'on' (the 'remainers') were currently performing. This, in turn, gave the complaints that were being formulated a generic quality whereby connections seemed to be alluded to between current, allegedly complainable actions and those actions of the remainers that had previously been complained about. Furthermore, as the argumentative interaction was developed in these ways by those who eventually walked out (the 'leavers'), the remainers appeared to respond by continuing to act in the way complained about, by making no concessions to the complaints that had been made and, in some cases, by overtly displaying their unpreparedness to desist. These

impressions notwithstanding, however, the various elements described did not seem to appear in any systematic way that was generalisable to all three sequences. Consequently, other than that they were all such that, in each case, they enabled one participant to deem walking out to be appropriate, the nature of the conversational environments, and the manner in which they were being created, remained undetected.

To add to the confusion, it became apparent, once the sequences had been analysed thoroughly, that it was possible, by extracting various moves from each of them, to devise a kind of 'model' pre-walking out sequence that *could*, potentially, create such an environment. In this 'ideal type' of terminating sequence the attention of the leaver shifted from some ongoing conversational activity to some current action of the 'remainder' that they deemed to be of a type that had constituted their principal cause for complaint during the preceding argumentative interaction. The 'leaver' then sought a cessation of the current behaviour. The 'remainder' characterised the behaviour as warranted and persisted in it. The 'leaver' then treated the 'remainder's' failure to comply as a warrant for terminating the conversation unilaterally by walking out.

What this sequence constituted was a 'model' that resembled each actual pre-walking out sequence in some respects but was replicated perfectly in none of them. It did not seem, at first, that this 'artificially' constructed series of actions could advance the analytical project in any way until it was realised that a similar set of circumstances had been encountered by Jefferson and Lee while researching 'troubles-telling' sequences of conversation (Jefferson and Lee, 1980:3). During their investigations these analysts had proposed 'that a central feature of troubles-talk was the constant tension between attending the trouble and attending to business as usual'. They identified a 'model sequence' by extracting various elements from a large corpus of conversations and concluded that this functioned as a 'template' that is oriented to but modified by interactants to enable them 'to move elegantly and fluently between' these 'polar relevancies'. On occasions some

moves that were made in the model sequence were not performed in the same sequential order in the data while, on others, some moves did not occur at all. Nevertheless, the overall tendency was for the data to approximately replicate the model sequence.

Now, it has been pointed out earlier that it is not the purpose of the present discussion to demonstrate that the various moves of which walking out sequences are composed are 'designed' for any purpose other than ongoing argumentation. Nevertheless, the approach adopted by Jefferson and Lee did seem to make available an avenue by means of which the possibility could be investigated that such sequences conform, approximately, to some kind of 'pattern' and that this 'pattern' culminates in the creation of a conversational environment within which walking out may be deemed appropriate by one of the interactants. For this reason the analyses of the sequences were re-examined to determine the extent to which the various moves of which they were composed resembled those from which the model sequence had been devised. This process has not only enabled a picture to emerge of the kinds of interactional move that immediately pre-figure these walkings out, but have also enabled the 'shape' of the more extended sequences of talk of which they are a part to be tentatively delineated. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to explicating these findings.

It has been proposed that the act of walking out seems to constitute a 'reaction' to a sequence of preceding events and that this series of events is only designed to result in such an outcome on some occasions. A model pre-walking out sequence has been devised which, it has been claimed, approximates the terminal sequences in the actual data. One move within this model has been described as a 'shift of focus' within the ongoing argumentative trajectory of the interaction. The proposal here, more specifically, is that, at some point during the series of interactional moves that eventually culminates in one participant walking out, the attention of that

participant focuses on some immediately current activity, action, behaviour, etc., of the 'remainder'.

There is nothing new, of course, about shifts of focus occurring in conversational interaction or, particularly where arguments are concerned, for the new object of attention to be some currently ongoing activity of the 'other' party. What is of significance in these instances, however, is that, firstly, the behaviours, etc., that are focused upon are oriented to by the 'leaver' in each of the cases as complainable. Secondly, they are such that the 'leaver' has a warrantable basis for considering them to be activities of a type that have constituted their principal cause for complaint earlier in the conversation, or even, perhaps, throughout it. Effectively, then, participants who have been accused, as performers of particular types of complainable behaviour, are deemed, by their co-participants, to be persisting, currently, in acting in the same allegedly reprehensible way.

Now, predictably, one difficulty immediately surfaces in all this. What is being described is a 'stage' in a 'model', rather than an 'actual', walking out sequence. The problem is that it is not demonstrable within the terminal sequences that have been studied, that such a shift of focus occurs in all the cases. Is what is being described then, as Jefferson and Lee (1980:5) put it,:

some sort of philosophical/logical construct, an ideal type not to be subjected to such a requirement as that it actually occur?

One matter that needs to be considered here is what evidence, if any, the data can bring to bear on the claim that has been made.

It is quite evident in the Joel/Mum data, that Joel does shift his attention in the way that has been described when, at lines 135 - 136, he abandons his current argumentative 'project' - attempting to elicit from Mum an acknowledgement that she has some responsibility for him being the kind of person that he is - and focuses, instead, on the level of amplitude that she is using while speaking. It is also

evident, at lines 140 - 141, that he builds a connection between Mum 'shouting' in the 'here and now' and her alleged behaviour towards him during his childhood, which has constituted one of the principal complaints that he has raised against her earlier in the conversation. Thus, he orients to her current activity as being similar to the kinds of activity about which he was previously complaining - as far as Joel is concerned, she 'is doing it again'. This sequence, then, seems to substantiate the claims that a shift of focus occurs, that some current action of the 'remainder' constitutes the new focus of attention and that this action is oriented to both as complainable and redolent of previously complained of actions.

The ice skaters' data are a little more problematic in this respect, mainly because the final stages of the walking out sequence are performed non-verbally. Nevertheless, as detailed in the analysis of the sequence, there are strong grounds for claiming that Chris' current behaviour or 'demeanour' - his disengagement and the extended period during which he refrains from orienting to Jane - becomes the central focus of her attention immediately prior to her departure. It was noted earlier that Jane's non-verbal actions at the point at which Chris disengages (line 146) treat his behaviour as un-premonitored, unilateral, unwarranted and un-negotiated. Her subsequent monitoring of his movements around the rink is also interpretable as displaying an analysis of his actions, particularly his lack of orientation to her, as 'wanting' in some respect. It is in these senses that Jane focuses on Chris' current behaviour as complainable.

Is there any sense, though, in which this behaviour of Chris' is reminiscent of actions of his that Jane has complained about earlier in the conversation? At lines 146 and 148 he cites his warrant for acting in these ways as being Jane's emotional display. One thing that *he* is displaying, then, as he makes verbally explicit at line 146, is his lack of sympathy with her and this is, indeed, a position that he has adopted earlier and one about which Jane has complained. More significantly, however, he characterises her tears as futile. One sense, presumably, in which they are, for him, 'futile', is that they do not address his immediately prior claim (lines 143

- 144) that their difficulties with the dance routine have arisen because she has not 'even bothered to try and do it'. Another thing that Chris' current actions seem to display, then, is that this continues to be his 'opinion'. This, too, is a position that he has adopted earlier in the conversation. Jane's principal complaint against this line of Chris', on the other hand, has been that she *is* trying but that she needs further practice. There are grounds here, then, for claiming that Jane, too, is focusing, as complainable, on current actions of her co-participant that are similar to actions of his about which she has previously been principally complaining. He is persisting in treating her as though she has not been 'trying' when she has consistently claimed that she is.

Milly and Clara's interaction is less 'amenable' to providing evidence for a 'shift of focus'. Here, Milly's extended account, excluding its final utterance (line 123), is built as a defensive explication of her earlier complaint that Clara 'puts down other people to make herself look good'. However, it is only at line 123 that she cites this propensity as a warrant for walking out. This, in itself, 'hints' at the possibility that the extended account was not begun as a 'warrant citing turn' and that it is developed into one at a late stage in its performance. This, in turn, raises the possibility that some shift of focus occurs, onto some further complainable matter, while the extended account is being performed.

It should be stressed again, here, that these are merely 'hints' and 'possibilities', but it is nevertheless noticeable that, while the extended account is being performed, Clara portrays herself (at lines 114 - 116 and 119) as an unjustly accused 'innocent' which is precisely the kind of stance that Milly has been complaining about throughout the conversation. So, while there is no explicit, verbal evidence in the data to demonstrate that Milly does shift the focus of her attention onto this current and ongoing 'portrayal' as complainable, grounds clearly exist for her to do so should she choose to. One interpretation of line 123, then, that is available to Clara, is that it may constitute a shift of Milly's attention onto her (Clara's) current activity.

Furthermore, the warrant citing turn (line 123) is performed at a sequential location at which it is interpretable by Clara, a) that her current actions, as representative of the kinds of actions about which Milly has previously been complaining, are also being complained about and, b), that these current actions, as well, possibly, as those previously complained about, are being cited as a warrant for Milly walking out. In short, the actions that Milly cites as her warrant for leaving seem to include those that are currently being performed.

It is now possible, from this re-examination of the data, to modify the claim made in the 'model' sequence that the leavers, in all three instances, shift the focus of their attention onto some complainable, current activity of the remainder that is similar to the kinds of activity of theirs that have previously constituted the 'leaver's' principal complaint against them. *In all three cases, leaver's walk out in circumstances in which they have a legitimate basis for considering remainers to be persisting in behaving in ways that they have principally been complaining about earlier in the conversations.*

As has been noted earlier, in both this section and the analytical sections of this chapter, the leavers in the three terminal sequences orient to the behaviour upon which they are currently focusing in a range of ways. Joel focuses on it explicitly by overtly censuring it (lines 135 - 136); Jane focuses on it non-verbally but in a way that is interpretable as treating Chris' current behaviour as complainable (lines 146 and 149); while Milly responds verbally in a way that is interpretable as citing Clara's current behaviour as at least a partial warrant for walking out. A second claim about these pre-walking out sequences can therefore be made. *In all three cases, the leaver responds to the current behaviour of the remainder in a way that provides them with a legitimate basis for inferring that it is deemed complainable.*

Returning to the model sequence, it was proposed that, having shifted the focus of their attention onto some current activity of the remainder, the leaver then attempts to negotiate a cessation of that activity. This is quite evident in the Joel/Mum data when, at lines 135 - 136, Joel demands cessation. In this instance, where Mum's

current activity is treated, unequivocally, as complainable, maximum opportunity is afforded to her to rectify her behaviour subsequently. The same is true of the Milly/Clara data where Milly's 'position taking' utterance - 'and I'm fed up with it' (line 113) - provides Clara with a similar opportunity. More generally, unless the leaver leaves immediately, an overt response, by making it clear to the remainder that their current activity is deemed complainable, maximises their opportunity to stop acting in the way that ultimately becomes the leaver's warrant for leaving. In short, if the remainder takes up the opportunity to stop acting in the allegedly complainable way, the conversation will probably become less likely to culminate in a walking out.

Where the Chris/Jane data are concerned, Chris, too, is provided with an opportunity to cease behaving in the allegedly complainable way - by re-orienting to Jane. In this case, however, what occurs cannot be described as an attempt to 'negotiate' a cessation. Rather, Jane 'signals' her intention to leave well in advance, and allows an extended period to elapse between the point at which it becomes possible for Chris to infer that his current behaviour is deemed complainable, and her departure.

So, the claim that 'leavers' attempt to negotiate cessations of allegedly complainable current actions also appears to require modification. *Thirdly, then, leavers may provide remainers with opportunities to cease acting in the ways that are inferably complainable. If these opportunities are taken up this is likely to contribute to the creation of a conversational environment in which walking out will not be considered an appropriate next move since the potential leaver's warrant for unilaterally terminating the interaction is removed.*

The next 'stage' in the model sequence involves remainers characterising their current activity as warranted behaviour and displaying their unpreparedness to discontinue it. In the two cases in which opportunities for discontinuation are maximised - the Joel/Mum and the Chris/Jane sequences - the remainers, nevertheless, display an unpreparedness to desist. Chris continues to refrain from orienting to Jane throughout the extended period during which she monitors his

demeanour and proceeds towards the exit. Mum refrains from decreasing her amplitude (line 137) and then explicitly refuses to do so (line 146). Clara, in the two turns that she performs while Milly is in the process of walking out (lines 126 and 129), also displays an unpreparedness to desist by continuing to uphold the position that she is being unjustly accused. It seems just possible, had she made some move that displayed a preparedness to abandon this line of argument, that, even at this late stage, the walking out could have been averted. In the event, though, Clara continues to assert her 'innocence' and Milly continues to leave the room. A fourth claim can be made on the basis of these observations. *In each case, the remainers, in circumstances in which they have a legitimate basis for inferring that their current activity is deemed complainable, respond by displaying their unpreparedness to cease performing that activity. This is the case even where opportunities are provided for them to stop behaving in the allegedly complainable way.*

There are close connections here between the unpreparedness of remainers to desist, and the ways in which they treat the actions of theirs about which the leavers are inferably complaining. More specifically, in each case, at some point during the interaction that precedes the walking out, the remainder attempts to characterise their current activity as warranted behaviour. At lines 146 and 148, for example, Chris portrays his disengagement and his subsequent non-orientation to Jane, as being responsive to her emotional display, which he characterises as futile and burdensome. Thus he treats his actions as being warranted by Jane's prior complainable action - crying. Similarly, Clara, in treating Milly's account/accusation as a description of her actions that she does not recognise, treats those actions as legitimate. Mum appears to be about to characterise her actions as warranted at line 146 but is overlapped by Joel before the turn is completed. A fifth claim can therefore be made. *In each case, the leaver has a legitimate basis for concluding that the remainder considers their current activity to be warranted or legitimate.'*

The final move to be considered, in both the model and 'actual' termination sequences under examination, is the act of walking out itself. In the model 'version'

it was claimed that leavers treat the remainers current behaviours as warrants for walking out. In the 'actual' data Joel, at the point at which he departs (line 147), explicitly characterises Mum's current behaviour - her 'shouting' - as intolerable to him. She, therefore, has a legitimate basis for concluding that he is walking out in response to her high amplitude and/or her refusal to decrease it and that this, therefore, constitutes his warrant for doing so. Jane monitors Chris' demeanour for signs that he may re-orient towards her and thereby demonstrates that she is 'open' to him re-initiating interaction but that she is not prepared to re-initiate it herself. She only exits after engaging in this process for an extended period and, even then, executes her departure in a way that maximises his opportunity to re-orient to her. Chris, then, also has a legitimate basis for concluding that the 'leaver' is leaving in response to his current behaviour - his failure to re-orient to her - and that this constitutes her warrant. Milly cites her warrant for leaving (line 123) and begins to do so at a point at which it is inferable, by Clara, that her attention has shifted to her (Clara's) current activity. She, too, then, has a legitimate basis for inferring that Milly's departure is at least partially prompted by her current actions. Furthermore, when Clara continues to display her unpreparedness to desist, Milly continues the move and actually exits. *Sixthly, then, in all three cases, at the point at which the leaver walks out, the remainder has a legitimate basis for inferring that they are doing so in response to their current activity.*

Having modified the various moves within the model sequence so that they more closely resemble the kinds of event that are found in the three 'actual' sequences, it is possible to gain a clearer impression of the nature of the conversational environment that is likely to be being created by them. Earlier in the conversations, remainers behave in ways about which leavers complain. At a later stage they then engage in some activity which, it seems, is deemed by the leavers to be of a type that is similar to the previously complained about activity. Leavers respond in ways whereby remainers have a legitimate basis for concluding that their current behaviour is perceived in this way but they continue to engage in that

behaviour. Evidently, then, the conversational environment that is being created would appear to be one within which remainers are deemed by leavers to be resolutely persisting in behaving in ways that they know to be objectionable to them.

It is noticeable that there are three 'stages' of allegedly complainable behaviour involved here. Firstly, that which occurs earlier in the conversation, secondly, the current behaviour, (i.e., that to which leavers orient as being reminiscent of the earlier behaviour) and, thirdly, continuation of the current behaviour even when it has become inferable that it is perceived in this way. Because of the repetitious and persistent nature of these 'offences', leavers have a legitimate basis for inferring that remainers are likely, at least in the immediate future, to continue acting in ways that are objectionable to them.

It seems most probable, within this kind of environment, that walking out is designed to achieve a number of ends. Such a move may be implicated in characterising the current behaviour of the remainder as complainable. It may also constitute an emotional display that is designed to express, for example, rage, frustration, etc. Centrally, however, in interactional terms, walking out enables the leaver to decline further recipientship of behaviour that they have found objectionable earlier; which they are continuing to find objectionable in the present and which they are likely to have to continue to endure if they remain in the presence of their co-participants. It is very probably for this reason that it occurs, characteristically if the three instances examined are typical, in environments where the continued performance of such behaviour is anticipatable by the leaver.

However, the terminating sequences that have been examined cannot be treated simply as self-contained units of interaction. Rather, they occur within the overall context of argumentative conversations of a particular type. It has been claimed (Schiffrin, 1984:311) that, in some social contexts:

Speakers repeatedly disagree, remain non-aligned with each other, and compete for interactional goods. Yet they do so in a non-serious way, and in ways which actually display their solidarity and protect their intimacy.

Clearly, the un-negotiated, non-collaborative departure of one participant from the other's presence is not a type of move that is likely to constitute a 'display of solidarity' or that is likely to 'protect the intimacy' of the interactants. However, it is also readily observable, well before the occurrence of the 'walkings out' that we have been examining, that the conversations from which they have been extracted do not constitute 'social arguments' of the type that Schiffrin describes. On the contrary, there is much evidence to suggest that they are formulated in ways that are designed, consistently, to defend argumentative positions that are of some significance to those participating in them and, consequently, that they are intended seriously. Much of this evidence has already been referred to in the analytical section of this chapter, as well as in chapters two and three. However, this would seem to be a point at which it could usefully be drawn together.

It has been noted, for example, that the speakers tend to behave, in a range of ways, that demonstrate the antagonistic nature of their interaction. Their complaints tend to be constructed explicitly (e.g., 'don't you dare correct me'), rather than implicitly (as in example 8); avoidably confrontational formulations are employed (e.g., 'you did one then dropped it on one and it looked stupid'); claims are made that are anticipatably contentious (e.g., 'you're a liar you know') and they tend to be aggravated, in various ways (e.g., 'you spent a lot of time lying and doing every evil thing you can to me'), rather than mitigated. Even where complaints are mitigated, furthermore, they tend to feature other, more forthright characteristics (e.g., 'an stop acting like a big arsehole that you seem to be doing right now'). On some occasions they are also formulated in ways that may be calculated to be offensive (see, e.g., 'its no good fucking crying' and 'you're telling me shit'). There is also a strong tendency, within many of the complaints that are raised, for disputants to characterise their co-participants as inclined to behave in complainable ways, generically. The attribution of these undesirable propensities, moreover, tends to be

exacerbated by the attribution of moral culpability, as recipients are accused of wilfully or even purposefully engaging in these behaviours.

The disputants also tend to make it quite evident that their emotions are 'running high' (*viz.*, Jane's tears, Joel's 'screaming' intonation, various displays of irritation and exasperation and the numerous instances of raised amplitude) and this is another way in which the 'seriousness' and 'unsociability' of these arguments is made apparent. There is also a tendency for the turn allocation and 'next speaker selection' procedures that are normatively oriented to by speakers, to be observed less strictly. Thus, some turns tend to be interruptive; speakers tend not to cut out when overlapped; they sometimes 'disattend' their co-participants or do not respond to prior talk and, on other occasions, do not respond in the ways projected by it.

It has also been noted that there is a strong tendency for the participants in each of the conversations preceding the three unilaterally terminating sequences that have been examined in this chapter, to repeatedly recycle argumentative lines, or versions of them, that they have adopted earlier in the conversations. It is apparent, then, that the issues raised have not been resolved to the satisfaction of the respective disputants by the time termination is approached, and that the positions that they have adopted in relation to these issues have not been significantly shifted from. Indeed, as has been demonstrated within the individual analyses, their positions sometimes seem to have 'hardened' or become more expansive as the conversations have proceeded. Opportunities to conciliate, furthermore, are regularly foregone.

For all of these reasons it seems quite evident that the conversations in question constitute thoroughly acrimonious and 'heated' disputes. This, then, is the kind of overall argumentative context within which the pre-walking out sequences that we have been examining have been generated. The disputatious character of this preceding interaction may be a significant factor where the outcomes of the conversations are concerned. It has been claimed that a particular 'pattern' of events within walking out sequences gives rise to a conversational environment

within which unilateral termination may be considered a valid option by one of the participants. It seems unlikely, however, that the kinds of 'good-natured', social arguments described by Schiffrin often end in this way. It may be, then, that the decisions of leavers unilaterally to terminate interaction are influenced, to some extent, by the nature of the overall argumentative context within which they are operating. To put it another way, whether, on a particular occasion, the occurrence of the pattern of events that has been described is deemed by a potential leaver to make walking out a viable option may be influenced by the degree to which that participant assesses the overall context, within which the pattern of events occurs, to be 'seriously' argumentative.

5. Summary.

The unilateral terminations considered here and, almost certainly, unilateral terminations in general, differ in two major senses from the types of interactional move that Vuchinich (1990) describes as 'withdrawals'. Firstly, unlike 'withdrawals', they make no provision for further conversation and, in fact, constitute very significant obstacles to it. Secondly, there is nothing within the data, in any of the instances examined, to suggest that the preceding interaction is organised in any way to 'build towards' walking out as an outcome. They are not, therefore, collaborative occurrences but involve one participant terminating conversational interaction unilaterally. The preceding interaction is organised - but for the purpose of pursuing the ongoing business of arguing.

However, although the preceding interaction is not organised to achieve 'walking out', similarities do seem to exist in the ways in which it is organised in each case. This suggests that a particular 'set' of moves, which is present in each of the cases considered, may contribute to the creation of a conversational environment within which walking out may, presumably amongst a range of alternative options, become appropriate. To put it another way, if these instances are characteristic, it

would appear that walkings out occur in the presence of a particular series of preceding interactional moves - a pre-walking out sequence.

This series (extract 20) can be described as follows (although the individual

20.

1.A: activity inferably of a type previously complained about (a)

2.B: complaint/complaint implicative response

3.A: treats (a) as warranted/displays unpreparedness to discontinue

4.B: walks out, treating (a) as their warrant for doing so

moves of which it is composed do not necessarily occur strictly in this sequential order). To begin with, A engages in some behaviour, activity, action, etc., that B has a legitimate basis for considering to be of a type about which they have principally been complaining earlier in the conversation (line 1). B responds to this current behaviour in a way that provides A with a legitimate basis for inferring that it is deemed complainable (line 2). A characterises their behaviour as warranted and/or displays an unpreparedness to stop engaging in it (line 3). B walks out at a point at which A has some verbal or sequential basis for inferring that their current behaviour is considered by B to be a warrant for doing so (line 4). It seems evident from this that the creation of a conversational environment within which walking out may occur commences at line 2 (extract 20) where B chooses to interpret A's prior action in a particular way - as being of a type already complained about. However, the creation of this type of environment is not at all inevitable. It is eminently possible that A may, subsequent to line 2, discontinue their activity, i.e., begin to act in some way that is not reminiscent of previously complained about behaviour. One way in which this can be organised has been described. By performing an explicit complaint at line 2 (sequence 21), B (as long as they do not exit immediately)

21.

1.A: previously complained of activity

2.B: complaint

3.A: uncomplaining activity

maximises A's opportunity to rectify their behaviour at line 3. If A takes up the opportunity a conversational environment is presumably created in which walking out is unlikely to be considered an appropriate or viable option.

It is quite evident that the walkings out examined in this discussion do not precisely replicate the series of events described (although the Joel/Mum data comes close). However, what is being described is the creation of a conversational environment, and it would be rather surprising if something so overarching could be constructed in only one, invariable way. A socially divisive action such as walking out can come to be considered 'appropriate' where an interactant can reliably predict that their co-participant is likely to persist in behaving in a complainable way even though the objectionable nature of behaving in that way is *inferable by them*. For this reason, it seems probable that walkings out occur in the presence of moves of the kind encompassed within the sequence of interactional events that has been outlined. Versions of this sequence, therefore, are likely to prefigure walkings out very frequently.

Finally, this is not intended to be a 'universal' claim, i.e., it is not the case that the presence of a sequence of moves of the kind described will invariably result in one participant walking out. Rather, what is proposed is that, where walking out occurs, it probably does so in the presence of some version of this series of preceding moves. It seems most probable that when, in these circumstances, a participant does choose to leave, they do so only where the overall argumentative context, within which the sequence occurs, is considered by them to be acrimonious and intractable enough to make such a move warranted.

Chapter Five

Overview and Conclusions

The research that has been described in the preceding chapters was undertaken, principally, in order to begin to fill a gap that exists within the literature that is currently available on the subject of argumentative interaction. While, as is outlined in chapter one, studies have been performed which examine disputatious talk as it is formulated by children and as it is constructed in various types of institutional or 'non-everyday' setting, those which focus on ongoing argumentation between adults in mundane interactional contexts are noticeably 'thin on the ground'. This is particularly true of work that is based on the detailed analysis of naturally occurring, argumentative talk¹. In the limited amount of work that is available, the references to everyday, adult argumentation are usually oblique, parenthetical or undeveloped. Within it, however, some significant claims are made. It is sometimes claimed, for example, that argumentative talk commonly consists of what are termed 'oppositional' utterances. Thus, for the researchers concerned, utterances such as accusations are customarily responded to with denials, counter-accusations, disagreements, challenges, etc., (see, e.g., Vuchinich, 1984:118, 1990; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981; Garcia, 1991). For some, the apparent regularity with which these types of response occur implies that disputants orient to a normative 'preference for disagreement' (see, for example, Antaki, 1994; Garcia, 1991). From the very beginning of the current project, however, observations were made which appeared, consistently, not to bear out these claims. Complaint responses, for example, did not appear to be constructed in ways that were simply

'oppositional'. Neither did complaint recipients appear to orient systematically to a preference for disagreement. It soon became apparent, however, that the claims made in some of the literature about the predominance of oppositional utterances and/or a preference for disagreement were not based upon any thoroughgoing exploratory work. Rather, they tend, in most cases, to be assumptive propositions within which the researchers concerned seek briefly to describe how adult argumentation is typically formulated in mundane settings in order, then, to contrast, in detail, the ways in which it is constructed or avoided in other, more specialised types of context.

It would be useful, at this point, to examine an example of such a study a little more closely. Garcia (1991), for instance, proposes that disputants in everyday conversational environments characteristically observe a preference for disagreement in successive turns at talk. In order to illustrate this she refers to one sequence of interaction. This is reproduced below (example 1).

Example 1. (*Transcription conventions slightly modified*)

1. Stan: I want to talk to you ()=
2. Karen: =I DI:DN'T (0.3) HAVE ANYTHING. =
3. Stan: =YOU HAD (RIGHT) TO DO WITH=IT! [(YOU ARE ALWAYS)]
4. Karen: [YOU KNOW THAT IS]
5. BULL I DIDN'T [(see it)]=I DIDN'T EVEN DO THAT
6. Stan: [YOU ALLOWED IT]
7. Karen: CRAP I DIDN'T SEE THAT

The topic of this conversation is a comment, which Stan finds objectionable, that Karen is alleged to have written on his last 'support' cheque. It is evident from Karen's utterance at line 2 that she interprets Stan's prior turn ('I want to talk to you') as a preface to some form of complaint about what has been written. As Garcia correctly points out, this sequence of interaction consists entirely of successive turns at talk in which each interactant does little more than perform an 'oppositional'

response to the other's preceding utterance. Without wishing to engage in a thoroughgoing analysis of these data, it is evident that these oppositional turns are formulated as an outright denial (line 2); a contradiction of the denial (line 3) which appears to be about to expand the scope of the original complaint ('... you are always'); an aggravated denial (aggravated in the sense that Stan is accused of talking 'bull' [lines 4 - 5]), and so on. Garcia claims that 'such exchanges of oppositional utterances occur frequently in ordinary disputes' (Garcia, 1991:820).

What she refers to as 'ordinary disputes' are those that are not mediated by a particular form of turn pre-allocation system, which is the principal focus of her study. She seeks to demonstrate that this system, in which it is pre-arranged that a mediator will perform alternate turns at talk, can limit the occurrence of the type of interactional polarisation seen above. Because, within such a system, it becomes necessary for disputants to speak 'through' the mediator, successive turns at talk between the disputants, themselves, do not occur. In consequence, Garcia observes, the supposed preference for disagreement is disrupted and interaction is more able to proceed on a non-disputatious basis. She provides numerous case-studies which demonstrate that this is, in fact, the case. An aspect of Garcia's work, however, with which the current study takes issue is her claim that the sequence of interaction referred to above is typical of argumentative talk. This is because, within this study, sequences of this type, which are included within the category of *unmitigated invalidations*, are somewhat *atypical*. As we shall see later in this chapter, complaint responses which invalidate complaints overtly and which make no concessions to them, occur in only around 5% of the cases in my corpus of complaint-initiated interaction. Where they do occur, they tend to generate subsequent conversational trajectories of precisely the type that can be seen above. Interactants perform mutually contradictory, oppositional utterances in successive turns at talk. However, my detailed analysis of a large body of cases reveals that the sequence of talk to which Garcia alludes, on the basis of which she

claims that disputants normatively orient to a preference for disagreement, is not at all representative of most argumentative interaction.

Because claims about the organisation of everyday argumentation are, like those of Garcia, made on the basis of very little investigative work into that particular form of discourse, it has been possible to view them with a certain degree of circumspection - as propositions that may or may not be borne out by the current study. This, and the general scarcity of preceding research, had the positive result that, having settled upon complaint-initiated sequences of conversation as a relevant focus for the research, the project could be pursued in a relatively 'agenda-free' way. It has been possible to allow the talk, itself, to reveal systematic forms of construction and methods of organisation contained within it. The ways in which these relate to preceding and succeeding interaction within sequences of talk could then be identified without the burden of unnecessary preconceptions or pre-existing assumptions as to what forms these interconnections might take. In the process it has been possible to begin to chart what, formerly, was largely uncharted interactional territory.

In this final chapter, the results of this exploratory process, which are described in detail in earlier chapters, will be summarised. Following this review of the project's principal findings, some of the more generic conclusions that can be drawn from them will be considered. This part of the chapter will begin by discussing the implications that the study has for the claim that participants in argumentative conversation normatively orient to a 'preference for disagreement'. The types of initial response that are typically performed by complaint recipients are particularly relevant in this respect and, in consequence, it is upon utterances that are performed at this sequential location that this part of the discussion will mainly concentrate. A principal conclusion, here, will be that complaint recipients do not, usually, construct their responses in ways that observe a preference for disagreement.

In the next part of the discussion the possibility is considered that more complex forms of preference organisation may be at work following complaints. Here, utterances are discussed that are designed to comply with multiple constraints. Responses to compliments, for example, are commonly constructed in ways that orient to joint preferences for agreement and for the avoidance of self-praise (Pomerantz, 1978a). It is possible that the responses that are typically performed by complaint recipients may, in a similar way, correspond with two types of preference - a preference to avoid overt disagreement and a preference to reject culpability.

In the penultimate section of this concluding chapter, the focus of the discussion returns to the *unilateral termination* of argumentative conversation. Here, it will be proposed that disputants who opt to bring arguments to a close by 'walking out' may, by doing so, avoid the occurrence of more socially disruptive and, perhaps, physically violent forms of 'communication breakdown'. It will be observed that bouts of physical violence between disputing parties are commonly preceded by a series of verbal moves (Luckenbill, 1977) that bears strong similarities with the pre-walking out sequence that is identified in chapter four. In the final section of the chapter some general observations are made about aspects of the methodological approach that has been used in the course of this research.

Before beginning this overall review and evaluation of the project, however, it is necessary to sound a warning note. The interaction that has been focused on in the course of this study is of a very particular type. While, self-evidently, these data are complaint-initiated and argumentative in nature, what it may sometimes be possible to lose sight of, particularly in chapters two and three, is that, in almost all cases, they emanate from much longer, more extended conversations that are, themselves, argumentative. The sequences of talk that are examined are not, then, disputes that have 'flared up' within the context of ongoing interaction that is non-disputatious. Rather, they constitute particular 'moments' - 'snapshots', as it were -

within extended arguments as they are in the process of being constructed or, in the case of chapter four, terminated.

Of course, there is nothing unique in adopting the methodological approach of concentrating on discrete sequences of talk from more extended conversations in order to study interactional detail at 'close quarters'. This is a way of approaching data that has been utilised commonly by conversation analysts, and others who are concerned with the study of communicative interaction, over the past several decades. However, as has already been mentioned, very little of the earlier work that has approached data in this way has focused, centrally, on interaction that is overtly disputatious. Moreover, during the background research that was undertaken in preparation for the current project, it was not possible to locate *any* work that examines a significant body of interaction that is quite so consistently disputatious, acrimonious and antagonistic as that presented here. This is particularly true of work dealing with ongoing, adult argumentation. Even Vuchinich's (1990) study, in which the data examined most strongly resemble those which we have been looking at, considers only the *termination of argumentative talk* in detail, rather than its construction. As to the length of the disputes from which the argumentative sequences were extracted in most of these earlier studies, this information is not always provided. Thus, the data that have been considered in the current study differ from those that have usually been looked at elsewhere in two, major respects. Firstly, the various sequences that have been examined have, generally, been more overtly disputatious than those which have been looked at previously. Secondly, they are constituents of argumentative conversations that are known to have gone on at length.

These characteristics of the data that we have been observing may have significant implications as to the kinds of more generalisable conclusion that can be drawn from them. In consequence, a number of issues must be borne in mind as we attempt to assess the extent to which the various observations that have been made have things to tell us about the systematic ways in which disputatious talk

may be conducted. It is possible, for example, that, rather than constituting forms of interaction that are typical of argumentation, in general, the features and characteristics that have been observed are artefacts of the particular type of extended, highly disputatious interaction from which the data have been extracted. If this is the case they may have more to tell us about the ways in which some arguments become 'heated' and extended than they have to say about the ways in which argumentation is generally constructed. Concomitantly, it is also possible that arguments that are less disputatious and extensive tend to be organised and constructed in ways that are significantly different from those that we have seen. While it will certainly not be possible to address all of these issues in this chapter, it is equally certain that we need to be aware of them as we attempt to draw conclusions from the observations that have been made.

It would probably be helpful, at this point, to provide a specific example of the kinds of consideration that are being alluded to. At the beginning of chapter four, Vuchinich's (1990) study of the termination of argumentative sequences of interaction was examined. Here, we saw that termination is usually achieved collaboratively by the use of 'terminal exchanges' consisting of pairs of adjacent utterances. By means of these, interactants are enabled to reach a point at which 'one speaker's oppositional turn will not elicit an oppositional turn from the other' (Vuchinich, 1990:121). These types of terminal exchange may be organised in several ways. A first speaker may, for example, make an oppositional move, such as an overt disagreement, which the second speaker validates. Alternatively, the first speaker may adopt an argumentative position that is intermediate to those previously contended. The second speaker may then indicate that they are prepared to proceed, non-disputatiously, on the basis of the compromise position. In other cases, the first speaker may perform an oppositional move in response to which the second speaker initiates a shift of topic away from whatever issue is the subject of argument. In this way dispute termination may be proposed implicitly. It appears, from Vuchinich's work, that following the performance of terminal

exchanges, interaction normally continues non-disputatiously. Now, clearly, the number of turns at talk that are performed from the commencement of a dispute to its terminal exchange will vary from conversation to conversation. Thus, arguments may sometimes be quite short-lived affairs, consisting of as few as two 'oppositional' turns prior to the performance of a terminal exchange. It seems most improbable that these more ephemeral types of 'spat' will contain many of the characteristics observed in the sequences of talk examined in this thesis. This is because the latter are taken from extended arguments which, partly by virtue of their length, may have had the opportunity to become, amongst other things, much more escalated. Indeed, one of the reasons that these arguments have become extensive and disputatious is that the interactants participating in them refrain from initiating terminal exchanges of the types to which Vuchinich refers. Another factor that is likely to influence the degree to which interaction appears overtly disputatious is the extent to which the disputants participating in it engage in the types of escalating activities observed in chapter three.

It is clear, from the preceding observations, that the characteristics, features and organisational formats that are identified in any one study of argumentative interaction cannot be generalised to all forms of disputation. Factors like the length of the disputes that are examined and the level of overt disputation that is displayed within them must be taken into consideration before any overarching conclusions can be drawn. For this reason it is important to recognise that the summary presented in the next section, and the more general conclusions that are drawn within it and subsequently, may be of specific relevance to extended, disputatious forms of argumentative interaction.

1. Summary of observations and some further implications

Chapter two of this discussion took as its main focus complainers' initial responses to complaints of various kinds. It was found that, after a complaint (first position) complainers normally respond (second position) in one of five main ways.

Firstly, and in by far the majority of cases (around 85%), they respond with what have been termed *implicit validations*. Some form of implicit acknowledgement is made that the complainees *has* engaged in whatever type of behaviour was attributed to them in the complaint, or some version of it. In a further 2% of cases, complainees respond with *explicit validations*. Here they confirm, in absolute terms, that they *have* performed the complainable action that has been attributed to them. However, as well as making concessive moves of the kinds described, both of these response types also recurrently include accounts or other forms of turn component within which the complained of behaviour is treated as legitimate, justified, innocent or, in some other way, unproblematic. In the third type of response, which occurred in around 5% of the cases in the corpus of data consulted, complainees respond at second position with *unmitigated invalidations*. As we saw earlier, these seek, through the use of components like, for example, overt denials and contradictions, to deny the validity of the complaints that have been made. Here, then, for example, complainees may dispute that the complainable behaviour alluded to in the initial complaint has occurred, or deny that it is they who have engaged in this behaviour. Fourthly, where complainees seek to invalidate complaints they more commonly do so by performing *mitigated invalidations*. These are responses within which the complainees invalidate the complaint, (e.g., by denying having behaved in a complainable way), but in which they also acknowledge that they have engaged in some form of behaviour that is being *interpreted* as complainable by the complainer. This behaviour is usually treated or characterised as *non-complainable*. Fifthly, on very rare occasions complainees respond at second position with an *admission*. These are outright acknowledgements of culpability and may be accompanied by apologetic components.

Now, it can be seen from these observations that in at least 87% of the cases (i.e. those designated as *implicit* and *explicit validations*), complainees' initial responses to complaints incorporate concessive components. This finding clearly

does not bear out claims that are made in a number of earlier studies. As was noted earlier, there is a fairly widely held view within the literature that 'oppositional' turns such as complaints usually engender reciprocal oppositional utterances (see, for example, Garcia, 1991:821, 828; Antaki, 1994:86; Vuchinich, 1984:118, 1990; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981). These utterances, it has been claimed, usually then engender further oppositional turns and so on. It is difficult, in consequence, to avoid the conclusion that, within this view, argumentation is seen as a form of interaction that consists of little more than one oppositional utterance after another. As Garcia (1991:821) puts it:

Once begun, arguments may be difficult to stop because accusations engender return accusations, counter-assertions, or denials. [...] Such denials lack accounts that might lead to a resolution of the disputants' divergent positions; other mitigating techniques that might lessen the face-threatening impact of the denial are also absent. [...] Denials are also a direct disagreement with the prior speaker, putting him or her in a position of either backing down [...] or defending him or herself. If the accuser maintains his or her stand and re-issues the accusation, the dispute continues for another adjacency pair because the second accusation also invites departure from a preference for agreement and may provoke a second denial. The departure from a preference for agreement that accusations make relevant can thus be maintained over a series of turns.

The observations that have been made in the current research, however, reveal that this is, at best, a description of the construction of argumentative interaction that is only partly accurate and, at worst, one that is somewhat simplistic. Within it there is no recognition of the concessive components that accompany justificatory accounts in the vast majority of responses to complaints. While these accounts themselves may sometimes, perhaps even often, constitute 'oppositional' utterances, inasmuch as they reject culpability for complainable actions that have been attributed within complaints, the concessive components are, nevertheless, recognisably in alignment with aspects of complaints. Moreover, the assumption

that oppositional turns simply engender return oppositional utterances has led to the promulgation of a view, as in the extract quoted above, that participants in argumentative conversation normatively orient their talk to a preference for disagreement (see also Antaki, 1994:86). As we shall see a little later in this chapter, the findings of the current work have major implications for this type of claim.

The finding that such a small proportion of the complaint-responses examined during this research are constructed as denials also contrasts with an observation that is made in Atkinson and Drew's (1979) study of courtroom interaction. These researchers observe that, in response to accusations:

Denials, justifications/excuses, counter-accusations and the like are preferred, whilst admissions and apologies are dispreferred: the former actions disavow or challenge the ascription of blame, while the latter accept the blame imputation.

(Atkinson and Drew, 1979:60)

Here, the characterisation of denials as a preferred form of response does not correlate with the comparative infrequency of these types of utterance within my corpus of complaint-initiated data. As noted earlier, for the purposes of the current research denials have been included in the category of *unmitigated invalidations* which occur in only around 5% of cases. It is also noticeable that concessions to preceding 'oppositional' moves, which are so prevalent in my corpus, are not referred to. However, there is much within the extract referred to above that is consistent with the findings of the current study. The designation of 'justifications/excuses' as preferred forms of response, for example, and of admissions and apologies as dispreferred forms of response, is consistent with the relative distributions of these types of utterance in the corpus of data consulted in the present research. Moreover, later in the same study, Atkinson and Drew discuss the typical responses of court witnesses who are in receipt of blame-

implicative interrogatives - questions that imply that they have failed to take some expected action during the course of the events in respect of which they are appearing. They note that:

Outright disagreements - for instance through explicit disconfirmations - are comparatively rare in these extracts, which suggests that witnesses also avoid disagreements with positions in the prior questions.

(Atkinson and Drew, 1979:154)

This is a finding that is much more in keeping with those of the present research.

The preceding observations notwithstanding, I have found that, on the infrequent occasions upon which they appear, denials and other forms of *unmitigated invalidation* do tend to generate a series of subsequent utterances that conforms to the view of those researchers who claim that oppositional turns simply engender further oppositional turns. This was established by the comparative analysis of the types of conversational trajectory that tend to be generated by complaint-validating second position responses (*implicit or explicit validations*), with those that tend to be generated by outright denials or contradictions (*unmitigated invalidations*). Those of the latter type, it was found, often seem to result in a polarisation of the argumentative positions of the respective disputants. This is evident inasmuch as they are commonly followed by extended sequences of talk within which each speaker repeatedly does little more than reiterate their own argument in a way that is diametrically opposed to that of the other speaker. This appears to be the case because the performance, at second position, of, for example, an outright denial, tends to limit the viable response options that are subsequently available to the complainer. If they do not respond, at third position, by insisting upon the validity of their initial complaint this becomes interpretable as a form of concession to the denial that has been performed at second position. Thus, complainers usually respond to this type of second position move by re-affirming

their initial complaint. This, in a similar way, tends to constrain the response options that are available to the complainees at fourth position. In consequence, they usually respond by reiterating their denial. This repetitive cycle of mutually contradictory utterances seems to continue until one or other of the interactants finds some way of extricating themselves from it so as to maintain their own position without inducing their co-participant to re-assert their contradictory position. By contrast, this type of overt polarisation tends to be avoided when complaints are implicitly or explicitly validated. In these cases, further insistence that the initial complaint was valid is rendered non-relevant. Instead, the focus of the interaction commonly shifts onto other matters. These include issues that have been raised within the justificatory accounts which commonly accompany complaint-validating responses.

It was also established in chapter two that where complainees validate complaints explicitly, rather than implicitly, they commonly do so in circumstances where this enables them to support, substantiate or evidence argumentative lines that they have adopted previously. In instance 15 (page 61), for example, we saw that the complainees explicitly validate a complaint that he is 'a liar'. By doing so, he seeks to demonstrate the veracity of claims that he has made earlier in the conversation about potentially untoward consequences that usually arise when he tells his co-participant 'the truth'. Under circumstances like these, where a complaint is being validated in order to authenticate the speaker's earlier claims or argumentative lines, there are obvious advantages to constructing the validation in an explicit rather than in an implicit way.

The justificatory accounts and legitimations that are normally produced at second position in conjunction with *implicit* and *explicit* validations were found to be of two main types - *counter-accounts* and *extrinsic accounts*. Both of these enable complainees to indicate that the complaint-validating aspects of their responses do not constitute admissions of 'guilt'.

Counter-accounts are utterances within which complainees attempt to reject culpability for having behaved in some way that has been treated as complainable.

They attempt to do this by re-attributing responsibility to the complainer. This sometimes involves the performance of counter-accusations in which it is claimed that the allegedly complainable behaviour of the complainees has been instigated by some untoward behaviour of their co-participant. One outcome that often results from responses of this kind is that, subsequently, the focus of the conversation shifts away from the matter originally complained about onto the allegedly complainable behaviour of the initial complainer. Alternatively, in other forms of counter-account, it may be claimed that the complainees have behaved in the complained of way as a result of something that their co-participant has done that is not characterised as blameworthy. Thus, the complainees may claim that they have behaved in the complained of way so as to attempt to comply with, for example, a request that has been performed earlier by the complainer. The definitive characteristic, then, of *counter-accounting* responses is that they seek to establish a causal relationship between the allegedly complainable behaviour of the complainees and some preceding action of the complainer. In this way, complainees seek to reject culpability for their actions by shifting responsibility for them onto their co-participants.

Extrinsic accounts are utterances within which complainees seek to establish a causal relationship between their complained of behaviour and external circumstances. Neither they nor their co-participants are usually held to be responsible for these extrinsic factors. In one of the instances that were examined in chapter two (sequence 26, page 81), for example, the complainees claim that she is earning less than her co-participant thinks appropriate as a consequence of just such an external circumstance - 'there's a recession on at the moment'. Again, by formulating responses of this type, complainees seek to diminish the extent to which they can be held to be culpable for their shortcomings. Other types of *extrinsic account* were identified in which complainees seek to characterise actions of theirs that are complained about as ways of behaving that are, in fact, 'laudable' or 'virtuous'. This commonly involves the citing of some outcome of the allegedly

complainable behaviour which, it is claimed, has been beneficial to others. Thus, in example 27 in chapter two (page 82), the complainee claims that her frequent absence from the family home, about which her co-participant has complained, enabled her to provide her young family with an income. Similarly, in example 30 (page 84), the complainee claims that by acting in an allegedly complainable way he was able to safeguard the well-being of a group of elderly people. Within responses of this type, then, complainees do not merely seek to reject culpability by treating as non-complainable behaviour about which a complaint has been made. They also attempt to *characterise that behaviour as meritorious*. This commonly enables clear implications to be conveyed that the initial complaint was unreasonable as well as unfounded.

Chapter three focused more directly on the kinds of response that are most commonly formulated by complainers at third position, subsequent to their co-participants' initial replies to their complaints. The types of conversational trajectory generated at fourth position, by these third position utterances, were also considered.

It was noted that no *exonerative responses* are apparent at third position within the corpus of data consulted. Not a single case can be found in which a complainer accepts that the justification performed by their co-participant at second position legitimises their behaviour. This is clearly in marked contrast to conclusions that are drawn within a number of studies emanating from the 'accounts literature' (Scott and Lyman, 1968; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981; Riordan *et al*, 1983; Hale, 1987) which are referred to in chapter three. Here, it has been claimed that the performance of an account by an interactant whose actions have been characterised as wanting in some sense typically results in a resolution of conflict. This is overwhelmingly *not* the case in the sequences of talk that have been examined in the current discussion. On the contrary, in all of these instances conflict persists subsequent to the performance of an account at second position, not uncommonly in an escalated form. In fact it seems that, in this overtly disputatious

type of interaction, virtually *nothing* that complainers choose to say at second position (other than the rarely occurring admissions of culpability and/or apologies) results in the resolution of conflict. Thus, the claim that accounts resolve conflict is clearly problematic. This may well be the case within minor 'squabbles' and other forms of less argumentative interaction. Indeed, it is probable that one factor that contributes to the less argumentative character of such disputes is that complainers exonerate complainees on the basis of the accounts that they perform. However, it is clear that, within disputatious interaction of the type examined in the present research, this is *something that complainers do not, generally, do*. This contributes to the recognisably disputatious character of this type of talk.

Chapter three attempted to identify details of the organisation and construction of these *non-exonerative responses* in order to ascertain the various ways in which their non-exonerative nature was made apparent. One way in which a great many of them (around 83%) display non-acceptance of second position accounts is through the continued pursuit of matters that have been raised, as complainables, at first position.

Such *non-exonerative responses* were found to fall within three main categories - *account-disattending responses, sarcastic or account-ridiculing responses and account-attending responses*. *Account-disattending responses* are utterances that do not respond directly to what has been said at second position. What are clearly addressable moves (e.g., counter-accounting responses such as counter-complaints and other forms of challenge, and even concessive moves) are not addressed. Rather, they are disregarded or ignored in ways that are sometimes quite pointed. This pointedness is achieved in two main ways. Firstly, elements of initial complaints, (e.g., phrases or key words), may be retained at third position. This tends to make it quite apparent that what has been said at second position is not being permitted to deflect the orientation of the ongoing talk away from the complainable matters raised at first position. Secondly, the response may be commenced at a point at which the complainees's second position response is

recognisably incomplete - interruptively, in overlap or where the complainees talk projects further talk on their part. Again, this suggests that what is in the process of being said at second position is being ignored. It is principally by continuing to focus on the matters originally complained about, often in ways that expand upon them, that *account-disattending responses* make apparent their non-exonerative character.

Sarcastic responses are utterances that are non-exonerative inasmuch as they overtly ridicule or do not treat seriously what the complainees has said at second position in justification of their behaviour. These responses usually include features, such as agreeing or confirming components, that appear to validate second position utterances. In addition, however, they also contain other features, such as exaggerated versions of complainable matters raised at first position or overt, verbal abuse of the complainees. By means of these it is made unmistakably apparent that what has been said is not genuinely being accepted as a legitimate justification of the complained of behaviour.

Account-attending responses are utterances which address matters that are raised at second position in a serious, non-sarcastic, way. Four types of response falling within this category were examined - *dismissive responses* (or *dismissals*), *non-dismissive responses*, *complaint-circumscribing responses* and *account-curtailing responses*. *Dismissals* respond non-exoneratively through the use of dismissive components such as explicit denials, contradictions or other forms of direct rebuttal. These are components by means of which second position accounts are overtly invalidated. In addition, this type of response is usually accompanied by further talk within which some form of justification or evidence is provided for the dismissal that has been performed. These additional components customarily include further allusions to the matters that were originally complained about at first position. *Non-dismissive responses* are utterances the non-exonerative characteristics of which tend to be more implicit. Here, complainers construct alternative accounts to those performed at second position within which they seek,

without overtly dismissing them, to demonstrate to their co-participants that what they have said does not legitimise their behaviour. So, in these responses, rather than overtly dismissing what they have said, complainers seek to provide complainees with grounds for concluding, for themselves, that their second position utterances do not account, satisfactorily, for their behaviour.

Complaint-circumscribing responses do not, normally, seek to dispute the validity of second position utterances. Consequently, they, too, do not contain overtly dismissive components. Rather, they are usually constructed in ways that either implicitly or explicitly accept the possibility that some dimensions, at least, of the complainees's response to the initial complaint are valid. However, like the other types of third position response that have been examined, these, too, are non-exonerative utterances. This is because they also contain modified versions of first position complaints, as well as these concessive moves. Within these reformulations those aspects of the second position account that have not been disputed are no longer included within the field of reference of the complaint. Instead, the focus of the conversation is shifted more directly onto dimensions of the initial complaint regarding which what has been said at second position has not been validated. This may involve the performance of a 'new' version of the complaint that focuses on specific details of the complained of matter that are, recognisably, of more principal concern to the complainer. Alternatively, the reformulated version of the complaint may diminish the scope or field of reference of the initial version. In consequence, the reconstructed complaint is less likely to be vulnerable to challenges that have been mounted at second position and is likely to be more difficult for the complainees to dispute. This may result, as in one example that was examined (instance 24, page 149), in the complainees abandoning their side of the argument completely.

Like *complaint-circumscribing responses*, *complaint-curtailing responses* do not, necessarily, dispute the accuracy or veracity of what has been said at second position. However, they are utterances within which further discussion of matters

that have been raised by complainees in defence of their actions is explicitly discouraged. This is done in a way that makes it clear that the initial complaint still stands. These types of response may be formulated as overt refusals to participate in further talk about matters raised at second position (as in example 15, page 124), attempts to postpone such talk, and so on.

Turning now to fourth position responses, it was noted that around two thirds of the cases in the data corpus do not further pursue lines of argument that have been adopted at second position. This does not mean, however, that complainees tend to respond in ways that are culpability-accepting. Rather, in almost all cases, they respond either by finding alternative ways of rejecting culpability (alternative to those utilised at second position) or by performing responses that are likely to result in a shift of conversational focus away from the issue of their alleged culpability. Options that they choose include the performance of counter-complaints against their co-participants, the topicalising of issues that have been raised at third position, attempts to initiate shifts of topic onto other related matters, attempts to 'close down' lines of argument that have been adopted at third position and the citing of reasons, other than those cited at second position, why the complained of behaviour is justified.

It was found, however, that *account-disattending* third position responses consistently generate fourth position utterances that *do* continue to use lines of argument that have been used at second position. There is a sense in which these types of fourth position response are well-matched to the disattentive utterances that precede them. Within them, complainees appear to use precisely the same strategy that their co-participants have just used. By continuing to pursue whatever line of argument they have adopted at second position they do not permit the prior turn to deflect their conversational trajectory. Effectively, then, they respond to the complainer's third position utterance, which disattends their own second position talk, by disattending it in return. Thus, it is evident that, on some occasions,

interactants choose reciprocally to pursue their own lines of argument by adopting the strategy of deliberately 'talking past' each other over successive turns at talk.

The third position response in complaint-initiated sequences of argumentative talk also appears to influence what happens at fourth position in other major ways. Most significantly, it often seems to constitute a key 'moment' in determining whether the disputatious character of the interaction is escalated, de-escalated or maintained at a similar level subsequently. The inclusion or non-inclusion, at third position, of three types of feature appears to be especially influential in this respect. These are, i) explicit, dismissive components, of the types mentioned earlier, ii) expansions in the field of reference or scope of the initial complaint and, iii) concessions to second position accounts. It was noted that third position responses that include features i) and ii) but which do not include feature iii) appear more overtly confrontational, antagonistic or acrimonious than those which do not include features i) and ii) but do include feature iii). In other words, by selecting various combinations of these characteristics complainers are enabled to regulate the extent to which their talk appears overtly disputatious. Detailed analysis of complainers' fourth position responses, moreover, reveals that *this is not simply an* idiosyncratic interpretation of the data that has been imposed upon them by the author. In the concluding part of chapter three it was shown that the fourth position responses that complainers perform following more disputatious third position responses, (i.e., those that include features i) and ii) but which exclude feature iii)), tend to be built in a more overtly disputatious way than was the talk of the same speakers in their previous, second position utterances. Similarly, responses that *do not* incorporate features i) and ii) but which include feature iii) tend to generate fourth position responses within which the level of disputatiousness is either similar to that evident at second position or within which it is actually diminished. Thus, it was seen that third position responses that appear more overtly argumentative are oriented to, by complainers themselves, as utterances that warrant escalations in the argumentativeness of their own talk. Those that appear less overtly disputatious

are not oriented to in such a way. It can therefore be inferred that complainers orient to third position responses that are dismissive, that expand the scope of the initial complaint and which are non-concessive in respect of second position justifications, as utterances that are more overtly disputatious than those that are not constructed in this way.

It was also seen in chapter three that particular types of *non-exonerative response* - *sarcastic responses* and *dismissals* - are commonly built in this more disputatious way while *non-dismissive responses* and *complaint-circumscriptions* are not. Thus, the types of third position response that tend to generate escalations in the overtly disputatious character of the subsequent talk are those that have been designated, in this discussion, as *sarcastic* and/or *dismissive* utterances. In general, then, it can be seen that it is to these two types of third position response, in particular, that complainers routinely orient as overtly disputatious utterances.

Something that begins to be made apparent by these observations is that, even within the corpus of highly disputatious data consulted here, there are some conversations which, nevertheless, become even more confrontational, unaccommodating and acrimonious than others. In chapter four the focus of the discussion was turned to three conversations within which the interaction becomes particularly disputatious. Each of these conversations culminates with one participant *unilaterally terminating* the interaction by physically leaving the vicinity in which it is being conducted. It was noted that, within Vuchinich's (1990) schema, events of this sort are included within a group of interactional moves that are designated as 'withdrawals'. He also includes, within this group of actions, two other types of action. Firstly, those in which speakers respond to oppositional turns by overtly declining to participate in further discussion of the disputed matter. Secondly, moves wherein they refrain from responding to oppositional turns, thereby implicitly indicating their unpreparedness to participate further. In response, their co-participant may stop arguing, by performing a non-disputatious turn or, alternatively, they may attempt to continue the dispute by responding in an 'oppositional' way. In

either case, then, the 'withdrawal' permits interaction to continue, either disputatiously or non-disputatiously. Where argumentation is terminated, this is an outcome that is achieved collaboratively. By performing a 'withdrawal', in these cases, one speaker proposes the discontinuation of the dispute and the other 'accepts' the proposition by continuing the interaction in a non-disputatious way.

It was noted that, in two major respects, *unilateral terminations* are different types of move to those described above. Firstly, since they involve the physical departure of one of the disputants, they do not merely result in the termination of *argumentative* interaction. Rather, they render further talk, *of any kind*, virtually impossible. Secondly, detailed analysis of the interaction immediately preceding each of the *unilateral terminations* revealed that, while grounds are usually available for those who are walked out on (the 'remainers') to infer that a move of this kind may be forthcoming, this is not an outcome that is collaboratively achieved. Rather, terminations of this kind are executed unilaterally by leavers with or without the overt collusion of the remainder, or even in the face of their outright opposition. It is in this sense that they are unilateral.

It was found that *unilateral termination* occurs within a particular type of conversational environment. More specifically, it appears to be the final act of a preceding series of interactional moves - a 'pre-walking out sequence'. Although this series may vary from conversation to conversation, the moves of which it is composed were found to be sufficiently similar, in each case, for a 'model' walking out sequence to be devised. This closely resembles the interaction that precedes the termination of each of the individual conversations. This model sequence enabled it to be determined that a pre-walking out sequence begins when the participant who ultimately becomes the remainder performs some action that the leaver interprets as being of a type that has constituted one of their (the leaver's) principal causes of complaint earlier in the conversation. The leaver responds to this action, either verbally or non-verbally, in a way that provides the remainder with legitimate grounds for inferring that it has been interpreted in this way. The remainder

then responds, again either verbally or non-verbally, in a way that characterises the complained of action as warranted and/or which displays their unpreparedness to cease behaving in that way. Following this, the leaver terminates the interaction unilaterally, treating as their warrant for doing so, the complainable behaviour in which the remainder is continuing to engage. Thus, the conversational environment in which walking out tends to occur is one where the remainder is deemed, by the leaver, to be persisting in behaving in an objectionable way when the objectionable nature of behaving in that way has already been made known to them.

Of course, it is not the case that a series of interactional moves such as that described inevitably results in a unilateral termination of interaction. For one thing, following the point at which the potential remainder's current behaviour is treated as being complainable it is perfectly possible for them to respond in a way that is less likely to be interpreted as such. Under these circumstances it seems likely that the potential leaver's warrant for unilaterally terminating the interaction will be removed and that conversation will be enabled to continue. However, even where potential remainers do not respond in this way, other options are probably available to their co-participants. The type of sequence that has been described seems to result in unilateral termination only when the interaction within which it occurs has become particularly acrimonious, antagonistic or 'heated'. This is made apparent in a number of ways. Complaints about remainers' behaviour may, for example, be extended; the ways in which they are formulated may become decreasingly mitigated or increasingly aggravated over several turns; or remainers may be characterised as having a generic propensity to behave in whatever complainable way has been alleged.

2. Principal objectives of disputants and the vexed question of preference organisation

It was observed, in the concluding sections of chapters two and three, that the talk of participants in disputatious, complaint-initiated interaction tends to be concerned with achieving two principal objectives. Despite the concessive moves

by which they are usually accompanied, which have been referred to earlier, complainers' second position responses to complaints recurrently seek to deny culpability for the complainable actions that have been attributed to them. Again, at fourth position, they systematically respond in ways that seek either to reject or not to accept culpability. They do this in one of three ways. They either make further allusions to the argumentative lines that they have adopted at second position in defence of their allegedly complainable behaviour (in a minority of cases); or, they cite alternative reasons why their complained of behaviour is justified or non-complainable; or, they perform responses that are likely to result in a shift of conversational focus away from the issue of their own culpability. It was concluded, therefore, that the rejection of culpability is a principal concern of complainers within the type of interaction under examination.

Turning, now, to complainers, they are usually confronted, at second position, with responses elements of which, at the very least, make relevant the possibility that their initial complaints were unwarranted, unfounded or unreasonable. This is the case despite the presence of the various types of concessive component that have been referred to earlier. In every case *within the corpus of data consulted*, the complainer's third position response seeks to resist this move. This is the case even in instances, such as *complaint-circumscribing responses*, in which elements of what has been said at second position are either validated or are not disputed, and in which the scope of the initial complaint is diminished. It was concluded, therefore, that the principal objective to which the talk of complainers is oriented in third position, is the rejection of the possibility that their initial complaints were unwarranted.

Now, given that the talk of disputants appears to be systematically oriented to these two principal considerations, and that culpability-accepting second/fourth position and exonerative third position responses are almost completely absent in the data corpus, could it be that what is being observed here is some form of preference organisation? As was noted, both in chapter one and earlier in this

chapter, some researchers within the existing literature (see, e.g., Garcia, 1991:821, 828; Antaki, 1994:86) claim that, unlike the talk of participants in non-argumentative conversation, which appears to be normatively oriented to a preference for agreement (Sacks, 1987 [1973]; Pomerantz, 1984²), that of participants in argumentative interaction is normatively oriented to a preference for disagreement. Thus, for Garcia (1991:821):

Accusations also operate contrary to the "preference for agreement". Preference for agreement would lead to an admission of guilt as the preferred response to an accusation. But, for accusations, denials are the preferred response because the absence or delay of a denial may be interpreted as an admission of/evidence of guilt.

The view that disputants normatively orient their talk to a preference for disagreement is partly a result of an opinion that is also held within some of this literature that argumentative talk is generally composed of series of reciprocally produced 'oppositional' utterances (see, e.g., Vuchinich, 1984:118, 1990; Eisenberg and Garvey, 1981, Garcia, 1991). If disputatious interaction is thought of in this way, a logical conclusion is that speakers are conforming to a preference for disagreement. However, as we have seen, the responses to complaints that are performed by the disputants in the current research tend, overwhelmingly, *not* to be constructed in this way. Rather, as well as being 'oppositional' in nature they are usually also concessive. Could it still be, though, that the tendency of these utterances to be in partial non-alignment with the complaints to which they respond provides evidence for a preference for disagreement of the sort described above? It is the contention of the author that these data cannot be straightforwardly interpreted in this way.

This is the case for three main reasons. Firstly, as was observed at the beginning of this chapter, the data that have been examined may not be adequately representative of all forms of argumentative interaction. Until further research is

undertaken, for example, we have no way of knowing whether or not culpability-accepting second/fourth position and/or exonerative third position utterances are more or less prevalent in argumentative interaction that is less overtly disputatious and extended than that which has been examined here. One possible reason that less disputatious and less extended arguments are less disputatious and extended may be that these types of utterance *are* more prevalent within it.

Secondly, the very absence of these kinds of response within the data corpus that has been consulted for the purposes of this discussion means that one of the principal 'tools' normally used in order to establish the existence of a preference organisation is simply unavailable. What is meant by this is that conclusions such as these are not usually made on the basis of statistical evidence alone. Sacks' (1987 [1973]) seminal work on the preference for agreement in interaction, for example, does not simply observe that, where agreement/disagreement is relevant, most talk is in agreement. Rather, the evidence that he uses results, principally, from the examination of deviant cases, that is, of talk that is in disagreement. Talk of this sort, he observes, even though it is in disagreement, is usually prefaced by agreeing talk or is, *in other ways, delayed until a later part of the turn*. Agreeing talk, by contrast, is usually neither prefaced nor delayed and therefore occurs at the beginning of the turn. Thus, it is by observing that 'dispreferred' utterances are systematically constructed in ways that indicate their dispreferred status that it is possible to determine that a preference organisation for agreement is being oriented to on a normative basis, *even when the talk is in disagreement*. Similarly, Pomerantz (1984) observes that the dispreferred status of dispreferred utterances is normally recognisable inasmuch as they are delayed in various ways, for example, by the use of pauses, requests for clarification, partial repeats of the prior turn and turn prefaces. Significantly, in the context of the current discussion, she also notes that, where a preference for *disagreement* is in operation, (e.g., subsequent to a turn in which the initial speaker makes some kind of self-deprecatory remark), the dispreferred status of dispreferred utterances (i.e.,

agreement-type responses) is also recognisable. This is the case inasmuch as here, too, pauses and other forms of delay are commonly used. Additionally, agreement components may be absent, they may be 'weak' in nature, or they may be accompanied by other talk within which the recipient makes deprecatory comments about themselves. It is on the basis of these observations that she concludes that, subsequent to self-deprecatory utterances, a preference for disagreement is normatively observed by second speakers.

It can be seen, then, that in order to establish beyond doubt that the participants in argumentative interaction systematically orient to a preference for disagreement, it would be necessary to demonstrate that in those cases where they perform agreeing, (i.e., dispreferred) responses, the dispreferred status of those turns is made recognisable. The existing literature fails, signally, to provide this kind of evidence. Moreover, this is not a gap that the current research is able to fill since instances of what would be 'dispreferred' utterances, if a preference for disagreement is being oriented to, are simply unavailable within the data corpus that has been consulted.

Thirdly, as noted earlier, Sacks (1987 [1973]) observes that when an utterance containing dispreferred components is performed, these components are usually 'pushed' towards the end of the turn. This non-contiguity of the dispreferred part of the turn, which might be, for example, a disagreement with the prior 'disagreed-with' turn, renders the disagreement that is being performed less prominent. A distancing of the utterance that is to be disagreed with and the disagreement components of the response is achieved. Now, if the view is accepted that a straightforward preference for disagreement is oriented to in argumentative talk, it might be expected that 'agreement-like' components of turns, such as the concessive components that are usually included in responses to complaints, would systematically be performed non-contiguously with the complaint. This would enable a distancing to be achieved between the complaint, which is to be disagreed with, and the agreement-like components of the complainees' response. No such

systematic way of formulating initial responses to complaints, however, is observable within the data that have been consulted here. Again, then, evidence that might support a view that disputants systematically orient their talk to a preference for disagreement, at least in a straightforward way, is noticeable for its absence.

To summarise, then, we cannot exclude the possibility that in sequences of argumentative talk that are less overtly disputatious than those that have been considered during this research, disputants may be more inclined to perform utterances that are culpability-accepting or exonerative. Also, since instances of these supposedly dispreferred forms of response do not appear within the data corpus that has been consulted, there is no evidence to show that, if they were to be performed, they would be formulated in ways that displayed their dispreferred status. Finally, where, as in the great majority of cases, concessive components are included in initial responses to complaints, it is just as common for them to be performed contiguously with the original complaint as it is for them to be performed non-contiguously. Again, then, there is no evidence to show that these components display a dispreferred status. *For these three reasons, it cannot be concluded that speakers in argumentative talk construct their talk in ways that observe a normative preference for disagreement.*

3. Responses to complaints and 'the co-operation of multiple constraints'³.

In the preceding section it was claimed that, for a number of reasons, the data that have been examined during this research cannot be interpreted as providing evidence for the existence of a preference for disagreement in argumentative talk. However, two features which recurrently appear at second position in the data that we have been examining raise the possibility that, if preferences are in operation, they may orient to multiple constraints rather than to a single constraint. In chapter two, it was observed that complainees usually respond to complaints with

Of course, one problem that immediately surfaces here is that, unlike theories that propose that single preferences are in operation, a theory that proposes the existence of multiple constraints is much harder to falsify. This is because deviant cases are likely to be more difficult to identify. As mentioned earlier, where single preferences are at work, dispreferred responses can be identified as such because they tend to be accompanied by delays and other features that index their dispreferred status. This becomes much more problematic where multiple constraints are concerned. In the case in question, for example, if a concessive component was accompanied by a delay, this may be attributable to a preference to reject culpability. Similarly, if a culpability-rejecting component was to be accompanied by features that might, in other circumstances, be indicative of a dispreferred status, these features may be attributable to a preference to avoid overt disagreement.

These difficulties notwithstanding, however, the proposition that, in response to certain types of preceding utterance, speakers construct their talk in ways that are designed to comply with multiple constraints is not without precedent within conversation analytic literature. In her study of compliments and recipients' responses to them, for example, Pomerantz (1978a) notes that the utterances performed by complimented parties normally negotiate a delicate pathway. They systematically manage, on one hand, to accept/agree with the compliment, thereby observing a normative preference for agreement, while, on the other hand, resisting this acceptance, thereby observing a normative preference to avoid self-praise. The speakers in Pomerantz's study achieve this in a number of ways. One of the strategies that they use may be of significance to this section of the current study. Here, they disagree with the compliments that they have received not by overtly negating them, but by qualifying them. For example, this can be done by proposing that the credit that has been attributed is excessive or exaggerated. In this way, overt disagreement is avoided and a preference for agreement is observed.

However, only a diminished form of credit is accepted, so that the extent to which the speaker appears to indulge in self-praise is also diminished.

Similarly, Atkinson and Drew (1979:153-154) observe that witnesses in court proceedings, in their responses to questions within which it is implied that they may have failed to take some relevant or expected action, also customarily construct responses that seek to perform 'coincidental interactional tasks'. These coincidental tasks, the researchers say,

Are witnesses' avoidance of the allocation of blame to themselves [...] the avoidance of self-blame; and the avoidance of disagreement with the position or information in a prior question.

They go on to note, in an extract part of which we have seen earlier in this chapter, that, in order to accommodate these two competing orientations, witnesses:

May withhold agreement with the forms in which information or proposals are put in questions, where those forms appear to be blame implicative. At the same time, outright disagreements - for instance through *explicit* disconfirmations - are comparatively rare in these extracts, which suggests that witnesses also avoid disagreements with positions in the prior questions.

It may be that the complainees whose responses to complaints have been examined in chapter two of the present discussion are adopting similar strategies to those described above. As we have seen, in something like 87% of the cases in the data corpus, complainees respond at second position by either implicitly or explicitly validating the complaints of which they are in receipt. These are utterances which, because they acknowledge that the speaker has performed whatever complainable action has been attributed to them, or some version of it, are 'agreement-like' structures. In addition, however, complainees' talk contains other elements within which they treat their behaviour as legitimate or justifiable. These are culpability-rejecting/avoiding components and, as such, constitute 'disagreement-like'

structures. Like the recipients of compliments in Pomerantz's (1978a) study and Atkinson and Drew's (1979) court witnesses, rather than building their talk in accordance simply with a single preference for disagreement, as has been mooted elsewhere, the recipients of complaints in the argumentative talk examined during the present research may also be observing two types of preference organisation. On the one hand they concede that they have engaged in the complained of behaviour attributed to them. These are 'agreement-like' moves that are consistent with a preference for agreement. On the other hand, they qualify these concessions by performing justifications for their behaviour. These are 'disagreement-like' moves that are consistent with what may be a preference to avoid the acceptance of culpability. Thus, immediately subsequent to complaints it is possible that multiple constraints shape the design of complainers' turns.

4. Degrees of social disruption - unilateral termination and physical violence

In his study of criminal homicide, Luckenbill (1977:179-186) examines violent conflicts that eventually culminate with the murder of one of the interactants. These types of conflict, he observes, are commonly prefigured by a particular series of preceding interactional moves. A number of similarities appear to exist between the sequence that Luckenbill describes and the 'pre-walking out sequence' which commonly precedes *unilateral terminations*, as described in chapter four.

Luckenbill's conclusions are drawn from a study of the official documents relating to seventy encounters that had resulted in murder. He reports that:

All official documents pertaining to these cases were secured. The character of the larger occasion as well as the organisation and development of the fateful transaction were reconstructed from the analysis of police, probation, psychiatric, and witness reports, offender interviews, victim statements, and grand jury and court testimony. These materials included information on the major and minor participants; who said and did

what to whom; the chronology of dialogue and action; and the physical comportment of the participants.

(Luckenbill, 1977:177)

Luckenbill observes that many of these encounters begin when one of the interactants performs some action that the other interprets 'as an offense (*sic*) to "face" '. These offensive actions have usually been complained about previously, either in earlier interaction during the same encounter or on previous occasion/s. They are commonly responded to by the offended party with what Luckenbill describes as 'an expression of anger and contempt', within which they characterise the offender 'as an unworthy person'. Following this, these utterances characteristically generate responses, on the part of the offender, which involve 'non-compliance' with the offended party's 'challenge or command and the continued performance of activities deemed offensive.' In Luckenbill's study, it is commonly at this point, in response to the displayed unpreparedness of one party to cease behaving in a way that has repeatedly been complained about by the other, that the latter resorts to physical violence. Either this initial assault or an immediately subsequent bout of physical conflict then goes on to result in the death of one or other of the combatants.

This series of actions resembles pre-unilateral termination sequences in a number of respects. Here, too, some behaviour of one interactant that has previously been complained about by the other is again treated as complainable. Like the offenders in Luckenbill's study, the remainers whose talk is examined in chapter four respond to these renewed complaints by displaying their unpreparedness to stop behaving in the complained of way, either explicitly or simply by continuing to engage in this behaviour. It is at this point that the leavers, in pre-unilateral termination sequences, rather than throwing a punch, or finding and using a weapon of some sort, like Luckenbill's offended parties, opt instead to walk

out. In doing so they decline further recipientship of this persistently complainable behaviour.

One thing that Luckenbill's study makes apparent is that physically removing themselves from the arena within which interaction is taking place is just one of the strategies that interactants may use in order to bring these types of conversation to a close. While unilateral termination may be a socially disruptive type of interactional response, on other, thankfully rarer occasions, the responses that interactants use in these circumstances may, as Luckenbill demonstrates, 'slip over' into what can be described as 'anti-social' forms of interaction. Indeed, although data for the incident are unavailable, it is known to the author that one of the conversations that has been examined in this research culminates in a very serious, physical assault by one of the interactants upon the other. While this kind of interaction sequence may often result in nothing more than a minor 'tussle', on other occasions its consequences are more fateful and may, like those outlined above, even be fatal. It would appear, then, that by unilaterally terminating interaction at the point at which their co-participants indicate that they are not prepared to stop acting in whatever way has been repeatedly complained about, leavers may be preventing from being realised the potential that these types of conversational environment sometimes seem to possess. Since remainers make it clear that they are determined to persist in behaving in ways that leavers are unprepared, or unable, to tolerate, the latter seem to be seeking ways of handling confrontational situations that have, to a very large extent, become un-resolvable. These are interactional circumstances that are 'ripe' for some form of social rupture.

It is interesting to note, incidentally, as was pointed out in chapter four, that the performance of some action that has previously been complained about and the subsequent renewal of those complaints does not necessarily result in the initiation of a unilateral termination sequence that culminates in one of the interactants walking out. It was proposed that if, following the renewed complaint, the offending party opts to stop behaving in the way that has been complained about, this is less

likely to result in the offended against party terminating the interaction. This is because it is the deliberate and persistent nature of the offence that is commonly treated, by the leaver, as their warrant for departing. When offenders opt to desist, they effectively remove this warrant. It seems likely that the same could be true where sequences of interactional moves that culminate in physical violence are concerned. That is, actions such as walking out and physical attacks appear commonly to be instigated by the persistent performance of complainable acts by the party who is either walked out 'on' or attacked. It is these actions that leavers and 'attackers' treat as their warrant for taking the actions that they take. Just as abandoning this sort of persistently complainable behaviour is likely to interrupt the progress of sequences of interaction that might otherwise result in a walking out, it seems probable that a similar type of response would be likely to interrupt the progress of those sequences of interaction that result in physical combat.

5. Final comments

When this research was initially undertaken it was anticipated that, by examining a significant body of argumentative data, it would be possible to gain a clearer understanding of the mechanisms and organisational formats by means of which speakers, in everyday conversational contexts, 'do' arguing. It was also expected that, in the course of such a project, it would be possible to re-examine and, where necessary, question some of the conclusions that had been drawn within a number of preceding studies. Hopefully, both of these intentions have, to some extent, been achieved.

However, as the research has gradually developed and unfolded it has become apparent that there are some disadvantages to proceeding in the way described. A central problem, in this respect, is that because the various features that have been identified during this research have been observed only in argumentative talk it is difficult to assess how common they are in talk, generally. It has been proposed in this research, for example, that a principal concern of complaint recipients is the

rejection of culpability. While this may be true of complaints that are formulated in argumentative conversational environments, we are unable to consider what generally happens in less argumentative or non-argumentative talk because such interaction does not appear in the corpus of data consulted. For this reason we are unable to conclude that, generally, the rejection of culpability following a complaint is a normatively preferred type of response. The same is true of non-exonerative responses following justificatory accounts. These are not, then, claims that this thesis seeks to make. What can be concluded, however, is that these types of utterance constitute ways in which argumentative talk is recurrently constructed as argumentative.

Much of this study has focused on two types of utterance - concessive, culpability-rejecting responses to complaints, and non-exonerative third position utterances. The point at which the potential for argumentation to occur first arises lies within the complaint itself. It is here that disputable matters initially make themselves apparent. Following this, the commencement of a dispute can most readily be identified in those infrequent second position utterances that have been designated as *unmitigated invalidations*. Within these, no concessive moves are made to initial complaints and justifications are not performed. Rather, culpability is rejected simply by means of explicit denials and contradictions. As such, this type of response is immediately recognisable as being argumentative in nature. However, in the majority of the cases examined, complaint responses contain concessions to complaints and culpability is rejected by means of justificatory accounts. As noted earlier, these are responses that are often not unequivocally disputatious in themselves. Rather, inasmuch as they include disputatious elements, they raise the possibility that the subsequent interaction may become more overtly argumentative. This is one of the potentialities that these types of response make relevant. It is at third position, where complainers' sometimes choose, from a range of available options, to perform non-exonerative utterances, that argumentative interaction

commonly becomes less equivocally recognisable as such. Moreover, the recognisability of this interaction as argumentative may be further enhanced at third position by a number of other characteristics that have been identified in the course of this research. These, as we have seen, include the presence of overt dismissals and expansions in the scope of initial complaints, and the absence of concessive moves. As we have also seen, it is commonly at fourth position, following third position utterances that incorporate these more disputatious types of feature, that complainees' talk, itself, becomes unmistakably recognisable as argumentative. Thus, argumentation following complaints is revealed as a form of interaction that arises not, as has been claimed elsewhere, from a normative, generalised preference, on the part of disputants, to disagree with each other. Instead, it is a form of interaction that evolves when interactants choose to perform argumentative responses in order to achieve particular, rather than general interactional ends - the rejection of culpability, where complainees are concerned, and the rejection of the possibility that their initial complaints were unwarranted, in the case of complainers.

Endnotes

Chapter one: Introduction

1. The italicised examples that appear in this discussion of Scott and Lyman's work are entirely of the author's own manufacture. They are provided in order, hopefully, to illustrate the types of utterance to which Scott and Lyman are referring. Where most of the categories that are described are concerned, the authors do not provide such examples themselves. Those that appear here have been formulated in accordance with their descriptions and are designed with the intention of faithfully representing them.

Chapter two: Responses to Complaints in Argumentative Conversation

1. A number of researchers have found that these kinds of *interactional 'stalemates'* are typically found in the *argumentative talk of young children*. See, e.g., Eder, 1990:70 - 71, on repeated accusation - denial sequences; Corsaro and Rizzo, 1990:30, on 'multiple insistence'; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1987, on 'recycling'; Goodwin, 1983:672,675, on 'primitive arguing' and Brenneis and Lein, (1977), on 'inversion'.
2. It seems probable that the interaction under examination here resembles sequences of argumentative talk referred to by Garcia (1991:822) in which 'breaking the cycle of oppositional utterances' may be interpretable as indicating that a speaker is 'backing down' from a previously stated position'. This view is supported by Emmison, 1987, 1988; Greatbatch, 1992 and Vuchinich, 1990.

Chapter three: Third and Fourth Position Responses in Complaint-initiated Argumentation.

1. The idiom used here - 'any fool can do anything for nothing' - is of particular interest inasmuch as it also incorporates an extreme case formulation

(Pomerantz, 1986) - 'for nothing'. Drew and Holt (1988) note that, while constructions of this latter type may be used in complaining sequences in which idiomatic expressions are also used, these two components commonly fulfil differing functions. In their typical cases, complainers begin by detailing the circumstances surrounding whatever complainable matter they are citing. Where extreme case formulations are used, they usually appear within these detailed 'reports'. Complainers then go on to summarise and make their complaints explicit with idiomatic formulations. One outcome of this, Drew and Holt propose, is that, because idioms are not designed to function as literal representations of the matters that they are describing, they are 'less open to empirical challenge' (*op cit*:406). Extreme case formulations on the other hand, they argue, are less inclined to possess this special resistance to challenge inasmuch as they 'purport to be literal descriptions of concrete facts' (*ibid.*). Returning to Dave's formulation - 'any fool can do anything for nothing' - this is probably an atypical example of the kinds of idiomatic expression discussed by Drew and Holt inasmuch as, by incorporating the extreme case formulation 'for nothing' it lays itself open to the empirical challenge that its recipient is, in fact, earning. It is just that she is not earning as much as the complainer would like her to earn. A little later in the conversation, in fact, Dave's co-participant mounts just such a challenge.

2. When the transcribed version of this turn is examined, it is evident that the first component - 'no' - is extended slightly while the third - 'haven't' - is slightly truncated. This seems to indicate that the first three components of the turn constitute an initial, abandoned response, a completed version of which would probably have been something like *'No, I haven't had enough practice'*. It would appear, then, that the second part of the turn - 'I've done it twice' - is a repaired and completed version of this initial response. It is also a version of it that is likely to be more difficult to challenge. While the abandoned version would involve the speaker in making an assessment about what does or does not constitute 'sufficient' practice, in the hope or expectation that her recipient will share her assessment, the repaired version cites a specific and, presumably, incontestable number of occasions upon which she has practised the manoeuvre. This allows her recipient to conclude, for himself, that she has not had sufficient practice. What we may be seeing here, then, is an instance in which a complainee is building her talk in a way that is more difficult to dispute, and this may indicate an expectation (which is accurate, as it transpires) that the account that she is performing is likely to be disputed.
3. For a discussion of particles like 'nyeh' see Jefferson (1978)
4. One possible interpretation of the implication that P 1 seems to be constructing

here is that Steve attempts to 'acquire' cars, presumably on a 'demonstration' basis, not because he is genuinely interested in buying them, but for some other, probably illicit purpose.

5. Other features that may influence the extent to which a third position utterance does or does not appear overtly confrontational, etc., may include the presence or absence of prosodical characteristics such as high amplitude and other forms of stressing or intonational characteristics that convey a sense of rancour, anger, etc.

Chapter four: Unilateral Termination: 'Walking Out' of Arguments

1. 'Getting on like', here, is a version of 'carrying on like'.

Chapter five: Overview and Conclusions

1. The principal exception, here, is Vuchinich (1990). This paper is based on the detailed analysis of a large corpus of disputatious conversations but it focuses exclusively on the various ways in which they are terminated. It is described on pages 162 - 164.
2. For a perspective that disputes the existence of a preference organisation for agreement in non-argumentative talk see Horowitz (1996.)
3. The title of this section is borrowed, in part, from Pomerantz (1978a)

Appendix

Transcription Conventions

The transcription symbols that are used in this study were devised by Gail Jefferson. They are of a type commonly used in conversation analytic research. Only those parts of Jefferson's system that have been used in the preceding chapters are described here. For a fuller version of this system see Atkinson and Heritage (1984:ix-xvi).

[- *Simultaneous Utterances*

Utterances that begin simultaneously are linked together with left-hand brackets:

Dave: [you total shit
Wife: [ah blame

[] - *Overlapping utterances*

When overlapping utterances do not begin simultaneously the point at which the second utterance begins is marked with left-hand brackets:

Jane: I can't lift 'n' lean roun' th[ere
Chris: [I nob'dy said

The point at which overlapping utterances end is marked with right-hand brackets:

Joel: because I a[m scared of].
Mum: [scared what]

Intervals of less than two-tenths of a second are indicated with a full stop in parantheses:

Pete: we 'ave never 'ad a audi (.) here

Speech delivery characteristics

Characteristics of speech delivery are represented by a variety of punctuation marks. Punctuation is not used to mark conventional grammatical units:

- : A colon represents the elongation of the sound or syllable by which it is immediately preceded. Where colons appear in multiples, the number used is proportionate to the length of the elongation.
- . A full stop indicates falling intonation
- , A comma indicates continued intonation
- ? A question mark indicates rising intonation.
- ! An exclamation mark indicates an animated tone
- A dash indicates that the immediately preceding utterance has been cut-off of or completed abruptly
- ↑↓ Upward or downward pointing arrows indicate marked shifts of intonation in the talk by which they are immediately followed.
- ↑↑↓↓ Double arrows indicate shifts of intonation that are particularly marked.

Where words or parts of words are stressed, this is marked by underlining:

Jane: I can't lift 'n' lean roun' there

Particularly heavy stressing is marked by double underlining:

Kevin: AS FROM (.) NO:W!!

Capital letters indicate that an utterance, or part of it, has been spoken more loudly than those by which it is immediately surrounded. See above and below:

Dave: you pissed OFF WHEN Y' WERE-

- ◦ Degree signs are used in pairs and indicate that the utterances by which they are interspersed are spoken more quietly than the immediately surrounding talk:

Chris: th' leg has to work quicker t' get t' th' place °then°.

- ◦◦ Pairs of double degree signs are used in a similar way to indicate talk that is spoken particularly quietly:

Milly: I did[n' ↓t o u c h] (you)
 []
 Clara: [°°(tou)ch me?°°]

Audible inhalations (.hhh) and aspirations (hhh) are inserted in the speech where they occur. The number of aitches used is proportionate to the length of the breath.

Double brackets are used for descriptions of non-verbal activities. These are inserted where the activities concerned occur as in the two following examples:

Chris: Lift
 (1.3) ((both participants lift left leg))

Milly: will you ((gesturing to camera)) j's go away

They are also used for descriptions of speech characteristics for which symbolic representations are unavailable:

Clara: ((upset voice)) touching me::

or to describe utterances that are difficult to transcribe:

Jane: ((sniff))

- > < 'Less than' signs indicate that intervening talk is spoken more quickly than the surrounding talk:

Mum: look (.) whenev' I hit you- >i' w's becau'< y' lie

- >> << Talk that is spoken particularly quickly is indicated by double 'less than' signs.

Transcriptionist doubt

On occasions, turns at talk, or parts of them, are indistinct or are indecipherable from recorded data. Such turns are transcribed in a number of ways. Where doubt exists about what has been said, the talk is enclosed in single brackets:

Joel: the feeling of hatred an' (fear)ness of you comin'
t' hit me

Where parts of an utterance are in doubt and other parts are indecipherable, the former are transcribed within brackets while blank spaces indicate the undecipherable portion of the turn:

Mum: NQ! I can('t j's-)

Utterances that are completely indecipherable are indicated by empty brackets:

Milly: °()° thats not f°ai::r:°

Other symbols

Where a particular line of interaction is the subject of analysis attention may be drawn to it by the use of a horizontal arrow in the left margin:

→5. Chris: >No ↓no- °n'-° ↓no:<

Utterances or groups of utterances that are of particular analytical interest may be numbered and linked together by the use of right hand brackets or extended right hand brackets in the left margin:

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1{ 1. Louise: don't touch ma guests=
2{ 2. Carlos: =okay okay (.) now I'm just speak[ing
   { 3. Louise:                                     [don't touch
3{                                     }
   { 4.           ma guests

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Within the text, utterances that are the subject of analysis may be partially quoted. In such cases, talk that has been omitted is indicate by horizontal ellipses.

Carlos: ... now I'm just speaking

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