British Journal of Social Psychology (2005), 44, 557–570
© 2005 The British Psychological Society

The British Psychological Society

www.bpsjournals.co.uk

Talk about receiving, giving, and taking in radio interviews: 'doing modesty' and 'making a virtue out of necessity'

Linda M. McMullen*
University of Saskatchewan, Canada

Acts of giving, receiving, and taking constitute much of our social lives, and talk about these acts is ubiquitous. However, such talk has not been studied in its own right. From radio interviews with persons who have accomplished or experienced something deemed remarkable, I identified two social actions that were accomplished by talk about receiving, giving, and taking: 'doing modesty' and 'making a virtue out of necessity'. Doing modesty was present in interviews with celebrities and was deftly managed through the joint use of contrasts by the participants. Making a virtue out of necessity was present in interviews in which the interviewee's experience of adversity was a prominent focus of talk, and was accomplished through the use of irony. I argue that both actions can serve the dual purposes of putting the interviewee in a good light and holding the attention of the listening audience. This research adds to existing work on social ties by providing another route for understanding how we make use of the exchange of social resources.

Acts of giving, receiving, and taking are omnipresent in human interactions. On a daily basis, we witness and engage in behaviours that are understood (and sometimes misunderstood) as acts of gratitude, indebtedness, donation, obligation, self-interest, and mutual benefit. Often, these acts are constituted in talk. We thank others for something they have done for us; we engage in *quid pro quo* negotiations with them; we ask for favours or advice. In addition, we talk about acts of giving, receiving, and taking as a way of performing certain actions. For example, saying that one wants to 'give back a little of what one has received in life' might be a way of justifying a decision to assist or otherwise engage with others; and asking for special recognition for providing a gift (naming a building after the giver) might be seen as engaging in self-enhancement or as making oneself superior.

However, despite the ubiquity of such acts and of talk about such acts, there is very little theorizing and research either on how these acts are performed in talk, or on what talk of giving, receiving, and taking accomplishes in human interactions. Rather, much

* *Correspondence should be addressed to Dr Linda McMullen, Department of Psychology, University of Saskatchewan, 9 Campus Drive, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada S7N 5A5 (e-mail: mcmullen@sask.usask.ca).*

DOI:10.1348/014466604X18532

of social science theorizing and research about giving, receiving, and taking remains abstract or is firmly rooted in a factors and outcome, causal model. For example, in the psychological literature, the importance of offerings of affirmation, help, support, advice, forgiveness, hope, inspiration, and love in the development and maintenance of interpersonal relationships (Harvey & Wenzel, 2001; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; Sarason & Duck, 2001; Sternberg, 1998) and for psychological well-being and physical health (Cohen, Underwood, & Gottlieb, 2000) is well-documented. For the most part, however, this literature focuses on how the expression of such intangible resources differs across situations and in particular relationships, on the conditions under which such resources are given and received, and on the outcomes of giving and receiving such resources, not on how the nature of the resources themselves is constructed, or on how talk about such resources is constituted and works to perform various actions.

Recognition of the importance of what is received from social ties is also evident in the sociological literature, particularly in writings on social capital. Social capital stands for the ability of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or other social structures. These benefits can include, for example, access to economic and human resources, contact with experts or accomplished persons (e.g. artists), and affiliation with respected institutions (Portes, 1998). As noted by Portes, 'The resources obtained through social capital have, from the point of view of the recipient, the character of a gift' (p. 5). However, as with psychological theories on social bonds, writings on social capital focus primarily on the motivations of actors, on its sources, functions, and consequences, and on the norms of exchange, rather than on how the character of what is given, received, or taken is constructed, or on what talk of giving, receiving, and taking accomplishes.

In addition, although receiving, giving, and taking are implicit in psychological and sociological theories of social relations, they are not of interest in their own right. Rather, as economic models of human behaviour, the focus of contributions such as social exchange theory (Berscheid & Walster, 1969; Homans, 1961) and equity theory (Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978) is on how people manage the contributions, or what they put into relationships with others; and the benefits, or what they get out of their relationships with others. As such, giving, receiving, and taking are vehicles through which various aspects of exchange, such as the strategies and process of power use by actors, the interactive processes through which actors influence one another, and the structural conditions under which certain exchange opportunities result in specific patterns of exchange relations, can be studied (see Cook, Molm, & Yamagishi, 1993).

From the anthropological literature, the development of the idea that intangible resources received through social bonds have the character of a gift is found in the work of Godbout and Caillé (1998). Building on Mauss's (1990) exploration of the gift in archaic societies, Godbout and Caillé maintained that the circulation of goods and services in order to create or nourish social bonds between people in contemporary societies also has the form of a gift. The gift is thought to be active; for example, in the world of emotional exchange and support, in services rendered (e.g. day-to-day acts that persons perform for each other), and in offerings of transmission that link generations (Godbout & Caillé, 1998). It is such intangibles as 'the gift of life, the art of conversation, familial or patriotic love, the appreciation of a job well done, team spirit, . . . and business lunches' (Godbout & Caillé, 1998, p. 13). In the theoretical work on the gift, notions of giving, receiving, and taking, *per se*, are preserved, and not subsumed as acts of exchange as they are in mainstream psychological and sociological theories of social

relations. However, although analyses such as that of Godbout and Caillé hint at the accomplishment of giving, receiving, and taking via discursive means, they provide no in-depth analysis. At best, they provide only decontextualized fragments of discourse that are assumed to be self-evidently illustrative and which remain unanalysed.

Sherman (2003) similarly hinted at the discursive constitution of receiving, giving, and taking in relationships. Although he conceived of receiving, giving, and taking as categories of relationship in a developmental psychological model, the levels in this model are sometimes fashioned in discursive terms. For example, receiving is presented in its most primitive form as 'demanding/commanding' (such as when a child screams 'gimme!' as a way of putting others in his or her service or to control them), and in its most mature form as 'thanking graciously' (as when sincere thanks are given expressing pleasure at receiving a gift and acknowledging the giver's role in it; Sherman, 2003, p. 298). Giving is presented as ranging from responding to demands or obligations (e.g. giving in or repaying a debt) at its most primitive level, to mutual growth for both the giver and receiver at the highest level, such as when one gives of oneself and what is given is exactly what is needed by the receiver. Similarly, taking is proposed as ranging from acting in one's own interest or asking for a direct favour (e.g. 'Would you please do this for me?') to mutual growth, for example, such as when an acquaintance asks an artist to discuss his or her ideas about creativity and the artist's compliance with this request leads to expanded knowledge on the part of both the artist and the acquaintance (Sherman, 2003, p. 299).

A discursive approach to receiving, giving, and taking

Fully embracing a discursive approach to receiving, giving, and taking, particularly one based in a constructionist as opposed to an objectivist epistemology, locates the analysis squarely at what is only hinted at in the theoretical work of Godbout and Caillé (1998) and Sherman (2003), and keeps the focus on performance rather than on abstract constructs having to do with human motivation and cognition, conditions of exchange, and outcomes. Rather than seeing discourse as a way of getting at operationalized behaviours of giving, receiving, and taking, a discursive approach shifts the focus to the features of discourse as the very behaviour to be explained (Wood & Kroger, 2000). In other words, what has typically been viewed as the route to the phenomenon of interest is understood as constitutive of the phenomenon.

Claiming to embrace a discursive approach does, however, mask a multitude of analytic possibilities and foci of study (see, e.g. the glossary in Wood & Kroger, 2000, for a list of types of discourse analysis). Choice of analytic strategy is driven by a variety of considerations, among which are suitability to the research question and familiarity for the researcher. In the present case, I adopt a perspective referred to as 'discursive psychology' (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Drawing on a variety of approaches including ethnomethodology (Garfinkel, 1967) and conversation analysis (CA; Sacks, 1992), this perspective is based on the assumption that language is both constitutive of phenomena and action-oriented (Potter & Edwards, 2001). Specifically, topics of relevance to psychology are approached through an examination of descriptions (accounts) both of and for the topic of interest, and understandings of the phenomenon of interest are made possible by a detailed, empirical analysis of how people construct accounts and of the social actions performed by these accounts. Furthermore, borrowing from the CA tradition, this perspective emphasizes the analysis of talk-in-interaction and recognizes the situated nature of talk. That is, guiding questions such as 'What are the participants

doing here?' and, 'How are they accomplishing that?' are coupled with an analytic sensitivity to the position that participants' utterances are actions that are situated within specific contexts (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998).

By applying this perspective in the present case, three focuses of study not previously attended to in any systematic way are opened up: (1) how acts of giving, receiving, and taking are constituted in discourse; (2) how the meanings of such acts are constructed; and (3) how talk of giving, receiving, and taking is constituted and what is accomplished by such talk. This article takes up the third focus and is concerned with how talk centred around receiving, giving, and taking is constituted and what such talk accomplishes in the context of broadcast interviews with persons who have accomplished or experienced something deemed remarkable.

Data: Source and rationale

I chose to collect interviews aired on Canada's publicly owned radio service, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), for two reasons. First, it is a source for a variety of talk that is centred on people's lives. In particular, it is a site for in-depth interviews focussed on the lives and accomplishments of well-known Canadians; for dialogues with emerging contributors to public life, usually in the arts; and for conversations with ordinary Canadians about interesting and remarkable life events. Given that such interviews are likely to be a source of talk about how the interviewee and others have variously contributed to the interviewee's success or notoriety, they may contain excerpts that are of relevance to the present study. Second, it has an excellent archive that makes it possible to access transcripts, audiotapes, or on-line recordings.

With these opportunities come certain constraints. Broadcast talk occurs in a variety of contexts which impose somewhat different expectations on the participants. For example, what is expected in news broadcasts differs from that of radio phone-in programmes; chat shows differ from political interviews. However, all talk on radio and television is public discourse. It is intended to be heard by an audience, often within a private sphere (e.g. a home or car), in which people expect to be spoken to in a simple, familiar, and informal manner (i.e. as if they were equals with the participants). But this pull toward approximating the norms of 'ordinary, informal conversation' (Scannell, 1991, p. 3) belies the significant extent to which broadcast talk is scripted, choreographed, and engineered. As Scannell stated:

> Broadcasting reproduces the world as ordinary, but that seeming obviousness is an effect, the outcome of a multiplicity of small techniques and discursive practices that combine to produce that deeply taken-for-granted sense of familiarity with what is seen and heard. . . There is nothing in the discourses of radio and television that is not motivated, that is not intended to generate inferences about what is being said by virtue of how it is being said (p. 8–11).

Despite appearing to be ordinary, then, it must be recognized that what is accomplished by what is said and how it is said in broadcast talk is in the service of particular ends. Participants will want to work to create certain images or presentations of themselves that will result in the sustained interest of the audience.

In this article, I present two ways in which the participants in radio interviews used talk of giving, receiving, and taking to perform various work. Specifically, I focus on how 'doing modesty' and 'making a virtue out of necessity' are performed in interviews with

persons deemed to be of public interest, either through their status as celebrities or because of their having experienced adversity. Excerpts 1 and 3 are taken from interviews that were available in transcript form only (no audio-taped recordings), and hence lack the transcription detail that is provided in Excerpts 2 and 4. Transcript conventions used in Excerpts 2 and 4 are noted in the appendix.

Analysis

Doing modesty

The following excerpt from an interview with the internationally acclaimed Canadian jazz singer, Diana Krall, illustrates how talk of giving and receiving is a site for doing modesty. In this excerpt, contrasts are used by the speakers to create a kind of 'point and counterpoint' performance in which the construction of acts of giving and receiving is deftly managed.

Excerpt 1

1	*Peter:*	There's got to be perks to the fame and stardom. I mean, have you been able to
2		buy yourself something you've always wanted, or meet people you've always
3		wanted to meet? What are the good things?
4	*Diana:*	It's allowed me to be able to go home and see my family when I want to, pretty
5		much; fly my family to see me when I want them to, if I can. The best thing I was
6		able to do, I'd never taken a vacation before, and I took my mom, my dad and
7		my sister to Hawaii after Christmas. It was kind of a celebration of mostly my
8		mom being well. As you know, she had a bone marrow transplant that has been
9		successful.
10	*Peter:*	That's working well?
11	*Diana:*	Great. She's doing great.
12	*Peter:*	Because when I saw you in Nanaimo, that was about a year ago, were you there to
13		do one of the concerts to help raise funding for the hospital that helped her?
14	*Diana:*	The Vancouver General Hospital. Yeah, we did a Valentine's Day gala dinner,
15		and then a concert at the Orpheum which was sold out. So, that's nice to do that
16		but also it's enabled me to meet, like you mentioned, meet people, to learn from
17		it, have other mentors that I'm meeting too in other areas and genres, different
18		forms of the arts that I can learn from, who've been, basically, really kind to me
19		to teach me

Peter begins this exchange (ll. 1–3) by focusing on what Diana has received from 'fame and stardom' and he casts the possibilities in terms of material benefits ('buy yourself something you've always wanted') and privilege ('meet people you've always wanted to meet'). His initial questions provide two exemplars of 'perks' which, if endorsed, might run the risk of the speaker being seen as boasting. Acknowledging that one has bought oneself something one has always wanted, if this something is extravagant, has the potential to cast one as self-centred and materialistic. Similarly, acknowledging that one has been able to meet people one has always wanted to meet draws attention to one's privilege, particularly if one is a celebrity. Both outcomes can place one in a negative light. Peter's questions can also be understood as tongue-in-cheek exemplars of the 'good things' that come from fame and stardom. As such, they provide opportunities for doing modesty via resisting.

Although it is not unusual for these kinds of questions to draw a response from a celebrity that is oriented to the importance of non-material benefits, particularly in

terms of time spent with family members, Diana's reply is, nevertheless, surprising both for its sharp contrast to Peter's question and its degree of personal detail. She immediately sets up the contrast to Peter's characterization of the perks by casting the good things as the opportunity or freedom to have contact with her family (ll. 4–5). In doing so, she very clearly separates herself from Peter's characterization of the benefits to fame and stardom, and begins to construct herself as someone for whom less flashy, more ordinary pleasures are important. Rather than using her money and influence for material or status benefits, she uses it as a means to see her family. Claiming to choose to have contact with family, especially by a celebrity, has a particular cultural currency in much of the Western world. It is often seen as good, virtuous, and ordinary, and as in contrast to wealth and status which are constructed as the trappings of fame.

Diana's use of the parallel constructions in lines 4 and 5 serves to emphasize that what the perks enable her to do benefits both herself and members of her family, and her insertion of qualifiers ('pretty much'; 'if I can') works to enhance the credibility of this response by implying that she cannot (and does not) go home or fly her family to see her whenever she wants. To further establish her credibility as a 'non-boasting giver', Diana provides a specific example (ll. 5–7) formulated as an extreme case. Diana's citing of the family vacation as the 'best thing I was able to do' accomplishes modesty not only by situating her in the everyday world of her nuclear family, but by its relative ordinariness. For many people living in Canada, even those in the middle-class, travelling to Hawaii would not be beyond their means. In addition, Diana's claim that she had 'never taken a vacation before' might further serve to cast her as having had a relatively non-privileged life up to this point. Although she hedges her claim about the meaning of the vacation ('kind of a celebration of mostly my mom being well'), the evocative statement about her mother's successful bone marrow transplant (ll. 8–9) underscores the significance of the vacation, and further casts her as an ordinary person who is vulnerable to the kinds of problems that all persons can face. Although the focus in lines 4–9 is on what Diana has been able to give to others, she is able to mitigate 'doing boasting' through constructing an alternative account to that provided by Peter.

Peter's reference in lines 12–13 to the fund-raising concert works to re-position Diana as a high-status benefactor. While Diana initially acknowledges the significance and virtue of what she was able to give to others (the concert was 'sold out'; 'that's nice to do that'), she quickly switches the focus to what she has received from others. By using the contrastive conjunction marker 'but' (l. 15), she signals that what she is about to say is important and perhaps even in opposition to what she has just said (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 40). Diana then emphasizes the significance of what she has received from performing by using a three-part list (Jefferson, 1990) in which she specifies how performing has enabled her to 'meet people, to learn from it, have other mentors' (ll. 16–17). Signalling that she is about to summarize the core of her remarks ('basically'), she keeps the focus on what others have given to her, and by using an intensifier ('really') to stress how kind her mentors have been (ll. 18–19), she clearly positions herself as a beneficiary of others' knowledge and skills. In doing so, she downplays her own contributions and emphasizes those of others. In this excerpt, then, doing modesty in talk of giving and receiving is accomplished by a set of contrasting positionings (Davies & Harré, 1990) of the interviewee by both participants.

Excerpt 2 illustrates another variation in how contrast enables doing modesty in talk of receiving, giving, and taking. In this case, contrasting culturally-infused categories are used by the speakers to accomplish this work. The excerpt occurs toward the end of a conversation between interviewer, Pamela Wallin, and Wally Lamb, who in the

introduction to the interview is situated as a 'great American author' and 'a high school teacher'. To this point in the interview, the conversation has focussed on Wally's writing career, for example, on the sources of his ideas, on having one of his books chosen by Oprah's book club, and on the themes in his books. This particular excerpt follows immediately after a discussion of the challenges of turning a novel into a movie script.

Excerpt 2

1	*Pamela:*	Do you still (.) teach?
2	*Wally:*	Yeah, yeah. I, um, I, I've been a teacher for uh longer than I've been a writer
3	*Pamela:*	Yeah
4	*Wally*:	and I knew from when I was a little kid that I wanted to teach; not so (.) with
5		writing. So, it's, it's really a, an important part of who I am. Uh I taught high
6		school for 25 years,
7	*Pamela:*	Yeah
8	*Wally:*	did a couple of years at the university. I ran a creative writing program, uh
9		couldn't get any creative writing done myself so um (.) so I've recently left the
10		university. Uh, but I need teaching in my life.
11	*Pamela:*	Yeah.
12	*Wally:*	And so, uh, these days I'm, I'm doing some volunteer teaching at a women's
13		prison (.) and uh running workshops uh for the women there and um it's, it's a
14		wonderful give and take. I mean, I'm, I'm learning so much by being in their
15		midst and, you know, hopefully I'm teaching them about showing 'don't tell
16		all'
17	*Pamela:*	[It □ also]
18		sounds to me like the seeds of another (1.0) □ book somewhere.
19	*Wally:*	Yeah, yeah. And I think, uh, I think in some ways this is research as well.

In an abrupt change of focus (l. 1), Pamela orients the interview away from a discussion of Wally's successful writing career and provides an opening for him to talk about teaching. Her use of the word 'still' might be understood as a recognition that writing may have taken precedence over teaching. Wally takes up the comparison of teacher versus writer, and works to establish the importance of teaching by invoking time ('I've been a teacher for longer than I've been a writer') and primacy ('I knew from when I was a little kid that I wanted to teach') as evidence. He then underscores its importance through identity talk in line 5. By listing the facts of his teaching career (ll. 5–10), Wally works to establish his credibility as a committed teacher, and, as if to dispel any doubt that writing might have displaced teaching, he uses the contrastive conjunction 'but', and constructs himself as 'need[ing] teaching'.

As further evidence to support his claim for the necessity of teaching in his life, Wally cites his 'volunteer teaching at a woman's prison and running workshops for the women there'. That this teaching is 'volunteer', for 'women', and in a 'prison' works to establish his commitment to teaching, and to put him in a favourable light: he is not teaching for profit and is giving his services to some of the most disenfranchised persons in society. He then encapsulates his construction of this teaching as 'a wonderful give and take'. Although the use of the *dummy it* (Penelope, 1990) in line 13 leaves unspecified what is being given or taken and who is giving and taking, Wally works to elaborate what he means by this construction. As in Excerpt 1, there is a careful management of claims about giving and taking as teacher and learner. While the statement 'I'm, I'm learning so much by being in their midst' does modesty by reversing Wally's and the women's positions (he is student; they are teachers), it also casts him as the one who is benefiting

from the contact with the women. As such, it runs the risk of putting him in a negative light by casting him as someone who is unilaterally taking from others. His next statement (l. 15) works to mitigate this risk by simultaneously shifting the focus to what he gives to these women, and by hedging this claim ('hopefully').

Because of the culturally-infused categories of 'great American author' and 'high school teacher' that were employed in the introduction of this interview, *writer* and *teacher* is a status comparison that can enable doing modesty. In much of Western society, teaching high school would be constructed as both less glamorous and less lucrative in relation to being a great author. Wally's convincing claiming of the status of volunteer teacher thereby does modesty both by virtue of this comparison and by the notion of unobligated giving that is part of volunteering. Doing modesty through claims of giving to others via teaching is further augmented through the contrast of *learner* and *teacher*, and Wally's careful managing of talk of 'give and take' in these latter contrasting categories.

Pamela's overlap and emphases in lines 16–17 rather abruptly shift the focus away from talk about teaching and back to talk about writing. In doing so, she shifts the focus to what Wally might be unilaterally taking from his interaction with the women, and cuts short his modesty work. Although Wally immediately agrees with Pamela, he subsequently qualifies his response ('I think, uh, I think in some ways') and includes research as part of what might come from his work with the women ('this is research as well'). By doing so, he does not endorse that his work with the women is only or primarily about providing him with material for another book. Pamela's abrupt change of topic that marks the beginning of this excerpt combined with her interruption in line 16 and abrupt shift in focus back to 'Wally as writer' suggests that doing modesty, while important enough to be deliberately engineered, might also have to be limited.

Making a virtue out of necessity

In Excerpts 3 and 4, talk of having received something of value (a 'gift') enables the interviewee to do making a virtue out of necessity, and irony is central to how talk of the gift is constituted. In both of these excerpts, the gift is constructed as something good coming from something bad. Excerpt 3 comes from a conversation between interviewer, Bill Richardson, and interviewee, Patricia Van Tighem, who, along with her husband, survived a mutilating attack by a grizzly bear, and subsequently wrote a book about it. This excerpt occurs immediately following Patricia's reading of a section from the book that ended with her husband claiming, 'We won't be attacked again, Trish; we're pre-disastered'.

Excerpt 3

Bill: . . . It's tempting to think that, huh? Pre-disastered, like nothing else can happen after that?

Patricia: Well, I think, in a way, we wanted to believe that, but it's not true. We, I think again, as the story goes on, people will discover that they're, we're normal people living a normal life and things happen that you have no control over. When we gave birth to twins and one of them had Down Syndrome and clubbed feet, I was devastated. I thought, 'This isn't fair. We already both have faces that look different. Why do we have to have a daughter that does, too?' And, uh, it, it was another lesson in accepting what had come to pass and learning a way to live with it. And this learning, as well, that it's not so much what happened to me,

11 but what I would do with what happened to me; that that's where the control
12 over the situation lay. I couldn't make things go one way or the other, but I could
13 decide how I was going to live after something like that happened. And in
14 choosing to love that daughter and not reject her, my gift is the, the amazing
15 acceptance and love that she gives to me; the demonstration of really what truth
16 and beauty are, that I would never have dreamt she could bring to my life.

In line 1, Bill's employment of various politeness strategies, such as making a statement with a tag question, using *dummy* it to depersonalize and generalize his claim rather than particularizing it to Patricia, and using the word 'tempting', serves to communicate indirectly that the notion of being 'pre-disastered' might be open to challenge. In effect, he opens up the possibility of Patricia's continuing with 'troubles talk' (Jefferson, 1988).

Patricia responds by directly disputing the validity of the notion of being pre-disastered ('but it's not true'), and in lines 4–5 begins the oscillation between the general and the particular that supports the eventual use of irony. Her repair in line 4 ('that they're, we're normal people') first moves her focus from the general to the personal, which is followed by a subsequent move back to the general ('things happen that you have no control over'). She then gives a personalized account of her initial reactions to her daughter's birth. By using the emotionally evocative word 'devastated' and by following up with a three-part sequence of reported speech ('This isn't fair. We already both have faces that look different. Why do we have to have a daughter that does, too?'), Patricia works both to authenticate her account and, as becomes evident later, to set up a contrast between how she could have responded and how she did respond. After providing this particularized and personalized account of her initial reactions to her daughter's birth, Patricia switches to a less evocative, more indefinite and vague style. Beginning at the end of line 8 and continuing through most of line 13, she outlines, through the use of many unidentified referents ('it', 'what', 'that'), unspecified words ('a way', 'the situation', 'things', 'something'), and conditionals ('would', 'couldn't', 'could'), a general lesson that she has learned. She then returns to the particular example of her daughter, and uses irony to claim that she has received something of value from an unlikely source: from a child who might be constructed as flawed, she has experienced what beauty 'really' is (l. 15).

Patricia's talk in this excerpt is characterized not only by the use of the particular to bolster a general claim, but also by claims of moral choices. Rather than viewing life as unfair, Patricia constructs herself as exercising control over that which she can control; rather than rejecting her daughter, she constructs herself as choosing to love her (ll. 10–14). In this case, talk of drawing a positive life lesson from personal adversity combines with talk of moral agency ('in choosing to love that daughter and not reject her') to provide a justification for claiming to have received a 'gift'. Making a virtue out of necessity is accomplished, then, by Bill's gentle directive to Patricia to continue with 'troubles talk' and by Patricia's establishing that there is an unwelcome obligation, that she has met this obligation, and that, ironically, she has derived some benefit from doing so. By performing this action, Patricia works to establish that she is normal, but extraordinary.

Excerpt 4 also comes from an interview in which talk of adversity is prominent. It occurs toward the end of an interview with host, Mary Lou Finlay, and Ken Wiwa, son of Ken Saro-Wiwa who, in 1995, was hanged on the orders of a Nigerian military tribunal, and who is constructed by Mary Lou as a 'champion of the oppressed Ogoni people'.

This excerpt is from a segment of the interview in which Ken Wiwa talks of how he had tried unsuccessfully to have Nelson Mandela intervene on his father's behalf in the days immediately prior to the execution.

Excerpt 4

1	*Ken:*	. . . and, you know, I didn't get to see Mandela, but I did get to read his book,
2		and, and 'A Long Walk to Freedom' and I thought it, and it gave me an
3		understanding of, of, of the dilemmas of people like my father (.) that they are,
4		although they have a reputation for (.) for never having compromised (.) um, of
5		course, the reality is that they've compromised (.) the most important part of
6		themselves to make, to, to earn that reputation.
7	*Mary Lou:*	Their family
8	*Ken:*	That's right.
9		(2.0)
10	*Mary Lou:*	Have you reconciled yourself fully to that now, do you think
11	*Ken:*	Absolu-
12	*Mary Lou:*	[or not]
13	*Ken:*	Absolutely.
14	*Mary Lou:*	or will it never be quite settled?
15	*Ken:*	No, I've completely reconciled myself to that because, in the end, I don't
16		know, we have this pragmatic view or, or, or whatever, but I mean, I look back at
17		where I am now (.) and I look like where my father started from, where I come
18		from (.) and uh, uh, and, and I've been given these tremen:dous opportunities (.)
19		um: and and in a sense my father's death has given me life (.) um has has
20	*Mary Lou:*	[umhmm]
21	*Ken:*	given me has been a has been a tremendous gift for me

Two instances of the use of irony in talk of receiving something from others are present in this excerpt. The first instance occurs in lines 2–6 where Ken presents what he has learned from reading Nelson Mandela's book. Similar to Excerpt 3, Ken draws a life lesson by moving from a specific reference to Mandela and his father to a focus on the more general ('people like my father'), and signals the use of irony by the phrase 'the reality is' (ll. 4–5): what actually is the case is the opposite of what it appears to be. Also, as in Excerpt 3, morality talk is present. Although Ken speaks in general terms about 'people like my father', and is vague as to what 'the most important part of themselves' (l. 5) is that 'they' have compromised, he affirms (l. 8) that Mary Lou correctly understands what he is implying has been compromised ('their family'). That Mary Lou interprets Ken's talk in lines 3–6 as a judgment of others, including his father, is suggested in her question about reconciliation. Although her question (ll. 10–14) begins with an extreme case formulation ('Have you reconciled yourself fully to that now'), she then hedges it ('do you think or not or will it never be quite settled?'), thereby providing options for Ken on what might be perceived as a sensitive, morality-laden topic.

The second instance of the use of irony occurs in lines 15–21. Again, as in Excerpt 3, Ken builds a case for having received something positive from something negative. His emphatic claim of having 'completely reconciled myself to that' requires some justification, and he warrants this claim in terms of a 'pragmatic view' and a deliberate, rational comparison of his and his father's life. His stressing of the word '*tremen:dous*' (l. 18) serves to emphasize the importance of what he claims to have received, as does his use of irony in line 19 ('and in a sense my father's death has given me life'). However, the

further encapsulation of this irony as a 'gift'(l. 21) is not couched in terms of moral agency or, specifically, as a reward for virtuous self-determination, as was the case in Excerpt 3. Rather, Ken presents himself as appreciative for what his father's death has given to him, and, in doing so, works to mitigate his earlier implicit criticism of his father. Yet, as in Excerpt 3, this move can also serve to cast Ken as having risen above adversity, and, in this regard, as having accomplished something extraordinary.

Discussion

In this study, talk of receiving, giving, and taking has been shown to be a site for two important social actions in broadcast interviews. Excerpts 1 and 2 illustrate how doing modesty is carefully engineered and managed in two interviews with celebrities. In both instances, contrasts figured prominently in how doing modesty was accomplished in the joint talk of the interviewer and the interviewee. In Excerpt 1, the contrast was created when the interviewer presented a particular version of a set of circumstances and the interviewee responded either by presenting quite a different event or by acknowledging the interviewer's version and then re-focussing on another event. Doing modesty was thereby achieved by the interviewee's active resistance to the interviewer's positioning of her as a celebrity. In Excerpt 2, contrast occurred in the form of culturally-infused, status-laden categories that were explicitly introduced by the interviewer, and subsequently taken up and re-worked by the interviewee. In this case, doing modesty was accomplished by the interviewee's casting of himself in what might be judged as lower status positions and by his embracing of these positions.

What the interview participants talked about also worked in conjunction with these contrasts in the accomplishment of doing modesty. By emphasizing what they had received from others and by carefully constructing their talk of what they had given to and taken from others so as not to appear boastful, or as acting in one's own interest or for one's own gain, the interviewees deftly worked to manoeuvre among these positions.

In the context of broadcast interviews with celebrities, doing modesty as jointly accomplished by the interviewer and the interviewee can serve an important function of enabling the celebrity to present herself or himself as 'not extraordinary'. Doing so has the potential to decrease the social distance between the celebrity and the 'ordinary folk' who comprise the listening audience. The deliberate engineering of such an effect would be consistent with Fairclough's (1989) discussion of interviewing as a 'discourse technology' that involves the manipulation of the personal and the subjective for institutional ends (Tolson, 1991). In the present analytic context, this effect can serve both to enhance the likeability of the celebrity and to pique the attention of the listening audience by displaying what might be constructed as part of the celebrity's personal and private, more ordinary and less public, life.

The work that I am claiming can be accomplished by doing modesty has also been linked to the construction of identities in interviews with celebrities. In their analysis of the Princess Diana *Panorama* interview, Abell and Stockoe (2001) showed how, at the beginning of the interview, Diana constructed her identity as a contrast between what they termed her 'true self' versus her 'royal role'. Specifically, Abell and Stockoe provided evidence of how Diana positioned herself as an ordinary person who, unlike Charles, was ill at ease and unfamiliar with the fulfilling of formal royal duties. Both the present analysis and that of Abell and Stockoe show explicitly how, in broadcast

interviews, celebrities can work to distance themselves from their public identities and to present private or 'less in the public eye' identities.

Excerpts 3 and 4, which were derived from interviews in which the interviewee's experience of adversity was a prominent focus of talk, illustrate quite a different social action, but one that may be equally powerful in its effect. As with doing modesty, making a virtue out of necessity was accomplished through talk of receiving and giving that employs a specific kind of contrast, in this case, irony. In Excerpt 3, the interviewee's claim of having received a 'gift' was a climax to a 'troubles' narrative that was encouraged by the interviewer. In this case, an unhappy situation was referred to in positive and desirable terms, and the use of irony seemed to create dramatic effect or, as identified by Roberts and Kreuz (1994), to add interest to the interviewee's account. In Excerpt 4, the claim of having been given a 'gift' also enabled the interviewee to say something positive about a negative situation (Colston & O'Brien, 2000) but, in this case, the use of irony served the careful management of criticism (Colston, 1997) that was jointly accomplished by the interviewer and the interviewee.

Again, self-presentational functions and institutional ends can also be served by the performance of this social action. In Excerpt 3, the 'gift' was constructed as a reward for exercising self-determination and for doing what was virtuous, whereas in Excerpt 4, it enabled the interviewee to show himself as capable of rational reframing and of being appreciative. In the context of publicly broadcast interviews that are presumed to be of interest to listeners because of accounts of adversity, the participants' ability to display how the interviewee has risen above this adversity may be a significant part of the raison d'être of the interview. Working toward a happy ending, particularly one that is consistent with dominant cultural values, is likely to sustain listener attention, to contribute to listener satisfaction and, consequently, be good for business.

Concluding comment

Analysing talk about receiving, giving, and taking adds an entirely different focus to existing work on social ties. It can provide an alternative kind of specificity to research on social relations by showing how resources and the exchange of resources are discursively constructed in particular interactional contexts. Focussing on these constructions provides a much needed emphasis on the making of meaning in an area of study that, to date, has been constituted by operationally-defined constructs. Although some researchers acknowledge that, for example, giving may be perceived differently by givers and receivers (Flynn & Brockner, 2003) and that giving and receiving have both positive and negative consequences (Liang, Krause, & Bennett, 2001), the constructed meanings of what is exchanged and how it is exchanged have not been a focus of study. The present analysis draws attention to one way in which the negative and the positive effects of what one has received can be constructed as co-existing. In addition, rather than using discrete categories of *givers* and *receivers* to classify persons as is typical of research on social exchange (see, for example, Flynn & Brockner, 2003), the present study underscores that the positions of *giver*, *receiver*, and *taker* are fluid and up for negotiation, and that these negotiations serve particular interactional (and even institutional) ends.

Clearly, there are other ways of studying doing modesty or making a virtue out of necessity other than through talk about receiving, giving, and taking; and talk about receiving, giving, and taking can accomplish work other than what I have argued was performed in the excerpts analysed in this study. However, analysing how we use talk

about the exchange of social resources to perform certain actions provides another route for understanding how we make use of these resources.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I would like to acknowledge the assistance of Sophie Gaudet, Farzana Karim-Tessem, Lisa Neuvenheim, and Stephen Shaw in conducting the research. I would also like to thank the two reviewers and the associate editor for providing detailed and substantive comments on an earlier version of this article.

References

Abell, J., & Stockoe, E. H. (2001). Broadcasting the royal role: Constructing culturally situated identities in the Princess Diana *Panorama* interview. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *40*, 417–435.

Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. (1969). *Interpersonal attraction*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Cohen, S., Underwood, L. G. & Gottlieb, B. H. (Eds.), (2000). *Social support measurement and intervention: A guide for health and social scientists*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Colston, H. L. (1997). Salting a wound or sugaring a pill: The pragmatic functions of ironic criticism. *Discourse Processes*, *23*, 25–45.

Colston, H. L., & O'Brien, J. O. (2000). Contrast and pragmatics in figurative language: Anything understatement can do, irony can do better. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *32*, 1557–1583.

Cook, K. S., Molm, L. D., & Yamagishi, T. (1993). Exchange relations and exchange networks: Recent developments in social exchange theory. In J. Berger & M. Zelditch, Jr. (Eds.), *Theoretical research programs: Studies in the growth of theory* (pp. 296–322). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, *20*, 43–63.

Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology*. London, UK: Sage.

Fairclough, N. (1989). *Language and power*. Harlow: Longman.

Flynn, F. J., & Brockner, J. (2003). It's different to give than to receive: Predictors of givers' and receivers' reactions to favor exchange. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*, 1034–1045.

Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Godbout, J., & Caillé, A. (1998). *The world of the gift*. Montréal, QC: McGill-Queen's University Press.

Harvey, J. & Wenzel, A. (Eds.). (2001). Close romantic relationships: Maintenance and enhancement. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc.

Homans, G. C. (1961). *Social behavior: Its elementary forms*. New York: Harcourt.

Hutchby, I., & Wooffitt, R. (1998). *Conversation analysis: Principles, practices and applications*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Jefferson, G. (1988). On the sequential organization of troubles-talk in ordinary conversation. *Social Problems*, *35*, 418–441.

Jefferson, G. (1990). List construction as a task and resource. In G. Psathas (Ed.), *Interaction competence*. (pp. 63–92) Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Liang, J., Krause, N. M., & Bennett, J. M. (2001). Social exchange and well-being: Is giving better than receiving? *Psychology and Aging*, *16*, 511–523.

Mauss, M. (1990). *The gift: Forms and function of exchange in archaic societies*. New York: Routledge.

McCullough, M. E., Pargament, K. I., & Thoresen, C. E. (2000). *Forgiveness: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Guilford.

Penelope, J. (1990). *Speaking freely*. New York: Pergamon.
Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and application in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology*, *24*, 1–24.
Potter, J., & Edwards, D. (2001). Discursive social psychology. In W. P. Robinson & H. Giles (Eds), *The new handbook of language and social psychology* (pp. 103–118). Wiley: Chichester, UK.
Roberts, R. M., & Kreuz, R. J. (1994). Why do people use figurative language? *Psychological Science*, *5*, 159–163.
Sacks, H. (1992). In G. Jefferson (Ed.), *Lectures on conversation*, Vols. 1–2. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
Sarason, B. R., & Duck, S. (2001). *Personal relationships: Implications for clinical and community psychology*. New York: Wiley.
Scannell, P. (1991). Introduction: The relevance of talk. In P. Scannell (Ed.), *Broadcast talk* (pp. 1–13). London, UK: Sage.
Sherman, R. (2003). Receiving, giving, and taking in relationships: A developmental psychological model. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, *11*, 297–300.
Sternberg, R. J. (1998). *Cupid's arrow: The course of love through time*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
Tolson, A. (1991). Televised chat and the synthetic personality. In P. Scannell (Ed.), *Broadcast talk* (pp. 178–200). London, UK: Sage.
Walster, E. G., Walster, W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). *Equity: Theory and research*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
Wood, L. A., & Kroger, R. O. (2000). *Doing discourse analysis: Methods for studying action in text and talk*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Received 11 February 2003; revised version received 12 August 2004

Appendix

Transcription conventions

(.)	Untimed pause
(1.0)	Timed (approximate) pause
___	Underlining: word or utterance delivered with emphasis
[ ]	Square brackets: overlapping utterances
:	Full colon: extension in the vowel or consonant sound in the utterance of a word
□	Rising intonation