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Everyday Antiracism in Action: Preference Organization in Responses to Racism

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Abstract

This paper examines features of preference organization in disaffiliative responses to possibly racist actions, drawing on a corpus of over 120 hours of recorded interactions from South African radio call-in shows. My analysis demonstrates how features of dispreferred turn shapes provide producers of possibly racist actions with opportunities to withdraw or back down from them. In cases where these opportunities are not taken up, subsequent responses may progressively include more features of preferred turn shapes. Responses may also include features of preferred turn shapes from the outset, thereby treating the prior actions as unequivocally racist. Responses that treat prior actions as such, however, also recurrently exhibit features of dispreference, thereby displaying speakers' orientations to "cross-cutting preferences" in responding to racism, with disaffiliative responses being "dispreferred" actions in some senses but "preferred" actions in others. I conclude by discussing the implications of these findings for everyday antiracism in interactional settings.

Keywords

Racism, antiracism, interaction, conversation analysis, preference organization

Research on what Essed (1991) calls "everyday racism" has described the significance of seemingly mundane manifestations of racism located in everyday situations and practices, thereby drawing attention to a range of phenomena that had previously been under-examined in the social sciences (Essed, 1991). This shift has been associated with the emergence of a related body of research on "everyday antiracism" (see, for example, Mitchell, Every, & Ranzijn, 2011), focusing on the ways in which ordinary people resist or challenge racism in their everyday lives (cf. Durrheim, Mtose & Brown's [2011] concept of "race trouble", which refers to exchanges in which matters of race and racism are at stake for participants).

While research on everyday antiracism has made valuable contributions, no previous studies of which I am aware have closely examined the moment-by-moment production of everyday antiracist actions in naturally occurring interactions (but see Robles, 2015 [this issue]; Stokoe, 2015 [this issue]). Instead, studies of this type of everyday antiracism have relied on hypothetical scenarios (e.g., Guerin, 2003) and retrospective self-report methods such as interviews (e.g., Mitchell, et al., 2011) and diaries (e.g., Hyers, 2007). In this paper, I address this gap in the literature by drawing on research on what conversation analysts refer to as "preference organization" to examine some features of disaffiliative responses to instances of what come to be treated as racially problematic, or possibly racist,[1] actions in everyday interactions. I begin with a brief discussion of the findings with respect to preference organization that are of central relevance for my analysis.

Preference Organization in Talk-In-Interaction

A number of seminal conversation analytic studies have described a collection of practices through which affiliative actions (or those that advance social solidarity) are promoted over disaffiliative actions (Heritage, 1984). These studies have focused on sequences in which a range of actions that make relevant alternative possible responses, with the different

alternatives displaying different alignments toward the action they are responding to (Schegloff, 2007). For example, assessments and claims can be responded to with either agreement or disagreement; offers and invitations can either be accepted or rejected; requests can either be granted or denied; and so on (Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). Examination of the practices through which these alternative responses are produced demonstrates recurrent orientations to their asymmetrical character, with aligning or "preferred" responses (agreement, acceptance, etc.) recurrently produced straightforwardly and without delay, while disaligning or "dispreferred" responses (disagreement, rejection, etc.) recurrently delayed, mitigated, and accompanied by accounts (see, for example, Heritage, 1984; Pomerantz, 1978, 1984; Schegloff, 2007). "Preference" thus refers here to systematic structural asymmetries in the "turn shapes" of the different possible responses, rather than to the psychological state of the individuals producing them – that is, it is the features of the responding turn rather than the speaker's motives, desires, etc. that provides for its characterization as either "preferred" or "dispreferred" (Schegloff, 2007).

A significant consequence of the features of dispreferred turn shapes is that they offer resources for recognizing incipient disaligning responses, providing opportunities for either party to preempt them, or for speakers to revise or back down from their prior actions in order to permit preferred responses to be produced instead (see, for example, Lerner, 1996; Schegloff, 2007). These factors contribute to the greater aggregate frequency of preferred responses (Schegloff, 2007), and the attendant minimization of the likelihood of interactional difficulties associated with dispreferred responses (Heritage, 1984; Lerner, 1996). However, as Schegloff (2007, p. 73) notes, in cases where disaffiliation does occur (e.g., during the course of arguments or conflicts), features of preferred responses can serve "as a kind of metric for the seriousness which the parties wish to accord their misalignment". Thus, the

production of a dispreferred action (e.g., disagreement) in a preferred turn shape (immediate, unmitigated, etc.) can be a resource for displaying strong disaffiliation.

An additional important consideration relates to cases in which there are multiple preferences. This results from an utterance serving both as an action that makes particular preferred or dispreferred responses relevant, and as a vehicle for other distinct actions that also make preferred or dispreferred responses relevant (Schegloff, 2007). In some cases, these multiple preferences are congruent (i.e., the same response is preferred for both actions implemented by the prior utterance), while in others they are "cross-cutting", meaning that the preferred response for one aspect of the utterance is the dispreferred response for the other (Schegloff, 2007). For example, agreement is a preferred response to assessments, but assessments can also be used as a vehicle for producing actions, such as compliments or self-deprecations, for which disagreement is the preferred response (Pomerantz, 1978, 1984). Such cases present difficulties for responders with respect to choosing which practice or set of practices to employ in responding (Schegloff, 2007). As the data I examine below demonstrate, this can result in responses that exhibit features of both preferred and dispreferred turn shapes. Prior to presenting this data, however, I turn to a brief discussion of the way in which responses to possible racism can be understood as constituting a type of cross-cutting preference.

Cross-Cutting Preferences in Responding to Possible Racism

A wealth of research in recent decades has examined the details of "race talk" – the ways in which race is introduced into spoken interactions, and how it is managed during their course. One prominent thrust of this work has focused on the practices speakers can use in order to shape how their utterances may be heard and responded to, and particularly to mitigate the possibility of being treated as prejudiced or racist on the basis of their talk (see, for example,

Barnes, Palmary, & Durrheim, 2001; Condor, Figgou, Abell, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006). These practices demonstrate speakers' orientations to a (relatively contemporary) set of norms proscribing open expressions of racism, such that expressions of this nature may make speakers vulnerable to sanctioning or other interactional difficulties.

A related area that has drawn the attention of researchers in the field more recently relates to the difficulties surrounding responding to racialized (and thus potentially racist) descriptions, claims, complaints, assessments, and the like. On the one hand, disagreeing or sanctioning responses to such actions, by virtue of being disaffiliative, constitute a threat to solidarity between the participants (see, for example, Guerin, 2003; Hyers, 2007). This is particularly so as a consequence of this type of response effectively constituting an accusation of racism against the responded-to party, and in light of the increasing degree to which such accusations are liable to be treated as normative breaches on a par with (or even worse than) the possible racism to which they are responding (see, for example, Augoustinos & Every, 2007). On the other hand, agreeing or affiliating with a possibly racist action – or even simply failing to directly challenge it – may place participants in a morally compromised position as a result of being seen as complicit with the action (see, for example, Condor, et al., 2006). This risk is particularly heightened in cases where there is a co-present or overhearing audience that includes people whose solidarity with a potential responder may depend in part on whether s/he takes up an opportunity to challenge a racist action. In light of these considerations, and as my analysis demonstrates, disaffiliative responses to possible racism can be seen to constitute an instance of cross-cutting preferences, being dispreferred actions in some senses but preferred actions in others.

Data and Method

The analysis that follows is based on a data set consisting of over 120 hours of recorded interactions from call-in shows on three South African radio stations. These recordings were produced between 2006 and 2013, but predominantly in 2008, and were designed to include broadcasts in a range of different time slots, both government- and independently-operated stations, and stations that reach substantial proportions of the country's population. The recordings include a total of over 620 stretches of interaction in which race was observably made relevant, with the present analysis drawing on a collection of 53 cases in which disaffiliative responses to racialized actions (including assessments, claims, accounts, complaints, etc.) were produced, and where the racialized character of the action being responded to was clearly treated as the basis for the disalignment.

Although it should be noted that the data set was not intended to provide a statistically representative sample of radio broadcasts (or interactions more generally) in South Africa as a whole, there are good reasons why South Africa offers a particularly suitable setting for the examination of the phenomena on which my analysis focuses. Specifically, the country relatively recently transitioned from a system in which race was a rigidly legislated basis of social organization to one in which racism is explicitly outlawed and non-racialism is enshrined as a constitutionally-protected value. However, race remains a highly salient feature of everyday life in South Africa, and contestations over matters of race and racism abound (see, for example, Cresswell, Whitehead, & Durrheim, 2014; Durrheim, et al., 2011). As a result, the kinds of disaffiliative responses to possible instances of racism that I examine in this paper are (as noted below) relatively plentiful in my data.

Moreover, while the focus of the present analysis is not specifically on the features of radio interactions as a particular form of institutional interaction (see, for example, Hester & Fitzgerald, 1999; Hutchby, 1991), at least two features of this interactional setting make it an

especially useful site for the purposes of this analysis. Firstly, by virtue of being produced for an overhearing audience, these interactions take place in a setting in which the contingencies surrounding responses to possible racism described above are particularly relevant. Secondly, although they frequently work to maintain a "neutralistic" stance (Clayman, 1992), hosts on the shows also systematically orient to a role of moderating the positions taken by callers and policing the expression of particularly extreme views. The practices hosts use in responding to possibly racist actions on the part of callers are thus readily available for scrutiny in this setting. In addition, although it remains an open question as to whether these practices match those that may be employed in other interactional contexts, it is likely that the generic features of preference organization on which I focus in the following sections would be potentially available as resources for participants in a wider range of contexts.

The analysis follows a conversation analytic approach (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 2007), aided by detailed transcripts produced using the notations developed primarily by Gail Jefferson (Jefferson, 2004). I begin the analysis by focusing on features of preference organization in responses to possibly racist actions that provide resources through which speakers of the actions can revise or back down from them, thus offering such speakers the benefit of the doubt with respect to whether the action was intentionally racist. I then examine progressive movement from the initial affordance of this type of benefit of the doubt toward its withdrawal. Finally, I consider responses that, from the outset, do not allow for such a benefit of the doubt. The data excerpts included below were selected based on how clearly they demonstrate the main features of these phenomena, while exemplifying the range of variation observed in the collection as a whole.

Offering the Benefit of the Doubt through Dispreferred Turn Shapes

Excerpt 1 shows part of a discussion of a controversial newspaper column addressing the legacies of colonialism in Africa. A number of callers earlier in the discussion have argued that the column constituted an instance of racism for several reasons, one of which was what the callers took to be a claim that colonialism benefited Africa rather than being harmful. In his contribution to this discussion, the caller in Excerpt 1 appears to align with this view over a number of successive turn constructional units (TCUs; see Sacks et al. [1974]), each of which is followed by a pause as the host declines to respond at places available for him to do so.

Excerpt 1 [549, 702 4-23-08]

```
1   C:  U:m, (.) I just wanna say that like um (.) Africa isn't
2       the only third world country that benefited from colonialism.
3       (1.0)
4   C:  There a lot of countries that >benefited from colonialism<
5       like um, (.) Asian countries, and South American countries,
6       Hong Kong, >and that (so/stuff.)<
7       (0.5)
8   C:  So I'm you know just saying, (.) tch fact is fact, the white-
9       (0.2) the white (.) countries were (1.0) have helped a lot of
10      countries develop, they also caused a lot of hh you know,
11      problems (there.)
12      (0.6)
13  C:  I'm- (.) I'm Chinese, so I'm not defending the white people
14      >or anything,< I'm just saying, (0.5) you know (y-) (.) just-
15      this- the- the fact is the fact, huh?
16      (0.2)
17  H:  Mm.
```

```
18      (0.7)
19  H:  Mokay. .hh Thanks very much for your call, Grant.
20  C:  Thanks, by[e.]
21  H:             [C ]ool.
```

By beginning his contribution with the claim that "Africa isn't the only third world country that benefited from colonialism" (lines 1-2), the caller displays an assumption that colonialism did in fact serve to benefit Africa, thereby implicitly aligning with the position that has been identified by prior callers as the basis for denouncing the column as racist. The completion of this claim constitutes a place where the host could have produced an aligning or disaligning response, but no response is forthcoming during a relatively lengthy 1.0-second pause (line 3). While this pause may be a result of the host giving the caller an opportunity to continue his point, it may also indicate that the host is specifically withholding a response at a place where one was relevant, in which case the pause could be a marker of incipient disagreement (Heritage, 1984) with the caller's claim.

Following this pause, the caller elaborates his claim by suggesting that "a lot of countries" benefited in this way (line 4), which serves to upgrade the claim from the unspecified number of such beneficiaries referred to in his first TCU. He then produces a three-part list that offers examples of these claimed beneficiaries, followed by a "generalized list completer" (Jefferson, 1990), which serves to show that there are other countries that could be named in addition to the ones he has listed (lines 5-6). Through this elaboration and upgrade of his prior claim, the caller pursues a response by producing another place at which a response from the host is made relevant. The host, however, again declines to respond during another relatively lengthy pause (line 7), providing further (albeit not yet conclusive) evidence for the incipient disagreement possibly conveyed by the pause in line 4.

The caller then embarks on a further pursuit of a response, beginning by producing the upshot that he had previously projected but not produced, as shown by his use of a turn-initial "so" (Raymond, 2004). This upshot restates, in slightly different terms, his case that colonialism on the part of "the white (.) countries" (line 9) has "helped a lot of countries develop" (lines 9-10), and presents this as a matter of "fact" (line 8). However, prior to reaching an intonational possible completion of this TCU (see Sacks, et al., 1974), the caller mitigates his claim by suggesting "they also caused a lot of hh you know, problems (there)" (lines 10-11). The caller thus offers a counter to his own prior claims, which suggests an orientation on his part to a potential problem with the apparently pro-colonial thrust of his prior utterances, and thus provides evidence for his treatment of the host's prior withholding of responses as indicating incipient disagreement. In addition, this utterance provides a third place at which a response from the host is relevant – and one at which the host may be more inclined to produce an aligning response as a result of the more balanced claim the caller has now offered, in contrast to the upgraded version he produced in lines 4-6. The host nonetheless continues to withhold a response during a 0.6-second pause at line 12, thereby further reinforcing his incipient resistance of the caller's claims, but still without placing this resistance explicitly "on the record".

The caller then begins another TCU with a change of tack, as he produces a racial and/or ethnic self-identification ("I'm Chinese," line 13) and then treats it (as shown by the connecting word "so" – see Raymond, [2004]) as the basis for a denial that he is "defending the white people".[2] By producing this denial, the caller treats the defense of "the white people" (and by implication, in the context of this discussion, the colonial system for which they were responsible) as a problematic action, such that it warrants denial. More specifically, by employing an explicit racial categorization here, he treats the colonial domination he is referring to as an explicitly racially organized (and hence racist) arrangement. As such, he

implicitly treats any defense of "the white people" in this context as effectively a defense of racism, and thereby an instance of racism in its own right. The caller's denial here thus provides further retrospective evidence of his treatment of the host's withheld responses as constituting disaffiliation from a potentially racist defense of colonialism, while working to distance the position he has taken from association with such an action.

Following this denial, however, the caller re-asserts a slightly reformulated version of his claim that "the fact is the fact," followed by a tag question, "huh?" (line 15), which serves as a further pursuit of agreement from the host while also serving to downgrade the strength of the caller's claim (Heritage & Raymond, 2005). After another brief pause (line 16), the host produces his first verbal response, in the form of the token "Mm" (line 17), which offers weak acknowledgment of the caller's claim but stops short of offering clear agreement (see Gardner's [1997] analysis of the use of this token). Following another relatively lengthy pause (line 18), the host produces what appears to be a contraction of "Mm" and "okay" ("Mokay"). The "mm" and "okay" components of this utterance both serve to further display acknowledgment of the caller's point (Beach, 1993; Gardner, 1997), while the "okay" component also possibly serves to display alignment with the caller (Beach, 1993). In addition, the "okay" component marks a transition toward bringing the call to a close (Beach, 1993) – an outcome that is completed by the host subsequently thanking the caller for his call, and the caller aligning with this move to closing in his next turn (line 20).

This excerpt thus demonstrates how one recurrent feature of dispreferred turn shapes (delays) can be treated by participants as foreshadowing resistance to a possibly racist action. However, the ambiguity with respect to whether the host's non-responses constitute resistance to the caller's claims, as opposed to merely giving him the opportunity to continue his point, provide a resource by which the trajectory of the exchange could be changed from one apparently headed toward disalignment to an outcome of possible alignment. As a result,

the caller was able to take the opportunity to revise his potentially racist utterance and deny its problematic character without the host explicitly producing the kind of agreement or disagreement that would be associated with the kind of risks described above. In the following excerpt, which is drawn from a discussion of violence against women, disagreement is produced more explicitly, but is characterized by a number of features of dispreference that similarly provide the speaker of a potentially racist action with the opportunity to back down from his action.

Excerpt 2 [129, SAfm 4-21-08]

```
1   C:  But there are many factors in my opinion, (0.2) u:m: (0.7)
2       women's rights, h (.) um: they are much more modern, (0.5)
3       a[nd I] think uh: males has to accept that. h
4   H:   [Mm. ]
5       (0.2)
6   H:  Mm.
7       (0.2)
8   C:  U:m: (0.4) [if ] she's got a point of view or:: (.) I think .hh
9 (H:)             [Tch]
10      from: being: a: non-white South African, (.h) we have a
11      different attitude towards females. h
12      (.)
13  H:  (M-) well that- the- uh- I once did a .hh eh POWA, People
14      Opposing Women Abuse, who've been doing a lot of work in this
15      field for many many years, [.hh ] and doing a great job at it,
16  C:                             [Yes.]
17  H:  .hh they once did a study, and they found that it was as
18      prevalent in Sandton as it was .hh in Soweto.
19  C:  Alright that's [(            )]
20  H:                 [ So it's not  ] whi:te or bla:ck, it's not uh:
```

```
21      [.hh]
22  C:  [Oka]y I was stereotypical [(in          )]
23  H:                             [ Ja, it's not ] moneyed or poor. .hh
24      It's: quite a South African phenomenon.
25      (.)
26  H:  There are so many guys, .hh beating up their wives in their
27      mansions man.
```

The caller in this case begins by producing an account for violence against women that associates it with the "modern" nature of "women's rights" (line 2) and the degree to which men accept such rights (lines 3 and 8), with the host (in contrast to the non-responses in Excerpt 1) producing one weak acknowledgment token in overlap with this account (line 4) and a second (line 6) following a brief pause after the first possible completion of the account (line 5). After continuing his account (following another brief pause in line 7), the caller shifts to a racialized account that attributes such violence to the "different attitude towards females" held by "non-white South African[s]" (lines 10-11). It is noteworthy that the caller mitigates this claim by prefacing it with "I think" (line 8) and by displaying his co-membership in the category "non-white", by using the pronoun "we" (line 10). However, in the context of this discussion, this claim may be heard as suggesting that the "attitude" of this group of people is associated with a proclivity toward committing violence against women.

While this suggestion is implied in the caller's claim rather than explicitly stated, evidence for this potential hearing is provided in the host's disagreeing response, which discounts the empirical basis of a link between race and violence against women. This response is delayed by a brief pause (line 12), a turn-initial "well" (line 13), and a number of repairs and restarts (line 13), which foreshadow the disaffiliation that follows. The formulation of the response itself reflects further elements of its dispreferred character, as the

host accounts for his disagreement by describing a study produced by an advocacy organization (lines 13-15 and 17-18), which he suggests disconfirms the caller's claim of a racial basis for women abuse (lines 20, 23-24 and 26-27). In the course of this account, he positively assesses the work done by the organization (line 15), thereby producing it as an authoritative source of information on the matter at hand. By attributing his opposition to the caller's claim to an organization that he treats as having this type of expertise on this topic, the host produces his disagreement as deriving from empirical facts produced by a third-party source, rather than as a matter of personal difference of opinion or antipathy between the caller and himself.

It is also noteworthy that the host's account of the study initially departs from the racialized claim the caller has offered by introducing geographical location as a relevant consideration, as he reports the study as finding such abuse to be equally prevalent in two contrasting areas of Johannesburg, Sandton and Soweto (lines 17-18). Then, in producing the upshots of this account (line 20), the host re-introduces race and suggests that the study discounts it as an explanation for women abuse, before suggesting that the study also discounts wealth as an explanation (line 23). He thus offers a generalized claim about the inadequacy of a range of factors[3] in accounting for this type of abuse, thereby mitigating his disagreement with the caller by producing his account as disagreeing with a broader class of (incorrect) claims that others might produce, rather than specifically targeting the caller and his racialized claim.

Even before the host begins to produce the upshots of his account, the caller displays acceptance of the account (line 19), before acknowledging (partly in overlap with the host's continuing production of the upshots) that he had been "stereotypical" in his prior claim (line 22). As a result, although the caller has not taken the opportunity to retract or revise his claim provided by the initial delays in the host's response (as was the case in Excerpt 1), he does

concede its incorrectness immediately after the first possible completion of the host's disagreeing account, and acknowledges his culpability in being "stereotypical" immediately after the host's production of the race-relevant upshot of his account. The caller thus relatively quickly backs away from his claim and moves into alignment with the host, while also treating his claim, in light of the host's response, as being problematic on the basis of its "stereotypical" depiction of "non-whites". He thereby takes an upgraded, more direct position against his own claim than the host has taken, which enables him to effectively achieve a fuller retraction of his claim than he might have been able to had the host's challenge been more direct and/or personalized.[4] The features of dispreference in the host's response thus facilitate the return to alignment between the caller and the host, and mitigate the potential damage to the caller's reputation that may otherwise have occurred.

Withdrawing the Benefit of the Doubt

In the excerpts examined in the previous section, and in a large majority of cases in the data set as a whole, features of the responses to potentially racist actions provided the speaker of the action with opportunities to back down from the action, thereby giving them the benefit of the doubt with respect to the intent behind the action. Moreover, in these cases (and typically throughout the data set), the original speakers made use of these opportunities, thereby mitigating the reputational damage that may have resulted from immediate sanctioning or direct accusations of racism, and arriving at aligning positions with their co-participants. In this section, I examine a case in which the original speaker declines this type of opportunity to back down, resulting in the progressive withdrawal of this benefit of the doubt. In this case, a caller contributes to a discussion of challenges facing the South African education system by using a previous caller's mention of school busing as an occasion for producing a

racialized complaint about children being bused from the “black townships” in which they live to attend schools in (implicitly) “white” areas.

Excerpt 3 [427, 702 4-7-08]

```
1     C:    Okay now the w- the (.) what the lady was talking about
2           busing,
3           (.)
4     C:    what is happening is that there are schools in the
5           township(s), .h but children are being bused from the
6           black townships, (.) into the suburbs, (0.5) uh which is
7           causing overcrowding in thee u:m (0.2) Model C schools
8           in the suburbs, .h and the schools in the townships are
9           being empty.
10          (0.2)
11    H:    Bu- u- (.) bu: but I mean people have to go to school.
12          (0.4)
13    H:    [  So:::  ]
14    C:    [They have] to go to school. .h [What I]'m saying is they
15    H:                                    [Okay. ]
16    C:    are busing black children, (.) from the black areas, .h
17          into the (0.4) erstwhi[le w]hite areas, into the Model
18    H:                          [.hh ]
19    C:    [C schools, (they're overcrowding them,)]
20    H:    [ Bu- i- I you know I'm sorry. Millie,  ] this:
21          [this black areas ] and-
22    C:    [Yes I'm a racist.]
23          (0.2)
24    H:    Ah well then I'm not go[nna talk to you any]more.
25    C:                           [(          ) No no-] ((call is
26          cut off))
```

```
27          (0.3)
28    H:    Bye Millie. ((host takes next call))
```

The host initial disagreement with the caller's complaint exhibits a dispreferred turn shape, shown by the short pause before his response (line 10), and the account he produces for his disagreement (line 11). It is also noteworthy that he doesn't take up the racialized character of the complaint, instead displaying a problem with understanding the basis of the caller's complaint as she has formulated it. As in the excerpts shown in the previous section, this gives the caller the opportunity to back down from the racialisation of her complaint without it ever being explicitly treated as problematic. When the caller does not speak during a relatively substantial pause (line 12), the host prompts an action from her using a stretched stand-alone "So:::" (Raymond, 2004), and at the same time the caller begins a response in overlap with the host (lines 13 and 14). However, rather than taking the opportunity to back down, the caller reiterates her complaint in a more clearly racialized way, making it unequivocally clear that she is complaining specifically about "black children from the black areas" being bused into "erstwhile white areas" (lines 16-17).

The host then produces another disagreeing response, this time explicitly objecting to the racialization of the caller's complaint (lines 20-21). The sequential positioning of this response, which begins in overlap with the caller's ongoing turn (line 19), is characteristic of a preferred turn shape, and thereby serves as a way of upgrading the host's disagreement with the caller (Schegloff, 2007). However, the host still partially treats what he is doing as a dispreferred action by apologizing as he does it, and it is also slightly delayed by the restarts at the beginning of his turn (line 20). The caller then speaks in overlap with the host, apparently recognizing what aspect of her complaint he is specifically going to object to

before he actually mentions race, and admits to being "a racist" (line 22), thereby orienting to the host as having been headed towards an accusation of this sort.

Following a pause in line 23, the host terminates his interaction with the caller, using her admission of being a racist as a warrant for doing so (line 24), and completing this course of action despite her overlapping protests (line 25). This action by the host again exhibits characteristics of both preferred (shown by the unequivocal and unapologetic character of his termination of the call, despite her objections) and dispreferred (shown by the slight delay and the account he provides for ending the call) turn shapes. This suggests an orientation on the host's part to the cross-cutting preferences associated with responding to what has now been produced as an unequivocally racist action. This orientation is also evident in cases in which an action is treated as unequivocally racist from the outset, an instance of which I examine in the following section.

When No Benefit of the Doubt is Given

Excerpt 4 shows an exchange involving a caller who has called to complain about comments reportedly made by the president of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL; the youth wing of South Africa's ruling ANC party) about student demographics at a large South African university. Specifically, the caller has (prior to the transcribed section of the call shown below) complained about the ANCYL president stating that "every time he turns his head around, he only sees Indians in the KwaZulu Natal University, and it's a little Bombay". Following the host's (non-transcribed) commiserations with the caller's complaint, the caller launches an attack on "the African community", which he thereby implicitly associates with the ANCYL president about whom he has complained (lines 1 and 3-5).

Excerpt 4 [390, 702 6-19-07]

```
1   C:  You know people:, I don't- don't understand them you see,
2   H:  Mm¿
3   C:  U:h: especially the (a-) African community:, eh- they- eh-
4       they are brought up (0.2) with: hate, with no father
5       [care (or whatever.)]
6   H:  [  A::h   no   I    ] think that's going a little too far,
7       Jay. U::h with respect, I mean I understand your grievance
8       but I think when you start generalizing like that you
9       certainly uh .hhhh you're just incorrect.
10      (0.4)
11  H:  Basically.
12      (0.2)
13  H:  pshm ((chuckle)) .hhh You can't £generalize like that,£ you
14      can't say an £entire gro(h)up of people are such and such,
15      come on.£ .hh We all know that.
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Unlike the initial responses in the previous excerpts, the host's response in this case exhibits features typical of a preferred turn shape. Specifically, it is produced without delay, slightly in overlap with the end of the caller's turn, beginning with a stretched "A::h" (line 6) that appears to be designed as an immediate marker of disagreement, rather than being a "pre-pausal" (Schegloff, 2007, p. 68) that serves only to delay the onset of the host's turn. The host goes on to chastise the caller for "generalizing like that" (lines 8 and 13-15), thereby treating the broad claim the caller has made about "the African community" as the specific basis for the his objections. In addition, the host's use of the extreme case formulation "We all know that" (line 15) serves as a claim that the caller has violated a norm of which "we all" are aware, thus treating him as self-evidently culpable for his transgression. It also appears that (as in Excerpt 3) the host terminates the phone connection with the caller, thereby

ensuring that he did not have the opportunity to respond to the host's sanctioning. However, (also as in Excerpt 3), the host's response also exhibits a number of features typical of dispreferred turn shapes, including mitigations ("I *think*" and "a *little* too far"; line 6), a claim of "respect" for the caller (line 7), a concession of the validity of the caller's grievance against the ANCYL president (lines 7-8), and accounts for his disagreement and sanctioning (lines 8-9 and 13-14).

This combination of features of preferred and dispreferred turn shapes in the host's response serve to display his disagreement as being strong and justified, but nonetheless as a delicate matter and as reluctantly produced. As a result, and as in Excerpt 3, they are evidence for an orientation on his part to the cross-cutting preferences associated with responses to the kinds of culpably racist actions produced by the callers in these cases.

Conclusions

In this paper I have examined some features of responses to potentially racist actions, and thus of everyday antiracism, in interactional settings. My analysis demonstrates some ways in which features of turn shapes associated with preference organization provide co-participants with resources for managing the cross-cutting preferences associated with responding to potential racism. Specifically, features of responses that display disaffiliation or incipient disaffiliation in dispreferred turn shapes (characterized by delays, mitigations, accounts, etc.) can provide prior speakers with structural opportunities to recognize and repair the racially problematic nature of their actions. When they take up these opportunities, a return to mutual alignment can be achieved without speakers directly or explicitly being accused of racism, thereby avoiding or mitigating both the potential reputational damage and the threats to solidarity between themselves and their co-participants that may be associated with such accusations. On the other hand, when speakers pursue or upgrade a problematic action,

responses can progressively take on more features of preferred turn shapes. Alternatively, features of preferred turn shapes can be employed immediately, without first providing prior speakers with opportunities to repair their actions. In cases in which such features are employed, they serve as resources for displaying strong disaffiliation from what are thereby treated as unquestionably racist actions. However, responses in these cases may nonetheless include features of dispreferred actions, thereby displaying an orientation to the threats to solidarity resulting from such responses and treating them as reluctantly produced.

These findings demonstrate the moment-by-moment decision-making and collaborative work required for actions to be realized as, for example, potentially racist but with no malicious intent (and thus not warranting direct antiracist intervention), versus culpably and maliciously racist (and thus requiring intervention). That is, the data demonstrate how responders to racialized actions contingently decide, based on the details of the action they are responding to, whether it is an instance of (merely) potential racism, as opposed to unequivocal racism, and may adjust this assessment as further evidence for one possibility or the other emerges. Conversely, potential transgressors can choose whether to revise, withdraw, pursue, etc. their actions based on the details of unfolding responses, and what these details reveal about the likely reputational outcomes of the options available to them. As a result, the findings reveal some of the complex details of everyday antiracism in action in the unfolding of naturally occurring interactional exchanges, and thus of the situated production and management of "race trouble".

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Notes

1. I use the term "possibly racist" (rather than simply "racist") in view of the way in which characterizations of actions as instances of racism, although they may be based on a range of common features that make them recognizable (and thus analyzable) as such, are subject to (re)negotiation by participants in the moment-by-moment unfolding of interactions (cf. Durrheim, et al., 2011). This is also consistent with the stance described by Schegloff (1996, pp. 116-117) with respect to the characterization of an object of analysis as "a possible X".

2. cf. Whitehead's (2012) discussion of speakers' similar treatment of racial categories as a basis for authority in taking positions on race-relevant matters; also see Cresswell, et al. (2014).
3. In doing this, the host produces associations between particular racial categories, geographical locations, and class statuses – see Whitehead (2013, 2014) for further analyses of these phenomena.
4. The mitigated and inexplicit character of the caller's claim may have also contributed to his subsequent ability to back down from it.

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