

# ISSA Proceedings 1998 - “I’m Just Saying...”: Discourse Markers Of Standpoint Continuity



## *1. Introduction*

Group discussion of a controversial issue confronts participants with intellectual and pragmatic challenges that in practice are inextricably entwined. Argumentation theory attends primarily to the intellectual challenges and provides conceptual tools for analysis of issues and arguments. Practical argumentation, however, is fundamentally a pragmatic, communicative process. The pragmatic work of discussion is not merely a distraction from the intellectual work of argumentation. Rather, it sustains the social matrix within which argumentation becomes possible and meaningful as a constituent feature of certain collective activities.

To understand the normative and pragmatic dimensions of argumentation in their intertwined complexity requires empirical studies of practical argumentative discourse along with analytical and philosophical studies of normative argumentative (van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Jackson, & Jacobs 1993). The present study attempts to contribute to the empirical side of this inquiry by describing and analyzing certain uses of a particular pragmatic device.

Specifically, the paper reports a discourse analysis of discussions among students in an undergraduate “critical thinking” course. Student-led discussions of two controversial issues (capital punishment and legal recognition of homosexual marriages) were audiotaped and transcribed. Examining discourse markers (Schiffrin, 1987) in the two discussions, we noted frequent uses of “I’m just saying” and related metadiscursive expressions (I’m/we’re saying, I’m/we’re not saying, etc.). Our central claim is that these “saying” expressions are pragmatic devices by which speakers claim “all along” to have held a consistent argumentative standpoint, one that continues through the discussion unless changed for good reasons. Through microanalysis of a series of discourse examples (see Appendix B), in the following sections we show how these discourse markers are used to display continuity, deflect counterarguments, and acknowledge the force of counterarguments while preserving continuity. In a

concluding section we reflect critically on the use of these continuity markers with regard to a range of argumentative and pragmatic functions that they potentially serve.

## 2. "Saying" as a Marker of Standpoint Continuity

Speakers often use "saying" as a discourse marker in order to highlight a formulation of their continuing standpoint in contrast to some other idea with which it might be confused. As in (1)19, the purpose may be simply to distinguish the speaker's main point from a subordinate element such as evidence. Often, however, the purpose is to dissociate the speaker's standpoint from some other, usually less acceptable, standpoint that in the context has been, or might plausibly be, attributed to the speaker. Rufus (1) describes some evidence he is about to present as "j'st some stats" as distinct from "our position we're sayin," which marks the immediately following discourse as a formulation of a continuing standpoint that the "stats" will be "speakin on."

Several turns prior to (2), a speaker had raised a challenge to the anti-capital punishment speakers by asking, "what about repeat offenders that have actually already been put in jail and gotten off and they were supposed to be reformed and come back and do the *same thing* again." A pro-capital punishment speaker first replied "that's our point" and went on to explain that a purpose of capital punishment is to ensure that convicted murderers will not murder again. There followed a brief digression initiated by another speaker's question about the meaning of a term. Will opens his turn in (2) by explicitly marking it as a reply to the original question about repeat offenders. He then marks a difference between what "we're all talkin about" and what "we're sayin." In the context of the original question and the subsequent speaker's explanation of the purpose of capital punishment, it might be inferred that opponents of capital punishment offer no means to prevent convicted murderers from killing again. Will's reply is that life imprisonment offers an equally effective means of prevention. By marking this view as what "we're sayin" he implies that he and other anti-capital punishment speakers have been misunderstood by the pro side. "We're all" (proponents as well as opponents of capital punishment) "talkin about" convicted first degree murderers, who could be imprisoned for life rather than executed. Will emphasizes that his advocacy of life imprisonment as a solution to the problem of repeat offenders, contrary to what the recent context might suggest, is not an *ad hoc* shift in standpoint. Rather, he implies, it formulates a continuing standpoint that he and other speakers have *all along* been advocating.

In (3), Fran (accompanied by other, overlapping speakers) corrects what seems to be a factual error in Judy's prior utterance. Judy marks her response ("I'm saying") as a formulation of her standpoint, self-correcting ("he got twelve- if you had twelve) in order to emphasize that what the other participants took to be a factual error had actually been intended as a hypothetical conditional. As in previous examples, the implication is that Judy's standpoint has not changed at all. She need not correct her error because she committed none. She marks her second utterance simply a reformulation of the point she has intended all along. Stan, just prior to (4), had advocated "severe" life imprisonment - defined as solitary confinement - as an alternative to execution. In a heated exchange (4), Tina points out that extended solitary confinement is illegal. Stan replies to this objection by claiming that it is completely consistent with his standpoint ("Exactly" ... "That's what I'm saying."). The implication is that Tina's objection requires no change whatever in Stan's position, because a change in the law has been a part of his continuing standpoint all along.

### *3. Variations of "Saying" and the Function of Progressive Aspect*

Fred's "asking" (5), and Will's "making the point" (7), are used quite similarly to "saying" in earlier examples. Each marks the speaker's utterance as a formulation of a continuing standpoint that other speakers have insufficiently acknowledged or confused with some other, less acceptable, standpoint. As in earlier examples, continuity is marked as a way of emphasizing that what is being expressed is not a new or revised standpoint but is precisely what the speaker has been "saying" all along.

In example (6), Fred uses the past progressive "was saying" instead of the present progressive "saying." In another context, this usage might mark a *change* in standpoint (i.e., what I previously "was saying" differs from what I now "am saying"). In this case, although "was saying" refers to statements Fred made earlier in the discussion, the following context ("what I believe") strongly suggests that his standpoint has not changed. What *has* changed is that Fred now realizes he needs to "clear it up" - that the admitted unclarity of his previous formulation of his standpoint will be repaired by his current formulation. The standpoint itself is unchanged but, due to Fred's previous unclarity, has been misunderstood. In this context, Fred's "was saying" can be interpreted as a slightly more polite variation of "saying" as a marker of continuity.

Collectively, examples (1) through (7) indicate that it is specifically the *progressive aspect* (-ing) of these discourse markers that carries the implication

of a continuing standpoint. A range of present progressive “speech act” verbs (such as “saying,” “asking,” “making a point,” “talking about,” “arguing,” “claiming,” etc.) can function similarly as discourse markers that highlight the continuity of an argumentative standpoint.

#### *4. “I’m Not Saying ... I’m Just Saying”: Deflecting Counterarguments*

“Saying,” when used as a marker of standpoint continuity, is often embedded in a larger discourse structure of the form “I’m not saying ... I’m just saying.” Examples (8) and (9) illustrate uses of this structure.

In a series of exchanges preceding (8), Mary had argued that the death penalty will not deter people who, like many inner-city poor, “live life without hope.” Another speaker, citing a vivid example of a middle class man who chose a life of crime, argued that one’s “financial background” does not determine one’s choices. In (8), Mary generally concedes this view while claiming that it is not inconsistent with her continuing standpoint. Like speakers in earlier examples, Mary tries to dissociate her own standpoint from other, less acceptable views that other participants have implicitly attributed to her. Like Stan in (4) or Will in (7), Mary could have said something like “I agree that people should be held responsible for their acts, but I’m saying that penalties should take circumstances into account.” Instead, she presents a more elaborate series of statements of what she is “not saying,” followed by statements of what she “believes” and “thinks,” and concludes on the perhaps rather vague point that she is “j’s saying there’s so many things to consider.”

Like Stan and Will in the earlier examples, Mary does not merely concede counterarguments presented by others. The counterarguments, she implies, not only are not inconsistent with her standpoint but express precisely her own views. She thus concedes the validity of others’ claims while denying that any change in her own standpoint is thereby required. As compared to Stan and Will, however, Mary gives a more elaborate statement of the points conceded. The elaboration (accompanied by vocal emphasis and other signs of emotional intensity) emphasizes that Mary is not merely conceding these points but is expressing her own sincere, strongly believed, continuing views. With statements of what she is “not saying,” she emphatically dissociates herself from unacceptable views that others have apparently ascribed to her.

In contrast, Mary’s concluding statement of what she herself is “j’s saying” seems increasingly vague and tentative. This contrast is interesting. One plausible

interpretation is that Mary is backstepping from her earlier standpoint while using the continuity markers as a smokescreen. Hesitation, nonfluency, and words like “think” and “just,” all discourse features that often function as hedges, could be cited in support of this interpretation. But “think” and “just” can also have other functions besides hedging claims. “I think” not only can express uncertainty but also marks an utterance as a formulation of the speaker’s own thoughts; thus it can serve to strengthen the association between speaker and utterance. “Just” can be used to downtone or hedge a statement (“just an idea”) but it also has specificatory (“just before dawn”), restrictive (“just on Tuesdays”) and even emphatic (“just amazing!”) uses (Lee, 1991).

The multiple meanings of “think” and “just” provide for a range of subtleties and ambiguities in discourse. Mary in (8) downtones her formulation of a standpoint that other participants have criticized yet also insists that her standpoint is unchanged because it never entailed the claims that her critics have attacked. Mary’s “I think” slightly hedges the statement it marks but also emphasizes her personal association with it. Her “j’s saying” slightly hedges her concluding formulation of her standpoint but also works, in conjunction with the earlier “not saying” statements, to emphasize that her standpoint *never included* the extreme and unacceptable views that others have criticized. Her standpoint is held forth as absolutely continuous and unaffected by the counterarguments.

“I’m not saying ... I’m just saying” is a structure frequently used to hedge a standpoint against actual or anticipated criticism while simultaneously asserting that the standpoint has been essentially continuous and remains unchanged. Peggy in (9) provides another example of this technique and also evidence of its normativity.

Previous to (9) another participant had cited a public opinion poll in which the majority of respondents had opposed legal recognition of homosexual marriages but had agreed that homosexual couples should be entitled to family benefits such as health insurance. A question was raised as to why the poll respondents might have held these seemingly contradictory views. In (9), Peggy replies that marriage has religious significance associated with the production of children. John interrupts her to ask about the implications of “this view” for heterosexual married couples who choose not to have children. John’s method of posing this question displays his special participation status as a discussion facilitator. Instead of responding directly to Peggy from his own standpoint on the issue, he objectifies Peggy’s discourse as “this view” and poses a question to the group as a whole. Although not explicitly directed to Peggy, the question implies a strong

challenge to the view she had presented. Interrupting John, Peggy hastens to dissociate herself from that view. Using the “not saying ... just saying” structure, she points out that she had not been expressing her own opinion but had been speculating on “probably what it was” – that is, on what the poll respondents had probably been thinking.

Peggy begins with “I’m just saying,” thus reversing the usual order of “not saying ... just saying,” but corrects herself by restarting with “I’m not saying.” Her self-correction displays an assumption that the “not saying ... just saying” structure is normatively expected. Her “oh yeah ... yeah” overlapping John, followed by “I’m just saying” parallel’s Will’s “yeah ... I agree ... I’m just making the point” in (7). But the form of John’s question perhaps makes this response inappropriate. Peggy cannot agree or disagree with John because John has not presented his own standpoint on the issue but rather has posed a question to the group in his neutral role as discussion facilitator. Peggy then refocuses her reply to clarify her own standpoint, but this creates a structural conflict between the “yeah agree ... just saying” and “not saying ... just saying,” which her self-correction resolves in favor of the latter.

Other interesting variations of “not saying ... just saying” in our data cannot be examined here for lack of space. In all cases, however, a close reading confirms that this structure is used to assert the absolute *continuity* of a speaker’s standpoint in response to actual or anticipated criticism. The speaker claims or implies *all along* to have been advocating not the problematic view (“not saying”) but only another, more acceptable, view (“just saying”). Although, as the speaker sometimes acknowledges, the criticism itself may be valid, it does not apply to the speaker’s continuing standpoint, which is different.

Other interesting variations of “not saying ... just saying” in our data cannot be examined here for lack of space. In all cases, however, a close reading confirms that this structure is used to assert the absolute continuity of a speaker’s standpoint in response to actual or anticipated criticism. The speaker claims or implies all along to have been advocating not the problematic view (“not saying”) but only another, more acceptable, view (“just saying”). Although, as the speaker sometimes acknowledges, the criticism itself may be valid, it does not apply to the speaker’s continuing standpoint, which is different.

##### 5. “I just don’t think”: Going to the Limit of Acceptability

We have shown that discussion participants often use “saying” and related

discourse markers to maintain the absolute continuity of their standpoints, even in the face of strong counterarguments. But, of course, we're not saying that participants *always* do this ... we're just saying they *often* do! Discussion participants do sometimes acknowledge that counterarguments have affected their standpoints. In doing so, they are often at pains, however, to *minimize* this admitted change in standpoint. Most subtly, like Mary in (8), they may acknowledge the strength of counterarguments by reasserting their continuing standpoint but in a more closely hedged or downtoned manner. Examples (10) through (12) illustrate a more explicit approach in which speakers acknowledge the force of counterarguments by shifting the range of their views to a point beyond which they continue to be unable to go. The persuasive force of a counterargument can move them just so far, but no further.

Tina in (10) confronts Judy with evidence directly contradicting Judy's claim that the death penalty has no deterrent effect. Judy stumbles momentarily then responds, not by challenging the evidence nor denying its relevance, but rather by falling back to a position that Tina's evidence no longer clearly contradicts. Notably, Judy does *not* formulate her standpoint with present progressive discourse markers like "just saying." Instead she uses simple present tense verbs (mean, think, say) to mark her discourse as what she *now* is saying in light of Tina's evidence, not what she *has been saying* all along. Unlike most speakers in previous examples, she does not attempt to maintain that her standpoint is absolutely continuous and unaffected by Tina's counterargument. Instead, she formulates a revised standpoint in terms of what "I jus don't think we can say." Tina's evidence refers only to murder, not to other violent crimes that are more numerous. On Tina's evidence, "we" can no longer claim that capital punishment has no deterrent effect but, try as we might to accept the opponent's position, we just can't say that "killing a few people" will solve the problem of violent crime in general. Judy's core anti-capital punishment position is thus preserved although admittedly revised in light of Tina's counterargument.

Jen in (11) emphatically agrees with the pro-capital punishment argument that crime should have consequences. However, unlike Stan (4), Will (7), and Mary (8), all of whom also agreed emphatically with their opponents, Jen in this case does *not* formulate her agreement as completely consistent with what she has all along been "saying." Using simple present tense verbs (agree, make, mean, think), she marks her discourse as a statement of what she *now* thinks in light of the strong arguments in favor of capital punishment, not as absolutely continuous

with what she has been saying all along. Although, she says, “I totally agree” with the need for consequences, “I just don’ t think that [capital punishment is] teaching a lesson that we are trying to make known.” The shift from simple present (agree, think) to present progressive (teaching, trying) in this quotation is significant. Jen uses it to distinguish her revised view from her core standpoint, which remains unchanged.

Although consequences are important, capital punishment is not the right consequence for murder because it sends the wrong message. Tina in (12) replies to Jen with a gesture of reciprocation. She “completely” agrees with “your point that two wrongs don’t make a right.” Executing murderers, she implicitly concedes, is morally wrong, but she goes on to argue that it is nonetheless pragmatically necessary. “We have no other option ... There’s nothing [else] we can do” or else the crime problem is “j’s gonna SKYrocket” as it “has been [skyrocketing]” for decades. Like Jen (11), Tina (12) shifts from simple verb forms (understand, make, have), marking what she *now* thinks, to a progressive form (“has been [skyrocketing]”) that marks continuity. In this way, she distinguishes the parts of her standpoint that have been revised under Jen’s influence from her core pro-capital punishment standpoint, which continues unchanged.

Like “just saying” in earlier examples, “just” in examples (10) through (12) is used to place the speaker’s standpoint in the acceptable range on an implied continuum of acceptable to unacceptable standpoints. This is what Lee (1991) refers to as a “specificatory” sense of just. “Just saying,” however, not only specifies the speaker’s standpoint but also usually downtones it. Lee (1991) would say in this context that the meaning of just is indeterminate between two simultaneous readings, specificatory and depreciatory. The downtoning implies that the speaker’s standpoint is not merely acceptable but lies *well within* the acceptable range (hedging a claim usually makes it more readily acceptable). In contrast, the “just” of examples (10) through (12) has the properties of an “extreme case formulation” (Pomerantz 1986); it carries an emphatic sense along with its specificatory sense. In its specificatory sense, “just” locates the speaker’s standpoint in an acceptable range extending “just” to the boundary between acceptable and unacceptable standpoints, but no further. In its emphatic sense, “just” implies that the speaker has shifted as far *as she possibly can* toward the opposing view. Her emphatic agreement with the opponent’s “very good point” demonstrates her sincere and open-minded effort to accept as much as possible of what the opponent is saying. She has accepted *just* as much as she can, so much that her own position now extends from its continuing core to a point *just short* of

unacceptability.

## 6. Discussion and Conclusion

In the terminology of grounded practical theory (Craig & Tracy 1995), this study has reconstructed certain techniques sometimes used by participants in argumentative discussions. The further development of a grounded practical theory of discussion practices would require not only that a wider range of situations and *techniques* be studied but that the use of the techniques be critically assessed with regard to the practical problems that occasion their use and the *normative principles* that would warrant the application of such techniques to such problems. The limited space of this paper precludes much commentary on these issues, but we will venture a few preliminary remarks.

We noted at the outset that participants in discussions of controversial issues face intellectual and pragmatic challenges that in practice are inextricably entwined, and the examples presented give evidence that “saying” and related discourse markers of continuity are used to address both types of problems, usually simultaneously. Speakers usually mark their discourse as a formulation of their continuing standpoint in order to distinguish their standpoint from other ideas with which it might be confused. Discourse markers of continuity thus contribute to dialectical functions of *specifying and clarifying argumentative standpoints*, which must certainly be counted among the important intellectual tasks of discussion.

Continuity markers also reflexively acknowledge a *presumption of continuity* that seems essential to the rationality of argumentative discourse. Rational discussion requires that different standpoints on an issue be stated, argumentatively elaborated, and defended or revised in response to counterarguments. The process necessarily unfolds over time as participants present their claims, reasons, supporting evidence, criticisms, and refutations. The form of the process is not ideally linear but rather “discourses” along a meandering path shaped by unpredictable contingencies of discussion. The rationality of this discourse rests in part on the presumption that participants hold consistent standpoints over time. The particular utterances of each participant must be presumed to represent coherently related aspects of that participant’s continuing, consistent standpoint. If, for example, a speaker states a general claim and then presents some facts, in order for other participants to make coherent sense of the discourse they must assume that the facts are intended to be consistent with the claim, or at least with the general standpoint that the claim represents. It is, of

course, quite normal – even admirable – for people to entertain various views and to change their views for what they regard as good reasons. The presumption of continuity does not proscribe change but rather implies that change is rationally accountable. If the presumption of continuous standpoints were not upheld, if participants too often changed their standpoints capriciously, without good reason and timely announcement, rational discourse would be disabled. As happened in Garfinkel’s (1967) famous “breaching” experiments, in which he systematically violated or challenged the normal presumptions of social interaction, such a discussion would quickly devolve to chaos. Rational argumentation would become impossible. Garfinkel’s ethnomethodology would suggest that this presumption of continuity is not only a logical consideration but pragmatically sustains the very possibility of a social order.

Issues that become controversial involve serious conflicts among people who hold different standpoints. Argumentation is a form of social conflict conducted in discourse (Crosswhite 1996). Not every discussion participant already holds a fully articulate, consistent standpoint. Perhaps in many situations, few participants do. Still, to participate in a discussion of a controversial issue reflexively acknowledges that different standpoints on the issue not only exist but seriously matter to at least some of those who hold them. To take standpoints seriously would seem to imply that one should have a standpoint of some kind – even if only a provisional standpoint or one of ambivalence, neutrality, or skepticism towards other standpoints – which one should try to make as consistent and well supported as possible and should change only when convinced by good reasons. On this reasoning we might speculate that discussion participants at least sometimes are *normatively expected to have standpoints*. We have noted in our data (but cannot present here for reasons of space) cases in which participants do seem to orient to such an expectation by, for example, reporting their lack of a definite standpoint in a manner suggestive of conversational “dispreference” (Pomerantz 1984). If this does occur empirically it suggests another pragmatic function of continuity markers; i.e. not just to clarify one’s standpoint but to display, when something in the context might suggest otherwise, that one has a standpoint.

In our data, speakers typically use continuity markers to distinguish their standpoints from other, *less acceptable* standpoints. When a view has been criticized or contradicted by evidence, a speaker who markedly dissociates that view from his or her own continuing standpoint effectively claims not only *to be*

*right* but, contrary to what others may think, *to have been right all along*. In conversation there is a structural preference for agreement over disagreement (Pomerantz 1984). Dissociating oneself from less acceptable standpoints creates opportunities for expressing and receiving agreement. It also protects one from the loss of face that results from being criticized or appearing to be wrong (Tracy 1997). These may not be among the more exalted pragmatic functions of continuity markers, but they generally uphold the social matrix that sustains discussion and are often quite harmless by pragma-dialectical standards. Judy (3) and Peggy (9) not only correct what to us are obvious misinterpretations of their standpoints, they also show agreement with others and deflect criticism. Given that they actually were misunderstood, a dialectician should see little harm in this mixture of motives. Judy in (10), on the other hand, although she acknowledges the counterevidence and offers a relevant distinction in reply, perhaps insists too much on her own continuing rightness. And Stan in (3) might well be accused of using continuity markers merely as a smokescreen to avoid looking wrong while insisting on an untenable position. Moments after (3), the group responded to Stan's escalating vehemence with laughter, then digressed to another topic. In this case the assertion of continuity neither much displayed the virtues of critical thinking nor entirely protected the speaker from loss of face.

Thus it seems that pragmatic devices such as continuity markers can serve a variety of dialectical and conversational functions, with good or bad results depending on the case at hand. Sorting good from bad results and attempting to formulate the differences as normative principles is a goal for further critical inquiry.

### *Appendix A Transcription Symbols*

Our method of transcriptions is based on the system used in conversation analysis (e.g., Heritage & Atkinson, 1987; Psathas, 1996).

Speakers are identified by pseudonyms. Special transcription symbols include:

, . ? punctuation follows intonation rather than syntax

:: prolonged syllable

- clipped syllable underline,

CAPS vocal emphasis, increased loudness

° decreased loudness

<> increased /decreased speech rate

hh .hh audible outbreath/inbreath

[ ] beginning/ending of overlap

= continuation of turn or absence of normal gap between turns

(1.0) one second pause

(.) brief, untimed pause

( ) transcriber uncertainty

(( )) transcriber comment

### *Appendix B Discourse Examples*

(1) Capital Punishment, lines 130-132

Rufus: Oh (.) This is j'st- some stats (.) um (.) (j'speakin on) our- our position to - um (.) part of whuh our position we're sayin that (.) um that definitely does not deter criminals...

(2) *Capital punishment, lines 224-230*

Will: M'wuh to respond to your question about repeat offenders that wuh-(.) we're all talkin about people that uh- whuhwe've - that they-they've found guilty in- in a court of law uh firsh degree murder (.) so we're sayin they sh'd get life imprisonment so all- awnly way these people would uh be repeat offenders'd be if they escaped ...

(3) *Capital punishment, lines 373-383, simplified*

Judy: I mean the- here's this jury I mean 'ts such a >random thing< you know, you get twelve different people in the Nathan Dunlap trial and he's in prison for life.

(.) ...

Fran: He's on death row.

((multiple voices overlapping))

Judy: I'm saying he got twelve- if you had twelve different people on his jury, he is in jail for life rather than being killed

(4) *Capital punishment, lines 926-933*

Tina: You can't there's a law that says you cannot stay in solitary confinement.=

Stan: = Exactly there's[ a law, ]so they need to change=

Tina: so that's

Stan: = the law =

Tina: = ((high pitch, louder)) You ever seen "Murder in the First?"

Stan: ((high pitch)) That's what I'm saying we need to change the law:s. Laws need to change.

(5) *Homosexual marriage, lines 486-492*

Jim: ... And so that- and that's the reason I think that interracial er-homosexual marriages will be recognized.

Lisa: Do you think they *should* be::

Fred: Yeah that's what we're asking. Are we:: we're not saying they're going- it doesn't matter about the future if they're going ( )

(6) *Homosexual marriage, lines 765-766*

Fred: Yeah. Well I guess- Let me clear it up. What I was saying (.) was this is my personal belief. ...

(7) *Homosexual marriage, lines 923-925*

Will: Uhm, yeah I mean I I agree with- what you're saying I agree with what *you're* saying. But- but- I'm just making the point that ...

(8) *Capital punishment; lines 807-819*

Male 1: They choose t' *commit* the murder

((multiple voices))

Mary: I'm not saying that I'm not sayin that- that their murder is their act of murder is wro:ng. I'm not saying that n I'm not saying that they don't deserve some consequence for that .hh n'that- I do think- I think life in prison should be life (.)

in prison. (.) I believe in consequences=

Will?: = °exactly° =

Mary: = b't I don't think (.) .hh tha::t (.) I think there's a lot of: (.) p(h)olitics in it? I think there's a lot of (.) eh- uh- b't worse, what- I mean what we're discussing is like what brings them to murder an- an that sort of thing .hh but .h I'm j's saying there's sho many things to consider an- and .h it's .h (.)

(9) *Homosexual marriage, lines 373-382*

Peggy: Well uh one of the things I thought is: that uh (.) marriage was (.) initially started up by the church, uhm to s- legally recognize a family and the purpose of a marriage was to create children and (.) perhaps uhm the reason people don't want: uhm: gay marriages to be recognized is because (.) perhaps it encroaches on: a:: uhm: a religious aspect of: like well wait a minute, marriages were originally crea:ted to:: uh:: have children to raise:[ (.)

John: Okay. Do we h[a-

Peggy: a family.=

John: = Okay. Do we understand that view? (.) So if we're gonna follow that view (.) there are a lot of married people (.) that get married (.) and do not (.)[ choose ]to have=

Peggy: oh yeah

John: = *children*. So if we're gonna be consistent with that,=

Peggy: = yeah.

John?: [(\_\_\_\_\_)]

Peggy: I'm just saying I'm just saying na I'm not saying I agree with em I'm saying that's (.) probably what it was: yeah.

(10) *Capital punishment, lines 531-547*

Judy: We *use* the death penalty *now*, an it's *still* going up. Is the thing I mean we're *using* it but[( )]Texas=

Male: ((clears throat))

Judy: = they're knocking off people every *day* man they kill people like *hthaht* in Texas, .hh an it's *still* going up=

Tina: = And in the[e uh: ]homicide rate has=

Judy: so what I mean is

Tina: = dropped every year n the past five years.

Judy: Has it? I=

Tina: = Yup, (.) in Texas it has.

Judy: B't I mean- eh- it's *not* only- the problem is not only *murder* (.) in our society I mean .hh there's other violent crimes=aggravated assault, larceny, arson, j'st- other stuff going on .h and I jus don't think that we can say by *killin* a few *people* every *year* it's gonna-it's gonna *help* anything I j'st (.) .h I mean maybe somebody can help me understand it cos I jus don't think it's gonna work.

(11) *Capital punishment, lines 680-687*

Jen: I agree with you, th't- th't you know you make °a° very good point like- (.) i- if nobody *knows* the consequence (.) I mean if the consequence isn't clear (.) what's gonna stop you.

Fred?: Mm hm=

Jen: Right? An I *totally* agree with that b't I j'st don' think that-.hh that it's (.) teaching a lesson th't (.) we-(.) are trying tuh(.) make known.

(12) *Capital punishment, lines 695-701*

Tina: I completely understand your point th't two wrongs don't make a right (.) bu:t (.) a-we have? (.) *no*: other options right nowWhich we do *not* (.) There's- (.)

There's nothing we can do b't if we don't- (.) if we don't *do* something .h *make* some- *make* the pum- *make* the consequences more severe, .h it's j's gonna SKYrocket as it *has* been for the past twenty thirty years.

#### NOTE

**i.** Parenthesized, numbered references refer to the numbered discourse examples in Appendix B. The transcription format and special transcription symbols are defined in Appendix A.

#### REFERENCES

- Atkinson, J.M., & Heritage, J. (Eds.). (1984). *Structrures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Craig, R.T., & Tracy, K. (1995). Grounded practical theory: The case of intellectual discussion. *Communication Theory*, 5, 248-272.
- Crosswhite, J. (1996). *The Rhetoric of Reason: Writing and the Attractions of Argument*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Eemeren, F.H. van, Grootendorst, R., Jackson, S., & Jacobs, S. (1993). *Reconstructing Argumentative Discourse*. Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press.
- Garfinkel, H. (1987). *Studies in Ethnomethodology*. Cambridge: Polity Press. (Original work published 1967)
- Lee, D. A. (1991). Categories in the description of just. *Lingua*, 83, 43-66.
- Pomerantz, A.M. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In: J.M. Atkinson and J.C. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis* (pp. 57-101). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pomerantz, A.M. (1986). Extreme case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, 9(2/3), 219-229.
- Psathas, G. (1995). *Conversation Analysis: The Study of Talk-in-Interaction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Schiffrin, D. (1987). *Discourse Markers*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Tracy, K. (1997). *Colloquium: Dilemmas of Academic Discourse*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.