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“And how old are you?”:

Age reference as an interpretative device in radio counselling

Nataliya Thell & Katarina Jacobsson

Abstract

Negotiations about problem definitions are a crucial part of psychotherapeutic and counselling work. In a conversation with a psychotherapist or a counsellor, the client's initial description of his or her trouble is transformed into an expert-informed problem formulation. This paper draws upon ethnomethodology, and particularly on conversation analysis and membership categorisation analysis, to describe how position in life course can be invoked in reasoning about explanation and solution of psychological problems. We analysed data from telephone conversations between a psychotherapist and people seeking help for their life difficulties on a Swedish radio programme. Our analysis shows how references to callers' age were used to position the callers as members of stage-of-life categories, in order to invoke expectations tied to the categories. We show how the callers' position in the life course was used as an interpretative device, when suggesting a normative description of the callers' life situations to negotiate understanding of their troubles. Thus this study explicates in interactional detail the interpretative use of cultural common-sense knowledge about the life course in the context of the specific institutional tasks of radio counselling.

Keywords: radio counseling, age reference, life course, ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, membership categorization.

Introduction

Media counselling, particularly in the form of 'media psychology', originated in the USA in the 1950s (Bouhoutsos, Goodchilds & Huddy, 1986). Since then psychological counselling in media has grown into a broad professional field (Henricks & Stiles, 1989; McGarrah, Alvord, Martin & Haldeman, 2009). In Australia, England, Finland, France, Israel, Germany, Puerto Rico, and Taiwan, among other countries, a range of professionals such as psychologists, psychotherapists, psychiatrists and social workers have been providing their professional advice about how to cope with life's challenges on the radio as well as in newspapers and on television (e.g. Hodges, 2002; Raviv, Raviv & Yunovitz, 1989; McGarrah et al., 2009). This paper draws upon data from a Swedish radio programme, *The Radio Psychologist*, episodes of which consist of conversations between a psychotherapist and people seeking help with various psychological problems, such as coping with anxiety, overcoming traumatic childhood

experiences, living with grief, or resolving difficulties in their family relationships. The aim of the study is to explicate how cultural common-sense knowledge about life course and ageing can be invoked in the conversations with a radio psychologist. Our initial interest in the topic of age in these radio conversations was the result of an observation that callers' age was invoked often and in different ways in the programme. A hypothesis was developed that the practice of invoking callers' ages is meaningful and serves particular interactional purposes in radio counselling. It is noteworthy, for instance, that in call-in opinion programmes or musical programmes in which listeners phone in to express their opinions about contemporary social and political matters or to request a song, the callers are not usually asked about their age. By contrast, an enquiry about a caller's age sounds more appropriate in the context of a call-in programme where a doctor gives advice on health issues. The paper's specific focus is on how callers' chronological age is referred to in the conversations with a radio psychologist when negotiating an understanding of the callers' troubles. Namely, the study aims to explicate how age references may be used to position callers as members of particular stage-of-life categories, and to invoke expectations tied to those specific categories in order to reason about the callers' troubles. We will start with a brief account on current knowledge about cultural constructions of the life course and life stages, as well as discursive approaches to counselling and psychotherapy, and will then proceed to examine age reference as an interpretative device in radio counselling.

Life course as an interpretative resource

Our point of departure is that a helping relationship, such as counselling and psychotherapy, is a collaborative *interpretative* work between a professional and a client with the aim of understanding the client's problem. One interpretative resource used to make sense of human actions and states, is 'life course' (Gubrium, Holstein & Buckholdt, 1994). The term 'life course' labels the Western world's view of life as a series of developments and events common for most people, which is a way of understanding human experience in relation to time. From this social constructionist perspective, life course and stages of ageing are categories that people use to describe their worlds; they are interpretations discursively established and assigned to experience (ibid.). A way of interpreting actors' qualities, actions, and states by reference to their location in the life course is a practice of 'life coursing', which entails comparison of one's actions to the idealised and practical actions of others at the same 'point' in the life course (Rosenfeld & Gallander, 2002; Rosenfeld, Ridge, Catalan & Delpech, 2016). Such references to age expectations create images of being 'on time' or 'off time', which may be used to attribute normality or deviance (Gubrium et al, 1994). This is due to age being tied to notions about proper life timing and appropriate behaviour at different life stages (Settersten & Hägestad, 1996a; 1996b).

Studies of social-cultural constructions of the life course and specific life stages have revealed how members of Western societies rely on typifications to make sense of their own and others' experiences in relation to time (e.g. Gubrium et al, 1994). The typical life course is constructed as a linear development from childhood and youth, positively perceived as an upward curve to adulthood, through adult life, into the downward path to old age (Hockey & James, 1993). The central part of the life course – adulthood – is conceptualised as an embodiment of independence and autonomy, while its extreme ends – childhood and old age – are understood as separate from and marginal to adulthood. This picture of the life course is hierarchical, where certain positions are privileged over others (Rosenfeld & Gallagher, 2002). Hockey and James (1993) have shown, for instance, that in Western societies children have been historically constructed as vulnerably dependent and 'incompetent' social actors, and that this cultural construction has acquired a metaphorical role in framing dependency of other marginalised groups, including elderly people (e.g. in treating elderly people as if they were children).

The taken-for-granted assumptions and ideas about ageing are culture-specific and constitute products of current dominant ideologies. As Lock (1993, 1994) has demonstrated in her comparative study of menopause in Japan and North America, subjective interpretations of physical changes in the body are culturally produced and therefore differ in different cultural contexts. Knowledge about the body and biological ageing is a product of history and culture, and sensations in the body registered by the brain transform into their subjective interpretations through the mediating force of culture (Lock, 1993). Moreover, particular life stages, such as adolescence, appear to be a modern social construct that imposes particular constraints on the respective group and portrays specific experiences as inevitable and inescapable; thus, adolescents are persistently depicted as a group at risk, the members of which are unstable due to hormonal changes and therefore unable to develop conscious decision-making characteristics (Lesko, 2012).

Developmental phases, stages and sequences are tools used to make sense of human experience, as well as products of the interpretative practice. The meanings attached to life change are produced and organised in and through interaction, in particular by means of references to age-related stages that "descriptively *accomplish*" life change (Gubrium et al, 1994, p. 29). Descriptions of someone as old, young or middle-aged constitute in this respect "constructive actions" (ibid., p.31), through which, on the one hand, meaning is assigned to experiences, and, on the other hand, the categories are continuously constituted and updated.

In recent decades, a growing number of age research studies have emphasised discourse and language use. Discursive research into age, similar to the social constructionist approach, underlines the distinction between

‘chronological age’ as a historical (objective) fact and ‘age category’, which is explained by references to social norms and the expectations associated with particular life stages (for example, clothing style, hair colour, posture, or social roles) (Laz, 1998, p. 93). In the discursive studies, the life span is approached as a “set of culturally specific and linguistically ascribed categories” (Coupland & Ylanne-McEwen, 1993), while age-related identities are studied as socially-produced discursive achievements rather than static individual features or products of cognitive processes.

In this study, we adopt ‘the identity-in-action tradition’ (Nikander, 2002), where age is understood as being performed and accomplished in talk. Studies that focus on age-as-an-interactional-accomplishment show how age identities and their specific features can be invoked in order to perform particular interactional tasks, such as suggesting and negotiating interpretative frameworks for understanding events and experiences (e.g. Hurd, 1999; Nikander, 2000; Poullos, 2009; Róin, 2014; Rosenfeld, 1999). This approach allows detecting, through details of talk, how age-related categories are oriented to as ‘inference-rich’ (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 2007c), i.e. how they are used to invoke cultural norms that incorporate prescriptions and proscriptions for behaviour (Settersten & Hägestad, 1996a; Settersten & Mayer, 1997). In the present study, we show how categorial work can be embedded in particular therapeutic tasks, namely in searching for and negotiating¹ explanations and remedies for troublesome experiences. The research focus on particular discursive actions allows for the tracing of how meaning of age and ageing is constructed in talk (Nikander, 2009). It reveals the social organisation of cultural knowledge (Stokoe, 2009) as well as the ways in which conversation participants collaboratively preserve or revise ‘categorial common sense’ (Atkinson, 1980; Stokoe, 2010).

Stage-of-life categories in interpretative work with troubles

Gubrium and colleagues (1994) argue that a wide range of human-service professionals, including psychiatrists, police, educators, and social workers, relate to the idea of “being on or off time” to discern normality and deviance. Likewise, Rosenfeld and Gallander (2002) observe that the life course is a central interpretative and organising resource in medicine, where “the very criteria for health are age-stratified” (p. 358). For instance, a criterion of productivity is applied to the health of middle-aged persons, but not to the health of older people. In this respect, age categories work as ‘shortcut reasoning’ in interpreting patients’ and clients’ troubles and legitimising professional decisions (Jacobsson, 2014). When professionals draw on the assumptions about the typical life course

¹ By ‘negotiation’ we mean an interactive process of reaching a common ground. The process does not necessarily presuppose an explicit exchange of oppositional views, but may have a more subtle character, when one conversation party accepts the other party’s judgement without contesting it.

in their expert judgements, they also enact and reproduce the constructions of the life course (Rosenfeld & Gallander, 2002). Through the process of ongoing production and updating the life course constructions, corresponding inferences are made socially acceptable (e.g. dependency of older people).

Counselling and psychotherapy constitute institutional settings in which a professional and a client collaboratively construct an account of the client's difficult situation. Problem formulation is considered to be a crucial part of psychotherapeutic and counselling work (Peyrot, 1987; Scheff, 1984). The initial description of the trouble that is presented by the client is transformed during his or her conversation with a psychotherapist or a counsellor into an expert-informed formulation of the problem². A number of studies have shown, for instance, that therapists and counsellors challenge and restructure the client's initial interpretation of his or her problem in order to shift the focus towards the client's 'inner world' (e.g. Antaki, Barnes & Leudar, 2005; Hodges, 2002; Madill, Widdicombe, & Barkham, 2001). While a client's complaints are often directed towards other people (e.g. spouses, family members etc.), the counsellors problematise the client's own conduct and psychological characteristics. At the same time, the client is not a passive observer of the process of reformulation of his or her trouble description by the professional. In fact, collaboration between the therapist and the client in the construction of the client's problem may be decisive in terms of the outcome of the helping relationship (Madill et al., 2001).

The discursive shift that is fundamental to the therapeutic process may involve re-categorising components of the problem description (O'Neill & LeCouteur, 2014). Age is one of the key bases for production of self-image and social identity (Hockey & James, 2003), and the 'natural life course' may be used as a schema of interpretation in psychotherapeutic practice (Atkinson, 1980). However, to our knowledge, there have been no studies directly focusing on and exploring in interactional detail how age categories can be invoked in counselling or psychotherapy as explanatory or interpretative tools. The few studies that address the use of membership categories in counselling and therapeutic interactions demonstrate that membership categories, including age categories, can be invoked in these settings for different purposes. In radio counselling, the callers might identify themselves in categorial terms to provide an intelligible description of the trouble, for example by saying, "I am a fifteen-year-old girl, and my boyfriend would like to have intercourse with me" (Ten Have, 1999, 2000). In therapy work with a family with a disabled child, stage-of-life categories, such as 'adolescence', may be used to substitute 'disability' categories in order to negotiate a less problematic version of the family situation (O'Neill & LeCouteur, 2014).

² We differentiate between *trouble* and *problem* using the tradition of the sociology of trouble (Emerson & Messinger, 1977; Gubrium & Järvinen, 2014).

In this study we aim to explicate in interactional detail how reference to one's position in the life course can be used to explore troublesome experiences. Specifically, we focus on how chronological age of callers to the radio-counselling programme is invoked to infer age-related interpretations of the troubles. Because chronological ages mark entry and exit points to life stages, and the associated social roles (Hockey & James, 2003), age references may be used in interaction to invoke common-sense knowledge and shared cultural norms (Nikander, 2009; Schegloff, 2007a). In our study we will show how age references can be used to invoke cultural scripts of being in a particular age to establish a 'shared argumentative space' (Nikander, 2009, p.868) between a radio psychologist and a caller when negotiating intersubjective understanding of the caller's trouble.

The study draws on an ethnomethodological approach and in particular on conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis (MCA). Among other things, CA and MCA have proven to be useful for analysing how age identities are negotiated and constructed through talk-in-interaction (Nikander, 2000, 2002; Poullos, 2009). Using a combination of CA and MCA allows one to trace and describe how conversation participants use categories to invoke common-sense knowledge in order to achieve interactional goals. The CA approach has also been useful in research on psychotherapy (e.g. Peräkylä, 2013; Peräkylä, Antaki, Vehviläinen, & Leudar, 2008; Voutilainen, 2010) and counselling (e.g. Silverman, 1997). Both CA and MCA have been applied to studying the process of problem formulation in psychotherapy (e.g. Madill et al., 2001; O'Neill & LeCouteur, 2014).

Data

The data are publicly available recordings of the Swedish radio programme *The Radio Psychologist*. The programme has been broadcast on the Swedish first national radio channel every week since 2007 and is claimed to have more than 170,000 listeners when on air weekly (Seiving, 2015). We have no information about demographic characteristics of the audience, but given the broadcast hours (Thursdays at 11 a.m. with repeats at 8 p.m. the same day and 1 a.m. on Saturdays), a broad range of potential listeners may be reached. In the programme, the radio psychologist plays the role both of a host who presents and invites programme participants to the conversation, and of an expert who helps to understand and solve the reported problems.

The Radio Psychologist is the only media programme of its kind in Sweden. The collection of programme episodes constitutes a set of interactional trajectories from callers' troubles to their expert-informed explanations, and on occasion to their solutions. This data set corresponds well to the tasks of our study on how troublesome experiences are explored in an encounter with a professional.

The conversations with a psychotherapist on the radio differ remarkably from conventional psychotherapy in the sense that they are produced for being broadcast on the radio, and thus are inevitably oriented to the ‘overhearing audience’ (Hutchby, 2006). At the same time, the dialogue between a radio psychologist and a caller may comprise successive stages of therapeutic process (Seiving, 2015) and thus be comparable to condensed forms of psychotherapy, such as single session and walk-in psychotherapy (see e.g. Cameron, 2007; Campbell, 2012; Harper-Jaques & Foucault, 2014). Similar to these condensed therapy formats, in *The Radio Psychologist* a help-intended (psychotherapeutic) relationship is established, accomplished and rounded off within one encounter. Literature suggests that media encounters with such professionals as psychologists and psychotherapists constitute a combination of counselling and therapeutic activities (Gaik, 1992) as well as problem-solving strategies (Henricks & Stiles, 1989). Although we refer to the overall setting of *The Radio Psychologist* as ‘radio counselling’, we agree with Gaik’s (1992) observation that counselling activities (seeking and providing advice and guidance) and therapeutic activities (encouraging introspection and self-analysis) interweave in psychological radio programmes. Furthermore, in this study we focus on the process of exploring callers’ experiences, including the work for identifying possible sources of the callers’ troubles – the activities that constitute the essence of the therapeutic mode of the interaction (Gaik, 1992, p. 276).

The data corpus for the study comprises 42 programme episodes of the total 43, which were broadcast during 2014. One episode was a repetition of an episode broadcast earlier the same year, and it was excluded from the data. Each episode lasted for 29 minutes, and included one conversation with a caller³ (with the exception of one programme episode, where the radio psychologist was answering listeners’ letters). Two psychotherapists were involved in the programme in 2014: a female psychotherapist trained in cognitive-behavioural psychotherapy (four programme episodes) and a male psychotherapist trained in psychodynamic and relational psychotherapies (the other 38 episodes). In order to gather background ethnographic information about programme production, the first author conducted two interviews, one with the psychotherapist who was involved in 38 episodes and the other with the main programme producer. The interviews revealed that all telephone conversations were recorded in advance and were edited by the programme producers in accordance to principles of preserving caller anonymity.

³ Radio listeners can contact the programme in different ways: by ringing in to the programme, by writing an email, or by sending a letter by post. They briefly relate their concerns and the programme producers contact them later to arrange a conversation with the radio psychologist. Although the format of *The Radio Psychologist* differs from the format of a conventional ‘call-in talk show’ (cf. Hutchby, 2006), we refer to the listeners participating in the programme as ‘callers’ due to their initiating role of contacting the programme.

Method

The analytical approaches employed in the study are conversation analysis (CA) and membership categorisation analysis (MCA). These research approaches are closely related by their attentiveness to sequential (interactional and social) order and provide tools for studying a 'performative aspect of discourse' (Van Dijk, 1997), i.e. discourse as talk-in-interaction. In CA (e.g. Sidnell, 2010; Sidnell & Stivers, 2013), identity categories are seen as being "bound up with particular ways of talking" (Hutchby, 2006, p. 15). A focus on talk, namely the sequencing and design of turns in conversation, is seen as revealing the roles, status, and identities of the people involved in particular interactional situations. MCA (e.g. Housley & Fitzgerald, 2015; Silverman, 1998) in its turn focuses on how members call upon categories and invoke 'category-bound activities' (Sacks, 1992) or 'category-bound predicates' (Watson, 1983) – the activities and characteristics associated with certain membership categories (e.g. 'baby' and 'cry'). When actors who belong to one category accomplish activities that are associated with another category (e.g. 'woman' and 'pipe-smoking'), incongruities may occur and can be marked by observers in their interactions (through displaying, for example, confusion or amazement), which makes the incongruities identifiable for an analyst (Silverman, 1998, pp. 87–88).

Initially, in line with CA methods (see e.g. Sidnell, 2010), we explored the whole corpus of data to trace recurrent interactional patterns that could be specific to the particular interactional setting of radio counselling. The initial observations on the data led to identifying the phenomenon for analysis – sequences of turns in which age references were used to invoke callers' membership in stage-of-life categories. The sequences were collected to form a 'collection of instances' of the phenomenon, and they were transcribed in accordance with conversation analytical transcription principles (see the appendix for a legend to the transcription symbols; for transcription conventions see e.g. Hepburn & Bolden, 2013). The data excerpts were then carefully explored through case-by-case comparison. In keeping with the ethnomethodological way of thinking, the analysis aimed to reconstruct the conversation participants' perspective, i.e. orientations and understandings that the participants displayed to each other in their interaction. While CA provided tools for explicating sequential unfolding of the conversations, MCA lent itself to examination of how the age identities of the callers were drawn on in the interpretative work regarding the callers' troubles.

Results

To begin with, we will give a brief overview of age references in the data corpus and exemplify their variations. Then we will pinpoint the specific instances of the

age references that serve age categorisations, to enable detailed analyses of what they accomplish in the radio counselling.

Callers' age was mentioned in 24 of the total 42 conversations with the radio psychologist⁴. In 18 conversations callers' age was not explicitly indicated, although implicit references to life stages could be made (e.g. in a description of a caller as a grandparent). In these cases, the membership categories most often invoked were from the collection 'family' and 'marriage', such as a daughter who has not had contact with her father for a long time, a mother to a drug-addict daughter, or a wife to a violent husband.

When callers' age was explicitly indicated, the age was most often (in 21 episodes) revealed in response to the radio psychologist's question "How old are you?". In three cases it was the callers who mentioned their age when telling about their trouble. In these 24 episodes the problems discussed tended to be less about troubles in relationships with others and more about troubles of intrapersonal nature, such as for instance feeling worthless when meeting challenges, or feeling lonely or unhappy (for differentiation between intrapersonal and relational troubles see e.g. Emerson & Messinger, 1977).

At first glance, the radio psychologist's enquiry about callers' age appeared to be a matter of obtaining information. However, the radio psychologist was informed in advance about the callers' age.⁵ The programme producers who were initially in contact with the callers, provided the radio psychologist with a short description of the callers prior to the telephone conversations, including their age. The question "How old are you?" was therefore asked not to elicit information but rather to make the age of the caller audible to listeners. In other words, in asking this 'known-answer question' (Schegloff, 2007b, pp. 223–224), the radio psychologist oriented to the radio programme audience rather than to his own cognitive state of 'not knowing'. Invoking callers' age identities could serve to shape identities 'sharable' with radio listeners, through which radio's potential to provide a forum for exploring emotional experiences and providing social support could be realised (Bainbridge & Yates, 2013; Levy, 1989). The identities constructed in *The Radio Psychologist*, including age identities, might work to communicate to the listeners that they may be able to identify with the caller, and so find the programme content particularly relevant to them. At the same time, as we will show further, the radio psychologist's enquiry about callers' age could also serve other interactional goals.

In our data the references to callers' chronological age occurred in the context of different activities incorporated in the process of exploring the callers'

⁴ Besides being mentioned in the dialogues between the radio psychologist and callers, callers' age could also (alternatively or additionally) be mentioned on the programme's web page in the descriptions of the programme episodes (15 episodes) and/or in the radio psychologist's on-air presentations of callers before the conversations (four episodes).

⁵ Interviews with the programme producer and the radio psychologist on 2/25/2015 and 3/3/2015.

troubles. For instance, references to callers' age were often used to measure chronological distances between two points in the life span, e.g. how old the person was when a traumatic event happened and how old the person is now. By linking the caller's current troubles to a particular point in his or her life course, the radio psychologist and the caller established a time point in which a life event, that might have caused the caller's trouble, could be located. This line of reasoning about aetiology of the callers' trouble can be described as historical or biographical (cf. Bifulco, 1985).

In this paper our focus is on a different activity than measuring chronological distances: namely on how references to callers' age were used to position a caller as a member of a stage-of-life category, and to invoke expectations bound to that category. Even though references to chronological age do not explicitly categorise the callers (as, for example, "she is old" or "he is young"), they are category-implicative descriptions that package common-sense cultural knowledge, and thus may be used to call upon an array of category resonances (Schegloff 2007a; Stokoe, 2009). As such, the age references invoked cultural normative meanings associated with stage-of-life categories in order to explain the callers' troubles and to offer possible solutions to them. This line of reasoning about callers' troubles may be defined as normative (cf. Fitzgerald, 2012). The two lines of reasoning – biographical and normative – did not exclude each other and both could occur within one conversation on the same caller's trouble.

We will now proceed to the detailed analysis of how the age references were incorporated into normative reasoning about callers' problems. Specifically, we will explicate how references to callers' age could be used by a radio psychologist to invoke stage-of-life expectations and to contrast them to the callers' conduct or experience. When doing so, we treat the practices under analysis as having particular within-conversation outcomes (Sutherland et al., 2012). For instance, the effect of particular explanatory trajectories, proposed by the radio psychologist, can be observed in the caller's confirmation or denial of it.

We will first show how a caller's chronological age could be used in aetiological reasoning about the caller's trouble to establish a contrast between his or her life situation and age-related expectations. We will then explicate how age reference could be combined with explicit category use (a stage-of-life category) to portray a categorial incongruity. Finally, we will demonstrate how age could be used by the radio psychologist as an argumentative resource in suggesting a remedy to a caller's trouble. In this last section of the analysis we will also illustrate how a caller could resist the normative (age-related) reasoning about his or her trouble.

Age in aetiological reasoning about a caller's trouble

The first extract comes from an episode with a caller, whose concern is physical pain, which he associates with anxiety. The extract shows the very beginning of the conversation, where the caller starts to describe his concern and by so doing, establishes his contextual identity as a sufferer from a particular trouble (cf. Thornborrow, 2001).

Extract 1⁶

1. C: what in fact made me (.) ring it was that:e
 2. (0.5) I'm carrying around a a big
 3. anxiety (.) in solar plexus,
 4. (1.0)
 5. C: and:: (0.6) cannot really understand why
 6. because (.) you should have problems if (.)
 7. if you FEEL LIKE THAT
 8. RP: .hh
 9. C: and (.) I think I cannot see a(h)ny pro(h)ble(h)ms
 10. RP: <no>, .hh but you have the feeling in
 11. solar plexus,
 12. (1.3)
 13. C: yeah it's like an open wou:nd
 14. (1.2)
 15. C: it simply hurts there in (.) in what what
 16. I guess is called (.) the nervous system
 17. (0.4)
 18. C: and: (.) I guess you can feel it if you, (0.3) are waiting
 19. for the taxman or, (0.4) a police squad
 20. or something else that is not so nice
 21. RP: hm
 22. C: but when you (0.2) DON'T HAVE it but (0.4) still:
 23. (0.4) feel such an anxiety such an (.) open wound
 24. then (.) you start to think about what what
 25. it depends on
 26. RP: hm mm and where do you end up in your thoughts then?
 27. C: yeah and then then I end up very wrong because .hh
 28. I don't have any problems heh [heh heh heh heh hh.
 29. RP: [heh heh .hh no: hh
- [6 lines omitted]
36. RP: .h you are not waiting for the tax man
 37. and you are not waiting [for something else,
 38. C: [NO
 39. RP: is there something else that: (.) you could: (0.3)
 40. carry as a question mark?
 41. (1.2)
 42. C: yeah p- it's possible that I have (0.3) too much to do:
 43. that I take on too much .hh I (.)
 44. own some property and it needs to be handled and
 45. (0.4) I::e handle some building (.) construction

⁶ The extracts provide translations into English of the original talk in Swedish. When translating the transcriptions we aimed to preserve the original word order, grammar and lexical choices as much as possible, and at the same time make the translation comprehensible. Although it is preferred to provide transcriptions of the original talk along their translations (Nikander, 2008) we omit the Swedish original extracts in the text of the paper and provide them instead in Appendix 2. This is due to the fact that we do not make analytical points of particular lexical and grammatical choices in the data.

46. (something like this)
 47. (0.4)
48.RP: [and how old are you?
 49.C: [and-
 50. (0.5)
51.C: **seventy**
 52. (0.4)
53.RP: **and still active?**
 54. (0.7)
 55.C: yeahh huh huh huh
 56.RP: aha how much how much do you work then in percentage?
 57. (1.3)
 58.C: h. well there is- th- h. work is going on all the time
 59. (1.2)
 60.RP: all the time, is it twenty-four hours or?
 61. [twelve hours
 62.C: [no no no [of course not [but-
 63.RP: [no] [no
 64.C: I have plenty of free time, (1.0) but I don't know
 65. if you- if it is so that when you get older that you
 66. erm (.) worry (0.4) too much >(do you) think<
 67. worry about such that you don't need to worry about

In lines 42–46 the caller is reasoning about possible causes of his anxiety and suggests that he probably works too much. In response (line 48) the radio psychologist elicits the ‘straightforward disclosure’ of the caller’s age (Nikander, 2009), to which the caller responds in line 51 by disclosing his age and in such a way positions himself in the life span. The radio psychologist uses the caller’s disclosure of his age to build a contrast between the caller’s age and him “being active” (line 53). The contrast structure is achieved with the help of contrastive linguistic devices: conjunction ‘and’ in the meaning of ‘but’, which connects the radio psychologist’s turn to the previous caller’s turn, and the discourse marker ‘still’, which indicates a contradiction (Frazer, 1999). Furthermore, the radio psychologist uses the attribute ‘active’, which describes a person who is young or of middle age (Silverman, 1993), and thus younger than the caller’s chronological age. The caller responds affirmatively in line 55 with light laughter. Through his affirmative response, the caller shows alignment with the contrast pointed out by the radio psychologist.

The stage-of-life category (‘retired’ or ‘old person’) is not named explicitly in the extract, but it is invoked through the reference to the caller’s chronological age of 70. By establishing the contrast between the caller’s ‘being 70’ and ‘being active’ the radio psychologist suggests that the caller is deviating from expectations associated with his position in the life course. This is achieved through the contrast structure – a descriptive device, which is used to portray something as abnormal or bizarre (Smith, 1990) and thus to make it accountable (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2009). The radio psychologist implies that there is ‘a normative breach’ (Raynolds & Fitzgerald, 2015) between the invoked membership category the caller belongs to, and his (level of) activity.

The caller’s laughter in line 55 may mark the delicacy of the previous talk (Haakana, 2001) – a delicacy that has to do with the portrayal of the caller as not

complying with particular (age-related) expectations. Besides, the delicacy may involve the ambiguity inherent in the radio psychologist's question, which might be heard as sceptical (or critical), as well as praising ('so active in spite of your age!'). While making the caller's level of activity accountable, the radio psychologist prescribes the caller the characteristic ('active'), which is associated with a 'higher' category (a younger person). As Sacks (1972) has shown, the hierarchical positioning of categories within the 'stage of life' collection and the fact that some characteristics are category-bound provide an opportunity for 'praising' members. For instance, when someone comments about a baby who refrains from crying in a situation where one would expect a baby to cry by commenting that "he is acting like a big boy", he or she is praising the baby by claiming that the individual (the baby) is performing an action bound to a category ('big boy') that is 'higher' than the category the individual belongs to ('baby'). In a similar way, the description of the caller as 'still active', or, in other words, as someone who at the age of 70 behaves as a younger person, can be heard as praise.

The categorial contrast introduced by the radio psychologist follows the caller's suggestion that his anxiety is a result of him having too much to do with his properties. This explanation is normative by nature, as it presupposes that his workload is *bigger than it should be*. The caller's description does not, however, contain a reference to a particular standard from which he deviates. By invoking the caller's age the radio psychologist suggests that the deviation derives from particular normative expectations – expectations associated with the caller's age. The age is thus used as an 'interpretative schema' (Atkinson, 1980) in the reasoning about what constitutes the caller's problem. The categorisation invokes cultural knowledge and establishes a 'shared argumentative space' (Nikander, 2009) as a common ground for developing intersubjective understanding of the caller's trouble.

The radio psychologist's enquiry about the caller's age in extract 1 serves at least two purposes. First, it allows the age-related (self-) identification to be incorporated into the unfolding conversation rather than presenting the caller's age along with his or her name in advance. Second, the question "How old are you?" serves to invoke the caller's membership in a stage-of-life category and to establish a categorial contrast. The contrast structure is employed to imply a deviance from age-related expectations, which in turn suggests a particular line of therapeutic reasoning about possible explanations of the caller's troublesome experiences, i.e. 'aetiological reasoning' (cf. Hillerbrand & Claiborn, 1990).

In lines 64–67 the caller takes the radio psychologist's hint: he invokes his age as an explicit account for his anxiety and suggests that his anxiety may be a result of his (old) age. This time the caller skips the activity-related explanation (working too much), and suggests a direct link between his age and his anxiety. In such a way, the caller displays his understanding of how his trouble may be related to his age. As the conversation unfolds, the participants elaborate on the

problematic character of the contrast between the caller's workload and his age. While other aspects of the problem, such as 'symbolic value of work' in maintaining social identity (Hockey & James, 1993), are also brought in to the conversation later, the final conclusion, formulated at the end of the conversation by the caller himself, is that he needs to "slow down". This solution is grounded in normative argumentation about the 'right' level of activity for the caller, taking into account his age.

Age in portraying categorial incongruity

In the second extract, which comes from another programme episode, age reference serves to invoke a different stage-of-life category – 'teenager'.

Extract 2

1. RP: what do you want to talk to me about?
2. C: .hh yeah it's this that I feel insufficient (.) everywhere
3. (1.2)
4. C: it almost doesn't matter: what I do: or: (.)
5. HOW I do so: it seems it isn't enough h. (.) fo:r anyone .hh
6. RP: not even for you?
7. (0.8)
8. C: n::o (.) especially not for me

[11 lines omitted]

20. RP: tell me more.
21. C: yeah: I have always had high expectations for myself h.
22. hm. and so: then my friends and family also
23. have got it .hh because I have it myself
24. RP: mhm do you mean that you have spoilt them?
25. (0.2)
26. C: yeah in some way (.) I have (.)
27. especially: the closest siblings
28. RP: mhm how old are you then?
29. C: nineteen
30. RP: nineteen and do you have siblings who are younger?
31. older? both ways?
32. C: both of them
33. RP: mm (.) both older and younger?
34. C: yeah:
35. RP: mm
36. C: I have basically been like a mom to them

[16 lines omitted]

53. RP: so you have been like a parent
54. C: yes
55. RP: .hh
56. C: .h quite much
57. (0.2)
58. C: and now it doesn't matter so much when I'm a parent myself
59. (.) so (.) because now I have my own child

60. (0.8)
61.RP: Lisa⁷ I notice that I forget that
62. you are nineteen years old
63. (0.3)
64.C: ehk heh heh there are many who do that
65.RP: well I understand that (.) it's happening right now
66. (0.7)
67.RP: you're still a teenager
68. (0.6)
69.C: yeah
70.RP: and you talk about things that in fact
71. belong to the adult's world
72. (0.6)
73.RP: when [it comes to responsibility] and such things
74.C: [ye:ah:]
75. (1.3)
76.C: it easily happens I guess
77. (1.5)
78.C: I haven't really been (.) a child and a teenager I think
79. (0.9)
80.RP: you needed and other needed you for other things
81.C: yeah

The extract shows the very beginning of the conversation, where the caller describes her trouble as “feeling insufficient” (line 2). The radio psychologist elicits the caller’s age disclosure (lines 28–29), when the caller talks about her siblings, whom she used to take care of (lines 24–27). In line 61, the radio psychologist formulates an observation that he keeps forgetting the caller’s age. In doing so, he actually displays that he remembers the caller’s age and rather calls attention to the fact that the caller’s age contrasts with the issues the caller is talking about. In particular, the radio psychologist’s observation is a response to the caller mentioning that she has a child (lines 58–59) and it reveals an orientation to the expectation that nineteen years old is too young an age to be a mother. The radio psychologist comments on the way the caller talks and acts and notes that her manner would suit a person who is older than her actual chronological age. The caller responds with light laughter, similar to the caller in extract 1, and then with an affirmation that this is the identity (of being older than she is) that she is often prescribed by others (line 63). The radio psychologist implies that the caller is not an adult yet but that she is acting as an adult and thus acting as a member of a ‘higher’ category. The presupposition in the radio psychologist’s turn is similar to the assertion in the praising example mentioned earlier, “he is acting like a big boy”. Still, both the radio psychologist and the caller problematise this by pointing out the incongruity between the caller’s description and her position in the life course.

In extract 2, the radio psychologist names the stage-of-life category to which the caller belongs according to her chronological age – a teenager or adolescent (line 67). The incongruity noted here is between the caller’s young age

⁷ Callers’ names have been changed due to ethical considerations.

(a teen) and her level of responsibility. In lines 70–73, the radio psychologist adds an explanation about what he sees as a contradiction to the caller's age: she talks about things "that in fact belong to the adults' world". By formulating the contrast between teen age and adult age, the radio psychologist orients to another categorial distinction: a teenager is a child rather than an adult. Baker (1984) showed that 'childness' and 'adulthood' are simultaneous descriptors of the 'adolescent': an adolescent can claim to be, and can be described by others, "as neither child or adult, but somewhere 'in between'; or both child and adult, in different ways" (p. 321). In extract 2, the radio psychologist exploits the 'childness' rather than the 'adulthood' descriptor of the category 'teenager'. The caller orients to this in line 78, when she names both categories of 'teenager' and 'child' side by side. Because childhood is seen to be 'a period of lack of responsibility' (Hockey & James, 1993, p. 57), the radio psychologist's categorisation of the caller as a teenager (and still a child) establishes a contrast between the caller's age and the responsibilities she is taking on.

By establishing the categorial contrast the radio psychologist aligns with the caller and confirms her suggestion that she expects too much from herself (line 21). Particularly, through the categorisation the radio psychologist introduces normative grounds for reasoning about the deviation. At the same time, the radio psychologist reformulates the description of the caller's situation. While the caller referred to her personal characteristics as a source of her trouble (she "does not suffice" and has "high expectations for herself"), the radio psychologist suggests that there are too many responsibilities imposed on the caller, which she (according to her age) should not be expected to take on. This re-description of the caller's situation implies a need for change and a possible solution: to reduce the load of responsibilities. Later the conversation develops into discussion of the ways in which the caller can learn to think more about herself, and how she can discuss the situation with her partner in order to get help in managing everyday housework.

Extract 3 and 4 are taken from yet another programme episode, where the problem discussed is the caller's job that makes him depressed and thinking of suicide. Extract 3 shows the very beginning of the conversation, while extract 4 is taken from the middle of the conversation.

Extract 3

1. RP: of course I wonder what made you to get in touch
2. wi:th the radio psychologist?
3. C: yea::h it depends on that I: feel that I: hh.
4. am so unhappy at my work that I #e::#
5. from time to time think about suicide, (.)
6. because of my job, .hhhh and:: then:: I think that:
7. #e# so: >YEAH< (.) you can't kind of kill yourself
8. because of a job because it's after all only a job,

9. .hh and this is anyway only thoughts
 10. so it's not the case kind of that I I feel hh.
 11. that I will commit suicide
 12. RP: [*no*
 13. C: [>see so you don't don't need to worry about that,<
 14. .hhhh but I feel that it would be interesting
 15. to: get a little: hhh. (0.3) help to think through,
 16. what I could do, and:: #e# how I shall
 17. handle this with my job to put it simple
 18. RP: mh hm
 19. (0.4)
 20. RP: .hh .h how old are you?
 21. C: I am forty-three
 22. RP: mhm
 23. (0.2)
 24. RP: and for how long have you had such feelings and thoughts?
 25. C: .hh we:ll they have become stronger over the last
 26. three four ye:a:rs h. .h but I have been working
 27. with the same thing basically since eighteen years ago
 28. and:: from the very first moment I guess I have
 29. actually felt s- that I haven't really felt well
 30. in that environment where I work then

In extract 3 the radio psychologist elicits the caller's age disclosure (line 20), and after the caller's response (line 21) suggests a biographic trajectory of reasoning about the possible source of the caller's distress: "for how long have you had such feelings and thoughts?" (line 24). The caller aligns with the radio psychologist first by answering that his troubling experiences have become stronger over the last three-four years (lines 25–26), but then rejects the suggested trajectory of reasoning by adding in lines 26–30 that he has been feeling bad all the time he has had the same job. The caller thus infers that there was not any other life event (other than starting his job 18 years ago) that could cause his distress.

In extract 4 the radio psychologist names the caller's age again (line 16) to build a contrast between the caller's position in the life course ("middle of life") and his dispirited mood (lines 16–17 and 20–21).

Extract 4

(from the 14th minute of the conversation)

1. RP: .h what do you think would be your feelings
 2. towards a person who: .hhh is in such a life situation
 3. that you are describing?
 4. (2.8)
 5. C: #well# I would feel sorry for that person and would think
 6. that it wa:s tra:agic hh. that that person went around and
 7. felt so bad although everything (.) could be so well,
 8. (.) considering that I after all have job
 9. RP: .hh
 10. C: and I hav:e relationships, and the like

11. RP: mm
 12. (1.7)
 13. C: I can't see an- any direct solu:tion myself
 14. (.) so to say
 15. (1.8)
 16. RP: **that is you're forty-three years old you are**
 17. **in the middle of your life**
 18. (0.5)
 19. C: ye:ah:
 20. RP: **but it sounds as if you feel as if you are older**
 21. **and as if [it was] almost over**
 22. C: [yeah]
 23. (0.8)
 24. C: yeah but I fe- it is my feeling that it is like that
 25. RP: hm
 26. C: then I have also been thinking about training into
 27. something else

The radio psychologist formulates a categorisation first (lines 16–17: “you are in the middle of your life”), and then, after the caller’s confirmation (line 19), contrasts the life category with what he describes as the caller’s subjective feeling of being older (lines 20–21). The contrast, drawn by the radio psychologist, follows the contrast described by the caller in lines 6–10: his life circumstances can be considered good, but he feels bad. The radio psychologist aligns with the caller’s description of the discrepancy and suggests a normative version of the incongruity, with which the caller agrees in line 22. While the caller portrays his life situation as such where he cannot see a way out (line 13), the radio psychologist depicts the caller’s life situation as deviating from the (age) norm. This normative description places a constraint on the caller to be able to make changes and conform to expectations. The caller orients to this implication in lines 26–27, when he starts to talk about the attempts he has made to change his job. Later in the conversation the caller and the radio psychologist discuss the resources (such as strength and ideas) the caller needs to make changes in his life, for instance how he can talk with a staff manager to negotiate better work conditions.

Age in suggesting a remedy to a caller's trouble

Extract 5 comes from an episode with a female caller who sought help in coping with her sensitive attitude to the situation in the modern world, which she described as full of tragedies and pain in people’s lives. The extract starts with the caller suggesting a new aspect of her trouble: she sometimes attends to other people’s needs at the expense of her own needs (lines 1–7 and 9). In response, the radio psychologist elicits disclosure of the caller’s age (lines 21–22) and then uses the caller’s position in the life course as an argument when suggesting that she needs to think more about herself (lines 25–28 and 45–46). While, in the first three examples the callers aligned with the radio psychologist when he introduced

a normative aspect into exploration of their trouble, this example shows how a caller can reject an age-related explanation and solution. In this respect, this example makes it particularly evident that the search for explanation and solution for a caller's trouble is a continual negotiation between a radio psychologist and a caller.

Extract 5

(from the 13th minute of the conversation)

1. C: and then since I have chosen a caring occupation
2. where you first of all take care of other people
3. and .h hold yourself back (.) and there were no problems
4. with this really but this this is also .hh
5. can of course also be at the expense (.)
6. and have been like this sometimes #e#
7. of my own needs [so to say
8. RP: [hmm
9. C: attend to others first .h and to yourself afterwards .hh
- [11 lines are omitted, where the caller talks about a privileged position of those who are born in Sweden, and about a need to share their privileges with others]
21. RP: .h Anita how old are you?
22. C: I'm sixty-three
23. RP: mm
24. (1.4)
25. RP: .hh I think (1.2) you are in an age where you h. (0.8)
26. in any case soon it would be time for you to (0.6)
27. well to put it in a worn-out way (.)
28. think more about yourself hh.
29. (0.9)
30. C: mm
31. (0.4)
32. C: yeah I did some years ago when I could have retired
33. .hh could have retired early and the like
34. but at the same time I feel that I (.) that is
35. my job is a way for me to to: .hh to channel
36. a little bit of that frustration that I feel
37. RP: mm (.) it is good (.) of course (.) what I was thinking about
38. was that you (.) with regard to what you said
39. eldest of the four children and so on .hhh
40. that there could be so to say movements which go
41. in two (.) directions (.) parallel, two directions
42. at the same [time
43. C: [yes,
44. RP: .hh one of them could be from your story
45. .hh that: .hh some time in life and maybe more and more now
46. .h attend to what are: (.) your needs
47. C: .hhhh I kno- well to me it's very much connected
48. I I've been doing during many yea- since many years
49. I really do such things that are good for me wi:th
50. culture and music and nature and such things [.hhh
51. RP: [mm

52.C: and at the same time it's the case: that: one of my needs
 53. it IS actually to be there for others NOT as a way
 54. to keep me a[way from myself .hhh
 55.RP: [yeah
 56.C: bu:t as a way to be a part of the humanity,
 57.RP: m
 58.C: to be a part of (.) to be a fellowman,
 59. (0.8)
 60.C: and still it's di:fficult sti:ll it's so di:fficult
 61.RP: yeah
 62.C: .hh to find a balance in this
 63.RP: .hh so my thought is not quite right for you
 64. it does[n't fit you really
 65.C: [no
 66.RP: no
 67.C: no it doesn't

In the extract the radio psychologist explicitly suggests that the caller's position in the life course may place particular constraints on her: it is time to think about herself and to attend to her own needs (lines 25–28 and 45–46). The radio psychologist's categorising description of the caller (lines 25–28: she is in the age when one needs to think more about oneself) contrasts with the caller's description (lines 1–7 and 9: she tends to take care of others rather than herself) and creates a picture of deviation from an age-related expectation. The radio psychologist uses the caller's age as an argumentative resource (cf. Poullos, 2009) to suggest a possible remedy to the caller's situation, which she has herself portrayed as problematic (lines 5–7 and 9: she attends to others *at the expense* of attending to herself). The radio psychologist invokes the caller's position in life course to describe her as a member of a category, and to infer a need for change in the caller's behaviour. The need for change is thus framed not as specific for this particular person, but rather as a general common-sense expectation attached to the caller's location in the life course.

Suggesting a remedy or solution to a trouble is critical to identifying it as a particular kind of problem or deviance (Emerson & Messinger, 1977). The radio psychologist's suggested solution (to attend to the caller's own needs) incorporates a specification of the caller's trouble as insufficient attention to herself. However, the caller rejects this line of reasoning by stating that she does attend to her needs (lines 48–50), and furthermore that to take care of others is one of her own needs (lines 52–54). At that, the caller does not dispute the normative presuppositions of the radio psychologist's description (that there is an age, at which one needs to think more about oneself, and that the caller is at or will soon enter this age), but objects to the portrayal of the deviation from the expectation. In lines 63–67 the conversation participants both agree to abandon this line of reasoning. Instead they talk later about how the caller can care for others in a way that would take into account her own sensitiveness.

Conclusions

The study has shown how references to chronological age were used in *The Radio Psychologist* to position callers in the life course and invoke age-related expectations. We have shown how age references were incorporated into a contrast structure that served to depict a deviation from expectations tied to the position in the life course. This work was embedded in the therapeutic tasks of generating explanations and solutions for callers' troubles.

The described communicative activity is an example of the interpretative practice of 'life coursing' (Rosenfeld & Gallander, 2002) and has been explicated here in interactional detail in the specific setting of radio counselling. 'Life coursing' is defined as a sense-making activity based on categorisation and comparison, where the typified life course and images of ageing serve as guidelines for understanding, and standards for comparison (Rosenfeld & Gallagher, 2002; Rosenfeld et al, 2016). In our data the conversation participants referred to the callers' age to invoke the images of the life course as a linear development incorporating stages associated with specific behavioural expectations. The comparison of the callers' conducts and experiences to the age-related assumptions occurred in the form of establishing a *contrast* between the callers' descriptions and the features bound to the particular stages of life. The contrast structure served to describe the callers' experiences or conducts as unexpected or remarkable, and to portray a categorial incongruity.

On the one hand, by pointing out discrepancies between callers' chronological age and their experience, the callers' age identity was made visible. As Laz (1998) says, "since we usually act our age in predictable ways – predictable given the particular context – we make our age invisible. We make age *seem* natural" (p. 100, italics in original). When there are incongruities between one's chronological age and one's behaviour, it becomes clearer that 'to act one's age' can require work and effort (Laz, 1998, p. 86). The 'failure' to correspond to categorial expectations becomes noticeable when participants orient to particular categories as being linearly organised and located in the life course, and to particular activities as being bound to particular categories (Atkinson, 1980). On the other hand, assigning particular activities and phenomena as more or less appropriate at different ages becomes relevant in particular interactional situations when it can be used as a resource or a strategy in negotiating how actions can be regulated with the help of conceptions of ages (Krekula, 2010). In the words of Hockey and James (2003), ageing "legitimizes access to certain social experiences, while denying access to others, and also embraces sets of implicit expectations about behaviour in relation to aged identities" (p. 4).

Therapy and counselling may be regarded as a form of a 'moral compass' (Füredi, 2004) in modern Western societies, where religion has lost its earlier strong position. In this sense, therapeutic interaction provides means to create moral 'projects of identities' (Hodges, 2002) that would supply help-seekers with

guidance for their behaviour and experiences in the form of models of effective individuals and functional relationships. Analysis of stages-of-life constructions reveals age-related cultural knowledge and moral assumptions that are activated in the interaction (Baker, 2004), and thus allows studying the ways in which moral reasoning can be integrated into psychological help with life troubles and difficulties. This study explicated one of these ways, specifically how references to chronological age may serve to invoke age-related expectations and launch normative reasoning about callers' troubles in radio counselling.

The findings revealed how position in the life course can be used as an interpretative device in the work for establishing an intersubjective understanding of troublesome experiences. References to callers' chronological age invoked cultural common-sense knowledge and created a 'shared argumentative space' (Nikander, 2009) between a radio psychologist and a caller, as well as with the radio listeners. The invoked age-related expectations allowed the descriptions of callers' life situations to be reformulated into ones that included normative reasoning. In this normative reasoning, the rationality of callers' conducts and experiences was considered through the lens of cultural common-sense knowledge about the life course and ageing.

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Appendix 1: The transcription symbols

RP:	Speaker identification: radio psychologist (RP), caller
[]	(C)
(1.2)	Starting point and end point of overlapping talk
(.)	Silence measured in seconds
=	Pause of less than 0.2 second
.	No gap between two utterances
,	Falling or final intonation
?	Level or continuing intonation
<u>word</u>	Rising intonation

wo:rd	Stress or emphasis
WORD	Prolongation of sound
word	Raise in pitch or volume, loud voice
#word#	Quiet or soft voice
wo-	Creaky voice
(word)	An abrupt cut-off
.hh	Unclear but possible segment of talk
hh.	Inhalation
>word<	Exhalation
<word>	Compressed or rushed talk
heh/huh	Slowed or drawn out talk
wo(h)rd	Laughter
	Laughter particle (aspiration) within a word

Appendix 2: The original transcriptions in Swedish

Extract 1

1. C: det som fick mig egentligen till att (.) ringa det var att:e
2. (0.5) jag går å bär på en stor
3. oro (.) i solarplexus,
4. (1.0)
5. C: och:: (0.6) kan inte riktigt förstå varför
6. för (.) man bör ju ha problem om (.)
7. om man ska (.) KÄNNA SÅ
8. RP: .hh
9. C: å (.) jag tycker jag kan inte se någ(h)ra pro(h)ble(h)m
10. RP: <nej>, .hh men du känner känslan i
11. solarplexus,
12. (1.3)
13. C: ja det e som ett öppet så:r
14. (1.2)
15. C: det gör ont helt enkelt där i (.) i det det
16. man väl kallar (.) nervsystemet
17. (0.4)
18. C: å: (.) det kan man väl ha om man, (0.3) väntar
19. på kronofogden eller, (0.4) polisinsats
20. eller nånting annat som inte är så trevligt
21. RP: hm
22. C: men när man (0.2) INTE HAR det utan (0.4) ändå:
23. (0.4) får en sån oro ett sånt (.) öppet sår
24. då (.) man börjar ju fundera på vad vad
25. beror det på
26. RP: hm mm å var hamnar du i dina funderingar då?
27. C: ja å då då hamnar jag ju väldigt snett eftersom .hh
28. jag inte har några problem heh [heh heh heh heh hh
29. RP: [heh heh .hh ne:j hh

[6 lines omitted]

36. RP: .h du väntar inte på kronofogden
37. å du väntar inte [på nåt annat,
38. C: [NEJ
39. RP: finns det nåt annat som: (.) du skulle kunna: (0.3)
40. bära på som frågetecken?
41. (1.2)
42. C: ja m- möjligt är att jag har (0.3) för mycket att gö:ra
43. att jag tar på mig för mycket .hh jag (.)
44. äger en del fastighet å det ska skötas å

45. (0.4) ja::e sköter lite byggnad- (.) -tion
 46. (sånt här)
 47. (0.4)
 48.RP: [å hur gammal är du?
 49.C: [å-
 50. (0.5)
 51.C: sjutti
 52. (0.4)
 53.RP: å fortfarande aktiv?
 54. (0.7)
 55.C: jahh huh huh huh
 56.RP: aha hur mycket hur mycket jobbar du då i procent?
 57. (1.3)
 58.C: h. ja det är ju- de- h. det jobbas ju hela tiden
 59. (1.2)
 60.RP: hela tiden, e det tjugofyra timmar eller?
 61. [tolv timmar
 62.C: [nej nej nej [natur]ligtvis inte [utan-
 63.RP: [nej] [nej
 64.5C: jag har gott om ledighet, (1.0) men jag vet inte
 65. om man- om det är så att när man blir äldre att man
 66. erm (.) oroar sig (0.4) för mycket >tror (du)<
 67. oroar sig för sånt som man inte behöver oro sig

Extract 2

1. RP: vad vill du prata med mig om?
 2. C: .hh ja det e det att jag känner mig o:tillräcklig (.) överallt
 3.
 4. (1.2)
 5. C: det spelar nästan ingen roll: vad jag gö:r elle:r (.)
 6. HUR jag gör så: verkar det inte duga h. fö:r nån .hh
 7. RP: inte ens för dig själv?
 8. (0.8)
 9. C: n::ej (.) speciellt inte för mig själv

[11 lines omitted]

20.RP: berätta mera.
 21.C: ja: jag har ju alltid haft högra förväntningar för mig själv h.
 22. hm. å så: då har även mina kompisar å familj
 23. fått det .hh på grund av att jag har det själv
 24.RP: mhm menar du att du har skämt bort dem?
 25. (0.2)
 26.C: .hjo ja på sätt å vis (.) har jag ju det (.)
 27. speciellt: de närmaste syskona
 28.RP: **mhm hur gammal e du då?**
 29.C: **nitton**
 30.RP: nitton å så har du syskon som e yngre?
 31. äldre? bägge delarna?
 32.C: båda två
 33.RP: mm (.) både äldre å yngre?
 34.C: a:
 35.RP: mm
 36.C: jag har ju i stort sett varit som en mamma för dem

[16 lines omitted]

53.RP: så du har vart som en förälder
 54.C: ja
 55.RP: .hh
 56.C: .h ganska mycket
 57. (0.2)
 58.C: å nu gör det ju inte så mycket när jag e förälder själv
 59. (.) så (.) för nu har jag ett eget barn

60. (0.8)
61.RP: Lisa jag märker att jag glömmer att
62. du är nitton år
63. (0.3)
64.C: ehh heh heh det e många som gör det
65.RP: a jag förstår det (.) att det händer precis nu
66. (0.7)
67.RP: du e tonåring fortfarande
68. (0.6)
69.C: ja:
70.RP: å du pratar om saker som egentligen
71. hör till vuxenvärlden
72. (0.6)
73.RP: när [det gäller ansvar] och sånt
74.C: [ja:o:]
75. (1.3)
76.C: det blir nog lätt så
77. (1.5)
78.C: jag har väl inte riktigt varit (.) barn och tonåring tror jag
79. (0.9)
80.RP: du har behövt och andra behövt dig till annat
81.C: a:

Extract 3

1. RP: jag undrar förstås vad det var som fick dig att ta kontakt
2. me:d radiopsykologen?
3. C: ja:: det beror på att ja:g känner att ja:g hh.
4. vantrivs så mycket på mitt jobb så jag #e::#
5. med jämna mellanrum får självmordstankar, (.)
6. på grund av jobbet, .hhhh å:: då:: tänker jag att:
7. #e# så: >JA< (.) man kan ju liksom inte ta livet av sig
8. på grund av ett jobb för det e ju trots allt bara ett jobb,
9. .hh å det e ändå bara tankar
10. så det e liksom inte så att jag jag känner mig hh.
11. att jag kommer att ta självmord
12.RP: [*nej*
13.C: [>alltså så att du inte inte får oroa dig för det,<
14. .hhhh men jag känner att det skulle vara intressant
15. å: få lite: hhh. (0.3) hjälp med å tänka igenom,
16. vad jag skulle kunna göra, å:: #e# hur jag ska
17. hantera det här med jobbet helt enkelt
18.RP: mh hm
19. (0.4)
20.RP: .hh .h hur gammal e du?
21.C: jag e fyrtio tre
22.RP: mhm
23. (0.2)
24.RP: å hur länge har du gått med såna här känslor å tankar?
25.C: .hh ja: de har stärkts under de senaste
26. tre fyra å:re:n h. .h men jag har ju jobbat
27. med samma sak i princip i arton år
28. å:: från första stund så har jag väl
29. egentligen: känt s- att jag inte riktigt har mått bra
30. i den miljon där jag jobbar då

Extract 4

1. RP: .h vad tror vad tror du att du skulle ha för känslor
2. för en person som: .hhh befinner sig i en sån livssituation
3. som du beskriver?
4. (2.8)
5. C: #ja# jag skulle tycka synd om den personen å tycka
6. att det va:r tra:giskt hh. att den person gick omkring å
7. mådde så dåligt fast allting (.) skulle kunna va så bra,
8. (.) med tanke på att jag trots allt har jobb
9. RP: .hh
10. C: å jag har: relationer, å så där
11. RP: mm
12. (1.7)
13. C: jag kan själv inte se nå- nån direkt lö:sning
14. (.) så att säga
15. (1.8)
16. RP: **alltså du är fyrtiotre år du är**
17. **mitt i livet**
18. (0.5)
19. C: ja:o:
20. RP: **fast det låter som att du känner som om du var äldre**
21. **å som om [det var] kört nästan**
22. C: [a:]
23. (0.8)
24. C: ja ju men jag kä- det e min känsla att det är så
25. RP: hm
26. C: sen har jag även funderat på att utbilda mig till
27. nåt annat

Extract 5

1. C: å sen när jag då valt ett vårdande arbete
2. så tar man också först och främst hänsyn till andra människor
3. å .h hålla tillbaka sig själv (.) å det har ju inte varit
4. några problem med det men det det men det blir också .hh
5. kan ju också bli på bekostnad (.)
6. å har väl blivit det ibland #e#
7. av mina egna behov [så att säga
8. RP: [hmm
9. C: se till andra först .h å sig själv sedan .hh

[11 lines are omitted, where the caller talks about a privileged position of those who are born in Sweden, and about a need to share their privileges with others]

21. RP: .h Anita hur gammal e du?
22. C: jag e sextio tre
23. RP: mm
24. (1.4)
25. RP: .hh jag tänker (1.2) du är i en ålder där du h. (0.8)
26. **där det i alla fall snart skulle bli dags för dig att (0.6)**
27. a att nu uttrycka det på ett slitet sätt (.)
28. **tänka mera på dig själv hh.**
29. (0.9)
30. C: mm
31. (0.4)
32. C: ja jag gjorde så för nåt år sen att jag skulle till pension
33. .hh skulle gå i tidig pension å så
34. men samtidigt så känner jag det att jag (.) alltså

35. arbetet är ett sätt för mig att att: .hh att kanalisera
 36. lite gran den frustration jag känner
 37.RP: mm (.) det e bra (.) förstås (.) det jag tänkte
 38. var att du (.) apropå det du sa
 39. äldst av fyra barn å så vidare .hhh
 40. att det skulle kunna finnas så att säga rörelser som går
 41. åt två (.) håll (.) parallellt, två håll
 42. sam[tidigt
 43.C: [ja,
 44.RP: .hh det ena skulle kunna varit från din historia
 45. **.hh att: .hh någon gång i livet å kanske mer å mer nu**
 46. **.h se till det som e: (.) dina behov**
 47.C: .hhhh ja ve- a så det går ihop väldigt mycket för mig
 48. jag jag gör under många å- sedan många år tillbaka
 49. så gör jag verkligen sånt som e gott för mig me:d
 50. kultur å musik å natur å sånt där [.hhh
 51.RP: [mm
 52.C: å samtidigt e det ju så: att: ett av mina behov
 53. det ÄR faktiskt att finnas till för andra INTE som ett sätt
 54. å hålla mig bor[ta från mig själv .hhh
 55.RP: [a:
 56.C: u:tan som ett sätt att vara en del av mänskligheten,
 57.RP: m
 58.C: att vara en del av (.) att vara medmänniska,
 59. (0.8)
 60.C: å ändå e det svå:rt ä:ndå e det så svå:rt
 61.RP: .hja
 62.C: .hh att få en balans i det här
 63.RP: .hh så min tanke stämmer inte riktigt för dig
 64. den passar [inte dig riktigt
 65.C: [nej
 66.RP: nej
 67.C: nej det gör den inte