

Concessive patterns in conversation*

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This paper argues that Concession in conversation is in a very fundamental sense dyadic, involving a three-part sequence in which a first speaker makes some point (X) and a second speaker acknowledges, or concedes, the validity of this point (X') but goes on to make a potentially contrasting point (Y). This basic pattern, the Cardinal Concessive, has several variations which involve, for instance, a different ordering of the parts or an implied Y. Two mechanisms for projecting Y are examined, semantic partitioning and implicative prosody. In addition, several functional and social implications of the Cardinal Concessive and its variations are considered. Perhaps the most interesting of these is that Concession may be used for expressing alignment as well as disalignment by conversationalists.

1. Introduction

Students of discourse have long been fascinated by a recurrent set of morpho-syntactic patterns in which a speaker or a writer appears to be 'conceding' that an addressee is, or might be, right about something that the speaker or writer goes on to take issue with. Here is an example from our conversational database (see section 2 below):¹

- (1) Joanne and Lenore are discussing a mutual friend who has engaged in substance abuse.

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1   Joanne:but he's healthy as an OX,  
2           that guy.  
3           (---) (h) that guy is HEAL[THY as an o:x.  
4 a Lenore:                               [his liver,  
5 a →      except for his liver.  
6   Joanne:(-) yeah,  
7           but I'm saying,  
8           is like,  
9           you know,  
10 b →     as much as he's ABU:SED his liver,  
11          and all other (-) other things in his life,  
12          he's still HEALTHY as an OX.
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In this example, there are several points at which ‘conceding’ appears; we focus here on the most explicit one. In lines 4 and 5, as indicated by the ‘a’ arrows, Lenore points out that their mutual friend’s liver is not healthy. In line 10, at the ‘b’ arrow, Joanne acknowledges that there is something right about what Lenore has said, namely that his liver is not healthy, but in line 12 sticks by her claim that he is ‘still healthy as an ox’.

For this paper we are interested in four recurrent features of patterns like the one in this example. First, much as the everyday use of the word ‘concede’ suggests, conceding is something that people do in talking with each other. Interactionally, acknowledging Lenore’s claim allows Joanne to disagree in a mitigated form by first (weakly) agreeing with it. As noted by Pomerantz (1984), conceding is one way speakers have for carrying out a potentially disruptive disagreement. As this example demonstrates, conceding involves a 3-part interactional sequence:

1 st move	A: States something or makes some point
2 nd move	B: Acknowledges the validity of this statement or point (the conceding move)
3 rd move	B: Goes on to claim the validity of a potentially contrasting statement or point

Second, as we are defining it here, conceding is in a very fundamental sense **dyadic**: in its basic form it requires (at least) two parties, one who concedes and one to whom (or for whom) the concession is made.²

Third, the speaker doing the conceding is doing so in the context of going on to make his/her own potentially **contrasting** point. Thus, ‘conceding’ can be understood as one way in which speakers can deal with expressing ‘contrast’ (as discussed in Ford, this volume).

Fourth, the nature of the potential contrast in the third move is open, since people’s inferential capabilities are open. That is, the exact way in which X and Y are understood by the participants as contrasting is not definable in advance, but is interpreted and negotiated by the participants in the situated context. In some contexts, for example, Y is taken by the participants to directly contrast with X, while in others Y may contrast with an inference from X, rather than X itself.

How have students of language recognized conceding? The notion of conceding has been of interest to linguists primarily in two arenas. First, Concessive has been highlighted as a type of clause combination. Within this tradition, scholars have investigated concessive clauses in

relation to their main clauses, and particularly with respect to concessive connective morphemes (especially König 1985a, 1985b, 1986, 1988, Altenberg 1986, Sweetser 1990, Karantzola 1995, Günthner 1999, this volume). A second area in which Concession has been studied is as a text relation (see, e.g., Longacre 1983, Martin 1992, Mann and Thompson 1987a, 1987c, 1988, 1992, Thompson 1987, Matthiessen 1995, Rudolph 1996, Azar 1997, and Reinhardt 1997).

Conceding has also been a concern of rhetoricians. Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca (1969) cites the 'classical masters of rhetoric', in particular Quintilian (1921-1933), as urging 'it is a good thing never to refute [one's opponent's] arguments in such a way that he seems a poor advocate' (454). One way to do this is concession, which

expresses the fact that one gives a favorable receipt to one's opponent's real or presumed arguments. By restricting his claims, by giving up certain theses or arguments, a speaker can strengthen his position and make it easier to defend, while at the same time he exhibits his sense of fair play and his objectivity (488).

We will see that the way English conversationalists use concession does in fact exhibit these very characteristics. More recently, Antaki/Wetherell (1999) identify what they call 'show concession', a pattern not identical but related to the ones described here, in which speakers address some vulnerability in their starting claim and, by making a show of conceding it, achieve the rhetorical effect of fortifying their own position.

Building on these studies, we became fascinated with the ways in which mundane conceding is accomplished by conversationalists. We incorporate the traditional view of concession as involving a conflict of expectations with our idea that the third move in a conceding format involves a potentially contrasting point of view. We incorporate the rhetorical perspective in our view of conceding as being situated (often) in a larger context of argumentation.

In this paper we would like to explore how and why a speaker concedes another's point in everyday interactions. The questions we address include:

- a. How does Concession structure conversational exchanges?
- b. When are speakers likely to use it and what interactional work does it do?
- c. What grammatical formats do speakers use to express Concession?

Examination of conversational data suggests answers to these questions. The data show that conceding is indeed something that speakers do frequently. Certain activities (e.g. assessments, blamings, tellings) are especially rich environments in which conceding can do important interactional work.

2. Database

The data for this study were taken from a variety of British and American sources, including conversations from the Corpus of Spoken American English (UC Santa Barbara)³ as well as our own collection of conversations and radio call-in show data. We identify the source of each of our examples below.

In carrying out this piece of research, we studied our transcripts for all cases in which we felt, as native speakers, that conceding was being done. For us, as suggested above, ‘conceding’ involves, first, acknowledging another’s point (though not necessarily ‘giving in’ or ‘yielding’⁴), and second, going on to make one’s own ((potentially) contrasting) point. We also included in our collection instances in which one or the other of these parts was missing but strongly projected. We collected a database of approximately 200 examples and examined them for recurrent interactional and grammatical features. In this paper we will report on the most robust patterns.

3. The Cardinal Concessive

As a first step towards understanding and describing the conceding data we have found, we propose defining what we will call a ‘Cardinal Concessive’ pattern. On analogy to a Cardinal vowel, a Cardinal Concessive can be defined in abstract terms and used as a reference schema for actual instantiations in conversation. The schema is maximally explicit, in that its three parts—which we represent with X,

X' and Y—are realized verbally, and are maximally distinctive with respect to other possible hypotactic clause combinations. The pattern identified in example (1) just above is an example of a Cardinal Concessive and could be represented provisionally as:

(1') Schematic representation of Cardinal Concessive in (1)
(provisional)

A: X That guy's liver is not healthy
B: X' As much as he's abused his liver (He's abused his
liver a lot)
Y He's still healthy as an ox

Or even more abstractly:

(1'') Schematic representation of Cardinal Concessive

A: X
B: X'
Y

(where X and Y are understood by participants as potentially contrasting)

We use 'Concession' and 'Concessive' with a capital 'C' to refer to this interactional schema. In this paper, we will further illustrate the Cardinal Concessive, and then go on to discuss variations on the Cardinal Concessive schema and their implications for interaction.

Consider now another instantiation of the Cardinal Concessive schema in our database. This example will allow us to introduce another important dimension of conversational conceding. Again, we have labeled the moves we understand the speakers to be making with X, X' and Y.

(2) Charles and Steve, currently in NYC, are lamenting the advent of Starbuck's coffeeshouses, which Steve says will 'blow out' the small privately owned places in cities like Minneapolis.

1 X Charles: but even the privately owned places here-
HERE,
2 X are so CHARACTERLESS,
3 (-) I mean by and large.

(2') Schematic representation of Cardinal Concessive in (2) (provisional)

- A: X The privately owned places here are so characterless
 B: X' Outside the Village they are
 Y There's some in the Village that are nice
 (where X and Y are understood by participants as potentially contrasting)

Not only is the Cardinal Concessive a practical analytic device for describing actual concessive patterns in discourse, but in fact our data suggest that it is also a schema which interactants—whether consciously or unconsciously—orient to in the production of talk (see also Ono and Thompson 1995). Evidence for this can be found, for instance, in collaborative completions (Lerner 1991, 1996, Ono and Thompson 1996). In the following extract, for example, Bee produces the X of the Cardinal Concessive schema, and Ava concedes that Bee is partially right (X'). Bee then finishes the sequence by producing Ava's Y, as it were:

(3) Bee and Ava (on the phone) have been joking about each other's knowledge of where the other is.

- 1 Bee: I FINALLY said something right.
 2 X (0.2) YOU ARE HOME. (hhhh)
 3 X' Ava: yeah- I BELIEVE so.
 4 X' PHYSICALLY anyway.
 5 Bee: yea:h.
 6 Y not MENTALLY (h) though, (hh)

In this excerpt Bee produces the first part of a Concessive schema in line 2. Ava then jokingly acknowledges that she is home, but only partially: she's home **physically**. That is, she does this conceding by partitioning Bee's X, just as we saw Steve doing with his *in the Village* in example (2). In doing this partial acknowledgment, Ava so strongly sets up a contrast between 'physically' and 'not physically' that Bee can collaboratively provide the Y of the Cardinal Concessive schema, in this case that she is **not** home **mentally**. We would argue that it is the shared knowledge of, and familiarity with, the Cardinal Concessive schema which enables Bee and Ava to collaborate in the joint production of this pattern.

In this section, we have illustrated the Cardinal Concessive pattern and one common way it is produced (with partitioning), as well as provided evidence that it is a schema to which speakers can be shown to systematically orient in ordinary conversation. In the next section, we suggest two other benefits to approaching our concessive data in terms of a cardinal schema.

4. The Cardinal Concessive as an analytic tool

Aside from its interactional reality, the Cardinal Concessive schema has two further advantages as an analytic tool: (i) it provides for maximal flexibility with respect to the lexico-syntactic representation of its parts, and (ii) it underspecifies the linkage between X' and Y. We expand on each of these features below.

4.1. *Lexico-syntactic forms of the constituent parts*

The Cardinal Concessive schema allows for its constituent parts X, X' and Y to be realized by linguistic units of varying size: words, phrases, clauses or whole chunks of discourse—all possibilities which are in fact attested in our database. In examples (1)-(3), all three parts of the Cardinal Concessive schema were phrases or clauses. But in the following case, X' is realized by a single word:

- (4) Marie has called in to this Berkeley radio phone-in program during the 1991 Gulf War to talk about an anti-war demonstration which took place the day before and in which she took part. The demonstration erupted into violence.

1	Marie:	I DO- I DO wanna say
2		that I really think a lot of people were
		SINCERELY there,
3		just to make the opinion KNOWN that,
4		(0.7) it was STILL time to negotiate,
5		and we didn't need to start the BOMBING.
6	X	and (0.6) i hate to SEE: uhm,
7	X	(0.3) EVERYBODY get a bad NAME for that,
8	X	and AS you say,
9	X	that's what makes it AMERICA.
10	->X' Leo:	yeah.
11	Y	but it IS a shame.

12 Y and it uh UNFORTUNATELY: uh::,
 13 Y (.) the fact that there are more people
 like YOU marie,
 14 Y than the REST,
 15 Y (0.6) than the BA:D apples uh,
 16 Y (.) kind of gets LOST in all of this.

In this excerpt Marie expresses the point that at least some of the participants in the demonstration simply wanted to make their opinion known that the bombing had started too early, before efforts at negotiation had been exhausted, and that they should not be disparaged because of this. In line 8 she appends a reference to an earlier remark by the moderator that freedom of expression, as long as it is peaceful, is a fundamental American right. Leo, the moderator, initially agrees with this (*yeah*) (line 10), but then proceeds to evaluate what happened as *a shame* (line 11), an assessment which is potentially incompatible with the positive light in which the basic right to freedom of expression has been presented. Yet his use of the Cardinal Concessive schema allows him to come across as claiming that both points hold.

In this example the X' move has minimal size, being realized by the single word *yeah*.⁵ However it can be more substantial, as we saw in (1), where Joanne concedes by saying *as much as he's abused his liver*. In the following case the conceding move is considerably more substantial:

- (5) On this call to a British radio phone-in program, Mrs. Etchalls and the moderator Dick Hatch are comparing the advantages and disadvantages of a penal system in which people who are convicted of felonies wear electronic beepers rather than go to prison.

1 X Etchalls: everybody KNOWS,
 2 X whoever you SEE don't they,
 3 X they know you've done SOMETHING,
 4 X whereas (0.7) YOU know,
 5 X once you're- you're going (all) away,
 6 X a lot of people could just think you've
 X gone on a HOLIDAY or something li:ke
 tha:t.
 7 X' Hatch: (0.4) I suppose they COULD,
 8 X' YES I suppose it would mean that
 X' you'd have to spend quite a lot of time
 INDOORS,
 9 X' or else you'd have to wear a large
 MUFFLER all the time.

in our corpus. For instance, the relation between X' and Y may not be marked by any morphological markers at all, as was the case in example (2) above. Here Steve merely juxtaposes the two claims *outside of the Village they are (so characterless) and there's some in the Village that are nice*. Yet X' and Y are linked by a parallelism between the two prepositional phrases and contrastive stress on *in* in the second one.

As was illustrated in (4), speakers may link Y to X' with the coordinating conjunction *but*. And, as the following example demonstrates, speakers may also have recourse to subordinating conjunctions in constructing Concessive patterns:

- (6) Mr. Butler has called in to this Radio Manchester phone-in program to take exception to the point which an earlier caller, Mrs. Sack, made, namely that contaminated meats should not be used in the production of pet food. He refers here to dogs.

1 Butler: and I just WONDER,
 2 (0.2) WHY we SHOULD worry TOO much
 about what we put in their FOOD,
 3 (0.6) er if- if- when you-
 4 as soon as you let them off the LEAD,
 5 or as soon as we SEE people LET them
 off a LEAD,
 6 they immediately go SNIFFING ROUND,
 7 (0.5) picking up all and sundry from the
 GROUND,
 8 X and I just wonder what's the point in
 worrying
 X about what goes in the TIN.
 9 (1.2)
 10 X'Hatch: well YES,
 11 ->Y except that I mean you- you HAVE to
 RECOGNISE,
 12 Y as er (.) Mrs Sack said,
 13 Y that there ARE a GREAT many PEOPLE,
 14 Y who- whose LIVES are:
 15 Y BUILT ROUND (.) to some extent,
 16 Y (0.4) their- their PETS,

Mr. Butler's point is expressed in a form related to that of a rhetorical question: *I just wonder what's the point in worrying about what goes in the tin* (lines 8-9), which in essence claims 'there's no point in worrying...'. Following a noticeable pause of 1.2 seconds, Dick Hatch initially agrees with what his caller has just said: *well yes* (line 11). But he goes on to formulate a sense in which he does not agree with this

point: *you have to recognize ... that there are a great many people .. whose lives are built round ...their pets* (lines 13-16). The conclusion to be drawn from this remark is presumably that owners are justified in being concerned about the well-being of their pets. Notice that Dick Hatch's counter-point Y is linked to his prior X' by the subordinator *except that* (line 12).

Thus a variety of means of explicitly linking X' and Y—as well as the absence of any explicit link—are attested in our corpus.⁶ The Cardinal Concessive schema does justice to this fact by underspecifying how its constitutive parts are conjoined.

In this section we have tried to show that approaching our data in terms of a Cardinal Concessive schema has several advantages, allowing us to show what all of our examples have in common in terms of what the interactants are doing and how they understand what they are doing. We have seen that acknowledging a previous speaker's point to have been (partially) right and then going on to make one's own contrasting point is a recurrent format with which speakers counter each others' claims. In the next section, we will examine the two most frequent variations on the Cardinal Concessive schema.

5. Variations on the Cardinal Concessive

The Cardinal Concessive is characterized by (i) the explicit presence of all three steps or moves (X, X', Y) and (ii) their presence in the order X, X', Y. Yet our data suggest that we want to also allow for variations on the schema involving either the absence of one of the parts or a change in the order of the parts, or both. We suggest that what the speakers are doing in the excerpts that follow is best understood **in terms of** the Cardinal Concessive pattern. We will also see that each of these variations has interactional consequences.

5.1. Concessive variation with [X Y X'] order

Rather than first conceding the validity of an interlocutor's point and then countering it, speaker B on occasion comes in immediately in the next turn with a potentially incompatible point or claim and only subsequently acknowledges that speaker A's prior point was also (partially) valid. For example:

- (7) Prior to this excerpt Charles has talked about a French friend Didier, who he describes as 'a musician and kind of cabaret artist'. The conversation then shifts to an occasion on which Charles heard Didier play some of his own songs and to another occasion on which Karen, a present co-participant, heard Didier's manager Ray sing. The topic of talk now reverts to Didier.

1 X Steve: w'll i- dz-- this guy's a CABARET artist,
 2 I mean -
 3 does [he PERFORM in
 4 Y Charles: [well I- I don't think he does that
 PROFESSIONAL-
 5 X' I mean he does -
 6 X' he:-he's had like a COUPLE of
 en[gagements,
 7 Karen: [oh Ray's his MANAGER.
 8 Charles: (--) HAH
 9 Karen: I forgot,
 10 right.
 11 Charles: o:h MAN.
 12 Karen: and they- he just had a gig at (--)
 STARBUCKS
 13 (-) on the EAST side.

In line 1 of this excerpt, Steve begins to ask Charles more about Didier's professional status. With his *i- dz-*, he begins and cuts off two questions; these might well have been questions starting with *is*, and then *does*. What Steve says next picks up from an earlier comment by Charles that Didier is a cabaret artist. Steve reasserts this earlier claim of Charles' as background to his question in line 3 *does he perform in ...*. In line 4, Charles intervenes immediately with his counter-claim Y to correct the misinterpretation: *I don't think he does that professional-* (line 4). This remark by Charles suggests that Steve's assumption was wrong if 'cabaret artist' is understood to refer to a professional occupation. So far then we have a pattern which looks rather like a simple contrast. Yet notice that Charles aborts his turn during the word *professionally*, which is produced with a sound cut-off; moreover, he proceeds to weaken his prior counter-statement by stating that Didier *does* (line 5). Although this turn is also aborted, the contrastive stress on *does* nevertheless indicates that there may be a sense in which the label of 'cabaret artist' is justified. Charles then proceeds to add that Didier has had *a couple of engagements* (line 7), which suggests that he is at least semi-professional. Accordingly, we have labeled lines 5-7 as X'.

7 X and walk AROU-
 8 X and crawl AROUND,
 9 Laura: oh,
 10 Y not crou -
 11 Y, X' not ALL the way DOWN though,
 12 Mom: unhunh,

The X in the pattern instantiated here is provided by Mom, who states that backaches can be helped if you *get down on your hands and knees and ... crawl around* (lines 2-8). Laura counters this immediately with a Y, *oh, not crou- ... not all the way down* (lines 9-11). That is, she is heard to be asserting that Mom's claim is not true—at least not wholly true, her formulation *not all the way down* suggesting the possibility of a contrast between 'all the way down' and 'part way down'. Thereafter, Laura appends the particle *though*, an abbreviated way of conceding the (partial) validity of Mom's prior statement. (In making this interpretation we follow Pomerantz, who says that as a final particle *though* does the work of "claiming to agree with the prior while marking, and accompanying, a shift in assessed parameters which partially contrasts with the prior" (1984:63).⁷) We have indicated this with the notation [Y X'] in line 11. We might gloss Laura's turn as saying 'It won't help a backache if you go down all the way, though what you say is partially true'.

We note that Laura's conceding move is not only lexico-syntactically minimal, it is also prosodically reduced: *though* does not form a separate intonation phrase but instead is 'cliticized', as it were, to the prior intonation phrase, which in this case comprises the entirety of Y, where it appears in post-tonic position. As a consequence, the import of X' is scarcely noticeable; Y remains prominent despite the fact that it is not in end position. One indication of this in example (9) is the fact that in subsequent talk the speakers orient not to how getting down on all fours helps a backache (X), but to how going down all the way is not helpful (Y): e. g., Mom produces a negative agreement token in line 12.

So a favorite variation on the Cardinal Concessive schema, then, is the X Y X' pattern, when speakers present their counterclaim first, and then concede that all or part of the previous speaker's claim has some validity.

5.2. Concessive variation with [X X'] only

The second type of variation we find attested in our corpus—albeit much less frequently—is the pattern [X, X']: in other words, Y is missing. That this should be an option is in a way surprising, since we have argued with respect to the Cardinal Concessive schema that the third move is the thrust of speaker B's turn. But under certain conditions (to be specified shortly), the Y move can be so strongly projected by a speaker's X' that its explicit expression is made redundant. Here is an example in which we have found speakers actually refraining from producing a projected Y by design, appealing to a tacit understanding of it and thereby furthering collusive alignment:

- (10) Harold, Miles, Pete and Jamie are gossiping about a neighbor who has recently produced a number of 'brat' kids.

1 X Harold: does she even have a b- a MAN?
 2 X I guess she MUST.
 3 Miles: (0.5) does she have a WHAT?
 4 Jamie: [a MA.N.
 5 Harold: [a MA.N.
 6 Pete: (.hh)
 7 X' Jamie: she has SOME [kind of a-
 8 X' Miles: [at least TEMPORARILY,
 9 Pete: [yeah,
 10 Harold: [yeah.
 11 Jamie: heh heh (.h) [at ONE time
 12 X' Harold: [for about FIVE minutes,
 13 X' PROBABLY.
 14 Miles: heh
 15 Pete: heh

At the beginning of this excerpt Harold asks a question: *Does she even have a man?* (line 1), which he then proceeds to answer himself: *I guess she must* (line 2). This establishes the point 'She must have a man', which we are calling X. Following a short side sequence for repair (lines 3-5), Jamie and Miles now each produce, in partial overlap, a conceding move with respect to this point. Jamie's *she has some kind of a-* (line 7) has strong stress on *some*, Miles' *at least temporarily* (line 8) has strong stress on *temporarily*.

What we see here, then, is Jamie and Miles each partitioning Harold's claim X in a different way. In Jamie's *she has some kind of a-* (line 7), the stress on *some* sets up a contrast between 'some kind of man' vs. 'the real kind of man'. In Miles' *at least temporarily* (line 8),

the stress on *temporarily* sets up a contrast between 'temporarily' vs. 'permanently'. In each case, these contrastive stresses on the first part of the contrast make it possible to project the second part.⁸ And in each case the counter-move Y (= 'but she doesn't have the real thing' or = 'but she doesn't have one permanently') is missing. The projectability of these counter-moves, however, serves as common ground for the merriment which Jamie, Miles and Pete share (lines 11 and 14-15). The fact that Harold too understands the implications of the concessive pattern is nicely demonstrated when he chimes in with another instantiation of X': *For about five minutes* (line 12) using identical prosody.

The second variation on the Cardinal Concessive that we have found well represented in our data, then, is one in which the third move, speaker B's counter-claim, what we are calling Y, is missing. In all such cases of concession in our data, Y can only be missing if it is strongly projected by the first two moves, X and X'. Our analysis of example (10) reveals one of the strategies by which this projection is accomplished, with prosody. The other common strategy has been seen in a number of our examples, including (10), namely what we have been calling partitioning.

We have omitted the Y in our labels in example (10), since, as we have said, Y is in fact missing. In the next section, we will slightly revise this labeling, and examine these two prominent strategies by which speakers accomplish conceding without making their counter-claim Y explicit.

6. Projectability of Y

As we have noted, there are two mechanisms which provide for the projectability of Y and render its actual production in interaction negotiable, both of which are in evidence in (10). One is semantic and the other prosodic; we will briefly examine each in this section.

6.1. *Semantic partitioning*

The semantic mechanism by which the counter-claim Y can be projected involves what we have been calling 'partitioning'. Partitioning occurs when X' sets up a binary contrast with respect to some aspect of

X, for instance with respect to size or amount (little vs. a lot), type (fake vs. real), time (now vs. then), location (inside vs. outside), frequency (sometimes vs. often), chance of occurrence (likely vs. unlikely), outward appearance (looking or seeming vs. really being), etc. In (10), for example, as we have shown, two partitions are in evidence, one concerning the type of man the neighbor has, the other concerning the period of time during which she has had a man. The concessive move involves confirming one aspect of the partition, e.g. one type of man or length of time, but disconfirming the other. Since the contrast established is binary, very often evoking one part naturally calls to mind the other. Moreover, the affirmation of one part implies the denial of the other (and vice versa). Thus the implicational relations in (10) could be more realistically captured if the X' moves were represented as [X'+Y-*implied*]:

(10') Schematic representation of Concessive variation in (10) (revised)

X	A:	She must have a man
X' + Y- <i>implied</i>	B:	She has some kind of a-

X	A:	She must have a man
X' + Y- <i>implied</i>	B:	At least temporarily

In these cases, then, one type of man the neighbor has or one time period of her having a man is affirmed; the other type and time period are by implication disconfirmed.

Our analysis of the way partitioning allows Y to be projected but not made explicit also gives us a means to schematically enrich our analysis of the conceding that Steve does in example (2), repeated in short form here:

(2') Extract from (2) above

1	X	Charles:	but even the privately owned places here-	HERE,
2	X		are so CHARACTERLESS,	
3			(-) I mean by and large.	
4	X'	Steve:	(--) OUTSIDE [of the Village they are.	
5		Charles:	[you know.	

6 Y Steve: there's [some in the Village that are
 7 Charles: [outside of the Village, yeah. nice.
 8 yeah,

As we suggested above, Steve is able to claim the simultaneous validity of two potentially incompatible situations, namely that privately owned coffeehouses are characterless and that privately owned coffeehouses are nice, by partitioning the proposition with respect to its location: he sets up the contrast 'outside of the Village' and 'in the Village' to do this. Due to the fronting of 'outside of the Village' as well as to its contrastive accenting, his X' thus strongly projects a counter-claim Y with an opposite location. In this case, however, unlike (10), the projected Y move is subsequently made explicit. The pattern could thus be represented as:

(2'') Schematic representation of Concessive variation in (2) (revised)

X	A:	The privately owned places here are so characterless
X' + Y-implied	B:	Outside of the Village they are
Y-explicit		There's some in the Village that are nice

What we see here, then, is that partitioning often projects what the speaker's next move, the (potentially contrasting) counter-claim Y, will be. Sometimes Y is then offered explicitly, as we see in Steve's comparison between *outside of the Village* and *in the Village* in example (2). But sometimes Y is left inexplicit, often with humorous or satirical overtones, as we saw in Jamie's *she has some kind of a-* and Miles' *at least temporarily* in example (10) about the neighbor's relationships. Example (10) thus illustrates the way in which this partitioning strategy, precisely because it is so frequently employed in doing conceding, can be used to project a counter-claim Y which then does not need to be made explicit.

6.2. Implicational prosody

The second mechanism which is available for projecting a counter-claim Y is prosodic in nature. Two intonational devices will have this effect: contrastive accent placement and a fall-rise tone (or its functional equivalent).

Contrastive accent placement is in evidence when the word or syllable which carries the 'main' or primary accent in an intonation phrase falls on a grammatical word or some lexical item other than the last one in an intonation phrase (Couper-Kuhlen 1986). For instance, in example (2), as we have noted, Steve says *outside of the Village they are* with strong prominence on the preposition *outside*. This projects a contrast with the lexical opposite of 'outside', namely 'inside'. And in (10) Jamie stresses *some* in *she has some kind of a-*. (If this turn had been completed, it presumably would have been 'she has some kind of a man'). This accent placement also evokes a binary contrast, although it does not make the other member of the contrast explicit. Contrastive accent placement is particularly effective when it is used in an X' to project an upcoming Y.

A second prosodic device we find speakers using to implicate an upcoming contrast is a fall-rise tone or its variant, the truncated fall (Couper-Kuhlen 1986). The fall-rise is found in the absence of contrastive accent placement but also in conjunction with it. In the following instantiation, speaker B uses both contrastive accent placement and the fall-rise contour to project an upcoming Y:

- (11) Talk in this family conversation has centered around making up clues to the birthday presents which Marcia's daughter Kendra is about to open. Kevin has pointed out in prior talk that his wife Wendy has *tried her hand for the first time at making a clue* and there has been some mild teasing about what kind of clue Wendy, as an amateur and relative newcomer to the family, might have made. Wendy has responded with *Stop it. Don't make fun of me*, cued as playful in a child-like voice.

- | | | |
|---|-----------|--|
| 1 | | Wendy: [but don't make FUN of me.] |
| 2 | X | Marci: [you look pretty PROUD of your]self
Wendy, |
| 3 | X'+Y-impl | Wendy: WE:LL, |
| 4 | X'+Y-impl | I'm a LITTLE proud,= |
| 5 | Y-hypoth | =except if you [think it's STUPID, heh |
| 6 | | Kevin: [ha |

7 Y-hypoth Wendy: [then [I'll feel BA:D.
8 Kevin: [ha [ha ha ha

In this excerpt Wendy repeats her playful plea *don't make fun of me* (line 1), while Marci suggests in overlap that Wendy actually looks rather proud of her clue (line 2). In response, Wendy acknowledges that Marci's assessment is partly true—she does feel *a little proud*—but she goes on to claim that should the others find her clue stupid, then something potentially incompatible will hold, namely she will *feel bad*. (As indicated, Y is expressed hypothetically here.) Partitioning is signaled in this instance not only by contrastive accent placement, with the main accent on *little* rather than *proud*, but also by the fall-rise tone, which begins with a pitch step-up on *lit-* and is spread over the rest of the tail of the intonation phrase. The falling movement on *little* is quite marked, while the movement on *proud* is only minimally rising.

The projecting prosodic devices discussed in this section are not used consistently enough in our materials to make any strong claims about 'concessive intonation'. We have many cases of concessive patterns which lack this kind of marking. Yet when contrastive accent placement and/or fall-rise tone are found, they often cue partitioning and are thus hints that Concession may be involved. Furthermore, when we find an example in which Y is missing, we always find either or both projecting prosodic devices and partitioning.

7. Functional considerations

What we hope to have shown is that Concession in English conversation can be understood in terms of a cardinal schema to which speakers can be demonstrated to orient, according to which they (partially) acknowledge another's point (X'), and then go on to make their own potentially incompatible point (Y). In this section we would like to touch on what we think are the most interesting functional and social implications of our analysis of Concession.

The patterns we have identified here apply first and foremost to dyadic interaction.⁹ Rather than being random or coincidental formations, we would argue that they have grown out of tasks which participants find themselves continually confronted with in interaction. The Cardinal Concessive, for instance, is clearly well adapted to prefacing disagreement with partial or weak agreement in the context of an assessing activity (Pomerantz 1984). As Pomerantz and others have

a backache ... is to get down on your hands and knees and ...crawl around than would be 'no it doesn't', because it opens up a way of looking at the matter which leaves some room for the other to be (partially) right.

8. Conclusion

In this paper we have shown how Concession is accomplished in conversational English, how speakers reveal their knowledge of Concessive patterns, and how they manipulate them for their own interactional ends. We have suggested that a useful way to analyze these interactions is to postulate a Cardinal Concessive schema, in terms of which we can understand how speakers accomplish a variety of interactional activities.

Functionally, we have seen that there is a range of evidence that speakers of English orient to and manipulate an interactional Concessive schema as they negotiate and jointly construct meanings. This schema emerges from the frequent use speakers can make of it for such tasks as prefacing disagreement and creating 'agreement' by acknowledging the simultaneous existence of two potentially incompatible perspectives. We have also seen that the variations on the Cardinal Concessive schema that we have described are regularly used to modify, weaken, or 'back down' from a previously stated position or to highlight Y rather than X'.

We hope to have made a contribution to the emerging field of 'interactional linguistics' by demonstrating that Concession flourishes in the everyday speech of users of English, that grammatical, lexical, and prosodic choices yield a range of ways in which Concession is manifested in conversation, and that starting from a Cardinal schema provides a rich way of accounting for the linguistic properties of this interactional activity.

Appendix: Transcription conventions

Numbered line	One intonation phrase
CAPITALS	Primary stress
.	'Final', i.e. low falling intonation
?	'Appeal', i.e. high rising intonation
,	'Continuous', i.e. slightly falling or rising intonation

-	Truncated intonation phrase
:	Syllable lengthening
-	Syllable cut-off
(.)	Micropause
(-),(--),(---)	Very short, short or not so short pause (estimated)
(1.0)	Measured pause
[Overlapping talk
[
(.h)	Inbreath
(h)	Outbreath
()	Uncertain transcription

Notes

- * We are grateful to Susanna Cumming and Gene Lerner for valuable discussion of the issues brought up in this paper and especially to Dagmar Barth, Cecilia Ford, Christine Gohl and Susanne Günthner for reading and commenting on an earlier version. Any remaining errors are our own responsibility. Both authors contributed equally to the conceptualization and writing of this paper.
1. Unless otherwise indicated, all of the excerpts given as examples in this paper stem from face-to-face interaction. We have standardized transcriptions to facilitate reading. For notational conventions, please see the appendix.
 2. This notion was implicit in the 'Concessive' relation which Mann and Thompson identified in written texts (see below).
 3. We are grateful to John W. Du Bois, director of the CSAE, for his efforts in creating the CSAE and making its contents available to us, and to Steve Albert for sharing his data with us.
 4. See, however, Kotthoff 1993 and Vuchinich 1984, 1990 for work in which concession is understood this way.
 5. A minimal token like *yeah* may of course be merely signalling reciprocity rather than conceding a point. To distinguish between the recipient-signal use and the conceding use, we suggest that it may be helpful to consider the prosodic realization of the minimal token. If, as in (4), the token forms a full-fledged intonation phrase of its own and is not produced with reduced prosody or in overlap, there are grounds for regarding it as a conversational move in its own right, which in the context under discussion would have conceding force. At the same time, as Susanne Günthner has suggested to us, the *yeah but* format can be seen as a conventionalization of the Cardinal Concessive pattern, which in many instances of its use has lost all or most of its concessive force.
 6. It is also possible for X' and Y to be expressed hypothetically and linked by *if...then*. For instance in one of the Gulf War calls, the moderator claims *one bomb is a big difference from making a hundred or a thousand. and nobody said he'd make more than one or two* (the reference is to Saddam Hussein), whereupon his interlocutor replies *well even then the damage with just one bomb is quite a bit*. We propose that this sequence can be analyzed as:

- A: X nobody said he'd make more than one or two
 B: X' even then (=even if he made only one bomb)
 Y the damage with just one bomb is quite a bit
- The Cardinal Concessive schema thus also allows for what have been called 'concessive conditionals' (König 1986).
7. Etymologically the particle *though* and the subordinator *though* are related, the latter being the result of a process of grammaticalization via which an adverb becomes a subordinating conjunction (Hopper/Traugott 1993). According to Quirk et al. (1972) the conjunct *though* is often "an informal equivalent to an abbreviated subordinate clause with the conjunction *though* as subordinator" (1972:525).
 8. See Sacks (1987) for discussion of a similar case.
 9. There are interesting derivative forms which appear in monadic discourse but for reasons of space we will not be able to go into them here (see, however, Couper-Kuhlen/Thompson, 1999).
 10. See also Quintilian, cited in Perelman/Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969.
 11. Notice that Vera also proposes a candidate completion of Connie's as yet unfinished 'she just can't handle:' with 'reality' (line 15), which Connie however does not acknowledge.

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