

# When “We Believe that ...”: The Role of Collective “we” in the Dialogic Negotiation in Hard News Discourse

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*The present paper examines the occurrence of collective self expressed by the first person plural “we” in British broadsheet hard news reports. Given that “we” typically embraces “I” and the “non-I”, and is viewed in contradistinction to “others”, it is subjective and dialogic (inter-subjective) in nature (Baumgarten et al.; Benveniste). This study, grounded in Systemic Functional Linguistics and the theory of engagement, examines the coupling, i.e., co-occurrence, of one dialogic signal “we” with other dialogic meanings (entertain, proclaim and disclaim) used for the dialogic negotiation of content and writer-reader engagement (Martin, “Beyond Exchange”; Martin and White). Couplings are interpreted from the point of view of the overall rhetorical strategy they are put to, referred to as syndromes of meaning (Zappavigna et al., “Syndromes”; Zappavigna et al., “The Coupling”). The rhetorical functions of syndromes reflect the basic dialogic meanings of the examined engagement categories such as a tentative suggestion of an opinion (entertain), a strong statement of an opinion (proclaim) and a rejection of a dispreferred opinion (disclaim). Finer variations within the individual rhetorical strategies are related to the difference in the source of dialogic positioning (an individual versus collective voice) and the referential scope of the pronoun (a precisely defined reference versus reference with a more general and diffused scope).*

## Keywords

Hard news; collective “we”; referential scope; engagement; coupling; syndrome

## 1. Introduction

This paper examines the occurrence of the first person plural “we” in hard

news discourse and the dialogic meanings that co-occur with “we”. Hard news typically frames reported events in terms of the accepted social norms and values, and the established status quo (White, “Death, Disruption”). News reports are about collectivities or groups united by common ideologies, belief systems, moralities, goals and interests, geography, history, culture, etc., such as nations, political parties and their voters, social classes, ethnic and religious communities, business groups, institutions and many others (e.g., Duszak; Pavlidou, *Constructing Collectivity*; Reisigl and Wodak; van Dijk; van Leeuwen). The orientation to collectivity is also important given the fact that newspaper audiences are conceived and targeted with regard to their ideological and other backgrounds (Richardson 77–82; Tarrow 12–18, 41–46). According to Conboy (5–6, 8), by the creation and re-creation of social groups with which multiple audiences can identify newspapers establish social coherence that can be shared by heterogenous voices. The pronoun “we” is one of the means of addressing collectivities and boosting collective relevance (Pavlidou, *Constructing Collectivity*).

In hard news discourse “we” can only appear when evoked by individual external voices which were themselves brought into the text by the journalist, i.e., in the context of directly reported discourse (or, speaking in terms of Martin and White’s engagement, direct attribution). When single individuals appear in hard news as participants in or commentators on events, their social-cultural background and other relevant affiliations are “entextualised”, i.e., explicitly stated and narrowed down, so that they can be seen as members of a community subscribing to a set of values and ideas (Fetzer 341–342). An important aspect of the interpretation of “we” in hard news is recontextualisation, a process in which new meanings arise from the interaction between the old text and the new text and context (e.g., Linell, *Approaching Dialogue* 154–158). For instance, in *Devane*, chief executive of *Macmillan Cancer Support*, said: “*We hope ministers will rethink these proposals.*” the referential scope of the pronoun is entextualised in the reporting clause (*Macmillan Cancer Support*), includes the external speaker (*Devane*) and in the overwhelming majority of cases excludes the reader.

The crucial presence of the speaker and context points to two features characteristic of the pronoun: indexicality (e.g., Bull and Fetzer 4; Du Bois 319; Pavlidou, “Introduction” 9-10; Silverstein) and subjectivity (Lyons). Subjectivity refers to a selective presentation of information restricted to a participant’s understanding of the world and their thoughts, emotions or

experience (e.g., Leech and Short 218–221, 273–274; Sanders and Redeker). In direct quotations, which are of interest to this study, the voice of the journalist is significantly backgrounded and the subjectivity of the external/reported voice is foregrounded. However, when the quoted voice evokes the collectivity of “we”, the former relinquishes the subjectivity of individual self in favour of the subjectivity of collective self; in switching from “I” to “we”, the quoted voice anchors explicitly their self to the group and positions themselves within it (Pavlidou, “Collective Aspects” 34). This switch underlines hard news interest in socially and collectively significant events depicting news actors in terms of collective inclusion or exclusion.

Given the diverse character of hard news audience, there is a risk of incurring readers’ opposition towards the presented content. Consequently, journalists employ strategies to minimise this risk (Martin and White; Urbanová; White, “Death, Disruption”, *Telling Media Tales*, “Media Objectivity”, “Exploring”). The system of engagement contains resources which enable the journalist to lead a dialogue with their readers, minimise imposition and thus increase the chance of readers’ acceptance (Martin and White 92-135). As explained in section 2, “we” is not only subjective but also intersubjective, i.e., dialogic, reaching beyond “I” to “you” and others (Baumgarten et al. 3; Benveniste). This paper explores the transition from the individuality of “I” to the collectivity of “we” and the interaction of one dialogic signal (“we”) with other dialogic resources (engagement system). The above mentioned collectivity and dialogicity features are examined with respect to the rhetorical and dialogic effects their interaction has. Apart from Martin and White’s engagement (section 3), the paper draws on the notions of “coupling” (Martin, “Beyond Exchange”) and syndrome (Zappavigna et al., “Syndromes”; Zappavigna et al., “The Coupling”) introduced in section 4.

## 2. The pronoun “we”

The first person plural “we” (personal, possessive, reflexive) has been addressed from a number of inter-related and overlapping viewpoints. Since the literature on “we” is vast, I will highlight only those areas that are most relevant to the present paper.

The referential scope of “we” is very wide and can encode various combinations of persons in dependence on which potential referents are

included: the speaker and their addressee, the speaker and other referents and not the addressee, and finally a group that includes the speaker, the addressee and other referents (Du Bois 320; Helmbrecht 33–34; Mühlhäusler and Harré 170; Pavlidou, “Introduction” 3–5). In contrast to the stability of “I”, referent(s) of the “non-I” may vary even within a single stretch of discourse uttered by one speaker, a quality referred to as “inherent fluidity” (Pavlidou, “Collective Aspects” 34, “Introduction” 6). Wales (62) notes the blurring of inclusive and exclusive uses.

Since “we” typically represents a junction between “I” and the “non-I”, it signals the explicit presence of the speaker in the text and is thus an expression of the speaker’s self and their subjectivity (Benveniste 202). According to Benveniste (224), an inherent feature of subjectivity is its dialogic character and the speaker’s self can only be perceived when in contrast with someone else, presumably the addressee. The subjectivity of “I” and “we” has an intersubjective or dialogic quality that reaches beyond a single subject towards others. Linell (*Rethinking Language* 95–96) considers generic pronouns including “we” a source of dialogue in communication.

Benveniste’s (202) referential/dialogic perspective on “we” as a junction between “I” and the “non-I” can in ideological terms be put as a bridge between oneself and the group or society one belongs to (Dori-Hacoenen 187). Drawing on Givón (178), Fetzer (335) considers collective “we” a marked option as it achieves more than a mere self-reference. When using “we”, the speaker presents themselves as a part of a collective, conceptualises self through the affiliation with “we” and constructs their collective self (Pavlidou, “Introduction” 5–7, 10). Seeing the plurality of “we” mainly in social and ideological terms, Wales (59) defines it as “‘more than one’ of the same” view or stance. The speaker’s identification with a group or institution they represent contributes to the creation of existential and ideological coherence of discourse (Dontcheva-Navratilova 107–136).

The pronoun “we” has been studied in different languages, genres and discourses: political discourse (Bull and Fetzer; De Fina; Dontcheva-Navratilova 107–136; Fetzer; Fetzer and Bull; Íñigo-Mora; Proctor and Su; Pyykkö; Skarżyńska), conversation (Scheibmann, “Inclusive and Exclusive Patterning”, “Referentiality”), the discourse of interviews (Schmid; Wagner) and academic discourse (Baumgarten; Fortanet; Harwood, “We do not seem”, “Political Scientists”; Kuo). A corpus quantitative approach is provided by Biber et al.

The research on the pronoun “we” in media discourses has been carried out with different objectives, from different theoretical angles and using different methodologies. A natural line of enquiry aims at referential properties of the pronoun. Petersoo examines exclusive (editorial) and inclusive uses of “we” in lead articles in the Scottish national press; Dori-Haconen explores “we” in Israeli radio phone-in programmes; and Mitchell and Stewart inquire into clarity, accuracy and impartiality of the pronoun in BBC radio broadcasts. The authors agree on the referential variability and heterogeneity of the pronoun, referential indeterminacy and underspecification with no contextual cues as to the potential referent, and inconsistent use within a single stretch of discourse (the “wandering we” in Petersoo and “flitting we” in Mitchell and Stewart). These qualities can be exploited for the purpose of addressing multiple or unknown audiences and easy transitions from one referent to the other (Petersoo).

A well-researched area concerns the role of the pronoun in expressing ideology and bias. The occurrence of “we” has been examined with regard to the construction of editorial voice, the relation between the institution and the audience and the spreading of ideology (Fairclough; Fowler; Temmerman, “Nail Polish”); using the method of CDA, Ali et al. examine the expression of bias towards news actors in direct and indirect quotations in an Iraqi English newspaper. Petersoo, Mitchell and Stewart, and Dori-Haconen examine national, social, cultural, economic, etc., groups and communities “we” serves to evoke in order to construct and maintain different types of identities in printed press and radio broadcasts.

In addition, a number of studies are relevant to the present paper methodologically in that they examine the co-occurrence of “we” with other features in connection with the function they perform in discourse. Ali et al. showed that the combination of lexis and morphological and syntactic features of the pronoun can convey bias towards a news actor. Analysing spoken interaction, Scheibman (“Inclusive and Exclusive Patterning”, “Referentiality”) examines the meanings arising from the co-occurrence of the pronoun’s grammatical features (in/exclusivity, number, individuality/collectivity), the type of referent (family, couple, classmates, human beings, etc.) and tense of predicates and modals. Analysing predominantly written discourse, Whitt investigates the interaction between “we” and evidential verbs of sight and sound and their contribution to the construction of intersubjective meaning and engagement with the addressee.

### 3. Meanings of engagement

In this paper, Martin and White's system of engagement forms the basis for the analysis of dialogic meanings. Engagement, informed by Bakhtin's (*The Dialogic Imagination, Problems*) idea of dialogic and monologic discourse, is a system which provides resources that enable authors to take a stance towards the values existing inside and outside the text (Martin and White 92–135). In monologic (single-voiced) utterances speakers do not recognise the existence of other potential voices and viewpoints, and produce discourse that is factual and not open to doubt or discussion. Dialogic (multi-voiced) discourse is grounded either in the subjectivity of the internal voice of the author (intra-vocalisation) or the subjectivity of an external voice (extra-vocalisation) (White, "Death, Disruption" 61, *Telling Media Tales* 390). By an explicit reference to their own particularity or that of the others, speakers take into account the existence of other alternatives and establish discursial dialogic space. Either speakers accept the alternatives or dismiss them; in the former case speakers expand the dialogic space by inviting potential views and including them in the dialogic space, whereas in the latter case speakers contract the dialogic space by challenging, dismissing and pushing off certain alternatives out of the dialogic pool (Martin and White 102–104).

Speakers expand dialogic space either by entertaining or attributing ideas. A locution that entertains other alternatives grounds the proposition in the individuality and subjectivity of the speaker. This category is realised by expressions of epistemic and deontic modality (Martin and White 104–111). In contrast, expansive attribution dissociates the internal voice from the text by attributing the proposition to an external voice, typically by means of reporting verbs of saying and thinking, nominalisations of these verbs and reporting adjuncts (Martin and White 111–117).

Speakers contract dialogic space either by disclaiming or proclaiming ideas. In the case of disclaim, certain beliefs and expectations are projected onto the addressee and then rejected or supplanted; utterances are rejected by means of negation (the sub-category deny) or adversary, concessive connectives and certain adverbials (the sub-category counter) (Martin and White 117–121). In the case of proclaim, the speaker limits the range of possible alternatives by excluding those which are at odds with the position advanced in the text. This is done in three ways: first, the writer expresses overt and taken-for-granted agreement with their dialogic partner (the sub-category concur); second, in contrast to neutral or distancing attribution the writer aligns themselves

positively with a proposition originating with an external source (the sub-category endorse); finally, the author explicitly intervenes into the text and emphasises their own point of view at the expense of others (the sub-category pronounce) (Martin and White 122–133).

#### **4. The notions of coupling and syndrome**

In order to determine the meanings and uses of collective “we” in hard news, the analysis applies two notions developed relatively recently in Systemic Functional Linguistics, namely coupling and syndrome. Coupling has been introduced by Martin (“Beyond Exchange”, “Innocence”, “Tenderness”, “Semantic Variation”), who defines it as the ways meanings combine across strata, metafunctions, ranks, and simultaneous systems at any point on the cline of instantiation and can involve two, three or more choices. The co-selection of meanings co-instantiated at a particular point in a particular text has to be functionally based and directed towards some rhetorical goal. In his studies Martin discusses mainly the coupling of various aspects of evaluation (different types of evaluation, target, source), and the coupling of interpersonal and ideational meaning (Martin “Beyond Exchange”). Through sharing couplings of ideational and interpersonal meanings, speakers construe and negotiate their identities and affiliate themselves with a particular socio-cultural community (Knight 42–43).

When couplings form patterns and these patterns recur across texts, we can talk about syndromes of meaning, i.e., recurring co-selections or clusters of meanings associated by and contributing to a particular rhetorical strategy (Zappavigna et al., “Syndromes” 169, 175; Zappavigna et al., “The Coupling” 219–220). For instance, examining the discourse of mothers evaluating their children’s criminal behaviour and expressing responsibility for it, Zappavigna et al. (“Syndromes” 175–181) identify the couplings of meanings (attitude, engagement, process type) which contribute to the “syndrome of culpability”.

#### **5. Research questions and methodology**

This study aims to contribute to the investigation of the hard news genre, more specifically to the meaning of collectivity expressed by the pronoun “we” (cf.

Pavlidou, *Constructing Collectivity*). Compared to, e.g., Ali et al., Scheibman (“Inclusive and Exclusive Patterning”, “Referentiality”) and Whitt, who are interested in the co-occurrence of “we” with selected grammatical and lexical features, the aim of this paper is to examine the coupling of “we” with the meanings of engagement (cf. Martin, “Beyond Exchange”; Martin and White). The paper explores how the dialogicity of engagement interacts with the dialogicity of collective “we”.

In the works which examine engagement in hard news and on which this study draws (White, *Telling Media Tales*, “Exploring”), the starting point is the internal voice of the journalist and their strategies to engage with the reader. This paper pays attention to discourse originating with an external voice (i.e., individual-bound dialogically expansive direct attribution), which represents the default context essential for the occurrence of “we”. I am concerned with the engagement and referential/pronominal strategies an external voice employs to address their audience. Although the rhetorical impact of the examined meanings and their couplings is also interpreted in terms of the reader’s ideological standing, dis/alignment with the advanced point of view and group affiliation, the present study does not adopt a CDA perspective. The primary methodological and interpretative framework is dialogic; the results are explained in terms of the openness of the text to negotiation and the reader’s inclination to accept or reject the presented content.

Let me now provide more details on the methodology. As regards the engagement analysis, each pronoun was assessed within the confines of “narrow context”, i.e., the context of a single assertion containing the pronoun. Default attribution was taken for granted and in the interpretation of results it was not paid any special attention to. The presence of other engagement meanings was marked and assessed in terms of type as outlined in Martin and White (entertain, attribution, proclaim and disclaim). For the purpose of this paper I considered two sources of engagement. In one case, the dialogic space was opened up by the individual voice evoked by the default attribution (hereafter only IVDA) and “we” appeared merely as an entity existing in the dialogic space established by the IVDA (as in *Mr X said: “I believe we could win the elections...”*); second, it was the collective voice of “we” that took their own subjective dialogic stance, i.e., collective self spoke dialogically on behalf of the IVDA (as in *Mr X said: “We believe we could win the elections...”*).

In addition, couplings of engagement meaning(s) and source were examined for the co-occurrence with the referential scope of the pronoun. Compared to,



e.g., Dori-Haconen, Mitchell and Stewart, Petersoo or Scheibman (“Inclusive and Exclusive Patterning”, “Referentiality”), who aim to determine more specific reference groups (family, nationalities, political parties, etc.), I dealt with reference in terms of in/determinacy and speaker-addressee in/exclusion. The cases I considered were always I-inclusive, i.e., an IVDA was understood as a member of the collective. I distinguished two categories – WE-AFF and WE-DIFF. WE-AFF is characterised by two features: a clear and unambiguous scope of reference, and an IVDA’s formal *affiliation* (hence WE-AFF) with the collectivity. WE-AFF mostly referred to conventional socially- or culturally-rooted collectivities united by a common interest or goal (such as governments, political parties, army, organisations of various interests including academic institutions, scientific teams, businesses, environmental groups or charities); sometimes its referential scope extended to clear and determinate reference to larger groups such as countries and states. WE-AFF was reader-exclusive.

The category of WE-DIFF is referentially less determinate and has a more *diffused* scope of reference (hence WE-DIFF). A diffused scope of reference could index members on the basis of affiliation (as does WE-AFF) but reference was often broader, included a varying number of groups and could correspond to cases described by Pavlidou (“Introduction” 5, “Collective Aspects” 34) as those in which the speaker has no intention to list all referents, it may not be possible to give a complete list and the group referred to is created ad hoc in discourse. In some cases the referential scope of WE-DIFF was very general and embraced generic collectivities such as whole nations, the general public or humankind and was comparable to the use of “one” or “you” in the “homophoric” (i.e., generalised exophoric) reference (Quirk et al. 353–354, 387–388; Wales 44–47, 58–59). After the process of recontextualisation, such uses could be reader-inclusive.<sup>1,2</sup>

Finally, couplings of the mentioned dialogic and referential features were interpreted with regard to their contribution to syndromes of meaning, i.e., with regard to the rhetorical function of the relevant section of discourse (Zappavigna et al., “Syndromes”; Zappavigna et al., “The Coupling”). Often a rhetorically/dialogically complete whole extended beyond the scope of the assertion containing “we” (the narrow context) and could ultimately extend over the entire stretch of default attribution, sometimes containing more than a single pronoun, numerous dialogic signals and different sources of dialogic positioning. Such stretches of discourse provide the “extended context” of the pronoun, form functionally and thematically homogenous sections also

characterised by a continuity of topic, information structure and cohesion. The coupled engagement and referential values work in tandem, implement a single dialogic strategy and contribute to a common rhetorical goal.

To sum up, I ask the following questions:

*What engagement meanings (attribution, entertain, proclaim and disclaim) couple with collective “we”?*

*Who takes the dialogic stance (an IVDA or “we”)?*

*What rhetorical strategies (syndromes) are the co-selections of engagement and collectivity meanings put to?*

*What impact on the dialogic space does the occurrence of “we” have?*

*What role does “we” play in readers’ alignment or disalignment with the advanced point of view?*

## **6. Data description**

The data for analysis were excerpted from four main UK quality newspapers (*The Times*, *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*) published in 2010 and 2011. Different broadsheet newspapers were selected so that the data are representative of the UK quality press in general rather than a single newspaper. The criteria for the selection of a particular copy of a newspaper (e.g., inclusion of weekday editions, exclusion of seasonal or special editions) follow Bell (22–23).

The corpus contains only hard news reports and excludes other types of writing such as feature stories, editorials, letters to the editor, etc. The criteria for text selection differ in reliability and significance and include the placement in a newspaper section, recency, topic, generic structure and authorial voice. The reports covered recent non-sensational topics (politics, economy, crime, environment, culture, etc.) and were excerpted from overtly marked national and international news sections; even though there is a degree of overlap between the four newspapers regarding the events covered, on the whole the corpus is heterogeneous in terms of the themes and individual news events. Although theme and recency may be relevant factors, the two decisive criteria were the generic structure and reporter voice, i.e., aspects which are related to the functionality of hard news and which are instrumental in contributing to (the impression of) the objective and impersonal style of reporting (e.g., Feez

et al.; White, “Death, Disruption”, *Telling Media Tales*, “Media Objectivity”, “Exploring”).

All news reports complying with the above criteria and featuring at least one token of the pronoun “we” were subjected to analysis. The corpus comprises 109 news reports; the four sub-corpora are comparable in length ranging from 24 to 29 reports. The whole corpus totals 55,359 words and contains 355 pronouns (270 occurrences of “we”, 14 of “us” and 71 of “our”). The default directly reported attribution amounts to 13,973 words; consequently, there are 25.4 pronouns per 1,000 words of directly attributed discourse. Default attribution represented the sole source of dialogic context for 103 (29%) pronouns; 244 pronouns (68.7%) were co-selected with other unambiguous markers of engagement additional to the default attribution; in the case of 8 pronouns (2.3%) the dialogic status of the additional markers was dubious. The 244 pronouns were the focus of analysis.

## 7. Discussion of results: General overview

This section offers a general overview of the coupled meanings – the type and source of engagement, and the referential scope of “we” in the narrow context of a single assertion. Table 1 specifies the number of pronouns occurring in the individual couplings; only unambiguous occurrences are taken into account.

Table 1: Couplings of the referential scope with the type and source of engagement

Source	Collective “we”			IVDA			Total
	WE-AFF	WE-DIFF	Sub-Total	WE-AFF	WE-DIFF	Sub-Total	
Entertain	75	17	92	35	37	72	164
Disclaim	23	8	31	21	23	44	75
Proclaim	15	10	25	15	14	29	54
Attribution	5	0	5	0	4	4	9
<b>Total</b>	118	35	153	71	78	149	302

Table 1 shows the following general tendencies. First, collective (153) and individual (149) voices take up a dialogic footing with a similar frequency. Second, the majority of pronouns (164) appear in the dialogic context of entertain; fewer pronouns appear in the dialogic context of disclaim (75) and proclaim (54); those in the context of attribution are scarce (9). Third, the distribution of WE-AFF and WE-DIFF is relatively even in the dialogic space established by an IVDA (71 and 78), while in the dialogic space set up by collective “we” WE-AFF (118) predominates over WE-DIFF (35). Further nuances will have become apparent when individual rhetorical aims are discussed in the next section.<sup>3</sup>

## **7.1 Syndromes of meaning**

The following section aims to present the main patterns and co-selections of the mentioned aspects and the rhetorical strategies they pursue. I will comment only on couplings which occur repeatedly and have some functional basis. Singular occurrences will not be discussed.

### **7.1.1 Entertain**

As mentioned above, both collective and individual selves show a propensity to engage with their readers via the entertain category. Basically, they adopt a dialogic stance towards the truth value of assertions (Halliday and Matthiessen’s proposition) or towards what should be done (proposal/obligation) or what they are willing to do (proposal/inclination) (Halliday and Matthiessen 147–148, 618).

#### **7.1.1.1 Collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome**

This section focuses on epistemic values associated with the entertain category, which together with the individuality of an IVDA and the collectivity of “we” express epistemic stance. The collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome serves to present content as an individual and/or collective opinion, a mere alternative subject to contestation; it creates space for engagement with dialogic partners by recognising and accepting alternative positions. In some cases (especially if extended context is taken into consideration), the dialogic space opened up by individual and collective selves and the ways they engage with themselves, the text and the audience are intricately intertwined. Consequently, it would be counter-productive or even impossible to deal with individual and collective selves separately and the point of view proposition syndrome is conveniently referred to as a collective-

cum-individual syndrome. Despite mutual interaction there are differences as to the frequency of co-selected meanings and resources drawn on to expand the dialogic space. “We” co-selects lexical resources (mainly speech act verbs, nouns, adjectives or adverbs such as *think, assume, believe, talk, hope, decide, propose, say, tell, argue, view, expect, call, suspicion, feeling, question, be certain/sure, potentially*) which may also appear with grammatical means (epistemic modal verbs, mostly *could* or *will*). An IVDA, on the other hand, tends to co-occur with grammatical means (modals *may, could, will*; conjunction *if*).

Let us begin with the discussion of the point of view proposition syndrome characterised by the following couplings: epistemic entertain, the source role, and individual vs. collective affiliated selves (WE-AFF). In total there were 56 WE-AFFs within the scope of epistemic entertain; the coupling of epistemic stance with a collective source is more frequent (34; 60.7%) than the coupling of epistemic evaluation with an individual source (22; 39.3%); in the latter case WE-AFF is a mere participant embedded in the epistemic space set up by the individual voice. Examples 1 and 2 illustrate the collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome characterised by the abovementioned couplings. The pronoun “we” and the discussed dialogic expressions are written in bold; for ease of reference occurrences of “we” are numbered where relevant; square brackets enclose additional information, such as an IVDA’s group affiliation.

#### Example 1

*Devane [chief executive of Macmillan Cancer Support] said: “... the government is pressing ahead with proposed changes in the welfare reform bill that **will** make 7,000 cancer patients lose ESA after 12 months ... **we hope** ministers **will** rethink these proposals.* (Ramesh 20)

#### Example 2

*“**If** Iraq was the only show in town, **we1 probably could** have increased [the number of troops there] but ... **we2 couldn’t**. **We3** had already **decided** to reinforce Afghanistan” said Dannatt [General Sir Richard Dannatt, the former head of the Army]. (Norton-Tailor 14)*

In example 1 WE-AFF refers to a charity (*Macmillan Cancer Support*), in example 2 to the UK army. Both examples illustrate epistemic entertain markers in the extended and narrow contexts sourced to both the individual and collective selves. In the beginning, the IVDA’s (Devane, Dannatt) establish

and expand the epistemic dialogic space in the extended context (*will, if*) and in example 2 also in the narrow context including WE-AFF (“*we1*” and “*we2*”; *probably, could, couldn’t*); the content is presented as a mere possibility entertained by the individual selves. Afterwards, the IVDA gives the floor to the collectivity of the groups they are affiliated with. The comments offered from the point of view of WE-AFF serve to express hope in example 1 (“*we*”, *hope, will*) and a collective decision functioning as the grounds supporting the preceding individual comment in example 2 (“*we3*”, *decided*). The individual and collective voices and their points of view are woven carefully into the fabric of the dialogic space. This has repercussions for agency since when an IVDA uses “we” to speak on their own behalf, the responsibility of “I” is reduced and transferred onto the collectivity (e.g., Dori-Haconen; Mühlhäusler and Harré178; Pavlidou, “Collective Aspects” 27).

Less frequently, the collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome is realised by the coupling of epistemic entertain with WE-DIFF (28); WE-DIFF (12) couples with the source role slightly less often than an IVDA (16). In example 3 the IVDA affiliated with Greenpeace (*John Sauven*) presents an opinion concerning the UK’s procrastination in implementing green policy and the measures it has pledged to introduce in different areas of life. It demonstrates the coupling of epistemic assessment with the IVDA as source and WE-DIFF as an entity embedded in the dialogic space.

### Example 3

*John Sauven, of Greenpeace, said... “If **we1** keep kicking **our2** heels instead of building a clean energy economy, **we3** will miss **our4** climate change targets and lose the economic advantage that **would** result from being a world leader in green technology.”*  
(Gray and Wallop 2)

In example 3 the IVDA opens up the expansive epistemic space in which the described state of affairs (*if we keep kicking our heels...*) and the future predictions (*we will miss our climate change targets... that would result from...*) exist as alternatives. The preceding discourse discusses proposed changes to the UK power system, including UK homes. In this context, the referential scope of WE-DIFF may include relevant departments in the UK government, energy industry and business, environmental organisations or the whole UK including the general public. In addition, it is not entirely clear whether the referential scope of “*we1*” and “*our2*” on the one hand, and “*we3*” and

“our4” on the other is identical or only partly overlapping. Green economy is presented as something positive and economically advantageous, forming an association between energy, environmentally-friendly business and economic benefit. The reader, potentially included in WE-DIFF, constitutes a participant in the proposed dialogic alternative and the advocated ideological stance. A tabulated description of examples 1-3 and a summary of the constitutive and optional elements of the point of view proposition syndrome are included in section A of the appendix.

### 7.1.1.2 Collective commitment to a future action syndrome

Another meaning of the entertain category coupled with collective “we” is inclination (Halliday and Matthiessen 147–148, 618). Most often, inclination covers the meanings of promise, intention, willingness and interest; the dialogic power of inclination lies in that an action or state are not presented as factual but as a potentiality existing within the subjectivity of its source. Inclination is the least frequent meaning of the entertain category: in total it couples with 25 pronouns out of which 22 (88%) are WE-AFF and simultaneously the source of engagement. In other words, WE-DIFF and an IVDA do not tend to couple with inclination. In contrast to epistemic modalisation sourced to WE-AFF, inclination meanings are realised mainly by grammatical means (modals *will, would, going to*), whereas lexical means are much less frequent (*promise, intention*).

Example 4 discusses the issue of UK teachers having insufficient powers to deal with students’ out of school misbehaviour. In the first half of the example, the Education Secretary notes the problem and evaluates it negatively (*heads are prevented from.....in town centres*). The second part of the example offers a solution to the problem and evaluates it positively (*we will change the rules ...., heads will have the freedom ...anywhere*).

#### Example 4

*He [Michael Gove, the Education Secretary] said: “At the moment, heads are prevented from dealing with their pupils if they run wild in a shopping mall or behave anti-socially in town centres.*

*“So we will change the rules to send one clear and consistent message. Heads will have the freedom they need to keep pupils in line, any time, any place, anywhere.” (Paton 9)*

In example 4 WE-AFF, referring to the UK Department for Education, opens up the dialogic space by a collective commitment to a future action (*we will change the rules ...*). Ideologically, the couplings of experiential and interpersonal (attitudinal and dialogic) meanings suggest that the lack of teacher power to enforce discipline formally is viewed as problematic, while the power over students' behaviour is considered desirable. The dialogic stance towards the positive consequence, i.e., more freedom to act (*heads will have the freedom ...*), can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be understood as an amplification and modification of the dialogic space established in the preceding discourse and thus identical in the kind of dialogic stance, i.e., entertain/inclination, and in source, i.e., WE-AFF. This interpretation is supported by the thematic unity as the noun "message" prospects forward and is specified in the ensuing text. On a different interpretation, there is a switch in the type of dialogic negotiation from inclination to epistemic proposition; the freedom to act is not seen as a promise on the part of the collectivity but a prediction originating with the IVDA. This latter reading is supported by a change in the grammatical subject from collective "we" (*we will*) to collective "others" (*heads will*). The example demonstrates the mingling and blurring of voices and collective and individual selves. A tabulated description of example 4 as well as a summary of and further variations on the commitment syndrome are included in section B of the appendix.

### 7.1.1.3 Collective obligation syndrome

This section is concerned with a syndrome that expresses obligation, a type of proposal that covers the meanings of obligation, need, suggestion or offer (Halliday and Matthiessen 147–148, 618). As a subjective assessment of necessity on the part of the speaker, it is dialogically expansive (Martin and White 110–111). In total, 48 pronouns couple with the meaning of obligation: in 16 cases obligation emanates from collective self and in 32 cases from individual self. The distribution of WE-AFF and WE-DIFF is even (24 WE-AFFs, as in *We shouldn't break the law* in which "we" refers to a professional community of newspaper reporters; 24 WE-DIFFs, as in *We should be concerned about the decline in phytoplankton* in which "we" may include the scientific community, the UK's general public or the whole of humankind). The co-selection preferences involving an IVDA and "we" differ: "we" coupled with the source function tends to appear as WE-AFF (14 out of 16), while an IVDA playing the same role tends to co-select WE-DIFF (22 out of 32) rather than WE-AFF (10 out



of 32). “We” prefers lexical means (*urge, propose, permit, advice, recommend, expect, insist, need, ask, call on sb., necessary*) to grammatical (*should, have to*), whereas an IVDA tends to draw mainly on modal verbs (*have to, must, should, cannot*). I will discuss two patterns: obligation sourced to an IVDA coupled with WE-DIFF (example 5), and obligation sourced to WE-AFF.

In example 5, David Cameron talks to Indian business leaders about the need to ensure that Pakistan does not support terrorism and becomes a democratic state.

#### Example 5

*Cameron said: “... It is unacceptable for anything to happen within Pakistan that is about supporting terrorism elsewhere. It is well-documented that that has been the case in the past, and we have to make sure that the Pakistan authorities are not looking two ways. They must only look one way, and that is to a democratic and stable Pakistan.”* (Watt and Dodd 2)

The individual voice opens up the dialogic space by imposing obligation onto WE-DIFF (*we have to make sure that ...*). The context does not make it entirely clear whether the referential scope of WE-DIFF includes only the UK and India or also other countries. The obligation meaning expressed by “have to” seems to illustrate circumstantial necessity, a kind of “external compulsion” to perform an action which could have unpleasant consequences if not carried out (Palmer 114–115). The meaning of obligation is further reinforced by the modal and non-modal evaluation in the extended context. The modal assessment (*They must only look...*) seems to express rational modality, a kind of dynamic modality which evaluates a situation as un/reasonable and un/acceptable and which typically expresses qualities the speaker identifies with (Palmer 105–107). In example 5, the IVDA employs the meaning of rational morality to appeal to the values of freedom, democracy and anti-terrorist ideology.<sup>4</sup> The non-modal attitude in example 5 (*It is unacceptable... supporting terrorism; ... a democratic and stable Pakistan*) illustrates judgement, a kind of evaluation expressing social esteem and social sanction, in particular the meanings of social capacity and propriety (Martin and White 52–56). In line with the meaning of rational modality, sympathy with or tolerance of terrorism is presented as something (morally) unacceptable. The co-selected modal, attitudinal and referential meanings are mutually reinforcing and contribute to the overall dialogic and rhetorical character of the passage. The coupling of obligation, especially

rational modality, with moral judgement makes the obligation stronger and more pervasive; consequently, the whole passage seems less open to recognise alternatives.<sup>5</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the syndrome of collective obligation characterised by the coupling of obligation with affiliated collective source is less frequent. Similar to the pattern with WE-DIFF described above, the co-selection of obligation and WE-AFF tends to co-occur with attitude; unlike the WE-DIFF pattern, it lacks optional deontic intensification and instead tends to co-occur with softening epistemic assessment, as in “*We [Air Transport Users Council] believe there is a need for a universal scheme which would include protection for when a scheduled airline went bust ...*”. Generally, the coupling of obligation with epistemic modalisation (*We believe, would include*) makes a proposal more deeply grounded in collective subjectivity and thus less prone to objection from a reader holding a different view. In addition, in this example the use of the nominal form (*there is a need*) allows the speaker to avoid imposing the obligation on or attributing the need to anyone in particular. A tabulated description of example 5 and a summary of the obligation syndrome are included in section C of the appendix.

### 7.1.2 Proclaim

This section aims to discuss couplings and patterns associated with the least frequent category, i.e., the contracting meanings of proclaim. Out of the 54 pronouns which couple with proclaim, 30 are WE-AFF and 24 WE-DIFF. The two attested sub-categories are pronounce (32) and concur (22); there was no occurrence of endorse in the narrow context. Both “we” and an IVDA tend to draw on lexical devices with epistemic meaning or emphatic function; grammatical devices include the auxiliary *do* used for emphasis.

Pronounce meanings tend to couple with an individual source (20) more often than with collective “we” (12), while the coupling of concur with an individual source (9) is less frequent than with a collective source (13). When a collective or individual voice couple with pronounce, they emphasise their own point of view at the expense of alternatives and thus contract the dialogic pool (as in *The fact is that we have long supported lifting the blockade of Gaza* in which WE-AFF refers to the UK; *We know there have been sightings of him* in which WE-AFF refers to a police department; *We’re not talking about a couple of small boulders ... we are talking about a great hunk of concrete* in which WE-DIFF refers to members of the UK public).

When an individual or collective speaker couple with concur, they express

ideas as if agreed or shared with a dialogic partner and accept the latter’s proposition as their own (as in *Sometimes we challenge the law ...*, certainly in which WE-AFF, referring to serious press, accepts a potential admonition about their illegal behaviour; *We’ve seen in the last two weeks that it doesn’t make sense to run the risk of adverse market reaction* in which WE-DIFF, referring to the UK or international public, appeals to a shared (visual) experience).

### 7.1.2.1 Collective opinion proclamation syndrome

Due to a relatively low frequency of “we” occurring in the proclaim dialogic space, only one pattern will be discussed, namely a co-selection of proclaim, affiliated collective source and optional epistemic hedging. The coupling of proclaim with WE-AFF presents the content as the only recognised alternative (e.g., *we recognize/affirm/realised/have shown that ...*), while the coupling of entertain with WE-AFF (*our view is, we decided*) or an IVDA (*I think, my hope is*) presents it as one of the dialogic possibilities. In example 6, WE-AFF ( Hamas and their followers) discusses their intentions regarding Palestine.

#### Example 6

*Ismail Haniyeh, Gaza’s de facto prime minister, told the rally: “We1 affirm that armed resistance is our2 strategic option and the only way to liberate our3 land, from the [Mediterranean] sea to the River [Jordan]. God willing, Hamas will lead the people ... to the uprising until we4 liberate Palestine, all of Palestine.” (MacIntyre 34)*

In example 6, the same experiential content (the idea of armed resistance) is expressed twice with a different dialogic positioning. The experiential overlap is reflected in lexical and referential repetition (*armed resistance* vs. *uprising; to liberate our land, from the [Mediterranean] sea to the River [Jordan]* vs. *we liberate Palestine, all of Palestine.*). First the idea is concurred by WE-AFF, i.e., presented as in agreement with a projected dialogic partner (*We affirm that armed resistance ...*), and thus overtly contracting. The same idea is then entertained via expressions signalling hope (*God willing, will*), and thus presented as dialogically expansive. The hope can be attributed to WE-AFF and understood as a continuation of the dialogue set up by WE-AFF, or to the individual voice after a switch in dialogic positioning (as in example 4). On both readings the presence of entertain renders the proposition more likely to be recognised as a dialogic possibility. A tabulated description of example 6 and a summary of the proclamation syndrome are included in section D of the appendix.

### 7.1.3 Disclaim

The engagement category yet to be discussed is that of disclaim. The number of pronouns in the disclaim dialogic context is 75; 31 are sourced to “we” and 44 to an IVDA; the source role couples more frequently with WE-AFF (23) than with WE-DIFF (8), while the ratio of an IVDA source coupled with WE-AFF (21) and WE-DIFF (23) is relatively balanced. As regards the distinction between the two main disclaim sub-categories, a collective source tends to couple with deny (23) rather than with counter (8), while an individual source shows an opposite proclivity and couples with counter (25) more frequently than with deny (19).

#### 7.1.3.1 Deny

Let us first discuss the deny sub-category, which contracts the dialogic space by repudiating the existence of alternatives on the basis of negation (Martin and White 118–120). A collective source (and less often an IVDA) tends to couple with negative expressions which simultaneously co-occur with the meanings of the entertain category. Consequently, when an alternative is contested, the denied aspect concerns something that is subjectively judged as impossible (... *will not harm ...*; *we couldn't ...*, *it is not possible for us ...*; *we will not win ...*), or something that is/was in somebody's mind (*we do not know ...*; *we haven't thought ...*; *we are not sure ...*; *none of us would wish ...*); the source denies an expectation regarding the expression of obligation (... *shouldn't be allowed*; *we don't permit ...*; *we cannot tolerate ...*; *we must not allow ...*) or willingness (*we're not going to ...*).

#### 7.1.3.2 Countering an idea or stance syndrome

The counter sub-category is expressed by certain adverbs and contrasting or concessive connectives. Similar to the deny sub-category, “we” couples with adverbs which simultaneously pattern with speech or thought acts, counter expectations related to opinion, inclination and obligation and modify the respective syndromes (*always, also, yet, only*). For instance, in *We had already made clear our intention/had already decided to ...* the assertion runs counter to the expectation that no speech or thought act have taken place; in *Our proposals will ensure a person will only be asked to ... when necessary* the promise counters the expectation that an obligation will be imposed irrespective of circumstances.

On the other hand, the meanings expressed by adversative connectives couple exclusively with an IVDA source (*but, while, still, however, although*);

IVDA is responsible for the juxtaposition and contrast of ideas, attitudes or situations. In the examples attested in the corpus, countering discourse tends to have a three-part structure, more specifically the countered idea or stance, the countering conjunction or conjunct, and the preferred idea or stance; the order of the individual parts may differ. Example 7 comments on the development of house prices in the UK.

#### Example 7

*“While we have assumed the housing market remains stable, house prices could decline at a more rapid pace,” he [Simon Kirby, an NIESR research fellow] said. (Aldrick and Monaghan 1)*

In example 7, “we” may refer to the NIESR (National Institute of Economic and Social Research) and any other referents holding the presented opinion (hence WE-DIFF). Their view (*we have assumed the housing market remains stable*) is countered by the IVDA (*while*) and supplanted by an opposing and presumably correct view held by the IVDA (*house prices could decline at a more rapid pace*). Even though both ideas are entertained (*assumed, could*), i.e., presented as alternatives that co-exist with other views in the dialogic space, the idea originating with “we” is pushed away from the dialogic space, which makes the whole passage to some extent dialogically contracting. The IVDA lays the responsibility for the allegedly mistaken point of view on WE-DIFF while taking the chance to promote the correct view.

As in example 7, in example 8, defending changes to alcohol licensing laws, there are two opposing parties – the party which agrees with the changes (the government) and the party which may possibly disagree (businesses selling alcohol). The structures in examples 7 and 8 are similar in that in both cases the collectivity is evoked to present a dispreferred opinion: in example 7 “we” entertains an opinion that has turned out to be incorrect and in example 8 “we” concurs with a voice that is in opposition.

#### Example 8

*Mrs May said: “We know that the majority of pubs and bars are well-run businesses but the Government believes that the system needs to be rebalanced in favour of the local communities they serve, with tougher action taken to crackdown on the small number of premises who cause problems.” (Whitehead 4)*

Example 8 shows a concur-counter structure. In the first part, WE-AFF

(the UK Government) accepts that many alcohol selling businesses are unproblematic (*We know that the majority of pubs and bars are well-run businesses*) and thus recognises the adversarial voice and makes a temporary concession to it (concur). However, the stance is countered (*but*) in the second part of the structure by the IVDA affiliated with “we” (Theresa May, the then Home Secretary); the countering view is formally attributed to a third party introduced by an NP (*the Government believes that the system ...*) which in fact stands for “we”. The limited agreement shows a gesture of solidarity with a dialogic partner presumed to be to some degree resistant to the writer’s argumentative position; the adversarial point of view is then dismissed, supplanted and pushed off the dialogic space (Martin and White 124–126). The clash between the two opposing collectivities (alcohol-selling business vs. “we”/the Government) and the values they represent is shown by the attitudinal expressions: the concur-counter structure is underscored by positive and negative evaluation (*well-run businesses, premises who cause problems*); the government (“us”) is presented positively as a public guardian, while alcohol-selling business (“them”) negatively as a potential threat to the public order. The reader can affiliate with either party depending on whether they see themselves in agreement with the proposed changes (e.g., as members of the public negatively affected by alcohol-related behaviour) or in disagreement with them (e.g., as business owners and customers). A tabulated description of examples 7 and 8 and a summary of the countering syndrome are included in section E of the appendix.

## 8. Summary and discussion

This paper was concerned with the contexts in which a speaker introduced in the hard news text by a dialogically expansive directly reported attribution (partly) renounces the subjectivity of the individual self in favour of the collective self expressed by the pronoun “we”; it examined the rhetorical purposes for which “I” evokes “we” and how “we” contributes to the mechanism of engagement between the newspaper report and its readers.

The most important tendencies regarding the couplings of source (IVDA vs. “we”) with engagement values which realise the individual syndromes and their rhetorical functions can be summarised as follows: 1. Most commonly an IVDA evokes “we” in order to express a personal or collective opinion and engage with other epistemic alternatives (the collective-cum-individual point

of view proposition syndrome); a noticeable aspect of the view proposition syndrome (and indeed other syndromes as well) is the mingling and blurring of individual and collective selves, which leaves agency open to interpretation and results in the sharing and re-distribution of responsibility (cf. Dori-Haconen; Mühlhäusler and Harré 178; Pavlidou, “Collective Aspects” 27). 2. In addition, the expanding and softening effect of epistemic entertain tends to occur in other syndromes with a collective source, namely the syndrome of collective obligation and the collective opinion proclamation syndrome. 3. Conversely, when an IVDA includes collective “we” in their own obligation or proclaim space, meanings do not tend to be softened and may be coupled with resources which strengthen them. 4. The meaning of inclination (willingness, intention) in the commitment to a future action syndrome couples almost exclusively with a collective source. 5. A collective source tends to couple with those disclaim meanings (negatives, adverbs) which modify other syndromes, predominantly those associated with the meanings of entertain. 6. On the other hand, an IVDA couples with connectives serving to counter disfavoured points of view, which points to their leading role in the orchestration of discourse rhetoric, dialogic negotiation and ideological positioning.

Let us now recall the definition of hard news and interpret the source-engagement couplings in the light of genre. Hard news presents an account of events with reference to the accepted social and moral norms and values in a manner that is (allegedly) balanced and objective; it is targeted at an ideologically and otherwise diverse audience (White, “Death, Disruption”, *Telling Media Tales*). In other words, hard news deals with issues which a multi-voiced audience can relate to in a manner that maximises the chance of reader acceptance or minimises the risk of reader rejection. The following points interpret the findings along the generic line. 1. The interest in the shared, common and agreed upon explains the presence of collective reference (“we”) in the first place; the presence of “we” anchors content to a group with a certain ideological background whose members subscribe to a certain set of values. 2. The high frequency of epistemic softening in the point of view proposition syndrome and in other syndromes sourced to a collective voice (obligation, proclaim, disclaim) seems to support the view that collectivity is one of the meanings at stake and hence protected by expansive dialogic strategies. 3. Conversely, unhedged obligation and dialogic contraction (proclaim and disclaim), i.e., meanings which are more likely to incur opposition in readers approaching the text from a different position, remain a matter of an individual source.

Another issue I would like to address is in/exclusivity and the associated discourse functions. In media discourse, the occurrence of “we” is often examined with regard to the construction of editorial voice, the relation between the newspaper and the audience, and the spread of ideology. Exclusive “we” expresses distance, authority and directiveness, while inclusive “we” can imply solidarity and forge unity between newspapers and their readers (Fairclough 127–128; Fowler 16–17, 48–54, 212–214; Temmerman, “Nail Polish” 247). The use of inclusive “we” represents a consensus-forming strategy; the idea of unity fosters reader-writer agreement with an implication that the reader must share the writer’s point of view and accept it as the only correct view (Fowler 212–214; Wales 66); otherwise “we” dilutes to “I” and “you” (Temmerman, “Today” 289–290). Interestingly, the appeal for unity goes often hand in hand with an unclear and ambivalent referential scope of the designated collectivity (Fairclough 179–180). Studies examining in/exclusive “we” in other genres follow the same line of interpretation (De Cillia et al.; Dontcheva-Navratilova 107–136; Íñigo-Mora; Moberg and Eriksson).

In the present study “we” was always IVDA-inclusive; reader-exclusive and reader-inclusive “we” roughly correspond to WE-AFF and WE-DIFF respectively. As a collectivity with an entextualised reader-exclusive referential domain, WE-AFF centres dialogic negotiation around itself and does not exert any pressure on the reader regarding group identification and agreement, and grants the reader the freedom to take their own stance towards the presented content (examples 1, 2, 4, 6 and 8). Possible pressure on the reader to accept the presented point of view can to some extent emanate from the power and authority ascribed to a particular collectivity. Exclusivity-associated distance is in line with and contributes to the overall strategy of the opening up of the dialogic space containing collective meaning. This seems especially true of cases in which an IVDA renounces the floor and lets “we” speak in their stead (i.e., “we” couples with the source role), where WE-AFF predominates over WE-DIFF (Table 1).

On the other hand, when it is an IVDA that sets up a dialogic context, frequency-wise WE-AFF is on a par with WE-DIFF, a collectivity with an indeterminate, multi-group, potentially reader-inclusive general/generic reference (Table 1). Reader-inclusivity can suggest in-group homogeneity and can be exploited for argumentative purposes. When an IVDA evokes a potentially reader-inclusive collectivity, the reader is as if pulled into the collectivity, their discourse world and the elaboration of the argument. As the reader is swayed along with an IVDA’s argumentation, the appeal becomes



more forcible and difficult to resist (Temmerman, “Today” 295, 298, 301). A strategic appeal to a semantically wider referent (referential over-inclusion) enables the writer to assume widespread support for the advocated ideology (Bull and Fetzer 15; Dontcheva-Navratilova 112–113). The higher frequency of WE-DIFF coupled with an individual source tallies with the strategies of persuasion, the absence of hedging and contractive engagement strategies.

Collective meaning also enhances argumentation by the increase in the validity of the presented argument. Fetzer and Bull find that the strategic shift in footing from the individual (“I”) to the collective (“we”) enables the speaker to strengthen argumentation by “extend[ing] the referential domain of their arguments from self’s beliefs and ideologies to that of a larger and more relevant social group” (281) and by “anchoring it to a wider domain of validity” (283). The presence of an IVDA in the text and the singularity of the argument particular to an IVDA are downgraded, boosting the objectivity and validity of the assertion (Temmerman, “Today” 301). The impression of a widely held and generally valid opinion can arise especially when the source role couples with general or generic WE-DIFF such as the public or humankind, and contractive engagement (e.g., proclaim). Such co-selections diminish the dialogic space and trigger the shift towards the factuality and monologicity of the argument.

The idea that the audience simply accepts the advanced point of view sees the reader as a passive news consumer. An explanation that expects a more active reader role says that in actual interpretation a diffused and often indeterminate reference gives the addressee the freedom to decide what agents are included in the collectivity and whether they feel included or excluded, and aligned or disaligned with the advocated position. Due to referential indeterminacy, readers can interpret ideas which are consonant with their own ideological position as targeted at them, whereas ideas which are at odds as targeted at others (Fetzer 345–346). The idea of choice tallies with the prevailing expansive strategy (entertain) which presents content as a mere alternative. If the reader shares and/or accepts the proposition or proposal, they construe or re-construe their social self around it and reify their membership in the community (Knight; Knox et al.). If the reader does not share the proposition or proposal, they exclude themselves from the dialogic space and the collectivity as conceived by an IVDA/“we” (cf. Baumgarten 181; Mitchell and Stewart).

To sum up, on the one hand, there are strategies which show a greater potential to grant the reader the freedom of choice to accept or reject the

advanced point of view (reader exclusivity and dialogically expansive entertain). On the other hand, there are strategies which invite the reader to go along with the text (reader inclusivity and dialogically contracting proclaim and disclaim); the strategies which are based on the assumption of in-group unity, reader-writer agreement and general validity of statements are not blatantly coercive but subtle and hidden and thus apt for the expression of argumentation in hard news. The degree of reader persuasion depends on the coupling of the individual meanings. At the same time, an important role is played by reader willingness to affiliate with the given collectivity and their opinion.

### Notes

1. I am aware of the fact that the WE-AFF vs. WE-DIFF distinction as well as the notion of in/exclusivity in general represents two poles with a continuum in between, manifesting different degrees of writer and reader involvement. Yet, in this paper I decided to confine myself to either-or treatment since the analysis includes other variables (source, engagement type) coupled with the two referential values. When uncertainty arose regarding the WE-AFF vs. WE-DIFF distinction, rather than stipulating ambiguity preference was given to the latter reading since referential indeterminacy is the essence of WE-DIFF.
2. The in/exclusivity cline is discussed in De Cock, and Wales (59); various aspects of the interpretation of the pronoun are discussed in Ali et al., Bazzanella, Borthen, De Cock, Íñigo-Mora, Scheibman (“Inclusive and Exclusive Patterning”, “Referentiality”) and Whitt.
3. There is a discrepancy between the total number of pronouns included in the analysis of engagement (244) adduced in section 6 and the total number of pronouns adduced in Table 1 (302). The number of pronouns in Table 1 has artificially increased due to the fact that one pronoun can couple with more dialogic meanings simultaneously.
4. As regards the meaning of “must”, the appeal to generally accepted moral and ethical values seems to license the dynamic meaning of rational modality rather than the deontic speaker-oriented meaning (Palmer 72–73). Speaker-bound deontic obligation seems to express a greater degree of subjectivity and dialogicity than group-bound rational modality.
5. In addition, example 5 contains an unspecified other voice (*It is well-documented that...*) whose point of view the IVDA endorses and which contracts the dialogic space (Martin and White 126–127).

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## Appendix

The appendix is divided into sections A-E; each section deals with a different syndrome. Tables 2–9 summarise the description of examples 1–8 considered in the main text. The description concerns narrow and extended context and covers the following aspects: the pronoun “we”, its referent and referential scope (WE-AFF, WE-DIFF); the source of dialogic positioning and its referent; the kind of engagement and expressions evoking the discussed dialogic values. Figures 1–7 summarise the couplings of meanings contributing to the rhetorical functionality of the syndromes. The coupled aspects include engagement and rhetorical meanings expressed by the syndrome; dialogic source; the pronoun “we” and its referential scope; and other/optional elements. Optional elements were included in the description only when they were functionally consonant with the syndrome and were found in more than a half of the examples attested in the corpus.

**Section A: Collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome**

Table 2: Description of example 1

Example 1	Dialogic source		Dialogic maker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We: WE-AFF	We	Macmillan Cancer Support	hope, will: entertain	<i>We hope ministers will rethink these proposals</i>
Macmillan Cancer Support				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	IVDA	Devane	will: entertain	<i>that will make 7,000 cancer patients lose ESA after 12 months ...</i>

Table 3: Description of example 2

Example 2	Dialogic source		Dialogic maker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We1: WE-AFF	IVDA	Dannatt	probably, could: entertain	<i>We probably could have increased the number of troops there</i>
UK army				
We2: WE-AFF	IVDA	Dannatt	could(n't): entertain	<i>we couldn't</i>
UK army				
We3: WE-AFF	We3	UK army	decided: entertain	<i>We had already decided to reinforce Afghanistan</i>
UK army				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	IVDA	Dannatt	if: entertain	<i>If Iraq was the only show in town</i>

Figure 1: Collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome I – WE-AFF

The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:				
Engagement/ rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– entertain: epistemic assessment</li> <li>– individual/collective opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– IVDA</li> <li>– WE-AFF</li> </ul>	– WE-AFF	– further epistemic assessment sourced to an IVDA in the extended context	– Ex. 1 and Ex. 2

Table 4: Description of example 3

Example 3	Dialogic source		Dialogic maker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We <sub>1</sub> + our <sub>2</sub> : WE-DIFF	IVDA	John Sauven	if: entertain	<i>If we keep kicking our heels</i>
the UK government, energy industry and business, environmental organisations, general public, whole UK				
We <sub>3</sub> +our <sub>4</sub> : WE-DIFF	IVDA	John Sauven	will: entertain	<i>we will miss our climate change target and lose economic advantage</i>
the UK government, energy industry and business, environmental organisations, general public, whole UK				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	IVDA	John Sauven	would: entertain	<i>that would result from being a world leader in green technology</i>

Figure 2: Collective-cum-individual point of view proposition syndrome II – WE-DIFF

The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:				
Engagement/rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– entertain: epistemic assessment</li> <li>– individual/collective opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– IVDA</li> <li>– WE-DIFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– WE-DIFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– further epistemic assessment sourced to an IVDA in the extended context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ex. 3</li> </ul>

**Section B: Collective commitment to a future action syndrome**

Table 5: Description of example 4

Example 4	Dialogic source		Dialogic marker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We: WE-AFF	We	Dept. for Education	will: entertain	<i>We will change the rules</i>
Dept. for Education				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	We or IVDA	Dept. for Education or Michael Gove	will: entertain	<i>Heads will have the freedom</i>

Figure 3: Collective commitment to a future action syndrome

The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:				
Engagement/rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– entertain: inclination</li> <li>– presence of a desirable action</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– WE-AFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– WE-AFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– positive evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>We will continue to work hard to deliver four brilliant ceremonies.</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– entertain: inclination</li> <li>– solution to a problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– WE-AFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– WE-AFF</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– negative evaluation &amp; problem</li> <li>– positive evaluation &amp; solution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ex. 4</li> </ul>

– entertain: inclination – absence of an undesirable action	– WE-AFF	– WE-AFF	– negative evaluation	<i>We will not get drawn into commenting on any speculation.</i>
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**Section C: Collective obligation syndrome**

Table 6: Description of example 5

Example 5	Dialogic source		Dialogic marker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We: WE-DIFF	IVDA	Cameron	have to: entertain	<i>We have to make sure</i>
the UK, India and possibly also other countries				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	IVDA	Cameron	must: entertain	<i>They must only look one way</i>

Figure 4: Collective obligation syndrome I – optionally strengthened

The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:				
Engagement/rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
– entertain: obligation – expression of obligation, need, suggestion or offer	– IVDA	– WE-DIFF	– evaluation – further deontic strengthening sourced to IVDA in the extended context	– Ex. 5

Figure 5: Collective obligation syndrome II – optionally hedged

The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:				
Engagement/rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
– entertain: obligation – expression of obligation, need, suggestion or offer	– WE-AFF	– WE-AFF	– evaluation – softening epistemic assessment	<i>“We believe there is a need ... which would include...”</i>

**Section D: Collective opinion proclamation syndrome**

Table 7: Description of example 6

Example 6	Dialogic source		Dialogic marker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We1+our2+our3: WE-AFF	We1	Hamas	affirm: proclaim/ concur	<i>We affirm that armed resistance is our strategic option and the only way to liberate our land</i>
Hamas (and their followers)				
We4: WE-AFF	We1 or IVDA	Hamas orIsmail Haniyeh	God willing: entertain	<i>God willing, Hamas will lead the people ... to the uprising until we liberate Palestine,...</i>
Hamas (and their followers)				

Figure 6: Collective opinion proclamation syndrome

<b>The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:</b>				
Engagement/rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
– proclaim – expression of a strong opinion	– WE-AFF	– WE-AFF	– softening epistemic assessment	– Ex. 6

**Section E: Countering an idea or stance syndrome**

Table 8: Description of example 7

Example 7	Dialogic source		Dialogic maker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We: WE-DIFF	IVDA	Simon Kirby	while: disclaim/ counter	<i>While we have assumed the house market remains stable</i>
NIESR and possibly other agents holding the same view				

We: WE-DIFF	We	NIESR and possibly other agents	have assumed: entertain	<i>we have assumed the house market remains stable</i>
NIESR and possibly other agents holding the same view				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	IVDA	Simon Kirby	could: entertain	<i>house prices could decline at a more rapid pace</i>

Table 9: Description of example 8

Example 8	Dialogic source		Dialogic maker(s)	Example
<b>Narrow context</b>				
We: WE-AFF	WE-AFF	The UK Government	know: proclaim/ concur	<i>We know that the majority of pubs and bars are well-run businesses</i>
the UK Government				
<b>Extended context</b>				
	IVDA	May	but: disclaim/ counter	<i>But the Government believes that ... who cause problems.</i>
		the Government	believes: attribution	<i>the Government believes that ... who cause problems.</i>

Figure 7: Countering an idea or stance syndrome

The couplings of default attribution sourced to IVDA with the following meanings:				
Engagement/ rhetorical	Source(s)	“we”	Other/optional elements	Examples
– dispreferred idea or stance	– WE – IVDA	– WE-AFF – WE-DIFF	– evaluation – entertain: epistemic softening – proclaim: concur	– Ex. 7 and Ex. 8 <i>Hospitals play a vital role but we do rely on them too much.</i>
– disclaim: counter	– IVDA	– WE-AFF – WE-DIFF		

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- preferred idea or stance	- usually IVDA	- WE-AFF - WE-DIFF	- evaluation - entertain: epistemic softening - proclaim: pronounce	- Ex. 7 and Ex. 8 <i>Hospitals play a vital role but we do rely on them too much.</i>
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