

Speakers' formulating their talk as interruptive

Ann Weatherall and David Edmonds

Abstract

Interruption has predominantly been conceptualized as a violation of normative turn-taking practices and speakership rights. The present study further develops a broader perspective by showing that speakers can orient to matters of sequential organization, other than turn-taking, when they claim their own talk is interruptive. Drawing from a larger collection of 72 cases where explicit claims to interruption were made, this paper uses conversation analysis to examine a subset of 20 instances where speakers specifically described what they were doing was interruption. Our target phenomenon were expressions such as “I want to interrupt” and “apologise for interrupting”. Speakers can prospectively mark some upcoming talk as interruptive and they can also retrospectively cast what they have just said as an interruption. Either way, the observably relevant disruption was not to turn-taking but to other sequences of action, namely the proper order of activities, the organisation of topics and adjacency pairs. Furthermore, by focusing on cases from institutional settings we propose that by explicitly claiming one's own talk as interruptive participants make relevant membership categories and their associated deontic responsibilities for the progression of activities within institutional settings.

Keywords: *Interruption; action ascription, conversation analysis; sequence organization; deontic authority.*

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1. Introduction

A common-sense understanding of interruption is one speaker starting to talk before another has finished speaking. Interrupting can be sanctioned for being rude. For example, adults can admonish children for interrupting. Drew (2009) suggested that interruption is a moral category that assigns blame to the in-coming speaker for a hostile transgression upon another person's speaking rights (also see Hutchby 1992, 2008; Schegloff, 2001). Given the negative associations with interruption, it is perhaps surprising that speakers might formulate what they are doing as interruptive. It is exactly such explicit claims to interrupting that are the focus of this paper. Taking a conversation analytic approach, we ask where and why speakers formulate their own talk as interruptive. Our contribution is to further develop a broader perspective on interruption. We identify three normative orders in the organisation of social interaction, other than turn-taking, which members are orienting to when they explicitly describe what they are doing as interruption.

1.1. Overlapping talk

Research on language and social interaction typically refers to 'overlap' rather than 'interruption'. Overlap is a more neutral term for simultaneous speech, freer from the negative moral connotations associated with interruption. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974) conversation analytic model of turn-taking established a compelling interactional

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account for the common but brief occurrence of overlap. They identified two systemic bases for occurrences of more than one speaker talking at a time. At the end of a turn at talk, if no next speaker has been selected, then two or more parties might self-select at once, producing simultaneous talk at the beginning of next turns at talk. Another reason for overlap arises from the turn-constructive component of talking. According to the Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson model, a turn at talk is built out of turn-constructive units (TCUs). A fundamental aspect of a TCU is that it can constitute a possibly complete turn at talk (also see Clayman, 2014). Towards the end of each TCU is the beginning of a Transition-Relevance Place (TRP) where speaker change may occur. Variability in the way a turn is brought to completion can produce overlap between the end of a current turn and the beginning of a next. For example, overlap can occur when there is a sound extension on the last word of a TCU. The addition of an additional element such as a personal name is another reason a next speaker mis-projects the actual completion of a current speaker's turn. Jefferson (1983) identified and differentiated 'recognitional' and 'progressive' overlaps as types of non-interruptive simultaneous speech. Overlapping talk can simply be due to turn-taking miscues whereby a next speaker begins their turn at talk early.

Although turn-taking miscues are common not all overlaps are mistakes in projecting completion of a current speaker's turn at talk. Jefferson (1986) used the term 'interjacent onset overlap' to describe instances when a next speaker started talking in the middle of a current speaker's turn. In addition, entry into another's turn-space is not necessarily 'intrusive', but can involve a pro-social action. For example, collaboratively completing another speaker's turn-in-progress (Lerner, 1991; 1996). Vatanen (2014) showed that responsive turns done in overlap have their own order and actions. She demonstrated they can convey a sense that speakers have independent epistemic access to information in initiating actions. Taken together, these findings suggest that overlapping talk occurs for a variety of reasons including

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turn-taking miscues and marking epistemic stance. Simultaneous speech is not necessarily about competing for a turn at talk, which is the case for interruption. As Murray (1988) proposed “simultaneous speech is neither necessary nor sufficient for identifying...interruptions” (p.115).

The discussion so far raises the question of what interruption actually is if not a next speaker selecting themselves before a previous speaker has finished talking. Schegloff (2001) suggested there is no independent, objective definition of an interruption. He instead proposed that an ingredient that makes talk interruptive is that it is treated by the speakers themselves as a ‘complainable’ (Schegloff, 2001, p. 305). Our particular focus is on speakers’ explicit descriptions of their own talk as interruptive. Using a conversation analytic approach we ask what exactly is being breached when a claim to interrupting is made.

1.2. Interruption as a member’s category

Conversation analysis examines interruption not as an analyst’s category, but instead a ‘members’ one. The term (cultural) member has ethnomethodological roots and is used in conversation analysis to refer to speakers or parties/participants in an interaction. As a grounded approach conversation analysis describes what members themselves observably display, and orient to, as ‘interruptive’ in their interactions (Bilmes, 1997; Schegloff, 2001). For example, Hutchby (1998) demonstrated that in disputatious contexts, such as radio phone-ins and small claims courts, overlapping talk was regularly negatively evaluated and oriented to as argumentative or disagreeing. He contended that it was the moral dimension of the activity that took precedence over simultaneous speech for speakers treating an incoming turn at talk as interruptive. Thus, claims to interruption can be part and parcel of doing some actions such as disagreement and argumentation.

French and Local (1986) examined the prosodic characteristics of what they called turn-competitive interruptions. They found loudness, pitch and sound extensions were used

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when there was competition for the conversational floor. Non-prosodic features of interruptions included repetitious syntax. In addition to disagreement and argumentation, French and Local noted that competition for the conversational floor occurred when the talk of the current speaker was being qualified or corrected.

Bilmes (1997) also investigated how speakers accomplished the act of interruption in conversation and the ways in which violations of speaking rights were claimed. In particular, he focused on the verbal and non-verbal practices used to display that one was being interrupted. Speakers can directly claim that they are being interrupted by saying things like “wait a minute” or “let me finish”. Speakers can also increase the volume of their talk as a way to display that some overlapping talk is being treated as interruptive. Bilmes’ emphasis was on displays of being interrupted. However, he also noted that in-coming speakers could display their own talk as doing interruption.

The aim of our study was to conduct a detailed examination of speakers directly formulating that what they were doing was interrupting. We found that parties seemed to be orienting to breaches of normative orders of talk, other than turn-taking. They were disruptions to aspects of overall structural organisation or supra-sequential coherence (namely, order of activities and topic) and to adjacency pair sequences.

1.3 Relevance of category membership to interrupting

There is a persistent and widely held belief that gender, as a social category, is relevant to interruption. For example, the term ‘maninterrupting’ has been recently coined to refer to the idea that men intentionally speak over women in order to assert their dominance in conversations (Bennett, 2015). Claims of gender differences in interruptions have a long history but have failed to gain strong empirical support (e.g. James & Clarke, 1993; Kitzinger, 2008; Murray & Covelli, 1988). Schegloff (2001) suggested that the inconsistent findings can be explained from a conversation analytic perspective. What counts as

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interruption is not an objective matter. That is, it is not a feature of talk that can be reliably identified using pre-defined criteria. Instead, interruption is a members' category. Speakers call talk interruptive for particular purposes and actions in interaction. As mentioned earlier in this introduction, instances of simultaneous speech may not necessarily be oriented to as interruptive. The additional element required for an interruption is members' orientations to an incoming turn at talk as a disruption to a normative order. The present research further develops a conversation analytic perspective by identifying the norms members are orienting to as being breached when they claim what they are doing is interruptive.

Furthermore, if members' category membership (e.g., as women or men; adults or children) is relevant to the formulation of some talk or action as an interruption that too necessitates establishing showing that those identities are relevant to the parties and consequential for the talk (Drew, 2009, Kitzinger, 2008). Our analysis of speakers' formulations of their own talk as interruptive suggests that category membership can be shown to be relevant to doing interrupting. In particular, we found that the relevant categories were related to speakers' institutional roles and their associated deontic rights and responsibilities to make things happen (Lindström & Weatherall, 2015; Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012).

2. The data

This article is based on a collection of 72 cases, in English, of direct formulations and explicit verbal claims of interruption in talk. The target phenomena were instances where speakers formulated interruption (e.g. "I want to interrupt") or claimed being interrupted (e.g. "can I finish?").

The cases included both audio recordings (for telephone-mediated talk) and video recordings (for co-present interactions). They were drawn from the first author's various corpora of interactions amounting to more than 40 hours of interactions, transcribed

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according to Jefferson's (2004) conventions, developed from over a decade of conversation analytic work. There were cases found in mundane conversation and in institutional settings including, therapeutic encounters, police interviews, reality TV shows, political debates and telephone-mediated service encounters.

The large majority of the cases (about 50) were claims to being interrupted. However, it is a smaller subset of 20 cases were the target for the present study. All were examples where speakers explicitly formulated what they themselves were doing as interruption. The cases presented in this article are all from institutional interactions because they show most clearly that doing interruption can be associated with locally relevant category membership. We also found some claims of interrupting in mundane interaction were linked to category membership, albeit locally occasioned ones. For example, at the beginning of telephone calls where the person answering the phone was not the one called. The 'answerer' would claim to be interrupting to get the proper person on the line. We included those cases in another subcollection where the claims to interruption were used in telephone calls to manage embodied conduct (e.g. going to fetch the proper person) that disrupted sequences in progress (see Edwards & Weatherall, in press).

3. Analysis

Schegloff (2007) defined sequential organisation to be a generic order in talk where activities or actions progress over a series of turns. In the analysis that follows, the clearest examples of disruptions to three different normative aspects of sequential organisation, other than turn-taking, are presented. The first extract shows an orientation to breaching the order of activities in a clinical interview. Topic change is a second aspect of overall structure that occasioned claims of interruption from the speaker. The final kind of disruption was to an adjacency pair of turns (Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff, 2007). As a whole the analysis further

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elaborates the norms members orient to as being breached when they claim what they are doing as interrupting.

3.1. Disruption to overall structural organisation

Some social activities such as primary-care medical interactions (Robinson, 2003) involve multiple, normatively ordered sequences of activities. Extract one shows a member's orientation to a disruption to activities within the coherence of an overall structural organisation of a psychotherapeutic interview. The extract is from a couple's psychotherapy session. It shows a therapist formulating what they are doing as interruption in order to ask permission to take notes. The analytic commentary following the extract describes the therapist's orientation to a norm where consent to take therapeutic notes be sought in advance of note taking during the therapeutic interview. Just prior to the extract below, the therapist has asked each party what they want to achieve from therapy. The husband has finished his answer. The wife is just completing her response at the beginning of the extract. Throughout the analysis, the lines of interest will be indicated in bold.

Extract One: Couples therapy:

01 WIF: **MAK**e sure we take care of everything (.)
 02 that needs to get taken care of .hh um (0.4) in
 03 as best way as we can like (1.1) David said
 04 before (0.6) we've just seen some ho:rrible
 05 situations and (0.2) I: (.) don't wanna go that
 06 route.
 07 (0.5)
 08 WIF: °ya know°
 09 (0.2)
 10 THE: .hh[hh]

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11 WIF: [(°ya know°)]
 12 (.)
 13 **THE: >Just to interrupt< [I'm: a-]**
 14 **WIF: [(°mhm°)]**
 15 (0.2)
 16 **THE: I didn't check with you (.) what's- what I like**
 17 **to do is to make a few notes to myself (0.2)**
 18 **as-as we go along and uh I hope that's gonna**
 19 **be okay with you (and) (0.9) um (0.4) just keep-**
 20 **<helps me keep track of things and then (.) .hh (.)**
 21 **when there's some kind of basis for writing up some**
 22 **(0.2) .hh (.) shared understandings or agreements**
 23 **we've got- <I've got the material there, is that**
 24 **gonna be okay with [you that I°-]**
 25 WIF: [°yeah°(fine)]

The beginning of the extract is towards the end of a therapeutic questioning sequence. In line 01 the wife is answering the therapist's question after her husband has done so. In couples' therapy, it is reasonable to assume that each party gets to talk in a locally managed, roughly democratic order. One after another. In the above case, the husband has gone first after and the wife second. Her view is quite similar to his, as it happens. Both parties have expressed a desire to avoid a messy separation. The wife's answer is brought to projectable completion at line six. She utters "ya know" twice, indicating she has nothing further to add.

Despite no observable disruption to a turn-in-progress, nor to a breach in turn-taking rights, the therapist explicitly names his conversation act as interruptive, "just to interrupt" (line 13). Yet, the turn is not produced in overlap. It is actually following a turn at talk that indicated a current speaker had no more to say. Such an observation supports the contentions

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of other conversation analytic researchers who have attested that interruption is not necessarily synonymous with overlapping talk (e.g. Drew, 2009; Murray, 1988; Schegloff, 2001; Vatanen, 2014). Nevertheless, the therapist's turn orients to a possible understanding of his upcoming talk as interruptive.

The therapist accounts for their interruption (lines 16-18) with the negative observation, "I didn't check with you". It brings something that didn't happen to the conversational surface. A negative observation marks what follows as a potentially complainable matter (Schegloff, 2005). In the above case the therapist hasn't done something he should have. Consent to take notes about what is said in therapy is an activity that should be done before actual therapy begins. The therapist in this case is a bit late in gaining the clients' consent to take notes on the session. The formulation of the upcoming talk as interruptive, alongside the account and an admission of failure, shows that the therapist is treating the launching of the new action at this moment as a breach, insofar as it is being done out of order.

Institutional interactions regularly have an overall structural organization or supra-sequential coherence whereby certain tasks and activities are treated and produced by speakers as having to be done in a certain order (Robinson 2003; Weatherall, 2015). Everyday activities such as opening birthday presents can also involve multiple, normatively ordered sequences of action (Robinson, 2014). The consent gathering in the above example is treated as something which should have occurred earlier and thus the normative overall sequential structure of a counselling session is treated as having been breached. In this instance, interruption is formulated with an orientation to sequence organization in two ways. First, the activity-being-launched is being done out of order, with respect to overall structural organization. Furthermore, that the therapeutic questioning-in-progress is being suspended in order to launch a new sequence of action.

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In institutional interaction, speakers orient to, and produce the various rights and responsibilities associated with their institutional roles (Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Deontic authority is a concept that has been related to how speakers display and manage their rights, responsibilities and obligations to introduce and progress actions in interaction (Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). In this case, the formulation of interruption is also bound up with the speaker's institutional membership category, responsibilities and deontic rights. The therapist does interruption in order to manage the proper progression of the therapy session by ensuring that all the relevant business gets accomplished, including gaining consent to take notes. Stevanovic (2013) noted that one aspect of deontic rights relates to whether speakers have the rights to determine local courses of action. The therapist displays these rights by launching a new course of action. In the above case, the speaker's formulation of themselves as interrupting is asserting and displaying deontic rights and responsibilities as a therapist for managing the proper progression of activities within the counselling session.

3.2 Interrupting to change topic

In a discussion of overall structural organisation, Robinson (2014) described topics as the 'something' that could come between the opening and closing of an episode of interaction. The next two extracts show speakers' doing interruption in order to change topic. The first case is an example of the speaker prospectively marking the topic shift as interruptive and the second case retrospectively casts what they have done as interruption.

Extract two is from a counselling session. In this case it is between a therapist and a client who has lost multiple family members in violent circumstances. The extract begins with the client detailing their religious beliefs about life after death in response to the therapist's prior question (not included in the extract) that asks what she believes happens after death.

Extract Two: Therapy after violent deaths:

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01 CLI: there i:s eternal life(1.4)and ↑how ↑that eternal
 02 life exists after we:: u:h what the lo:rd: I: (0.6)
 03 ya kno:w (0.6) so:meone said (it's/is) beautiful.
 04 (1.5)

05 **THE: mch (0.3) le:t me interrupt cuz I wanted tuh- (.)**
 06 **something else that I wanted to focus on=we'll get**
 07 **back to that(0.4).hhh I: wa:nted to focus on(0.8)**
 08 the ther:apy because at the >aye dee aye< (0.8)
 09 u:h (.) you came in and joined a group (0.4)u:h °we
 10 worked°- (0.8) more specifically on supporting you=
 11 =and encouraging you to express some feelings >and
 12 I: remember one of the (things/types)< that (0.8)
 13 you felt was helpful at that point was that you
 14 fi:nally allowed yourself to get angry
 15 (1.1)

16 CLI: mmh:m
 17 (1.0)

18 THE: (it) was something that you hadn't recognised (1.7)
 19 in °yourself°
 20 (2.1)

21 CLI: the ↑thing wa:s that (0.4) after all of these
 22 things that ha:ppened (0.9) I gue:ss my greatest
 23 grief wa:s (1.1) there mus:t've been a reason and-
 24 and- and I ↑think it's comes from (.) religious::
 25 teaching

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The client's first turn in the extract comes to grammatical completion at line three. After a silence, the therapist states, "let me interrupt", prospectively marking that what will follow could be understood as interruptive. The existence of two concurrent courses of action are explicitly identified, "something else that I wanted to focus on, we'll get back to that". Specifically, the therapist informs the client that a line of questioning on a different topic to the prior talk is about to be launched ("something else..."). The therapist also adds, "we'll get back to that", which allows for the possibility that questioning on the previous topic could be returned to in the future. The new line of questioning relates to the client's newfound ability to express anger. So, in this instance, interruption is done to introduce the therapeutic discussion of a different topic.

The claim of doing interrupting in extract two can be understood as associated with the speaker's institutional role as a therapist. The formulation is used in this case to temporarily put discussion on a topic to one side, and to focus on another. Thus, the formulation of doing interruption allows the therapist to manage the various therapeutically relevant matters. It is not clear why the therapist treats the after-death topic as having been interrupted. Regardless, the therapist displays their deontic rights to determine what will be discussed within the session (Stevanovic, 2013; Stevanovic & Peräkylä, 2012). The remainder of the therapist's turn introduces a new topic that is about feelings. The client cooperates with the topic shift by further describing their newfound ability to express anger as a result of previous therapy.

In the next extract, the speaker retrospectively marks talk that introduced a new topic as interruptive. It is retrospective in so far as the claim to interrupting occurs after the talk that is doing the interruption. The extract is taken from an interview of author Scott Miller at a psychotherapy conference and begins with the interviewer describing and comparing different psychotherapy approaches including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT, lines 1-

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10). Specifically, the interviewer describes what the different approaches focus on (“CBT therapists are about technique”).

Extract Three: Psychotherapy conference interview:

01 INT: Ye[ah so] (my) exper- my experience common factors=
 02 SCO: [(ri-)]
 03 SCO: =m[m]
 04 INT: [tha]t (sli-) they like talking about the
 05 allian[ce s]e be te therapists:.hh are about (0.2)
 06 SCO: [ye:s]
 07 INT: technique=
 08 SCO: =ye[s]
 09 INT: [a]nd alliance too [but an]alytic .h
 10 SCO: [(ye-)]
 11 INT: existential, hu[manistic-]
 12 **SCO: [little si:de] note about**
 13 **se be te therapi[st .h] u:m:=**
 14 **INT: [mkay]**
 15 **SCO: ='pologise for interrupting**
 16 .hh[h >ya know] who they< go see: (0.3) when
 17 INT: [s'alright]
 18 SCO: they have a problem?
 19 (1.1)
 20 INT: who?
 21 (0.5)
 22 SCO: tch humanistic °therapists°

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23 (0.6)

24 INT: °>mh<°

25 (0.8)

26 SCO: several studies now (0.4) >see bee tee<

27 therapists the last person they wanna see when they

28 have a problem is one of them.

Scott interjects in overlap at line 12 at a point where the interviewer begins the contrasting part of a multi-unit turn (that is “but analytic”; line 9). The interjection is formulated as introducing a “little side note about CBT therapist[s]”. The topic shift is touched off by the interviewer’s prior mention of cognitive-behavioural therapists (line 5). The framing as a “little side note” (line 12) makes available an inference that the main course of action is not being majorly deviated from and will be resumed in the future (Jefferson, 1972).

The formulation of doing interruption is formatted as an explicit apology with a naming of the breach (see Heritage & Raymond, 2016). Through the design of the turn, Scott displays an orientation to the moral accountability of interjecting into the interviewer’s turn at talk. Although he incurs on the interviewer’s turn at a non-transition relevance place, it is to introduce a new topic. The apology receives the preferred response of absolution from the interviewer, “s’alright” (line 17), acknowledging that a breach has occurred but assuring Scott that it is not being treated as problematic (Robinson, 2004). These two turns form a retro-sequence, functioning to retrospectively mark Scott’s interjection as interruptive (Schegloff, 2007). The topic shift transpires to be an implicit criticism of cognitive-behavioural therapists (lines 26-28).

Scott’s entry into the ongoing turn and subsequent marking of it as interruptive are positioned at a strategic point in the interviewer’s turn. The interviewer had just begun to

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produce the contrasting part of a multi-unit turn with “but”, and was shifting to a new description of the latter three approaches (“analytic, existential, humanistic”). As such, this is possibly the last point at which Scott could launch a criticism of cognitive-behavioural therapists before it would lose its relevance. In relation to turn-taking, the apology marks the breach of incurring on the speakership rights and turn-in-progress of the interviewer. However, the interruption is done for cause, to launch a topic touched off by something said within a turn at talk. So, it seems that marking a topic shift as interruptive is one way that speakers orient to the relevance of a normative sequence of activity (see Schegloff, 1992).

3.3 Disruptions to adjacency pairs

The final aspect of sequential organisation that was oriented to as being disrupted was to adjacency pair sequences. Adjacency pairs are two turns of talk, spoken by different speakers to produce an action (Schegloff, 1968; Schegloff, 2007). The first example of a disruption to an adjacency pair involves a speaker retrospectively casting their talk as interruptive after correcting an aspect of a first-pair-part. The second case involves interruption to a second-pair-part before it was brought to possible completion.

Extract four was taken from a police interview in the initial stages of an investigation of Casey Anthony. Between 2008 and 2011, Casey Anthony was accused, tried and acquitted of the murder of her daughter Caylee in a widely publicized case (Battaglia, 2012). In this excerpt, two police officers (PO1 and PO2) are interviewing a friend of Casey Anthony, Amy Huizenga. She is being asked about what Casey Anthony’s said to her around the time Caylee went missing (“July second”). Amy uses the opportunity to explain that she made a mistake about dates in her affidavit which she can now correct because she has checked with her phone records and it was a day earlier than she originally stated.

Extract Four: Amy Huizenga police interview:

01 PO1: mch July seco:nd (0.5) she tells you child’s

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02 with na:nny [you guys-]

03 **AMY:** [.h well-]

04 (0.2)

05 **AMY:** and: I: will say: in my original >affidavit<

06 which was: a mistake >cuz I've now checked

07 my phone records and see when that

08 phone call was< .h >I did originally say<

09 that the first night that- or the first day

10 that she showed up was on Tuesday the fir:st

11 .hhh checking now my phone records it was that

12 **Monday.**

13 (0.5)

14 PO1: the thirtieth

15 AMY: Yes=

16 PO1: =mch kay=

17 AMY: =uh which was false (.) doh- (.) information that

18 >I thought was< tru:e but have now looked at

19 phone record[s and what not]

20 PO1: [you had good] intentions

21 (1.1)

22 PO2: You just clarify (th[at) (as well)]

23 PO1: [that's:]=

24 PO1: =that'[s fine]

25 AMY: [Yeah tha]t's- that's >why I wanted

26 to clarify that<

27 (0.2)

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28 **AMY:** [Sorry go on] £I d(h)idn't mean to interrupt=
 29 PO1: [(mkay/mmhm)]
 30 **AMY:** =youhh£
 31 (0.8)
 32 ???: mch
 33 (0.4)
 34 PO1: The s:econd

At the beginning of the above extract, the police officer is about to begin a new line of questioning about what Casey said to Amy on a particular date (“July second”). The formulation of the date and an initial description “she tells you child is with nanny” is prefatory to a forthcoming question. The police officer’s turn is not complete when Amy interjects. The and-preface marks Amy’s interjection as related to the police officer’s turn. The interjection states that her original affidavit provided the police with incorrect information (lines 3-12). Amy’s incursion was occasioned by the reference of “July second” (line 1), and she treats this as an opportunity to correct her prior comments on a related date. Following the correction, these prior comments are characterized as a wrongdoing, to which the other police officer provides a pardon, “you had good intentions”. The talk shows that Amy is treating having the correct information for the official police record as a relevant matter.

At line 28, Amy produces an apology with a go-ahead, “sorry go on”, which cedes the floor back to the police officer. The apology suggests that Amy treats the interruption as a morally sanctionable matter (Heritage & Raymond, 2016). “I didn’t mean to interrupt you” retrospectively casts her interjection and the subsequent insertion sequence devoted to doing correction as interruptive. In this case, correction is an action that is produced as having to be done ‘now’ because of its immediate relevance. If the record is not corrected immediately

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Amy could be accused of lying. As Hutchby (2008) noted interruptions can be a way of doing urgency because they are seen in contexts such as warnings of immediate danger or extraordinary noticings.

In saying “sorry go on I didn’t mean to interrupt you”, Amy retrospectively casts her talk as disrupting what the police officer was doing. She did begin her turn at talk in overlap with the previous turn and where it was not possibly complete because a question had not been fully articulated. Nevertheless, she did select as next speaker at a turn constructional unit boundary (after “she tells you child’s with nanny”, lines 1-2). We suggest that Amy’s formulation of her talk as interruptive was as much an orientation to interrupting a first-pair-part as it was to turn-taking practices. Her correction was launched before the end of the police officers turn, which is where other repair is typically initiated (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977). The function of the talk that was categorised as interruptive was to launch a new activity devoted to correcting some information contained within a first-pair-part.

In the setting of a police interview, the interactional project can perhaps be glossed as establishing the facts of the matter that are under investigation. The police officer has the rights and responsibilities to ask relevant questions and the interviewee to respond truthfully. In the above extract, Amy selects herself as next speaker at a turn constructional unit boundary to correct some misinformation that she had previously given. If she doesn’t interrupt she may be seen as having lied. Her action is associated with her deontic responsibilities as the subject of a police interview. As with the previous cases, the formulation of interruption is inferentially linked to the relevant identity or membership category of the speaker.

The next extract has been selected as example of a speaker orienting to talk as disrupting an adjacency pair sequence. It also shows a clear instance of turn competitive

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interruption, bringing into sharp relief, in a short stretch of interaction, the difference between turn competition interruptions and sequence disrupting ones.

The excerpt is taken from an American reality television show called *Survivor*. It is a game-show where groups of strangers are marooned in an isolated location. The last remaining survivor is the winner. Contestants vote to eliminate each other. A large part of the programme's drama and its appeal is the emotional rollercoaster involved with surviving in the game. Part of the show is called 'tribal council'. It is when the host, Jeff Probst, asks cast members about their strategies on whom they may vote to eliminate. We join the extract with Denise answering Jeff's question on who she would like to face in the final of the game. He has suggested it would be an easy win for her if cast member Abi (a weak contestant) was the other finalist.

Extract Five: Survivor tribal council:

- 01 DEN: easy win if thats the kind of game that you want to
 02 play (.) we see that season after season where
 03 people take kind of the dead weight the- the
 04 unlikeable person they- they take that
 05 the[:y that they beli-]
- 06 ABI: [wow I never though]t I was the=
 07 =unlik[ab]le p[erso]n [hah]
- 08 DEN: [i-] [I m-]I'[m ju]st saying in=
 09 =seasons past I'm not [just put]ting=
- 10 ABI: [.hhh]
- 11 DEN: =you in that [box abi.]
- 12 ABI: [wo:w hhh]hh=

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- 13 DEN: =but weve- weve seen that. you know we have
- 14 JEF: **i want to interrupt**
- 15 (.)
- 16 DEN: yeah
- 17 JEF: **abi you didnt grasp (0.2) that youre seen as**
- 18 **unlikable?**
- 19 ABI: i- i- didnt know- i- i- seriously did not grasp
- 20 that i was: that hated (0.2) in the ga:me

The above extract begins with Denise responding to Jeff's question about her strategy for the elimination round (not shown). She suggests she will not go for an easy win by keeping a weak contestant in the competition (lines 1-4). Abi treats Denise's answer as a personal criticism of her and expresses surprise ("wow") at being labelled "unlikeable" (line 6-7). Abi's defensive response is in the middle of Denise's turn so is what Jefferson (1986) called interjacent onset overlap. Abi talks in overlap with Denise to disagree by displaying surprise. Wilkinson & Kitzinger (2006) found that displays of surprise can have a sequential progression. However, in this case Abi's "wow" is eruptive, almost literally into Denise's turn. The "wow" is then repeated which is part of how Abi shows a highly affective stance.

Denise orients to the simultaneous talk with Abi by halting her turn-in-progress with a sound cut off in the middle of the word "believ-" (line 5). She makes a move to regain the conversational floor almost immediately by increasing volume and repeating the syntactic structure at the start of her turn "i- I'm- I'm just saying". Hutchby (1992) demonstrated that interruption was a practice for doing disagreements and arguments (also see French & Local, 1986). Consistent with Hutchby's work, Denise is using interruption to disagree with Abi. Abi orients to Denise's turn as being a personal criticism but Denise disagrees with that understanding and claims it is a general assessment she is making.

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At line 13, Denise resumes her answer by re-iterating part of it “but we’ve –we’ve seen that”. She continues her turn by saying “you know we have”. Exploiting a possible turn constructional unit boundary of Denise’s turn, Jeff announces “I want to interrupt” (line 14). The announcement is made without actually overlapping with Denise’s talk. On the video recording Jeff makes a slicing movement with his hand which is an iconic gesture that he is cutting Denise’s answer off. Although it is not clear in the transcript Denise has not completed her response to the question, so both turn-taking and sequence organisation are disrupted. Jeff claims interruption to launch a new activity. As it turns out, it is to topicalise Abi’s surprise at the suggestion she is unlikeable. Part of the drama that makes the programme what it is involves the host discussing contestants’ feelings.

Denise provides Jeff with a go-ahead to proceed with his interruption, “yeah” (line 16). In effect, she is orienting to Jeff’s rights and authority to take the floor as the show’s host. Both parties are making relevant the roles and responsibilities that create this context as the game show (see Schegloff, 1992). The upcoming talk, and its associated action, is interruptive. Jeff selects Abi as the recipient of the next question (line 17). He asks about whether she was aware of Denise’s criticism of her as an unlikeable person. His question to Abi control the progression of the interaction by starting a new activity.

Jeff has several responsibilities as the host, including the distribution of speaking rights and controlling of the floor during the tribal council session. By saying he is interrupting Jeff achieves both of these responsibilities by displaying his rights to impinge on a current speaker’s turn in order to transfer speakership to another. As show host he has deontic rights to determine the local course of action and distribution of speakership in the multi-party interaction (Stevanovic, 2013). The context of the reality show is produced, in part, by contestants orienting to the host’s entitlement to control the conversational floor. In

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the above example, the host claims that right to seize an opportunity to change the activity to one that produces the kind of drama that typifies the programme.

To summarise the analysis. The extracts presented above show claims to interruption can orient to three different kinds of disruption to norms of organisation other than turn-taking. The disruptions shown were to the proper order of activities, the organisation of topics and adjacency pairs. By focusing on explicit elaborating claims to interruptions and the incursions they address, we have further developed the view that interruption is not just about turn-taking.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Conventionally, interruption has been conceptualised and studied as turn-taking violations, when one party starts talking before another has finished what they were saying. Conversation analytic research has proposed that there are no objective criteria for what counts as an interruption. Rather, it is better understood and investigated as a members' category. Schegloff (2001) discussed interruption as a moral categorisation because it takes a negative stance on talk or action that cannot be explained by objective criteria. By focusing on speakers' direct claims that their own talk is interruptive we have been able to show that disruptions to sequential organisation other than turn-taking can be relevant to what parties treat as subject to sanction. A unique contribution this study makes is to further elaborate on the normative orders that speakers' show are relevant to them when they describe what they are doing as interruption.

In a discussion of the overall structural organisation of talk and sequential organisation, Robinson (2014) noted that some social activities involve multiple sequences of action that are normatively organised, and that these have not been a strong focus of conversation analytic research. Such supra-sequential coherence is often evident in institutional interactions. For example, primary-care medical visits for acute conditions have

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a relative positioning of activities that progress from problem presentation through to diagnosis and treatment recommendations (Robinson, 2003). Our example of a therapist prospectively casting a request to take notes after therapeutic questioning as interruptive (extract one) is a clear instance of a speaker orienting to a breach to a normative supra-sequential order.

The relative positioning of one activity to another is one aspect of overall structural organisation of talk, another is when participants produce an interaction as being topically shaped (Robinson, 2014). We found that speakers' claims of themselves as interrupting were used to shift the topic of talk. Indexing a change of topic as interruptive could be done prospectively (extract two; a therapist moving the focus of the therapeutic discussion) or retrospectively (extract three; an interviewer initiating a topic change that was touched off by something the interviewee had said). In the former case there was no disruption to the previous speaker's turn because it had clearly come to completion. However, in extract three the interviewer's incoming turn was not at a transition-relevance place.

It seems likely that touched off topics may require interjacent overlap. Sometimes the thing to be topicalised may occur within a turn at talk. One way of extending the relevance of a topic is to tie the talk closely to it. Hutchby (2008) documented interjacent overlap being used for 'extraordinary noticings' which may occur within a current speaker's turn at talk. In the *Survivor* example (extract five) the claim to interruption was done to change the relevant activity to extend the relevance of a heightened display of emotion. The host's bid for the conversational floor was done interjacently (that is not at a TRP) and also not in overlap. Sequential interruptions, like turn competitive ones can, but don't necessarily involve simultaneous talk.

The adjacency pair is a basic structure of sequence organisation (Schegloff, 2007). We propose that speakers oriented to this basic sequence structure when they formulated their

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talk as interruptive. Extract four showed an interviewee in a police interrogation disrupting a first-pair-part in order to correct some information; extract five showed a speaker orienting to the cutting off of a second-pair-part as interruptive. Although in both these cases a turn at talk was also being disrupted, we suggest that the relevant matter for the parties were breaches to sequence of turns in an adjacency pair. Stronger support for our proposal would be examples where there was no simultaneous talk but the adjacency pair structure was still treated as disrupted.

Schegloff (2001) showcased a conversation analytic approach to interruption, overlap and turn-taking. It ended with a conjecture that interruption may best be understood as a category-bound activity. He was critical of research that used interruption as a first-order category of analysis that were counted and related to features of speakers such as their gender or social status. Nevertheless, Schegloff recognised the potential importance of membership categorisation devices – an inferential order with sets of rules for understanding the relevance of categories of people for activities including what they know and what they do (see also Sacks, 1992; Stokoe, 2012). Our analysis supports Schegloff's conjecture. It does seem that the right to interrupt – a moral breach– is accountable in terms of a speaker's membership category.

We propose that speakers formulated their own talk as interruptive as a means to accomplish the rights and responsibilities associated with their institutional roles. Thus, our work also contributes to the emerging conversation analytic research on deontic authority (Lindstrom & Weatherall, 2015; Stevanovic, 2013; Stevanovic & Svennevig, 2015, *inter alia*). We showed that speakers could use interruption to launch new, and manage existing, courses of action and thus exert their deontic authority to determine the trajectory of an institutional interaction.

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We have importantly shown that interruption is not just about turn-taking practices such as violating speakership rights and another's right to the conversational floor. Rather, members can also orient to violations in other aspects of normative sequential organisation as disruptive. Furthermore, we have suggested a way that membership categorisation can be relevant to interruption. In institutional talk, at least, deontic rights and responsibilities to progress an interactional project can seemingly entitle speakers to interrupt one activity to initiate another one. We suggest that attention to all aspects of sequential organisation should be an aspect of future studies of interruptions.

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