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**Abstract**

*During interviews, police officers attempt to elicit information from suspects in order to fulfill the demands of the interview procedure. However, suspects can question the officer's line of enquiry or even the need for the interview itself. This study examines the use of well, when it prefaces utterances, drawing on 22 interviews from one UK police constabulary. The analysis uses an approach which includes tools from Conversation Analysis (CA) and, in particular, identifies the use and function of certain sequences and question-answer pairs. Well has been noted as a marker of contradiction or of potential conflict and, in this context, is used by officers when framing exchanges which contradict the suspect's prior turn, either directly or through recalling suspect's previously elicited responses. Officers also control interactional agendas by using well to preface opinions regarding case evidence. The analysis of well usage shows how officers mitigate their own responses when contradicting the suspect or when highlighting inconsistencies in accounts.*

**Key words:** *Police interviews, discourse markers, discourse analysis, suspect resistance*

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 The Police Interview**

In England and Wales, as elsewhere, the police-suspect interview is the event in which the suspect's account is discussed and clarified for potential future legal proceedings. This account is the suspect's own report of what events took place, their motivation for engaging in certain actions and their understanding of what occurred when interpreted within a legal framework. However, the planning and structuring of such interviews is complex, with the officer required to record those topics which the suspect evokes and 'reducing the dominance of the interviewer at the interactional level' (Heydon 2018: 204).

Discursive power in interview interaction has been shown to predominantly lie with the officer due to their institutional status and ability to control the account creation process (Ainsworth 1993, 2008; Benneworth 2009; Shuy 1998; amongst others). This power is particularly seen in the construction of challenges (Edwards 2006; Gaines 2011) whereby officers evaluate the interviewees' responses (Heydon 2003; Johnson 2008). Power lies in the

ability to control interaction and the topical and action agendas within such interaction (Heritage 2015). However, such power is in flux on a turn by turn basis. Suspects attempt to obtain interactional control to pursue topical agendas which they feel are relevant. Haworth (2017) notes that though interviewer agendas determine the outcomes of the interviews, these are not always focused in favour of the prosecution's case and also, in Haworth (2006), how discursive roles can vary over the course of the interview. In her study of the interviews with Harold Shipman (Haworth 2006), suspect resistance was shown in how the suspect would not reply in the forms specified by officers, as the suspect placed emphasis on his greater knowledge of the topics discussed due his status as a medical expert.

## 1.2 Discourse Markers and the use of *Well*

Whilst there has been some debate as to the definition of discourse markers (Blakemore 2002; Fraser 1999), research has concerned itself with how discourse markers aid the process of creating discursive coherence. Schiffrin's (1987) seminal work includes an operational definition of markers as 'bracket[ing] units of talk' identifying them as 'devices which are both cataphoric and anaphoric whether they are in critical or terminal position.' (ibid.: 31). Markers do not form a singular word class, operating as a range of 'devices which provide contextual coordinates for ongoing talk' (ibid.: 41) so that '[T]he analysis of discourse markers is part of the more general analysis of discourse coherence – how speakers and hearers jointly integrate forms, meanings, and actions to make overall sense out of what is said' (ibid.: 49).

As a discourse marker, *well* has seen a wide range of research due to its multifunctionality (Hovy 1995). Schiffrin (1987: 102-103) describes *well* as 'a response marker which anchors its user in an interaction when an upcoming contribution is not fully consonant with prior coherence options'. When speakers preface such responses with *well*, the following utterance is marked as operating outside of the terms provided by the question itself, leading to disclaimers or explanations which were not identified within the initial question's structure.

*Well* use enables the speaker to maintain the floor (Jucker 1997) with *well* indicating that a face threatening act is going to occur and, by signalling this process, attempting to lessen its impact. Innes (2010) identified how lawyers would use *well* framed assertions to elucidate further detail for overhearing audiences to clarify case information. This strategy controlled the flow of information, particularly in regard to disagreements (Hale 1999). In analysing police interviews with witnesses, MacLeod (2009) examined how *well* would frame sequences, and as with lawyers, how officers would use *well* to control interaction. The use of *well* (and so, the other marker discussed within her paper) was important to officers as it enabled them to 'attach importance to certain facts while omitting much of the information provided by the victim' (ibid.: 46).

In this paper, the focus is on the use of the *well*-preface as part of a larger sequence organisation which takes place when suspects attempt to determine the topic of discussion or attempt to contradict or disalign from the officer's action agenda, broadly referred to as 'suspect resistance'. The study adds to the already considerable present research on the use of *well* as a marker in

other contexts (Heritage 2015; Kim 2013; Lerner and Kitzinger 2019; Schegloff and Lerner 2009; amongst others) but has been largely neglected within police interview interaction, only mentioned previously at length in MacLeod (2009). However, the data collected for this study highlights how important the *well*-preface was within sequencing decisions made by interviewing officers during periods where the suspect resisted certain lines of questioning. This study shows how interactive power is not static within the interview process and is determined on a turn by turn basis. Though often sequential and topical decisions are at the disposal of the officer, suspects must contribute to account creation so compliance with this process is required. Therefore, officer's discursive strategies, explored here with regards to the *well*-preface, shed light on how such compliance is achieved (or not).

## **2. Data and Method**

The analysis in this paper uses extracts from interview data where officers are questioning suspects. The extracts were analysed in part of a wider study regarding the officer's use of discourse markers in suspect interviews (Garbutt 2016). This process includes the production of an account of the suspect's actions and therefore has potentially serious repercussions for the suspect. In the interviews collected, suspects were charged with minor offences (see table 1) and were recorded by the police officers onto cassette tapes. These tapes were then listened to by the researcher and transcribed using a simplified version of Jefferson's transcription system (1984) in order to provide transcripts for analysis (see appendix for key). The interviews themselves took place in England between 2005 and 2007. All interviewees had been cautioned at the beginning of the interview and had been arrested on suspicion of committing a criminal offence. The right to free and impartial legal advice had been provided with some suspects asking for a solicitor to be present during the interview. Though the interviews were collected by the same constabulary, the interviews themselves took place in three different police stations. A corpus of 22 different interviews was collected and these interviews varied in length from 5 to 45 minutes. The extracts in this paper were taken from four different interviews, the details for which are given in Table 1. The extracts and those interviews they were taken from were chosen due to providing examples of challenges which included the use of *well* as found elsewhere in the data. The personal information the interviews contained was anonymised during the transcription process so no private data was held. Alternative names and locations were provided and the information usually provided at the beginning of the interview, including name, date of birth and address of the suspect, was omitted from the transcripts. Repeated listening of the tapes ensured the accuracy of the transcription.

The methodology used to analyse this data included the sociolinguistic view of discourse markers offered by Schiffrin (1987) whilst also using tools from CA. These tools, drawing on ten Have's model of CA (2007) with reference to Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks (1977), included an analysis of how turns are organised through turn taking, sequencing (such as seen in adjacency pairs and sequence expansion), repairs and turn design (how turns are interpreted by participants and other

recipients). The use of the *well* preface often occurred during follow up expansion sequences after an initial question and answer pair. The use of CA tools during analysis clarifies the speech acts officers evoke during interviews in response to suspect resistance. Tools from CA have been employed further and more extensively elsewhere in institutional discourse research through an applied CA approach (Drew and Heritage 1992). However, it must be noted the diversity of approaches evident within Applied CA. Antaki (2011: 7) identified six different Applied CA approaches within the relevant literature, such approaches leading ‘away from the ordinary conversation which made up the raw data of much of CA’s early work, and towards the worlds of work and social institutions which impose their own imperatives on the exchange of talk’.

Interview Number	A5	A9	A10	A17
Length of Interview	41m20s	20m59s	45m35s	28m0s
Offence Investigated	Burglary	Criminal damage	Criminal damage	Burglary
Frequency of well-prefaced questions/statements used by officer	9	4	12	10
Those present within the interview	OF, SUS, SOL	OF1, OF2, SUS	OF1, OF2, SUS, SOL	OF1, OF2, SUS

**Table 1:** Interview information for extracts discussed in this paper

### 3. Analysis

In analysing how officers respond to suspects’ agenda-driven turns, I will consider how officers use *well*-prefaced responses in sequences which:

- Contradict the suspect’s immediate prior turn
- Identify inconsistencies in the suspect’s immediate prior turn within the context of their account as a whole
- Display information relating to case evidence, e.g. witness testimony

The officers do this by:

- Justifying their previous questioning strategy
- Offering opinions
- Along with *well*, using *okay* as a marker of receipt of suspect’s responses before leading on to contradictory information
- Attempting to maintain action agendas when suspects ask questions which disalign from those agendas (cf. Heritage 2009)

All these elements are used by officers to maintain discursive power in the event of suspect resistance.

Both extracts 1 and 2 are from the same interview and provide examples of officers using case evidence, and arguably their own opinions, to manage

suspect resistance. The officer uses a *well*-prefaced turn to introduce this information and to maintain interactional power by having control over action agendas despite the suspect's attempts to switch topic.

The suspect has been arrested for damaging the police cell in which he was held the previous night and the officer has shown CCTV footage of the alleged incident taking place. In extract 1, the suspect initially challenges the officer using a *so*-prefaced question (analysed in regard to police interviews in Johnson (2002). The extract was discussed in terms of *so* usage during Garbutt (2015)). The officer recalls the evidence in line 10 to challenge the suspect's ongoing attempts to question the process of the interview. The reference to the witness's statement helps to identify the suspect's testimony as implausible (Benneworth-Gray 2014). This extract provides an example of how case evidence is used to address a suspect's question and maintain an action agenda during the interview.

### Extract 1 (A9)

1 SUS: So where does it show I'm breaking the light?  
 2 OF: **Well**  
 3 (8.2)  
 4 OF: It's erm unfortunately it's on a time phase a frame  
 5 freeze type of thing but the light is above the  
 6 door but you can't see the light as such but er  
 7 SUS: So how can they say I broke it if?  
 8 OF: **Well** because it was intact the lamp itself was  
 9 intact (.) before you went in  
 10 there we've got a statement to say from the officer  
 11 that the area was okay  
 12 that everything was intact

In line 2, the officer uses *well* as a response marker, but this is the entirety of the response, preceding a long pause. Some response to the suspect's initial question (line 1) is required, but the officer is distracted by the process of showing the video footage to the suspect. The footage itself is problematic as it is difficult to see when the suspect actually smashes the light fitting. (This is further complicated later in the interview when the laptop the officer is using to view the footage runs out of battery power and the second officer is required to go and get a charger.) The lack of immediacy in showing the suspect committing the offence results in the officer recalling witness testimony to respond to the suspect's questions.

In line 8, a *well*-prefaced turn is used to regain control, noting the importance of witness testimony in lines 8 to 12. The *well*-preface privileges the role of the officer and provides information to undermine the suspect's attempts to gain control (Heritage 2015). Further to the witness testimony, there is emphasis

on the damage caused by the suspect when the officer uses the word *intact* three times.

The power asymmetry between officer and suspect is less obvious here than in other interview discourse (for example, Benneworth 2009). Cerović (2016) highlights how unusual it is for suspects to ask questions but is particularly relevant for suspects when denying guilt and attempting to hold the floor (though Cerović concentrates largely on the use of rhetorical questions). The suspect prefaces the summary with *so*, marking the conclusion that because the CCTV footage does not show what is evidentially required, that he cannot be found guilty of committing the offence. The suspect maintains the topical agenda whilst attempting to control the action agenda, due to the view that the evidence is flawed (Hayano 2013; Heritage 2009).

During the same interview, the suspect explains that the cuts and bruises evident on his hands and arms occurred the previous night due to the treatment of the officers towards him whilst he was in custody and that the officers were unnecessarily forceful in their attempts to restrain the suspect and ensure that he entered the detention cell (extract 2). However, the officer argues that having watched the CCTV with the suspect, the injuries occurred due to the Perspex light which the suspect allegedly damaged whilst being held in the cell. The extract shows how the officer uses *well* to provide a non-standard response in view of the suspect's initial question in lines 7 to 8. This turn also simultaneously expresses an opinion regarding the suspect's previous response. The introduction of the *well* preface in line 9 begins the process whereby the officer attempts to discredit the suspect's account of his injuries whilst still allowing the suspect to provide this information, though with interruptions and interjections which imply some uncertainty as regards its veracity.

### Extract 2 (A9)

- 1 SUS: I remember being hurt because I've got all the  
 2 bruises up to there [cut here] but [they go]  
 3 OF: [hmmm] [are you]  
 4 OF: sure you didn't cut that from the [er?]  
 5 SUS: [no]  
 6 OF: From the Perspex?  
 7 SUS: No you can't punch the Perspex with  
 8 that bit can you?  
 9 OF: **Well** Perspex can be very sharp  
 10 SUS: Yeah I know but it's there  
 11 OF: And there's no record of any erm (.) injuries  
 12 to you as far as I'm aware this er(hh)  
 13 SUS: They done it (.) [that] weren't from the Perspex  
 14 OF: [hmm]  
 15 SUS: That's definitely not Perspex come from there  
 16 that's the damage

- 17 OF: How did you break it?  
 18 SUS: Punched it  
 19 OF: You punched it?  
 20 SUS: Yeah (.) I've got a hard punch I have  
 21 OF: Hmm what happened when you punched?

The use of *well* in line 9 is noted as a 'harbinger' of a 'non-straight forward response' (Heritage 2015) as the officer is not responding in full to the suspect's question in lines 7 to 8. The officer does maintain the same topical agenda to address what the suspect has stated, though the action agenda is different with the officer shifting the focus to the possibility of the Perspex being the cause of the suspect's injuries. This is also accomplished in the following turns by identifying further evidence that there is no record of the injuries (lines 11 to 12). Though the suspect continues to assert the cause of his injuries (line 13 and lines 15 to 16), the officer only provides receipt with *hmm* in line 14, showing no commitment to the suspect's response before leading onto other topics (line 17).

This exchange occurs as a result of the previous questioning sequence, the reasoning for this provided by the officer in lines 3, 4 and 6 and a need to 'disambiguate' (Kim 2013). The officer further expands this sequence by adding *are you sure* (lines 3 to 4) testing the suspect's recollection. Such a question indicates that the suspect is an unreliable witness and by asking the question, there is an attempt to undermine the account. This challenge could have a significant impact on interview interaction, with attempts by the officer to reassert his power. However, *well* also operates as a face threat mitigator (Jucker 1997) as the officer does not respond to the suspect's previous turn. The marker also helps to frame the officer's response for an overhearing audience (Innes 2010) and providing links between this observation and his previous questioning turn in lines 3, 4 and 6.

A similar occurrence is seen in extract 3, though the officer is more forceful in asserting their role as an eyewitness to contradict the suspect's response. In extract 3, the suspect has been arrested for burglary, a result of a witness's statement on the clothing worn by the perpetrators. The officer identifies this clothing as having been worn by the suspect and his friend when they were arrested. As the officer was present at the time of arrest, he displays this knowledge in a *well*-prefaced turn which attempts to undermine the suspect's own contradiction.

### Extract 3 (A5)

- 1 OF: Perhaps but it's fair to say you did (.) had on you and  
 2 your mate quite a few layers of clothing on last night  
 3 SUS: Not really  
 4 OF: Okay **well** I was there when you were arrested as well =  
 5 SUS: = one jumper

In line 4, the officer marks acceptance of the second pair part using *okay* (Schegloff 2007) and as such marks receipt of this dispreferred response. The use of *well* following the receipt marker indicates a movement away from the suspect's problematic response to placing greater importance on the fact that the officer was present at the scene and a witness (MacLeod 2009). While the officer cannot claim that the suspect's response is an outright lie, the officer instead challenges this response, reminding the suspect of their presence at the scene.

This response from the officer expands on the information presented in lines 1 and 2, with the comment *it's fair* showing the officer's self-identification as an impartial observer. After the suspect's direct contradiction, the officer provides the reasoning behind the line of questioning. The use of *well* enables 'my side' telling (Heritage 2015), with the suspect stating his account, that he was not wearing *quite a few layers* (line 2) but instead just one jumper. When receiving this contradiction, the officer has to move ahead beyond this change to the information which he has provided.

The use of *well* at this point is marking that there is discordance with the prior response. These assertions are not just for the suspect's information but also aid in clarifying meaning for an overhearing audience, thereby potentially identifying this as a controlling sequence such as seen when disagreements are stated in courtroom proceedings when using a *well* preface (Hale 1999). The use of *well* can be seen as agenda-based with displaying this testimony of the officer as evidence and directly contradicting the suspect's account.

In extracts 2 and 3, the contradiction with the suspect's prior turn is implicit, identifying that Perspex is sharp or that the officer was aware of what the suspect was wearing from their presence at the scene. However, in extracts 4, 5 and 6, which all come from the same interview, *well* prefaces turns where the officer offers more explicit contradiction, dealing with ongoing suspect resistance by attempting to gain a confession from the suspect.

In extract 4, the officer clarifies the process of the interview with the suspect, explaining that this is the officer's attempt to put the actions of the suspect, as described during the interview, into a legal context and, in this case, that the suspect is guilty of attempting to break into a house to steal prescription drugs. As with other extracts (see table 1), there are two officers present at the interview, who both challenge the suspect (lines 23 and 24). The first officer attempts to highlight that the suspect committed the crime for which they have been arrested though the suspect maintains he did not intend to commit a crime. The officer's reasons for doing so are outlined in lines 13 to 21, whereby the officer is challenging the suspect but not attempting to *catch* (line 14) the suspect out. As with other extracts, there is an expansion sequence, with the initial question and answer pair in lines 1 to 6. This extract provides an example of an officer providing their own opinion following a suspect's denial. *Well* prefaces this opinion whilst also framing it as following the initial expansion sequence where the suspect's actions are outlined in greater detail.



**Extract 4 (A17)**

1 OF: Yeah will you accept that that act in itself  
2 would be seen to be theft? because it's stuff  
3 that doesn't belong to you all it  
4 [you may well have had]  
5 SUS: [all being well I'm sure] >I would wouldn't<  
6 have had her permission  
7 OF: Right  
8 SUS: But you've you've got to appreciate where I've been  
9 at with it mate  
10 OF: Oh yeah I can↑ I can↑ it's just  
11 SUS: I'm not trying to say I wasn't trying to commit a crime  
12 I was trying to I was just trying to say sorry  
13 OF: Yeah what what I'm getting at and I'm not I'm not  
14 trying to catch you out or make you look stupid or  
15 anything but the purpose of these these interviews  
16 is for us for you to tell what you've been doing and  
17 for us to put into some kind of context which  
18 we can define legally and we can that yep this is a  
19 burglary he's gone there with intention and what's  
20 and that intention is to get into the house and  
21 to steal from inside the house  
22 SUS: That's not really what I did though  
23 OF: **Well** I think I think that was  
24 OF2: You tried to (.) you know that  
25 SUS: No my intention was to go there and for her to be there  
26 OF: Yeah yeah yeah but once (.) once you established  
27 that she wasn't there you  
28 [went beyond]  
29 SUS: [I was at the] house [though] already  
30 OF: [yeah] (.)  
31 OF: but you knocked on the front door and then you  
32 climbed over the wall

During this section, the officers are clarifying the objective of the interview, to obtain the suspect's account, but have used this process to underline the suspect's guilt. The officer identifies the interview aims in lines 15 to 21, holding the floor to display this information for the suspect.

The first officer's use of *well* indicates some attempt to build rapport with the suspect. Initially, the officer uses *will you accept* (line 1) as a leading question, giving the suspect few options but to agree with the assertion put forward.

This underlines the officer's question as containing a level of presupposition (Hayano 2013) and attempting to display the actions of the crime in logical, institutionally-recognised terms: it is theft because it is *stuff that doesn't belong to you* (lines 2 to 3). Marking with *right* (line 7) to indicate receipt of the suspect's response enables the officer to move on and provide a fuller explanation with greater detail to obtain the acceptance of the suspect. However, though this expansion sequence does provide further information, the suspect still does not agree with the officer's set of events as described and the use of *well* aids in introducing a topical agenda, the officer's conviction of the suspect's guilt (line 23). In fact, in lines 11 to 12, the suspect partially admits their guilt but in line 25 denies it once the full explanation is provided by the officer.

The use of *well* in line 23 backchannels to the previous information in the initial lengthy turn in lines 13 to 21 (Owen 1981) and operates as Heritage (2015) notes a 'harbinger of a non-straightforward response' to the suspect's immediate prior turn. This is a non-straightforward response as it is a direct contradiction of what the suspect has said, and sets the agenda of the interview (Heritage 2009), in this case, identifying the suspect's guilt. The use of *well* modifies this assertion, though the contradiction is picked up by the suspect who asserts his innocence in line 25.

The second officer also uses their opinion about the suspect's intent in a more explicit use of discursive power. The second officer's challenge in line 24 is more direct, providing a direct comparison with the first officer's *well*-prefaced use. It is possible that the second officer provides a less mitigated response because of this initial sequence from the first officer, and attempts to obtain a clear response from the suspect (i.e. *you know that*). What results is that the suspect provides a firmer denial of the officer's assertions regarding intent. In line 25, the suspect asserts a denial but this denial is further identified and clarified in line 29.

This extract shows how officers use *well* to cope with suspect resistance by modifying the subsequent contradiction to the suspect's statement. During the expansion sequence, the first officer displays the account in institutional terms and the interview extract shows the closed process by which the rights information is used, i.e. everything the suspect says will be recorded (Komter 2003), and also, how officers can add a less emotive aspect to the suspect's response by removing their role as an active agent (Edwards 2008). It is worth noting the ambiguity in the suspect's turn in lines 11 to 12 whereby the suspect states their agenda as being concerned with the process of providing an apology to the victim rather than saying anything about their guilt or innocence. This apology would perhaps only be relevant if they were guilty though the officer does not question this point in subsequent turns.

The next two extracts are consecutive within the transcript but are divided here for reasons of clarity. In extracts 5 and 6 the officer engages with the suspect's agenda as it becomes more difficult to ensure that information relevant to the account is provided. The officer marks this, though in the following extract (6) this leads into a more abstract discussion regarding the nature of intent. Extract 5 provides an example of how *okay* indicates receipt of the suspect's resisting turn before the officer provides a contradiction to what has been said, as seen in extract 3. However when there is no direct

challenge provided (as seen with the second officer in extract 4), less power is evident within the interviewing officer's turns and the suspect maintains control over the topical agenda.

### Extract 5 (A17)

- 1 OF: **Well** you intended to get in the house by  
 2 creating as little damage as possible it doesn't  
 3 mean that you you (.) you're a gentleman you're  
 4 a gentlemanly burglar then because you're trying  
 5 to create the impression of not wanting to batter  
 6 the door down to get in =  
 7 SUS: = that's not creating an impression of not wanting  
 8 to batter the door down that's not battering the door  
 9 down  
 10 OF: That's being considerate but you've still (.) you're still  
 11 breaking in somewhere where you're not supposed to be =  
 12 SUS: = well I didn't break in did I?  
 13 OF: Okay **well** you're still intending to and trying to

The officer begins by describing the suspect's account as appearing like a *gentlemanly burglar* (line 4), employing such a term to show the disparity between the suspect's account and the alleged offence. Such a display forms a challenge to the suspect's words, attempting to show how officers discredit the account and reasserting the suspect's intention to steal, despite the resistance of the suspect to agree to this assertion. It is notable also how the officer and suspect both use *well* with the suspect employing similar marker functions for their interactional agenda.

Whilst the officer acknowledges the suspect's responses, with the receipt marker *okay* in line 13, *well* marks the boundary receiving the response to non-acceptance of the response, as the officer contradicts what the suspect has said. The suspect also uses *well* to provide a non-direct challenge to the officer's statements, reasserting their viewpoint and attempting to shift topics. The marking of receipt indicates that there is acceptance of the suspect's question (line 12) but no clear response is provided. Though the suspect does challenge the officer's interactional control, the officer is still able to set both topical and action agendas. However, as in other extracts in this paper, the officer's discursive control fails to ensure that the suspects do not directly contradict (lines 7 to 9) or ask direct questions (line 12).

The following extract leads directly on from extract 5, showing the changes in topic agenda. It is arguable that the suspect maintains greater interactional control, though ultimately, it is the officer who pursues an action agenda and discredits the suspect's argument. In contrast to extract 4, the suspect is able to provide a greater control over topic agenda.

**Extract 6 (A17)**

14 SUS: Well yeah but you know people intend to you  
15 know to fly aeroplanes but they don't always fly  
16 them you know what I mean?  
17 OF: Yeah yeah  
18 SUS: They crash them into the ground  
19 OF: **Well** you can still attempt to do something which  
20 is impossible

In line 19, the officer's use of *well* differs from that in the preceding extract, those used within lines 1 and 13, as the topic becomes less related to evidential details. The officer uses *well* to preface a contradiction to what the suspect has said in his attempts, albeit loosely, to focus interaction onto more relevant lines of argument.

What else is important here is that both suspect and the officer are using *well* prefaces to control interactional agendas. Not only do officers use *well* to move beyond suspect resistance but suspects similarly use *well* to resist certain lines of argument put forward by the officer. The use of *well* manages a 'short range' sequential relationship (Heritage 2015) by linking together the important question and answer sequences, whether these questions are provided by either party. In this extract, the suspect uses the analogy of aviation accidents to identify the difficulty of differentiating between intent and the ability to fulfill an action. However, as the officer is only considering intent, he identifies the potential intent is what is crucial and attempting to do something difficult or *impossible*, in the terms of the case, break into a house, is still possible, and thereby undermining the suspect's argument.

Cerović (2016) notes through the use of rhetorical questions how suspect resistance can often be implicit in nature. In the extracts in this paper, suspects resist topic shifts or implications of guilt through asking similar questions and challenging the case evidence. However, in the last extract, the suspect is more direct in confronting the officer, by challenging the repetition of topics during interview discourse.

In extract 7, the officer uses information which the suspect has previously provided to gain further account detail. The suspect has been arrested for burglary and maintained a version of events which indicates their innocence. The use of the information provided by the suspect seeks to justify the questions which the officer asks. These questions attempt to challenge the suspect's resistance. Both uses of the *well* preface (lines 4 and 11) provide an anaphoric reference to the previous questions provided (line 4 refers to the question in line 2; line 11 refers to the question in lines 8 to 9). The officer provides justification for those questions in these *well*-prefaced lines, with line 11 also marking a topic switch. Unlike extract 6, the suspect is not attempting to control the topical agenda but instead the action agenda, by indicating issues with the process of questioning and refusing to comply with repeating or elaborating on details previously provided.

**Extract 7 (A10)**

- 1 SUS: I didn't knock on any doors  
 2 OF: Why not?  
 3 SUS: Didn't knock any doors  
 4 OF: **Well** if you believed he lived there  
 5 SUS: Yeah but there's >how many doors are in there?<  
 6 how many is in there? I'm not going to go  
 7 and knock on everybody's door  
 8 OF: All right okay and then you come straight out  
 9 of there okay where then?  
 10 SUS: No I took (.) refer back to your notes  
 11 OF: **Well** you've said you gone down the alleyway  
 12 SUS: Yeah  
 13 OF: The dead end one  
 14 SUS: Yeah I've come out and gone into that block

Initially, the use of *well* (line 4) frames an assertion where the officer attempts to elicit further detail from the suspect (which is similar to questioning processes in courtroom proceedings, Innes 2010). The officer identifies the weaknesses in the suspect's story and addresses their resistance to the questions by showing inconsistencies in the suspect's account. However, the officer's use of *well* in the third position indicates that the impending turn is the reason for the question *why not?* (line 2) (Kim 2013). The question *why not* requires expansion as the officer assumes that the need to knock on the doors makes sense though the suspect clarifies why this is not appropriate in lines 5 to 7, that it would require him knocking on a number of doors just to see if the person he was trying to find was there. The suspect uses a rhetorical question in lines 5 to 6 to underline this argument, not expecting the officer to know themselves exactly how many doors are in the block of flats. In doing so, the suspect strengthens their decision not to knock on the doors and further indicates the veracity of their story and their innocence.

The second use of *well* prefaces a turn which addresses the suspect's resistance by immediately following the suspect's topics, in this case, by *refer[ing] back to your notes* as a course of action. Having marked receipt of the suspect's inability to answer the previous question (*all right okay* are stacked in line 8 to mark a movement away from this question), the officer attempts to move ahead with the action agenda of the interview, i.e. checking the clarity of the information provided by the suspect. The suspect does not dispute what the officer states in line 11 but instead confirms (line 12). The officer uses *well* to manage interactional backchanneling (Owen 1981) to restate the suspect's account for the record. Though the suspect is resisting, the officer still maintains some control by steering topics (MacLeod 2009) framing this information as from the suspect, *you've said*, justifying the questioning process and in an attempt to proceed (Schegloff and Lerner 2009). This sequence also helps to consolidate the information elicited previously by the question in lines 8 to 9.

In extract 7, the *well*-preface indicates the use of recipient design, and the justification for the officer's questions whilst also attempting to maintain topical control (MacLeod 2009). What is also important is the suspect's challenge to authority. Both speakers are indicating the need for clarification of what is said and use reminders of what has been said in order to fulfill their agendas. The suspect's comment to *refer back to your notes* may be considered as overstepping the mark. Whilst the use of rhetorical questions enables suspects to maintain their innocence, the officer here contends with a direct challenge to their authority. The officer is forced to reframe responses with *well* reflecting some disagreement with the suspect's request.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

In this paper, I have analysed how officers respond when faced with suspect resistance during interviews with a focus on *well* when used as a preface in such sequences. The form such turns would take included: contradicting a suspect's prior turn, identifying inconsistencies in the suspect's previous elicited account and by displaying case evidence, usually to show further inconsistencies. These strategies were often used concurrently. The extracts provide an insight into how suspects attempt to topic switch when their options to do so is usually limited (Heydon 2018).

Responses to suspect resistance using the *well* prefaced turn often marked some contradiction to what the suspect has said, either directly or indirectly. The data showed that direct contradiction, such as seen in extract 5, occurred after an expansion sequence where the officer argues the intent of the suspect. However, in extract 2, the example of contradiction was less explicit as the suspect's immediate prior response and the officer's *well* prefaced turn do not align. The officer is contradicting the suspect in their account of how they received their injuries. However, the suspect's response, that you cannot easily punch Perspex, does not align directly with the officer's following turn, that Perspex is sharp. In this example, *well* marks the partial response as a disjunction marker (Schiffrin 1987) with an implicit contradiction and a response that does not align with the suspect's argument.

Identifying inconsistencies in suspect accounts often drives the final stages of the interview. These inconsistencies highlight the contradiction in the suspect's account and potentially show the officer working on behalf of the court (Rock 2012). Highlighting these inconsistencies was particularly relevant in extract 7. The suspect resists this line of questioning with the officer having to justify the ongoing line of enquiry. The suspect challenges the action agenda of the officer and there are elements of recipient design in the later turns of the extract whereby the demands of setting the account down in lengthy detail and testing the suspect on consistency must be handled alongside preventing potential interactional breakdown.

In displaying case evidence, officers would use such evidence to both contradict suspect's accounts and highlight inconsistencies but rather than using opinion, officers can provide a more neutral reasoning for non acceptance of the suspect's immediate prior turn. How these responses are framed tended to vary between extracts, such as seen with emphasising the

witness account (extract 1) or the officer's own report of what occurred at the scene (extract 3). These examples, as with other methods, gave the floor to the suspect to provide further information.

Suspects were shown to use similar methods when attempting to obtain responses from the officer (extract 1). The officer's dispreference for certain topic shifts was marked through the subsequent utterance, prefaced with *well*, before showing a lack of engagement with those topics which the suspect wished to address. The use of *well* also acts as a disclaimer (Schiffrin 1987), thereby putting the utterance prior to this in doubt. The officer is marking the suspect's responses as at odds with the line of enquiry. Using *well* helps to ignore assertions from the suspect (MacLeod 2009) and ensures that officers can attempt to maintain their action agenda. However, it is at these points of suspect resistance that power asymmetries become less evident, with examples of how suspects can contradict and question the officer's line of questioning. Whilst officers arguably still have overall power, the extracts in this paper show that it is not always evident on a turn by turn basis.

In this limited sample, the use of a *well*-preface is integral to the process of addressing suspect resistance, as it provides a marker of dispreference whilst also mitigating the contradiction evident in the forthcoming utterance. Such usage by officers highlights the importance of recipient design and protecting interview interaction from potential breakdown. An interesting extension to this work would provide clearer detail of how the use of *well* in these sequences impacts on the effectiveness of the interview process as a whole in terms of the creation of the suspect's account for use in court.

### **Appendix: Transcription Key**

( . )	pauses of less than a second
( number )	pauses of over a second, provided within seconds e.g. (3.2) is a pause of 3.2 seconds
[ word ]	overlapping speech
-	stuttering speech where a certain sound is repeated
?	questioning intonation
↑	rising intonation (not necessarily a questioning intonation)
↓	falling intonation
( h )	exhalation with the number of 'h's indicating length of breath
<u>word</u>	at a louder volume
°word°	at a lower volume
( laughs )	laugh
<word>	slow speech
>word<	fast speech
=	turns which run on with no pause between speakers

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