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Self-categorization: a resource for the management of experiential entitlement in talk about child death

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Abstract: In this paper, I examine self-categorization practices as resources for the interactional organization of relative experiential entitlements. Locating the study in talk about child death, an explicitly moral domain of social life, this study utilizes 18 radio-based interactions from a South African talk-radio broadcaster. Using an ethnomethodological, conversation-analytic approach, I examine affective responses to reports of child deaths, demonstrating how these practices reproduce child death as a contemporary social and moral concern. My findings demonstrate how practices of, and variations in, self-reference and self-categorization are resources for managing relative rights and obligations, thereby reproducing common-sense knowledge about parents and children in contemporary South African society. This research contributes to advancing knowledge in the fields of membership categorization analysis and the social organization of experience.

Keywords: child death; conversation analysis; entitlement to experience; ethnomethodology; membership categorization; self-reference

1 Introduction

Children are routinely viewed as vulnerable members of a society (Ariès 1965), and their deaths, especially those deaths that are seen as preventable, are treated as morally disruptive (Riches and Dawson 1998; Timmermans 2005). Conversely, protection of a society's children is constructed as an individual and national priority, with a widened scope of potential blame and culpability that extends to parents, other adults, civil organizations and government itself (Donzelot 1979; Rose 1989). The site of the present study, South Africa – as a part of Sub-Saharan Africa – has been targeted as an area with pervasively high mortality rates and other indicators

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of ill-health and structural inequalities (Coovadia et al. 2009). The high prevalence rate of child deaths in South Africa, itself an artefact of structural inequalities based on race and class (Darikwa and Dorrington 2011), makes this context a particularly perspicuous site for the study of the social organization of experiences of child death. It is worth stating upfront that, while this analysis deals with tragic and catastrophic experiences, it does so with the intention of providing insight into a disturbingly frequent occurrence in the South African landscape. The child mortality rate (due to both violence and negligence) in the country is unacceptably high (Hall et al. 2018), and the present analysis refracts larger structural inequities that underpin much of the violence perpetrated against children in South African society (Coovadia et al. 2009).

In this paper, I use a conversation-analytic approach to examine radio-based interactions about child deaths that have occurred in South Africa. Conversation analysis treats experience as an interactional, rather than private or internal, phenomenon, and describes participants' management of the rights and responsibilities therein (see Heritage 2011). By examining affective responses toward reports of child deaths on the radio, I describe a set of practices that are systematically deployed by speakers in interactions about child death. While self-reference displays a speaker's routine entitlement (and obligation) to comment on the experience being discussed, the deployment of category terms locates particular speakers as incumbents of a relevant membership group, which is treated as a resource for displaying heightened experiential rights and obligations. As such, this resource may also be deployed in cases where a speaker is vulnerable to being held accountable for the death of the child. These practices provide insight into the mechanisms by which the categories of (and common-sense knowledge about) parents and children are maintained and reproduced in interaction.

I specifically examine the interactional organization of radio-based interactions about child deaths, focusing on self-referential practices in first-person emotional responses to specific incidents of child deaths. I begin by reviewing relevant literature on child death, radio-based interactions and conversation analytic approaches to studying experience and emotion as interactional concerns. I continue with a brief description of the dataset for this study, as well as the methodology that has guided the analysis. The analysis is divided into three sections: the first examines simple self-reference in talk about child deaths, while the second examines self-categorization as a method for displaying heightened experiential rights and obligations in these interactions. The final section provides an analysis of how self-categorization is used to manage relative entitlements and how these are used as the basis for asserting a speaker's moral position in the interaction. The analysis is followed by a discussion of the significance of these findings for studying the social organization of experience.

2 Literature review

I begin with a brief overview of child death and its impact as normative features of contemporary society, contrasted with a discursive approach which studies child death as a social phenomenon. Focusing on radio talk as a form of institutional interaction, I note how talk about child death is treated as explicitly moral even in the face of routine institutional constraints. I conclude this section with a discussion of experience and emotion as interactional matters that shape and affirm personhood and identity.

A large body of literature (Bogensperger and Lueger-Schuster 2014; Hendrickson 2009; Lindsay and Heliker 2018; Nehari et al. 2007; Riches and Dawson 1998; Vig et al. 2021) explores the effects of child deaths on those normatively understood to be impacted by their deaths, such as those in kinship relationships, for example, as well as community members or other people in close physical proximity to the child that died. This literature, while important, entrenches the common-sense bond between parents, relatives or community members, and children, while paying less attention to the social constitution of these sets of normative knowledge.

Less has been written about child deaths as a social phenomenon (but see, for example, Menzel 2014; Zelizer 1994). The present study focuses on how participants on a radio show talk about child deaths and negotiate the relative experiential rights and obligations that are a feature of this talk.

2.1 Radio talk: a form of institutional interaction

While radio talk about child death encompasses a domain of social life that is distinctively broad, it is nevertheless locally managed and negotiated, with speakers displaying their relative rights and obligations on a turn-by-turn basis. Although this analysis does not focus on the features of radio interaction as a particular platform for public interactions (see, for example, Dori-HaCohen 2012, 2014; Hester and Fitzgerald 1999; Hutchby 1991; Whitehead 2009), it is important to distinguish between the organization of experience on a public and institutionalized platform from the interactions that might take place between two individuals in a more private setting.

Radio talk is shaped by institutional constraints, whose features are useful for the purposes of this study. First, since radio is an important site for the (re)production of social and moral values (Van Dijk 1988), it is a useful context for the examination of child death as a *public* concern in which participants are not (necessarily) directly implicated in the reports to which they are responding. It thus

provides an analytic context for the study of relative entitlements in a domain with a widened scope of access. Second, radio interactions are produced for an overhearing audience (Heritage 1985) and are thus attuned to both local and more distal features of recipient design. As institutional representatives, radio presenters are discouraged from revealing personal opinions or biases, and are expected to display a "neutral" stance (Clayman 1988, 1992), especially in controversial or sensitive matters. Objective reporting is crucial to the business of producing "topically relevant information for an assumed news agenda" which is of interest to "government officials, social scientists, and a mass audience with diverse interests and ideological sympathies" (Clayman 1992: 164). Deviations from neutrality or the institutional stance frustrate the institutional project, and are thus available for scrutiny in their orientation to a competing set of normative requirements, for example, the obligation to respond appropriately to an upsetting news story. The tension between institutional and parent identities is a core feature of these interactions, and the systematic prioritization of personal identities and opinions over institutional neutrality, in essence of experience over information, provides a glimpse into the powerful consensus surrounding child death as a moral concern.

2.2 Experience in interaction

Sacks' (1984) analysis of knowledge and experience as interactional concerns emphasized that, for participants, these domains are distinct moral systems, with different normative constraints on their production, an insight that has been systematically supported and developed in subsequent research (Heritage and Raymond 2005; Raymond and Heritage 2006). While knowledge refers, broadly, to things that people know about "mutually accessible" objects in the world (Heritage 2011: 183), experience requires participation in, or observation of, an event: what Sacks (1984: 424) described as "encountering" an event. As such, the interactional constraints upon experience (what Sacks [1984: 424–429] termed "entitlement to experience") are more tightly regulated than they are with regard to knowledge, with the practical distinction being that participants treat knowledge as something that can be shared, in contrast to experience, which is treated as belonging to the experiencer. This management of experiential rights and responsibilities underpins the construction of self-other relations more generally. Raymond and Heritage (2006: 701) refer to this as the "distance-involvement dilemma", in which "persons must manage the twin risks of appearing disengaged from the affairs of the other, or appearing over-involved with and even appropriating them". In practical terms, parties must manage these two countervailing contingencies in a manner that is

affiliative while simultaneously attuned to the other's relative experiential rights and territory.

The negotiated nature of experiences as "very carefully regulated sorts of things" (Sacks 1984: 428) places sharp limits on both the type and the quality of response available to experiencers. And, while boundaries around experiential entitlement are an important participant concern underpinning "coherent personhood" itself (Heritage 2011: 183), they are treated as explicitly relevant in moral talk. Sacks (1992: 245) noted, however, that there are occasional situations in which the scope of entitlement to an experience is relaxed or widened and certain events are given an "abstract status". In such cases, an individual trouble is reformulated as a public concern, shaping the possibility of political mobilization (Sacks 1984: 426). Sacks (1992: 245) described this as "feel[ing] that something had to be done", noting that the preservation of feeling in the transformation of a private concern into a "general" phenomenon is "rare" and yet "enormously powerful".

Emotion has been widely studied as a resource in the production and management of social actions (Peräkylä and Sorjonen 2012). For example, Edwards (1999) notes how participants rely on normative knowledge of emotions *as visceral and involuntary* in getting certain interactional tasks done, noting that the seeming inevitability of emotional responses are central to the rhetorical affordances that they provide. The centrality of emotion in matters of experience is visible in Sacks' (1984: 424–429) discussion, in which entitlement is displayed both through the right to claim emotion as well as to the obligation to display it. In a sense, emotion is a vehicle by which experience is interactionally displayed such that a person demonstrates having "encountered" an event rather than, for example, merely "hearing about" it; while at the same time emotion is also reflexively used to account for the entitlement that it claims. The analysis that follows examines emotional responses as interactional displays of experience, and analyses the organization and composition of these utterances with a focus on how speakers refer to themselves on these occasions.

3 Data and methodology

This study is based on a data corpus that contains 203 stretches of interaction in which a child's death is explicitly discussed or mentioned. The interactions take place on 702 Talk Radio, a South African, English-speaking, privately owned radio talk station broadcasting in the Gauteng and Western Cape provinces of South Africa, as well as streaming online. The interactions were recorded between 2014 and 2017. As this data was collected from a talk-radio show that broadcasts and streams to the

public, and has online archives in the public domain, ethics approval was not sought (see Stommel and De Rijk 2021).

The present analysis draws on a collection of 18 cases that contain first-person emotional responses to incidents of child deaths. These first-person responses were relatively uncommon in the data corpus, as compared to, for example, assessments. By way of example, the following extract contains an objectively formulated (Edwards and Potter 2017) evaluative statement ("it's a horrendous story"), which is an extremely pervasive feature of these interactions (see Appendix 1 for detailed transcription conventions).

(1) [20140722-0526-4800]
1 Pre: with=the:: the death of little (.) Taegrin ↑Morris
2 ↓and i-i-i-t's a ↑horrendous ↑sto:ry

First-person utterances, on the other hand, that describe a speaker's emotional response to a report, were far less common in the data, providing support for the relative complexity of claiming subjective experience versus objective information. Although assessments are certainly worth investigating in their own right, the rarity of first-person emotional responses in the corpus makes them a compelling site for the study of the organization of experience in a public domain. While the data are not intended to be nationally or statistically representative, they do represent a range of possible actions and practices available to speakers.

3.1 Analytical framework

The analysis employs a conversation-analytic approach (Atkinson and Heritage 1984; Sacks et al. 1978), aided by detailed transcripts that were produced using Jeffersonian conventions (Jefferson 2004).

Membership categories are repositories for cultural common-sense knowledge (Sacks 1972a) that members rely on and "assume that others members … use in the same way" (Garfinkel 1956: 185). As such, membership categories may be used as accounts for social actions, and in this way are profoundly important resources in the production and coordination of recognizable and coordinated activity (Schegloff 2007). Membership Categorization Analysis "examines the practical methods of categorization work in relation to the local accomplishment of social and moral organization and order" (Hester and Fitzgerald 1999: 346), treating the use and appreciation of categories as a moral affair. As Jayyusi (1984) notes, categorization, as an activity of practical reasoning, asserts the normative relationships between category pairs and rearticulates the moral order implied by these. As one of the most common methods for referring to self and others, membership categories are

intimately tied to person reference practices in interaction. The present study, which analyses first-person emotional responses in talk about child deaths, focuses on how membership categories (and the parent-child standardized relational pair in particular) are mobilized as self-referential resources in managing experiential entitlements in a morally saturated area of social life.

Previous research demonstrates the presence of dedicated terms for both self- and other-reference in interaction, establishing that, for self-reference, the dedicated term is the first-person singular pronoun "I" (Lerner and Kitzinger 2007; Sacks and Schegloff 1979). The use of "I" as the normative or dedicated format for self-reference does not make relevant or explicit any particular feature of its speaker; and also fulfils the twin principles of minimization and recipient design identified in the organization of preference for person reference (Sacks and Schegloff 1979). In interaction, however, speakers may utilize a "more-than-simple" self-reference by way of a self-categorization (Whitehead and Lerner 2021), for example, by self-categorizing as an incumbent of a relevant membership group. That is, "speakers exploit the inference-richness of membership categories as a resource for self-presentation" (Whitehead and Lerner 2021: 4) in order to be heard as speaking as a member of a particular category, with all the rights and responsibilities associated therewith.

Within membership categories are standardized relational pairs (SRPs), which include two parties that are linked through a normative arrangement of values, rights and obligations (Sacks 1972b). Importantly, the use of one part of the pair mobilizes the store of information associated with its relational obligations, which are routinely treated as moral obligations (Leudar et al. 2004). This is especially the case with the parent-child standardized relational pair, which invokes enormous stores of cultural knowledge about children as vulnerable due to their status as less than fully competent members, and parents as obligated to protect and care for them (Tilbury 2007). In talk about child deaths, deployment of the "parent" category as a self-referential practice invokes the parent-child SRP and all of its associated rights and responsibilities.

4 Data analysis

4.1 Simple self-reference: 'I' and 'me'

In the two extracts below, the speakers produce first-person emotional responses using simple self-referential formats. These examples suggest that the speakers treat a report of child death as relevantly warranting an appropriate affective response, and that simple self-reference is one method for producing such a response. As such,

in matters of experiential entitlement, the speakers display both a right to comment on, and an obligation to display their emotional responses toward, these reports of child deaths.

In the extract below, the host has just completed a brief news report which includes mention of a child death, an incident in which Taegrin Morris, a four-year-old boy, was fatally dragged alongside a car by his seatbelt when the car was hijacked from his mother. The car was later abandoned, and the story captured media attention for the 'senselessness' of the crime and the cruel death of the child. The caller has phoned to discuss a political matter that has also featured in the news (not transcribed), but nevertheless orients to an obligation to register a concern about the just-reported story before moving on to the (unrelated) 'reason for his call'. In doing so, the caller orients to the possibility that not responding to the report about the child death may make him appear callous or insensitive, and signals this particular news story as the one that most relevantly requires a response.

(2) [20140721-0826-2414]

1	Pre:	Short and sharp Pete=what you ↑got for u[s]
2	Cal:	[H]i: John
3		uh=just ↑quickly u:m I feel very nauseous about this kid
4		that died um u[m]
5	Pre:	[Y]a::::

Although the caller is immediately directed to make his comment "short and sharp", he deviates from the reason for his call ("just quickly" in line 3) to comment about the just-reported story. While the reason for the call is unclear at this point (and turns out to be unrelated to this news report), it is notable that the caller uses his first (and potentially only) turn to produce this claim, thereby treating it as an urgent matter to attend to (see Hutchby 1991 for a discussion on openings in radio call-ins).

The multiple hesitation markers ("um", lines 3–4) and misplacement marker ("just quickly") suggest that the speaker treats this type of utterance as a potentially delicate formulation (Lerner 2013), which may be due to the sensitive nature of the topic or the complexity involved in displaying his feelings toward it. The speaker's unmarked self-reference term ("I") is followed by a description of a physiological state that indexes a corresponding emotional state ("feel very nauseous"), with his affective response accounted for by his reference to "this kid that died". The utterance is strongly aligned with (line 5), indicating the presenter's appreciation for, and affiliation with, this affective display.

In extract (3), a presenter is introducing a news story about three children that perished in a shack fire. This type of story is common in South Africa during the winter months, where people with no access to electricity make fires in their shacks in order to stay warm. In this particular story, the parents were asleep in a separate

shack to the children, and the children's shack burned down during the night. The host is directing her talk to a large radio audience and, in her introduction to the story, describes her affective response to the incident, referring to herself in the passive voice, i.e., 'me', instead of 'I'.

(3) [20170117-412]
1 Pre: He-he:re's a story that just (.) left me so:
2 dejected: uh=when I heard it on EWN .hh three children.
3 ki:lled in a shack fire in Snake Park

Through the use of a prospective indexical ("here's a story", line 1), the host foreshadows the topic as emotionally salient. This is borne out in the ensuing description of the incident, which describes three children who died in a shack fire. Similar to the previous extract, the delicate nature of the formulation is indicated, here through the recycled turn beginning and pause before the utterance (line 1).

The inclusion of the particular area where the incident occurred ("Snake Park") is important: Snake Park is a poverty-stricken area near a mine-dump on the outskirts of Johannesburg, where service delivery (including electricity) is non-existent, and people rely on unsafe methods such as indoor fires to stay warm in winter. The host's description of herself as "dejected" orients to an obligation to publicly demonstrate her affective response to the incident, as well as demonstrating that this response is not limited to people directly involved in the incident but may extend to a person who encounters it indirectly.

4.2 Beyond simple self-reference: methods for self-categorization

In this section, I examine some of the methods by which the speakers employ self-categorizations in affective responses to reports of child deaths. In their deployment of category terms, the speakers orient to the relevance of producing the utterance *as an incumbent of a particular category of person*. The articulation of these situated identities positions experiential claims made by certain categories of people as upgraded or heightened relative to others, and thus provides analytic purchase for the examination of the speakers' relative rights and responsibilities in talking about their experiences and feelings about reports of child deaths.

Extract (4) refers to a story in which a teenager was fatally stabbed while at school. The incident occurred in the Western Cape, a South African province with a high prevalence of gang-related violence (Venter and Jeffries 2020), and the presenter is on the line with a provincial government official (the MEC [Member of the Executive Committee] of Education), who has come on to the show to comment on the

incident and provide information. However, as a state actor tasked with ensuring a well-functioning education system, the MEC is also vulnerable to being held partly accountable for this incident.

(4) [20171017-801]

1	Pre:	.hhh ↑Right no::w hhh eh- I=mean you a mother of
2		kids (0.6) [I']ll I over and above bei::ng (.)
3	MEC:	[Mm]
4	Pre:	the MEC (.) of Educa:tion (.) in the W:estern ↓Cape
5		and (.) it=it must drive you up the wall to dea::l .hh
6		with this type of situa:tion .hhh whe:n you look at your
7		o::wn kids and you=go: you know (.) hhh this is not
8		happening to me but I could be that parent .hhh so::
9		[wha]t is being done MEC .hhh
10	MEC:	[Mmm]
11	Pre:	↑O:::ver and above the resource ↓office::s: (.)
12		what else is being done to make su:re that our schools
13		are actually safe places for our kids to ↓go
14	MEC:	Look (.) we do:ing everything possible

This extract occurs mid-way through the interaction, after the MEC has provided some relevant information about the nature and details of the incident, with the just-prior turn confirming how the weapon was brought onto school property. Although she has been brought on to the show in her institutional capacity, the host uses self-repair to insert an other-categorization of the official as a mother. He follows this with an explicit assertion of the types of rights available to her, as a mother, regarding having feelings about the incident; and even offers a candidate affective reaction on her behalf. He goes so far as to verbalize the nature of these rights and the logic by which they are available to her ("this is not happening to me but I could be that parent", lines 7–8). By assuming this reaction as something "any parent would legitimately feel", the host's candidate claim takes for granted the category-based knowledge associated with parenthood and child death, and offers insight into the ways that membership categories are deployed as common-sense resources in interaction. It is also used, however, to leverage a corresponding set of obligations (to protect children, to care for their wellbeing) that is demonstrably grounded in her co-incumbency in the "parent" category as a way of securing a more robust government response. Notably, the host also self-categorizes himself as a parent ("our kids"), suggesting that his concern for the safety of children exceeds his institutional role and is associated with his own parenthood.

This example demonstrates the tension between institutional and personal categories that is a feature of many of these interactions: while the institutional role

of hosts, reporters and other state officials requires neutrality and a focus on information provision (Clayman 1992), there are nevertheless certain topics where speakers self-categorize (or are other-categorized) in relevant membership groups. In talk about child death, the speakers routinely self-categorize themselves as parents, with membership in this category further treated as the basis for displaying and managing experiential entitlement, including rights and obligations. However, the MEC's responses are noncommittal at best, displaying potential resistance to fitting a category-tied predicate that is expectable for her as a mother, and to this role being treated as more relevant than (or equally relevant to) her institutional one.

In the following extract, the presenter introduces the news story about the fatal school stabbing (continuation of Extract 4). The presenter is directing his talk toward the larger radio audience rather than to a co-present recipient and, during his description of the incident, positions himself explicitly as being angry and upset, with an emotional response produced in line 14.

(5) [20170315-1015]

1	Pre:	A gra:de eleven pupil ↑woke up (0.2) like ↑every
2		other grade eleven ↓pupil (0.1) got dressed (.)
3		↑probably had breakfast=↑probably kissed his mom
4		good↓by::e (2.2) little did ↑a:ny(0.2)body=↓kno:w
5		(1.8) that ↑come the afternoon:n (0.9) he'd be ↓dead
6		(2.8) he=was u:::h .hhh a=pupil at Ee:steriver secondary
7		↑school one who was sta::bbed to death=grade eleven
8		pupil di:ed .hh following being sta:bbed in the ne:ck
9		and the a::rm several times=my question is .hhh ↑WH:Y
10		IN THE WO:RLD DO OUR KIDS HAVE TO PUT UP WITH ↓THIS
11		(0.5) ↑wh::y is=it (3.4)that in the ↑very place where
12		they're supposed to be given a fu:ture (2.6) that very
13		↑fu:ture (0.6) gets ↓taken away °from them ° (1.6)
14		as a ↑pa:rent (1.0) my hea:rt ↓breaks

Although the speaker's description of his affective experience, including his self-categorization as a parent, is only fully articulated in line14 ("as a parent my heart breaks"), this entire stretch of talk is analysable as foreshadowing his experiential entitlement to this claim. The initial description of a "grade eleven pupil" is followed by a description of a typical morning routine of a school-going child (getting dressed, eating breakfast, kissing mom goodbye) and the naming of the school where the incident took place (lines 6–7). These category-relevant descriptions of the child's age are deployed as a justification for the speaker's outrage, as well as showcasing his own status as a parent (through his familiarity with these types of routines). Since

"parent" is an inclusive category that encompasses all forms of caregivers, its deployment suggests the mobilization of rights and obligations related to all categories of parental caregivers.

In line 7 the host transitions from his own description of the incident to "reading out" the formal news report, and then reverts to his personal description and commentary in line 9. The movement between the institutional and personal is a mechanism for navigating the informational and affective or experiential components of the talk, both of which are treated as important by the host. His final utterance, a gloss of the prior description, is an affective response in which the host self-categorizes as a parent. Importantly, he prefaces this self-categorization by referring to the child as an incumbent of a larger membership group ("our kids", line 10), expanding the scope of this entitlement to anybody who is normatively bound to such a category (e.g., parents of any grade-eleven pupil, or ostensibly any school-going pupil of any other age). This type of abstraction mobilizes a category-relevant problem or concern that can be used as a catalyst for action (see Sacks 1992: 245). Here, however, its proximity to the claim that it precedes suggests that it is also being linked to the self-categorization in line 14. By claiming to be a member of the group ("as a parent") that has just been identified as collectively having a problem with school safety, the speaker effectively upgrades his claim ("my heart breaks") to be heard not merely as just another "somebody" who is making this claim, but as a "specific somebody" for whom these circumstances have very real, disturbing and problematic implications.

Although "kids" and "parents" belong to the same collection of category terms and comprise a standardized relational pair, their distinct uses mobilize different, yet related, bodies of knowledge. For example, the speaker focuses on the age category of the deceased (rather than, say, his gender) as a demonstrable warrant for the type of injustice he is claiming has been committed. By contrast, his self-reference as a "parent" as a preface to his affective response is designed to emphasize the specific impact that this story has on him by virtue of his inclusion in the parent category. Further, the movement from singular to plural category terms expands this entitlement to any person who can claim membership in this category (see Lerner and Kitzinger 2007), as a post-positioned commentary on a more general failure of protection of all children.

In extract (6) the presenter is describing an incident where an 11-year-old boy was bound and hanged in a public train station, in an area called Bonteheuwel in the Western Cape Province that is infamous for its gang-related high homicide rate. This form of homicide is a common practice among gang members wishing to "send a message" about how dissenters might be punished.

(6) [20170327-947]

1	Pre:	So .hh ↑whi::le they were stringing him up there
2		were people (.) standing b:y an-and see:ing ↓this
3	Cal:	Very m- e-e-e ve-very possible=because .hhh like I
4		say it's on the busy walkway=you've got ho:mes on the
5		one side and office blocks on the other side .hh and
6		then as well as people wa:lking across the sta:tion
7		at-at the very centre
8		(.)
9	Pre:	°Ka:y° it's at this point I wanna say something
10		unconstitutional but I ↑wo::n't
11		[becau:::se I:: kno:]:::w ↑he::[y?]
12	Cal:	[Really rather not ya] [.h]h Ya it's best
13		to rather not [he]
14	Pre:	[I']d rather not I:: I I I I I I
15		I'm I'm a- I'm a- I'm a- I'm a pa:rent. u::m I've
16		got a l:o:t of rage in- in- in- inside of me but.
17		we cannot fall foul. of our constitution

This extract is part of a longer interaction in which a police official has come onto the show to provide details about the incident. In this example, the host is responding to a story "in the moment" rather than referring back to a news report, with his affective response negotiated in situ as he attends to competing orientations. In lines 1–7 it is established that the incident took place during the day in a busy walkway where many people were present. The presenter uses the category-relevant description of "people standing by and seeing this" (line 2), thereby treating them not as 'witnesses' who could have useful information about the incident, but as 'bystanders' who could have potentially intervened but did not. This fact is treated as problematic, signified in the pause (line 8) and then the presenter's next comment (lines 9–10) about "wanting" to say something unconstitutional, presumably a strong criticism about the fact that nobody intervened in the murder of the child. This extreme moral judgment reflects a way in which child deaths occasion a particular set of obligations even in cases where an institutional actor's neutrality is at stake. Although the tentative reference to "something unconstitutional" is left unspoken, it likely refers to the controversial stance taken by many community members in support of vigilante justice as an extralegal method for pursuing retribution in cases of child homicides. His recipient's endorsement of his expression of restraint, despite the brutality of the crime, reflects how the participants "bound" their experience (Sacks 1984: 427) and display their orientation to the type and degree of distress legitimately available to them.

The presenter, however, underscores his restraint by emphasizing that it is not attributable to any leniency on his part (regarding the crime itself) but rather to his co-membership in a different group – the citizen of a country – where the rule of law must be upheld for the greater good. It is interesting that this category-relevant description ("we cannot fall foul of our constitution") is juxtaposed against a self-categorization as a parent prefacing a strong affective claim. The category term is mobilized as an account for the non-institutional stance taken with his unspoken "unconstitutional" opinion, and is scaffolded by his explicit description of his emotional response to the story. While his self-reference mobilizes the rights and responsibilities he has as a parent, to protect all children and to protest their harm, it is positioned against a second, contradictory set of rights and obligations as a citizen subject to the laws of a country. The speaker's dilemma is made explicit in this deliberation, in which the rights and obligations associated with the story are conflicting and dependent on his incumbency of two distinct roles.

4.3 Negotiating relative entitlements

In the following extract, a presenter and reporter are discussing the Taegrin Morris incident (continuation of extract 2 above). While the presenter displays emotionality around the morning's news headline, the reporter counters with a similar response scaffolded with a self-categorization. As I demonstrate below, her self-reference is designed to mitigate a potential failing on her part regarding her obligation to respond to the story.

(7) [20140722-0626-1055]

1	Pre:	↑Goo:d morning Cindy Pal↓uta
2		(0.2)
3	Rep:	.hhh goo::d morning=Koketso ↑ho:w are you today↓
4		(0.2)
5	Pre:	.hh ↑I'm aright hey .hh (0.2) °I'm okay°
6	Rep:	he- he- he .hh ↑that's good (0.2) It's [Tue::sday]
7	Pre:	[Well I me]an
8		it's getting better (.) it's getting better=I think I
9		↑think .hh I=I sta:rted off (.) at four o clock (.)
10		being very=very e↓motional around this um .hh um um
11		a:h th- the Ma:rtins=um ↑Morris sto:ry the little boy↑
12		.hh
13	Rep:	Mm[mmm]
14	Pre:	[But]I think (.) being able to ta:lk to people

15 just kinda lifted my spirits and (.) as we continue
16 =you know (.) ↑human interaction has ↓helped
17 (.)
18 Rep: ↑Ya: ((laughs)) oka::y ((laughs)) I- s- I=think
19 it's uh very=as a mother of a: (.) .hh of a fi:ve
20 year old and a three year old↓ I jus:t when=I heard that
21 mother's voice yesterday in the ne:ws clip=just
22 saying .hhh ↓you know how he pleaded to her for help=I
23 just .hhhh my ↑hea::rt a:bsolutely breaks=it's ↑one
24 of my biggest fea:rs

The presenter's response to "howareyou" initially seems neutral ("I'm aright", line 5), but this assessment is then repeated in downgraded form ("I'm okay") and in a significantly quieter pitch, implying that his response is to be heard as negative, and retrospectively suggesting that the previous assessment "I'm aright" was in fact to be heard as demonstrating resilience in the face of difficulty, rather than a straightforward assessment of his own state. In the face of the reporter's sequence-closing response ("that's good") and movement to the sports report, he repairs his self-assessment to include an earlier self-assessment conveying his emotional response to the Taegrin Morris story currently in the news. In referring to the news story that has evoked this reaction, he first uses the family name ("Morris") as a straightforward recognitional reference, the preferred format for locally initial reference. This is followed by an additional reference to the child's age category ("the little boy") as a warrant for his emotional response. The presenter continues with an account for his improved state, suggesting that sharing the mourning process with others has helped him to navigate his feelings about the report. The reference to a "shared experience" of public grieving is consistent with the "abstract status" of this case, in which the collaborative organization of experience undercuts its "isolating character", allowing one to "have a more extended experience than you would have had if only you had had it" (Sacks 1992: 246). His description demonstrates the right and obligation to comment affectively on the story, as well as its status as a shareable experience.

The reporter's next turn is directly responsive to this utterance, and includes an agreement token followed by laughter. However, she treats her laughter as potentially projecting troubles-resistance (Jefferson 1984), and formulates an assessment utterance ("I think") that is immediately repaired to an affective response, treating an experiential response as more appropriate to the troubles-telling just prior. Her affective response is designed to mitigate her initial failure to attend to the news report, which may be seen as an indictment on her moral standing.

There are a number of interesting practices deployed by the reporter in her response. For example, she displays an independent encountering of the event

(Heritage and Raymond 2005) as a way of strengthening her emotional response as a private and previously held experience ("when I heard that mother's voice"). Further, the reporter explicitly categorizes herself as a mother of two children, with each child's age treated as a distinct category term; and uses this self-categorization as the basis for her emotional reaction to hearing "another mother's" experience, and also to echo this experience in one of her own deepest fears. Thus, her emotional response is rooted in her ability to empathize more deeply with the experiencing mother, as well as in her fear of experiencing something similar.

The reporter's self-categorization orients to her relatively greater entitlement than the presenter to share her feelings; but simultaneously negotiates this entitlement relative to the other mother, the one whose son has died, and respects the experiential preserves of the mother's grief. For example, when describing her emotional response to the incident she associates it with an empathic response on the experiencing mother's behalf ("my heart absolutely breaks"). However, she also notes that her entitlement to these responses is rooted in her own, priorly formulated, fears. This response suggests that the management and display of relative entitlements may be deployed as an interactional resource to reassert the speaker's moral position in a domain demonstrably vulnerable to disaffiliation, or any displays of a lack of moral consensus.

5 Discussion and conclusion

The findings reported above are significant for understanding the reproduction of child death as a unique social and moral concern, as well as for providing important linkages for the domains of epistemics, membership categorization analysis and the social organization of experience.

Experience is the fabric from which the "private experiential preserves" of "coherent personhood" are woven (Heritage 2011: 183) and, as such, asks of members to affiliate without encroaching into another's experiential territory. Entitlement to experience is thus "extraordinarily carefully regulated" (Sacks 1984: 428), regarding the right to claim experiences as well as the obligation to claim them appropriately. While emotion is one resource for claiming and displaying experience, Sacks (1984: 426) warned that it was important for members to ensure that they "have to have the experience [they]'re entitled to" and to have only the type and degree of emotional response that any other experiencer would reasonably have. It is important to emphasize that, in this paper, the experiential responses are being reported on a talk-radio platform, where they are appropriate in a way that they would likely not be in a more private setting, or in conversations with individuals directly impacted by such occurrences. While Sacks' discussion focused on

entitlement via a direct encounter with an event (such as witnessing, or being directly impacted by, an occurrence), my findings suggest that news reports of child deaths may be treated as experiential encounters, despite the lack of a direct or personal association with the incident. This finding provides important considerations for studying what counts as experience, for whom, and when. It also strengthens Sacks' (1984) observations about the "extraordinarily careful" regulation of entitlement to experience, while teasing out some of the nuances that are present even in the "rare" instances that such entitlement is made publicly available.

For example, the present analysis demonstrates how the parent-child standard relational pair (Sacks 1972b: 37) is used by the speakers as the basis for claiming heightened rights and obligations in response to a child's death. In these interactions, reports of child deaths are treated as matters on which hearers can (and ought to) comment and display emotion. This suggests that the speakers treat news of child deaths as one domain with an expanded scope of access, and that, more importantly, this expanded domain is nevertheless carefully regulated, with the speakers managing and negotiating their rights and obligations relative to one another.

Furthermore, the presence of affective responses in an institutional context characterized by a commitment to neutrality suggests an orientation to a competing set of normative requirements (see Rafaely and Whitehead 2020), as evidence for the occasioned and context-renewing nature of identity in (institutional) interaction. Finally, my findings show how institutional identities are systematically negotiated alongside parent identities in talk about child death, thereby underwriting the importance of the parent-child relational pair as an account for action in talk about child death.

One possible account for the depth of feeling evidenced in the speakers' responses to child death reports may be explained by the unique position occupied by children in modern society, and the moral failing that their deaths imply for the society in general. This expanded entitlement, however, is complicated by the potential relevance of many different varieties of these experiences and thus relative entitlements that may be associated with them. While affective responses suggest systematic orientations to both the rights and responsibilities associated with claiming experience, my analysis has been focused on how self-referential practices are a resource for displaying, managing and negotiating entitlement in talk about child death. Importantly, self-categorization as a parent and the mobilization of the parent-child standardized relational pair (SRP) reference a morally implicative "locus of rights and responsibilities" associated with members of this category. The use of these category terms suggests that common-sense reasoning about parents and children is partially sustained through their deployment as moral resources in claiming and managing experiential entitlement occasioned by stories of child death. As such, in explicating their own incumbency in the "parent" category (when

relevantly able to do so), the speakers display the consequentiality of their parent identity and reproduce the "store house" of knowledge about this membership group (Schegloff 2007: 469).

Interestingly, the deployment of this SRP is not limited to the parents of the child that has died but extends to anyone who can claim co-membership in the parent category. The basis for this expanded locus of entitlements is articulated in one participant's description that "this is not happening to me but I could be that parent", echoing Sacks' (1992: 245) description of how an event can "bode for other people" and thereby turn into a public concern. By self-categorizing as a parent, the speakers transform instances of child deaths into personally salient experiences that are then explicated as the basis for their emotional responses. Furthermore, the speakers observably use these categories to do moral work regarding the limits on their and others' experiences. The investigation of entitlement to experience in child death exposes the (re)production of these norms in a complex social order that sustains common-sense knowledge about parents and children in modern society.

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Appendix 1: Transcript conventions

[…]	Square brackets mark the start and end of overlapping speech
↑↓	Vertical arrows precede marked pitch movement
Underlining	Underlined letters indicate emphasis within an individual word
CAPITALS	Capital letters mark speech that is hearably louder than surrounding speech
(0.6)	Numbers in round brackets measure pauses in seconds and milliseconds
(.)	Micropause
((laughter))	Double brackets indicate additional comments about features of the talk
Ye::ah	Colons show degrees of elongation of the prior sound
Hhh	Out-breaths
.hhh	In-breaths
Yes=but	Equals signs mark the immediate "latching" of successive talk with no interval
°Okay°	Degree signs indicate whispering or hearably quiet talk
Pre	Presenter or host of the talk show
Rep	Reporter, including sports reporters and newsreaders
Cal	Caller, member of the public

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