

Children's Whining in Family Interaction

Carly W. Butler and Derek Edwards

*Department of Social Sciences
Loughborough University, United Kingdom*

RUNNING HEAD: Children's whining.

Research on Language and Social Interaction, 2018, 51(1), in press.

Final submission, accepted November 2017

Acknowledgements

The analysis presented in this paper has benefitted from observations, insights, and challenges from participants of the Loughborough University Discourse-Communication-Conversation conference in 2012, the 2014 International Conference on Conversation Analysis, and at Tema Barn, Linköping University in March 2015.

Children's Whining in Family Interaction

ABSTRACT

Children's whining is identified in extracts of video-recorded social interaction at home with siblings, parents and other family. "Whining" is primarily a vernacular category, but can be identified in terms of a set of phonetic features including pitch movement, loudness and nasality, and contrasted with crying. We focus on the uses and consequences of whining, in and for social interaction. Rather than identifying and attributing experiential causes or correlates of whining, we examine what children do with it, how it is occasioned, and how others, mostly parents, respond to it. Whining performs actions such as objecting to transgressions and thwarted goals, and making complaints. Parental reactions include one or more of: "stance inversion," which is the adoption of a contrasting tone in next turn; formulations of the offending circumstances; orientations to remedying the problem; and rejection of the whine's basis, including dispositional formulations of the child's whining (e.g., being "grumpy"), and accounts for not complying with a called-for remedy. Data are in English.

INTRODUCTION

We examine examples of children's whining in terms of its occasions and consequences in and for social interaction. This approach to whining, as social action interlaced in successive turns at talk, vocalizations and physical activities, contrasts with much of the literature that seeks to define whining's distinctive acoustic features, and to relate those features to the child's underlying experiential states, of which whining is taken to be an expression or symptom. Instead, we are interested in what whining accomplishes within everyday sequences of interaction. Although, for the purposes of transcription and analysis, we characterize whining in terms of its various (and variable) acoustic and phonetic features, those features are not our prime focus. Rather, we focus on whining's everyday, mundane recognizability and accountability. "Whining" is, in the first place, a vernacular (everyday, non-technical) term that parents and others may deploy, often used with a judgmental and sanctioning flavour, and accompanied by everyday suppositions of the kinds of experiential states that may cause children to make such noises. However, rather than focusing on experiential states (whether common-sense or technical), nor on adults' labels and accounts, our topic is what whining *does*, on and for its occasions, within video-recorded sequences of social interaction. First, however, we consider how whining has been treated as a research topic, relevantly to our own treatment of it.

Whining is generally considered unpleasant and unwanted (Edwards, 2005). Defined as "a low somewhat shrill protracted cry" (Oxford English Dictionary), the distinctive intonational pattern of whining involves exaggerated rising pitch contours, increased loudness, and slower production (Sokol, et al., 2005). While this makes whining a useful attention-getting practice, whining has been found to be more annoying and distracting than other speech forms (Chang & Thompson, 2010). A second problem with whining is that it is generally considered to involve heightened negative affect, typically to "represent discontent" (Chang & Thompson, 2010, p. 261). Research has set out to identify which specific emotional state whining represents. As a regular feature of temper tantrums, whining has been seen to represent negative emotionality such as anger or sadness (Green, Whitney, & Potegal, 2011). Potegal and Davidson (2003) found whining and crying was associated with "distress", characterized as sadness co-occurring with comfort seeking (Green et al., 2011), but not anger. However, in their observational study, Sears, Repetti, Reynolds and Sterling's (2014) operationally defined whining as "using a complaining or whining tone without visible signs of crying/sadness" (p. 276).

Whines are also associated with problematic social functions such as complaining, requesting, or refusing. Sears et al. (2014) found that whining followed the refusal of a request, and failure to attain a desired outcome. Chang and Thompson (2010) also suggest whining occurs in the

context of unmet goals. Taking a more interactionally grounded approach, Schegloff (2005) notes the use of whining intonation in the actions of imploring and entreating, and suggests that children can be said “not ‘to whine,’ but to ‘do whining’” (p. 469). The use of whining for specific pragmatic purposes reveals its potential to be explored as a social action that is used to *do things*.

With past research focusing on identifying the unique acoustic properties, emotional states and specific contexts of whining, we are starting to understand more about general patterns in whining behaviours. However, aggregated datasets and coding schemes necessitate exclusion of the *particulars*, the situated contextual details that play into the production, recognition and treatment of whining by participants. As such, we know little about whining behaviours as *interactional phenomena*: the interplay of vocal and non-vocal practices, affective displays, and social actions that are produced when children whine in social contexts. While there is a substantial literature on the socio-cultural nature of emotion and its displays (e.g., Harré, 1986; Wetherell, 2012), our focus is not on emotion as such, but on the action of whining. Whining behaviours are inextricably bound up with the specific contexts in which they occur. Examination of the social and sequential contexts of whining can offer insights into the situated design and action-orientation of affective displays, and children’s everyday socio-emotional practices.

The present study explores some of the nuances in whining behaviours by examining it as situated practice and social action. Bracketing off queries about underlying emotional states, and focusing on instances rather than generalities, offers a fresh perspective on whining as an everyday and lived phenomenon. In line with work that treats psychological matters as interactional phenomena (Edwards & Potter, 2005), and emotion as an actively produced *affective stance* (e.g., Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012; Buttny, 1990), we take an agnostic position on the presence or otherwise of a specific experiential or intentional state of mind. Buttny (1990) explores the indexical link between a producer’s display of negative emotions and a recipient’s moral accountability to respond to problem episodes. This helps identify children’s whinings as negative affective stances that give a negative emotional valence to a complaint, and thereby solicit particular interactional responses such as remedies, sympathetic actions, or disciplining. Whatever a person’s subjective state may be, our direct access is to whatever they display in and through interaction (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000; Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012). Such a perspective aligns with Wetherell’s (2012) suggestion that exploring how affective practice is situated and connected can unify and advance new cross-disciplinary social scientific research on emotion. Video recordings of everyday social interaction also gives access to the sequential settings, the prior conditions and subsequent responses (or absence of responses) of co-interactants to such displays, and the range of embodied and prosodic resources used in performing affective stance (Goodwin,

Cekaite, & Goodwin, 2012). Prioritizing what is available in the interaction allows a focus on emotion as interactional practice, as a social, public, local phenomenon (Wootton, 1997).

Wootton (2012) suggests that interactional studies that place “the sequencing of action centre stage” (p. 58) can identify “collections of action packages, the properties of which will both specify and shed light on the analysis of emotion displays as systems of action” (p. 60). As demonstrated through an analysis of distress in request sequences, Wootton argues that there is a case for treating the *sequential position* of affective displays and their associated behaviours as “the primary units for the analysis of emotion, rather than the units of sadness, anger and so on” (p. 60). This approach highlights the fundamentally interactional basis of affective stance, and the potential for analysing the sequential organization of affective displays to explore children’s understandings and expectations, and issues such as entitlement, responsibility, sequentiality and accountability.

There is a small but growing body of research on the interactional organization of children’s affective stance in everyday contexts. Studies exploring children’s disputes with peers in gossip activities (Evaldsson & Svahn, 2017) and in playing hopscotch (e.g. Goodwin & Goodwin, 2000) describe a range of verbal and embodied practices, including posture, gesture, and vocal resources, in producing affective stances within larger sequences of action. In the home, affective displays are important in the organization of participation in family activities (C. Goodwin, 2007), and in the course of opposing, resisting and negotiating parental directives (M.H Goodwin et al., 2012).

Cekaite (2009) has shown how children use a range of affective stances in educational setting to solicit the attention of their teacher. In a cross-cultural study, Demuth et al. (2012) describe various discursive practices through which caregivers treat infants’ negative affect as appropriate or not, with affective modulation in their responses a key part of this.

While whining has been noted in papers exploring various aspects of adult-child or family interaction, whining *per se* is rarely an explicit focus. Whining-like behaviours have been noted in research on parents disciplining children through threats (e.g. Hepburn & Potter, 2011) and in their use of directives (Craven & Potter, 2010; M.H. Goodwin & Cekaite, 2013, 2014). Goodwin et al.’s (2012) discussion of children’s ‘pleading objections’ identify multimodal and interactional features that closely align with whining behaviour. Crying and vocalizations also appear in discussion of children’s pain cries (Berducci, 2016; Jenkins & Hepburn, 2015), displays of distress (Wootton, 2012), and in a detailed account of children’s recruitments of help from carers in pre-school settings (Kidwell, 2013). Across each of these studies, affective stances are considered as displays and part of the production of broader sequences of action.

Even crying in very young infants can be understood as interactionally grounded social practice (Berducci, 2016). In research on children’s interactions in nursery/pre-school settings, Kidwell (2013) described children’s crying as initiating a *problem-remedy* sequence in reference to

the normative and sequential organization of crying episodes: “When a child begins to cry, s/he will typically cry until an adult attends to him/her and, further, continue crying until a satisfactory solution, a ‘remedy’ for whatever problem s/he is experiencing, is produced. The caregiver, for her part, will monitor and be attentive to the child’s behavior and cease her remedying actions upon recognizing that the child has been soothed” (p. 519). So, crying indexes a problem and a carer’s responses remedy that problem. A child’s cry, or a whine that indexes a problem of some kind, then operates as a *remedy solicit*.

Verbalized whining allows for the communication of a specific issue and identifies a problem whilst mobilizing the attention and support of another person. It is hearable as a “childish” activity, and part of one’s “interactional repertoire” in the early stages of life (Schegloff, 2005, p. 469). As a stance it therefore has the potential to be “done” by older people – as “doing doing whining”, as persisting in the face of a frustrated goal in which something desired is unavailable (ibid.). Working with video-recorded interactions involving whining and whining-related behaviour, the broad aim of this paper is to explore how affective stances are produced and responded to in the course of everyday family activities. We examine: the vocal, verbal, and embodied resources involved in whining; the social actions done through whining; how carers respond to children whining; and some trajectories of whining within courses of social interaction. Treating such instances analytically as affective displays offers analytic traction into family social interaction, and the co-production of stance and social action in children’s affective displays.

METHOD

Our data extracts come from a corpus of approximately fifteen hours of video-recordings of children at home. Families were given cameras and tripods for up to two weeks and were invited to record interactions of their choosing, with the aim being to capture aspects of ordinary family interaction and play; neither the researchers nor the families had any initial focus on whining. The corpus is diverse, including English-speaking families living in Australia and the United Kingdom, children aged from 18 months to five years, and a range of family activities recorded. The data sources were merely those conveniently available; we attempt no cross-cultural comparisons, nor make claims about universals nor cultural specificity. Consent to participate was given by parents, and verbal and/or written assent was given by older children in age-appropriate ways: by ‘signing’ an assent form, ticking a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ box, or accepting invitations from the parent or researcher with a ‘yes’ or nod. Parents were given options as to the use and degree of anonymity of the data collected.

The analysis adopts a conversation analytic methodology and explores the interactional organization of psychological matters in line with discursive psychology. Standard Jefferson (2004) transcription conventions are supplemented by symbols¹ included in this brief segment from Extract 1:

Emma: #↑↑I nyee' a n:e::w one I ca::n't d~o it
mu:mmy:, <mummy: (h) ↑↑ ↓He (h) :lp me:::.#

We use the hash symbol “#” to enclose talk that is produced in a phonetically different or unusual way compared to the same person’s more “usual” speech (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 1996; Hamo, Blum-Kulka & Hachohen, 2004). Double up-arrows “↑↑” are used to indicate especially high pitch, and “wobbly voice” represented by a tilde “~” (Hepburn, 2004). A double tilde “≈” marks more pronounced “wobbliness,” as if “doing crying.”

Initial selection of extracts for analysis was non-technical, in that cases vernacularly describable as “whining,” in our own judgment, were chosen for detailed study. Once selected on that basis, further specification of “whining” and its interactional consequences was the product of analysis. The examples selected were found to have the acoustic properties of whining noted above: a marked alteration in prosody, typically involving a higher pitch, rushed speech/vocalization, elongated vowel sounds, and emphasis. Refinement of the initial selection focused on cases that involved a clear bounded sequence, and cases that best illustrated the variety of matters chosen as the focus for this article. The eventual selection of cases for detailed analysis was supported by several data sessions and presentations at various international institutions, with participants at these events confirming the cases ‘go together’. Detailed and particularly helpful discussions at Tema Barn, Linköping University led to the inclusion of the ‘little cries’ examples (Extracts 4, 5, and 6) as non-verbal whines, and equivalent to verbal cases due to the similarity in prosody, action and responses. Rather than aim to formally define what a whine is, or to specify linguistic and prosodic parameters of whining, we explore whining as a recognizable social practice, examining when and how these displays are produced, what actions they are bound up with, and how they are responded to by recipients. As such, the generalizability and specificity of the analytic claims remains something for subsequent research to explore; we offer neither an exhaustive nor definitive account of children’s whining, but an initial contribution.

ANALYSIS

Whining, Stance, and Inversion

Extract 1a shows some of the core properties of whining sequences across the collection, including the embodied production of affective stance, social actions bound up with doing whining, and a type of carer response that we term a *stance inversion*. Three-year old Emma and her one-year-old brother are in the garden at a water-sand table, with water on one side and sand on the other. The mother is initially off-camera having just started the recording. Following eight seconds of silence, Emma issues a plaintive whine (lines 1-3).

Extract 1a. McCarthy 002 0:08

(Mum is off camera)

1 Emm: #↑↑I nyee' a n:e::w one I ca::n't d(~)o
2 it mu:mmy:, <mummy:(h)↑↑
3 ↓He(h):[lp m e : : . #]

4 Mum: [↑What's wrong with the w]a:ter
5 sweet↑hear:t?

6 Emm: #↑nYou ma:de me↑ cr(~)y ↑'cos you made the
7 sa:nd co:me ↓o:ff.#

Emma uses a range of vocal and embodied resources that display affective stance. She uses a very high pitch, elongated vowels, and emphasis, while the “wobbly voice” and aspiration particles make the utterance sound like “doing crying” (Hepburn, 2004). Her turn is constructed of multiple units running together (I need a new one/ I can't do it/ mummy/ mummy/ help me), with a left push to the second “mummy”. As well as providing emphasis and displaying heightened affect, these features produce a sense of urgency.

The whining production is accompanied by emphatic gestures, delivered with the same intensity as the vocal production. At “can't” (line 1) Emma drops the plastic star she is holding into the water and flaps her arms as she turns towards her mother, who is behind the camera. After Mum starts to approach and asks “what's wrong”, Emma lifts her forearms, palms facing up and gestures down toward the table as she says “you made me cry.” While the movement of her arms indicate her referent and draw Mum's visual attention to the situation, they also laminate her affective displays and the stance she is taking through her talk.

Emma produces a cry for help (“mummy help me”) in the face of a frustrated goal, demonstrating an insistent orientation to something problematic or absent (cf. Schegloff, 2005). The plea requests assistance, while the account of the problem “I need a new one I can’t do it” asserts a helpless state. These pleas serve as “remedy solicits” (Kidwell, 2013), that identify a problem and recruit the attention and involvement of somebody who can fix it. The prosodic and embodied packaging of Emma’s utterance make it hearable as a plea or imploring, and invite a response attentive to both the call for help and the affective stance displayed.

Mum’s response is geared toward the problem-solution and identifies the water as the problem by asking “what’s wrong with the water sweetheart?” (lines 4-5). The design and production of the turn carries a strong affective stance that is markedly different from Emma’s. With a higher pitched sing-song voice, and the endearment “sweetheart”, the mother conveys a positive affect that is an inversion of the stance Emma produced. The urgency in Emma’s plea is met not with a remedy, but with an inserted clarification request as to the nature of the trouble, partially formulated as some unspecified thing “wrong with the water”, delaying provision of the sought-for help.

Emma’s response (lines 6-7) is not fitted to Mum’s clarification request, but instead identifies Mum as the cause of the trouble and *blames* her for her affective stance (“you made me cry”) and the problem (“you made the sand come off”). So, affect is made explicit, is upgraded in intensity, and Mum is made culpable for it. Emma resists Mum’s identification of “the water” as the problem, and proceeds regardless of Mum’s inverted stance. As the extract continues, Mum maintains an inverted stance in terms of both her culpability and the problem situation:

Extract 1b.

9 Mum: ↑0::h(h)::↑ so you need tih do a ne:w
 10 sta::r do yih?
 11 (0.2)
 12 Emm: ~Ye:s:~.°
 13 (0.7)
 14 Mum: Okay, well let me see:ç
 15 (0.5)
 16 Mum: ↑How’d you do: i:t:..
 17 (1.0)

18 Mum: >D[o we-< will we ↑make] `em he:re.
 19 Emm: [↑()]
 20 (2.2)
 21 Mum: <D'you know what we could do: (0.8) tih
 22 jist- (0.3) fi:x this right?=I'm gonna make
 23 it nice and fla:t, (0.7) an' I'll jist mi:x
 24 this in with it a li:ttle bit, (1.2) an'
 25 (we)/(I)'ll make it ni:ce and flat =now you
 26 see if you can make a star.
 27 (0.7)
 28 Mum: Press it down really ha::rd.
 29 (0.8)
 30 Mum: *Really ha:rd* u:rgh! Now ↑push it↑
 31 (0.8)
 32 Mum: ↑See:!
 33 (0.5)
 34 Mum: You made a pe:rfect sta:r.
 35 (5.2)
 36 Emm: ↑(Look at) that star.

Receipting Emma's accusation as news with a "change of state oh" (Heritage, 1984), Mum formulates a solution as the upshot of Emma's complaint: "so you need to do a new star do you?" (lines 9-10). This neither denies nor affirms Mum's culpability, nor orients to Emma's emotional display, but selectively focuses on Emma's problem, that of having no star made of sand ("the sand came off"). Mum's response also picks up on the state of helplessness that Emma conveyed in her first "whine". Emma's "I need a new one" is reframed as "you need to do a new star". By turning "I need" into "you need to do", Mum invokes the agency and competency that Emma has rejected in her pleas and complaints, and deletes Mum's own culpability. Mum continues by dealing pragmatically with the situation by initiating joint problem solving (lines 18 and 21, e.g. "do you know what *we* could do") as part of a running commentary. During this, Emma stands watching until Mum hands the task over to Emma (lines 25-26), who presses the plastic star into the now-wet sand and ends up making a "perfect star!" (line 34).

Over the course of the sequence, then, Mum inverts the situation, in both an affective and a practical sense. The strong negative stance displayed by Emma is inverted by

disattending to the whining and emphatic delivery, and disaffiliating with it by a display of positive stance. Both the helplessness and culpability invoked by Emma are overturned by not engaging with issues of blame and focusing on Emma's agency, initially through some joint problem solving and then attributing success to Emma herself. Mum does not help Emma by making her a star, but by helping Emma to help herself. The problem is resolved without overt attention to the emotional display. That is not to say that the urgent, upset whine was not relevant to the way the sequence unfolded – such urgent pleas invite immediate help – but that the help provided neutralized the affective stance. We argue that *stance inversions*, whereby a speaker takes a contrary stance in response to a just prior stance display, are particularly useful in the management of children's whining and potentially more broadly as an interactional practice across different contexts and practices.

Extract 2 also demonstrates adults inverting the affective stance displayed by a young child, using a non-problem-focused strategy. In this case, two-year-old Jason and his parents are at his grandparents' (Bob and Kate) house for lunch. The extract occurs just over an hour into the recording. The food has been eaten and the adults have remained talking at the table while Jason has been playing and wandering around, mostly off camera. As the extract begins, Kate is looking at some photos and laughing, while Bob is addressing Dad as part of a discussion about arranging delivery of a disc. Just before the start of the extract, Jason walks behind Mum and approaches Dad from behind.

Extract 2. Sheriff02 Grandparents

- 1 Kat: (Oh [the) (---(h)-----) hh ↑hik↑ hih hih hik]
 2 Jas: [#I wanna get outsi:↑:de [dɪɑ:dɪ:: #]
 3 Bob: [If he gives the
 4 disc tih Nao:mi, (.) we' if I
 5 [take the disc over (-----) to Naomi]=
 6 Jas: [I wanna ge' ou:tsi↑::de [(now) Daddy= #]
 7 Dad: [KHHH ((cough))
 8 Bob: =[when we go, [(that'd be good) (----)]
 9 Jas: [=hhh [I w a n n a b e]
 10 [outside .h a' then go: ho[:meɹ]
 11 Dad: [°Right.° [Wel-] >we're
 12 ginna go home s- we're gonna go in tih
 13 s[ee the-< (.) (Santa Parade) <
 14 Mum: [>(We're gonna' [see: [(.) <(Father Chris-)>]
 15 Bob: [()

that orients to what may be a key feature of Jason's project, which is leaving the grandparent's house with his parents.

Whining and stance in the escalation of a complaint

In previous extracts we have seen a swift resolution of whining sequences with a quick move into remedy or distraction, resulting in no further whining by the child. In Extract 3, however, there is a series of escalating whines. Five-year-old Joe is sitting at the table eating sandwiches, while his 18-month-old twin brothers are in high-chairs having already finished their meals. The extract begins with Mum off-camera preparing pudding (tubs of yoghurt) for the twins, while playing an interactional game with the twins about the noises that animals make (e.g. "how does a dog go?"). As Joe self-selects (line 6) to answer a question put to Toby, regarding what a fish does, he notices the yoghurt that Mum has chosen for one of the twins. This occasions the whining.

Extract 3. Dobson59 20:03 Pudding

1 Mum: >Toby what does< a fi:sh do:.
2 (0.7)
3 Joe: BU::R[GH!
4 Mum: [What's a fi:sh do To:by?
5 (0.6)
6 Joe: A fish: does ^thi:- .h ↑↑No: I wan- that's
7 my: pudd:ng:.
8 (0.7)
9 Joe: Nau:ghty gi:rl?
10 (0.6)
11 Mum: >Y(h)ou sh(h)ould've eaten< ↑qui::cker.
12 (0.2)
13 Mum: The's ↑lots i:n there.
14 (3.6)
15 Joe: ↑B't ↑that- (0.2) I w↑anted tha::t o:n:e,
16 #no:ne of the othe::rs?
17 Mum: ↑O:h'll we'll have to get some mo:re of
18 those ones ano:ther time.=
19 (Twin): HHN::G
20 Joe: ↑But then they'll be different ↓~pi::ctu:::res~.
21 Mum: (Would you like a ())
22 (1.3)
23 Joe: #.h ↑↑But I wanted that↑↑ pwi:ctu:::re.#
24 (0.2)
25 Mum: So:rry:.
26 (.)
27 Joe: S:illy?

Each yoghurt has a different design or character on the packaging, and Joe's noticing of Mum's choice of a *particular* yoghurt pot initiates the whining sequence, as Joe cuts off his turn-in-progress, to object. Joe's whining, marked prosodically by raised pitch, is carried through several turns (lines 6-7, 15-16, 20, 23). Over these turns, Joe's voice becomes increasingly "whiney" via elongated vowels, a more nasal tone, and elements of "pre-crying" aspirations and wobbly voice (at lines 20 and 23). In his final whined utterance at line 23, Joe pronounces the word "picture" with an errant "w" sound which gives the turn a babyish enunciation.

Joe begins his objection with an emphatic opposition marker, "No" (line 6). Cutting off his own turn, to issue this objection, prioritizes the objection as urgently requiring attention and remedy. This parallels the "urgency" Emma displayed in Extract 1. Joe seems to be on his way to saying something like "I wan(t that pudding)," or, as he says shortly afterwards at line 15, "I wan(ted that one)", but cuts off "I want(ed)" to self-repair to "that's my pudding" (lines 6-7). This shift, from an expression of wanting to an assertion of ownership, upgrades the status of Joe's claim upon it. It is not merely an object of desire or request, but already his. Asserting proprietorial rights to the pudding provides a stronger basis for a complaint, involving transgression on his mother's part for giving to the twins something that belongs to Joe. Joe's escalating whining conveys an affective stance that enhances the verbal complaint's sense of grievance. Joe's arm and finger are outstretched tautly as he points towards the pudding (lines 6-7). Following line 7 his arm remains extended but he slowly releases the finger-pointing during the gap at line 8, before mock-admonishing Mum with "naughty girl" (line 9) which implies her culpability. The rebuke plays on category disjunctures in that Joe, as a child, is reprimanding his mother with an utterance an adult might use towards a child. While the tone of voice retains an element of complaint, the possibly playful nature of the utterance involves a different "keying" (Goffman, 1981) that makes what is said hearable as a tease retroactively softening the negative stance at line 6, into something less serious, something like "doing doing telling off".

Mum responds at line 11, not directly to Joe's labelling her a "naughty girl", but with a counter-accusation that minimizes her culpability, while aligning with what we hear as Joe's teasing stance – "you should have eaten quicker," with soft laughter particles bubbling through her rebuke. In Mum's case, responding to Joe, this is something like "doing doing rebuke." She adds gently, "there's lots in there" (line 13), offering Joe some compensation for his loss. Joe's initial stance, combining objection, complaint and blaming, is thus *inverted*

by Mum via her softer tone and more normal pitch, along with her resistance to culpability and therefore any need for apology or remedy. Subsequently, Joe retracts his arm and there is an extended silence of 3.6 seconds (line 14) that looks on its way to a lapse and potential closing of the sequence, until Joe opens it up again with a counter to Mum's assurance that there are "lots" of puddings in the fridge; he "wanted that one none of the others" (lines 15-16). Joe thus reverses the repair noted in lines 6-7, from asserted ownership back to "I wanted." The wanting is past tense, but the complaint remains active. "None of the others" (line 16) is an extreme formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) of what he is rejecting, and the turn is again delivered with vowel elongation, raised pitch, and a clear "whiny voice" (signalled by the # signs). If line 9 was a pull-back and opened up a closing, Joe's turn at lines 15-6 is an escalation and re-opening.

Mum resists Joe's complaint with a stance-inverting softened pitch (line 17), starting with a conventional expression of resigned acceptance ("Oh (we)ll"), and proposes, as a solution, getting "more of those ones another time" (lines 17-18). In so doing, Mum orients to the past tense of Joe's "wanted", and looks to the future, where the proposed action is framed as a joint one ("We'll have to") rather than a remedy done by Mum alone. However, Joe has not finished objecting. His "But" at line 20 prefaces a concern that he will not manage to get the same picture on any new yoghurt pot, as the one he has just been thwarted from having. Mum's possible offer at line 21 of an alternative pudding is not audible enough to consider in detail, but it is followed by a further objection from Joe: "but I wanted that picture," delivered in the "whiniest" prosody thus far (including the "baby talk" noted earlier). Again, however, it is an assertion of a past wanting, of a moment now gone and irremediable. To this last complaint, with Joe no longer actively pursuing the specific yoghurt pot he wanted, Mum finally responds with an apology, a stand-alone "sorry" (line 25) that ratifies Joe's warrant for complaint and her own culpability. Joe receipts this with a further, final, reprimand "silly"². Like line 9, there is something playful about this, "doing doing telling off," while at the same time acknowledging and accepting the apology as the end of the matter.

So, Extract 3 involves a whine that develops over multiple turns. The continuation of a whining episode beyond a single "whine unit" is more typical of the persistent whining that adults tend to find problematic. Mum's way of managing the interaction avoids granting Joe what he wanted, and orients him to alternatives, while side-stepping the complaint about herself. Part of this interaction management includes her countering the complaint's affective expression, via intonational stance inversion. Notably, Joe himself was party to this management, producing not only the complaint and the whining, but also the softening of it

through a mixture of “baby voice” intonation and forms of address (“naughty girl” and “silly”). The affective stance encoded in vocal delivery is clearly both action-performative and interactionally oriented.

The relative complexity of Extract 3 is at least partially attributable to the social and linguistic competencies available to a five-year old child. These competencies allow for close management of shifting stances, their intonational embodiment and verbal expression, co-constructed with the mother. Previous extracts exemplified whining by much younger children, yet similar features were noted in terms of the production and response of the whine, and of the co-production of an affective stance. Our final analytic section shows that these features and practices are evident in episodes involving even younger children with limited verbal skills.

Stance and Action in Non-verbal Whining: “Little Cries”

Whines effectively index whatever is being said or oriented to as problematic in some way. While the nature of that problem may be expressed through words, the speaker’s emotional stance is also embodied through prosodic features of the talk. In this section, we discuss “little cries” that are qualitatively different from crying/sobbing episodes, but rather, merit treatment (by participants and analysts alike) as non-verbal whines. The crying is different from “sobbing” that occurs in bouts (Hepburn, 2004; Kidwell, 2013), or children’s pain cries, that involve cry-units and necessitate in-breaths to be sustained (Berducci, 2016). These “little cries” are typically just one unit of sound, with no clearly projected further units. We treat them as non-verbal whining due to the similarity in their sequential positioning, apparent action orientation, and – crucially – their interactional treatment, which indicate parents’ orientation to the little cries as practically equivalent to more obvious whining. Data sessions and presentations with international colleagues provided an initial peer review to warrant treating whines and these “little cries” as related situated actions. As with whining, our interest is not in producing a rich phonetic description and definition of little cries, but in exploring the interactional organization and outcomes of the sequences in which they occur.

A “little cry” involves vocalization without words to indicate a problem. Despite the absence of words to specify what that problem is, its nature is indexically available in the setting and action sequence, just as it is with whines that accompany speech. We can look to the sequential context of the cries’ production, and at the orientations of producer and recipient to see how they work interactionally.

Consider Extract 4, which we will first gloss descriptively to capture the sequence of physical actions that the transcript only partially represents. The extract comes from a recording in their garden with Mum, Dad, Grandma, five-year old Joe, and eighteen-month-old twins Tom and Mac. Tom, slightly unsteady on his feet, walks toward a small plastic sit-on car which has a trailer attached to the back. He has his hands on the car and looks to be trying to establish how to get on it. Joe then comes along, gently moves past Tom and sits on the car himself. Tom looks toward Mum and issues a “little cry” (Extract 4, line 3), which is short and sharp, with a clear beginning and end to it; this is not the kind of cry that is going to continue, escalate, turn into sobbing, or need soothing.

Extract 4. Dobson 52 Garden 0806 Tractor and Trailer

1 Joe: That too: ()
 2 (1.0)
 3 Tom: → ≈↑↑Ih yah ah a::h≈
 4 Mum: ↑You go in the ba:c::k?
 5 Tom: ↑i::h ↓u::h
 6 (2.6)
 7 Joe: (Oh) () (cry baby)
 8 (2.1)
 9 Tom: ↑A*a::h↑
 10 Gra: M H↑A:*h iheh that's good ↑isn't it.
 11 Tom: £Ah hah£

Tom's cry is issued when his action-in-progress, aimed at sitting on the car, is thwarted by Joe. Tom's gaze towards Mum during the cry mobilizes her reciprocity (Butler & Wilkinson, 2013), suggesting this is a cry for help. Even though the cry is occasioned by Joe's action, it is not delivered to or for him, and does not seem designed to direct Joe to get off the car. However, Mum's remedy is not to remove Joe and allow Tom access to the car. Rather, she proposes verbally (line 4), and with a pointing gesture, that Tom goes in the back (i.e. in the trailer), while taking the few steps towards him to pick him up and then place him in the trailer. Joe then rides off pulling the trailer, and Tom smiles and laughs amiably.

In Extract 4, then, there is little, if any, orientation to affect either in the production or receipt of the little cry. It indexes an obstructed goal (as does a whine), some sort of objectionable transgression on the part of Tom's brother Joe, and solicits and receives a remedy. This sort of cry has clear parallels with the cries explored by Kidwell (2013) that seek the intervention of an adult. There is a problem of some kind, an adult is sought to remedy the situation, and the situation is resolved. While the production of the cry effectively mobilizes Mum, and conveys a sense of urgency, the jointly produced focus is on achieving a

solution rather than pursuing a complaint. In the following examples, in contrast, similar sorts of cries are treated by Mum as affect displays, that is, as expressions of feelings.

In Extract 5 the same Mum and children (Tom, Joe and Mac) are doing baking. Joe sits at a chair by a table while Tom and Mac sit in highchairs. Each child has their own bowl to which Mum has been adding ingredients, and helping to mix these into a cookie dough. After preparing Joe’s dough, Mum moves across to Tom and starts kneading the dough in the bowl on his highchair table. The extract starts just as Mum lifts up Tom’s bowl, presumably to more effectively work with the dough, with line 1 showing Tom’s non-verbal utterance in response to this.

Extract 5 Dobson 58 Baking 1633 Bowl

1 Tom: #Ug uh:[:ng:::~#
 2 Mum: [I kno:w Tom I kno::w.
 3 ((Mum turns away out of camera shot))
 4 Tom: ~H:eu
 5 Mum: Hh
 6 (0.4)
 7 Joe: Yea:h.
 8 Mum: Hang on Tommy
 9 Tom: ~Heu:::~nguh:[::~
 10 Mum: [↑I kno (hh) w (hh)
 11 (1.3)
 12 Mum: ↑I kno:[w ↑To:mɔ̃
 13 Tom: [↑Hu::..!
 14 (0.6)
 15 Mum: There you go. There’s yours

Tom’s vocalization follows the removal of the bowl from his reach, marking Mum’s action as objectionable and transgressive. While lacking some of the urgency and intonational qualities that characterize other whine-like “little cries,” Mum clearly orients to it as a complaint. She responds with the empathetic token “I know Tom I know” (MacMartin et al., 2014), with increasing elongation and pitch movement on the repetition of “kno::w,” displaying recognition and understanding of Tom’s trouble and affiliating with his vocalized stance. The shift to the nickname “Tommy” at line 8 conveys endearment and intimacy. When Mum then turns away with the bowl briefly (out of the camera frame), Tom upgrades his cry (line 9) with greater urgency, volume, and a more whiney intonation. Mum responds in turn with an upgraded empathic receipt, with laughter particles and an upwards shift in pitch (line 10, with higher pitch also in line 12).

Mum’s responses treat Tom’s non-verbal cries as sensible and “know-able,” that is, as indexing a recognizable and appreciable affective stance. They acknowledge the

complainability of Mum’s own actions and thereby validate Tom’s treatment of them as a transgression, and align with his action as a complaint. The matter of affiliation is more complicated; Mum’s empathic responses treat Tom’s cry as “doing an affective stance,” but there are elements of stance inversion, as Mum responds to Tom’s more intense whiney cry with laughter particles and higher pitch. There are parallels with Extract 3, when a complaint was responded to in ways that made light of the trouble while acknowledging complainability and culpability. However, stance and complainability are responded to at the expense of a response to the trouble source itself. Mum’s empathic response acknowledges, but does not remedy, the situation. Tom has to continue to wait until Mum has finished stirring the mixture and returns the bowl to him at line 15.

Mum’s response renders the little cry, or whine, as doing a particular action and displaying affect, retroactively making of the cry the thing it is treated as being, or doing. The focus is on the action orientation of an affective stance, whereas in other instances, such as in Extract 6 below, the display of emotion and affective stance is dealt with directly.

Treating Cry as Expressing Emotional Disposition

In this final example (Extract 6), Tom, Joe and Mac are in the playroom with Mum. Mum has the camera behind a sofa, with Joe beside her – both are thus off camera throughout this extract. The twins have been collecting DVDs from the far side of the room and bringing them over to Mum, while Joe has been attending to the age-rating on the DVDs and removing those that are “too old” for the twins. As the extract begins, Tom is making crying-whinging sounds as he tries to reach a DVD on the sofa (lines 1-2).

Extract 6 Dobson 56 Playroom 1454 Grumpy Boy

1 Tom: ~Heh=heh~*.h.h*~he::lp.h=hoo:
 2 [uh~
 3 Joe: [O::h.=
 4 Mum: O::↓::h.
 5 Tom: ↑Hee[:leebuh-]UH
 6 Joe: [↑What are you↑ do:ing.]
 7 (0.6)
 8 Joe: ↑A:Y!
 9 (0.5)
 10 Tom: → ~↑↑UI:H=HIH↑=HIH=HIU:H=HIU:::H~
 11 (0.5)
 12 Mum: Tom you ↑can’t have that↑ it’s a
 13 ↑twe:lve¿
 14 Tom: ~Hye:::h ↑eu:::h~

15 (0.4)
 16 Mum: I[t's a ↑twe:lve↑ grumpy bo:y?
 17 Tom: [Hhh ((picks up DVD on sofa))

Tom's "UH" at line 5 is delivered when he manages to reach the DVD and pick it up. Joe's "AY!" at line 8 is an objection to Tom having the DVD and corresponds with him taking it out of Tom's hand. The target cry at line 10 is made with outstretched hand towards Joe/the DVD behind the sofa, just to the right of the camera. The cry ends somewhat abruptly when Tom picks up another DVD from the sofa, and looks at Joe pulling it close to his body and out of reach of Joe and Mum.

Like other "little cries," this cry of Tom's has "whinging" components. There are no tears involved, and the crying is produced in a loud and urgent manner. It protests Joe's action of taking the DVD and therefore, as in Extracts 4 and 5, treats the removal of an object from Tom's possession as a transgression. The whining emerges in response to this transgression and signals the thwarting of an action – Tom's grasping of the DVD. With his arm outstretched towards the DVD held by Joe, Tom's cry seems to be in the service of having the DVD returned to him. During the cry, his gaze appears to be primarily on Joe other than a brief gaze flashed at Mum just before she addresses him in, at line 12. So, unlike Extract 4 where Mum was clearly the intended recipient of the cry, here the cry is directed at Joe. As such, the action is less treatable as a "cry for help" or "remedy solicit" due to its observability as an objection, or complaint, that seeks a resolution from the perpetrator himself (Joe).

Mum's response is addressed to Tom (line 12), and formulates Tom's project in her rejection of his goal ("you can't *have that*"). She also accounts for that rejection, with "it's a twelve" (that is, not suitable for a child younger than 12 years). This account is repeated at line 16 in the face of further crying by Tom, who is then characterized by Mum as "grumpy boy." The description "grumpy" formulates Tom's reaction as a product of grumpiness, that is, as dispositional rather than warranted by his situation. The implication is that Tom is not merely displaying an affective stance, but is behaving symptomatically, as a "grumpy boy." So, while the initial cries are treated pragmatically, Tom's continuing whine at line 14 is treated by Mum as unwarranted and dispositional. While affective displays can be made without reference to emotional state, we suggest that when emotion *is* invoked, that invocation can be understood to be accomplishing something interactionally relevant (cf. Edwards, 1999, on the rhetorical uses of emotion terms). In this case, it is used in the context of justifying a rejection of Tom's appeal for the return of the DVD.

DISCUSSION

Having identified a number of instances of children's whining, involving various phonetic properties, we focused on their production and consequences in and for the social interactions where they were done. Prosodically, the whines had in common a marked shift from regular delivery. The instances all involved raised pitch and loudness, and elongated vowel sounds. The "little cries" that we included as a closely allied practice, given our primary interest in interactional functions rather than phonetics, had some similarities in terms of sound, but were also, for the most part, markedly different from more standard crying (sobbing) as there was little projection of further cry units (Berducci, 2016).

Analysis showed how a range of whines and "little cries" served to object, complain, and/or solicit remedial help (the latter particularly in Extract 4). Their status as expressions of affect were interactionally optional, as something to be picked up, highlighted, labelled (in whatever way), or ignored. In treating whines and cries as emotional expressions, the particular ways in which such emotional states or dispositions were formulated functioned not merely diagnostically, in identifying a parent's best guess what subjective state a whine might be "expressing," but rhetorically, with regard to the activity and situation at hand. In the case of "grumpy boy" (Extract 6), this attribution helped to counter and de-legitimate Tom's objection to losing possession of a DVD that was in any case, and also accountably, too old for him.

When whining was not overtly treated or labelled as emotionally expressive, other resources could be used by parents in managing and responding to it, effectively bringing the whining to a close. As we saw in Extracts 1 and 2, one such resource was "stance inversion," where the interacting adult adopted a contrasting tone, while nevertheless orienting to the child's concern for the offending situation (Extract 1a, "↑What's wrong with the wa::ter sweet↑hear:t?"). In that example, as in others, stance inversions were also opportunities for formulating features of the whine's problematic circumstances, preparatory for possible remedy (the problem was to do with the water), or rejection (Extract 6: "Tom you ↑can't have that↑ it's a ↑twe:lve;"). The specification "It's a twelve" works as an account for rejection, that is, for not providing the sought-for remedy. Another example of remedy-oriented stance inversion, following a whine, is in Extract 3, "↑O:h'll we'll have to get some mo:re of those ones ano:ther time."

One notable feature of Extract 3, with the 5-year-old Joe, was the joint nature of how the whining, and its objected-to circumstances, got resolved. It was not for Mum alone to invert, counter, or remedy the situation. Joe himself took part interactionally over several turns, pursuing the whining and complaint while also adopting a more playful stance (“Nau:ghty gi:rl;”) to which Mum produced a gently laughing response. Although detailed transcription and analysis does not permit exploration of many instances, we saw across the range of extracts various ways in which whining was managed interactionally. Whining may or may not be treated as emotional expression, in which case a specific emotion rather than an alternative might be attributed, but also whining may be countered, rejected or remedied. It is in the details of action, interaction and uptake that the “meaning” of whining is constituted, though not infinitely so. There are recognizable features of whining (admittedly, that is a somewhat circular observation to make, given the requirement to recognize instances in the first place), and a recognizable set of members’ options for interpreting and dealing with it; it is unlikely that we have exhausted those options in this study.

Regarding the social functions of whining, its generally perceived negativity and undesirability, and its relationship to emotional states and stances, there are issues concerning children’s development and socialization. Rather than approaching whining as emotional expression, nor indeed rejecting the notion of whining as emotional expression, we suggest that the recognition and interpretation of whining are best understood as members’ concerns. That is to say, the status of whining (and, by extension, other bodily signals and their descriptions), as indicative of experiential states, is itself part of the nexus of accountability within which, and into which, children are socialized. It is part of what is involved in their becoming competent members of a culture, with its complex range of practices of interaction and accountability. “Whining” is first and foremost a vernacular category, whose natural home is within the descriptive practices of everyday life. In this study we have leaned heavily on that vernacular sense, in identifying candidate instances of the phenomenon, which in turn have driven the analysis. Further, it appears that the themes that interest researchers of various kinds (psychologists, interaction analysts, linguists, etc.), including the identification, labelling, causes and functions of whining, are, in the first place, matters that are performed and resolved as practical matters in the course of everyday social interaction. That makes recordings of everyday social interaction a good place in which to ground our understanding of the phenomenon.

REFERENCES

- Berducci, D. F. (2016). Infants' pain cries: Natural resources for co-creating a proto-interaction order. *Theory & Psychology, 26*(4), 438-458.
- Butler, C.W. & Wilkinson, R. (2013). Mobilizing reciprocity: Child participation and 'rights to speak' in multi-party family interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics, 50*, 37-51.
- Buttny, R. (1990). Blame-account sequences in therapy: The negotiation of relational meanings. *Semiotica, 78*, 219-247.
- Cekaite, A. (2009). Soliciting teacher attention in an L2 classroom: Affect displays, classroom artefacts, and embodied action. *Applied Linguistics, 30*, 26-48.
- Chang, R. S., & Thompson, N. S. (2010). The attention-getting capacity of whines and child-directed speech. *Evolutionary Psychology, 8*, 260-274.
- Couper-Kuhlen, E., & Selting, M. (Eds.) (1996). *Prosody in conversation: Interactional studies*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Craven, A.J., & Potter, J. (2010). Directives: Entitlement and contingency in action. *Discourse Studies, 12*, 419-442.
- Demuth, C., Keller, H., & Yovsi, R.D. (2012). Cultural models in communication with infants: Lessons from Kikaikelaki, Cameroon and Muenster, Germany. *Journal of Early Childhood Research 10*, 70-87.
- Edwards, D. (1999). Emotion discourse. *Culture & Psychology, 5*, 271-291.
- Edwards, D. (2005). Moaning, whinging and laughing: The subjective side of complaints. *Discourse Studies, 7*, 5-29.
- Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (2005). Discursive psychology, mental states and descriptions. In H. te Molder & J. Potter (Eds.), *Conversation and cognition* (pp. 241-259). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Evaldsson, A-C., & Svahn, J. (2017). Staging social aggression: Affective stances and moral character work in girls' gossip telling. *Research on Children and Social Interaction, 1*, 77-104.
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Oxford, England: Basil Blackwell.
- Goodwin, C. (2007). Participation, stance and affect in the organization of activities. *Discourse & Society, 18*, 53-73.
- Goodwin, M. H., & Cekaite, A. (2013). Calibration in directive/response sequences in family interaction. *Journal of Pragmatics, 46*, 122-138.

- Goodwin, M. H., & Cekaite, A. (2014). Orchestrating directive trajectories in communicative projects in family interaction. In P. Drew & E. Couper-Kuhlen (Eds.), *Requesting in social interaction*, (pp. 185-214). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Goodwin, M.H., Cekaite, A., & Goodwin, C. (2012). Emotion as stance. In M.-J. Sorjonen & A. Peräkylä, (Eds.), *Emotion in interaction* (pp. 16-41). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Goodwin, M. H., & Goodwin, C. (2000). Emotion within situated activity. In A. Duranti (Ed.), *Linguistic Anthropology: A Reader* (pp. 239-257). Malden, MA: Blackwell.
- Green, J.A., Whitney, P.G., & Potegal, M. (2011). Screaming, yelling, whining, and crying: Categorical and intensity differences in vocal expressions of anger and sadness in children's tantrums. *Emotion, 11*, 1124 –1133.
- Hamo, M., Blum-Kulka, S. & Hachohen, G. (2004) From observation to transcription and back: Theory, practice, and interpretation in the analysis of children's naturally occurring discourse. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 37*(1), 71-92.
- Harré, R. (Ed.) (1986b). *The social construction of emotions*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Hepburn, A. (2004). Crying: Notes on description, transcription, and interaction. *Research on Language & Social Interaction, 37*, 251-90.
- Hepburn, A., & Potter, J. (2011). Threats: Power, family mealtimes and social influence. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 50*, 99-120.
- Heritage, J.C. (1984). A change-of-state token and aspects of its sequential placement. In J.M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 299-346). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Jefferson, G. (2004). Glossary of transcript symbols with an introduction. In G. H. Lerner (Ed.), *Conversation analysis: Studies from the first generation* (pp. 13-31). Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- Jenkins, L., & Hepburn, A. (2015). Children's sensations as interactional phenomena: A conversation analysis of children's expressions of pain and discomfort. *Journal of Qualitative Psychology, 12*, 472-491.
- Kidwell, M. (2013). Interaction among children. In J. Sidnell and T. Stivers (Eds.), *The handbook of conversation analysis* (509-532). West Sussex, England: Blackwell.
- MacMartin, C., Coe, J.B., & Adams, C.L. (2014). Treating distressed animals as participants: I Know responses in veterinarians' pet-directed talk. *Research on Language and Social Interaction, 47*, 151-174.

- Pomerantz, A. (1986). Extreme Case formulations: A way of legitimizing claims. *Human Studies*, 9, 219-229.
- Potegal, M., & Davidson, R. J. (2003). Temper tantrums in young children: 1. behavioral composition. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, 24, 140-147.
- Schegloff, E. A. (2005). On integrity in inquiry... of the investigated, not the investigator. *Discourse Studies*, 7, 455-480.
- Sears, M. S., Repetti, R. L., Reynolds, B. M., & Sperling, J. B. (2014). A naturalistic observational study of children's expressions of anger in the family context. *Emotion*, 14, 272.
- Sokol, R. I., Webster, K. L., Thompson, N. S., & Stevens, D. A. (2005). Whining as mother-directed speech. *Infant and Child Development*, 14, 478-490.
- Sorjonen, M.-J., & Peräkylä, A. (Eds.) (2012). *Emotion in interaction*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Wetherell, M. (2012). *Affect and emotion: A new social science understanding*. London: Sage.
- Wootton, A.J. (1997). *Interaction and the development of mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wootton, A.J. (2012). Distress in adult-child interaction. In M.-J. Sorjonen & A. Peräkylä, (Eds.), *Emotion in interaction* (pp. 42-63). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.

¹ (~) similar to wobbly voice but not like 'breaking noise' in crying talk.

is used to indicate speech characterizable as using whining or whinging intonation/prosody. It typically involves high pitch, stretched sounds, slightly nasal sound to talk.

² It is not clear whether 'silly' is being used to describe Mum's behaviour, or the application of that description to address or categorize Mum as silly. Intonationally, it has the same pattern as 'naughty girl', with a falling final intonation, and whether it is used as a description or categorization, it serves the same function as potentially sequence-closing.