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# Directing and requesting: two interactive uses of the mental state terms *want* and *need*\*

**Abstract:** This article is focused on the uses of the terms *want* and *need* to build directives and requests in family interaction. The study is located within the theoretical framework of discursive psychology, using the methods of conversation analysis. Within social cognitive research, mental state terms are analyzed as references to inner mental experiences. In contrast, this article analyzes the selection of *want* and *need* as sequential phenomena. The use of I *want* to deliver directives increases the likelihood of compliance when one cannot monitor or control whether a projected action will be carried out. Requests built using I *need* are recurrently delivered following a request from an interlocutor and delay the granting of the request while maintaining alignment. Thus rather than simply expressing an internal mental experience, the verbs *want* and *need* have specific practical uses in their normative sequential environments.

**Keywords:** discursive psychology; conversation analysis; family interaction; want; need; requests; directives.

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## 1 Introduction: mental state terms as sequential phenomena

This article examines the interactive deployment of the mental state terms *want* and *need* in everyday family interaction and shows how the selection of these terms to build directives and requests is a sequential phenomenon. The article has two major concerns. First, it focuses on the broad theme of how psychology

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can be understood as an object “in and for interaction” (Potter 2005: 739) and how psychological terms can be fruitfully examined as resources that accomplish particular actions in a range of interactional settings. I examine live interactional practices in which *want* and *need* regularly occur, specifically how speakers use *I want* to deliver directives and *I need* to build requests in specific, recurrent environments to manage a range of contingencies and considerations. The second concern will be to extend work that has reported on the selection of syntactic format when building requests and directives (Aronsson and Cekaite 2011; Craven and Potter 2010; Curl and Drew 2008; Heinemann 2006; Lindström 2005; Vinkhuyzen and Szymanski 2005). The analysis draws on recent discursive psychological work which examines “psychological” matters as they are described, invoked, and put to use by people themselves *in situ* as part of the social actions performed in and through everyday talk (e.g., see contributions in Hepburn and Wiggins 2007). The consideration of selection of these terms as interactional, sequential phenomena has particular implications for a referential theory of language that assumes that mental state terms emerge within talk as words that reflect inner mental states.

## 1.1 Referentialism and Theory of Mind

A major assumption of much of social cognitive research is that mental state terms develop in language as names referring to inner mental experiences. A major facet of this work is Theory of Mind, defined as a basic human competence to impute mental states to others, to recognize that others may have desires, beliefs, and intentions that differ from one’s own, and to use knowledge of others’ mental states to explain and predict their behavior. Proponents of Theory of Mind uncritically adopt a referential theory of meaning as it is assumed that there are close relations between particular linguistic and cognitive developments (Gopnik and Meltzoff 1986, 1987).

In their seminal study of “how children talk about the mind,” Bartsch and Wellman (1995: 31) developed a coding scheme to identify “genuine references to psychological states.” They examine children’s uses of the term *want* for what these may reveal about children’s understanding of “desire.” Consequently, their coding scheme aims to identify utterances with “a focus on desire rather than on a specific action” (1995: 68). For example, requests for unattainable objects (such as where it is clear that a request will not be granted) are coded as *contrastive* and are cited as being particularly revealing about children’s understanding of desire states. Contrastive utterances, “those contrasting desire and outcomes, those contrasting desire with actions” (1995: 77), they argue, “demonstrate an under-

standing of desires as something like a personal disposition or experiential state” (1995: 79). In contrast, conversational uses are treated as uninteresting and are disregarded for the purposes of analysis.

Conversational uses are defined as the “simple, unadorned request for an object when the object was in plain view. Such a statement could too easily, in the absence of additional context or evidence, be a mere request for an object as in “Give me the ball” or even a polite version of “Hand me the ball” (1995: 67). In recent years there has been interest in how conversational input shapes Theory of Mind development (for a recent review, see Slaughter and Peterson 2012). Following Bartsch and Wellman’s work, these studies of “maternal mental state talk” utilize coding schemes that differentiate “between uses of mental state terms that were genuine versus those that were conversational” (McElwain et al. 2011: 1299).

## 1.2 Discursive psychology: an interaction analysis

It has been noted that this “psychologized” conception of beliefs and desires as hidden mental states is inconsistent with how words about intentionality are used in everyday life (Leudar and Costall 2004). The notion that mental state expressions can be studied as matters oriented to in talk-in-interaction is a basic premise of discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter 2005). “Psychological” matters are not approached from an analysts’ perspective, rather the focus is on how psychological terminology is described, invoked, and put to use by people themselves *in situ* as part of the social actions performed in and through everyday talk.

Early work in discursive psychology reworked a range of standard psychological topics such as memory (Middleton and Edwards 1990), attitudes (Potter and Wetherell 1987), and “script knowledge” (Edwards 1994, 1995). Research has shown how activities such as “remembering” are inherently social (Middleton and Edwards 1990), rather than a record of events which is relayed by speakers. A second strand of work has focused on the “psychological thesaurus” and examines how categories that are conventionally treated as psychological are invoked and used in everyday and institutional interaction (Edwards 2005, 2006, 2008). This includes “psychological terminology” such as *remember* and *jealousy* (Shaw and Kitzinger 2007; Edwards 1995) as well as idiomatic and metaphorical terms such as *to be honest*, *honest to God*, and *boiling angry* (Edwards 2005; Edwards and Fasulo 2006). Edwards (2006) examines how the modal verb *would* is used in handling accountability by formulating a general disposition to act one way or another in the context of police interrogation. He shows how suspects recurrently state what they generally *would* or *wouldn’t* do as a basis for denying a specific

accusation. Childs (2012) shows how speakers may formulate their “wants” as part of a two-part structure, *I don’t want X, I want Y*, which is recurrently delivered in two specific sequential environments which are following a proposal regarding the speaker’s future actions or a formulation of the speaker’s motivations. Across both subsets the second part of the structure *I want Y* decreases the likelihood of challenge by a co-interactant in third-turn position. Childs (2012: 15) argues that “rather than descriptions of pre-existing inner experiences, the *I want* constructions examined here are best understood as formulations that are rhetorically organized to reject and undermine an alternative.”

### 1.3 Requests and directives in interaction

Another tradition of work, pertinent to the analysis here, has examined the syntactic forms speakers use when delivering requests and directives and how the grammatical format of these turns influences the trajectory of the ongoing sequence. Curl and Drew (2008) show how the selection between modal requests such as *could you* and requests prefaced by *I wonder if* display speakers’ assessments of the likelihood that the request will be granted (or their entitlement to make the request) and understandings of the contingencies involved in the recipient carrying out the projected action. They show that modal forms display greater entitlement to make a request than those prefaced by *I wonder if*. An *I wonder if* preface, they note, “is a way to display one’s lack of entitlement to having a request granted or one’s awareness of the contingencies surrounding the granting of a request” (2008: 141). Rather than displaying entitlement to make a request or presuming that it will be granted, speakers simply “wonder” whether such a thing can be done.

Craven and Potter (2010) examine the nature and design of directives as distinct from requests. Drawing on Curl and Drew’s analysis of entitlement and contingency in types of request, they note that directives, typically delivered using an imperative format, are built as a *telling* rather than an *asking*. They show how “in directives, performing the stated action is not treated as contingent on the capacity or desires of the recipient. At the same time, the lack of attention to issues of capacity and desire (by not embodying these issues in a modal request form) builds a strong display of the speaker’s entitlement to direct the recipient’s actions” (2010: 9).

The following analysis draws on Curl and Drew’s (2008) notion of entitlement and contingency in requests and Craven and Potter’s (2010) characterization of directives as actions that embody no orientation to the recipient’s ability or willingness to carry out the requested action. The study develops work on the

selection of request format and will consider the uses of the mental state terms *want* and *need* in the construction of directives and requests in family interaction. This is part of a broader program of work that considers questions of power and resistance and how social influence operates within the family (Craven and Potter 2010; Hepburn and Potter 2011).

## 1.4 Data and analysis

The data were taken from two sources: media data taken from a series of “fly on the wall” documentary programs which each document the lives of a particular family over an extended period of time (the C4 and AAF corpuses) and a corpus of recordings of twenty-eight mealtimes made by two families, the “Potts” family and the “Crouch” family (all names are pseudonyms). The families were given a video camera for approximately one month and were asked to make recordings of ten to fifteen mealtimes. The families were given the option of deleting any recordings before the end of the recording period, and ethical permission to include anonymized extracts in research meetings and publications was obtained from each participant.

The analytic approach is located within the theoretical framework of discursive psychology, which focuses upon psychology as something displayed in talk-in-interaction (Potter 2005). The analysis draws on the rigorous analytical techniques of contemporary conversation analysis. Orthographic transcripts of each recording were generated and a broad search of materials was used to select a corpus of candidate requests and directives built using *want* and *need* as verbs. These examples were subsequently transcribed using the Jefferson notation system (see Atkinson and Heritage 1984) as standard in conversation analysis (see the appendix for transcription details).

## 2 Analysis

### 2.1 *I want* formatted directives

There were ten instances of directives built using *I want* within the data corpus. As is usual in conversation analysis, my aim is to explicate the interactional work which is being managed by this expression. I show how directives built using *I want* invoke authority and mobilize the recipient’s obligation to the speaker while ostensibly orienting to the projected action as the recipient’s business. Thus I

argue that *I want* formatted directives are Janus-faced in that they have two contrasting aspects. On the one hand their action import is to *tell* rather than *ask* the recipient to do something, but on the other hand they ostensibly orient to optionality. In other words, they are produced as if they are refusable when in fact, normatively, they are not. Before going on to consider these features I first outline the typical environments in which speakers frame directives using *I want*.

### 2.1.1 Deferred action directives

There are several features that are typical of the interaction environment in which speakers build directives with *I want*. First, the format is selected when the speaker is directing an interlocutor on something which is the *recipient's* business, rather than making a request on their own behalf, such as for assistance or permission. That is, the recipient is required to carry out some *action* rather than grant permission for the *speaker* to do so.

Second, speakers build directives with *I want* when the projected action is deferred (Lindström 1989 as cited in Landqvist 2005) and the turn makes relevant a commitment to a future activity rather than immediate compliance. That is, the majority of examples concern an action which is to be carried out when the speaker will not be present. Several examples are given below.

(1) AAFE3 26:58

(Pat: mother; Grant: son, aged seventeen)

01 Pat: [((walks into room and puts hand on hip))]

02 Gra: [let's get moving o:n ]

03 → Pat: oka:y now Kevin and Gra:nt I want you to be

04 back here by six.

05 (.)

06 Pat: ri:ght?

07 (.)

08 Mar: [((walks past Pat out of room))]

09 (Mar): [ri:ght. ]

10 Kev: I'm not going any(way,) ((out of camera shot))

(2) E4 16:20

(Jane: mother; Tom: son, aged fifteen)

01 Jan: WHE:RE YOU GOI:NG?

02 (1.0)

03 Tom: ( ) we're not allowed to be in so we're



and in doing so display an orientation to the matter as the recipient's business. By building directives in this way, speakers display an orientation to the matter as something which the recipient has primary responsibility of fulfilling. Further, the *I want* format generates an environment where the want may be satisfied, or not. On the surface, the possibility that the projected action will not be carried out is allowed for.

Note that none of the examples here uses an imperative format. For example the directive in Extract (1) is built:

oka:y now Kevin and Gra:nt I want you to be ba:ck here by six.

It is not built using an imperative such as:

oka:y now Kevin and Gra:nt be ba:ck here by six.

That is, the example in Extract (1) does not build a directive by formally, or in speech act terms, directly telling Kevin and Grant to be back by six.

We can also note that none of the examples are built using an interrogative format. Extract (1) was not built:

oka:y now Kevin and Gra:nt can you be ba:ck here by six.

That is, Extract (1) does not build a request using an interrogative format addressed to Kevin and Grant regarding their *ability* to be back by six. As a declarative, the turn does not formally solicit a *yes/no* response and so does not propose either of these as a possibility.

Directives built using *I want*, then, are Janus-faced and on the one hand strengthen the recipient's obligation to comply by invoking authority and entitlement, while on the other hand orienting to optionality and appearing to give the recipient a way out. In the following sections I consider each of these two features in turn.

### **2.1.2 *I want* mobilizes recipients' obligation to comply**

Building a directive using *I want* invokes authority and reflects speakers' orientations to their entitlement to issue a directive. Entitlement is "pointedly displayed by not orienting to any possibility of the request not being granted" (Curl and Drew 2008: 145). This lack of orientation can clearly be seen in the following ex-



tract. The previous night Tom and his sister were involved in a physical fight while they were alone in the house.

(4) 2008 3 29:30

(Simon: father; Tom: son, aged fifteen)

01 Sim: you're in trouble mate.

02 (1.0)

03 Sim: about last ni:ght.

04 (1.0)

05 Sim: ((*starts pointing at Tom*))

06 → Sim: I want you home on the fi:rst bu:s,(.) not

07 the second bu:s,

08 (0.4)

09 Sim: okay¿

10 (0.2)

11 Sim: no skateboard to schoo:l,

12 (0.5)

13 → Sim: I wanna check your bag before you go to

14 schoo:l,

15 (1.0)

16 Sim: [((*stops pointing at Tom and steps towards him*))]

17 Sim: [you're in trouble. ]

18 Sim: ((*pushes Tom's bedroom door open further*))

The target turn at lines 6 and 7 has a clear sense of *telling* rather than *asking*. The turn at lines 1-3 “you're in trouble mate.” invokes Simon's relative deontic authority. Tom is “in trouble”, a notion which implies some sort of punishment. As Simon's father, presumably Simon will administer this punishment. This turn also deletes Tom's agency and choice with respect to the events that are to follow. Note the turn “I want you home on the fi:rst bu:s,(.) not the second bu:s,” is built as a declarative format. It is not built as an interrogative such as “can you get the first bus home?” which treats compliance with the request as contingent on the recipient's willingness, ability, or capacity to comply (Vine 2009). Requests built in this way can be refused (Craven and Potter 2010) as *yes* or *no* are available as possible response options (Raymond 2003). As a declarative *I want* does not formally solicit a *yes/no* response and so proposes either of these as a possibility.

A further feature of the construction of this turn, which distinguishes this from a typical directive, is that *I want* indexes the speaker, further invoking Simon's relative deontic authority as his “wants” are treated as a sufficient basis for Tom to comply. Whereas request forms built using a modal such as “can you?”, index the recipient, and directives tell the recipient to do something without

giving a basis for doing so, here the *I want* construction indexes the speaker, as Simon's "wants" are provided as the basis upon which Tom must comply, which further enhances the display of entitlement.

Note the turn at lines 13 and 14 which is an implicit directive embedded within a directive sequence. This appears to be a deviant case as the form used does not *grammatically* present the action as one which Tom, as the recipient, will carry out. Formally, grammatically, the turn differs from that at lines 6 and 7, where "you" expresses the agent of the future action. However, as Edwards notes "the very notion of an *intention* to do something, as something worth formulating, makes relevant a potential gap between thought and action" (2008: 180, original emphasis). Thus if Simon were simply *able* to check Tom's bag, he would do so. By stating that Simon "wants" to check the bag, as something worth formulating, displays an orientation to the notion that the projected action requires an action on Tom's part. Although semantically "I wanna check your bag before you go to school," refers to a future action that the speaker will carry out, its function is not to simply inform Tom of Simon's "wants" but to request that Tom show Simon his bag before leaving the house.

### 2.1.3 Reporting a want as a fishing device

So far it has been noted that rather than *ask* recipients to do something, *I want* constructions are used to build directives that *tell* recipients to carry out an action. These formats embody high entitlement as the recipient is treated as obliged to carry out the projected course of action on the basis of what the speaker wants. However, the *I want* format changes the grammar of the turn so that formally the recipient is *not* being told what to do. Rather the speaker's *want* is simply reported which generates an environment where it may be fulfilled or not, which (on the literal surface at least) allows for the possibility that the projected action may not be carried out. We can see then that directives built using *I want* are Janus-faced and are produced as if they are refusable when in fact, normatively, they are not.

An initial orientation to optionality that is closed down once the directive is reissued can be seen clearly in Extract (5) in which Grant is about to leave the house with a friend and is told by his mother, Pat, to be back by six o'clock.

(5) AAFE3 26:58

(Pat: mother; Grant: son, aged seventeen)

01 Pat: [((walks into room and puts hand on hip))]

02 Gra: [let's get moving o:n ]

03 → Pat: oka:y now Kevin and Gra:nt I want you to be  
 04        ba:ck here by six.  
 05        (.)  
 06 Pat: ri:ght?  
 07        (.)  
 08 Mar: [*((walks past Pat out of room))*]  
 09 (Mar): [ri:ght.        ]  
 10 Kev: I'm not going any(way,) (*out of camera shot*)  
 11 Gra: [*((runs past Pat out of room))*        ]  
 12 Pat: [you're no:t goi:ng ↓good.↓ o:kay,]  
 13 Pat: [*((walks towards door, following Grant))*]  
 14        | (0.2) |  
 15 Pat: Gra:nt  
 16        (.)  
 17 (Mic): (ye:s)  
 18 Pat: GRANT?  
 19 Gra: yea::h  
 20 Pat: [*((stands in doorway looking at Grant))*        ]  
 21 Pat: [YOU BE BACK HERE BY ↑SIX↑ O CLO:CK. ]  
 22        (0.2)  
 23 Gra: I'll be ba:ck here as soon as possible.  
 24        (.)  
 25 Pat: ohkay.  
 26 Gra: ah say po see

At the start of the extract Pat walks into the room as Grant is about to leave the house “let’s get moving o:n”. Note the turn at lines 3 and 4 is not built as an imperative “Kevin and Grant be back here by six” and so grammatically and formally does not *tell* the recipients to do something. Rather Pat’s *want* is simply reported. There is an ostensible allowance for optionality, “a potential gap between thought and action” (Edwards 2008: 180) as this *want* may be fulfilled or not. Following a slight gap (line 5) a response is pursued with the incremental “ri:ght?”, an attached interrogative clause with positive polarity which projects a “yes”. We can see that the ostensible orientation to optionality, and the gap between the “wanting” and its realization is closed down as a “yes” response is pursued. Following a sequence during which it is determined that Kevin will not be leaving the house anyway (lines 10–12), Pat pursues a response from Grant (lines 15, 18) who has begun to leave the house. In his turn at line 19, Grant responds to the summons “yea::h” rather than provide the response to the directive which is being pursued. The directive is then redone using an upgraded imperative format

“YOU BE BACK HERE BY ↑SIX↑ O CLO:CK.” which restricts Grant’s response options solely to compliance. The pattern that we see in this example is a move from a report of Pat’s “wants” that orients at least notionally to optionality, to an interrogative which projects a “yes”, to an upgraded imperative form that does not project the possibility of refusal. As Craven and Potter note, this lack of acknowledgement of the recipient’s right not to comply is typical as repeat directives typically “upgrade the issuer’s entitlement and downgrade the recipient’s contingency” (2010: 8). In sum, the gap between thought and action and the possibility that the wanting may be satisfied or not, is closed down.

#### **2.1.4 Summary**

Extracts (1) to (5) are typical instances of how *I want* formatted directives are constructed in the family mealtime data. First, these directives are formulated to invoke authority and entitlement as the recipient is treated as obliged to carry out the projected action on the basis of what the speaker wants. On the other hand, the *I want* construction changes the grammar of the turn so that formally the recipient is *not* being told what to do. Rather, the speaker’s want is simply reported which generates an environment where it may be satisfied, or not. *I want* formatted directives, then, are Janus-faced and work to increase the likelihood of compliance when building deferred action directives by invoking authority and entitlement, while ostensibly orienting to optionality and appearing to give the recipient a way out.

## **2.2 *I need* formatted requests**

In contrast to the *I want* formatted directives discussed above, the examples in this section, built using *I need*, directly *ask* for something, rather than *tell* someone to do something. There are fifteen candidate requests built using *I need* in the data corpus. I outline one recurrent environment in which these requests occur which is following a request or directive from an interlocutor where they are constructed as a prerequisite to compliance with the base first pair part (FPP).

### **2.2.1 *I need* as a prerequisite to compliance**

Extracts (6)–(8) provide some examples of requests following a request or directive from an interlocutor.

(6) Potts 5 09:10

(Don: father; Wayne: son, aged ten)

01 Don: ((*passes napkin to Wayne*))

02 Way: ↑what tha:t for↑

03 (1.0)

04 Jud: wipe yer fa:ce on

05 (1.0)

06 → Don: [£for wiping your a:rse on after.£]

07 Don: [((*takes napkin out of packet*)) ]

08 (1.2)

09 Way: °°( ) (after)°°

10 (0.1)

11 Don: wipin' th'a:rse on ((*singsong voice*))

12 (2.3)

13 → Way: need some mo:re

14 (1.2)

15 Don: what for wiping th'a(h)ss o(h)n

16 |(1.2) |

17 Way: |((*smiles and nods at Don*))|

18 Way: [whole pa:ck ]

19 Way: [((*glances at Don*))]

20 (0.2)

21 Don: wha?

22 Way: ( ) a [whole pa:ck ]

23 Jam: I'm not eating tha|t bit its all gristle

24 Don: ((*puts pack of napkins on table next to Wayne*))

(7) Potts 3 08:00

(Judy: mother; Wayne: son, aged ten)

01 → Jud: you're not going anywhe:re so you might as well

02 eat 'um

03 (2.2)

04 → Way: I nee- I nuh nee:d a dri:nk?

05 Jud: |((*cuts up food on plate*))|

06 |(2.1) |

07 Jud: cah- ↓get a drink of water.↓

(8) AAF7 04:22

(Pat: mother; Kevin: son, aged eighteen)

01 → Pat: [mm gonna get your hair cut today?]

02 Pat: [((*looks at Kevin*)) ]

03 Kev: huhu\_m  
04 Pat: a:h  
05 (0.5)  
06 Bil: tri::m=  
07 → Kev: =I need mone:y

In each of the arrowed turns some aspect of the recipient's conduct is specified. In the first extract, albeit in a manner which is oriented to as "non-serious," Don instructs Wayne to wipe his "arse" on a napkin, with a non-ironic instruction at line 4, which is "wipe yer fa:ce on". In the second extract Judy directs Wayne to eat his left-over food and to remain sitting at the dinner table. In the final example Pat requests that her son Grant get his hair cut. The kinds of instructions given to recipients in these extracts are built using various turn types and at various positions within turn construction units. Although there is diversity in the content and sequential positioning of these turns, it is recognizable that each directs some aspect of the recipient's conduct. In each example the request or directive is responded to with a *need* construction that launches a further request sequence (the example in Extract [6] is produced without the personal pronoun *I*, leaving open the possibility that *we*, the family, will need more napkins). Note that none of the examples here use an interrogative format. The request in Extract (6), for example, is built

need some mo:re

It is not built with an interrogative form such as

can you give some mo:re

Rather than a request which solicits a *yes/no* response and which is contingent on the recipient's willingness or ability to comply (Vine 2009), speakers display entitlement to make these requests on the basis of their positioning as a *prerequisite to compliance with the base request*. This matter will be discussed further below as I turn to Extracts (9) (an extended version of Extract [7]) and (10) (an extended version of Extract [8]) and examine the practice in further detail.

(9) Potts 3 08:00  
(Judy: mother; Don: father; Wayne: son, aged ten)  
01 (14.0)  
02 Way: ((*puts down knife and fork*))  
03 Jud: well you can eat the:m two,



food and his request is formulated as an upshot of these instructions. The turn is promissory in nature as it aligns with the instructions to stay at the table and highlights a precondition for him to comply; he needs a drink and must acquire one in order to stay at the table for a further period of time. As a declarative, the turn does not formally solicit a *yes/no* response and so proposes either of these as a possibility. Rather than functioning as a straightforward request that may either be granted or rejected, the obligation of the recipient to comply is strengthened by virtue of the turn's positioning as a *prerequisite to compliance with the base request*. As Schegloff (2007: 99) notes, insert sequences are promissory in nature as they are "understood to have been launched to address matters which need to be dealt with in order to enable the doing of the base second pair part. They project the doing of that second pair part upon completion of the preliminary work." That is, compliance with Judy's directive (remain sitting at the table, eat further food) is projected once Wayne has been granted permission to leave the table momentarily to retrieve a drink. The turn is hearable as a request in part due to this sequential positioning as it is built as an upshot of the directive to stay at the table. Judy treats the turn as a request for permission to leave the table momentarily as she grants permission for Wayne to do so "cah- ↓get a drink of water.↓".

The central observation on which the rest of the analysis hinges is the recipient's use of an *I need* construction following a directive from an interlocutor as a way of introducing a precondition to compliance. The turn is built as an upshot of the preceding talk and so, due to the promissory nature of insert sequences (Schegloff 2007), the obligation of the recipient to comply is strengthened, as the "needed" object is formulated as a precondition to compliance with the recipient's own prior request.

Let us consider a further example. Pat and her daughter Michelle are sitting in the car, about to leave the family home for several months. Husband Bill and their sons Kevin and Grant are saying goodbye.

(10) AAF7 04:30

(Pat: mother; Bill: father; Kevin: son, aged eighteen)

01 Pat: [mm gonna get your hair cut today?]

02 Pat: [((looks at Kevin)) ]

03 Kev: huhu:m

04 Pat: a:h

05 (0.5)

06 Bil: tri::m=

07 → Kev: =I need mone:y

08 (.)



09 Kev: its gonna cost fifty dolla:rs.  
 10 (.)  
 11 Pat: ↑li[sten take- ] take your↑ picture and  
 12 Kev: [for a good ba:rber]  
 13 Pat: =send it to me plea:se,  
 14 Kev: heh HE::H HEH.  
 15 (0.4)  
 16 Kev: .h[hh! ]  
 17 Pat: >[will you do] tha:t<  
 18 Kev: o:h oka:y  
 19 (0.2)  
 20 Mic: WE ALL wanna see what it looks like.

The sequence initial request concerns whether Kevin will be getting his hair cut later that day. As an affirmative-polarity *yes/no* interrogative this turn projects a *yes* response (Raymond 2003) which would imply compliance with it as a request. At line 3, Kevin responds with a weak agreement form (Pomerantz 1975). The turn is *not* built as an explicit *yes*, and is thus open for revision. Following Pat's receipt of this response (line 4) where the sequence is brought to possible closure, Bill further specifies and reopens the request as he indicates the kind of haircut that Grant should have "tri::m=".

As an action "I need money:y" accomplishes requesting. One feature which denotes this action import is that Kevin's co-interactants, Pat and Bill, are in a position to grant the request and to provide Kevin with the money. Indeed, Kevin's request for money makes this a condition for him doing so. A second evidential feature is the turn's sequential positioning. Similarly to Extract (7), the request is produced as an upshot of the preceding talk, as something which has emerged interactionally rather than something which was previously on the agenda. That is, Kevin is not simply requesting money for any old thing, nor simply stating that he needs money "out of the blue". Kevin goes on to further specify the request "its gonna cost fifty dolla:rs." and provides an account which justifies this "for a good ba:rber". Although the request is not explicitly either granted or rejected, it is treated as one which is "no problem". This is evidenced as Pat requests that Kevin send her a picture of his haircut (lines 12, 14) and so the haircut is treated as done. In the space where one would expect the pursuit of a response to the request, Kevin agrees to send Pat a picture (line 18). That is, the lack of explicit response is not treated as problematic as the haircut, and the provision of money to pay for a "good barber" is treated as done. One key feature of the *I need* construction is that not only will the granting of this request enable the base request to be granted, but it will allow more *effective* compliance. Kevin "needs" money

not only to comply, but a specific amount of money to get his hair cut by a “good barber”. This renders an otherwise potentially disruptive intervention an affiliative one.

### 2.2.2 Summary

One major sequential environment in which *I need* formatted requests occur is following a request or directive from an interlocutor, where the *I need* formulated request is inserted as a prerequisite to compliance. Grammatically *I need* constructions do not on their own accomplish requesting but are hearable as requests in part due to their sequential positioning where they introduce a precondition to compliance with a base request. The selection of this format builds requests as an upshot of the preceding talk, rather than something which was previously on the agenda. Due to the promissory nature of insert sequences, the obligation of the recipient to comply is strengthened due to this sequential positioning, building on the recipient’s commitment to having their own prior request complied with. We can see that there is more than the semantics of the word *need* or the object of the request that contribute to the sense of these requests as necessary. Rather, these turns gain their interactional potency from their sequential positioning as formulating a precondition to compliance with a base request.

## 3 Conclusions

This article has identified two main environments in which speakers use *I want* and *I need* constructions. In the first section I showed how speakers build directives with *I want*, demonstrating their interactional import in a specific sequential environment. *I want* formatted directives have two main features:

1. *I want* constructions mobilize recipient’s obligation to comply by invoking authority and entitlement. Non-compliance is not oriented to as a response option.
2. Reporting “wants” index a potential gap between thought and action, orienting to optionality and ostensibly allowing for the possibility that the projected action may not be carried out.

Each of these features works in conjunction to manage the contingencies involved with issuing deferred action directives. On the one hand these constructions in-

crease the likelihood of compliance by invoking authority and entitlement. On the other hand an orientation to optionality works to maintain civil relations with the recipient. In sum, *I want* formatted directives are Janus-faced and as such tell recipients to do something while ostensibly orienting to optionality.

In the second section I examined one environment in which speakers select *need* as a verb in request sequences, which is following a request or directive from an interlocutor. As insert sequences are promissory in nature (Schegloff 2007) here the recipient's obligation to comply is strengthened by virtue of the turn's positioning as a prerequisite to compliance with the base request. Rather than an intrinsic feature of the requested object, the turn gains its sense as something that is necessary from its sequential positioning as formulating a precondition to compliance with a base request.

Curl and Drew (2008) show that speakers preface requests with *I wonder* to display lack of entitlement to make a request and an understanding of the contingencies involved in the granting of the request. In the analysis here we saw how directives built using an *I want* construction feature strong markers of entitlement and little or no orientation to the contingencies involved in the speaker granting the request. If one considers requests on a continuum of contingency and entitlement as they suggest, high entitlement *I want* constructions are inversely linked to *I wonder* constructions.

Let us now return to our broader issue of mental state terms and interaction. Much of social cognitive research assumes that verbs such as *want* and *need* map onto internal referents and represent talk about the mind. Researchers are concerned with differentiating between uses of mental state terms which are referential and those that are simply conversational (e.g., McElwain et al. 2011). Discursive psychology's argument that mental state terms are objects with their own normative sequential environments and uses (Edwards 2006) is evident within the analysis of request and directive sequences offered here. When we consider the sequentially specific nature of *I want* and *I need* constructions, it is apparent that coding schemes which are designed to identify "genuine references to psychological states" (Bartsch and Wellman 1995: 31) are inadequate as they do not take into account the intricacies of interaction and the action orientation of talk. Regardless of what a speaker may be thinking or feeling, speakers may state that they *want* or *need* something in specific sequential contexts to accomplish particular actions. What we see in these materials are verbs that are understood within social cognitive research as "desire terms" (Hughes et al. 2007; Moissinac and Budwig 2000), as resources that are drawn on by speakers in everyday talk and interaction. Viewed in this way, the uses of these terms become an interactional matter rather than a window into the developing mind.

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## Appendix: transcription notation

The transcription system used is based on that developed by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson and Heritage 1984).

(0.8)	Pauses are shown by the tenth of the second in brackets.
(.)	A micropause, which is too short to measure.
=	Equal signs denote the immediate latching of successive talk.
[ ]	Square brackets indicate the beginning and end of overlapping speech.
	Straight lines indicate the beginning and ending of overlap with actions
((walks))	Double parentheses within italics denote actions.
↓ ↑	Vertical arrows precede notable pitch changes.
<u>Underlining</u>	Denotes emphasis – the location of underlining within a word locates emphasis and also indicates how heavy it is.
CAPITALS	Indicate words which are notably louder than the surrounding speech.
°i know°	Degree signs enclose words which are notably quieter than the surrounding speech.
I do::nt know	Colons indicate that the preceding sound is elongated. More colons denote more elongation.
hhhh	Outbreath. As with colons, this is proportionate.
.hhhh	Inbreath, proportionate.
really?	Question marks indicate a “questioning” intonation.
no,	Commas mark weak rising intonation.
really¿	Inverted question marks indicate a rise stronger than a comma, but weaker than a question mark.
no.	A full stop denotes a falling intonation.
!	Exclamation points indicate animated intonation.
>really<	Arrow brackets enclose talk which is delivered at a notably faster pace.
<really>	Arrow brackets which point away from talk indicate that speech is delivered at a notably slower pace.
heh heh	Laughter.
st(h)o(h)p i(h)t	h’s in brackets signal laughter within speech.
£	Denotes “smiley voice.”
bu-u-	Hyphens indicate a “cut off” of the preceding sound.
(guess)	Words within round brackets indicate uncertain transcription.

## **Bionote**

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