

Preparing to talk:

Behind-the-scenes planning between negotiators for subsequent communication with persons in crisis

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Abstract

Police negotiators work in small units or teams. In a crisis negotiation, one of the team becomes the 'primary' negotiator and talks with the person in crisis. However, because the person in crisis may refuse to participate, and because several negotiators are co-present, there are multiple opportunities for negotiators to talk between themselves, 'behind-the-scenes'. We used conversation analysis to analyse these interstitial sequences in a corpus of audio-recorded UK suicide crisis negotiations. Our analysis focused on how negotiators talk about what, when, and how to communicate to people in crisis. We found that negotiators evaluated different communication technologies and modalities (e.g., telephone versus face-to-face) and physical locations (e.g., standing on the ground versus on a roof) in terms of their affordances for future interactions and impact on previous ones. Second, negotiators (re)formulated what and how to communicate with persons in crisis and evaluated hypothetical consequences. Third, they evaluated their progress in terms of specific (in)effective words and phrases. The analysis shows how negotiators, in contrast to individual post hoc reflection, come to share live scrutiny of their negotiation practice. Overall, the paper augments what we know about the low frequency but high-stakes activity of crisis negotiation.

Keywords: crisis negotiation, conversation analysis, participation framework, planning, teams, suicide.

1.0 Introduction

When a person in crisis threatens suicide, police negotiators working in small teams attempt to talk to them and bring about a safe and non-fatal outcome. Within the larger team of negotiators, the ‘primary’ talks directly to the person in crisis. However, throughout the negotiation, there are multiple opportunities (e.g., if the person in crisis falls asleep, or refuses to interact) for team members to talk amongst themselves, out of earshot of the unaddressed person in crisis, to evaluate the ongoing negotiation or discuss what to do next. It is during these interstitial episodes that the negotiators display to each other their understandings about the unfolding negotiation – what is working and not working, and what they might do next to progress, or remedy, any given situation.

Research on crisis negotiation comprises a large and interdisciplinary field, from theory and experimentation to modelling and training, all with an aim to understanding and optimizing negotiation practice (see Grubb; 2020; Knowles, 2016). While much of the research and training focuses on hostage and other non-suicide contexts, personal crisis is far more common in terms of the daily caseload of the police (Charlés, 2007; Grubb, 2020). Yet suicide crisis is studied disproportionately less and, as Rogan (2011) notes, there “exists a marked absence of research-based knowledge about suicidality specifically within the context of crisis negotiations” (p. 21). Furthermore, while a key aspect of any negotiation is what happens among the negotiation team ‘behind the scenes’, and there are myriad descriptions of the team and its composite roles and activities (e.g., Guskowski, 2017; Schlossberg, 1980), scant attention has been paid to what negotiators actually do and say to each other as they plan the immediate next steps in the unfolding encounter.

The aim of the current paper, then, is to examine the interstitial conversations that occur between the team negotiators themselves, as they prepare for the negotiation, evaluate what happens, and plan for the next part. We begin by reviewing existing research on communication and the negotiation team.

1.1 Negotiating in teams

As part of the UK’s “national negotiator deployment model”, Grubb et al (2021) refer to teams of negotiators as ‘cells’, which are “typically set up … once they have arrived at the scene. A full cell consists of a team leader (an experienced negotiator) and four negotiators” (p. 961). They go on to note that most incidents “do not require the implementation of a full cell” and that a “‘negotiator cell’ could refer to a scenario which

only involves three parties (i.e., the primary and secondary negotiators and a coordinator acting either remotely or at the scene)” (p. 962). Schlossberg (1980, p. 113) describes the cell’s roles in terms of “gathering basic information, such as number of individuals involved, threats, types of weapons, etc., organizing the team with one overall supervisor assigning work, overseeing developments coordinating the hostage team with the containment team; maintaining an ongoing analysis of the information; and planning strategy.”

In their interview-based study of crisis situations, Grubb et al (2021, p. 692) report the “procedural, operational and communicational aspects of negotiation” as articulated by their participants:

“Interviewees described having to identify who was going to perform which role during the initial deployment phase: ‘... if there’s two of us for instance, we decide who is going to lead ... who’s going to be number two ...’ In addition, interviewees who were trained as coordinators, described having to identify whether they were going to take on a negotiator role or a coordinator role at this stage in the process.”

Grubb et al also refer to periods of debriefing “as a means of CPD, whereby negotiators were able to reflect upon their performances during the incident, to identify mistakes made, or lessons learned and to highlight areas of good practice.”

Grubb et al’s study gives an insight into the reflections and experiential accounts of negotiators about their roles in a team. However, much of the negotiation literature focuses, explicitly or implicitly, on the primary negotiator and their relationship with the person in crisis rather than on the interaction between team members, and there is less direct research focus on or training/guidance for the team itself (McMains & Mullins, 2014). In terms of disaggregating team members, McMains and Mullins (2014) describe the secondary negotiator as “the most important role on the negotiation team” (p. 85) but also that there is “insufficient focus on or use of” secondaries (p. 118). Relatedly, most authors also focus on the negotiation ‘frontstage’; that is, the communication between negotiator(s) and person(s) in crisis, rather than on what happens ‘backstage’ between negotiators without the person in crisis,

In Stokoe and Sikveland (2020), we focused on how secondary negotiators intervened in ongoing conversations between persons in crisis and primary negotiators, while remaining in the ‘backstage’ and not taking turns ‘frontstage’ in the negotiation. Secondary negotiator actions fell into two categories: turns ‘authored’ by them but designed for person in crisis as recipient in for primaries to ‘animate’, and those

designed for the primary negotiator as sole recipient, creating a complex ‘participation framework’ (Goffman, 1981). The paper identified ways in which participants work in concert that are different to, say, choral or compound turn production or other forms of orchestration previously researched in conversation analysis (e.g., Lerner 2002).

The institutional setting of crisis negotiation, involving a behind-the-scenes interlocutor in a two-party interaction, provides the basis for examining how ‘members’, in the ethnomethodological sense, make everyday life accountable (Garfinkel, 1967); that is, the enactment of the secondary negotiation role rests partly on their ongoing analysis of the interaction between primary and person in crisis. Unlike interactions where all parties are (potentially) ‘frontstage’, the job of the secondary negotiator is to suggest to the primary negotiator what, how, and when to say particular words formulated as actions – while remaining ‘hidden’ from the recipient of those turns (see Koskela & Palukka, 2011). By examining the crisis negotiation’s ‘deep’ backstage, in which team members interact with each other to evaluate and plan for parallel interaction with a co-present but unaddressed participant, the current paper further extends this ethnomethodological endeavour.

The current paper also contributes to the large body of research in pragmatics, applied linguistics, and conversation analysis, on teamwork and collaboration and, more broadly, multiparty interaction, though our focus is not on the *multiparty* nature of the interaction per se (see, for example, Ford & Stickle, 2012; Kangasharju, 1996). Like other articles in this special issue of the *Journal of Pragmatics*, particularly those that also explore interaction in teams as they plan and coordinate teamwork (e.g., SPECIAL ISSUE AUTHOR REFS), the current paper contributes to research on how teams collaborate to undertake concurrent (multimodal) activities including in medicine, surgery, and healthcare. Some of this work examines how “communication problems that negatively can impact patient safety” and that and how “[e]ffective communication is crucial in the coordination of interdisciplinary teams and for preventing medical errors... [to] advance patient safety” (Ivarsson & Åberg, 2020, p. 1). Decision-making and planning is also explored in workplace meetings amongst teams in design (e.g., Boudeau, 2013) and education (e.g., Vehkakoski, 2008), as well as in interprofessional and multidisciplinary meetings more generally (e.g., Schoeb et al, 2018). Formal and informal multiparty organizational meetings have also been studied extensively (see Asmuß, 2012 for an overview).

In Zucchermaglio and Alby’s (2012) study of soccer team meetings, they examined how sports teams “plan their behaviours for future matches and to reflect upon their past performances on the pitch” (p. 459). Although the researchers were not permitted to analyse the changing room meetings during the match interval, they gained access to

the meetings that happened before and after. Their analysis focused on the way the teams discussed future hypothetical scenarios and potentially problematic situations, constructing “a repertoire of possible game actions to be performed during the forthcoming match.” They also showed how teams managed to evaluate performance “to encourage players’ co-telling with regard to typical and problematic team behaviours.”

The interactional setting of crisis negotiation, with particular affordances and constraints, is different from much of the literature outlined above. Although like Zucchermaglio and Alby, in which discussions of what immediately to do next are part of the setting, the negotiation teams we focus on are conducted in the ‘backstage’ with regards to a crucial participant – the person in crisis. And while, say, surgical or emergency services planning may be about a non-participating third party (e.g., an unconscious patient), the participation framework is different. These interstitial deep backstage sequences comprise a kind of informal meeting without a pre-defined agenda, and the negotiators do not know at which point in the overarching encounter they may have time to do this, since many episodes are occasioned by the person in crisis (suddenly) refusing to communicate.

Despite a strong focus on the importance of communication in the negotiation literature and the inclusion of crisis communication models therein (e.g., Taylor, 2002), surprisingly little actual communication is published as part of research reporting. A substantial proportion of research uses retrospective designs to elicit accounts of practice (e.g., interview and survey-based accounts of negotiation, e.g., Grubb et al, 2020; Oostinga et al, 2009) and the “extant literature dealing with suicidal stand-offs” has been criticized for deriving from “anecdotal experience” (Rogan, 2011, p. 26). While interview studies provide insights into how negotiation works, we learn little about the actual communicative processes involved (cf., Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Even analyses of “actual hostage negotiations” (Donohue & Roberto, 1993, p. 184), using “detailed chronological transcriptions” (Rogan, 2011, p. 26) or “transcripts produced from audiotapes of interactions” (Giebels & Taylor, 2009, p. 8), seldom present such transcripts in research reports. This means that direct access to and scrutiny of live unfolding negotiations is relatively rare.

Thus, the final aim of this paper is to analyse what happens inside the negotiation ‘cell’ to further understand the work of professional negotiators, including the communication that just occurs between themselves. We focus on how negotiation team members orient to ‘talk’ or ‘communication’ itself as their topic; how they discuss the practical and technological bases of social interaction; how they plan what to say to the person in crisis, and their ongoing assessments of their progress in, and the progressivity of, crisis negotiation.

2.0 Data and method

The paper reports analysis of a dataset comprising cases of crisis negotiation that were audio-recorded and provided by a UK police hostage and crisis negotiation unit as part of routine practice (that is, not for research in the first instance, and no video-recordings were made). The Head of UK national negotiation training “took the rare step of releasing negotiation tapes” (Rupasinha, p.c.) in order to co-produce research-based communication training which was delivered to the Metropolitan Police and Police Scotland between 2017-2019. Recordings of actual crisis negotiation (rather than retrospective research designs using interviews and surveys, or simulations) are hard to access, which is why papers that include detailed and extended transcripts comprise a small proportion overall of the crisis negotiation literature.

Crisis negotiators are specially trained police officers (e.g., McMains & Mullins, 2014). Within the team, a ‘primary’ negotiator engages directly with the person in crisis. Each case in our data had a different primary negotiator. The negotiations happened in many configurations: the person in crisis was barricaded inside a building or on a roof; the negotiation was conducted over the telephone, or the interaction occurred face-to-face, sometimes at physical distance. The dataset is described in Table 1, below. We were granted permission by the hostage and crisis negotiation unit under their own research governance auspices of data processing, and by ANONYMISED University’s Ethics Approval (Human Participants) Sub-Committee, to evaluate the data in line with standard ethical practice when using recorded conversational data (Speer & Stokoe, 2014).

Table 1: Summary of negotiation data collected.

[over page]

Case ID	PIC details	Case background	Physical / mental health	Physical threat	Negotiator details	Location (PIC)	Location (N)	Physical proximity	Duration	Outcome (PIC)
HN1	Male; 18 yrs	Self-harm; Domestic abuse; Social services	Medication	Knife	N1 male, N2 male	Loft inside a building	Inside building below loft	Face to face	3 hours 5 mins	PIC comes down
HN3	Male; adult	Self-harm incident involving the police; PIC claims police is trying to break into his flat as cause for upset	Medication; paranoia; previously imprisoned for 21 years	Knife	N1 female, N2 male	Inside flat	Initially outside building, then inside building outside the flat	Phone / Face to face	2 hours 20 mins	PIC lets negotiators in his flat
HN5	Female; young adult	Victim of violence involving the police; poor experience of mental health hospital	Psychotic episodes in the past	Noose around neck	N1 male, N2 male	Inside flat	Outside flat separated by a locked grill door	Face to face	1 hour 20 mins	PIC hands over keys to her flat
HN10	Male; adult	Unknown; Possibly drug-related; PIC talks about suffering if he comes down	Medication; methadone	Knife; proximity to edge of roof	N1 male, N2 male	Behind a tree on top of a building	On the ground	Face to face	3 hours 5 mins	PIC comes down
HN11	Male; young adult	Mental health team attended earlier - no response; upset with mum	Medication + past hospitalisation	Wire around the neck; proximity to edge of balcony	N1 male, N2 male	Barricaded with a bike on the edge of a balcony	On the ground	Face to face	3 hours 40 mins	PIC eventually opens door for Ns to come up
HN16	Male; young adult	Attempted burglary; upset about alleged assault by a police officer	Paranoia	Proximity to edge of roof; threat to jump	N1 female, N2 male	On top of building (15ft down)	On the ground	Face to face	4 hours	PIC comes down
HN17	Male; adult	Unknown	Alcohol; paracetamol (PIC seemingly falls asleep)	Proximity to edge of roof; falling asleep	N1 female, N2 male	Top of roof	On the ground	Face to face	1 hour 50 mins	PIC comes down
HN22	Male; adult	PIC shouting abuse at the government		Proximity to edge of roof	N1 male, N2 male	On top of building	On top of another (higher) building	Face to face	45 mins	PIC comes down
HN23	Male; adult	Lost access to son; lost job; Speech impairment		Gun; threat to shoot police / negotiators	N1 female, N2 male	Inside flat	Outside flat or in other building; other police officer right outside flat	Phone	2 hours 50 mins	PIC is shot by police and survives
HN24	Male; older adult	Upset with police; a particular police officer who PIC claims was abusive in connection with a feud with PIC's energy supplier		Gun; threat to shoot self and possibly others (police)	N1 male, N2 male	Inside flat	Outside flat or in other building	Phone	1 hour 5 mins	PIC comes out
HN31	Male; adult	Unknown; Ns seemingly cannot see or hear PIC	Some medication	Unknown; close to edge	N1 male, N2 male	Barricaded in stairwell	Further down the stairwell	Face to face	53 mins	PIC comes out (dynamic entry due to PIC falling asleep)
HN32	Male; adult	PIC talks about all that's wrong with the 'system' and 'today is the day'	Drinking	Proximity to edge of roof	N1 male, N2 male	On a roof	On the ground	Face to face	3 hours 25 mins	PIC comes out
HN33	Male; adult	Brother has committed suicide a year earlier	Heavy medication	Proximity to edge of roof; drugged state	N1 male, N2 male	On the roof of a church	On the ground	Face to face	1 hours 30 mins	PIC falls (ends fatally)
HN34	Male; adult	PIC has received a notice from Immigration Office to leave the country		Proximity to edge of roof	N1 male, N2 male	On the roof of a building	On the ground	Phone / Face to face	2 hours 25 mins	PIC comes down

Out of 34 total cases supplied by the police, 14 were fully usable in terms of recording quality at the level needed for analysis. In 12 cases, the PiC survived, eventually coming down or away from a precarious position. One case ended fatally, and one with injury. Note that, without video, it is difficult to interpret some gaps and pauses throughout the interaction. The recordings were stored under encryption and transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) system for conversation analysis. Participants were given pseudonyms; all identifying features were removed. 'Person in Crisis' and 'Negotiator' are the police officers' own terms for the parties involved. We refer to 'persons in crisis'

by their pseudonym (e.g., “Patrick”) where names are used by negotiators; otherwise, we use the abbreviation ‘PiC’. Each extract is headed with a number (e.g., HN34) which refers to the identification of each case. We refer to the primary, secondary, and other negotiators as N1-N5.

The transcripts were analysed through repeated readings in conjunction with playing the recordings. We focused on, firstly, all episodes in which the negotiators were talking in the ‘deep backstage’; that is, only between themselves rather than a) with the person in crisis, or b) the configuration described in Stokoe and Sikveland (2020), in which secondary negotiators talk to primaries ‘backstage’. Having identified such sequences, which comprised approximately 10% of the negotiations (three of the 31 total hours), we then discerned the topics under discussion and activities under way in broad terms. The data showed that much of this talk was about communication itself. The analysis presented below therefore presents examples of this talk, grouped into three areas, to show that and how negotiators themselves ‘theorize’ or ‘go meta’ (Olson & Bruner, 1996) about their work by describing and evaluating it and thus plan their emerging communication strategy.

3.0 Analysis

We present three sections of analysis, each focused on how negotiation team members plan and evaluate the ongoing negotiation. The first section examines that and how the negotiators discuss the practical and technological bases of communicating to negotiate; that is, how different physical locations (e.g., standing on the ground versus on a roof) and modalities (e.g., negotiation on the telephone versus face-to-face) afford or constrain their interactions. The second section provides examples of how negotiators discuss what and how to communicate with the person in crisis, including particular words and how to say them. Finally, we consider instances in which negotiators assess the progress of the ongoing negotiation interaction.

3.1 The practical and technological bases of communicating to negotiate

Extract 1 comes from the very start of a negotiation with an adult man who has received a notice from the UK Home Office to leave the country. He is on the roof of a building and the negotiators are on the ground. The complete negotiation lasts 2.5 hours, and takes place on the phone and, at distance, face to face. At the end, the PiC comes down.

Extract 1: HN34

01 N1: .pt .hh s'twe:l:ve fourty four:, (0.8) on Thursday:

02 °°th-°° (1.8) twenny-third July¿
03 (0.6)
04 N1: Jamie Ayers Greg Anderson, .hh uhh on a:: rooftop (in the
05 middle of) Mornington,
06 (0.9)
07 N1: With a male named Mo::si, h French Algerian speaking, .hh an'
08 have just commenced tryin' to engage with him.
09 N1: .hhh have no v-v::isibility of him at the moment¿ .hhh
10 uhm b'lieve he's round th- thē other side (0.5) of thē
11 [building structure that we:'re in.]
12 N2: [(we've got)] two:: similar sorts of
13 buildings y'know ((continues))

Throughout this extract, communication on radios is audible; further, it becomes clear that other members of the negotiation team are talking to each other while N1 formulates the situation for the purpose of the recording (lines 01-12). N2's turn (lines 12-13) is underway but only becomes audible as N1 completes his formulation, which has a 'spontaneous monologue' phonetic quality (Swerts & Gelukens, 1993) to lines 01-12. This participation framework is interestingly different from much of what conversation analysis has studied previously, since 'schisms' appear as two concurrent interactions unfold (cf. Egbert, 1997) but with different addressed and unaddressed recipients (co-present parties from line 12; for anyone who subsequently listens to the recording from lines 01-12).

Between lines 01-12, then, and 'for the benefit of the tape' (Stokoe, 2009), N1 starts by recording the time, date, and parties present – two negotiators ('Jamie' and 'Greg') and the person in crisis, 'Mosi' – as well as their location "on a:: rooftop (in the middle of) Mornington," (lines 01-07). Our interest is in the next parts of N1's formulation – that the negotiators "have just commenced tryin' to engage with him." (line 08). The formulation comprises word selections that are legalistic, like 'commenced' rather than 'started' and 'engage' rather than 'talk' (e.g., Heydon, 2005), and is notably different from the words that actually comprise dialogue requests to persons in crisis (Sikveland & Stokoe, 2020) as well as how the negotiators talk about these actions between themselves, as subsequent extracts show.

The negotiators continue to discuss the physical environment and the modalities and channels through which communication might happen. 'Debbie' is the pseudonym of the negotiation cell leader.

Extract 2: HN34

01 N2: W- we might- (0.3) we might need t'consider (0.6) goin'
02 on t'the other building, (0.2) an' even ca:lling across
03 or looking across [I don't know] an' loud hailing across,
04 N1: [Yeah:]

05 N2: =so .hh
 06 (0.7)
 07 N2: (But) no.=the next option is pho:ne isn't it. before
 08 we go- (.) go to that.
 09 (0.3)
 10 N1: Yeah,
 11 (0.3)
 12 N1: P'rha:ps if Debbie rings ↓him, an' asks him to- (0.)
 13 t'say we're up he:re, we're tryin'a- speak to him,
 14 (2.7) ((chain/rattle noise in background))
 15 N2: [Yeah.
 16 N1: [(if Debbie c'd) just- ring: text 'im.
 17 1.1)
 18 N2: Yeah.
 19 (0.6)
 20 N1: Text an' ring him, [()].=
 21 N2: [(I think y'right)]
 22 N2: =I- I think so, cos-
 23 N1: (And speak to us.)[()]
 24 N2: [Whilst I could a- u- uh- whilst we could
 25 rig a (ten/tent kit,) I'm- £certainly n(h)ot uh heh ke(h)en
 26 o(h)n gettin' ou(h)t there tonight,£.hhh
 27 (4.3)

The team members consider possible communication problems, clarifying the physical environment and their position on a building adjacent to where the person in crisis is. At the start of the extract, N2 formulates a list of options (“goin’ on t’the other building,” “ca:lling across”, “looking across”; “loud hailing across,”), which gets an aligned response from N1 (line 04), but N2 then categorizes this list of options as ‘things to be tried later’. At line 07, he formulates the immediate and first course of action – to try calling on the phone. N1 aligns with (line 10) and expands this suggestion, adding that the cell leader Debbie “rings ↓ him, an’ asks him to- (0.) t’say we’re up he:re, we’re tryin’a- speak to him,”. In so doing, N1 both proposes a modality for interacting but also ‘authors’, in Goffman’s terms, the words and action to be ‘animated’ by Debbie. These words are notably different to those used by N1 to record their activities for the record – he does not suggest that Debbie says, “the negotiators want to commence engagement with you”.

As N2 aligns with N1’s suggestion (lines 15-16), N1 adds “text” to the list of options, and ‘ring/text’ become a combined type of summons (line 20) that both occur via (smart)phone. N2 agrees with this suggestion adding an account for this agreement to “text an’ ring” – that he is ‘not keen on getting out there tonight’, which refers to ‘rigging up’ technical kit to presumably enable more direct and proximate physical contact.

In the next extract, from a different negotiation, the negotiators are on the ground and the person in crisis, a young man, is on the roof, having been threatening to jump following allegedly committing attempted burglary and is upset about alleged assault by a police officer. In this moment, the person in crisis is seemingly out of sight. 'Jim' is the pseudonym of N3; 'Jane' is the pseudonym of N1. Interspersed with their 'deep backstage' talk, N1/Jane also produces turns designed for the 'frontstage' and for the person in crisis as recipient, which we indicate through capital letters. However, there are no discernible PiC turns.

Extract 3: HN16 9

01 N2: Jim.=Has he gone to the other side.
02 N3: I don't know,=I can't- I can't see him.
03 (1.5)
04 N1: He's on the <aerial there>.
05 (0.2)
06 N1: The aerials.
07 N3: ()
08 N1: ARE YOU CLIMBING UP THE AERIALS AGAIN.
09 (4.7)
10 N2: I'm gonna go back and () ((*sound of wind in microphone*))
11 N3: ()
12 N1: WHE[RE'VE YOU GONE.
13 N2: [()]to Jane,
14 N3: Okay.
15 N2: Yeah?
16 (1.8)
17 N1: SHALL I GO THEN,
18 (0.2)
19 N1: YOU OBVIOUSLY DON'T WANT ME TO TALK TO ME,
20 (6.9)
21 N1: I'm thinking can he get in the other side.=Is it open
22 do you reckon=around the other side.
23 N2: I wonder if he's gone into the (house)
24 (0.2)
25 N2: [(cos he-)
26 N1: [That's what I'm wondering cos he's just totally
27 (0.8) disappeared.
28 (2.3)
29 N2: Just (0.5) say ag[ain-
30 N1: [Is there officers round the front,
31 N2: Yeah.=There should be:,
32 (1.2)
33 N2: Let me just find out for you,
34 (1.4) ((*sound of footsteps*))
35 N1: WHERE ARE YOU?
36 (0.5)
37 ??: (kek).
38 (2.0)
39 N2: Is it possible just to find out from the radio if
40 any officers on the other side can see him (.) (at

41 all).
42 N2: On the radio?

This extract exemplifies the dynamic and multiple participation frameworks that crisis negotiations produce. N1 moves from interacting with N2 and N3 to designing turns for the person in crisis as primary recipient (while N2 and N3 can hear but not participate) while N2 and N3 may talk to each other while N1 speaks to the PiC (e.g., lines 10-15).

Our specific interest is how the negotiators ask and answer questions to each other about the visibility and location of PiC, and thus his ability and availability to be a participant in the negotiation. At lines 01 and 02, N2 asks N3, in the form of a yes/no interrogative if the PiC has “gone to the other side.”, to which N3 responds with an account for not supplying a preferred response. N3 does not know and ‘can’t see’ the PiC. At line 04, N1 extends this sequence and formulates PiC’s location: “He’s on the <aerial there>.” After reformulating this and confirming the location as “the a**erials**”, N1 then produces a turn for PiC as addressee, asking him “ARE YOU CLIMBING UP THE AERIALS AGAIN.” As a question rather than, say, a statement like “I CAN SEE YOU CLIMBING THE AERIALS”, N1 orients to PiC as the one entitled to know more about his location and actions than the negotiators – which perhaps also works to ascribe agency to PiC which is a tacit goal of many negotiation practices (Stokoe et al, 2020). As a question, it also invites an answer; that is, a second pair part and verbal engagement in the negotiation.

As noted above, there is no discernible (i.e., on the recording or as formulated in what the negotiators say) response from PiC. At lines 12, 17, 19, and 35, N1 addresses turns to PiC, which are both requests for his location (“WHERE’VE YOU GONE”, “WHERE ARE YOU?”) and formulations of the PiC’s intent to engage in the negotiation and the upshot of non-participation (“SHALL I GO THEN”, “YOU OBVIOUSLY DON’T WANT ME TO TALK TO ME,”). Note that N1 continues to maintain her participation in the backstage conversation with other team members. For example, N1 and N2 speculate as to the possible locations of PiC (lines 21-27) and the locations of police officers who might be able to see the PiC from “round the front” (line 30) or “find out from the radio if any officers on the other side can see him” (lines 39-41). Here, N2 enacts his membership of the unit as supporting N1 (as the primary negotiator) by finding out information about the scene to support, in this case, N1’s pursuit of PiC’s reciprocity.

The final extract in this section comes from another case in which the PiC has barricaded himself inside his flat. He has an unspecified speech impairment. He has recently lost parental access to his son and has lost his job. He is threatening to kill himself with a gun. The negotiation has been happening on the telephone. Our interest in this extract is how crucial the modality and channel of communication is for

understanding – and thus planning and acting on – the contingencies of information that unfold turn by turn. In this case, the negotiators are discussing whether the PiC’s intents are to achieve ‘suicide by cop’; a term that refers to “when a suicidal individual purposefully provokes the police to shoot and kill him or her” (Dewey et al, 2013, p. 448).

Extract 4: HN-23 1 1536; 1:02:50

01 N3: >An[d then he< talked about his faith (.) >and when he=
02 N1: [Yeah>.
03 N3: =talked about his faith< he said “I’m not going to take my
04 own life.”
05 (0.4)
06 N1: [Yeah.
07 N2: [And then he=He stopped talking bu[t the (information)=
08 N3: [So:-
09 N2: =was that he wants us to do it.
10 N1: Yeah.
11 N3: >He wants officer< to come and get it done <quickly>.
12 N5: So.[=I heard [that [a-
13 N4: [(he’s not
14 N3: [So [it is not suicide that he wants=
15 N1: [He’s not going to do (that) himself.
16 N3: [=because he won’t take his own life,
17 N4: [(he he’s not going to do it-)
18 N5: So I heard that as “I want to take my life,”
19 N2: I heard=“I won’t take my life,”
20 N3: Me: [too:;
21 N5: [Ah Okay,=I think we need >to take that point up with
22 him<,
23 (0.4)
24 N5: If we get the opportunity was it “want” or “I won’t”.
25 (1.0)
26 N4: He’s (quite) squeaky.
27 N5: £It’s not the clearest thing [>listening to (him) speaking=
28 N1: [i- i-
29 N5: =on< is it£.=
30 N1: =And also he’s quite slurry at [times,=he’s not,
31 N5: [Yeah.=Exactly.
32 N4: °Okay°.

The negotiators are making plans for how to confirm PiC’s intentions, and the upshot is formulated by N5 at lines 21-22 (“I think we need >to take that point up with him<, If we get the opportunity was it “want” or “I won’t”). This comes after a series of turns in which the crucial matter of a suicidal person’s “wants” (lines 09-17) is being reported on and formulated – because the negotiators have “heard” different things (lines 18-19) and the primary negotiator (N1) is not able to confirm. Indeed, at the end of the extract, N5 accounts for their collective lack of certainty about what PiC wants by invoking the technological affordances of what they are ‘speaking to him on’ (“It’s not the clearest

thing”) and that the PiC is “quite slurry at [times,=]”, which gets strong agreement from N5 (line 31).

This extract, like others in this first section, provides evidence that and how communication modalities and their affordances – in addition to what to say to persons in crisis – are of concern to the negotiation team. In Extract 4, we saw how being able to hear clearly what the PiC says is a fundamental resource to negotiators, not least because this may be the only evidence or ‘data’ with which they can plan their next moves. This is especially crucial here as it guides the negotiators’ planned next moves in a high-stakes situation. Further, the way the negotiators attempt to disambiguate “I want” versus “I won’t” provides insights into the tacit orientations that govern their action and the development of the negotiation activity – based in the shared ‘unique adequacy’ of being a negotiator.

While there is a wealth of research on what is termed ‘suicide ideation’, the factors and variables associated with it (e.g., Mendez-Bustos et al, 2013) and a scale on which to assess it (Beck et al, 1979), such data are necessarily collected in cases with non-fatal outcomes (Silverman et al, 2007) and are gathered post-hoc, rather than between one turn and another in a crisis negotiation. For that reason, every turn uttered by the person in crisis provides the basis for any next turn that the negotiators must plan for, including technological/modalities constraints. That is, the negotiators must plan for future talk based on an (technologically challenged) interactional past. Here we see how negotiators orient to technological/modalities constraints as they plan, as a team, for future turns.

3.2 What and how to communicate

Having shown that negotiators attend closely to the technological constraints and affordances of communication modalities in negotiation, we move on now to consider other orientations to communication – in this case, what words to say and how to say them. Extract 5 is from the same case as Extract 4 in which the PiC has barricaded himself inside his flat and is a potential ‘suicide by cop’ case. As the team attempt to establish telephone contact, N4, who is a team member but not the primary negotiator, orients to the importance of what to say in the “opening gambit”.

Extract 5: HN 23 1 740

01 N1: [>Shall I try on the mobile<?] A different number,
02 (0.2)
03 N1: Perhaps he’s seen that number come up;
04 (1.0)
05 N4: Uhm::,
06 (1.0)

07 N4: Yo:u could.
 08 (1.0)
 09 N4: So that opening gambit is really important,=isn't it,=
 10 =That opening sort of couple of lines [to try:=
 11 N1: [Yeah.
 12 N4: =and hook him in.

N1 formulates a possible reason why PiC may or may not answer the summons of the ringing telephone, which is recognising the number and thus knowing who he will be talking to if he answers it (Arminen & Leinonen, 2006). N1 therefore suggests trying on a different mobile (line 01). After gaps and a hesitation, N4 agrees with this (lines 04-08), but at line 09 takes a so-prefaced turn, introducing a new topic – the importance of the “opening gambit”. In this way, as Bolden (2009, p. 974) observes, N4 indicates “the status of the upcoming action as ‘emerging from incipency’ rather than being contingent on the immediately preceding talk” in order to advance “their interactional agenda” – that is, focusing on what to say once a summons has been answered, rather than how to get a response to a summons in the first place.

Managing to “hook” the PiC and establish reciprocal turn-taking is necessary for an effective negotiation. We return in Extract 6 to the negotiation with ‘Mosi’, an adult man who has received a notice from the UK Home Office to leave the country and who is currently on the roof of a building while the negotiators are on the ground. Like Extract 5, the discussion has segued into not just where and through what channel to initiate contact, but *what to say* once the summons has been successful.

Extract 6: HN34 1 ((0:04:07))

01 N1: Then we'll consider loud hailer option
 02 N3: Cool,
 03 N1: From here: (0.2) before we-
 04 (0.8)
 05 N3: >Cool<,
 06 (0.2)
 07 N1: Do something else?
 08 N3: Do you want to do the ca:lls.
 09 N1: O:kay,
 10 N3: I'm just thinking my accent (.) might be a bit-
 11 N1: .£hh h[:£.
 12 N3: [The combination of a Scottish accent and a (man)
 13 from Algeria might be a little bit (0.2)
 14 N1: Heh heh?=
 15 N3: =Confusion Hna heh heh?
 16 (0.2) ((*talking in background*))
 17 N1: I've understood everything you've said tonight (.)
 18 [(that is),
 19 N3: [Hn heh he he.

In addition to considering modality – if the phone does not work N1 and N3 may “consider the loud hailer option” (line 01) – the negotiators here also focus another possible hindrance to enabling a clear communication channel – N3’s “Scottish accent” (line 12). Here, the negotiators invoke the national identity categories to account for possible hindrances (“a Scottish accent”, “man from Algeria”). N1 states that he has understood “everything”; both negotiators treat N3’s comprehensibility as a ‘laughable’.

Returning to the case of ‘suicide by cop’, here N1 and N2 are rehearsing what N1 will say to PiC in the next phase of the negotiation.

Extract 7: HN23, 7:40-10:00

01 N1: =Yeah. Talk (.) so that [you speak] to one per[son,
02 N2: [Yeah-] [Yeah.
03 N1: Or- or n- (.) no- I don’t want to just say the one person
04 because I’ll- we’ll want to introduce [(0.6) [others.]
05 N2: [So we don’ [t get it]
06 (.) confused,
07 N1: Yeah(p).
08 (.)
09 N2: They’ve got a job to do,
10 N1: Yeah.
11 (.)
12 N2: You and I need to work [together,]
13 N1: [Yeah.] I’m sat somewher:e (.)
14 [so I c- all I can d o , is] listen.
15 N2: [You and I need to work >together on this<.]
16 (.)
17 N1: To you.
18 N2: I’m- (0.3) wh:olly focussed on you:
19 N1: Yeah.=
20 N2: =They’ve got other thing:s;=
21 N1: Yeah.
22 (0.5)
23 N2: This is about you and me,
24 (.)
25 N1: Yeah.=
26 N2: =Understanding and trying to get [>through this<.
27 N1: [Yeah(p)
28 (0.4)
29 N1: Yeah.
30 (0.7)
31 N1: Okay?
32 N2: .pt Right.

By the end of the extract, N1 and N2 are in agreement about their strategy, and N2’s “.pt Right.” marks the end of the current sequence ahead of N1 next beginning to enact their strategy. At the start of the extract, N1 is rehearsing how he will formulate the participants in the negotiation, and the potential consequences of telling the PiC that they will “speak to one person,”. While in general terms the negotiators work to keep the

conversation exclusively between the primary negotiator and the person in crisis (Stokoe & Sikveland, 2019), in negotiations that last many hours it may be the case that other members of the team become the ‘primary’. N1 initiates self-initiated self-repair at line 03, providing an account for an alternative approach: “no- I don’t want to just say the one person because I’ll- we’ll want to introduce (0.6) others.” N2 extends the sequence by providing further reasons for adopting the alternative strategy – “So we don’t get it (.) confused,” (lines 05-06).

Between lines 09 and 29 N1 and N2 then rehearse further things to say to PiC to explain that, while other people will be visible to PiC, they have “got a job to do” (line 09 and line 20). Over a series of turns, they then move between formulating candidate turns as though spoken to the currently absent but primary recipient. N2 formulates and reformulates a participation framework (“I’m- (0.3) wh:olly focussed on you:.”; “You and I need to work together.”; “You and I need to work >together on this<.”; “This is about you and me,”). After articulating in overlap another possible turn (lines 12-17) – “I’m sat somewhere (.) so I c- all I can do, is listen. To you.” – N1 aligns with N2’s suggestions (lines 19, 21, 25, 27, and 29).

What is interesting about this extract is the attention paid by the negotiators to the fragility of the upcoming negotiation and the need to keep the PiC aligned with the interaction. The data provide empirical examples of how negotiators orient to some the communicative phenomena proposed in the negotiation literature, such as in the ‘Behavioural Change Stairway Model’ (see Vecchi et al, 2005). The model recommends practices such as ‘active listening’, ‘empathy’, and ‘rapport’. However, as argued earlier, there is little scrutiny of actual crisis encounters with accompanying transcripts, or, therefore, of how *specific* actions (questions, proposals, requests, etc., and their linguistic forms) comprise ‘influence’ and ‘behavioural change’ as observable ‘shifts’ in crisis conversations (Stokoe & Sikveland, 2020). As Rubin (2016) notes, recommendations about as ‘rapport building’ are somewhat “amorphous and nebulous”: “it is less clear what the linguistic features are that trainers can point to in order to help negotiators achieve” (p. 9). Our data show what kinds of things the negotiators themselves discuss and prioritize when it comes to communicating with persons in crisis. As such, their discussion displays their competence, as members, in defining ‘good’ or ‘effective’ communication practice; something that they are trained to notice and consider. Such sequences also constitute the immediate shared scrutiny of negotiation practice – their ‘professional vision’ and ‘animation of the discourse of their profession’ (Goodwin, 1994, p. 606) – rather than individual or personal post hoc reflections.

3.3 Evaluating the ongoing negotiation interaction

In the final section we consider how, and in what terms, negotiators evaluate their ongoing interactions with persons in crisis. Extract 8 comes from a negotiation with an adult male person in crisis, who is threatening self-harm with a knife. He is locked in his flat and the negotiators are outside the apartment building, then later inside the building but outside the PiC's flat. The negotiation takes place on the phone until the end when the PiC lets the negotiators into his flat. Here, we are about a quarter though the overall negotiation.

Before this extract starts, the PiC has overheard other negotiators while talking to N1 and has become angry and suspicious ("I can hear him talking miles behind my back. I can hear it"). N1 reassures PiC that this is not the case, and they move on to discuss PiC's dog and whether the negotiators can look after it. The negotiators discuss the dog as a possible means to elicit further cooperation from PiC. N1 has said to the PiC that she will "ring back in five", to which PiC has responded, "Alright, love. Sorry." Then the 'deep backstage' conversation between the negotiators begins.

Extract 8: HN3 3: 1397; 39.02

01 N1: The thing is (.) he's <easy to talk to>,
02 (0.5)
03 N1: Cos if==he gives you loads of stu[ff].
04 N2: [Yeah,
05 N2: Yeah.=Yeah.
06 N1: °No°.
07 N2: °Don't worry°.
08 N2: The point is,=You didn't need any prompting.
09 N1: "Yeah",
10 N2: It was all flying.
11 N1: Yea,
12 N2: You don't need [(_)-
13 N1: [Yeah,
14 N1: Yeah,
15 N2: Alright.
16 N2: You- (.) You know what.
17 (0.3)
18 N2: Whid- where we'd want to head with it?
19 (0.6) ((*sound of zipper closing*))
20 N2: You wanna try and (0.8) work on it?
21 N2: It's gonna be:: a little bit of a- a:: job to get
22 him to buzz us in?

Despite there being much talk prior to this extract about PiC's suspicion of those he can overhear in the environment (e.g., N1 says to N3: "He- he's incredibly paranoid. He can hear you and then he thinks you're calling him a wanker."), N1 makes it clear that she has achieved spates of effective conversation with the PiC. At line 01, she assesses PiC

as “easy to talk to” and as someone who “gives you loads of stuff.” (line 03). “Loads of stuff” is a contextually dense description that again reveals the tacit orientations and shared knowledge between N1 and N2 that ‘getting PiC to talk about things is a good thing’, and that the PiC’s participation lacks resistance. N2 agrees with this (line 05) and expands the positive assessment of the negotiation’s progress – “You didn’t need any prompting.”; “It was all flying.” (lines 08 and 10). Having collaboratively produced a positive evaluation of the negotiation thus far, N2 moves their discussion forward with a question about next actions: “where we’d want to head with it?” (line 18). N2 also produces a candidate next challenge for the team to consider, and for them to support N1 with, which will be “to get him to buzz us in,”.

We return in the final part of our analyses to an extended extract from the ‘suicide by cop’ negotiation which ranges across different areas, from the issue of technology and modality to what and how to do communication – as well as opening with an (ironic) evaluation the ongoing interaction (“Brilliant”). Extract 9 comes from near the start of the police recording of the case, and the negotiators have been setting up, including formulating the situation for the record (as in Extract 1). Prior to the arrival of the negotiation team, the PiC has been talking to a woman police officer who was the first to arrive on the scene. The negotiators have dialled the number of the PiC. However, the summons is answered by a recorded message stating that “this number is unavailable”.

Extract 9a: HN23: 34; 01.20

01 N2: Brilliant.
02 N1: °.hhhhh hhh°
03 (2.0) ((Sound of phone? being put down on table?))
04 N1: He’s- he’s turned that off do you think?
05 N2: He turned that off that [time.
06 N1: [It- it ra- it ran[g twi:ce.
07 N2: [It rang once
08 and then it went (0.2) mobile number (un)avai[lable.
09 N1?: [((sound of
10 *phone dialling*)
11 (0.3)
12 N2: He turned it off.=(So) shall we wait (.) rather than
13 antagonise him?
14 (0.6)
15 N2: And [get them: to read him the instruction?
16 N3?: [()
17 N2: [>Get them<
18 to read (him) the instruction.
19 (1.4)
20 N2: He di- (he/you’re) definitely ri:g[ht.
21 N1: [(Well) (.) [it rang twice
22 N2: [he- he cut
23 N1: =[and then-]
24 N2: =[that one off], Yeah.

25 (0.8)
 26 N2: Unless the battery just died.
 27 (0.2)
 28 N1: eh he-n ((Laughter))
 29 N3: =Could be,
 30 (3.2)
 31 N3: (I'll) get a timeline.

The extract starts with N2's ironic assessment of their progress so far, "Brilliant.", and they continue to speculate that the PiC has turned off his phone (lines 04-12). At line 12, N2 suggests waiting rather than dialing again and 'antagonizing him' (lines 12-13) although dialing is audible on the recording (lines 09-10). Across the extract, the team members speculate as to the reason they cannot establish a connection - whether the PiC's phone "rang twi:ce." (N1 repeats this at lines 06 and 21); "rang once and then it went (0.2) mobile number (un)available." (N2 suggests this twice at lines 07-98 and 22-24), or whether "the battery just died." (line 26). N3 confirms this possibility (line 29) and then initiates a new activity, setting up a 'timeline'.

As the deep backstage negotiation continues, without the PiC as a participant, the team continue their preparations. In the extract below, N2 initiates a new sequence about their potential approach to the PiC ("While we've got >a bit of a< minute?" at line 52). We have deleted a sequence in which N2 initiates talk about the state of their current location compared to the main London Metropolitan Police training centre.

Extract 9b: HN23: 34; 01.20

52 N2: While we've got >a bit of a< minute?
 53 (0.5)
 54 N2: What else (.) are we looking at,
 55 Fi:nances?=You carry on with your- your board and we'll
 56 just (.) [brainstorm this.
 57 N3?: [()]
 58 (1.0)
 59 N1: Uhm.
 60 (0.2)
 61 N1: Some other hooks for him,=(His ki:[ds],=it's all=
 62 N3?: [(Oowh,)]
 63 N1: =because of (the rain) (0.2) ()
 64 (),=i wonder where he's been living in the
 65 <last three weeks>,
 66 (0.7)
 67 N2: [Do we look at-
 68 N3: [Isn't that () guys?
 69 N2: We just put that in at quarter to one.
 70 N1: Yeah,
 71 N2: Do [we::: (.) Do we go with family?
 72 N1: [(twelve forty five)
 73 (1.0)
 74 N2: Do we a[sk about family?

At line 52, N proposes a new sequence focused on “What else (.) are we looking at,” and that they should “brainstorm this” as N3 carries on with the timeline on his board (lines 55-56). N1 proposes “Some other hooks for him,=(His ki:ds),=”, and, in the midst of some talk which is difficult to hear clearly, N2 proposes content for the N3’s timeline: “We just put that i:n at quarter to one.” (line 69). This is possibly corrected by N1 at line 72 (“twelve forty five”), while N2 formulates a possible strategy built off N1’s “hook”: “Do we go with family?” (lines 71 and 74). N1’s hard to hear talk between lines 61-65, apparently about ‘the rain’, may be touched off by previous talk about the relative “luxury” of their physical location. But it also gives N1 an opportunity to consider where PiC has “been living in the <last three weeks>,”. However, this is not topicalized by the other negotiators.

After line 74, PiC answers a summons and N1 begins to talk to him. However, about a minute into their conversation PiC disconnects the call, saying that he would “sooner talk to the lady at the door” (the original police officer on the scene) and precedes cutting the line by saying “Nah, you know what, I – don’t worry.” We rejoin the team’s evaluation of this negotiation as the N2 formulates PiC’s preferences.

Extract 9c: HN23: 131; 05.50

- 121 N2: So he’d rather talk to he:r.
 122 N1: Yeah.
 123 (0.2)
 124 N2: I guess there’s- there’s a relationship established,
 125 N2: [And-
 126 N1: [Already,=Yeah.
 127 N2: And [it’s- it’s maybe <easier (0.4) than the pho:ne>,
 128 N1: [()
 129 (0.5)
 130 N2: But that doesn’t (0.2) [suit our purposes.
 131 N1: [Yeah.
 132 N1: =No.=No.
 133 N2: So:.
 134 (0.2)
 135 N2: At least he answered (.) that time,
 136 N1: Yeah, he did, yeah.
 137 N2: At least he was willing to have some conversation.

One interesting feature of this N2’s evaluation of their progress is how his formulation of the PiC’s motivation that “he’d rather talk to he:r.”, for which the unspoken contrast is “to us” as the negotiation team, is transformed into an external account: the PiC has relationship with someone else. That is, her resistance is not a rejection of them per se, but because of circumstances that pre-date their own attempts to negotiate (cf. Edwards, 2005, on ‘subject side’ and ‘object side’ practices).

Thus, N2 directly connects their failed progress to the fact that PiC has established a relationship already with the police officer. The police officer is not a trained negotiator and the units work in such a way that they generally displace any uniformed officers who are often the first at any negotiation scene. In this case, the fact that PiC would “rather talk to he:r., does not “suit our purposes.” N2 supplies an account other than building a relationship for the success of the police officer, which is that she spoke to him in person, and “it’s maybe <easier (0.4) than the pho:ne>,” (line 127). So, here, as they evaluate their progress, the team return to the issue of not just what to say, but also the modality through which communication is best afforded. They continue to formulate the potential positive aspects of the negotiation on which they can build, treating the fact that “At least he answered (.) that time,” as evidence of his willingness “to have some conversation.” (lines 135-137), which they must use to take forward and continue their plans.

4.0 Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this paper was to examine how negotiators talk about, plan for, reflect upon and evaluate their core communicative task of negotiating with persons in crisis with the goal of bringing about a non-fatal outcome for all involved. We examined the ‘deep backstage’ of negotiations in which negotiators, in interstitial sequences, *talk to each other* rather than with the person in crisis. The recordings provide evidence of participation frameworks that differ from much of what we typically study in conversation analysis and pragmatics more broadly. Of course, we already know much about the mechanics of multiparty encounters (e.g., Kangasharju, 1996), including how participants’ associations are joint achievements that can produce ‘interactional teams’ (Lerner, 1987, p. 152). The data analysed for this paper reveals specific kinds of ‘schisming’, as a negotiation team member talks to an overhearing but absent future audience ‘for the tape’, and in which another member takes on the role of talking to the person in crisis while also continuing to interact with the rest of the unit. Furthermore, the negotiations take place through multiple channels, from text and phone conversation to via a loud hailer to proximate face-to-face, and by shouting from the ground to the roof of a building while trying to overcome the hindrances of wind and other surrounding noise. Finally, the person in crisis, may stop participating at any moment, becoming a co-present but unaddressed interlocutor by refusing to negotiate, or simply by falling asleep.

We examined three aspects of the negotiation unit’s deep backstage interactions in which communication itself was their topic. First, the negotiators proposed and

evaluated their ability to physically communicate from different locations, as well as the possibility or not of making telephone contact and having sequence-initiating summons responded to or not. The negotiators formulated what they took to be the motivations, wants, and intents of the person in crisis based on their participation in the negotiation, as well as their uncertainties about these same psychological factors and what, say, hanging up the phone conveys (including attributing no agency to the person in crisis, if the 'battery just died'). Second, we examined how the negotiators planned what to say to the person in crisis, and the importance of their "opening gambit" for the likely success of the negotiation. They 'authored', in Goffman's terms, potential turns at talk for the primary negotiator to 'animate' (that is, deliver to the person in crisis), and rehearsed these as though interacting with the PiC in first person. Finally, from the start of each case, the negotiation team evaluated their progress, including what worked well and what failed to engage persons in crisis. This included attending to what would help gain trust and the importance of building relationships with them.

The paper provides a foundation on which to further examine how communication in a crisis negotiation is conceived, implemented, adjusted, and responded to when interacting with persons in crisis – in terms of precise words and phrases rather than in terms of gross categories such as 'empathy'. More work is needed on the constitution and mechanics of the interstitial sequences that comprise a core part of negotiation practice; that is, the complex participation framework that is also multiparty, multimodal, and multichannel. As Kangasharju (1996, p. 292) pointed out, "[t]eam talk means inter alia that members of the same team often continue, complete or repair each other's turns or they can take a turn on behalf of another member of the team." In our data, the conversations analysed provide direct access to how negotiators make sense of and construct a shared future and past reality through displaying tacit knowledge of spatiotemporal artefacts, indexical references, and a shared and implicit pursuit of understanding their absent and unaddressed participant: the person in crisis. In so doing, the paper has begun to tease out the relationship between 'planning in theory' and 'planning in practice', as well as specifying the core 'communication skills' of negotiation as articulated in models (e.g., 'build rapport', 'active listening') as they may play out 'in the wild' reality of preparing to and evaluating talk in a setting where the stakes are so very high.

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