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INTERRUPTIONS AND GENDER IN TV SERIES

*A Study of *Suits* and *The Good Fight**

TIIVISTELMÄ

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Tässä tutkielmassa käsitellään keskeytyksiä ja sukupuolta TV-sarjoissa. Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus on vastata kolmeen kysymykseen: ”Millaisia keskeytyksiä tekevät miehet ja naiset TV-sarjoissa *Suits* ja *The Good Fight*?”, ”Millainen vaikutus vallalla on tehtyihin keskeytyksiin?”, ja ”Miten keskeytetyt ihmiset reagoivat keskeytyksiin?”. Aineisto on kerätty molempien sarjojen ensimmäisestä tuotantokaudesta. Sarjat sijoittuvat samanlaiseen ympäristöön ja ensimmäisten kausien minuuttimäärät ovat samankaltaiset, joten niitä on helppo verrata.

Tutkielman teorian pohja löytyy keskusteluanalyyseistä. Kaikki keskeytykset jaetaan onnistuneisiin ja epäonnistuneisiin keskeytyksiin. Onnistuneet keskeytykset jaetaan kahteen alakategoriaan: tunkeileviin ja yhteistyöhaluisiin keskeytyksiin. Keskeytystyyppien sukupuolijakaumaa verrataan sarjojen kesken. Tarkoituksena on selvittää, mikäli sarjojen välillä eroja vai yhtäläisyyksiä, sille niiden päähenkilöt ovat eri sukupuolta. *Suits*-sarjan kaksi päähenkilöä ovat miehiä, kun taas *The Good Fight*:in kolme päähenkilöä ovat naisia.

Tutkielman tärkeimmät tulokset liittyvät sukupuolien tekemiin keskeytyksiin. *Suits*-sarjassa miehet tekevät enemmän keskeytyksiä, kun taas *The Good Fight*-sarjassa naiset tekevät enemmän keskeytyksiä. Kummassakin sarjassa sekä miehet ja naiset tekevät enemmän tunkeileviä keskeytyksiä, yhteistyöhaluisten sijaan. Keskustelussa jäsen, jolla on enemmän valtaa keskeyttää todennäköisemmin jäsenen, jolla sitä on vähemmän. Tämän huomaa erityisesti työpaikalla tapahtuvassa vuorovaikutuksessa, jolloin esimies keskeyttää alaisensa useammin kuin alainen esimiehen. Keskeytyksiä harvoin huomioidaan tai kommentoidaan, mutta kun niin tapahtuu niin keskustelun jäsen, jolla on enemmän valtaa keskustelussa, kommentoi sitä todennäköisimmin, jos hänet keskeytetään.

Avainsanat: Keskeytykset, keskusteluanalyysi, kieli ja sukupuoli, valta keskustelussa, sosiaalinen konstruktionismi.

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis deals with interruptions and gender in TV series. The purpose of this thesis is to answer three questions: "What types of interruptions do men and women make in the TV series *Suits* and *The Good Fight*", "what kind of effect does power have on the interruptions made?" and "how do people that are interrupted respond to the interruption?". The data was collected from all the episodes of the first season of both TV series. The series take place in similar settings and the amount of data amounts to a similar number of minutes, which makes them easy to compare.

The theoretical basis lies heavily in conversation analysis. All interruptions are categorized into successful and unsuccessful interruptions. Successful interruptions are then sub-categorized into intrusive and cooperative interruptions. Then the gender distributions of what types of interruptions are made are compared between the two series. The results are compared to see whether there are similarities or differences based on the gender of the main characters in each series. *Suits* has two men as main characters while *The Good Fight* has three women.

The main findings of the study are that in the male-led series *Suits*, men make more interruptions and in the female-led series *The Good Fight* women make more interruptions. Overall intrusive interruptions are made most by both genders. When it comes to power, the one with more power in an interaction usually interrupts the one with less power. This is especially noticeable in the workplace, when it comes to superiors and subordinates. Interruptions are very rarely acknowledged in an interaction, but when they are the party with more power is more likely to bring it up.

Key words and terms: Interruptions, conversation analysis, language and gender, power in discourse, language in fictional TV series, social constructionism.

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1. Introduction

Nobody likes getting interrupted. We might lose our track of thought and feel disrespected. Even if we get the chance to continue, the momentum is gone. However, not all interruptions have a malicious intention behind them. Interruptions are a normal part of conversation in real life, and also on TV series.

This thesis is focused on interruptions and gender in fictional scripted tv series. More specifically, on interruptions in two legal drama series: *Suits* and *The Good Fight*. The reason for focusing on scripted tv series is because they show different representations of gender based on who has made them, where they are made and who they are made for. These two TV series were chosen because *Suits* is a male-led TV series, and *The Good Fight* is a female-led series.

The goal is to find out if there are differences in the types of interruptions made based on gender and if there are differences in the amounts of interruptions made by men or women in both series. The goal is also to figure out whether social power or the position one has in the law firm the series takes place at has influence on the amount or type of interruptions that are made.

The purpose of this study is to find out whether women or men interrupt more, what kind of interruptions do they make and if there is a difference in the series based on the gender of the protagonists. If we assume that the protagonist is supposed to be the most important person in the series, the so-called “hero” of the story, do they have more power? Or are they interrupted more because we are supposed to sympathize with them? The series’ also take place at law firms, where there is a hierarchy, so I want to find out whether the people with more power interrupt the people with lower positions more.

The research questions for this thesis are:

1. What types of interruptions are made most by men vs women in each series?
2. What kind of effect does power have on the interruptions made?
3. How do the people that are interrupted respond to the interruption?

The objective is to discover whether social power outside of gender has more of an effect on who makes the most interruptions in these series, and who they interrupt. The types of interruptions that are made are also interesting, because the series are scripted and therefore every interruption has a function. In regular conversations overlap and interruptions occur more, so the ones that are written into scripted fictional television dialogue must have a significance for the story or for the characters in the story.

Chapter 2 lays out the theoretical framework for this study. It discusses social constructionist theory, different types of interruptions, the language of fictional television dialogue, conversation analysis and power in discourse. Chapter 3 will focus on the data and methods of the study, especially conversation analysis as a method for gender and language research, and feminist critical discourse analysis. In Chapter 4 the results of the study are presented. Chapter 5 contains the discussion of the results and Chapter 6 contains the conclusion. References and appendices can be found at the end.

2. Theoretical framework

This section discusses social constructionist theory, interruptions, TV dialogue as a field of research, conversation analysis and power in discourse.

2.1. Social Constructionist Theory

Fägersten and Sveen (2016, 85) that introduces different theories on language and gender using examples from *Sex and the City*, a series that premiered on HBO in 1998, that challenge and support the theories. They focus mostly on language used by a character called Samantha because the language she uses deviates most from the stereotypes that are attached to the language women use.

The theories that Fägersten and Sveen (2016, 92) discuss are the deficit theory, the dominance theory, the difference theory and social constructionist theory. Fägersten & Sveen explain that deficit, dominance and difference theories fail to consider how other factors, such as class, age, ethnicity and social positions and relationships interact with gender, but social constructionist theory takes those factors into account too (2016, 106). It also proposes that language usage is not so much an inherent function of gender as it is a social construction reflecting outside influences (Fägersten & Sveen 2016, 106).

Fägersten and Sveen explain that social constructionist theory views gender identity as the result of performance, which means that a person behaves as a male or a female, and the behavior has physical and linguistic manifestations (2016, 106). Gender is also viewed as a scalar construction, which means that a person does not have to just be masculine or feminine. A person's language use can vary according to their different social roles, at times being more stereotypically masculine or feminine, or not aligning with a readily identifiable gender identity at all (Fägersten & Sveen 2016, 107).

Klostermann & Forstadt (2016, 1) explain that any social influence on an individual experience can be referred to as social constructionism. Its view on gender is described by interactions between people, language, culture and not by biology. They continue that our people's experience of the world is influenced by events and interactions with people (Klostermann & Forstadt 2016, 1). The language we speak informs how we make sense of the world and categorize events and people. The experiences people share become institutionalized and help us predict people's roles and interactions. No matter the biological sex of a person, people experience sexual socialization where definitions femininity and masculinity are shaped by the culture. This is how people learn the sexual feelings, desires, roles, and practices of the society (Klostermann & Forstadt 2016, 2).

Brickell (2006, 87) notes that definitions of social constructionism are often influenced by disciplinary preoccupations and there is not one single definition of it. He acknowledges that language plays an important part in social contexts in how meaning and subjectivity are constructed, it does not only describe pre-existing entities. However, there are aspects of social life language cannot include. Although relationships of power are often justified by language, power relationships can also include other non-linguistic forms of coercion, labor and constraint. Brickell (2006, 101) also criticizes the lack of a theory on systematic social inequality. Social constructionists do not pay enough attention on social relations of dominance and subordination.

2.2. Interruptions

Interruption is when someone starts their turn, before one speaker is finished. Speer (2005, 39) states that overlapping talk is not necessarily an interruption. An interruption violates another person's speaking rights. She continues that overlapping speech is not

necessarily a sign of dominance, although it can be. Speer notes that in regular conversation people speak over each other often and that it can also mark affiliation or alignment with the other person (Speer 2005, 39).

The question then remains about how one can differentiate interruption from overlapping talk. Speer (2005, 39) states that it depends on what they are trying to do. Marianne LaFrance (1992, 498) describes overlap as not interruptive when it takes place at a point when the first speaker might have completed the utterance or when the speaker has continued talking for an inappropriate amount of time. Conversely, if the first speaker is unable to finish making a point, the topic is cut short by the interruption, and/or it is a statement rather than a question, can the overlap be considered interruptive (LaFrance 1992, 498).

LaFrance continues to argue that some interruptions are also more severe than others (1992, 499). If an interruption is severe, it can be seen as an attempt to exercise power over other participants. She explains that studies on interruptions have shown that the more dominant member of the participants in a conversation interrupts the less powerful member more than the other way round. For example, parents interrupt their kids more than the reverse and teachers interrupt students more. If the interruption is made by the member of a lower status, the reaction to the interruption is more negative (LaFrance 1992, 499).

Zimmerman & West (1975, 116) found that interruptions occur more in mixed-gender interactions than same-gender interactions. In mixed gender interactions men made virtually all interruptions. In same-gender interactions men and women made the same amount of interruptions.

Li (2001, 268) distinguishes three different types of interruptions. There are successful interruptions, unsuccessful interruptions and silent interruptions. Successful interruptions are divided into intrusive and cooperative interruptions. Li (2001, 268) argues that an interruption is successful if the first speaker is unable to finish a complete utterance and stops talking while the second speaker continues their turn until they finish an utterance. Unsuccessful interruptions are ones where the second speaker interrupts the first speaker but then either both speakers keep talking over each other and finish their utterances or the second speaker stops talking before the first speaker is finished and cannot finish their intruding speech.

Silent interruptions are difficult to analyze, because in these cases the utterances of the two speakers do not overlap (Li 2001, 268). It is still an interruption because it happens when the first speaker's turn is not finished. However, it can be challenging to know whether the first speaker used silence as a way of yielding their turn or intended to continue talking. Li explains that a case like this is determined as an interruption when the final syllable has no change in the tone of speech or if the lips of the first speaker are still moving during the pause or they start moving after a short pause (2001, 268). If there are one or more turn-yielding signals, the case does not count as an interruption. The turn-yielding signals are either a rise or a fall in pitch at the end of a clause or a prolonged final syllable.

Cooperative interruptions, which belong to the category of successful interruptions, are made to try to help the speaker, by agreement, assistance, or clarification (Li 2001, 269). An agreement interruption allows the interrupter to demonstrate concurrence, compliance, understanding, or support. It can also serve as an extension or elaboration of the idea that is being presented by the first speaker. An assistance interruption occurs when the interrupter thinks that the speaker needs help and provides them with a word, phrase,

sentence or an idea. The goal of a clarification interruption is to have the first speaker clarify or explain a given piece of information that is unclear to the listener (Li 2001, 269).

The second type of successful interruption that Li (2001, 269) describes is an intrusive interruption, which puts the first speaker at risk because it might disrupt the process or content of the current conversation. There are four types of intrusive interruptions, which are: disagreement, floor taking, topic change, and tangentialization.

Li (2001, 269) explains that a disagreement interruption happens when the listener does not agree with what the current speaker is saying and wants to express their opinion at once. When floor taking occurs, the topic stays the same, but the interrupter develops the topic by taking over the floor from the current speaker. She continues by describing topic change is a conversation act, in which the person interrupting is more aggressive, than in floor-taking because they have to manage to change the topic too. Tangentialization is a type of interruption that shows that the listener has been paying attention, by summarizing information given by the current speaker. By doing this, the interrupter may make fun or minimize the message being sent by the current speaker. Doing this prevents the interrupter from listening to information they do not want to hear, which could be because the information has already been presented or it is known to the listener some other way (Li 2001, 270).

Tannen (1994, 59) writes that although many researchers interpret interruption as a sign of dominance, it is not something one speaker does to another. Both participants take part in an interruption, one must stop speaking when another one starts, otherwise it is just overlap and not an interruption. Another objection to it is that a conversation is not always a fight for who has the floor. This can vary in subcultures, cultures and individually based on the person. Interruptions are also not always obstructive, but supportive

(Tannen 1994, 60). As we can see from the existence of cooperative interruptions (Li 2001), some interruptions are supposed to help the first speaker.

Tannen explains that it is hard to tell whether the participants in a conversation feel like their rights have been infringed upon only based on a transcript. Often some overlap and a fast pace in conversation just means it is going well, although many people would say one person is supposed to speak at a time in a conversation (Tannen, 1994, 63).

Sometimes a person interrupts unintentionally when they expect a shorter pause and then try to fill it when a pause that is longer than they expected occurs (Tannen, 1994, 68). Culture differences in conversational styles can cause some people to interrupt easier than others. Some cultures have characteristically “fast paced” speaking styles in relation to other cultures. For example, in a conversation between an American and a Scandinavian, the American is more likely to interrupt more.

Different conversational styles that are attributed to specific cultures can become sources of negative stereotyping (Tannen 1994, 71). Antisemitism, for example, attributes loudness and aggressiveness to Jewish speakers, which can be traced back to different conversational styles in different cultures.

2.3. The Language of Fictional Television Dialogue

Bednarek (2010) discusses why it is important and useful to study the language used on fictional television dramas. First of all, television is very popular, and it has a huge influence on our lives, since it is such an important global medium that people engage with on an everyday basis (Bednarek 2010, 8). Bednarek continues to argue that we do not only watch television, but we also talk about it with others and use it to negotiate our identities, even people who do not watch television use that to construct their identity. She explains that we negotiate our identities by how much television we watch and by what we watch.

Television can fulfill a need for social interaction, relationship, and identity building, by the viewer relating to characters, talking to other people about different series and by comparing our own identities to the characters we see on television. Television can also affect how people make sense of reality, construct their identities and desires (Bednarek 2010, 8).

Bednarek (2010, 9) notes that while television has had a lot of academic attention, it has mostly been outside of linguistics at the intersection of television studies and general media studies. Television dialogue has been a long-neglected field of study for quite a while. She explains that looking at audience figures makes it clear that focusing on fictional television in particular is worth it and that dialogue in fictional television series can have a positive influence on those learning the English language in countries where it is not spoken (Bednarek 2010, 10). For learner's, television and film might be one of the few places where they hear spoken English language, if watching in the original language. Fictional television series can also get audiences engaged and it can become something that the viewers interact with actively, some people being casual consumers, fans, cultists or enthusiasts. Bednarek (2010) chooses to focus mainly on American television series in her research, because television is becoming more globalized, and all the main television formats, such as soap operas, news, drama, game shows and advertising, were invented in the United States.

Bednarek (2010, 11) wants to make a distinction between a television *series* and a television *serial*. She explains that *series* tend to have recurring characters, themes and settings and that most story arcs are completed within one episode, although there might be some meta-narratives that pan over multiple episodes or seasons. Multiple plotlines can also exist at the same time in a series, while some minor characters and settings

change, for example going from high school to college. Some episodes can have cliff-hangers, and the audience does need to know what has been going on in previous episodes to be able to follow the story, but episodes can also be viewed on their own. As examples of series, Bednarek (2010, 12) mentions *Dawson's Creek* (Warner Brothers, 1998-2003), *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004) and *Ally McBeal* (FOX, 1997-2002).

Bednarek continues to explain that a *serial* has a storyline that extends over individual episodes and that are very open-ended (2010, 13). The story could possibly go on forever, if the audience keeps watching and the serial does not get cancelled. Most soap operas tend to be serials, but also some more action-oriented shows like *24* (FOX, 2001-2010) and *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) are also serials. Bednarek (2010, 13) explains that series tend to be more popular than serials because they offer the viewer continuity and suspense at the same time.

There are many distinctions in the genre of television series. Bednarek argues that a very general difference in genre is between a drama and a comedy, but those too can be divided into many smaller genres, such as a sitcom, fantasy series, action series, police series, sci-fi series, mystery drama, detective series, prison series, soap opera and many others (2010, 9). There is no set list of different genres of television series. The categorization into different genres can be done taking into account many different factors of a series, for example storytelling, plot, performance, style, content, etc. Series can also contain different elements from many different genres.

The communicative context of a fictional television series is very different from naturally occurring conversation because it is scripted dialogue. Writing scripts for television is not an 'artistic' or 'poetic' effort, but rather a creative and commercial team effort of many different writers that can have different roles in the writing team (Bednarek 2010, 15). Bednarek describes linguistic features of scripted fictional television dialogue

in the book (2010, 64). She mentions that television dialogue is never realistic but designed for the viewer and for specific functions.

Some linguistic features that separate television dialogue from naturally occurring conversation are that it exhibits features of stage dialogue, includes some stock lines and there are fewer false starts, overlaps, interruptions, unclear words and unexpected topic shifts to make the dialogue clearer for the audience (Bednarek 2010, 64). Television dialogue has short turns and less vague language (e.g., *kind of, stuff*) than normal conversations, and it includes more emotional and emphatic language and also more informal language. The dialogue is also more limited in settings, interaction types and topics than regular conversation, and there is less repetitive discourse since it does not advance the narrative to include it. Television series also include something called aesthetic devices, such as repetition, rhythm, surprise and voice-overs (Bednarek 2010, 64).

Bednarek does also mention (2010, 66) that despite the differences mentioned between television dialogue and regular conversation, they do still resemble each other closely, especially in the organization of the conversation. Television dialogue and regular conversations also have a similar use and patterning of intensification. As Bednarek mentioned, repetitions, false starts, fillers, and vague language may occur less frequently in television dialogue, it still does occur in it. Bednarek (2010) explains that their function is usually to provide realism, comic confusion or to show mental states. Different genres of television series can include different kinds of linguistic features. Crime series have more technical language, criminal jargon or slang, supernatural series include genre-specific jargon, teen series have 'teen language' in them, and comedies have more fast-paced and witty language (Bednarek 2010, 67).

2.4. Conversation Analysis

Weatherall (2002, 106) explains that the focus of conversation analysis is defined as investigating language and social interaction. For conversation analysis (CA), the analytic goal is to show how actions, events, objects, etc., are produced and understood. Therefore, the production of gender is also included in the actions that can be investigated by conversation analytic research. Conversation analysts usually focus on regular everyday conversation (Weatherall 2002, 106).

Weatherall references Garfinkel (1967) in her book, writing that ‘the development of CA was influenced by the ethnomethodological insight that everyday behavior is not random or accidental but structured by a set of stable, underlying organizational features (Garfinkel, 1967)’. She continues with explaining that conversation analysis assumes that the organizational features of everyday interactions are their own social structures and that they have nothing to do with psychological or any other characteristics of speakers (Weatherall 2002, 106).

Weatherall introduces the concept of gender noticing (2002, 114). She explains that a constructionist approach to gender and language brings up the question: How does one differentiate the aspects of speech that are ‘doing gender’ and the ones that are not, without connecting language use to the gender identity of the speaker and without relying on gender stereotypes (2002, 114)? She presents the concept of gender noticing as one solution to the question. Social categories, like gender, age and ethnicity should only be used in an analysis, if the speakers make them relevant to the conversational interaction, according to a conversation analytic approach. Weatherall explains that it means that when analyzing a conversation, these kinds of categories should not be used unless the speakers orient to them in the interaction (2002, 115).

2.4.1. Turn-taking

To understand the structure of conversation, we must first look at some key concepts in CA. One of the basic concepts is turn-taking. When talking to each other people naturally take turns and each turn has an intent behind it (Drew 2012, 131). Drew explains that interactions are a connected sequence of turns, where each person ‘does’ something and the other person’s response depends on how they understood what the other was ‘doing’ in their turn.

Steven E. Clayman talks about how turns are coordinated within conversations (2012, 150). The goal is usually to have a minimal amount of silence and overlap between turns. In some contexts, turn-taking is guided by the format of the event, for example in interviews, debates, and ceremonies, but in regular speech there is no such format so the people who take part in a conversation have to determine the turns themselves. To give someone else the floor, there are turn-yielding signals that indicate that the speaker might soon be done with their turn and ready to give the floor to someone else.

Clayman (2012) continues that to move from one speaker to another there are procedures the people taking part in the conversation use to achieve that. The current speaker can select the next speaker and when their turn is done the selected party can start speaking. If the current speaker has not selected anyone for the next turn, at a possible completion point a speaker can select themselves and start their turn. In this situation if there are multiple possible speakers the one to start first gets the turn. If the speaker has not selected anyone and no one self-selects the current speaker can continue their turn, but they do not have to.

Each turn is composed of different components, which are called turn-constructive units (TCUs). The units are made of different linguistic and other factors, for example lexis, syntactic, morphological, and grammatical forms, timing, laughter, gestures et cetera. Turn-constructive units can be sentences, clauses, phrases, or individual words (Clayman, 2012, 151). TCUs are coherent and self-contained utterances which can be considered complete based on the context.

Taking turns is built on respect for what was done in the turn prior, this is called cohesion (Drew 2012, 135). There should be continuity within the turns people take. After a turn-constructive unit is complete, there is a *transition-relevance place* (TRP) where there can be a possible speaker change. The endings of turns are usually foreshadowed before they happen.

One clue is syntax, when a unit of talk is complete (Clayman 2012, 154). The next speaker might start their turn before the first speaker is completely finished on this syllable if the speaker is slowing down and stretching the last syllable. Syntax might offer multiple possible completion points so it is not a sufficient clue as to when a speaker might be done.

Another clue is prosody. When a speaker is about to finish their turn, they usually talk slower and less loudly (Clayman 2012, 156). There is also a rising or falling intonation at a place that could be considered syntactically final. This is called *terminal intonation contour*. Earlier in a speaker's turn there can be a pitch peak where there is a short rise in intonation before the falling intonation at the end. This pitch peak might be a sign that the next possible syntactic ending is the end of a turn (Clayman 2012, 156).

Pragmatics can also be a clue to when a turn is ending (Clayman 2012, 156). Turn-constructive units try to advance actions in a conversation. Once an action is seemingly

done it could indicate the completion of a turn. Usually, action boundaries overlap with syntactic boundaries, but there are ways to distinguish the action boundaries. First you must recognize the form that is being produced so you can find out when it is supposed to be complete.

One example of this is when a question has been asked one anticipates an answer. If it is a yes or no question one of those answers is enough for the turn to be complete, and if there is a *wh*-interrogative the answer is something different. When one speaker is telling a story syntactic and prosodic completion points are less relevant, the turn is only over once the story being told is complete (Clayman 2012, 157).

2.4.2. Social Action Sequences

There are social actions in discourse that must be ordered in a certain way, such as an invitation, a request, a denial, or an acceptance (Stivers 2012, 191). These actions that form adjacency pairs. Adjacency pairs are sequences in interaction that always occur next to each other. The first part of the pair warrants a certain response to come after it.

Some defining characteristics of adjacency pairs are that they are composed of two turns, the turns are taken by two different people, the turns occur one after the other, ordered so that the first part always occurs before the second part, certain first-pair parts are paired with certain second-pair parts (Stivers 2012, 192). For example, a greeting must follow a greeting and a summons must be followed by an answer. An offer cannot be followed by a farewell nor can an accusation be followed by an informative answer. The following first- and second-pair part actions make adjacency pairs:

First-pair part action	Second-pair part action
Summons	Answer
Greeting	Greeting
Invitation	Acceptance/declination
Offer	Acceptance/declination
Request for action	Granting/denial
Request for information	Informative answer
Accusation	Admission/denial
Farewell	Farewell

Table 1. Adjacency pairs (Stivers 2012, 192)

Sometimes, a sequence can be expanded on either before the sequence, in the middle of it or after the sequence (Stivers 2012, 193). These are called pre-expansion, insert expansion and post-expansion. A pre-expansion is a sequence that includes some preparation for the first-pair part of the main sequence. An insert expansion occurs between the first and second part of a sequence. It can either bring up an issue with the first part of the main sequence or it is a preliminary to the response (Stivers 2012, 195). Post expansions are used to further expand on a sequence after the second-pair part.

There are minimal and non-minimal post expansions. A minimal post expansion could be a reaction to the second-pair part but does not initiate a sequence by itself. A non-minimal post expansion is used when the speaker does not believe the second-pair part of the main sequence was adequate for concluding the sequence. This could be a request for clarification, for example (Stivers 2012, 199).

2.4.3. Preference

Preference in CA has to do with different kinds of principles and constraints when it comes to conversation (Pomerantz & Heritage 2012, 210). Pomerantz and Heritage explain that the principles of preference touch many areas of conversation analysis, such as selecting and interpreting referring expressions, producing, and interpreting initiating and responding actions, repair, turn-taking and progressing through a sequence of actions (2012, 210). They continue by stating that research in preference usually focuses on two aspects of it: preference principles that are culturally shared and orderly ways of speaking and acting that follow principles of preference and that can be empirically discovered (2012, 210).

One preference principle that Pomerantz and Heritage introduce is that the speaker should always choose references to people, actions, and events in a way that the recipient will understand them easily. This is part of a concept called *recipient design*, which means that the speaker should orient to the recipients (2012, 211). There are many specifications to this concept, one is that the speaker should choose a description that both the speaker and the recipient are familiar with.

When referring to people, if it is someone both parties know the speaker should choose a recognitional reference, for example the person's name that they are referring to, unless they deliberately want to keep that information from the other person. If the person referred to is someone the other person does not know one can use a nonrecognitional reference (Pomerantz & Heritage 2012, 212). When the recipient hears a recognitional reference, they assume the person is someone they should know.

2.5. Power in Discourse

Hutchby studies the role of power in conversation analysis in his study. He writes that institutional discourse is marked by systematic asymmetries, which makes it different from regular discourse (1996, 484). He remarks that these asymmetries are usually treated as features of the context the discourse is set in. Even though CA is against the view that power relations pre-exist in affect discourse, Hutchby believes that if you focus on talk-in-interaction, this view can bring forth interesting aspects of power as a feature of institutional interaction. His study focuses on the question-answer sequence in institutional interaction.

Hutchby explains that in arguments there is an 'action-opposition' sequence. The one that starts the interaction with an action, is said to be the weaker party in an argument since the person who takes the second position can argue with the one who has first position. The first person makes themselves vulnerable by having to state their opinion first and then having to defend it. Speakers often use systematic means to avoid first position. The one in second position can choose when or if they express their own opinion.

One way of taking away power from someone is through impoliteness (Schnurr, Marra & Holmes 2008, 214). Impoliteness can be used to appear superior, to get power over actions, and to get power in an interaction. If one gains power over someone's actions they can get them to do something for them or they can avoid having to do something. If one gains the power in interaction they can make the other person talk, silence them, get the floor to themselves or shape what the other person is telling them. Schnurr, Marra and Holmes list some strategies on how to achieve this power, which are: sarcasm, turn-taking, interruptions, overlaps, and floor-management.

They found that most of the impolite discourse in the workplace was directed by the superiors to their subordinates. At the same time, they found that the subordinates did not react to the impoliteness as marked. Schnurr, Marra and Holmes explain that it is a sign of the significance of status and power in the workplace (2008, 216). For superiors it is acceptable to be impolite to their subordinates, while the other way round it would be deemed as unacceptable and inappropriate.

In their study, they found that there are two types of impolite behavior. The first type is superficially polite discourse moves that convey a very impolite message. The second type is seemingly impolite discourse moves which are, at closer inspection, polite moves when taking into account the working groups. When examining the politeness and impoliteness of discourse moves, the lines can get blurry unless you take the context into account. Most impolite behavior was directed towards the subordinates by superiors, but it was interpreted mostly as being direct rather than impolite. Subordinates being impolite towards their superiors was, in contrast, interpreted as trying to subvert existing power relations (Schnurr, Marra and Holmes 2008, 228).

Mullany (2008, 232) states that the professional workplace has not only become a field of interest in politeness and power research but also in gender studies. She studies how impoliteness and power relate to gender in interactions in the workplace. In her study she focused on business meetings in a manufacturing company in the UK.

She found that women in the workplace do resist men exerting interactional power over women. One way of resisting it is by negatively evaluating the men's abilities to fulfil their professional responsibilities. Some women also engaged in stereotypically masculine impolite behavior to enact power in their managerial positions. However, Mullany (2008, 250) also found that women managers were evaluated negatively based on

their perceived biological shortcomings by men. Even when women use assertive speech strategies they are perceived negatively by their male peers on the grounds of their gender.

3. Data & Methods

3.1. Data

As data for this research two tv series are used, which are *Suits* (2011-2019) and *The Good Fight* (2017-). *Suits* is created and written by Aaron Korsh, and it premiered on USA Network and ran from 2011 until 2019. In total there are nine seasons and 134 episodes of the series. The series takes place at a New York City law firm and the main characters of the series are Mike Ross and Harvey Specter. Mike is played by Patrick J. Adams and Harvey is played by Gabriel Macht. Both characters are white males, Harvey is around 40 years old at the beginning of the series, and Mike is in his late twenties, around 28 or 29 years old.

The series starts when Harvey hires Mike to work at the law firm as an associate lawyer, that he works at, because Mike can remember anything that he has read even once, which makes him an asset to the firm. Mike has never gone to law school, but knows a lot about it, because he has helped people get into law school by doing the Bar exam for them. Harvey and Mike start working together at Pearson & Hardman, while trying to keep Mike never going to law school a secret.

The Good Fight is a series created by Robert King, Michelle King and Phil Alden Robinson and it is a spin-off series of *The Good Wife*. It was produced for CBS All Access started airing in 2017. So far there are five seasons and 50 episodes. This series takes place at a law firm in Chicago and the main characters of the series are Maia Rindell, Lucca Quinn and Diane Lockhart. Maia is played by Rose Leslie; Lucca is played by Cush Jumbo and Diane is played by Christine Baranski. The series starts with Diane

Lockhart retiring from running a law practice but ends up having to go back to work because she loses her retirement money. Turns out that Maia Rindell's father was part of a Ponzi scheme, that resulted in a lot of people losing their savings. All the women end up working at the same law firm.

The aspect of this data is interesting because the dialogue is written but meant to be spoken. It is also not spontaneous language, since it is written beforehand, so it doesn't represent natural language. Instead, it represents the writers' perception of how different people speak. But because the dialogue is intended to sound like natural spoken language, I will be treating it as such in my thesis.

I will be using the first season of each series as my data. The seasons have different amounts of episodes, the first season of *Suits* has 12 episodes, and the first season of *The Good Fight* has 10 episodes, but the episodes of *Suits* are shorter than *The Good Fight* episodes. While *Suits* has 40-minute episodes, *The Good Fight* has episodes that are around 50 minutes. This results in approximately the same amount of data from both. Ten episodes of *The Good Fight* amounts to around 500 minutes of data and twelve episodes of *Suits* is approximately 480 minutes. The data is altogether twenty-two episodes.

Both of the series are similar in genre, and they are set in the 2010's, which means that the language used in both series is made to represent contemporary American English. Both *Suits* and *The Good Fight* are American legal dramas from the 2010's and take mostly place at the workplace, in this case the legal offices. The main difference between the two series is that the main characters of *Suits* are two men, while the main characters of *The Good Fight* are three women. Because series are so similar in topic and time period it is easy to compare the interruptions that are made in them.

3.2. Method

The method for my thesis is watching the first season of both series and writing down each interruption made in them and then transcribing them. The interruptions will then be divided into categories, based on whether the interruptions are successful or unsuccessful. Successful interruptions will be categorized into intrusive interruptions and cooperative interruptions.

Quantitative and qualitative analysis will be mixed in this thesis. A conversation analytic method is used to transcribe and categorize the interruptions, since the theory on interruptions stems from conversation analysis, and the theory of turn-taking. For the more qualitative part of my analysis, I will use feminist critical discourse analysis since conversation analysis should only be used to analyze things to do with gender if they come up in the conversation where the interruptions happen.

3.3. Conversation Analysis as a Method for Gender and Language Research

Ehrlich, et al. (2014) discusses conversation analysis as a method for gender and language research. As discussed before, CA does not study the stereotypes of how men and women talk, but instead focuses on the structural features of language that are not reliant on the characteristics of the speakers themselves, like their categorical memberships. This allows CA to find out how the social world really works and does not rely in any presuppositions about it. By taking this approach, we can develop functioning definitions of different conversational practices, for example using turn-taking rules when defining when overlap is an interruption and when it is not. It also allows us to study what different conversational practices can be used to achieve in a conversation, like performing helpful or hostile actions (Ehrlich et al. 2014).

One of the other advantages of CA as a method for gender and language research that Ehrlich et al. (2014) mention is that it helps us define broader practices in specific conversational terms. One can for example “display empathy” by successfully completing another’s utterance, “display expertise” by using specialist terms, or “empower” someone through complimenting them. This kind of comprehension can be used to understand interactional inequalities and formulate communication skills training to improve services (Ehrlich et al. 2014).

One of the biggest disadvantages mentioned in the book for using CA to study social life is that it does not try to tell us people’s thought or intentions, it can only tell us what they actually do in any interaction (Ehrlich et al. 2014). A perceived disadvantage of CA as a method is the concept of participant orientations. It causes problems for those who want to study something that the participants are not clearly oriented to. While we reproduce cultural patterns constantly without explicitly bringing them up, the question then remains of how we can study phenomena if it does not come up in conversation. As a part of CA, we cannot do that. However, orientations to gender are not always explicit and we should not focus only on the obvious referenced, like “speaking as a woman...”. Gendering can also be much more covert (Ehrlich et al. 2014).

Members of the same culture for example, can bring up categories without explicitly naming them and words that are gendered linguistically (e.g., “boyfriend,” “girlfriend”) may not always be gendered interactionally. That means that the gender of the word is not always relevant to the occasion when it is used. The same logic works the other way too, terms that are nongendered linguistically, for example “partner,” or “people”, can be gendered interactionally. The main problem in this area remains that what constitutes an “orientation” and what does not, remains to be specified by technical language (Ehrlich et al. 2014).

3.4. Transcription in CA

In CA there are certain conventions to transcribing conversations. There are many aspects of conversation that can be indicated in transcriptions via certain markers, such as overlap, gaps, intonation, volume, pitch variations, tempo, and voice quality (Hepburn and Bolden 2012). A transcriptionist can also add their own comments and uncertain hearings are also marked in certain ways. Features that accompany talk can also be indicated, such as aspiration, laughing, and crying. The lines are usually always numbered for analysis purposes and a fixed width font is used for aligning overlapping talk and visible behavior.

In this thesis, using all the different markers that are conventionally used in transcribing talk would be unnecessary, since the focus is only on interruptions. Therefore, this thesis will only use the markers used for overlapping and cut-offs. The way interruptions are marked is similar to overlapping talk. When a person is interrupted, there is often a section of overlap before the first speaker stops talking, but not always.

Overlap is marked with square brackets. The beginning of an overlap is marked with a left square bracket ([) and the end is marked with a right square bracket (]). A dash (–) indicates a cut-off, when a person stops talking suddenly. Below is an example of overlapping talk from Hepburn and Bolden (2012, 59). As we can see the square brackets indicate the beginning and end of the overlap.

5 Nan: Oh r il[ly I'm'nna go loo :k,]

6 Hyl: [In the V iew section.]

3.5. Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

Lazar (2014, 180) lays out the key principles of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA), such as feminist analytical activism, “gender” as an ideological and structural practice, gender and power relations and how discourse constructs gender. The aim of FCDA is to examine how different assumptions of gender and power asymmetries get

produced in different discourse contexts. FCDA developed from mixing critical discourse analysis with feminist studies, both of which focus on social emancipation and transformation. The difference between using critical discourse analysis (CDA) and FCDA to study gender is that FCDA is driven by developments in critical feminist theory (Lazar 2014). Lazar explains that some clear forms of gender asymmetry are exclusionary gate-keeping social practices, physical violence, sexual harassment and denigrating women and girls. Sexism can also take more covert and complex forms.

4. Results

4.1. Gender Distribution of Interruptions

When making calculations on interruptions only based on gender in each series, in *Suits* there were 126 interruptions made in total, while in *The Good Fight* there were 94 interruptions. Out of these interruptions in *Suits* men made 96 (76,2%) of the interruptions, and women made only 29 (23,8%) interruptions. In *The Good Fight*, 41 (43,2%) of the 95 interruptions were made by men and 54 (56,8%) were made by women.

The number of people being interrupted was also 126 in *Suits*, while in *The Good Fight* 97 people were interrupted. The difference in the amount of people making interruptions and people being interrupted in *The Good Fight* can be explained by cases where two people that are talking at the same time are being interrupted by one person. The gender of the person being interrupted in *Suits* was mostly male, as was the gender of people making the interruptions. Men were interrupted 105 (83,3%) times and women only 21 (16,6%) times in *Suits*. In *The Good Fight* men were interrupted 38 (39,2%) times and women were interrupted 59 times (60,8%).

When looking at the gender of who interrupts who gets interrupted, the differences between *Suits* and *The Good Fight* are even more obvious. In *Suits* most interruptions happen between men. In total 77 out of 126 interruptions are between men (61,1%). There are only two interruptions that happen between two women (1,6%). Interruptions where a man interrupts a woman happen 19 times (15,1%), and ones where women interrupt men happen 28 times (22,2%).

In *The Good Fight*, men interrupt men 13 times out of 97 interruptions (13,4%). Women interrupt other women 31 times in total (31,9%). Interruptions where men interrupt women happen 29 times (29,9%) and ones where women interrupt men occur 24 times (24,7%). Below is a table to summarize the gender distribution in both series.

	M-M	W-W	M-W	W-M	Total
Suits	77 (61,1%)	2 (1,6%)	19 (15,1%)	28 (22,2%)	126
The Good Fight	13 (13,4%)	31 (31,9%)	29 (29,9%)	24 (24,7%)	97

Table 2. Gender distribution of interruptions.

4.2. Types of Interruptions

4.2.1. Types of Interruptions in *Suits*

As mentioned before, there are successful and unsuccessful interruptions. Successful interruptions are separated into intrusive and cooperative interruptions. Almost all interruptions in *Suits* are successful interruptions.

In *Suits* there was only one example of an unsuccessful interruption, and all 125 of the rest were successful interruptions. There were 109 intrusive interruptions in the 125 successful interruptions and 16 cooperative interruptions.

The gender distribution between the types of interruptions in *Suits* can be found on the table below. The percentages show how many percent of interruptions in each gender category (men-to-men, women-to-women, men-to-women, women-to-men) are intrusive, cooperative and unsuccessful. On the right there is the total amount of the type of interruption that was made.

	M-M	W-W	M-W	W-M	Total
Intrusive	69 (89,6%)	1 (50%)	16 (84,2%)	23 (82,1%)	109
Cooperative	7 (9,1%)	1 (50%)	3 (15,8%)	5 (17,9%)	16
Unsuccessful	1 (1,3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1

Table 3. Gender distribution on types of interruptions in *Suits*.

Out of all 77 interruptions made by men to other men, 69 (89,6%) were intrusive, 7 (9,1%) were cooperative and one (1,3%) was unsuccessful. There were only 2 interruptions made by women to women, one was intrusive (50%) and one was cooperative (50%). Men interrupted women 19 times, 16 (84,2%) of those were intrusive and 3 (15,8%) were cooperative. Women interrupted men 28 times. Out of the interruptions 23 (82,1%) were intrusive and 5 (17,9%) were cooperative. Out of all 126 interruptions made in *Suits* 109 (86,5%) were intrusive, 16 (12,7%) were cooperative and one (0,8%) was unsuccessful.

Most of all interruptions made were intrusive with an overwhelming majority percentage, cooperative interruptions were made significantly less overall and only one unsuccessful interruption occurred in all 126 instances. As we can see, intrusive interruptions were most commonly made in all categories, except women interrupting women. This abnormality is due to the small amount of interruptions made in this category, making the distribution between intrusive and cooperative 50%-50%. There was only one unsuccessful interruption, which was made by a man trying to interrupt another man but failing. Between men interrupting women and women interrupting men the percentage of cooperative interruptions and intrusive interruptions is similar, with them being a bit more common in women interrupting men. Intrusive interruptions are still more common in

both categories. Cooperative interruptions are more common in these two categories than man to man interruptions.

Next, we will investigate some examples of unsuccessful interruptions, intrusive interruptions and cooperative interruptions.

Example 1. An unsuccessful interruption:

Mike: I was on the phone with them, and Louis [helped me—]

Harvey: [Look at me].

Mike: And he did this snapping thing, and [Gregory—]

Harvey: [Look at]me.

You're high. Get out.

Mike: Harvey you don't understand, [Louis—]

Harvey: [Out.

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 2: Errors and Omissions, time stamp 27:04)

This is an example of an unsuccessful interruption because despite the interruption of the second speaker, which is Harvey, the first speaker Mike does not stop talking but continues with his utterance while they talk over each other. The one making the interruption here is Harvey, who is Mike's boss, and, in this conversation, he is asking Mike to explain how he had time for tennis and filing a claim the same morning. The second interruption is also intrusive and made by Harvey to Mike. Mike tries to explain the situation to Harvey, but he interrupts him again to tell him to get out and does not let him finish his utterance.

Example 2. An intrusive interruption:

Harvey: You think that's not from smoking weed?

Mike: Trevor [got—]

Harvey: [That']s another thing. You're never gonna talk to Trevor again.

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot part 1 & 2, time stamp 27:55)

Example 2 is the first interruption in this series, and Harvey is laying down some ground rules for how they will be able to successfully work together without anyone finding out that Mike did not go to law school. This is a successful and intrusive interruption because the interruption made by the second speaker, who again is Harvey, poses a threat to the first speaker, Mike, and disrupts the process of the conversation by not letting Mike complete his answer to Harvey's question before Harvey interrupts him.

Example 3. An intrusive interruption:

Harvey: Vanessa, really... How come you and I [never—]

Vanessa: [Harvey,] I don't sleep around. And I could never be in a relationship with you. All you ever think about is yourself.

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot part 1 & 2, time stamp 49:06)

This is another example of a successful intrusive interruption, this time the second speaker is a woman called Vanessa that Harvey is on a date with. It is intrusive because Vanessa never lets Harvey finish his question and instead interrupts him by answering his question. She knows what Harvey will ask and does not need to let him finish before answering.

Example 4. A cooperative interruption:

Mike: I care about this woman. She's got nowhere else to turn—

Rachel: And you can't help her by yourself.

Mike: I can. I just prefer not to.

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot part 1 & 2, time stamp 47:45)

This interruption is made by Rachel when Mike asks Rachel, who is a paralegal at the firm they both work at, for help in his case. It is a cooperative interruption because Rachel helps Mike finish his sentence instead of disrupting the flow of the conversation.

Example 5. A cooperative interruption:

Harvey: Well Allen—

Aaron: It's Aaron.

Harvey: I think that says it all, don't you?

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 3: Inside Track, time stamp 13:31)

In this example an associate called Aaron, is trying to offer help to Harvey. Here speaker 2, Aaron, interrupts to correct the mistake Harvey made when he misremembered his name, therefore it is cooperative and not intrusive. It was made to make a correction and assist the speaker in that way.

4.2.2. Types of Interruptions in *The Good Fight*

In *The Good Fight* 92 of 97 interruptions were successful, while 5 were unsuccessful. Out of the 92 successful interruptions 85 were intrusive and 7 were cooperative. The

table below shows the gender distribution between the types of interruptions made between genders in *The Good Fight*. The percentages show how many percent of interruptions in each gender category (men-to-men, women-to-women, men-to-women, women-to-men) are intrusive, cooperative, and unsuccessful. On the right there is the total amount of the type of interruption that was made.

	M-M	W-W	M-W	W-M	Total
Intrusive	11 (84,6%)	29 (93,6%)	25 (86,2%)	20 (83,3%)	85
Cooperative	2 (15,4%)	1 (3,2%)	2 (6,9%)	2 (8,3%)	7
Unsuccessful	0 (0%)	1 (3,2%)	2 (6,9%)	2 (8,3%)	5

Table 4. Gender distribution on types of interruptions in *The Good Fight*.

Men interrupted other men 13 times total, 11 (84,6%) of those times were intrusive and 2 (15,4%) were cooperative. Interruptions between two women occurred 31 times, 29 (93,6%) of those were intrusive, 1 (3,2%) was cooperative and 1 (3,2%) was unsuccessful. Men interrupted women 29 times, 25 (86,2%) of which were intrusive interruptions, 2 (6,9%) were cooperative and 2 (6,9%) were unsuccessful interruptions. Women interrupting men occurred 24 times, there were 20 (83,3%) intrusive interruptions, 2 (8,3%) cooperative ones and 2 (8,3%) unsuccessful ones. Out of all 97 interruptions that were found in *The Good Fight* 85 (87,6%) were intrusive interruptions, 7 (7,2%) were cooperative interruptions and 5 (5,2%) were unsuccessful interruptions.

In the table we can see that most interruptions in all categories are intrusive interruptions. Over 80% of interruptions were intrusive in each one. Percentagewise intrusive interruptions are most common in woman-to-woman interruptions with over 90 percent being intrusive, since there are more interruptions in total and only one interruption is

cooperative in this category. The second most were by men to women. The least intrusive interruptions are made by women to men. The second least were by men to men. When it comes to cooperative interruptions, considering the small number of man-to-man interruptions, there are relatively more cooperative interruptions between them than in any other category with 15 % of. The second most cooperative interruption were made by women to men. The least were made by women to women with only 3,5 %.

Here are some examples of unsuccessful interruptions, intrusive interruptions and cooperative interruptions from *The Good Fight*.

Example 6. An unsuccessful interruption.

Lucca: You're implying that this [missing video shows something nefarious.]

Diane: [I'm not saying anything other than what] the police report states.

(*The Good Fight*: Season 1, Episode 1: Inauguration, time stamp 10:24)

Diane and Lucca are talking about the amount of the settlement of a legal case in example 6. The interruption made by Diane in this case is unsuccessful since both women are finish their sentences and neither stops talking because of the other. Diane starts talking over Lucca to explain what she is implying if not that the video that is missing in this case has something suspicious on it and it is missing on purpose.

Example 7. Unsuccessful interruptions.

Colin: This is melodrama, [Your Honor].

Lucca: [Why is it]melodrama? If this man doesn't [get the help he needs, he will die].

Colin: [Oh my God. We're preventing him fr]om making a terrorist well. That's all.

(The Good Fight: Season 1, Episode 3: The Schtup List, time stamp 25:17)

In this example Colin and Lucca are arguing in front of a judge in court. The example contains two instances of unsuccessful interruptions. There are two points of overlap in the conversation they are having. In the first overlap Lucca is speaking over Colin, who is addressing the judge. Lucca tries to interrupt by starting to talk before Colin is done with his utterance by asking him a question. The second overlap happens when Colin talks over Lucca in the middle of her explanation of what might happen if the man in question does not get medical assistance. In both attempted interruptions the two speakers continue to speak over each other while completing their utterances and ignoring the interruption made by the other which makes them unsuccessful interruptions.

Example 8. An intrusive interruption.

Diane: They're worried you might be being ostracized.

Maia: Oh, they have got to stop. Really—

Diane: It's okay. There is an empty office downstairs that I [can—]

Maia: [No,]no please—

Diane: Come on, let your godmother spoil you a little bit.

(The Good Fight: Season 1, Episode 1: Inauguration, time stamp 06:21)

In this scene Maia is talking to Diane at her new job as an associate, Diane knows Maia's family, which means they know each other already. Diane is trying to help Maia on her

first day, but she is trying to refuse. This example contains three different intrusive interruptions. The first is made by Diane, the second by Maia, and the third by Diane again. They are intrusive because all of them cut off the previous turn of the other speaker.

In the first one Diane interrupts Maia's turn when Maia is trying to explain that everything is fine and Diane does not need to do anything for her, she does not get to finish her turn when Diane interrupts to offer her an office if she is being ostracized by the other associates. Maia then interrupts Diane to reject her offer before she gets to finish making it. Diane then interrupts Maia again to convince Maia to let her do it. Although these are intrusive interruptions, the tone of the interruptions is very polite and made in a positive manner.

Example 9. Intrusive interruptions.

Yesha: Here's my worry, Ms. Tascioni. Maia and I have attorney-client privilege [and—]

Elsbeth: [Yes,]and so do we, because I represent the firm.

Yesha: Yes, but some of these issues are only Maia's.

Elsbeth: Then she should quit the firm because her issues are hurting the firm's interests.

Yesha: No, I don't think that's [what—]

Maia: [What]do you wanna know?

Elsbeth: Why is your dad out on bail?

(*The Good Fight*: Season 1, Episode 5: Stoppable: Requiem for an Airdate, time stamp 34:09)

This example has multiple intrusive interruptions. The first one is made by Elsbeth to Yesha, who is an attorney that is also helping Maia. The second interruption is made by Maia, and she interrupts Yesha's turn. Both are successful interruptions since the first speaker does not get to finish their turn. The first interruption is intrusive because while Elsbeth does not change the topic of the conversation she takes the floor from Yesha and interrupts her turn.

The second interruption in which Maia interrupts Yesha, she completely takes over Yesha's turn when speaking to Elsbeth. She does not let her finish her explanation and instead asks Elsbeth a question instead.

Example 10. A cooperative interruption.

Mike: I just... wasn't expecting to see—

Wife: Your friend from work. How come you've never introduced us?

Elsbeth: I said the same thing.

(*The Good Fight*: Season 1, Episode 5: Stoppable: Requiem for an Airdate, time stamp 38:10)

Mike Kreteva comes home to find his wife talking with Elsbeth. Mike is a lawyer trying to find out if Maia helped her dad commit fraud, and Elsbeth is the lawyer helping Maia. In this interruption the reason it is cooperative is because Mike's wife is trying to help him finish his utterance by completing his sentence for him.

Example 11. A cooperative interruption.

Doctor: Regrettably, here's the problem—

Diane: You've already destroyed it?

Doctor: No, we've already fertilized it.

(*The Good Fight*: Season 1, Episode 4: Henceforth Known as Property, time stamp 15:01)

Diane and Lucca are trying to locate their client's egg for her to fertilize it and they're seeing a doctor to find out what happened to it. During this interaction, Diane interrupts the doctor and ends the sentence for him the way she expects it will end. She is wrong, but the intention behind the interruption is to assist and be helpful.

4.2.3. Comparing *Suits* and *The Good Fight*

The below table shows the number of intrusive, cooperative, and unsuccessful interruptions in *Suits* and *The Good Fight* side by side.

	Suits	The Good Fight
Intrusive interruptions	109 (86,5%)	85 (87,6%)
Cooperative interruptions	16 (12,7%)	7 (7,2%)
Unsuccessful interruptions	1 (0,8%)	5 (5,2%)
Total	126	97

Table 5. Comparison of Interruption Types in *Suits* and *The Good Fight*.

Looking at the types of interruptions in *Suits* and *The Good Fight* side by side we can see that a similar percentage of the total amount of interruptions consists of intrusive interruptions. Regarding cooperative interruptions, *Suits* has about 5 percent more of them than *The Good Fight*. *The Good Fight* however has more unsuccessful interruptions than *Suits*. And once again we can see that in the same amount of minutes in each series, *Suits* has more interruptions in total.

Next, we will take a closer look at the gender distribution of each type of interruption in both series. First, we will compare intrusive interruptions.

Intrusive interruptions	Suits	The Good Fight
M-M	69 (63,3%)	11 (12,9%)
W-W	1 (0,9%)	29 (34,1%)
M-W	16 (14,7%)	25 (29,4%)
W-M	23 (21,1%)	20 (23,5%)
Total	109	85

Table 6. Comparison of The Gender Distribution of Intrusive Interruptions.

From this table we can see that the amount of intrusive interruptions between men in both series is very different. *Suits* has a much larger amount of intrusive interruptions by men interrupting other men than *The Good Fight*. The majority of intrusive interruptions in *Suits* belong to this category (63,3%), whereas in *The Good Fight* this category has the least amount of intrusive interruptions (12,9%). In contrast, the least amount of intrusive interruptions in *Suits* are made by women to other women, with only 0,9%, while in *The Good Fight* that is where the most (34,1%) intrusive interruptions occur.

Intrusive interruptions made by men to women are found more in *The Good Fight* than in *Suits*, with 29,4% in *The Good Fight* and 14,7% in *Suits*. Those made by women to men occur in a similar percentage in both series, with 21,1% in *Suits* and 23,5% in *The Good Fight*. In *Suits* this is the second most popular category while in *The Good Fight* it is the third most popular.

All in all, *Suits* has more dramatic differences in the amount of intrusive interruptions, with men-to-men being the most common by a large amount and the smallest having less than one percent of the interruptions. In *The Good Fight*, however, the differences

between the gender categories are not as big. The biggest percentage difference is about 12%, between the lowest and highest amount.

Next, we will compare the gender distribution of cooperative interruptions in both series.

Cooperative interruptions	Suits	The Good Fight
M-M	7 (43,8%)	2 (28,6%)
W-W	1 (6,3%)	1 (14,3%)
M-W	3 (18,8)	2 (28,6%)
W-M	5 (31,3%)	2 (28,6%)
Total	16	7

Table 7. Comparison of The Gender Distribution of Cooperative Interruptions.

Here we can see the gender distribution of cooperative interruptions in *Suits* and *The Good Fight*. The most amount of cooperative interruptions in *Suits* occurs between men, with 43,8%. In *The Good Fight* the same amount is made between men, men-to-women and women-to-men, all including 28,6% of the interruptions. The lowest amount is between women, with 14,3%. In *Suits* the least amount of cooperative interruptions occurs between women, with 6,3%.

In the table below we can see the gender distribution of unsuccessful interruptions in *Suits* and *The Good Fight* side by side.

Unsuccessful Interruptions	Suits	The Good Fight
M-M	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
W-W	0 (0%)	1 (20%)
M-W	0 (0%)	2 (40%)
W-M	0 (0%)	2 (40%)
Total	1	5

Table 8. Comparison of The Gender Distribution of Unsuccessful Interruptions.

Unsuccessful interruptions happen more in *The Good Fight*, with 5 total, while in *Suits* there is only one occurrence. Therefore 100% of unsuccessful interruptions in *Suits* occur between men. In *The Good Fight* however, there are no unsuccessful interruptions between men, but all of them happen in the other three categories. Forty percent of them happen when men try to interrupt women and another forty percent when women try to interrupt men. The last 20% happen between women.

If we were to look at the numbers all together without any differentiation between the two shows, this is what it would look like:

	M-M	W-W	M-W	W-M
Intrusive	80	30	41	43
Cooperative	9	2	5	7
Unsuccessful	1	1	2	2
Total	90	33	48	52

Table 9. The Gender Distribution of Interruptions in Both Series.

From this table we can see that when both series' numbers are added together, men still make the most intrusive interruptions to other men, but also the most cooperative interruptions. They just interrupt each other the most overall. The least interruptions occur

between women, both when looking at intrusive and cooperative interruptions. Man to woman and woman to man interruptions have a similar amount of both intrusive and cooperative interruptions, with a few more in the woman interrupting man -category. Based on how little women interrupt other women it is interesting to see how much more they interrupt men. Similarly looking at men, they tend to interrupt other men quite a bit more than they interrupt women.

4.3. Power Dynamics Regarding Interruptions

Looking at the power dynamics of who is the person interrupting someone else and the person being interrupted, one could assume that the person interrupting someone has more power than the person being interrupted.

Firstly, investigating the interruptions in *Suits*, it does seem that the person with more power within the relationship dynamic that is interacting does make more interruptions. Looking at the numbers in the table below, significantly more interruptions are made by people with more power in the conversation.

Power of The Interrupter	Number	Percentage
More	70	55,56%
Less	32	25,4%
Same	24	19,05%
Total	126	100%

Table 10. Power Structure of Interruptions in *Suits*.

Out of 126 interruptions in *Suits*, 70 were made by people with more power in the conversation. Next, 32 were made by people with less power and 24 were made by people with the same amount of power as the one being interrupted. As we can see over fifty percent of all interruptions are made by people with more power. Since there are clear

power structures in the workplace, we see fewer interactions with people that have the same amount of power in any given situation. The instances where the power was balanced between the two parties were mainly gathered from interactions with people outside the workplace.

Some power dynamics are very easy to distinguish, for example when Mike and Harvey are talking and Harvey interrupts Mike, which happens often. In those scenes the power dynamic is clear, Harvey is Mike's boss and so it is socially more acceptable for him to interrupt Mike than it is for Mike to interrupt him.

Below is an example of a situation where Harvey interrupts Mike. This is a classic example of an interruption between these two characters. Harvey is usually always in control in their interactions and Mike is following his lead and he almost never interrupts Harvey.

Example 12. An interruption between Harvey and Mike.

Harvey: Glad you showed up.

Mike: Oh, hey. I'm sorry, I was [just—]

Harvey: [Shut]up. Listen.

Mike: Okay.

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 3: Inside Track, time stamp 02:23)

Many interruptions also happen between two coworkers, where the two people are on the same level, and they have equal power in the situation, one is not in a position above the other. These interruptions happen often between Harvey and Louis who are both partners at the law firm they work at. Often it is Harvey interrupting Louis, rather than the other way round. Other interactions where the participants have equal power are

between two friends outside of work, for example with Mike and his friend Trevor, or Mike and Jenny.

The example below is an interruption between Mike and Trevor. Although they are friends and therefore are equals in the friendship, in this particular situation they are at Mike's apartment, so Mike has the right to tell Trevor what he can or cannot do at his house.

Example 13. An interruption between Mike and his friend Trevor.

Trevor: I'm just gonna take a pee.

Mike: Trevor, stop. No, no—

Trevor: It's fine.

Mike: Get your hand off the knob.

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 12: Dog Fight, time stamp 02:22)

Some more complex power dynamics are for example the relationship between Mike and Rachel especially at the beginning of the series when Rachel often interrupts Mike. Rachel is a paralegal at the firm, which means that her position is technically "lower" than Mike's position, because he has been hired to work as a lawyer. However, Rachel has been at the firm for many years, therefore she has seniority over Mike, who is newly hired and needs help from her often.

Below is an example of an interruption between Mike and Rachel, where Rachel interrupts Mike. This example is taken from their first meeting, on Mike's first day working at the law firm. Rachel is showing Mike to his desk. In this situation Rachel is in control of the situation, her being the one responsible for showing Mike around because he is new, and she has been working there for years.

Example 14. An interruption between Rachel and Mike.

Rachel: I gave you that for a reason. You haven't taken one note.

Mike: That's because—

Rachel: Because you were too busy ogling me to listen to a word I've said?

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 1: Pilot part 1 & 2, time stamp 33:10)

Another complicated dynamic is the one between a lawyer and their client. The client is the one that has hired the lawyer so in theory the lawyer works for them, but the lawyer also in a position of authority, being more knowledgeable about the law and they are the one advising the client on what to do.

Below is an example of an interruption between a lawyer and a client, more specifically Louis and his client Tom. Louis is interrupting Tom, while they are talking with Jessica in her office. Louis is trying to be helpful and reassuring Tom that they are there for him, but at the same time being rude to him by interrupting him.

Example 15. An interruption between Louis and a client called Tom.

Tom: It's not a big deal, really. We were [just—]

Louis: [No, no], no, no, no, no. Like I said, we're here to make you happy. Right?

(*Suits*: Season 1, Episode 2: Errors and Omissions, time stamp 31:21)

As in *Suits*, looking at the power dynamics in *The Good Fight* the one with more power in a situation makes more interruptions than the one with less power. Most of the

interruptions are made by someone higher up in the hierarchy of a law firm than the one being interrupted. From the table below we can see the power structures of the interruptions made in *The Good Fight*.

Power of The Interrupter	Number	Percentage
More	39	40,21%
Less	23	23,71%
Same	35	36,08%
Total	97	100%

Table 11. Power Structure of Interruptions in *The Good Fight*.

We can see that in *The Good Fight* too, most interruptions were made by the person with more power in the interaction, with 39 out of 97 cases (40,21%). Almost as many, however, were made by people with the same amount of power in the interaction with 35 cases (36,08%) and the least were made by people with less power, with 23 cases (23,71%).

In example 16, there is a deposition going on where Lucca is deposing a police officer called Andrew Theroux about a police brutality case. This is an example of an interruption where the person interrupting has more power than the one being interrupted. The reason why Lucca has more power than Andrew in this situation is because Andrew is the one being questioned and therefore, he has a defensive stance in the situation. Lucca is on the legal team of the person suing Andrew.

Example 16.

Lucca: Is this you on the video, sir?

Andrew: Yeah, but that's not the whole [thing—]

Example 18.

Lucca: Look, I know your first instinct would be to call him, but for the [firm—]

Maia: [We need] to tell the partners.

The Good Fight, Season 1, Episode time stamp 02:18

The Good Fight also has similar power issues as *Suits*, where it is not always clear who has more power in a situation. Same lawyer-client relationships occur in *The Good Fight* too.

One especially interesting relationship within the series was between the law firm and the financiers that financed some of the lawsuits at the firm based on an algorithm that calculated whether it was going to be profitable or not. In this example Adrian is talking to litigation financiers about a class-action lawsuit. One of the financiers, Tom C. Duncan, interrupts him while they are discussing whether to go forward with the class-action lawsuit or to drop it.

In this dynamic the law firm is the one asking for funding from the financiers, which means that the financiers are the ones to decide whether to give them money to finance certain big lawsuits. Here the law firm is the client of the financiers, but the financiers decide whether the firm gets money from them for the lawsuits. Having clients is the reason why the financiers have business in the first place and if the firm wins the lawsuit, they get a percentage of the money they win from it. On the other side, the firm cannot pursue big lawsuits without financing, so the relationship between them is mutually beneficial. This aspect makes it hard to determine which side has the most power when interacting with each other. This interaction is between Adrian and one of the financiers called Tom Duncan.

Example 19.

Adrian: Class action against 12 nationwide retailers. I'll need financing on, say, 140—

Tom: How many in the class?

(*The Good Fight*, Season 1, Episode 2: First Week, time stamp 29:19)

If we compare the percentages from *Suits* and *The Good Fight* when it comes to who makes the most interruptions, we can see that in both series the person with more power makes interruptions most often. In *Suits* the percentage is higher with over 50% of the interruptions, whereas in *The Good Fight* the percentage is around 40%.

	More	Less	Same
Suits	55,56%	25,4%	19,05%
The Good Fight	40,21%	23,71%	36,08%

Table 12.

It seems that in both TV series the one with more power in a social interaction makes more interruptions than the one with less power. This is especially clear in work-related interactions, where it is more socially acceptable for the boss to interrupt their employee, than it is for the employee to interrupt the boss. It is also considered very inappropriate for anyone to interrupt the judge when in a court setting because the judge is the one who controls the court and has the most power there, which is also a common setting in series like these.

4.4. Responses to Interruptions

In this section we will find out how the people interrupted by intrusive or cooperative interruptions responded to being interrupted. There are only a couple instances of where

the person being interrupted acknowledges the interruption in some way, usually after the interruption happens the conversation moves on from there without anyone commenting on it. Next, we will discuss the few cases where the interruption is acknowledged by the person that was interrupted.

Example 20 is from the second episode of *Suits*, where Mike and Harvey are having a conversation in the filing room about Mike's good idea on how to win the case, which they did.

Example 20.

Mike: Well, I mean, it wasn't really my [idea—]

Harvey: [They'r]e settling for 400 million.

Mike: Okay, yeah, that was my idea. So, does this mean I get to keep my job?

Harvey: I wanna talk to you about that.

Mike: Before you do, Harvey—

Harvey: Do we have to have a conversation about how you keep interrupting me?

Mike: Um...

(*Suits*, Season 1, Episode 2: Errors and Omissions, time stamp 39:40)

As one can see from the context, Harvey is not actually mad at Mike for interrupting him, since he is there to deliver good news to him. In this case he wants to get his point across without being interrupted, so he asks a rhetorical question about whether they need

to have a conversation about Mike interrupting him. Even though just a few seconds earlier he too interrupted Mike.

In example 21 Louis is trying to ask Donna whether she would cover for Louis' secretary Norma for two weeks while she is away on vacation. From the conversation it is obvious that Donna does not want to work for Louis, not even for two weeks.

Example 21.

Louis: Hey Donna. Harvey and I were just talking about you and—

Donna: No.

Louis: You don't even know what I was gonna say.

Donna: Yes, I do.

Louis: And how is that possible?

Donna: I read lips, I know body language, and I talk to Norma. I'm not some token you win at a fair, Louis.

(*Suits*, Season 1, Episode 5: Bail Out, time stamp 17:10)

Louis acknowledges the interruption by commenting that Donna did not know what he was going to say, because she interrupted him before he was done with his turn. It turns out that Donna did know what he was going to say, which means that Donna did not need to hear the rest and therefore interrupted Louis.

5. Discussion

The discussion part of this thesis will look more in depth into the results explained in the previous chapter and we try to answer the research questions asked at the beginning. The research questions are:

1. What types of interruptions are made most by men vs women in each series?
2. What kind of effect does power have on the interruptions made?
3. How do the people that are interrupted respond to the interruption?

Let us first consider the first research question about what types of interruptions are made most by men versus women in each series. Since *Suits* is a male-led series, it is not surprising to find that most interruptions were made by men and to other men. Most of the interruptions were made by Harvey, who is one of the main characters. He mostly interrupts Mike, who he hires in the pilot episode to work with him. In those cases, there is an obvious power structure at play since Harvey is Mike's boss and therefore his superior. They also get the most screen time, which contributes to the fact that most of the interruption happen between them.

In *The Good Fight*, a women-led series the distributions of interruptions made by each gender is more evenly divided, although women make more interruptions and are also interrupted more. In both cases the gender of the main characters plays a big role. The gender we see more on screen is the one we see interacting more which leads to more cases of interruptions between those genders.

The fact that there are only two woman-to-woman interruptions in *Suits* says a lot about how many scenes there are between women. There are only two, which either

means that women don't interact much with each other on screen in this TV series or they interact very politely, with minimal interruptions.

In both *Suits* and *The Good Fight*, the amount of intrusive interruptions was much higher than the amount of cooperative interruptions, with *Suits* having only one unsuccessful interruption in all the episodes. In *Suits* intrusive interruptions mostly occurred between men, with over a half of all the intrusive interruptions falling to that category. The second most intrusive interruptions are made by women interrupting men, third by men interrupting women, and lastly by women interrupting women. The amount of women interrupting anyone in an intrusive way is much lower than the amount of men using intrusive interruptions in total, but men also get interrupted intrusively more than women.

The amount of cooperative interruptions in *Suits* is much lower than intrusive ones. The most cooperative interruptions are made by men interrupting men. The second most are by women interrupting men, third by men interrupting women and the least by women interrupting women. In total, men make more cooperative interruptions than women, and they also get interrupted more in a cooperative way than women.

Comparing the amount of intrusive versus cooperative interruptions made by men, men make more intrusive than cooperative interruptions in *Suits*. Women also make more intrusive interruptions total, but the percentage of all cooperative interruptions made by women is higher than the percentage of woman-made interruptions in the intrusive interruptions.

In *The Good Fight* most intrusive interruptions happen when women interrupt women. The second most intrusive interruptions are made by men interrupting women,

third by women interrupting men, and the least by men interrupting men. Out of all intrusive interruptions women make more intrusive interruptions but they also get interrupted intrusively more than men.

Cooperative interruptions in *The Good Fight* are made the same amount by men interrupting men, men interrupting women and women interrupting men. The least are made by women interrupting women. In total men make more of the cooperative interruptions and men also get interrupted more in a cooperative way.

The fact that the majority of interruptions in both *Suits* and *The Good Fight* are intrusive interruptions, tells us that maybe that is just the nature of most interruptions and that is why they occur a lot more than cooperative interruptions, no matter the gender of the person interrupting or the one being interrupted. In *Suits* they occur mostly between men, because there are more scenes where we see men interacting with one another, and in *The Good Fight* they occur mostly between women, because it has more scenes with women interacting with one another.

When it comes to cooperative interruptions, we see them happen mostly between men too in *Suits*, which might also be for the reason that men simply have more scenes together where they interact, because the main characters are men. In *The Good Fight*, however, cooperative interruptions are quite evenly divided between all categories, but women to women cooperative interruptions occur the least. The number of cooperative interruptions is so low though, with only seven total, that it is hard to conclude any reasons from the distribution of those few instances.

Looking at the unsuccessful interruptions in *Suits*, while there is only one occurrence, it is between two men. It seems that the person not letting themselves be interrupted is

showing some kind of power over the person trying to interrupt by simply ignoring the attempt.

Considering the second research question: “What kind of effect does social power have on the interruptions that are made?”, there is an obvious hierarchal power system in place in workplace dramas like these two. One can plainly see who is in a higher position at a law firm, whether you’re an associate, junior partner, senior partner or name partner, and various other positions that exist. Even if we are talking about two associates, they are talked about by marking how long they have been associates, a first-year associate or second-year associate et cetera.

There is also something to be said about people that are well-liked and confident in themselves, regardless of their status. These kinds of people might have more power socially, based on their personality. More than people that others dislike or who seem “weak” or easily manipulated. In TV series we accept it more easily that the “weaker” characters might get stepped on and interrupted more even if they are technically in a position of more power. Antagonistic characters might also interrupt others more to make the viewer dislike them more.

When it comes to interruptions, we assume that the person with less power is less likely to interrupt someone, because it is considered rude and the one with more power than you might do something that would impact your life in a negative way. Looking at the interruptions made in these TV series, there are more interruptions made by people with more power in an interaction rather than the one with less power. Based on the results, it is not always the person with the least power that makes the least interruptions. As we can see from *The Good Fight*, people with the same amount of power as each other interrupt each other quite often too.

Looking at the last research question about how the person being interrupted responds to being interrupted, it seems that those people usually do not acknowledge the interruption in favor of moving the conversation forward. There were only a few instances of the people being interrupted making a comment about the interruption or a remark that acknowledged that they had been cut off. Interruptions are so common in conversation that to dwell on each one would bring most conversations to a halt.

Considering previous research on interruptions in the workplace by Schnurr, Marra and Holmes (2008) they found that when a superior is impolite to a subordinate, it is not treated as marked, but considered just being direct. The impolite behavior here would be to interrupt someone. Therefore, it is logical that most of the time these kinds of interruptions are not acknowledged since they are deemed as acceptable. The two cases where the interruptions were commented on in this set of data, were cases where a subordinate interrupted a superior and the superior commented on it.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, we investigated interruptions and gender in the two TV series: *Suits* and *The Good Fight*. The reason for choosing these two series in particular was that they both are American legal dramas from the 2010's, which was important so that the language of the series could be easily compared with one another.

The one major difference in them was the gender of the main characters. *Suits* has two men as the main characters, while *The Good Fight* follows three women. The reason for choosing series with main characters of different genders was so that we could compare the interruptions made by women versus men in legal drama series. It was also taken into consideration that if we compared two series where the main characters were the same gender in both, there would be an unequal amount of screen time for one of the genders, and therefore they would be harder to compare, because the main characters appear on the screen the most.

The goal was to find out which gender made more interruptions in both series, and what type of interruptions were most common. The types of interruptions investigated were intrusive interruptions, cooperative interruptions, and unsuccessful interruptions. All the instances of interruptions from the first season of both series were counted and categorized into the types of interruptions. They were also all written out and all interruptions were categorized based on who interrupted who, was the interruption made by a man to a man, woman to woman, man to woman, and woman to man.

Looking at the gender distribution of interruptions, there is a distinct difference in the two series. In *Suits*, where the main characters are men, men make more interruptions than women and in *The Good Fight*, where the main characters are women, women make more interruptions.

The types of interruptions made tell us about the speaker's attitude towards the other person. From the results it is obvious that overall, the hierarchy in the workplace in *Suits* and *The Good Fight* has a bigger impact on who interrupts who than gender has. It is also very clear that intrusive interruptions are much more common than cooperative interruptions. Based on this knowledge one could say that intrusive interruptions are a part of everyday life at the workplace, when it comes to superiors speaking to subordinates.

This study was only limited to these two law firms in two different TV series and therefore is not applicable to all workplaces or life in general and you might get different results based on different TV series or even different seasons of these ones. It was only meant to show how interruptions, gender and power are represented in these series. In the future, it would be interesting to find out how well these findings match with real life workplace interactions.

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