

## **Feminist Conversation Analysis: Examining violence against women**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Conversation analysis is a rigorous methodology for feminist analyses of gender, language, and sexuality. Its focus on the accomplishment of actions in naturally occurring social interaction is different from other approaches to gender and language. Aspects of a conversation analytic mentality have been critiqued by both feminists and language scholars for constraining the study of gender and communication. Nevertheless, we show that a sustained focus on the minutiae of social interaction and close attention to what people say and how they say it in the service of action can further advance knowledge about key feminist concerns including gender, power, identity, and oppression.

Conversation analysis influenced some of the earliest research on gender and language. For example, by analysing patterns of turn-taking in couples' talk, Zimmerman and West (1975) reported that men interrupted women more frequently than the inverse. However, 'feminist conversation analysis' was only coined at the turn of the century by Kitinger (2000), who promoted it for feminist research. For some critics, conversation analysis' objective empirical approach is ill-fitted for investigations with a political, feminist stance (Speer 1999; Whelan 2012). Yet using conversation analysis need not preclude political views. We share Kitinger's position on the value of bringing feminism and conversation analysis together. It is our view that feminist conversation analysis offers a productive methodology for the field of gender and language research.

The research we present in this chapter demonstrates a conversation analytic approach to the study of violence against women. As feminist scholars, we are concerned with the gendered meanings of victimhood, and the difficulties women face in disclosing violence and seeking support from institutions. As conversation analysts, we examine these questions using recorded data from real-life interactions where women seek help from a victim support

helpline. A focus on the details of interaction can yield novel insights into how the meanings of victimhood are negotiated when the relevant actions are callers seeking help and call-takers delivering services. Empirical findings can then be applied to improve services, thereby making a practical difference for women seeking support from violence.

## **CONVERSATION ANALYSIS AND PARTICIPANTS' ORIENTATIONS**

Conversation analysis is an empirical, observational method that examines how social life is organised to produce shared meaning and accomplish coordinated action. Despite its name, conversation analysis examines more than just talk. Data are recordings and transcripts of 'talk-in-interaction' which includes what people do and say, movements of the body, and interaction with the environment. A foundational assumption is that people are competent 'members of a culture' (that is, parties or participants) who go about their daily lives with an understanding of how the social world works. The aim of conversation analysis is to explain *how* members build and recognise actions that result in a remarkable coordination in the accomplishment of everyday activities. To that end, analytic observations are grounded in the detail of actual social interactions, with a focus on what participants do and how they do it. As feminist scholars using conversation analysis, one key interest is in how sex, gender, and identity are accomplished through the practices of everyday life.

Conversation analysis is concerned with people's own understandings of what they and others are doing in social interaction. In technical terms, this is referred to as 'participants' orientations.' What participants treat as relevant is precisely (in fact, only) what conversation analysts attend to when analysing the interaction. For example, whether talking at the same time as someone else is an interruption is not for analysts to decide, but something participants display – on the spot – as part of the ongoing interaction (Weatherall and Edmonds 2018).

One way to determine participants' orientations is through the 'next turn proof procedure.' This procedure is based on the principle that the way someone responds in a next turn of talk displays their understanding of what was happening in the previous turn. In the extracts presented below, we show how call-takers' turns display an understanding of callers' turns which preceded them. We also present a case where the next turn proof procedure is not available as an analytic tool (when the recipient does not take a next turn of talk). Nonetheless, we show how callers' actions are built in ways that demonstrate their orientations to how their turns will be understood and responded to by others.

Focusing on participants' own words and what they are demonstrably doing is one way to conduct feminist research that examines people's lived experiences in their own terms (Kitzinger 2000), but the analytic focus of participants' orientations has been controversial for feminist conversation analysis. One critique is that examining participants' orientations cannot speak to the socio-political, cultural, and historical contexts of gender and power (Whelan 2012). However, Schegloff (1997) argued that analysts who treat their concerns as more important than participants' are engaged in 'theoretical imperialism' (p. 167). He was responding directly to feminist language research that presupposed the relevance of gender or sexuality when analysing speakers' ways of talking and behaving. Just because participants *can* be categorised as men or women doesn't mean these are legitimate analytic categories to make sense of how they act. The very same participants could just as easily be categorised based on their age, occupations, food preferences, hair styles, and so on. Schegloff argued that it is not legitimate to pick out gender identities from this list, just because the analyst happens to be interested in gender. Instead, conversation analysts examine the identities that *participants* treat as important, and demonstrate how these identities are used by the participants to make sense of the interaction they're involved in.

Examining participants' orientations does not, as some critics might have it, limit analysis to apolitical descriptions of technical phenomena. Nor does a political feminist analysis necessarily compromise conversation analysis' theoretical roots (see Wovk 2007 for a critique). Instead, feminist conversation analysis can provide a disciplined approach for investigating how socio-cultural matters such as gender, sexuality, identity, and power are visibly relevant as participants build and interpret their social worlds and progress daily activities. A feminist interest in gender and power can be valid if analysts do not assume how or where this will become manifest in the data, but instead undertake to demonstrate *that* and *how* their feminist interests are noticed and used by participants (Speer 2012). The following section presents some illustrative examples of the emerging field of work at the intersection of feminism and conversation analysis.

## **A BRIEF REVIEW OF FEMINIST CONVERSATION ANALYTIC RESEARCH**

A conversation analytic approach has been used productively by feminist scholars to examine a variety of issues. Below we present three strands of research that utilise conversation analytic methodology to examine feminist concerns. Firstly, feminist conversation analysis has demonstrated how gender and sexuality operate as normative, ordinary parts of social life and how everyday oppression works by sanctioning certain identities and behaviours as non-normative. Secondly, conversation analysis can be used to examine participants' orientations to common-sense cultural knowledge about the gendered social and moral world. Finally, grounded insights about the workings of the social world have been used to consider effective interventions for social change, and develop services to provide practical help for people in need.

### **Analysing everyday oppression**

A key aim of conversation analysis is to understand the methods members use in 'being an ordinary person' (Sacks 1984, p. 415). In other words, how people as culturally

competent members of society go about their everyday lives accomplishing actions with others and interacting with the physical and social world. Conversation analysts examine the resources used by participants to build and interpret in/equality in diverse settings. For example, analysts have documented how turn-taking is organised in large political meetings to support democratic participation (Mondada 2007).

Building on foundational ethnomethodological approaches to gender (e.g. Kessler and McKenna 1978), feminist conversation analysis has demonstrated how gender and sexuality are part and parcel of common-sense knowledge. Certain ways of being in the social world are treated as ordinary and unremarkable, while others can be subject to scrutiny. For example, from a young age, children use the notion of gender differences to assess whether others' behaviours are acceptable or not (Weatherall 2002).

One notable programme of research has demonstrated how heterosexuality manifests in interaction as ordinary and unremarkable, while homosexuality is treated as non-normative. For example, a heterosexual person may mention in passing a 'wife' or a 'husband,' making their sexuality available to listeners while engaged in another activity entirely (Kitzinger 2005). When lesbian women do the same thing, their recipients treat them as 'displaying' their sexuality and may apologise for assuming they were heterosexual (Land and Kitzinger 2005). It is through these everyday practices Kitzinger argued, that oppression is built, maintained, or potentially challenged.

Conversation analysis can document the linguistic practices that underlie structures of inequality, and how these can be challenged or undermined. One way to observe challenges to widespread understandings about gender and sexuality is through the technical practice of repair, where participants correct their own or others' talk. Simply shifting pronouns can work to undermine sexist presumptions, such as doctors being male (Ekberg and Ekberg 2017). Speakers can interrupt their own turn or others' to change an exclusive masculine

reference term, 'he,' to more gender inclusive references (Weatherall 2015). Correcting sexist assumptions or orienting to gender exclusive language are members' practices for challenging what counts as normal.

### **Culture and the gendered social-moral order**

Feminist conversation analysis can study the gendered social-moral order by demonstrating how participants understand sex, gender, and sexuality in diverse but ordinary settings. Examples include the way a cross-gender identity can be accomplished by children when playing during school break-time (Butler and Weatherall 2007) and identifying the interactional organisation of sex categorisation of a child soon after they have been born (Lindström, Näslund and Rubertsson 2015).

Analytically, gender as a social construction be studied through participants' actual use of description and categorisation in talk, two practices linked to common-sense knowledge and moral beliefs. Any person, object, or event, can be described and categorised in an almost infinite number of ways. This means that any actual description or categorisation will be selective. Category terms are a store of common-sense knowledge (Schegloff 2007), and a way participants make moral judgements, of which gendered expectations can play a large part (Stokoe 2006, 2010). Examining how participants describe people and events, and the categories they choose effectively provides a window into the working of gendered culture in action.

The link between categories, activities, and inferences is a key way participants manage gender and morality in practice. The same people can be categorised in different ways, depending on which aspects the speaker highlight or downplays. For example, a husband's description of his wife's 'girls' night out' invoked the activities of heavy drinking and flitting with men, while she described the same people as 'married women' who merely talked about their children in order to defend against his accusation (Edwards 1998). Certain

activities are culturally understood as ‘proper’ for some category members, but not for others. For example, complaining neighbours described ‘improper’ activities for a mother as staying out late and leaving children alone, invoking normative gender expectations and moral judgements (Stokoe and Edwards 2012). Perpetrators of domestic violence used the same category-based moral logic, such as describing partners as unfaithful or untidy to implicitly justify their violence (Le Couteur and Oxlad 2011). Even without naming a category directly, participants can use the link between activities and categories to let others infer moral judgements. For example, a man confessing to murder described how his victim had propositioned him for sex, letting his listeners make judgements about *what kind of girl* she was based on the unspoken category of ‘prostitute’ (Wowk 1984).

### **Interventions and social change**

According to Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2014, p. 154), an ‘essential prerequisite’ for feminists advocating social change ‘is an accurate understanding of how the world is now,’ and conversation analysis provides an empirical basis of knowledge about the social world and how participants understand it. A grounded focus on interaction can avoid many of the pitfalls of other language-based intervention programmes. For example, Kitzinger and Frith (1999) critiqued the feminist consent slogan ‘just say no’ as based on a mistaken belief about how talk works. Conversation analysis has shown that refusals overwhelmingly occur without the word ‘no’ at all, and regularly include features such as accounts, delays, and mitigations. Although well-intentioned, date-rape prevention programmes that advise women not to hesitate, make excuses, or give explanations require women to violate culturally shared norms for doing refusals, making these campaigns arguably misguided.

Support services can also be improved through a detailed analysis of how they operate by examining audio, or if possible, video recordings of what they do in practice. Concepts like ‘empathy’ and ‘empowerment’ that are often central to feminist support services can be

better understood by grounding what they mean in actual practices. For example, research on the UK Birth Crisis Helpline has documented how feminist principles of women-to-women support, advocacy, and empathy are accomplished through talk-in-interaction. Well-established findings show that finishing someone else's turn of talk can be used to show shared understanding (Wilkinson and Kitzinger 2014) and assessments of a caller's situation can demonstrate empathy (Kitzinger and Kitzinger 2007). In our own research, we intend to adapt our research findings into evidence-based training to help the organisation better respond to the needs of women who have experienced violence. A turn-by-turn analysis of *how* women ask for help in this context not only contributes to scholarly examination of the difficulty of disclosing violence (see Jordan 2004) but has practical applications. Training programmes such as the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM) have been developed to translate analytic findings to improve service-delivery across institutions (Stokoe 2014). In our own work we assume a sound first step to develop processes that effectively meet the needs of victims of violence is to examine what actually happens when they attempt to secure support.

## **USING CONVERSATION ANALYSIS TO STUDY VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

Violence against women is an issue of long-standing feminist concern, and has been approached from a number of academic and activist perspectives. Using a conversation analytic approach, we examine real-life interactions in which women turn to a victim support agency for help. Our analysis of calls to this service reveals *how* women disclose violence and negotiate the meanings of victimhood, while shedding light on the actual practices involved in women's engagement with support services and the justice system. With a focus on participants' descriptions and categorisations, we demonstrate how they invoke common-sense knowledge about victims of violence. Our findings broadly align with other feminist

research that points to a set of cultural beliefs about violence which structure and maintain a gendered social-moral order that functions to disadvantage women.

Our data are calls to a New Zealand community organisation which offers practical advice and emotional support to victims of crime and trauma. A call-centre is the first point of contact and operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call-takers connect callers to support workers or transfer them to alternative agencies. Calls are routinely recorded for training purposes, and the organisation amended their pre-recorded message and online privacy statement for us to inform callers that recordings could be used for university research purposes. To ensure confidentiality, identifying information such as names and addresses have been edited from the sound-files and replaced with pseudonyms on the transcripts.

The organisation initially provided us with a sample of 48 calls, and we subsequently collected a purposive sample of all calls across a seven-day period. In total, our sample consists of 396 calls and over 23 hours of recordings. We listened to each call and catalogued them with a unique identifying number, brief summary, and keywords. Calls were indexed based on details like length, gender of caller, reason for the call, and call outcome to create a searchable database. Calls were transcribed following conversation analytic conventions that capture the details of interaction such as silences, overlapping talk, intonation, and speed (Hepburn 2004; Jefferson 2004).

Listening to recordings and examining transcripts, we familiarised ourselves with the data in a process called unmotivated looking. Rather than beginning with a hypothesis, searching for a specific phenomenon, or presupposing gender underpins what people are saying, we approached the data with an open – albeit feminist – stance. Although we were interested in women and victimhood, we did not presuppose its relevance for callers seeking help.

An initial observation was that callers contacted the service for many different reasons and presented their problems in different ways. From this observation, we set out to collect instances where callers identified themselves and presented their problems. This can occur in many places, but in the cases below we focus on the opening moments of the call. We were interested in the different ways callers presented themselves as victims of gendered violence, and so narrowed our focus to cases regarding sexual or domestic violence. The organisation is a generic victim support service, and so only 57 calls concern sexual or domestic violence, which formed our sub-set for analysis. For each case, we examined how caller and call-taker reached a joint understanding of caller as a victim of violence. We found that callers regularly used description and categorisation to identify themselves and present their problem, and that the common-sense cultural knowledge was a resource for call-takers to make inferences about callers and their circumstances. Below we present three cases that show different ways callers described themselves and their problems.

The opening of a call is an important moment where participants identify themselves and establish the reason for the call. It is also the first opportunity for callers to describe their experiences and ask for help. Extract 1 shows the routine opening contact service workers (CONTACT) are trained to use,<sup>1</sup> and the way the caller responds.

Extract 1

01      CONTACT:      kia ora victim support this is Claire  
02                      (1.4)  
03      CALLER:      .hh oh hi um my name's Leanne Alweather .hh um (0.2)  
04                      I: had s- (0.6) dealt with you guys befo:re um with  
05                      problems at ho:me .hh and um (0.8) the: lady that  
06                      I did deal with and I can't remember her name she did  
07                      put me on to .hh a (.) um lawyer? .hh (0.8) and (0.8)  
08                      yeah I was just w- (0.2) wanting to find out inf- (0.2)  
09                      the lawyer's name again hh  
10                      (0.8)  
11      CONTACT:      o:h okay (0.8) o:h (0.6) what- what's your name please?

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<sup>1</sup> 'kia ora' (line 1) is Māori greeting used in New Zealand English



and the consequences of her husband's return) are linked to the location 'home' (line 5; 23). Note also the breathiness (marked by capital 'h' line at 23) that represents the callers' loud exhale of breath, a non-verbal way of displaying emotional stance (Potter and Hepburn 2010).

Common-sense knowledge about married couples is that they live together in a shared family home. Generally, home is understood as a place 'where one belongs, whose presence there is not accountable.' (Schegloff 1972, p. 98). Yet for this caller, home is where her problems (i.e. victimisation) occur, and she *does* account for her husband coming home and the consequences that would entail. The two activities (a husband returning home and a wife hanging up the phone) are not conventionally linked together, but if the categories are morally qualified (Cuff 1993), for example into 'abusive husband' and 'victimised wife,' then the caller's description makes sense. Although she never says the words 'victim' or 'violence' directly, the categories she uses and the activities she describes allows the inference that she is a victim of domestic violence perpetrated by her husband. By responding with 'oh right' (line 24) in the next turn, the contact service worker displays an understanding of this as an account (rather than asking why or querying the caller's explanation).

In the following extract, another caller describes her experiences in quite a different way. In contrast to Extract 1 and 1a, this caller refers to herself using the category 'victim'. Nevertheless, her first description of how she came to contact the service also provides inferences about her identity and the nature of her experiences.

#### Extract 2

01      CONTACT:      kia ora victim support Molly speaking  
02                      (0.6)  
03      CALLER:      .hh hey Molly: um: it's Mara here I'm just  
04                      ringing up um (0.6) hey: u:h look I've just got  
05                      one of these um pamphlets from the: Taura drive  
06                      police station?  
07      CONTACT:      mhm?=  
08      CALLER:      =Ngawhare? ((place name))

09 (1.0)  
 10 CALLER: and um I was just reading <through it> u:m (0.8)  
 11 y'know for victim information,  
 12 (0.2)  
 13 CALLER: if um: (0.4) if I feel that (.) myself an:d (1.0)  
 14 my son are victims of psychological abuse o:r  
 15 (0.6) some sort of you know (0.4) um (1.0) >how do  
 16 you say it< um (1.0) u-uh::h: abuse (.) (of/or) (.)  
 17 like THREAt,  
 18 (0.4)  
 19 CONTCT: mhm  
 20 CALLER: you know like um (1.4) you know like I'm being  
 21 threatened that (0.2) you know like (0.6) I'm not  
 22 allowed to: (0.8) leave with my so:n from the address?

Like the caller in Extract 1, this caller returns the contact service worker's greeting and introduces herself by name. She begins to describe what it is she is 'just ringing up' for (lines 3-4), but abandons this turn-in-progress to instead describe how she found out about the service. In contrast to the caller in Extract 1 who described her prior dealings with the organisation to identify herself as a client, the caller here presents herself as a first-time service-seeker by describing how she found out about the service.

Yet even in her description of how she came to call the organisation, the caller presents herself as a potential client, which in this case means a victim. She refers to the place she found a pamphlet about victim support as the 'police station' (line 6). Like 'home' in Extract 1, this description of place invokes inferences that the contact service worker can use to make sense of the caller's identity and the nature of her problem. Police stations are places associated with certain activities (e.g. reporting a crime) and certain categories of people such as police officers, suspects, witnesses, and victims (Dingemanse, Rossi, and Floyd 2017; Schegloff 1972). That the caller is looking for 'victim information' (line 11) implies she is a victim, and that she is doing so in such a place suggests police involvement, lending her the legitimacy of being recognised by a criminal justice institution.

The caller's description of looking for victim information implicitly categorises her as a victim. The caller goes on to explicitly categorise herself and her son as 'victims' (line

14) but pauses throughout her turn (line 13) display some difficulty in formulating her experiences. By describing someone as ‘my son’ (line 14), the caller categorises herself as a mother. These two categories are paired together, but can also be grouped in the wider collection of categories, ‘family’. Following the consistency rule of categorisation (Sacks 1972), if two members of a family are victims, it is consistent to categorise the perpetrator within this same collection. In other words, the perpetrator of violence against mother and son is also a family member. The caller invokes the common-sense knowledge that family members live together in a shared home when she describes her problem as being unable to leave with her son (line 21-22). As with Extract 1, the location of the caller’s problems and the categories of people involved make inferentially available that the problem is about domestic or family violence. The contact service worker provides only minimal responses (lines 7, 19), rather than taking a full turn of talk which would display her understanding of the caller’s description. Nonetheless, the caller describes her situation in ways that makes domestic violence inferentially available, displaying her understanding of a relevant reason to seek help from the victim support service.

In the third extract, a caller specifies that she is ringing about a ‘court appearance’ (line 4-5). Courts (like police stations) are settings that allow recipients to infer certain people and activities (Dingemanse, Rossi, and Floyd 2017) such as lawyers, judges, offenders, and so on. In the context of seeking court information from a victim support agency, this description identifies the caller as a victim in the criminal justice system, a societal institution that has been the target of considerable feminist critique for re-victimising women (see Jordan 2004).

#### Extract 3

01	CONTACT:	kia ora victim support Molly speaking
02		(0.6)
03	CALLER:	.hh hullo Molly it’s Taydi Letonen speaking, .hh
04		Molly I’m ringing with regard to um tch a court

05 appearance .hhh of Dayton Matthew Fenterwild  
 06 today in relation to a breach of protection order?  
 07 (0.2)  
 08 CALLER: .hhh um it's got to: hh. now and I- .hh there was  
 09 a note to be made on the file by uhm (.) Stephen,  
 10 from the Norswith police .hhh uh rather than the  
 11 co:urts ring me they were going to ring me. hh  
 12 (0.2) uhm (.) >immediately as soon as he'd< been  
 13 dealt with (.) as far as l-like whether he was  
 14 released or in fact there were bail conditions!  
 15 CONTCT: mh[m,]  
 16 CALLER: [.h]hh  
 17 (0.4)  
 18 CALLER: and I haven't (0.4) ah heard anything yet and I'm  
 19 just starting >to get a little bit< (0.2)  
 20 [worried (about) where I'll] stay  
 21 CONTCT: [ yeah no that's all good]  
 22 (0.2)  
 23 CALLER: [ plan ]  
 24 CONTCT: [so what I-] d- what I will do: is I'll pop you  
 25 ↑↑through to the police non emergency number,

By naming the person involved (line 5), the caller identifies the referent without making explicit her relationship with him (contrast this with Extract 1a's use of 'husband'). Nevertheless, her description of a 'breach of protection order' (line 6) provides inferences about the named person as and the nature of her victimisation. Protection orders are granted by the New Zealand family court in cases of domestic or family violence. Thus, the recipient (and analysts) can infer that the named man breached a protection order *against the caller* and appeared in court *on that charge*. Common-sense knowledge about when protection orders are given allows the inference that the named man is either a family member or (ex-) partner of the caller; and the perpetrator of violence against her.

The caller's reference to time is an important way that she presents the urgency of her problem. The court appearance was 'today' (line 6), but at the time of the call, she is yet to receive the information she was promised. Note the sound-stretch and exhalation on line 8 before the caller describes the present time, 'now,' and the way she cuts-off ('I-') to describe the prior arrangement that has not yet been met. She specifies that the police were to contact her 'immediately as soon as he'd been dealt with' (lines 12-13) making the fact she hasn't

‘heard anything yet’ (line 18) a cause of worry. Here we see the caller’s displayed orientation to the urgency of her circumstance – whether the perpetrator of violence has been released, or the nature of his bail conditions are serious matters that have practical ramifications of where she will stay (line 20) as well as her emotional state.

The caller’s report of events that should have happened can be understood as a complaint. However, the contact service worker responds by offering to connect the caller to the police (lines 24-25). This offer ratifies the caller’s identity as a victim entitled to help. However, the contact service worker displays her understanding that the appropriate agency to help the caller is police, rather than Victim Support. Thus, in the next turn, the contact service worker displays her understanding of the caller’s problem as a situation that somebody else can resolve rather than as a complaint she can directly respond to. Here, the next turn proof demonstrates participants’ orientations to the relevant action, showing the different ways participants can seek and provide help.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Conversation analysis can provide new insights into long-standing feminist questions. Detailed analysis can reveal the workings of issues such as women’s experiences with the justice system, the difficulty of disclosing violence to institutions, and the practicalities of help-seeking or service-provision. By focusing on participants’ orientations we can also demonstrate how people make sense of shared cultural meanings about violence and victimhood.

We set out to investigate how callers and contact service workers come to a joint understanding of the caller’s circumstances. We found that callers presented themselves and their experiences in a range of ways. Descriptions of people, activities, and places are everyday ways that participants invoke common-sense cultural knowledge about the gendered social-moral world. In this way, we can examine how participants themselves orient

to cultural beliefs about violence (such as who is involved and where it occurs) and use them for practical activities like seeking support. Calls to a victim helpline are a consequential site in which shared beliefs about gendered violence are built, reinforced, or potentially challenged in ways that can impact the provision of support.

Feminist scholars have long documented the struggles women face in having their experiences recognised as victimisation and securing help through the institutions of criminal justice (Jordan, 2004). Our research speaks to these issues by examining real-life cases where women turn to a support service for help. In Extract 1, the caller references the difficulty of seeking support over the phone when her home is not safe. In Extract 2, the caller identifies as both a victim and a mother, identities which can lead to contradictory expectations of protecting children and upholding the nuclear family (Powell and Murray 2008). In Extract 3 the caller describes how miscommunication between police and courts has left her in fear for her safety.

Empirical findings grounded in detailed analysis of recordings that show how women understand their experiences and explain it in their own terms can be used to design practical applications to improve support services. One internationally recognised programme is the Conversation Analytic Role-play Method (CARM) which develops research findings into evidence-based training (Stokoe 2014). In this way, a focus on what participants actually say and do as they seek support can inform the delivery of service, making a practical difference to the lives of women in need.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

For feminist conversation analysis to become widespread, more opportunities are needed for scholars to learn about the methodological approach. Conversation analysis, including the study of membership categorisation practices, is a highly technical discipline, and can appear intimidating for a novice. Yet as we have shown, attention to the fine level of

detail can yield important insights into the operation of the gendered social moral order, and the way participants invoke, reproduce, or challenge shared common-sense knowledge. An area of exciting potential for feminist research is the analysis of embodied interaction, where the tools of conversation analysis are used to examine how participants use gaze, gesture, touch, movement, and interact with features of the physical environment as they go about their daily lives.

The sharing of data corpora within the conversation analytic research community has fruitful potential for collaborative feminist scholarship. Different researchers can re-analyse the same data to analyse different practices. For example, in our analysis above we focused on description and categorisation, but the same data could be analysed in terms of the sequential unfolding of the interaction, the way participants repair their talk, and so on. We hope that the growth of feminist conversation analysis is accompanied by a spirit of collaborative endeavour, so that shared corpora become a valued resource for future feminist research.

There are controversies regarding feminist conversation analysis. Yet to move beyond these debates, we offer the parallel with feminist psychology. Once considered a contradiction in terms (see Fine and Gordon 1992), feminist psychology is now accepted as a legitimate field of enquiry. Conversation analysis is a rigorous empirical methodology that grounds claims about the social world in the observable conduct of participants. Feminist conversation analysis provides a powerful tool to demonstrate *that* and *how* the gendered social-moral order is understood by participants, and used to practical ends. We encourage students and scholars of language, gender, and sexuality to take up conversation analysis as a research approach. As we have demonstrated, grounded observations of recordings of naturalistic data, and a deep engagement with participants' own understandings holds remarkable potential for feminist work that remains largely untapped.

## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Description</i>
(0.2)	Numbers in brackets represent silences in seconds
(.)	Silence less than one-tenth of a second
[word]	Square brackets represent overlapping talk – talk by different speakers that occurs at the same time
word=	Equals signs represent ‘latched’ talk. This can be a continuation of talk within a turn or across different lines on the transcript
=word	
wo:::rd	Colons indicate a sound-stretch; more colons represent a longer stretch
>word<	Arrows surrounding talk indicate faster speech
WORD	Capitalisation indicates greater volume
°word°	Speech between degree signs is quieter relative to the rest of talk
<u>word</u>	Underlining represents emphasis
~word~	Words within tildes represent ‘wobbly voice’
.	Full-stop indicates falling intonation at the end of a unit of talk
,	Comma indicates continuing intonation at the end of a unit of talk
?	Question mark indicates rising intonation at the end of a unit of talk
↑word	Upward arrows before talk indicate a sharply increased pitch
wo:rd	Underlining and colons represent intonation contours within words
.hh hhh	Breathiness is represented with the letter ‘h.’ The length indicates the relative length of breathiness. Preceded by a full-stop indicates an in-breath; without this an exhalation is represented
wo(h)rd	‘h’ within words represents breathiness (often laughter or crying) within a spoken utterance
.snih Huhh	These represent sniffing and sobbing respectively

- ( ) Empty brackets represent spoken words unable to be transcribed
- (word) Words in brackets represent uncertain hearings
- ((ring)) Double brackets represent transcriber comments

## **FURTHER READING**

Kitzinger, C. (2000) 'Doing Feminist Conversation Analysis.' *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(2), pp. 163-193.

Kitzinger's article coined the term 'feminist conversation analysis' and argued for the compatibility of feminism and conversation analysis. This work became the target of the debates about the legitimacy of feminist conversation analysis.

Speer, S. A., and Stokoe, E. (2011) *Conversation and gender*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This edited collection was the first book to bring together studies of gender using a conversation analytic approach. Studies in a range of settings including children's play, mediation, psychiatric assessments, and helpline calls provide clear demonstrations of conversation analysis in use.

Weatherall, A., Stubbe, M., Sunderland, J., and Baxter, J. (2010) 'Conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis in language and gender research: approaches in dialogue,' in Holmes J. and Marra M. (eds) *Femininity, Feminism and Gendered Discourse*. Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 213-243.

In this comparative chapter, four renowned feminist language researchers analyse the same piece of data with different methodological approaches. This provides a valuable consideration of the strengths and limitations of various discursive approaches, including conversation analysis.

Stokoe, E. (2006) 'On ethnomethodology, feminism and the analysis of categorial reference to gender in talk-in-interaction.' *The Sociological Review*, 54(3), pp. 467-494.

Conversation analysis is committed to an ethnomethodological mentality, and Stokoe's article demonstrates how gender can be studied using those perspectives. She draws particular attention to the way gender can be studied sequentially and categorially.

## **RELATED TOPICS**

The accomplishment of gender in interaction: ethnomethodological and conversation analytic approaches to gender; gender and sexuality normativities; gender, stance, and category work in girls' peer language practices; feminist poststructuralism – discourse, subjectivity, the body, and power; semiotic representations of women criminals.

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