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Book Review: Talking about troubles in conversation by Jefferson, G.

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reader can expect in the chapter that follows. Doing this provides readers a tool for making connections between the different layers of Ellis's arguments.

Ellis's *Fierce Entanglements* makes a timely contribution to considerations about the role that dialogue and deliberation might play in managing complex and seemingly intractable conflicts around the globe. It is well worth the time and effort.

Author Biography

Rick Malleus (PhD, University of Minnesota, 1998) is an associate professor in the Communication Department at Seattle University. His research interests focus on intercultural reentry, cross-cultural comparison in media use, and mediated communication issues in Southern Africa.

Jefferson, G. (2015). *Talking about troubles in conversation* (P. Drew, J. Heritage, G. Lerner, & A. Pomerantz, Eds.). New York, NY: Oxford University Press. 234 pp.
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As the editors of this collection make quite clear, Gail Jefferson demonstrated an unyielding curiosity to understand the fundamentals of human interaction throughout her career. Best known for creating conversation analysis (CA) with colleagues Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, Jefferson blended methods of interpersonal communication and linguistics to further our understandings of human communication. Jefferson died in 2008, leaving behind a large repository of published articles that span a wide range of related topics on interpersonal communication and the analysis of conversation across disciplines. The editors of this book believe that there is value in organizing these previously published articles into thematic collections; talk about troubles and anxiety is the primary topic of this collection, which the editors hope will be the first of several.

The book contains six articles about troubles-talk that were originally published by Jefferson between 1980 and 1988 in peer-reviewed academic journals and edited collections. In the *Introduction*, the editors explain that these articles were the result of a project Jefferson undertook at the University of Manchester (United Kingdom) titled *The Analysis of Conversations in which Troubles and Anxieties Are Expressed*; thus, this collection returns unity to articles that were published across disciplines. Her data included what might be considered mundane, everyday telephone conversations that she had gathered in the United States, and her focus was upon troubles-talk as a broad concept that emerged through everyday conversations. Importantly, while CA is sometimes criticized for being focused upon the sequencing of interaction to the exclusion of meaning, we see in this collection that Jefferson was indeed motivated by meaning

and experience. In exploring troubles-talk, she was attempting to understand not the sequences that she so methodically demonstrates in these essays, but the implications of those sequences for understanding norms in mundane, everyday interpersonal conversations. Each of the six articles republished in this collection receives its own chapter, and each chapter begins with an introduction written by the editors that contextualizes the research and explains its significance. These short introductions will be tremendously useful to those who are new to the study of CA, because they place each essay in the context of other important articles that were published in CA by Harvey Sacks and others during that time. The introductions also offer short summaries of the research and findings, and discuss the implications of those findings within the context of CA and human interaction in general.

In addition to explaining a sequencing model of the “fundamental trajectory for troubles telling sequences” (p. 22), Jefferson’s articles in this book address the following topics: troubles-talk at the inception of a conversation, advice-giving, trouble-talk resistance, stoicism and laughter, and conversational conclusions. The authors chose to organize the text based upon the chronology of a conversation rather than upon the chronology in which these works were published and the first piece in the work that offers the general theoretical framework and method was published after the others. Importantly, the editors make clear that in so doing, they are following the original six-stage model outlined in the first article in this piece, “On the Sequential Organization of Troubles-Talk in Ordinary Conversation” (pp. 27-61), and I believe that this is a very useful structure for students and scholars new to CA, who are learning the structure and its implications for the interactions they will study. The organization provides a reader first with the explanation of the sequences, and then with useful demonstrations of the application of this qualitative method. Importantly, of course, both the editors and Jefferson acknowledge that not all troubles-talk exhibits all these stages given the unique context and progression of individual experiences.

Those researchers who are most familiar with Jefferson’s work and CA will undoubtedly recognize some of the remaining five articles selected for inclusion in this book. The first piece, “On ‘Trouble-Premonitory’ Response to Inquiry,” demonstrates how, in the opening moments of conversation, one can trace the topic development of trouble beginning with its initial formal characteristics when participants elect to discuss or not discuss said trouble. In Chapter 3, “The Rejection of Advice,” Jefferson and her coauthor John Lee analyze interactions that happen after the introduction of a trouble, specifically the familiar cases in which the teller of a trouble listens to and then rejects advice given by their conversational partner, potentially creating “asynchrony or misalignment between participants” (p. 97).

The fourth chapter presents “On the Interactional Unpacking of a Gloss” in which Jefferson defines a gloss as “a ‘generalization’ and/or somewhat inaccurate and/or incomplete and/or a masking or covering-up of ‘what really happened’” (p. 129). The analysis hinges not necessarily upon the gloss, but upon the subsequent revealing of that which was glossed, a common pattern in her sequencing. In this chapter, the analysis reveals a certain indifference in the response, and again demonstrates that Jefferson is concerned with more than discovering normalizing sequences but also has

consequence for understanding meanings as well. Similarly, in “On the Organization of Laughter in Talk About Troubles,” Jefferson shows how analysis of conversation requires one to do more than merely document the existence of laughter; one must also incorporate its meanings. Of course, laughing during trouble-talk is often not to be interpreted as funny, and acknowledging the how and why of laughter is as important as documenting merely that it happened. In the case explored by Jefferson in this piece, the teller’s laughter was not replicated by their partner, which was interpreted as validating to the teller because it reinforced that the trouble was really nothing to laugh about. In both these pieces, Jefferson implicitly demonstrates that meanings of vocal utterances are vital to the interpersonal, cultural, and linguistic understandings.

In the final chapter, “On Stepwise Transition from Talk about a Trouble to Inappropriately Next-Positioned Matters,” Jefferson analyzes the closure of troubles-talk as interlocutors conclude their interaction about troubles and move on to other conversational business or often to finalize their interaction. Through many sequenced examples, Jefferson shows a pattern in which recipients of trouble-talk manage the turn in topic in ways that are cooperative with the teller, avoiding rupture.

Because these articles have been previously peer-reviewed, their merit is not in question in this review. Of course, important to note is that there is a larger, ongoing debate across disciplines about the general usefulness and benefits of CA. Some critics have raised concerns about what they perceive as a willful exclusion of context or sociopolitical concerns on the part of CA researchers (e.g., Billig, 1999; Fairclough, 1992). Yet proponents of CA continue to respond to these concerns, and this volume itself demonstrates that CA can, and often does, focus on the concerns of meaning through the analysis of real interaction. What cannot be dismissed is the large growing body research in the area of troubles-talk, mostly inspired by Jefferson’s work presented in this volume (e.g., Chatwin, 2008; Rasmussen, 2014). Thus, for scholars interested in a deeper understanding of troubles-talk in interaction, especially as it relates to CA and ethnomethodology, this volume is simply foundational.

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