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Title: **"Let's have the men clean up": Interpersonally-communicated stereotypes as a resource for resisting gender-role prescribed activities**

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Abstract

This paper examines a productive use of communicating gender stereotypes in interpersonal conversation: to resist activities traditionally prescribed according to gender. The analyses video-taped naturally-occurring U.S. household interactions and presents three techniques participants may deploy to contest gender expectations: mobilizing categories, motivating alignment, and reframing action. We show how gender is an accountable category in relation to household labor, and how gender categories provide a resource by which participants can non-seriously solicit and resist participation in domestic gender-prescribed activities. Our analysis provides some insight into how participants use gender stereotypes in everyday talk and what functions such talk serves.

Author biographies

Jessica S. Robles (PhD, University of Colorado at Boulder) is a lecturer in Social Psychology in the Department of Social Science at Loughborough University, UK. Her research examines the social organization of difference and how people interactionally manage ordinary moral troubles in their everyday lives, drawing on discourse and conversation analysis. This work has covered, for example, political disagreements, gift-exchange dilemmas, responses to racist talk, and challenges of mobile device use in interaction. She has published articles in journals such as *Discourse Studies, Text & Talk, Health Communication, Journal of Language and Social Psychology,* and *Journal of Research on Language and Social Interaction.* She is co-author with Karen Tracy of the second edition of the book *Everyday Talk: Building and Reflecting Identities.*

Anastacia Kurylo (PhD, Rutgers University) is an assistant professor in the Communication Studies Department at St. Joseph's College in New York. Her research focuses on stereotypes communicated in interpersonal, intercultural, organizational, and new media contexts. Specifically, she explores the ways in which stereotypes are constructed through interpersonal communication and how this interactional and collaborative process facilitates stereotype maintenance within a cultural knowledge base. Dr. Kurylo has produced over 25 publications including authoring *The Communicated Stereotype: From Celebrity Vilification to Everyday Talk*, editing *Inter/Cultural Communication: Representation and Construction of Culture* and *Negotiating Group Identity in the Research Process: Are You In or are You Out?,* and co-editing *Social Networking: Redefining Communication in the Digital Age* and a special issue of the *International Journal of Interactive Communication Systems and Technologies* (IJICST) titled *Intercultural New Media Research for the 21st Century*. She is a past president of the New Jersey Communication Association and the New York State Communication Association and reviews for various associations and journals. Additionally, she maintains a blog titled, *The Communicated Stereotype*.

"Let's have the men clean up": Interpersonally-communicated stereotypes as a resource for resisting gender-role prescribed activities

Stereotypes—in which groups of people are named and associated with some essential quality—constitute a recurrent feature of everyday discourse. In the U.S., public uses of stereotypes by political figures and celebrities still create controversy and generate new research (Kurylo, 2013; Dubrofsky and Wood, 2014).[1] There have also been myriad analyses of stereotypes in institutional encounters (e.g., Stokoe, 2009). However, stereotypes in private conversations are more opaque and harder to research, given they occur in backstage, off-record interactions. Yet, in these spaces stereotype meanings and robustness are constructed (Condor, 2006), normalized, and often allowed to pass unquestioned, since accusing someone of speaking a stereotype or racist (or sexist)-sounding utterance is a delicate, face-threatening activity (Van Dijk, 1992) with moral and interactional implications (Kurylo, 2013; Stokoe, 2003; Stokoe and Edwards, 2007).

When stereotypes are communicated, they become "publicly accessible situated knowledge structures" (Semin, 2000: 603)—shared and available for comment, rather than ostensibly cognitive. That this occurs despite widespread proscriptions against racist-sounding talk suggests stereotypes help the communicator enact some practical action (Kurylo, 2012; Kurylo and Robles, 2015; Stokoe, 2008). This can only be examined by looking at the situations in which stereotypes are communicated. However, most research on stereotypes focuses on mental, cognitive dimensions in traditional psychology (see Biernat and Deaux, 2012). This paper instead investigates ordinary interpersonal conversations from an interactional, communicative approach (e.g., Edwards and Potter, 1992; Kurylo, 2012, 2013; Kurylo and Robles, 2015). This adds to existing research by focusing on a more private, understudied area of stereotype use; examining the interactional dimension of

stereotypes; and delving into how and why stereotypes persist despite the stigma of their use and social assumptions that stereotyping is "an unsavory practice to be avoided or concealed" (Bodenhausen and Macrae, 1996: 232).

We analyze video-recorded naturally-occurring interaction to highlight how stereotyped categories are made relevant to traditionally gender-prescribed courses of action in the home. The analysis shows how gender categories are produced to account for behavior in mundane conversations. We examine three techniques to (non-seriously) challenge gender stereotypes: mobilizing categories, motivating alignment, and reframing action. These can be assembled as a practice to manage the practical problems of resisting expected domestic participation, avoiding reproach, and reproaching others, while dodging possible conflict. We also consider how these techniques may add up to a "ritual of resistance" that challenges but also reifies gender stereotypes.

Stereotypes and gender categories

Stereotypes associate groups of people with purported characteristics; this academic definition resonates with non-academic definitions (though differences exist) (Kurylo, 2012). Stereotype research is prevalent in psychology and social psychology (e.g., Cox and Devine, 2015; Hinton, 2000; Kashima, 2000), where there is a long history of examining gender stereotypes related to behaviors, attitudes, and performance (c.f., Biernat and Deaux, 2012). An oft-neglected but relevant dimension of stereotypes would examine how their meanings are communicated: how is psychological business produced in discourse to accomplish social actions? As social constructionists and discursive psychologists have argued, it is in social interaction where ostensibly-mental matters like stereotypes are communicated and become consequential (Edwards, 1991; Speer and Stokoe, 2011). By examining how stereotypes surface and perturb in language, we obtain an empirical picture of how cultural assumptions are built in action from the ground up (e.g., Baker, 2000).

Critical and feminist approaches to gender argue that ubiquitous internalized gender norms and subjection to them result from an androcentric society (c.f., Bem, 1993). However, ideologies about gender are constructed and contested in everyday interactions (Speer, 2001); commonsense cultural knowledge about gender is visible in how people in interaction use gender categories (Stokoe, 2011), which Baker (2000) argues "lock into place" gender discourses. Sacks' (1986) membership categorization device (MCD) is one way of reanalyzing and systematically grounding stereotypes in empirical activity. Though ethnomethodology, conversation analysis, and to some extent discursive psychology largely reject the use of psychologists' analytic terms, we believe the currency, recognizability, and use of "stereotype" across research and in public discourse makes it worthwhile to unpack through an interactional perspective. Similarly, "categories" have traction as analysts' concepts in psychology, while here we ground them in participant uses (Edwards, 1998). In doing do, we engage in a project similar to respecification in discursive psychology (Edwards and Potter, 1992) to speak across disciplines.

The MCD unpacks the inferential process by which people are associated with categories, and categories with action. In Sacks' (1986) core example, "the baby cried, the mommy picked it up," we understand the baby to be in the category of "infants" because it does the action of crying; we further revise the baby to be in the category of "children" because a mommy we presume to be *that baby's mommy* picks it up. The mommy is therefore in the category of "mother." We put them both in the "family" collection. Sacks used two rules to explain attributions of categories: (1) economy (only one category reference is sufficient—so just "baby") and (2) consistency (categories that appear together are assumed to be linked—so the mommy is the mommy of the baby, rather than just any mommy). Sacks (1986) suggested that certain activities are "category bound": strongly associated with specific categories of people. Invoking the category cues likely features

assumed to be bound to that category—and vice versa. Thus when we hear "automechanic,"

we associate activities such as "doing an oil change" and "performing engine repairs."

Similarly, if you say "I got my car fixed up the other day" it cues the category

"automechanic." It may also, however, index other categories expected to overlap with that of

automechanic—for example, "man" or "working class."

       Category associations are often implicit (see Speer and Stokoe, 2011). Gender is

viewed as "naturally present among persons interacting" (Hopper and LeBaron, 1998: 59)--

treated by members as both visible and obvious--making gender stereotypes of ambiguous

relevance expectations in interaction. This taken-for-granted naturalization of gender informs

how people read social situations, how they respond to one another, how they align with and

against actions, and so forth (e.g., Goffman, 1976). Because "gender creeps into talk across

multiple utterances spoken by more than one person" (Hopper, 2003:194), analysts must

attune to various ways of indexing gender, and how these become resources for action.

Pomerantz and Mandelbaum (2005) suggest that when categories are implicit, an analyst

must show incumbency through participant accounts. There may also be other ways in which

participants "work up" implicit category membership (Edwards, 1998; Widdicombe, 1998)

when category associations are accomplished rather than described.

       Categorization reveals culture (Sacks, 1986): by examining categories we can track

culture "in action" rather than assuming *a priori* that a term is used in politically problematic

ways (Baker, 2000). Furthermore, Hopper (2003) proposes that "generalizations do not help

us much unless we describe, in detail, how ordinary people communicate to make gender

salient to any particular moment" (4). To this end, interactional research treats gender as an

empirical question (e.g., Hall and Bucholtz, 2012; Kitzinger, 2008; Speer, 2005; Speer and

Stokoe, 2011; West and Zimmerman, 1987; Wodak, 1997) and demonstrates how gender is

co-constructed by members (Kitzinger, 2008). Gender is something interactants "do" rather

than something they "have," and is a resource by which multiple activities may be accomplished (Stokoe, 2008).

Studies examining gender categories show their procedural consequentiality in interaction, and how productive these are for accomplishing actions (e.g., Eglin, 2002; Speer, 2001; Stokoe, 2003). Family and relationship categories seem particularly generative for gender indexing. Not only do some categories mark gender linguistically ("mommy," "daddy") (c.f. Butler and Weatherall, 2006), but these are also differentiated by gendered roles such that mommy and daddy cannot be reduced to identical "parent" categories: the activities expected of each tend not to be the same, categorically speaking (see also Ochs and Taylor, 2001). Membership categories can be used in praising and blaming when people act outside category expectations in desirable or undesirable ways (Sacks, 1986): people can be held accountable (and hold others accountable) for category misbehavior (c.f. Buttny, 1993). In this way, membership categorization is relevant to how people do morality in talk when gender becomes the basis on which reproaches and complaints are built (e.g., Evaldsson, 2007; Jayyusi, 2014; Rapley, McCarthy, and McHoul, 2003; Stokoe, 2003).

This study builds on existing work to examine how the accountability of gender expectations is used to enact social actions, such as resisting and soliciting participation in household activities (e.g., Stokoe, 2008). We show some ways participants may exploit common stereotypical assumptions of gender accountability to accomplish practical social action, and we demonstrate sequential implications for and consequences of ascribing actions to category deployment. In particular, we describe some concrete, "private conversational" practices that demonstrate complex ways in which using gender as a resource layers interactional meanings and complicates straightforward assumptions about what it means to comply with and resist gendering.

Data and methods

Eighteen videotapes featuring household activities (especially preparing food, eating, cleaning) across three corpora of data collected by both authors were examined for explicit and implicit communication of gender categories. These data primarily include naturally-occurring video-taped interaction recorded for research purposes, but also a corpus of home movies. Data were transcribed using the standard Jefferson conversation analysis transcription notation system (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984).

Data were examined using a discourse analytic approach (Jaworski and Coupland, 2014) focusing on participants' language in ordinary instances of video-taped social interaction. We draw on membership categorization analysis (Housley and Fitzgerald, 2002; Stokoe, 2008; Stokoe and Smithson, 2001) to ground potentially gender-stereotypical matters in participants' talk as it associates categories of people with activities. We use conversation analytic and discursive psychological approaches (Edwards and Potter, 1992; Psathas, 1999; Stokoe, 2012) to situate category uses in sequential context and show how categories are made procedurally consequential to action (Schegloff, 2007). This makes action formation and ascription (Levinson, 2013) key to understanding what practical actions are done through, for, and around categories. Our analysis is also informed by an ethnomethodological (Garfinkel, 1996) interest in the ways participants accomplish jointly-coordinated practical activities and a grounded practical theoretical orientation (Craig and Tracy, 1995) to local techniques participants use to accomplish discursive practices that manage practical exigencies.

This analysis starts with an exchange of 1 minute and 10 seconds that was the only example in our collection in which gender categories were used explicitly *and* over the course of an expanded sequence. We began with this example as a case study; qualitative research has shown case studies to be an efficacious way of generating insights into a situation or type of situation, while offering future research directions (Stake, 2000; e.g., Minocha, 2009), and

conversation analysis particularly has displayed how bringing its method to a single case demonstrates the method's capacity to analyze any fragment as a "locus of social order" (Schegloff, 1987: 101). However, we compare examples based on 27 excerpts across our data (including brief and implicit categorizations) to this core case to demonstrate how the techniques we describe constitute a more generic practice. In doing so, we illustrate how explicit, stereotyped gender invocations in interaction draw on often-unexamined and unarticulated assumptions that are commonly at work more generally in mundane household interactions.

Exploiting the accountability of gender

Hopper (2003) suggests that domestic scenes make gender especially salient, as this is "where sex-based distribution of chores, food, and liberties occurs" (16). In this space we expect to find certain bodies doing certain activities, and expecting or demanding those activities of one another. In our analysis we examine how participants make these matters relevant in their talk. We highlight a core case of an explicit use of the gender category "men" in a post-dinner clean-up activity, paying attention to (1) the associated activities, (2) the sequence in which this occurs, (3) relevant implicit gender indexing, and (4) how these views on the data retrospectively and prospectively shape action ascription. We compare the techniques participants use in this explicitly categorizing, expanded sequence to similar sequences across our data.

We describe three techniques participants use in gender categorizations produced to contest household-related category expectations:

1. **Mobilizing categories**: naming or invoking a category to make relevant which participants are in or out of that category;

2. **Motivating alignment**: aligning with and against others based on category membership;

3. **Reframing action:** Reframing one's current activity as occasioned by others'

(inapposite) categorical demands.

These techniques manage local challenges of resisting expected domestic participation,

avoiding reproach, and reproaching others, while doing so in a teasing style that dodges

potential conflict.

Mobilizing categories

This section begins with a fragment from our core case in which categories are

mobilized, or named to differentiate participants as in/out of that category. In this case, the

camera was placed viewing the dining room table, apparently adjacent to the (off-camera)

living room.[2] Though a television is playing in the living room throughout the recording, talk

can be heard from both rooms. There are eight individuals present at various points in the

video (no information on the relationships is available). In the dining room, Brenda is

standing up cleaning the area immediately in front of her. The rest of the table has not been

cleared. Laura is on Brenda's right side sitting down, and Caren is sitting on Laura's right.

All other individuals are currently off-camera.

Gender categories are made explicit through sequence initiation when Laura raises her

voice (line 2) to get attention from a distally separate (and separately-engaged) portion of

their party, followed by a pre-announcement that projects an upcoming action to prompt a

response from the "men" in the other room.

Excerpt 1 Fragment 1 "let's see what the men's reaction will be"

```
1                     (3.0)
2      Laura:         ALRIGHT ((Laura's left hand motions to Brenda,
3                     simultaneously head turns toward Brenda, Caren))
4                     (1.0)
5      Laura:         °Let's see what the men's reaction will be°
```

Laura invokes gender by specifying "men" in line 5 instead of an alternative descriptor in line

5, excluding the one identified woman in the living room. Gender is often presumed to be

dichotomous (Tracy & Robles, 2013). The economy rule (Sacks, 1986) states that "a single

category from any membership categorization device can be referentially adequate" (333). By selecting "men," one term in a dichotomy, the "us" from "let's" in line 5 can be heard to refer to "women" distinguishable from "men" (later in the transcript, the one female in the same room as the "men" to which Laura refers demonstrates that she has heard the gender distinction when she says, "They can't hear, the game's too loud"). Laura names the category "men" to make relevant which participants are in or out of that category: treating the men "over there" as relevant to her upcoming turn, and the women "over here" as contrastable. By differentiating through her talk in this fashion, Laura deploys the category to serve a contrastive function in service of a contrastive activity. After Laura's preface ("let's see"), she continues:

Excerpt 1 Fragment 2 "let's have the men clean up"

```
6    Laura:       ((Looks forward to living room)) OKAY LET'S LET- LET'S
7                 HAVE ((Leans forward)) THE MEN CLEAN UP
8                 (1.3)
```

In lines 6-7, Laura's utterance is spoken to be hearable to the category "men." That the utterance is in part (perhaps mostly) for the benefit of "the men" is also projected by her prior turn, "what the men's reaction will be," suggesting she is about to produce an utterance to which they may have a response. This category use is done in service of an action, at this point is hearable as directive—attempting to direct the others' behavior (Robles, 2015a)—since Laura makes a same-turn self-repair (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977) in line 6 from "LET'S LET," which allows for voluntary participation, to "LET'S HAVE" in which participation is directed. Laura produces this apparent compliance seeking (Sanders and Fitch, 2001) on behalf of the women by the pronoun "us" in "Let's". This categorizes the women associated with the activity of directing action, while categorizing the men with the activity of complying (ostensibly, by cleaning up). As the conversation continues, this membership categorization is used to account for why "the men" do not take up (or even respond to) the directive.

Excerpt 1 Fragment 3 "it's the Y chromosome"

```
9      Laura:      See. ((Leans back))
10     Brenda:     ((Looks up briefly towards living room, then to
11                 Laura, then leaves the room with two handfuls of crumpled
12                 napkins/other garbage from the table))
13     Laura:      It's the Y chromosome they don't hear it ((shakes head))
```

The gap in line 8 (1.3) and "see" in Line 9 indicates no verbal response to Laura's directive in lines 6-7. Laura confirms there was no response and provides an explanation of why her directive was ignored when she states, "they don't hear it." "See" is not hearable merely as an attention-directing device, but as pointing out something that was expected all along—an expression of lack of surprise (line 9). This apparently-unsurprising conclusion is attributed to the "y chromosome" (line 13), invoking biological sex as an explanation for why the men "don't hear it." The category "men" here is not associated with a number of activities, including some explicit ones—not being women, not being in the same part of the house, not hearing, having y chromosomes—and some implicit ones, such as not cleaning and not having desire or willingness to clean. These category associations comprise the accountable (often psychologized) material associated with the category (men) invoked in this interaction; and surface stereotypes about women (as expected to clean) (Bianchi, et al., 2012; Hopper, 2003) versus men (who by contrast don't clean), and here are formulated as not hearing directives to clean—as if they do not have the physiological capacity to understand the concept of cleaning.

The word "hear" makes sense (line 13) when inferring the implicit stereotype: it is implied and is intelligible because "stereotype hearers are . . . expected to finish processing the information and concept within themselves" (Boss, 1979: 24). By invoking biological sex, Laura provides the men with an excuse that attributes their lack of help to factors out of their control. The men, who may or may not physiologically hear the directive, comply with this excuse by "doing not hearing." Laura's explanation places no apparent blame because

chromosomes dictate the assignment of cleaning responsibility: men can't clean/women can. This normalized distinction is presented as natural, based in biology, out of anyone's control.

Across our data, explicit mobilized categories cropped up regularly. For example, following the close of a holiday meal, one woman announces that "the boys are gonna watch football," after which men leave and women stay behind to clean; in another example from a home movie, before the meal, participants refer to "the men's table." In such examples, activities are organized along a contrastive categorization regarding what bodies end up in what spaces doing what things. Similarly, gender may be made relevant implicitly: in another post-holiday-meal video, an aunt washes dishes and her adult nephew appears asking her about dessert, after which she directs him to get plates, and they engage in a quick back-and-forth about what kind of plates, what utensils to use, and so forth. Although the nephew lives in the house and the aunt does not, the sequence positions her as the expert on the kitchen and what happens in it. In a single case, one cannot assume gender is relevant merely because of the visible gender people appear to have (Cameron, 1997; Edwards, 1998; Kitzinger, 2008): rather, it is *made* relevant in patterns across data in which people are held accountable for knowing and doing in systematic ways.

However, gender categories may not always be mobilized. Compare the previous example to the following:

Excerpt 2 "good in the kitchen"

```
1    Jilly:      It's good. It's always good.
2    Beatrice:   It is.
3    (2.0)
4    Beatrice:   he is a good in the kitchen.
5    Jilly:      It's n(h)ot always the case is it,
6    Beatrice:   we:ll look at me.
7    ((laughter))
8    JR:         we love your spam,
9    ((laughter))
```

Here, the gendered aspect is implicit, but is consequential and accomplishes social action. The women and children are sitting at a table in a separate room from "the men's table," and

Jilly (line 1) has just complimented the gravy, which was made by Jim (who is sitting at the men's table and therefore not present). Beatrice, Jim's wife (and Jilly's mother), agrees (line 2), and adds with an emphasis on "he" in line 4 the categorization of a "good cook" or "good in the kitchen." The "he" works in two ways: to differentiate from Beatrice, who is not known as a good cook (note her contrastive self-deprecation on line 6 and the comment on her ability to make "spam," a canned meat product, by a granddaughter on line 8); but also to differentiate from men in general compared to the stereotype that grandmothers do the cooking, accounting for her acceptance of the compliment on Jim's behalf. In another similarly implicit example (excerpt 3), from a recording of a group of friends who have just shared a (non-holiday) meal, gender is also mobilized to contrast activities and present parties.

Excerpt 3 "doing the dishes"

```
1     Dia:        oh god is he doing the dishes
2     Jamie:      ((laughs)) I know.
3     ((overlapping talk))
4     Cora:       now I just feel lazy?
5     Jamie:      I usually dry at home but I'm feeling lazy now too.
6     Mike:       it's the tryptophan.
7     (5.0)
8     Cora:       I guess I could help dry.
9     Dia:        don't sound so excited.
10    ((laughter))
11    Jamie:      no:: get Bob to do it
12    Dia:        yeah right
13    ((laughter))
```

Here, Dia (line 1) comments on Jamie's husband (off-camera) doing the dishes in a way that suggests it is shocking (but pleasantly so), and Jamie's response acknowledges this reading; Cora and Jamie provide accounts for their not offering to help (the other men present do not) (lines 4-5), and eventually Cora makes an unenthusiastic offer. When Jamie suggests Bob (also off-camera), Cora's husband, might help (line 11), Dia's response is sarcastic (line 12). Again, gender is not named here, but the relevance of people's gender to the activity of washing and drying dishes implicitly aids in assessing the likelihood of and accountability for

participating in the activity. Indeed, it is somewhat telling across the data how often men are thanked on the less frequent occasions that they help with cleaning up after dinner, versus how rarely the women are (and even then, mostly by other women) on the more frequent occasions that they do.

Thus, gender categories can be used to organize and account for participation in the current activity. The category furnishes the participants with resources for action that are relevant to the situation (household cleaning) and recognizable to others. In the fragments of excerpt 1, using the category seems to push back on gender norms by explicitly soliciting a particular action from "the men," while also excuses them from complying. However, attributing action is not always simple. In the next section we describe the importance of alignment in this participation framework. This reveals a slightly different interpretation of the focal activity being accomplished through categorization, and shows how activities are sequenced and layered to build resistance.

Motivating alignment

In this section we start with the complete excerpt 1 to examine how gender categories are mobilized to motivate alignment with (or sometimes disalignment against) others regarding household activities. Consider again how excerpt 1 is seeable as an instance of compliance gaining, or directive to solicit participation in post-dinner cleaning. The whole exchange is reproduced below.

Excerpt 1 (complete) "who wants to clean up?"

```
1                       (3.0)
2       Laura:          ALRIGHT ((Laura's left hand motions to Brenda,
3                       simultaneously head turns toward Brenda, Caren))
4                       (1.0)
5       Laura:          °Let's see what the men's reaction will be°
6       Laura:          ((Looks forward to living room)) OKAY LET'S LET- LET'S
7                       HAVE ((Leans forward)) THE MEN CLEAN UP
8                       (1.3)
9       Laura:          See. ((Leans back))
10      Brenda:         ((Looks up briefly towards living room, then to
11                      Laura, then leaves the room with two handfuls of crumpled
12                      napkins/other garbage from the table))
```

```
13    Laura:        It's the Y chromosome they don't hear it ((shakes head))
14    Laura:        ((leans forward)) =WHO WANTS CHEESECAKE=
15    Laura:        =See ((leans back, looks at Caren, right hand
16                  gesture palm up))
17    Caren:        ((laughs))
18    Tom:          Right here you didn't ( )
19    Laura:        [((Laughs))
20    Caren:        [((Laughs))
21    Laura:        It is the Y chromosome ((Nods head))=
22    Laura:        =((Turns head to camera)) I hope this test is recorded=
23    Laura:        [((Turns head forward))
24    Caren:        [((Puts her feet on the chair in front of her))
25    Laura:        [ (0.7)
26    Laura:        so years from now in a biology class they will see: the
27                  difference between the y chromosomes=
28    Laura:        =((Leans forward)) WHO WANTS TO CLEAN U:P. ((Leans
29                  back))
30    Laura:        ((Shakes head, makes gesture similar to lines 15-16))
31    Brenda:       ((Returns to dining room, continues cleaning table))
32    (2.5)
```

In a Goffmanian (1959, 1969) frame of mind, one might wonder about the "sincerity" of the directive produced: its indirectness makes its meaning slippery. Though "let's have the men clean up" indicates a directive (lines 6-7), it is also produced as a commentary to the women (and for the men). "Let's have the men clean up" is framed as a notable activity, different from the (perhaps undesirable) norm. In this reading, the phrase comes across not so much as a directive, but as a complaint, with which certain co-participants are expected to align.

Saying things to person A that are meant for person B is a way of calling into question B's behavior in an indirect way—it is a common feature of family interaction, in which parents may speak to no one in particular, or to each other, or through pets, to nudge children to act on their own or consider their current undesirable behavior (e.g., Tannen, 2004). It is also a way of avoiding conflict, therefore potentially doing relational maintenance (Canary et al., 1993). This is especially the case here, as the delivery is jocular. A complaint is one way of doing a directive. Indeed, it is more direct than a mere comment would have been (for example, "gosh what a mess"). However, it is without a tone that suggests it must be seriously attended.

If it were serious, one would expect that--having failed to do any directing--Laura or aligning others would *pursue* compliance, or at least a response. Repair using a higher

volume or including participants' names, rephrasing the act as a request, or checking whether anyone has heard, are all next turns that would indicate a continued attempt to progress a project of having the men clean. Perhaps if those failed, we would see a downgrade, in which the men are asked to "help" or given specific, smaller tasks. Instead, Laura does listening or attention check (line 14) by proposing an offer (still in raised voice) which, presumably, the men would be disposed to accept. This receives no reply, somewhat weakening the proposal that men don't hear requests to help with cleaning; but it is presented as evidence that speaks for itself (lines 15-16)—perhaps indicating a position that men don't hear what women say generally; or that they don't hear attention-getting tactics which may yield subsequent cleaning solicitations.

Thus, the action proposed here has the flavor of a directive—if the men had jumped up and started cleaning, surely no one would have been disappointed—but there are signs that it's doing a complaint (for the women) and reproach (toward the men). The proposal (lines 2-9) and check in line 14, the explicit reference to "test," and mention of recording (lines 14, 22, 26-27), frames the talk as a collusion in an experiment, and then as proof of an apparent fact (but one assumed in advance). Laura does not say, "I'm going to see if the men will help" or "let's see if this works on the men." The brief pause and "see" on line 9 come across less as accepting an unsurprising outcome, and more as *confirming* an expected outcome that was never really in question.

We might also question whether Laura's account is meant to be literal. It seems unlikely that a purported Y-chromosome-linked activity glossable as "not hearing anything about cleaning" (line 13) is meant to be taken completely factually, but rather is an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986) or exaggeration in which the account "being a man" is upgraded to a biological rather than social category. Subsequent references to this alleged biological fact (lines 21, 26-27) re-emphasize, almost escalate, the apparent difference. This

upgrading, rather than being a straightforward account, may instead suggest the

unreasonableness of their reaction. It is *not* the case that "cleaning" has this biologically

determined basis; therefore, the explanation is a social one—the men could clean, and could

hear solicitations to clean, if they really wanted to. Instead, they resist doing so and ignore

relevant directives (even if they do not hear--unlikely since later the woman with them

responds--they must know a mess exists, and an offer to clean is relevant).

In the usual preference organization, complaints about others motivate alignment and

reproaches toward self motivate disalignment (Pomertantz, 1984). Co-participants here do not

fully/explicitly go on record as affiliating/agreeing, but align with Laura's talk in important

ways. For example, Caren laughs (lines 17, 20), and Brenda's silence could be a tacit

agreement. On the other hand, while there is nothing overtly disaligning in Brenda's actions,

she does continue to clean throughout (the other women do not), which could suggest bodily

disalignment from Laura (not physically enacting being "on board" either Laura's explicit

project of having the men clean, or implicit complaint about men's lack of cleaning and/or

lack of hearing cleaning solicitations). Furthermore Laura, though the chief person

topicalizing cleaning, notably does not engage in any cleaning, nor does she make any move

to do so (even as it is clear the men won't, and Brenda does). Caren's similar inaction could

be further aligning with "the men should clean" or "the women should not (have to) clean."

The men's silence, meanwhile, like Brenda's cleaning, could be aligning with the unstated

stance "the women will clean," or at least could be interpreted as doing so.

Stereotypes are a tactic for complaining (Stokoe, 2003, 2009). Motivating alignment

is a key dimension of getting complaints off the ground and doing the work they are designed

to do (Edwards, 2005). In this case, the explicit (men) and implicit (women) stereotyped

categories are embedded in a complaint with which it is expected the women will align. We

saw similar instances across our data in which gender is mobilized in service of a complaint

about people's cleaning activities. For example, in a discussion of developing a "cleaning rota" among flatmates living in London, one participant responds to complaints about another (non-present) participant's neglect of the toilet with the account "well, he's a guy"; this is received with laughter and scoffing, without disagreement.

Most examples we saw were far more implicit. In the following (during cleaning after a holiday dinner), gender is mobilized for the same women-clean/men-don't-clean dynamic, here reproduced rather than resisted, and provides the man with an account for not cleaning:

Excerpt 4 "you don't belong in the kitchen"

```
1     Hans:       Look (baby) let me help you clean up.
2     Maureen:    No (Hans) You're not going to help clean up.
3                 (0.5)
4     Hans:       Oh sure.
5     Maureen:    No thank you I appreciate it but no.
6     Hans:       So you know –
7     Helen:      I would (n't)  let you help.
8     Hans:       It's probably-
9     Maureen:    I wouldn't let you (  ) I'm sorry man
10    Hans:       No I'm I'm I'm I'm (a little (un)steady you know)
11    Helen:      You what?
12    Hans:       I'm a little ((un)steady you know)
13    Maureen:    No way, no no no no no
14    Helen:      I wouldn't trust you.
15                (1.0)
16    Maureen:    I appreciate your offer though.
17    Helen:      I come into the kitchen I come into the kitchen I see
18                a piece of glass on the floor "Hans why did you break it"
19    Maureen:    You don't belong in the kitchen (.) I'm sorry. Now if you
20                want to go out sweep up the garage or something that's  a
21                different story.
22                (1.3)
23    Maureen:    You can make some wonderful music when we clean up how
24                bout that.
```

This instance is almost opposite in its initiation to excerpt 1: a man called Hans has entered the kitchen and offered to clean (line 1). Immediately, the women align with each other to position Hans as "inept at cleaning" (lines 2, 5, 7, 9, 13-14, 18) and he accepts this formulation (lines 10, 12). It's unclear whether Hans' proffered account in lines 10 and 12 is general (how he is most of the time), or situated (if he drank too much and is less able to help). Hans is also older and in some ill-health, so it could be a comment on his physical condition. The women orient to the account as a general feature of Hans, as when Helen

offers the image of coming into the kitchen and finding Hans has broken a glass. As with

excerpt 1, Hans is given an account for not cleaning based on a lack of ability (being inept at

cleaning, rather than not hearing requests to clean). Maureen's closing (lines 23-24) reframes

Hans' ineptness as not being about cleaning in general, but about kitchen-related cleaning:

she provides an example about sweeping the garage as being something he could do. It does

not appear to be a real suggestion here, since garage sweeping is hardly relevant to holiday-

related activities. Instead, in the set of activities that might "give Hans something useful to

do," it is suggested he play some music.[3]

In another similar example (also cleaning up after a holiday dinner), the dynamic is

accomplished in activity rather than through recounting. In excerpt 5 from a home movie

from 1989, an adult son helps his mother put the leftover food away.

Excerpt 5 "you untie it"

```
1     Lisa:      I have an old fashioned (.) meat grinder
2     Mike:      m: (1.0) *hi↑i* ((noticing camera))
3     JR:        ((giggles)) ((behind camera))
4     (4.0)      ((Mike puts food in a bag))
5     Mike:      oh g(h)od this thing better not leak all over the place
6     (2.0)      ((Mike fusses with bag, walks over to Lisa, shows her))
7     Lisa:      (that's the wrong one/bag)
8     Mike:      I tied it
9     Lisa:      well you U↑NTIE it
10    Mike:      I didn't wanna have to do that
11    (5.0)      ((Mike gives Lisa the bag, walks away; Lisa unties))
```

In addition to soliciting assistance about numerous decisions regarding this process (prior to

this excerpt), the son also makes decisions on his own (lines 4, 8) and then complains about

them (lines 5, 10), prompting the mother to reprimand his decision and "do it over" for him

(line 11)—again, positioning him as inept. He aligns with this position, almost upgrading it

by avoiding correcting his error as she instructed (line 9) and instead giving the problem over

to her to fix, while moving onto a new task himself.

In these cases (excerpts 1, 4, and 5), gender categories are embedded in complaints

and criticisms, and the "commonsense" of their stereotyped activities motivate alignment

with these taken-for-granted facts. In excerpt 5, a teasing reproach of a man's inability to clean produces alignment, with the woman taking over the cleaning. In excerpt 4, a complaint about a man's inability to clean is reported to align with the women continuing their cleaning. And in excerpt 1, for an apparently different result, a woman's complaint about men's lack of ability to hear about cleaning is announced in an extreme-case fashion to procure alignment from women, against the men not cleaning, not hearing requests to clean, and/or not offering to help clean. Excerpts 4 and 1 are delivered non-seriously, but the base techniques work because of the rich material associated with the categories on which their interpretations rely.

In excerpt 1, Laura's apparent directive and the account that warrants it appear to advance a complaint about the men's (or "men's") disinclination to clean. This claim rests on the shared understanding of what the categories of men and women are supposedly accountable for regarding cleaning. By motivating alignment, Laura marshals support for her complaint. However, this complaint sequence is hearable as yet a different sort of action; we reflect in the next section on how action ascriptions may be retrospectively reframed with each subsequent expansion to accomplish categorical resistance.

Reframing action

By seemingly-complying with the assumption that men can't (and won't) clean, the men in excerpt 1 tacitly reinforce the assumption that women can and will. This casts the action of Laura's talk as a declaration of resistance to the expectation that she, as part of the women category, do the cleaning. However, layered on top of that, it may be an account for why she is *not* cleaning, aligning with the women who are not cleaning. It is an excuse for why Laura (and perhaps Caren) do not, and should not have to, clean. The resistance packages a justification.

Laura does not start an argument, demanding that the men clean up, and she does not show anger when they do not: she frames her talk as non-serious. The men go along with the

"not hearing," almost as if they have taken the "out" Laura provides as an excuse to carry on with the not-cleaning that they might have done anyway. Conflict is avoided and relational ties maintained while drawing attention to non-participation in the cleaning, perhaps in part because the resistance is a ritual that is not truly designed to challenge. It is a "show of resistance."

"Not cleaning" and "not being able to clean" are activities participants easily associated with the category "men": in excerpts 4 and 5, gender works as an indirect account for maintaining traditional categorical action differentiation regarding who should clean up in what domestic spaces. It does not resist, but rather "buys into the stereotype" as a way of accounting for "letting mother put away the leftovers" (excerpt 4) and "keeping Hans out of the kitchen" (excerpt 5). In these excerpts, men appear to offer assistance sincerely; women treat men's offers as sincere; and women sincerely reject those offers.

Whether those offers *were* sincere is an interesting, and probably unanswerable, question. If men have a history of being rejected for offering to clean (based on a history of unsatisfactory cleaning), then an offer could be a ritual, more a kind gesture than a genuine offer. Gender can then serve as an account for why one doesn't have to clean. This parallels excerpt 1 wherein the stereotypes are called into question. However, the "calling into question" does not result in a change in behavior: no genuine attempt is made to get the men to help or to suggest the woman who is cleaning should stop. Rather, at least one woman invokes a "principled" reason for not helping to clean, reframing her action as an account for her own behavior and as a ritual that flags unfair gender expectations without seriously addressing them.

Although excerpt 1 was the only example in the data that is both explicitly gendered *and* expanded, we did see cases in which complaints about household labor were

ritualistically traded in ways that reframed action and potentially implicated gender

expectations, as in excerpt 6:

Excerpt 6 "help washing up"

```
1      Carl:        I never get any 'elp washing up.
2      JR:          m::
3      Jenny:       wha- what 'ave you done today Carl?
4      Carl:        well-
5      Jenny:       you haven't done nothing today except talk to Peter (.)
6                   talk to Roy Parker,
7      Carl:        I've been researchin' on the internet a:ll day. Sometimes
8                   it does- in fact it does take a lot of time
9      Jenny:       ((exaggerated yawn))
10     JR:          m::.
11     Jenny:       exactly. ( )
12     Carl:        and then I lie on the settee for: maybe an hour or two?
13     ((laughter))
14     Carl:        well I have to get up cuz it gives me neck ache.
15     Jenny:       w(h)ell that does it,=
16     Carl:        =well I'm saving meself cuz at the moment Jeff
17                  doesn't need me to do his working.
```

In this instance, Carl launches a complaint about doing the dishes (line 1), which is

challenged by Jenny (lines 3, 5-6), and to which Carl responds in a joking way that suggests

he does indeed have things pretty easy when it comes to housework (lines 7-8, 12). As in

excerpt 1, Carl's seeming-request for help washing up is reframed more as a complaint about

doing dishes, and then an account for not doing some housework, based on an implicit

principle of fairness. Jenny later points out that she does all of the other tasks around the

house while having a job, whereas he is retired; this could implicate gender, as she is still

expected to clean more despite being the "breadwinner." She then tells a funny (and often-

told) anecdote about how she leaves the vacuum out as a hint to hoover, and he counters with

his own (also re-told) story about how annoying it is to have to step around the vacuum. This

exchange plays out similarly to excerpt 1 and others—in a teasing, playful way—but also

shows how participants manage and resist the necessities of housework by layering meanings

onto their conversational activities.

　　　Though gender is less obvious in this instance (albeit defensibly involved), complaints

and criticisms about cleaning can easily *be* gendered to upgrade reproachability and seek

alignment across different gender-identified co-participants (as in excerpt 1). In other words, gender is a ready-to-hand resource for accounting for behaviour in household activities. Reframing these actions as rituals saves them, however jocularly produced, from turning to conflict. Gender is a recognizable, "inference-rich" category for accomplishing accountability, but a somewhat dangerous one. By producing gendered reproaches in non-serious ways, the trouble of gender is both invoked and occluded.

Discussion

We examined a practice that reveals how gender stereotypes can be productive resources for accomplishing social actions and socially constructing identity (Widdicombe, 1998). In examples across our data, participants mobilized gender categories to differentiate co-participants for some social purpose, and motivated alignment with and against certain categories to support accountabilities for "doing one's part" regarding household labor. In some cases, participants also reframed the actions to which their categorizations were put in service, in order to resist category expectations. In our core example, we showed how these techniques were locally enacted to manage the challenges of resisting expected domestic tasks, avoid reproach for doing so, reproach others non-seriously, and avoid possible conflict.

These results show how gender can (1) be made relevant to practical actions and managed resistance (e.g., Stokoe, 2008, 2012), as well as (2) reinforce cultural assumptions and discourses about gender accountability (Baker, 2000; Condor, 2006; Stokoe, 2012). The analysis also broadens the repertoire of known practices participants use, allowing analysts to "track" implicit gender categories by not just examining accounts (e.g., Pomerantz and Mandelbaum, 2005) but also examining where people resist accountability or attempt to turn it back on some other apparently-different category.

Furthermore, the resistance practice we examined has unique and interesting features that show the many, even apparently-contradictory, layers of meaning constructed through

gender categories in use. This builds on previous literature about how categories feature in rebellion and resistance (Edwards, 1998; Sacks, 1992; Widdicombe, 1998) while showing how resistance is not an obvious matter. We noted (out of many examples) cases in which participants go along with gender stereotypes, unproblematically orienting to gender category memberships and associated stereotypical accountabilities (such as who cleans). However, even when gender categories are tested or resisted, their use may reconstruct their validity, strengthening their practical meaning and productivity. This makes the possibility of genuine category resistance ambivalent.

For example, in the core case analyzed herein (excerpt 1), criticism and resistance take on a non-serious, ritual hue. They permit the complaint only in the context of not actually demanding redress, accomplishing a sort of moral legerdemain that allows participants to do apparently-antisocial activities (complaining, resisting, not responding, not helping clean, etc.) without penalty. Our analysis inspected a sequence in which an explicit category reference indexed commonsense gender expectations in service of actions that were continually negotiated and updated over time. Though soliciting participation in cleaning constitutes the apparent initiation of this sequence, the progression of actions recasts these as possible resistances, complaints, teases, excuses, and so forth. Participants may exploit stereotypical assumptions of gender accountability in service of practical action, but the ascribable action is subject to and exploits the contours of sequence across an interaction. This is an important component of interaction to trace when examining the productivity of gender and how deftly it may be deployed in action. It is easy--but inadvisable--to make assumptions (as analysts who also participate in everyday life) about how categorization works up gender in an interaction. The complexity of this example, shown aside similar instances across our data, highlights the need for close attention to action when examining

how people use categories in interaction and to what extent categories marshal stereotypical material.

There are multiple activities going on in any interaction: our analysis does not present the only, or most significant, locus. However, we offer an interpretation that illuminates categorization and stereotypical talk, showing how stereotypes convolute and propagate through actions. Furthermore, participant use of stereotypes in ordinary conversation gives insight into why stereotypes are so robust in the face of taboo norms (Kurylo, 2013). Interpersonally communicated stereotypes are not simply problematic, but serve practical actions while socially constructing gender norms as valid cultural constructs. Some forms of resistance to stereotypes may end up reproducing them (see also Robles, 2015), and challenging stereotypical assignments of tasks can unintentionally reify the status quo. Thus do membership categories bridge micro and macro level of discourse (Edley and Wetherell, 2008), showing how micro interactions of backstage behavior contribute to front-stage, public ideological practice.

Notes

[1] See, for example: http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2015/07/donald-trump-mexicans-119849, http://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/news/paula-deen-deletes-tweet-son-bobby-deen-brownface-details-201577.

[2] The interaction takes place after an hour. Lomax and Casey (1998) suggest that after a duration in the presence of the camera interactants may forget or become comfortable with it. When interactants referenced the camera in the flow of the ongoing conversation (for example toward the end of the focal excerpt analyzed herein), we considered how such moments were contributing to the ongoing production of action.

[3] The implicit gender categorization is hearable in how people distinguish Hans as different, but it could just so happen that Hans is a man; furthermore, the term "man" in line 9 does not appear to be categorizing Hans, and is not necessarily even functioning as a masculine person-reference (it may just be a marker of utterance closing or generic term of address; c.f., De Lopez, 2013). It is the gendering of cleaning (kitchen versus garage) and the utterance "you don't belong in the kitchen" (line 19) that come across as "doing gender." Certainly the latter *could* be merely saying "you Hans don't belong in the kitchen," but the formulation of "x belongs in the kitchen" (or as is the case here, does not) has a long history of gender-markedness (e.g., Aladuwaka and Oberhauser, 2014).

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