

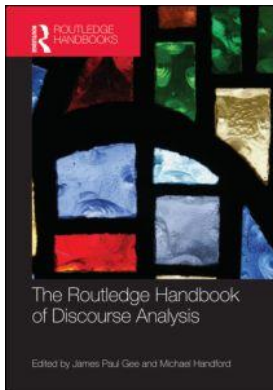
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Discourse, gender and professional communication

Louise Mullany

Introduction

Research investigating the interplay between discourse, gender and professional communication has grown rapidly over the last decade in a wide range of geographical locations. Professional communication is defined here as spoken and written communication, including all electronic forms, that takes place with at least one person occupying a professional role. Following Gunnarsson (2009: 5), ‘professional’ is defined in general terms as ‘paid-work related’, and therefore applies equally to skilled/non-skilled workers and to white-collar/blue-collar workers.¹ Professional communication should thus be viewed as an overarching category, which incorporates more specific terms in discourse analysis research within its definition. This includes workplace discourse (Koester, 2010), business discourse (Bargiela-Chiappini *et al.*, 2007) and institutional discourse (Sarangi and Roberts, 1999).

One of the best known and most influential projects focusing on gender and discourse in professional communication is the *Language in the Workplace* project in New Zealand (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Holmes, 2006a; Schnurr, 2009). Other discourse and gender researchers have investigated professional communication in locations such as Brazil (Ostermann, 2003), Germany (Thimm *et al.*, 2003), Greece (Angouri, forthcoming), Hong Kong (Schnurr, 2010; Schnurr and Mak forthcoming), India (Iyer, 2009), Japan (Saito, 2009), Kenya (Yieke, 2005), Malaysia (Mohd Jan, 2008), Spain (Martin-Rojo and Gómez Estaban, 2005), the UK (Mullany, 2007, 2010a; McRae, 2009; Baxter, 2010) and the US (Ashcraft and Mumby, 2004; Kendall, 2004).

Professional communication research on discourse and gender thus far has tended to be dominated by a focus on spoken discourse, though studies of written discourse have also recently emerged (Koller, 2004; Iyer, 2009). Early research in the field of spoken discourse tended to examine professional–lay person encounters, for example courtroom interaction between lawyers and witnesses, or doctor–patient interactions (see Kendall and Tannen, 1997 for an overview). More recently, there has been an increased emphasis on studying discursive interactions *between* professionals. This includes encounters between people of equal status and interactions where there are power differences between interactants.

Both inter-professional and professional–lay person communications need to be examined if gender and discourse studies are to be as inclusive and wide-ranging as possible. Written discourse analysts, including Koller (2004) and Iyer (2009), have produced fruitful investigations of professional communication texts created by the mass media, and the development of new technologies using written electronic communication has opened up new contexts where professional

discourse can be analysed. For example, Schnurr and Mak (forthcoming) examine the discourse of a woman manager through her email discourse style as well as through a more traditional analysis of her spoken discourse.

A number of different approaches to discourse analysis have been adopted by researchers – including critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, corpus-based discourse analysis and narrative analysis.² The boundaries between some of these approaches are fluid, and researchers will often blend together different discourse analytical approaches with the aim of providing thorough and varied analyses. Detailed researcher reflexivity is crucial when one integrates approaches in order to ensure that researchers present a legitimately accountable case for combining discourse analytic frameworks.

For example, Mullany (2007) places interactional sociolinguistics at the centre of her approach, though her analysis includes techniques more commonly associated with conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis and pragmatics. The *Language in the Workplace* data have been successfully examined from a range of perspectives that include critical discourse analysis (Holmes, 2005), interactional sociolinguistics (Holmes and Marra, 2004) narrative (Holmes and Marra, 2005) and pragmatics (Holmes, 2006b); and often these approaches are integrated (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Holmes, 2006a; Schnurr, 2009). McRae (2009) investigates meetings in UK companies by combining conversation analysis with evidence from the broader sociocultural context, more akin to techniques from critical discourse analysis. This includes background information from companies, meeting participant feedback and employment statistics. In the area of written discourse, Koller (2004) integrates critical discourse analysis with corpus-based discourse analysis in her examination of media business texts in the US and the UK. Mullany (forthcoming) combines corpus-based discourse techniques with interactional sociolinguistics to examine how gender and professional identities are enacted in spoken inter-professional business interactions and in written electronic healthcare interactions between adolescents and general practitioners (GPs).

Combining different approaches has proved fruitful in contemporary gender and language research. However, some researchers align themselves with one particular paradigm and are not open to integration. This often depends upon the intellectual tradition of the discipline and on how researchers position themselves in relation to this background. For example, researchers who take a ‘pure’ approach to conversation analysis do not integrate it with any other approach; in this they differ from McRae’s study outlined above. For example, Stokoe’s (2008: 151–154) analysis of professional–lay person communication during police–suspect interviews focuses solely on the transcriber’s version of talk in interaction. No approach or evidence from any other data source is used. ‘Pure’ conversation analysts only investigate gender when it becomes the topic of conversation through directly indexicalized lexical items (Ochs, 1992), defined as items where gender is explicitly encoded within the lexis, such as *woman/man* (see the section on key concepts for further discussion).³

Approaches to gender and discourse that integrate different elements can arguably be seen as more adaptable when researchers are engaged in jointly negotiated, reciprocal investigations that aim to be of practical relevance to those in the professional world who are being researched. According to Sarangi (2006), this should be the aim of all professional communication research. The flexibility and adaptability of the researcher is key to the success of any such jointly negotiated projects. Having a varied discourse analytical toolkit to draw upon can be a distinct advantage when producing jointly negotiated questions and topics. For example, the *Language in the Workplace* researchers have produced a range of written material and hosted events such as workshops and training sessions for their research participants (see Mullany, 2008 for further discussion).

Whatever approaches are taken, it is crucial that the focus remains on exploring social and political gender-based problems in professional settings, which require analysis from a discourse-based perspective. While debates between proponents of different paradigms can be useful if they are well intentioned, it is important for researchers not to get side-tracked by situating themselves in 'armed camps' (Silverman, 2000: 10). This runs the risk of infighting about whose paradigm is 'better' or 'superior', at the expense of exploring continued and persistent gender inequalities.

The next section of this chapter will give an overview of gender and discourse issues that have been examined thus far in professional communication research. 'Key concepts' then details key theoretical concepts that have been used to conceptualize gender and discourse, including specific discourse contexts where professional communication takes place. An analysis section then provides a series of examples of analysis, illustrating a variety of approaches in action. The final section will focus on future lines of enquiry.

Exploring gender issues

A good deal of research thus far has focused on women working in professional roles traditionally occupied by men. For example, in law enforcement, McElhinny (1998) examines the discourse of women police officers in Pittsburgh in the US and Ostermann (2003) analyses how women police officers interact with female members of the public in Cidade do Sudeste, Brazil. Walsh (2001) examines the interplay between discourse and gender when women occupy male-dominated roles within politics, as members of parliament in Northern Ireland and as priests in the Church of England.

A key area of exploration has been that of the persistent gender inequalities that exist within professions and the role that discourse may play in maintaining and perpetuating such inequalities. A focus has been given to women attempting to break through the 'glass ceiling', the persistent barrier faced when aiming to reach the higher echelons of power in businesses and organizations. This has led, in part, to a focus on the discourse of women who occupy leadership positions (Baxter, 2010). In blue-collar workplaces, attention has also been given to women who occupy supervisory/managerial positions, running teams of shop-floor workers in factories (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003; Holmes, 2006a). For low-paid, unskilled professional positions, Cameron (2003) has examined the gendering of spoken discourse in call centres and how this can work to disadvantage both women who occupy these low-paid, low-status roles and men who may not gain employment in such workplaces, as they are perceived to lack the required communication skills for the job (see 'Key concepts' below).

In addition to producing studies that examine women's professional discourse, it is also important for researchers to produce empirical studies of the discourses of men and masculinities. In the late 1990s researchers commented that, although a good deal is written about men and masculinities, often this is not based on empirical evidence (Johnson, 1997), partly due to the understandable initial desire to focus on women's discourse in early research. Within the field of professional communication some researchers have investigated the discourse of both women and men simultaneously, in a range of mixed-sex settings (Baxter, 2003; Holmes, 2006a; Mullany, 2007; Schnurr, 2009). Research on the discourses of men and on masculinities in the professions is still lacking, though data analysis looking solely at this issue has emerged. Holmes (2009) focuses on men, masculinities and leadership. She demonstrates how leaders enact masculinities through their discourse strategies, which include the themes of leader as hero, leader as father and leader as a good bloke/mate. Work has also started to emerge on men in blue-collar professions. Baxter and Wallace (2009) examine the discourse strategies of British builders and Mullany (2010b) examines the discourse styles of Canadian truckers.

Key concepts

The majority of contemporary professional communication researchers view gender as a fluid, active concept, something that we *do* through language as opposed to something that we inherently have (see also Coates, this volume). Butler's (1990, 2004) concept of gender as a performative social construct has played an influential role. Butler advocates that gender is a process that constantly has to be enacted. From her perspective, gender is a 'doing, an incessant activity performed' (Butler, 2004: 1).

In professional communication research the conceptualization of gender as socially constructed is frequently integrated with the communities of practice (CofP) approach. CofPs have been used to investigate how gender and discourse practices are related to specific groups and contexts of interaction. CofPs are conceptualized as follows:

An aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short – practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor.

(Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 464)

Wenger (1998) argues that a CofP must have the three following components in order to exist: (1) mutual engagement; (2) a jointly negotiated enterprise; and (3) a set of negotiable resources accumulated over time. This 'resources' category includes discourse styles. The CofP approach has proved to be a particularly productive framework, serving as a concept that enables the nuances of individuals' gendered linguistic practices to be accounted for in different professional settings. Holmes and Stubbe (2003) have adapted the CofP framework from a specifically gender-based perspective for investigations of professional communication. They demonstrate how particular workplace contexts can be usefully categorized on a continuum from 'more feminine' to 'more masculine' CofPs.

In addition to gender as a socially constructed concept and to the CofP approach, gender and professional communication researchers have also emphasized the importance of looking not just at the micro context but also at the macro, overarching social context in terms of societal power structures. One effective way to do this is to follow Foucault (1972: 49) in conceptualizing discourses as pluralized and as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak'. When defined in this manner, 'discourses' can be seen as '*carrying* ideology' (Sunderland, 2004: 6; see Mills, 1997 for further discussion). The concept of gendered discourses governed by gender ideologies enables researchers to focus upon systems that regulate gendered norms and govern our judgements and evaluations of one another through analyses of discursive content and production.

Gendered discourses will vary from society to society, though one globally consistent discourse is 'the discourse of gender difference' (Sunderland, 2004: 52). This is an all-encompassing discourse, which operates upon the stereotypical precept that women and men will interact and behave in inherently different ways due to biological differences alleged to exist between them. Such perceptions are based upon stereotypical notions of biological essentialism regarding gender and language use, according to which women and men are biologically programmed to speak differently – a myth frequently perpetuated by the mass media and popular culture publications (see Cameron, 2007 for a detailed critique).

Another approach that has been influential in discourse and gender work on professional communication is Ochs' (1992) theory of indexicality. Direct indexicality has already been explained in reference to 'pure' conversation analysis (see 'Introduction' and endnote 3). It is Ochs' theory of indirect indexing of gender that has been used more frequently in professional discourse research thus far. Indirect indexicality of gender is characterized by the fact that

interactional styles come to be encoded, and thus indexed, with specific gendered meanings. Individuals' speech styles are viewed and evaluated in light of these gendered norms and expectations. Each society has a range of normative gendered speech styles, held in place by powerful gender ideologies, including the discourse of gender difference, which govern how professionals evaluate one another on the basis of gender. In Western cultures, this includes expectations from men to be assertive, competitive speakers who will dominate the talking time, will be direct and will interrupt aggressively, whereas women will be collaborative and co-operative, will speak minimally, will give supportive feedback and will use indirectness (see Holmes, 2006a: 6 for further details).

Research has shown that, if women stray too far beyond the boundaries of normative feminine discourse styles when enacting professional identities, they may well be negatively evaluated for being too bossy or overly aggressive. On the other hand, if women in positions of authority favour normatively feminine speech styles, they may be negatively evaluated for being weak and ineffective (Crawford, 1995; Lakoff, 2003; Mullany, 2007). This persistent problem, faced by numerous women professionals, is termed the 'double bind'.

Some time will now be spent demonstrating these concepts in practice, as the chapter moves on to present a series of analytical examples of professional discourse in action.

Analysis

There is a wide range of spoken discourse features, taken from various sub-disciplines such as conversation analysis, critical discourse analysis, interactional sociolinguistics and pragmatics, which have proved to be beneficial categories to use when analysing gender and professional communication in stretches of talk. When different analytical paradigms are integrated, this can include (but is by no means limited to) the following: turn-taking techniques, including interruptions and supportive simultaneous talk; contextualisation cues; managing the discourse of disagreement and conflict, including the speech act categories of criticisms, warnings and refusals; giving directives; the role of narrative; and the use of humour and small talk (see Holmes, 2006a; Mullany, 2007 for overviews). In the interests of space, this chapter will focus upon one area specifically: that of managing disagreement and conflict. However, as an integrated analytical approach is adopted here, other discourse elements will be observable within these stretches of discourse: the multi-layered analysis will also highlight the importance of turn-taking, interruptions, contextualization cues, humour, speech acts, and the overall importance of the enactment of power, status and solidarity.

The analysis will examine how the articulation of disagreement and conflict can bring different gendered discourse norms into focus in the societal contexts where professional communication takes place, drawing upon the theoretical concepts outlined in the previous section. From a normatively feminine perspective, disagreement and conflict would be delivered in a way that 'entails damage control, mitigating potentially threatening behaviour, minimizing conflict, and negotiating consensus' (Holmes, 2006a: 171). From a normatively masculine perspective, disagreement and conflict would be articulated in a direct, competitive way, with unmitigated refusals, disruptive interruptions and instances of threatening behaviour.

The first two examples are taken from a meeting recorded as part of an ethnographic case study within a UK-based manufacturing company (Mullany, 2007). This is a company-wide CoP whose main jointly negotiated enterprise is the regular task of reviewing company products. There are ten participants present – six males and four females. Rob is the meeting's Chair and one of the company's directors. All other participants are at a middle-management level apart from Julie, who is at a lower-middle level. (Transcription conventions are at the end of the chapter.)

Example 1

The group is discussing a problem with surplus stock

1. Carl: I didn't realise we had (-) fifteen pallets worth
2. Julie: hh.
3. David: /It's not true to say but\
4. Julie: /and I can't believe\ you're saying that I told you
5. /lot about it\ [laughs]
6. David: /oh right\
7. [laughter from many]
8. Carl: I think that must have been before you're saving that for
9. cust/omers\
10. /[continued laughter]\
11. Julie: hh.
12. Mark: So erm Wayne and Paul (xxxx) are looking at (.)
13. sorting forklift out (.) erm (-).

(Mullany, 2007: 143)

Example 1 illustrates Julie, the most junior member of the CofP, challenging her superiors Carl and David. She begins by exhaling sharply (line 2) in response to Carl's statement (line 1). She then disruptively interrupts David and takes the floor to challenge him, Carl, and by implication all other CofP members at the meeting. Her challenge is mitigated only by her use of *you lot* as a colloquial, collective form of address, in conjunction with her laugh at the end of her utterance (line 5), both of which operate as contextualisation cues of humour. David overlaps the end of her utterance ambiguously (*oh right*), and this is directly followed by laughter from many of the meeting participants. Julie engages in normatively masculine jocular abuse here, using metadiscourse to strengthen her challenge (*saying, told*). Her challenge operates as a form of 'subversive' humour (Holmes and Marra, 2002), where the power of one's superiors can be subverted and challenged with the protection of humour's ambiguity: perlocutionary force can always be denied under the guise that the speaker was not being serious.

Julie successfully challenges her superiors for failing to listen to her at an earlier meeting, but protects herself somewhat through humour and a colloquialism, to ensure that her challenge is not completely unmitigated. Carl adds to this with his humorous comment to Julie (lines 8–9) and laughter continues, with humour operating as a tension releaser. Although Julie laughs along, she then exhales sharply again (line 11), which appears to signal her continued exasperation at information not being retained by her superiors. Mark then takes the floor and brings the topic to a conclusion (lines 12–13).

Example 2 also focuses on Julie's discourse strategies. On this occasion, she performs a refusal that results in disagreement when her superior, David, prompts her to retake the conversational floor. Example 2 takes place after example 1, and Julie and Carl have just been involved in a lengthy process of negotiation regarding the storage space of further stock that has been over-ordered:

Example 2

Julie and Carl have just finished discussing other stock storage space problems. This is followed by a lengthy pause

1. (-)
2. David: You got another one Julie?
3. Julie: No get lost
4. [laughter from many]
5. Sharon: No you have

6. David: monitors and {product name}
7. Julie: [smile voice] what about the one in the
8. middle that Rob's meant to be
9. /doing exp\lore opportunity of using
10. Rob: /me again?\
11. Julie: /{company name}\ samples there [points at agenda]
12. Rob: /oh right\ okay well I have sent a note

(Mullany, 2007: 144)

Julie issues a direct, on-record dispreferred response (line 3) to David's indirect directive, mitigated in the form of a request for Julie to take the floor again, after a lengthy pause (lines 1–2). David briefly adopts the role of Chair here, but Julie challenges him in the form of a refusal, followed by a direct command (*get lost*), which functions as an insult. Her challenge is again mitigated by humour, this time through her adoption of a register most typically associated with children's discourse. Uttering direct insults is at odds with the interactional norms of this CoFP, and thus results in laughter from many of the meeting participants. Julie has again used subversive humour to challenge her superiors, demonstrating her use of normatively masculine discourse styles.

Sharon then continues by issuing a direct, unmitigated, normatively masculine disagreement with Julie (line 5), and David again attempts to get Julie to take the floor by reading out the agenda item listed with Julie's initials next to it: this is designed to act as a turn-taking prompt. However, Julie is right. There is another agenda item in-between, which belongs to the meeting's Chair, Rob, and he has overall responsibility for turn-allocation in this meeting. Julie draws all participants' attention to this by questioning the item, using a smile voice to give at least some mitigation to her challenge. Rob overlaps, questioning whether it is his turn (line 10), and finally takes the floor after Julie physically points to the place on the agenda by using the deictic 'there' to prove to Rob that she is right. Julie's challenge and refusal, mitigated by humour functioning subversively, highlight how Rob has been neglecting his chairing role.

The next two examples also include a female employee issuing refusals and are taken from Holmes' (2006a) work. Instead of being taken from white-collar meetings, both of these extracts are taken from the interaction of blue-collar employees working in a factory. They involve Ginette, who occupies the position of team manager. The first example takes place on the factory floor, where Ginette is with her subordinate Russell. Russell needs a piece of equipment to carry out his task:

Example 3

Ginette is the team manager of a factory production team, and Russell is a packer in her team on the factory floor

1. Russ: can you get me one please [in Samoan] :fa'amolemole: ['please']
2. Gin: you get one
3. Russ: ah you're not doing anything
4. Gin: you go and get one
5. Russ: fuck it +++ fuck you go and get your fucking legs out here (fatters)
6. Gin: why didn't you get one before I talked to you about that yesterday
7. Russ: because we're busy + I got to get all that out of the way

(Holmes, 2006a: 165)

Ginette gives a direct, unmitigated refusal to Russell's request (line 2). Holmes (2006a) details how these participants have a close working relationship and Russell's originally seeming polite request, where he code-switches into Samoan, should be interpreted as rather tongue-in-cheek, as

opposed to genuine, politeness (line 1). Politeness in requesting is not a norm in this team, and thus stands out as non-genuine. Russell then issues an explicit challenge to Ginette in response (line 3) and she repeats her earlier unmitigated refusal (line 4). Russell then uses a succession of expletives, commonplace within this team's interaction. Ginette's response shows that she has neither taken offence nor is surprised by Russell's expletives. Instead, Holmes (2006a: 165) observes how she shifts from normatively masculine, direct, on-record refusals to a more normatively feminine strategy, issuing a "motherly" reprimand', as Russell's superior, that he should have already done this himself.

Holmes contrasts Ginette's interactional refusal of Russell with another of Ginette's refusals, this time in interaction with non-team member Francie:

Example 4

Ginette is talking to Francie, the quality assurance checker. (An NCR is 'a sheet filled out when a product is not up to standard', 2006a: 173):

1. Fra: do you have an NCR for that (box) over there?
2. Gin: yeah I've I'm waiting for a number + +
3. I need to see Vicky about the NCR thing
4. I haven't got a number for it yet
5. Fra: oh how would you get it
6. Gin: when I get to see Vicky +++
7. Fra: oh how's about you just give it to me now +
8. take a copy of that + so I can compare it
9. and I'll take the number then+++
10. Gin: (where are they) + do you want it right now
11. Fra: if it's possible [laughs]
12. Gin: it's just I've left a + I've got um Jennifer's working +
13. going through it as well
14. Fra: oh okay is it possible tomorrow then?
15. Gin: I'll get it to you tomorrow morning yeah.

(Holmes, 2006a: 166)

Holmes draws attention to how Ginette displays very different strategies in refusing Francie's request. Ginette does not have the number that is needed, but on this occasion she uses lengthy strategies of conventional politeness to refuse Francie. Ginette starts off in response to Francie's initial request with 'yeah', a 'conventionally polite agreement marker' (Holmes, 2006a: 166). Ginette then provides Francie with a full explanation of why she does not have a number (lines 2–4). Holmes then draws attention to three further attempts by Francie to get the information she needs from Ginette (line 5, 7–9 and 14), and Ginette shows reluctance to respond by pausing on each occasion. She also uses other politeness strategies including hesitations, offering another explanation and engaging in avoidance strategies (lines 2–4, 10, 12–13). Both speakers negotiate with each other and come up with a compromise (lines 14–15) – both parties are satisfied by the end of the interaction.

In contrast to the normatively masculine strategies that Ginette uses with Russell, she displays a range of normatively feminine strategies when needing to issue a refusal to non-team member Francie. Ginette thus draws on a wide range of strategies in her discourse style. Holmes concludes that it is commonplace within the production team for masculine strategies to be used, with on-record, direct refusals being given, but, when interacting with a member of the factory CoP outside the production team, Ginette uses more conventionally feminine strategies.

Coming back to meeting discourse, the final analytical example is taken from an ethnographic study of a retail company in the UK (Mullany, 2007). Example 5 is from a regular departmental managerial meeting, though all managers also work on the shop floor. There are six participants present – four females and two males. The meeting is chaired by Amy, an upper-middle level manager who is the direct superior of all present. Kirsty and Eddie are trainee managers. This is their first meeting. Karen is at a middle-management level:

Example 5

Amy is explaining departmental policy to Kirsty and Eddie

1. Amy: we're going to be carrying it for more than fifteen weeks=
2. Karen: =yeah it's ten weeks for stock and it will be calculated
3. on how many sales within five weeks
4. Amy: No it's longer than that Karen
5. Karen: Oh (.) right
6. Amy: It's longer

In example 5, Amy issues a direct, on-record, unmitigated disagreement (line 4), which challenges her subordinate Karen's declarative (lines 2–3). Amy thus adopts a normatively masculine style to correct Karen's mistake. Karen's response (line 5) is rather ambiguous, and Amy responds to it by reiterating her point (line 6). Amy decides not to protect Karen's face needs at the expense of ensuring that trainee managers Kirsty and Eddie have the correct information they need in order to carry out their roles successfully.

All analytical examples presented here demonstrate that, in contrast to early discourse and gender findings that catalogued distinct gender differences in professional discourse styles (see Kendall and Tannen, 1997), more recent studies have found ample evidence of women using normatively masculine strategies as well as normatively feminine strategies, even when the speaker occupies the lowest position on the institutional hierarchy, as was the case in examples 1 and 2. Julie was very strategic in how she issued her challenges, which arguably prevented her from being reprimanded by her superiors. Ginette's discourse provides evidence of a 'wide verbal repertoire' (Marra *et al.*, 2006), where a speaker strategically adopts normatively masculine and feminine strategies. Although space prevents further illustrations, it is notable that Julie and Amy can also be witnessed using features of a wide verbal repertoire, in addition to the normatively masculine strategies they have been shown to use above (see Mullany, 2007).

The discourse strategies selected will depend in part upon workplace cultures, the type of CofP where the discourse has taken place, the specific discourse setting and the conversational topic. However, the crucial point is that women and men may not be evaluated and assessed in the same manner as professionals, even if they use remarkably similar discourse styles. Marra *et al.* (2006) draw attention to the fact that exactly the same linguistic strategies can be evaluated very differently depending upon whether they are used by a woman or a man, women often being subject to the double bind, particularly when they try to enact authority.

With the two women leaders introduced above, Ginette provides a good example of a successful woman leader who is positively evaluated by her colleagues and is not subject to the double bind. However, in contrast, when interviewed as part of the retail ethnographic study, Karen made the following comment about Amy:⁴

Amy (.) is a very strong character very straightforward erm says
what she means is very direct (.) and it can be quite an overpowering
experience talking to her.

Lucy, another of Amy's subordinates, made the following comment:

Amy is very domineering...she's quite abrupt you know as a woman (.)
I can be quite honest with her though sometimes she scares the pants off me.

These evaluations typify a series of negative comments made about Amy on the basis of her gender and interactional style from both women and men, status equals and subordinates (Mullany, 2007: 169–176). These evaluative instances illustrate the importance of looking for evidence of the double bind and how the discourse of gender difference can result in a negative evaluation of women in professional positions if they stray outside of expectations for gendered speech norms. Although Amy's interactional style displayed many features of normatively feminine discourse (2007: 106–124), it is the less frequent instances of normatively masculine talk that get focused upon in evaluations of her as a manager. Commentators have illustrated that men are not subject to the same negativity if they stray outside the boundaries for acceptable masculine behaviour:

When women attempt to prove their competence by 'acting like a man' they are considered to be less than women. When there seems to be some merit in what would normally have been considered a 'female' approach, men adopt it as their own. What was seen as weak is now thought of as flexible; what was emotional now combines with the rational to bring balance.

(Appelbaum et al., 2002: 45)

This rather pessimistic scenario is not the case in all professional communicative settings, as evidenced by Ginette's success in her factory. However, it is crucially important to look for any evidence of the double bind when examining discourse and gender in professional communication, and, as part of this, to ensure that broader social-cultural practices of the societal context where the discourse is taking place are also analysed.

Towards the future

It is the intention that this chapter has demonstrated the importance of conducting studies of discourse, gender and professional communication. In particular, there was a focus upon how discourse and gender have been theorized and analysed in recent professional communication research. However, although investigations in this area have grown significantly in recent years, there is still a range of topics and a plethora of different professional groups whose discourse remains underexplored from a gender perspective. For instance, much more research is required on what Banyard (2010) refers to as the five 'Cs', where women in countries all over the world dominate the professions of *cleaning*, *caring*, *clerical work*, *cashiering* and *catering*. These are all low-paid posts with minimal status. Banyard (2010: 85–86) argues that, as there is so little opportunity for career development within these professions, this forms a 'sticky floor', which prevents women from 'getting anywhere near the glass ceiling, let alone smashing it'.

Although research on gender, discourse and sexualities has grown in a range of other contexts (Saunston and Krytzis, 2007), the interplay between discourse, sexualities and professional identities remains underexplored in professional contexts (though see Morrish, 2002). This should include a focus on the influence of sexual orientation on the performance of professional identities and also on the study of sexual desires/sexual behaviour in professions. As a part of this, in addition to issues of gender inequality (including the 'glass ceiling' and the 'sticky floor'), other gender-based social and political problems, such as instances of sexual harassment and sexual harassment legal cases, would benefit from a discourse-based analysis. Access to such data may be far more difficult to obtain, but, nevertheless, research of this nature would be invaluable. The

research field would also be more inclusive if a range of different ethnic groups and more varied age ranges were investigated. In overall conclusion, discourse and gender studies of professional communication are currently at an exciting stage of development. All indications are that this area of discourse analysis research will continue to thrive in future years.

Transcription conventions

A combined version of Holmes (2006a: 223) and Mullany (2007: xii):

+	Pause of up to one second
(.)	Pause of two seconds or less
(-)	Pause of over two seconds
(xxx)	Material that was impossible to make out
[fatters)	Transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
{xxx}	Material that has been edited out for the purposes of confidentiality
xx/xxx\xx	Simultaneous speech
[laughs]	Paralinguistic features in square brackets
[comments]	Editorial comments italicized in square brackets
=	No discernible gap between speakers' utterances

Further reading

Baxter, J. (2010) *The Language of Female Leadership*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

This volume presents an up-to-date perspective on gendered discourses and how they affect the spoken discourse strategies that female leaders use. Baxter defines three corporation types: male-dominated, gender-divided and gender-multiple. She identifies different gendered discourses that go along with each type. The book includes advice on how women leaders can achieve effective leadership language.

Holmes, J. (2006) *Gendered Talk at Work*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Holmes' work brings together a plethora of spoken data analyses from the *Language in the Workplace* corpus. These include interactions from government departments, corporate organizations, factories, medical settings and IT companies. She covers a range of areas of analysis including gender and leadership talk, relational practice, humour, disagreement and complaint and narrative analysis.

Mullany, L. (2007) *Gendered Discourse in the Professional Workplace*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

This monograph is based upon ethnographic studies in UK manufacturing and retail companies. Its overarching aim is to provide a discourse-based investigation of why women managers still cannot break through the glass ceiling. A number of different approaches to discourse are explored and analyses of the interactions of women and men managers are presented to explore this complex and persistent area of gender inequality.

Iyer, R. (2009) 'Entrepreneurial identities and the problematic of subjectivity in media-mediated discourses', *Discourse and Society* 20: 241–264.

This article presents a written textual analysis of media discourses authored by women entrepreneurs, taken from Indian newspapers and popular magazines. Iyer takes a critical discourse analysis approach, which draws upon a range of different analytical features. She explores dominant gender discourses in her texts including dominant discourses of femininity and patriarchy. She characterizes a newer, oppositional discourse of 'being/becoming', which signifies a shift in representations of women, echoing shifts in gender relations and wider social changes.

Notes

1 The terms 'white collar' and 'blue collar' originate from a tradition of different colours of workplace clothing, depending upon occupation type. 'Blue collar' refers to blue shirts/overalls worn by those

- engaged in manual labour. ‘White collar’ refers to white shirts worn by those in offices, engaged in non-manual work.
- 2 An additional approach to professional communication research is ‘feminist post-structuralist discourse analysis’ (FPDA, Baxter, 2003). According to Baxter, FPDA is a supplementary approach. It aims to examine ‘the continuously fluctuating ways in which speakers, within any discursive context, are positioned as powerful or powerless by competing social and institutional discourses’ (2003: 44). Baxter suggests that these aspects of spoken discourse analysis have not been given enough focus by researchers of conversation analysis or critical discourse analysis.
 - 3 From a ‘pure’ conversation analysis perspective, lexis that directly indexes gender is known as a categorization device. Advocates of this approach argue that this is the only way to see if gender is relevant in a conversation. In contrast, many others argue that gender is omnirelevant within discourse (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003; Holmes, 2005). An approach that relies upon instances where gender is directly indexed is limiting, particularly as direct indexicality of gender occurs very infrequently within professional (and everyday) discourse (see Swann, 2009).
 - 4 The interviews where these stretches of talk occurred were dyadic encounters collected as part of a mixed-methods approach. For a detailed account of the interview process, see Mullany (2007).

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