



# Talking About Troubles in Conversation (Foundations of Human Interaction)

*Gail Jefferson*

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Few conversational topics can be as significant as our troubles in life, whether everyday and commonplace, or more exceptional and disturbing. In groundbreaking research conducted with John Lee at the University of Manchester UK, Gail Jefferson turned the microscope on how people talk about their troubles, not in any professional or therapeutic setting, but in their ordinary conversations with family and friends. Through recordings of interactions in which people talk about problems they're having with their children, concerns about their health, financial problems, marital and relationship difficulties (their own or other people's), examination failures, dramatic events such as burglaries or a house fire and other such troubles, Jefferson explores the interactional dynamics and complexities of introducing such topics, of how speakers sustain and elaborate their descriptions and accounts of their troubles, how participants align and affiliate with one another, and finally manage to move away from such topics.

The studies Jefferson published out of that remarkable period of research have been collected together in this volume. They are as insightful and informative about how we talk about our troubles, as they are innovative in the development and application of Conversation Analysis.

Gail Jefferson (1938-2008) was one of the co-founders of Conversation Analysis (CA); through her early collaboration with Harvey Sacks and in her subsequent research, she laid the foundations for what has become an immensely important interdisciplinary paradigm. She co-authored, with Harvey Sacks and Emanuel Schegloff, two of the most highly cited articles ever published in Language, on turn-taking and repair. These papers were foundational, as was the transcription system that she developed and that is used by conversation analysts world-wide. Her research papers were a distinctive and original voice in the emerging micro-analysis of interaction in everyday life.

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