Transforming Research Methods in the Social Sciences

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Introduction

Social science research, particularly research using quantitative approaches, has conventionally used social categories (including those relating to race, ethnicity, gender and culture) as a means to partition target populations in ways that are seen to be relevant for the purposes of the research questions at hand (cf. Schegloff, 1991, 1997). Using such an approach, researchers treat social categories, inter alia, as bases for dividing samples of participants into distinct groups for the purposes of group comparisons, as variables between which relationships are explored in correlational approaches, and as predictors of outcomes of interest in regression models (cf. Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). While research using categories in these ways remains widespread across the social sciences, it has been criticised for at least 50 years on the basis that it takes for granted, or even actively constructs, the very categories that it ostensibly aims to study (e.g. Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Garfinkel, 1967; Heritage, 1984; Schegloff, 1991).

These criticisms, coupled with important theoretical developments in the social sciences, have been driving forces behind the development of a range of qualitative research approaches that take language use as their primary object of inquiry (for discussions of these developments and the research approaches arising from them, see Durrheim [1997] and Whitehead [2017]). Research drawing on these approaches has offered a shift away from the use of social categories as variables to be used in statistical analyses, instead providing valuable insights into the ways in which categories are constructed and used by participants in discourse. However, consistent with the dominance of interview data in qualitative research more generally (see Potter & Hepburn, 2005), much of this research has relied on data sources in which it is the researcher rather than the participants who first introduces categories of interest into the talk – for example, by recruiting participants based on their membership in a target category, or by asking questions that explicitly mention categories. As a result, the analyses in such studies tend to focus on talk about categories that have been topicalised by the researcher, and they are not well positioned to examine how categories become consequential for ordinary people as they engage in ordinary actions-in-interaction in their everyday lives outside of the interview (cf. Stokoe, 2009;
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Whitehead, 2017; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003). Moreover, like the quantitative approaches discussed above, this type of research also effectively treats particular categories as taken-for-granted bases for social inquiry by using them as bases for recruiting participants and formulating interview questions.

One possible reason for the relative dominance of interview-based studies, both in South Africa and elsewhere, is methodological, relating to assumptions about the ‘capturability’ of suitable data in ‘naturally occurring interactions’ – meaning interactions that are not produced solely for research purposes, and hence were not driven by researchers’ particular interests, but instead would have occurred independently of researchers observing or recording them (e.g. Clayman & Gill, 2004; Potter & Hepburn, 2005). Van Dijk, for example, argues that talk about topics such as race and ethnicity occurs relatively rarely in everyday conversations, such that finding relevant data by recording naturally occurring interactions would ‘amount to a search for the proverbial needle in the haystack’ (1987, p. 119). As a result, researchers’ elicitation of talk about categories by research participants has tended to be seen as the only feasible way to efficiently collect data relating to specific categories. However, recent research has shown that ‘seemingly elusive phenomena [such as the emergence of particular categories] do occur, predictably, in the same kinds of sequential environments, doing the same kinds of actions’ (Stokoe, 2009, p. 81). This demonstrates possibilities for the development of approaches to studying how social categories may systematically and recurrently become relevant in naturally occurring interactions.

Despite these possibilities, there remains a shortage of such research based on South African data sources – although there are some notable exceptions (e.g. Barnes, Palmary & Durrheim, 2001), and there are many excellent examples based on data from other countries (e.g. Kitzinger, 2005; Raymond & Heritage, 2006; Schegloff, 2007a; Stokoe, 2009). In light of this, in this chapter I describe an approach, informed by ethnomethodological and conversation analytic perspectives, that offers potentially valuable resources for investigating these phenomena. To illustrate the value of this approach, I use descriptions of the data and procedures generated in the course of a broader study in which the methodology was employed to examine the use of racial categories in audio-recorded everyday interactions from South African talk-radio shows (see Whitehead, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2018). In addition, I present some brief empirical examples from this study in order to demonstrate some of the analytic payoffs of the approach.

An ethnomethodological perspective

The term ‘ethnomethodology’ was coined in the mid-1950s by Harold Garfinkel, who used it to describe the sense-making procedures (hence ‘methodology’) employed by a given group of people (hence ‘ethno’) (Heritage, 1984). As such, a hallmark of the ethnomethodological tradition is a preoccupation with the perspectives and actions of ordinary members of society, with its aim being to investigate ‘the body of common sense knowledge and the range of procedures
and considerations by means of which ordinary members of society make sense of, find their way about in, and act on the circumstances in which they find themselves’ (Heritage, 1984, p. 4). This common sense knowledge, as described by Garfinkel (1956, p. 185), consists of ‘socially sanctioned grounds of inference and action that people use in everyday life, and which they assume that other members of the group use in the same way’.

One particular branch of ethnomethodological inquiry has focused on common sense knowledge and everyday actions, particularly with respect to social categories. This work owes much to Harvey Sacks (1972a, 1972b), who used the term ‘membership categorization devices’ to describe systems of social categories, and the normative ways in which they are used and administered by members of society (also see Sacks, 1995; Schegloff, 2007c). Sacks’s work showed the way in which categories serve as repositories for, and organise, bodies of common sense cultural knowledge. This common sense knowledge is socially shared, taken-for-granted knowledge about what people of particular categories are like, how they behave and so on (Schegloff, 2007c). Although this knowledge may not be scientifically or factually accurate when applied to any particular member of a category, and (especially in the case of some sets of categories, including race) it may be morally or politically contested, it has ‘the working status of “knowledge”’ for the ordinary people who treat it as such (Schegloff, 2007c, p. 469). Thus, categories are ‘inference-rich’, meaning that once a person is taken to be a member of a category, anything known about that category is presumed to be so about them (Schegloff, 2007c, p. 469). In addition, categories are associated (again, through common sense knowledge) with particular kinds of activities or conduct, which Sacks (1972b, p. 335) termed ‘category-bound activities’.

This line of inquiry provides an important set of resources to bring to bear on investigations of social categories. That is, paying explicit analytic attention to the situated deployment of categories (and hence the common sense knowledge associated with them) offers insights into the mechanisms through which category-related social structures are reproduced at the level of everyday interactions. Moreover, such an approach complements research conducted at the macro level, offering a means to examine the consequentiality of broader, aggregate-level dynamics and policies for ordinary people’s everyday conduct and sense-making with respect to social categories.

Analytic approach: Conversation analysis

Schegloff (2006, p. 70) has described interaction as ‘the primary, fundamental embodiment of sociality’, pointing out that ‘talk-in-interaction’ figures centrally in the concrete activities of all the institutions that make up the macro structure of societies. As a consequence, one way of studying social order at its point of production is to examine talk-in-interaction in various settings. Conversation analysis, or CA (e.g. Sacks, 1995; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974; Schegloff, 2007b), which grew in conjunction with the ethnomethodological theoretical tradition described above, provides an approach to studying social order in this way, using audio- and video-recorded interactions as data.
In addition to allowing for the study of social order at its point of production, a focus on recorded interactional data offers a number of important advantages. Firstly, interactional data provide a means to ground analytic claims in the orientations of the participants themselves, as a result of participants in interactions displaying their understandings (or analyses) of what has just happened through the way(s) in which they respond to it (Heritage, 1984). In this way, consistent with the ethnomethodological principle of privileging participants’ categories over those of analysts, researchers’ analysis of the data can be ‘checked’ against the analysis provided by participants, internal to the data, by virtue of the interactional nature of the data (Sacks et al., 1974). Secondly, the use of recorded data allows for repeated viewing and/or listening, which can reveal the importance of seemingly insignificant, but potentially very important, details that might be overlooked on the first viewing/hearing. Thirdly, recorded data allow for detailed transcripts of the data excerpts on which the analysis is based to be included in the write-up of the analysis, and for the data to be played at oral presentations of the findings. This provides readers and audience members with an independent empirical basis for judging whether they find the analysis persuasive.

It is important to emphasise that CA is centrally concerned with explicating actors’ practices (i.e. what they do and how they do things), rather than with their motivations (i.e. why they do things). Moreover, this approach focuses on analysing utterances as public actions rather than, for example, treating them as indicators of underlying psychological processes. Talk is thus treated as a form of public social action, analysing it primarily for its social and interactional import, rather than for what it reveals about any particular individual’s motivations, thoughts, beliefs and so on (Clayman & Gill, 2004). To the extent that such matters do enter into an analysis, they are treated as displays rather than as ‘inner’ psychological objects. That is, analysis is concerned with what actors display or make available to their co-participants (either explicitly or implicitly), rather than with whether these displays reflect a particular internal psychological state.

An ethnomethodological, conversation analytic focus thus provides a set of tools for a detailed examination of the ways in which people orient to, use and self-administer categories, and the common sense knowledge associated with them, in individual episodes of interaction. In this way, categories can be studied by examining what they are for ordinary people, and how they matter for the way people act in everyday situations, even when they are engaged in activities that are not necessarily about a category per se, but for which a category comes to be treated as relevant or consequential (cf. Whitehead & Lerner, 2009; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 2003).

I turn now to a description of the data collected for the broader study mentioned above. Although these data are not subjected to a detailed analysis in this chapter, describing the data (and in particular identifying and addressing their limitations) enables further explication of the methodological orientation I have described, and the insights it potentially offers.

**The data set: Radio talk**

The data for the study consisted of audio recordings of shows from three different South African radio stations, namely SAFm, 702 and Kaya FM. Approximately
125 hours of broadcasts were recorded, consisting of several hours of pilot data that were recorded in May 2006 and May to June 2007, with the bulk of the data recorded over a three-month period from March to June 2008, and further recordings being made sporadically from 2011 to 2014. The data yielded a total of over 620 stretches of interaction in which racial categories were observably made relevant, either explicitly or allusively (see Whitehead, 2009). This demonstrates the degree to which instances of the visible surfacing of social categories may be plentiful even in data sources not expressly produced for the purpose of studying them.

Although data collection was conducted so as to include materials from as wide a range of speakers as possible, it is important to emphasise that a data set such as this can by no means be claimed, and nor was it intended, to constitute a random or nationally representative sample, either of South African speakers or of interactions in South African settings. In light of this, it is worth pointing out several limitations of the data. Firstly, as a consequence of my own limited language skills, I recorded only English-language broadcasts. This suggests the value, particularly in linguistically diverse societies such as South Africa, of researchers with the linguistic abilities required to examine interactions produced in a wider range of languages. Secondly, the data set includes only those speakers who have access to a radio and a telephone, thus excluding a substantial number of South Africans. Thirdly, the majority of the data was collected from one particular institutional context (radio broadcasts and listener call-ins), and it is likely that certain features of the data are products of the unique interactional organisation of this context, rather than occurring similarly in South African society more broadly (for a description of the interactional organisation of radio call-in shows, and the relevance of speakers’ categorical identities in such interactions, see Fitzgerald and Housley [2002]).

While these limitations should be borne in mind in evaluating findings based on the data, it is also important to point out that a central concern for conversation analysts (and for many other qualitative researchers) is not with determining whether the interactional practices under study are used widely or frequently within a population, but rather to demonstrate the possibility that these practices can be used in some kind of interactional context. That is, if an interactional resource or practice is used even by a limited number of speakers in only one type of context, then it could at least potentially be used by other speakers in other contexts (cf. Silverman, 2000). In addition, a certain generic set of interactional contingencies, and a range of resources and competencies through which they can be managed, are available to all members of a society regardless of the particular context in which their interactions are taking place (Peräkylä, 2004). Thus, in producing their conduct in publicly broadcasted interactions, speakers implicitly propose that their utterances are intelligible to a wide range of listeners, who should be able to recognise and make sense of them as social actions, independently of the context in which they were produced. Consequently, while many of these contingencies and resources may be specially adapted to the demands of particular institutional environments (Drew & Heritage, 1992), they are all built on a basic set of materials that have many features in common across speakers and contexts.
The aim of the study for which these data were collected was thus to develop detailed descriptions of some interactional contingencies and practices relating to the social organisation of racial categories, rather than to make distributional claims about their operation or frequency of occurrence. Thus, even if the interactional practices identified through this approach occur relatively rarely, or are completely absent in some settings, their operation on any given occasion may still reflect the operation of broader category-related common sense knowledge. That is, the minority of cases in which such common sense becomes explicit or clearly observable, even if it does so primarily as a result of the interactional contingencies associated with a particular institutional setting, may represent simply ‘the tip of the iceberg’ of cases and settings in which it is shaping participants’ conduct without ever explicitly surfacing.

Analytic procedure: Working with collections
An important feature of the CA approach is building and using collections of target phenomena (Schegloff, 1996). While the phenomena of interest to conversation analysts are frequently identified through examinations of single cases, building a collection of related instances of a phenomenon can serve as a means of enriching an analysis by elucidating the scope of the phenomenon and the degree to which its features are common across multiple cases (Clayman & Gill, 2004). Once such a collection has been assembled, a comprehensive analysis of the entire collection is conducted. This involves constructing an account that can accommodate the unique features of each case in the collection, while at the same time describing the generic features of the phenomenon that apply to all instances in the collection (Clayman & Gill, 2004). This analysis is typically aided by detailed transcripts of data, using a transcription system, developed primarily by Gail Jefferson (2004), which uses symbols to represent a range of potentially important features of speech production, including intonation, emphasis, pauses and overlapping talk. An important caveat to the use of transcripts as an aid to analysis is that the recordings themselves, rather than the transcripts produced to represent them, remain the data and thus the source of evidence for analytic claims (cf. Psathas, 1995).

Ethical considerations
The use of recorded radio broadcasts as a data source presents a somewhat different set of ethical considerations than those associated with many other research approaches, given that the researcher had no contact with the participants and the interactions would have taken place even if they were not being recorded as data. One might question whether the participants in these interactions would give consent for their use as data if they were aware that they had been recorded for this purpose, and thus whether it is ethical to use such recordings as data without obtaining informed consent from those who appear in them. It would not be feasible, however, to track down all the participants to gain their consent, particularly since callers to the shows are typically identified only by their first
name and the city from which they are calling. Moreover, it can be assumed that participants in the interactions were aware that their talk was part of a public broadcast that would be heard by potentially large audiences, and thus that any potential harm that could result from the use of these broadcasts for research purposes would be no greater than the potential risks associated with other uses of, or responses to, the broadcasts resulting from their availability to the general public (cf. Kaufman & Whitehead, 2018). The use of these recordings as data is also consistent with research ethics guidelines, such as those of the British Psychological Society, which state that ‘where it is reasonable to argue that there is likely no perception and/or expectation of privacy . . . use of research data without gaining valid consent may be justifiable’ (BPS, 2013, p. 7).

Empirical illustrations

In the following sections I present examples of two of the phenomena identified in analysing the data, namely generalising practices, through which speakers can claim that what they are saying does not apply to any particular racial category and, conversely, particularising practices, through which speakers can claim to be speaking about or as a member of a particular racial category. Although they are not intended to constitute a comprehensive analysis of the practices they exemplify, these brief illustrations demonstrate the utility of the approach described above for investigating how racial categories may become relevant, and hence be reproduced, in the course of everyday interactions in South Africa.

Generalising practices

Previous research (Whitehead, 2009) has examined speakers’ use of list construction practices to formulate race in general, thereby claiming that what they are saying does not apply to any specific racial category. In Excerpt 1, a speaker produces a similar generalising practice in the course of complaining about crime in South Africa. Just prior to this excerpt, the host asked the guest about the murder of her father some years earlier, and expressed his condolences for her loss, before suggesting that such an experience provokes some people to leave South Africa. In line 1 of the excerpt, he follows this suggestion up by asking the guest whether it had occurred to her to leave for this reason. In the course of an extended response (lines 8–21), the guest reflects on how ‘difficult’ it is to make such a decision (line 15), before stating, ‘I don’t think any South African: (.) um: (.) mm: doesn’t matter which colour they are or which race they are’ (lines 16–17) should be placed in such a position. The guest thus temporarily halts the progressivity of her utterance to parenthetically insert ‘doesn’t matter which colour they are or which race they are’ into it (cf. Mazeland, 2007; Whitehead, 2009). This serves as a generalising practice by virtue of explicitly claiming that her utterance should be heard as applying to people of all possible racial categories, rather than only to a particular category or set of categories.
Excerpt 1

(1) [213 - SAfm 5-7-08]
1 H: Did it ever occur to you?
2 (0.2)
3 G: ↑Ja, um I mean ye- I must be honest and say ja, I’ve
4 about it.
5 (.)
6 G: Um: (. ) I think _ everybody thinks about it.
7 (. )
8 H: M[m.]
9 G: [Um: (. ) . hhh (0.2) ja, so it- it is a- (. ) it is always
10 an option to leave, (. ) and I don’t blame people who leave
11 because (. ) especially if y- if you have young children you
12 are always (0.2) always fearful of: (0.7) of them (u-) (0.2)
13 their their future ja=hh
14 (0.2)
15 G: °Ja.° But it’s- it’s a difficult decision to make and: (0.7)
16 um:: (0.8) I don’t think any South African: (. ) um: (0.2) mm:
17 doesn’t matter which colour they are or which race they are
18 . h um: (. ) should actually be put in a d- (. ) in a position
19 to: (. ) (n-) (. ) to have to make that. °W::° we should all
20 feel safe at home an- an- and feel (we-) (0.2) feel safe
21 here.
22 (0.3)
23 H: Mm.
24 (1.0)
25 H: And it’s hard to do that, you know I was in uh . hhh in
26 Paris walking around late at night, and women walking
27 alone, (0.2) at night, safe. . hhh And I remember thinking
28 “God I wish I could walk this much back home.” You know?
29 Just walk.

By using a generalising practice in this way, the guest treats her utterance (and
the complaint about crime it implements) as being vulnerable to being heard as
racialised. That is, since the use of such a practice is designed to discount any
possible implication that an utterance was tacitly racialised, it displays the speak-
er’s orientation to the possibility that the utterance may be heard as racialised
unless such a hearing is discounted. As a result, the use of this practice serves
to explicitly introduce race in a context in which it was previously only (poten-
tially) implicitly present, or not present at all. Thus, in this case, the guest’s
reference to ‘any South African’ (line 16) is, through the subsequent production
of the generalising practice, retrospectively treated as a potential allusion to par-
ticular, race-specific South Africans.

The basis for the possibility of a racial hearing in this case appears to rest on,
and reproduce, common sense knowledge regarding connections between emi-
gration, crime and particular racial categories. Specifically, the host’s preceding
discussion of emigration may serve to invoke the phenomenon of the large numbers of white South Africans who have emigrated to countries such as Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom in recent decades (e.g. Adepoju, 2003). In addition, the discussion of violent crime, and the fear of falling victim to it, may be heard as echoing common sense associations between blackness and criminality. These associations have long held currency among white South Africans in particular, with discourses of die swaart gevaar (the black danger) being used to justify segregation before and during apartheid, and being recapitulated in euphemistic links between race and crime in the post-apartheid era (e.g. Lemanski, 2004).

It thus appears that the guest’s use of a generalising practice in this case is designed to pre-empt a possible hearing of her complaint as implicating black crime in particular, and as being produced on behalf of white victims in particular. This apparent use of the practice for managing the production of a potentially delicate action (cf. Whitehead, 2009) is further supported by evidence of the guest’s orientation to the fraught nature of answering the host’s question. This can be seen in the pause (line 2) prior to beginning her response to the host, and in the numerous hesitations in the course of producing her answer, particularly just prior to and following her production of the generalising practice (lines 16 and 18). In deploying this practice, however, she makes this potential racialised hearing explicit, and makes the common sense knowledge underpinning it more readily available for subsequent speakers to take up. In this case, the host does not pursue the racialisation introduced by the guest, instead displaying agreement (line 23) and treating the guest’s complaint as consistent with his own experiences of South Africa (lines 25–29).

**Particularising practices**

The converse of generalising practices is practices that serve to particularise race, treating a specific racial category as specifically relevant for what is being done. One way in which race can be particularised is through the use of racial self-identifications, which speakers can deploy as a way of showing that they are speaking as a member of a specific racial category, thereby treating their racial category membership as a consequential feature of their conduct. An instance of this practice is shown in Excerpt 2, in which a guest uses a racial and age self-categorisation as a resource for complaining about his difficulties in securing government start-up funding for a guest-house business with youth involvement. Just prior to the excerpt, the guest provided a lengthy account of his difficulties in securing funding, and the host supportively aligned with this complaint.

**Excerpt 2**

(2) [193 – SAfm 4-30-08]

1 G: .hh It’s- it’s- it’s quite saddening eh:: it’s quite saddening. And- and you- you sometimes .hh wonder. And- and- and obviously you- you don’t wanna be eh (d-)
2 demotivated,
3 H: =No.
4 G: .h eh for tha- <and as a young, (.) black South African,
all what you need to prove .h out there, (0.2) eh: that
look, .h industries that have been said to be dominated by
these (. ) e:h (eh d~) so- so- so ↑ called people, .hh that
you can do (it) a lot more better.
( . )
G: And you- you- you can do it lot more better, .hh with: the
collectiveness of- of the ↑ rest of the people. .hh But all
what keeps you back is i- .h is- is- is is money.

In response to the host’s support for his complaint, the guest describes the emotional and motivational effects of situations like this (lines 1–4), before suggesting a need ‘as a young (.) black South African’ to make an impression on this industry (lines 6–10). By identifying himself in this way, the guest specifically proposes that his age and race are relevant for understanding the difficulties he has described and his position as a struggling entrepreneur. He thus uses common sense knowledge of which types of people the government might be expected to assist (i.e. youth and those disadvantaged by apartheid) as a resource for pointing out the irony of a person like him struggling in the way that he has. This is further demonstrated in his subsequent formulation of ‘industries that have been said to be dominated by these . . . so ↑ called people’ (lines 8–9), which appears to be an allusion to the historically predominantly white ownership of such industries. The guest thus appeals to common sense knowledge of the apartheid-derived racialisation of these industries as further evidence for the incongruity between his struggles and the assumed objective of undoing continuing legacies of apartheid. In this way the caller treats his age and race as additional bases for heightening his complaint: he is not only an entrepreneur struggling to find funding, but a young black entrepreneur in a context where one might expect greater facilitation of the movement of people like him into industries (such as this one) that have been historically white-owned. This raises the further possibility that the guest may have been designing his complaint throughout the interview to be heard as coming from him as a ‘young black South African’, and that he explicitly self-identified in this way only after the host (even in aligning with and supporting his complaint) had consistently displayed no explicit uptake of this potential relevance of race for his complaint.

It should be noted that this analysis of the common sense knowledge apparently underpinning the guest’s racial self-identification requires reading somewhat beyond what he explicitly specifies, which can be seen as a consequence of the degree to which such common sense is taken for granted without needing to be explicited in detail. Thus, by not explicitly specifying why his age and race are relevant in light of what he is complaining about, the guest displays an assumption that his recipients (the host and the overhearing audience) are capable of recognising and understanding their relevance without any need on his part to spell it out. Moreover, by passing up at least one potential place at which he could have displayed a lack of understanding in this regard (during the slight pause at line 11), the host tacitly aligns with this assumption. Thus, although the exact nature of the common sense knowledge being invoked here
may not become explicit, it is clear that the guest and host have collaborated in producing the basis of the relevance of age and race for this complaint as being self-evident and shared (both between themselves and the audience).

Conclusions

The brief empirical illustrations presented above demonstrate the utility of the approach I have described for identifying and examining interactional practices through which categories (particularly racial categories) surface in everyday interactions in South Africa. This reveals several ways in which the methodological approach described above offers resources for advancing an understanding of the social organisation of categories such as these. Firstly, as the data excerpts demonstrate, this approach offers a means to investigate how categories surface in the course of interactions in which they have not been identified as a topic and have not yet been explicitly mentioned. Thus, in contrast to methodologies through which categories are prespecified as central to the topical agenda of the talk that participants produce, this approach allows for the examination of how racial categories are introduced in these interactions in the course of actions that are ostensibly not racialised but come to be produced as racialised as a result of these practices. This demonstrates how the relevance of categories can be reproduced as a ‘by-product’ of what people are otherwise engaged in doing, even when it is not centrally about them (cf. Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011; also see Kitzinger, 2005; Whitehead, 2012). Secondly, this approach offers a way of identifying and analysing the uses of interactional practices through which common sense knowledge associated with particular (racial) categories observably shapes people’s conduct at specific moments (also see Whitehead, 2012, 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2018). When these practices are deployed by speakers and unproblematically recognised by recipients, the common sense knowledge underpinning them is renewed and thereby reproduced. The examination of these practices thus provides a way of investigating how the consequentiality of common sense knowledge about macro structures (such as those relating to race) becomes visible at the micro level of ordinary interactions.

Finally, it is important to emphasise that the interactional practices that could be examined using this approach are not specific to race but could conceivably be employed in studying any other category system. Moreover, they are produced as constitutive features of speakers’ methods for producing ordinary actions-in-interaction (cf. Stokoe, 2009), such as disagreements and complaints, that do not rely on categories but instead can be produced in the service of a wide range of interactional outcomes. As such, these practices also rely on the same generic ‘building blocks’ (e.g. turn-taking, sequencing, action formation, person reference) that all talk-in-interaction is made up of, and that have been primary concerns of conversation analysts for several decades (Schegloff, 2006). As a result, understanding how race, or other category systems, surface in ordinary interactions is bound up with understanding how the generic features of talk-in-interaction serve as resources through which people produce and negotiate their everyday social lives.
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Note
1 A ‘Transcription Module’ on CA transcription, which includes links to sound files exemplifying the features of speech production that the transcription symbols are used to represent, is available at www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/schegloff/TranscriptionProject/index.html

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