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Title	**Putting persuasion (back) in its interactional context**			
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Putting persuasion (back) in its interactional context

Persuasion is a ubiquitous presence in everyday life, with decades of research from across the social sciences, and, of course, particularly within psychology. Nevertheless, in this paper, we argue that we still know very little about actual manifestations of persuasive conduct 'in the wild'. Taking a discursive psychological approach to the study of people in the settings that comprise their everyday lives, we respecify persuasion as a visible, situated, and interactive accomplishment, rather than starting from a conceptualisation of it as an outcome of invisible cognitive processes (Humă, Stokoe, & Sikveland, 2019; Pino, 2017; Wooffitt, 2005). Examining a corpus of business-to-business 'cold' sales calls we show how salespeople successfully secure meetings with prospective clients, and how these outcomes are tied to specific practices of turn-taking and sequential organisation, rather than being the result of the prior (unknowable) 'intent' of the prospect. We conclude that persuasion is not an elusive or mysterious phenomenon, but needs much wider scrutiny to describe and understand it in settings that matter to the participants involved.

1   Psychology and persuasion

While persuasion has always been a constant presence in social life, nowadays, we probably are exposed to persuasive communication at a rate higher than ever before. We are constantly bombarded with ads and commercials when we turn on the TV, or radio and when we open a newspaper or a webpage. Politicians battle for our support and votes in debates with their opponents, at political rallies, and through journalistic interviews. We are also, more than ever, engaging in persuasive interactions with sales and service professionals who 'assault' us

with tempting offers to buy new products, or sign up for new services. Evincing such diverse manifestations, across key spheres of human life, it comes as no surprise that persuasion has sparked the scientific interest of scholars across the social sciences: psychology, sociology, marketing, communication, political sciences, and linguistics.

The psychology of persuasion has its origins at Yale University in the 1940s, when research on how people persuade each other became one of the most fundamental topics of post-World War II North American social psychology (e.g. Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953). The building blocks of this research tradition – the experimental method and an underlying cognitive ontology of psychological phenomena – shaped how psychologists subsequently studied and modelled persuasion. For example, according to the prominent Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), persuasion is underpinned by either central or peripheral information-processing mechanisms that bring about a change-of-attitude (Petty, Rucker, Bizer, & Cacioppo, 2004) under specific conditions. The researcher's quest consists in identifying these conditions and mapping out the workings of the cognitive mechanisms which presumably effect attitude change.

Meanwhile, language, the medium in and through which we attempt to influence each other, has rarely been the explicit focus of persuasion research. As in psychology more generally, studies that have attended to the role of language in persuasion usually reduce it to semantic or stylistic features of persuasive 'nuggets' (e.g., Areni & Sparks, 2005; Sparks & Areni, 2002). Furthermore, in most studies, it is the researchers who design the persuasive messages and their elicitation, as participants' replies are often recorded via pre-set closed questions, eliminating diversity in responses (Roiser, 1974) as well as restricting participants' opportunities to take part in persuasion. Whether delivered through written, audio, or video media, these persuasive messages are often simplified or artificially stripped of features inherent to everyday talk such as prosody, interactive elements, and indexicality, thus

widening the gap between naturally occurring persuasive conduct and its contrived production in the laboratory.

Conceptualising persuasion in social-cognitive terms, it could be argued that the importance of language – as well as the roles of the 'source' (persuader) and 'target' (persuadee) – have already been considered in persuasive communication research. However, existing models of persuasion still operate with a mechanistic understanding of communication rather than talk-in-interaction. Language is still conceived as a tool for transmitting discrete messages to be processed rather than as the medium in and through which social life is talked into existence, and in which the consequence of one turn at talk is revealed in the next. Overall, then, we contend that features pertaining to the conversational and interactive co-production of naturally occurring persuasive communication have remained undiscovered and untheorized (Gibson & Smart, 2017; Humă et al., 2019; Sanders & Fitch, 2001).

We also note that, while arguments about the (lack of) ecological validity of laboratory studies are commonplace in psychology, reduced validity is arguably even more crucial for the study of persuasion. This is because issues related to the stake and interest that people have in the encounters they are engaged in – what discursive psychologists call 'the subject side' of interaction (Edwards, 2007) – are crucial for persuasion. Psychological experiments, in which invented scripts and messages are designed by experimenters, are often not well equipped to capture this key aspect of human interaction. As Edwards and Potter (1992) already demonstrated with respect to attribution, hypothetical vignettes typically used in experimental attribution research oversimplify and misconstrue attribution, thus precluding researchers from noticing that and how attributional accounts are rhetorically designed to manage the particular stake and interest at play in making those attributions.

For discursive psychologists then, persuasion is best approached as a naturally occurring phenomenon that can be studied in such terms. Since its original formulation in Edwards and Potter (1992), the 'Loughborough School' (Stokoe, Hepburn, & Antaki, 2012) has adopted conversation analysis (CA) as its method for studying human beings in their ordinary and institutional lives. Through the study of recordings of social interaction 'in the wild', DP achieved what vast swathes of psychological research – in the (broadly) North American and European traditions – have failed to do. While psychology often refers to itself as the 'science of behaviour', very little empirical work examines behaviour directly. Instead, psychologists rely on questionnaires and other proxies for studying social life. For US-based psychologists Baumeister, Vohs, and Funder (2007), 'psychology pays remarkably little attention to the important things that people do' (p. 396). Despite half a century of CA research, and thirty years of DP, ten years after Baumeister et al.'s critique of psychology, another US-based psychologist made a similarly uninformed observation:

> Laypersons often think of psychologists as professional people watchers. It is ironic, then, that naturalistic observation, as a methodology, has a remarkably thin history in our field. In contrast to ethologists (and researchers working with infants), psychologists are in the privileged position to be able to obtain valuable data by simply questioning their subjects. At the same time, there are clear limitations to what self-reports can assess. … the psychological scientist's tool kit also needs a method to directly observe human behavior in daily life. … naturalistic observation can bring behavioral data collection to where moment-to-moment behavior naturally happens (Mehl, 2017, p. 184).

It is symptomatic of the strangely bounded and uni-disciplinary conception of 'psychological research' that these authors seem unaware of DP and CA. Yet, from its foundational work in the 1960s, CA – the study of the natural organisation of talk-in-interaction – has demonstrated the importance of studying human action in the real settings that make up social life. CA has shown time and again that and how what was thought of as messy talk exhibits

'order at all points' (Sacks, 1992, p. 484) from the tiniest details such as single actions and their prosodic and embodied production (Sikveland & Ogden, 2012) to large spates of talk such as political discourses (Atkinson, 1984) and complete encounters (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973).

Earlier in this paper we argued that social psychology has put forward a partial conceptualisation of persuasion based on a restricted understanding of communication as conveying information and of language as grist for the cognitive mill. This is reflected in extant definitions of persuasion which reduce persuasive conduct to underlying cognitive entities such as intentions, attitudes, or beliefs. From a discursive psychological perspective these constructs are interactional accomplishments rather than individual causes of social conduct (Edwards & Potter, 2005). Even when persuasion is treated as a discursive activity – "the attempt or intention of one participant to change the behaviour, feelings, intentions or viewpoint of another by communicative means" (Lakoff, 1982, p. 28) – it is still defined in cognitive rather than discursive terms. Similarly, recent and more comprehensive definitions, such as that proposed by Gass and Seiter (2018, p. 88) whereby persuasion is understood as "the activity of creating, reinforcing, modifying, or extinguishing beliefs, attitudes, intentions, motivations, and/or behaviors" still promote an individualistic understanding of persuasion focusing on the persuadee's cognitive processes while ignoring the interplay between the interactants' actions. By contrast, the discursive psychological approach to persuasion starts by recognising that all discourse has a rhetorical dimension (Billig, 1987) and that each turn at talk is both shaped by prior turns and also shapes ensuing talk (Sacks, 1992). What singles out persuasive communication is not, as Lakoff (1982) argued, its non-reciprocity or novelty, but its recipient-constraining sequential architecture. Persuasive conduct mobilises conversational resources that enable speakers to constrain interlocutors' responses in order to

pre-empt or deal with resistance to the courses of action they are engaged in (Humă et al., 2019).

In this paper, we purposefully avoid putting forward a formal definition of persuasion beyond the above formulation of persuasive conduct. Our research serves as an example of how to identify systematic persuasive practices in naturally occurring talk. We track persuasion-in-interaction as it unfolds naturally in 'cold' calls between salespeople and prospective customers (prospects). These naturally occurring conversations provide a perspicuous setting to examine persuasion, because it is the core of the salespeople's job to convert prospects into clients. Specifically, we examine a setting in which one party – the prospect – finds him or herself in an encounter they did not initiate, and in which they are invited to do something they did not seek out. These calls comprise the first step towards a successful commercial transaction – securing a face-to-face meeting in order to sell products. To begin to address the question of 'what counts' as persuasive conduct, we examine a key and recurrent practice used by salespeople to enhance their chances to obtain appointments with prospects.

Data and method

The paper reports our analysis of a corpus of 150 naturally occurring cold calls provided by three British companies that sell office equipment. The calls were recorded between December 2015 and January 2016. The data feature nine salespeople contacting prospects who were themselves employees of either schools or private companies. We transcribed the calls using the Jefferson (2004) system for conversation analysis, which is also commonly used in discursive psychology (Hepburn, 2004). This system provides social scientists with the tools to represent minutiae details of naturally occurring talk, such as silence, overlapping

talk, and prosody, which, as we will see in our analysis, are consequential for the interactive choreography of persuasive communication. All identity-revealing details such as names have been anonymised by being replaced with pseudonyms (Hepburn & Bolden, 2017). Our methodology follows the British Psychological Society's (2018) Code of Ethics and Conduct having received ethical approval from Loughborough University's Ethics Approval (Human Participants) Sub-Committee.

Our dataset comprises both first-time and subsequent (or 'subsequent') calls. The latter are a frequent occurrence in business-to-business sales, where converting prospects into clients occurs stepwise, over several encounters. In subsequent calls, salespeople are trying to persuade prospects to agree to meet face-to-face, as a way of moving the sale forward, towards a commercial agreement.

To analyse the data, we use conversation analysis and discursive psychology. Both methods take an inductive approach to the analysis of talk-in-interaction that relies on carefully examining the data corpus in search for discursive patterns (Wiggins, 2017). We started by identifying, within the calls, the sequences in which participants discuss a future face-to-face meeting. Within this initial framework, we scrutinised all cases with a focus on the structural aspects of the interaction (Schegloff, 2007; Sidnell, 2010): the architecture of the sequences through which securing and scheduling a meeting were accomplished, and the actions comprised in these sequences. We also noted features pertaining to the interactive management of turn-taking by noticing the practices salespeople were using to keep the floor to produce multi-component turn constructional units (TCUs). It is worth underlining that, unlike other qualitative methods, such as thematic analysis or grounded theory which aim to present individual experiences communicated through language, CA and DP treat language-in-interaction and its organisation as the focus of the analysis. Furthermore, they avoid speculating about alternative interpretations of utterances, by using the next turn proof

procedure (Edwards, 2004) and by relying on participants' orientations to their own and their interlocutors' talk.

The methodological integrity of our analytic endeavour resides in the detailed transcription and analysis of the data which is available, to all readers, for inspection and re-examination. Both CA and DP abstain from speculating about participants' unobservable intentions or thoughts and instead focus on individuals' actions and their demonstrable interactional consequences. Furthermore, in doing CA and DP, we draw on and incorporate findings from prior interactional studies, thus validating our analytic observations by grounding them in existing empirical research.

2   Analysis

The analysis starts with an extract that illustrates how sales meetings are arranged in 'cold' calls. Our focus will be on the sequential and interactional context in which our target persuasive practices (shown in the rest of extracts) are deployed. Thus, Extract 1, which is typical of subsequent 'cold' calls, is a contrast case which does not feature the phenomenon we are interested in, but which features other persuasive practices discussed in Humă et al. (2019). We use this extract to illustrate how salesperson and prospect first agree to have a meeting and then go on to schedule it. Securing the prospect's agreement to meet is crucial to the progress towards scheduling it and, thus, to the success of the 'cold' call (Humă & Stokoe, in press). Only once the prospect is on board with the meeting, can the scheduling begin. Thus Extracts 2-4 we show how the strength of this normative conditional ordering between securing and scheduling an appointment is exploited by salespeople who reverse its logic: once the salesperson initiates the scheduling, it is implied that the prospect has agreed to meet, whether that has been explicit not.

In Extract 1, we join the conversation just after the participants have moved from the
opening of the call to its main business – arranging a sales appointment.

Extract 1 Eplus 8

```
 1   S:     .Hh Mister Gupta I hope you recall we:: discussed
 2          about the telecoms,=uh especially you:r old
 3          Alcatel systems.
 4               (0.7)
 5   P:     [( )]
 6   S:     [ A:]ndu::h its maintenance and .h lines and calls
 7          and stuff. .h A:nd you asked me to send some
 8          details about the company and you said that you
 9          are going to discuss with one of your collea:gues
10          senior colleagues I ↑believe.
11               (0.6)
12   P:     Yeah.=
13   S:     =U:h so:: I'm just wonderi:n' whereabout are we in
14          terms of the conversation .h uh fo=or- Can we come
15          and have a chat about u:hm your phone systems
16          andu:h see how we could be of he:lp to you
17          sometime next month o:r .h end of this month?
18               (0.3)
19   P:     Y- yeah we can do that. °Yeah°.=
20   S:     =↑Oh. Fantastic, .h So: ↑u:hm mkt (0.5) shall we
21          look at like the: next- the third week of January
22          or ↑so?
23               (0.6)
24   P:     °Uh third week of January let me che:ck°, Uh w-
25          what date exactly.
```

In this extract the salesperson (S) first asks to visit the prospect (P) and then brings up
potential dates for the meeting, once the latter has agreed to it. The activity of securing an
appointment is implemented through an extended sequence (lines 1-20). It starts with a
preamble (lines 1-12) which first displays the salesperson's knowledge about the company's
phone systems, and then invokes the interlocutors' prior interaction and ensuing mutual
responsibilities, thus setting them up as business partners. This background story, which is
ratified by P in line 12, frames the upcoming self-invitation 'Can we come and have a chat

about u:hm your phone systems' (lines 14-15) as a reasonable development in their business relationship, as opposed to a sales meeting. The TCU continues, bypassing a transition relevance place (TRP), with an embedded offer of help 'andu:h see how we could be of he:lp to you' (line 16) which positions the salesperson as a 'benefactor' to the prospect's company (Clayman & Heritage, 2014). With no reply forthcoming at this point, the salesperson extends her turn again by suggesting two alternative times for the meeting 'sometime next month o:r .h end of this month' (line 17). Note that, in this sequential context, a 'simple' rejection from the prospect would be understood as a rejection of the time frames, while a refusal of the meeting would require a more elaborate response. In line 19, the prospect agrees to meet, but without accepting the proposed time frame which remains to be negotiated via a separate scheduling sequence. The prospect's response 'Y- yeah we can do that.', while forwarding the salesperson's course of action, is grammatically misaligned to the prior turn and non-contiguous (note the 0.3 seconds gap, and turn-initial hesitation). Through this design, the speaker reframes the meeting as a joint project (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014) and repositions himself not as a benefactive, but as an independent party consenting to the meeting (Stokoe, Sikveland, Huma & Kevoe-Feldman, frth). The salesperson receipts his answer with a third-position high-grade assessment '=↑Oh. Fantastic,' (line 20) which marks the end of this sequence (Antaki, 2002). The interaction now progresses to the next logical and necessary step for arranging a meeting: finding a suitable date and time for it.

It is worth highlighting that both sequences are initiated by the salesperson, as the initiator of the call. The turn-taking machinery allocates mainly responsive turns to the prospect giving him less scope for directing the conversation (Leidner, 1993; Sacks, 1992). In this extract, S explicitly asked P whether she would be permitted to pay him a visit and he is given a sequential space (line 19), after that question, to either accept or refuse the meeting. The rest of our examples feature interactions in which prospects *are precluded from refusing*

to meet, usually through a combination of turn-taking and sequence organisational practices

that restrict the sequential space for a response and through framing the meeting – in the

preamble – as having already been accepted.

Having demonstrated the contingent ordering of securing and scheduling a meeting,

next we show how S can bypass the necessity for an explicit consent to the meeting.

Extract 2 Eplus 20

```
 1   S:   OBviously(h) uhm did promise to catch you.=Round
 2        now.=>Obviously we< had a chat in uh:m kind of
 3        late December. .Hhh [uh I] mentioned before we=
 4   P:                      [(mm)]
 5   S:   =deal with a number of hotel:s and .hhh big big
 6        restaurants:.=Hospitality EXperts in the London
 7        area,=And I just really wanted to tee up a time
 8        for .hh one of my experts to kind of ↑pop down and
 9        see how we can help out regarding the telephony
10        ↓really¿ .hh[h uh:m] I don't >know< if you've got=
11   P:              [Okay, ]
12   S:   =a- a date in mind that works for yourself?
13            (0.5)
14   P:   I got this wee- uh:: I hav:e uh let's see this
15        wee::k:: I hav:e uh:: (0.8) .ptk (0.7)
16   S:   Ne-=
17   P:   =Thurs- (0.3) uh nex:t uh:: next Tuesday?
```

At first glance, this extract may not seem different from the one we just examined, in terms of

the salesperson's actions and the end outcome. Indeed, in both examples, the salespeople are

successful in securing appointments, but, as we will show, the methods used are subtly

different with respect to the prospect's part in that achievement.

In the preamble, S invokes, in vague terms, the participants' interactional history

(lines 1-3) and his company's credentials as hospitality experts. Latched to that, he launches a

meeting request 'And I just really wanted to tee up a time for .hh one of my experts to kind of

↑pop down and see how we can help out regarding the telephony ↓really¿' (lines 7-10). The

grammatical design of this TCU – a speaker-centred 'want' declarative – makes a response

from the prospect less relevant than, say, a 'Can I' interrogative format (Stivers & Rossano, 2012). P's acquiescing response 'Okay,' (line11) is not an explicit acceptance or a display of commitment (Lindström, 2017). It also comes in overlap as S has kept the floor, through the in-breath and continuer (Schegloff, 1996) to continue his turn with a tentative scheduling initiation. Note that, as Extract 1 illustrated, the start of the scheduling presupposes that both parties have already consented to meet. The precise timing of the onset of S's TCU in line 10 clearly shows that he had already moved to the scheduling *before* P had acquiesced to meet.

Another method for precluding the prospect from rejecting the meeting is illustrated in Extract 3. Here the salesperson renders an acceptance/rejection irrelevant by claiming, in the preamble, that the prospect's colleague Eva has instigated the meeting.

Extract 3 Eplus 2

```
 1   S:    ↑Walter ↑very very quickly just before sometime I
 2         spoke to Eva, .mht A:ndu:h we discussed about the
 3         telecoms contracts=I used to be in touch with
 4         Fernando: last year? .hh A:ndu:h we discussed
 5         about your Yeltel contracts which are up for
 6         renewal by early next year?
 7              (0.3)
 8   S:    .Pt[h  So] Eva advised me to have a quick chat=
 9   P:       [Mkay,]
10   S:    =with you an' schedule a meeting in to discuss
11         about the: Yeltel: .h (.) contracts. .h U:h just
12         (a) wonderin' if u::h you're available sometime
13         (.) °December or January time°?
14              (0.5)
15   P:    U::h be more likely: January 'cause u::h (0.7)
16         December I'm g'nna be on holidays quite lot.
17              (0.2)
```

Starting in line 1, the salesperson recounts several prior interactions with P's colleagues, Eva and Fernando, with whom she claims to have talked about the company's telephone system. She attributes the initiative of having a meeting to Eva '.Pth So Eva advised me to have a quick chat with you an' schedule a meeting in to discuss about the: Yeltel: .h (.) contracts.' (lines 8 and 10-11). By informing P that his colleague is proposing the meeting, S is

suggesting that P's company is already showing interest in a commercial agreement. The declarative format of this informing makes a response from P unnecessary (Stivers & Rossano, 2012). Furthermore, at the end of this TCU, the salesperson produces an in-breath and continuer (like in the previous extract), thus keeping the floor and rendering a response from P sequentially unrealisable. Only after the salesperson initiates the scheduling (lines 11-13) does the prospect get the opportunity to display his stance towards the meeting. The design of the question '.h U:h just (a) wonderin' if u::h you're available sometime (.) °December or January time°?' presupposes the prospect's agreement to meet. Note that a disconfirming response from the prospect would not constitute a refusal of the meeting, but a rejection of the proposed time frame.

Our third and final example illustrates a variation of the practices we have identified so far. Instead of sequentially deleting the slot where the prospect could accept or refuse to meet, here the salesperson frames the meeting, from the outset, as having been accepted, albeit in the distant past.

Extract 4 Eplus 11

```
 1   S:    ↑I'm just >really seeing< if we can reschedule the
 2         meeting with Jim Cross that you had last yea:r.
 3         .hhh Go(uh)- way back last year in fact,=.hhmh And
 4         it was to (da:-) to do with the phone system?
 5               (0.2)
 6   P:    Oh right,
 7               (0.2)
 8   S:    Yeah.=Uh I'm just wondering IF y- uh:m you are
 9         availabl:e uh:m i:n: March or >something of< that
10         nature?
11               (0.8)
12   P:    Uh::m:::(b-) probably be better >with a little
13         bit< sooner than tha:t,
```

In contrast to the examples shown so far, Extract 4, which occurs just as participants move into the business-of-the-call, starts with the reason-for-the-call straight away '↑I'm just

>really seeing< if we can res<u>che</u>dule the meeting with Jim Cr<u>o</u>ss that you had last y<u>ea</u>:r.'
(lines 1-2). The speaker-centred request to *reschedule* the meeting does not allow the prospect
to accept or refuse it. The action of 'rescheduling' presupposes that, at some point in the past,
the prospect had accepted a meeting with the salesperson's colleague, Jim Cross. Note also
the definite article '**the** meeting' signalling to P that he should recall which meeting S refers
to (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979). With P not responding at the TRP in line 2, S continues her turn
providing more details about the time frame and content of their prior interactions and thus
treating P's absent response as a stemming from difficulties recalling these arrangements.
This prompts a news receipt 'Oh right,' (line 6) from the prospect, which enables the
salesperson to move to the scheduling of the meeting. The scheduling initiation '<u>U</u>h I'm just
wondering <u>IF</u> y- uh:m you are a<u>va</u>ilabl:e uh:m <u>i</u>:n: <u>Ma</u>rch or >something of< that nature?'
(lines 8-9) is designed as a Yes/No interrogative which presupposes that the prospect has
accepted to meet, even though the prospect has not explicitly voiced his acceptance.

We have no way of ascertaining whether P had indeed scheduled the meeting which
then got cancelled or whether S is stretching the truth, as salespeople are known to do. Nor
do we need to decide one way or another. Our contention is that by asking to reschedule the
meeting, the salesperson is rendering an acceptance/rejection irrelevant at this particular
moment in the interaction which enables him to secure a meeting *without asking for one*.

3   Discussion

This paper has articulated a way of studying persuasion – a core topic for social psychology
within the study of social influence – that examines people trying to persuade others in
settings that matter. Using discursive psychology, we have explained and illustrated how
persuasive conduct is accomplished collaboratively and interactively, in stark contrast to what
established information-processing models of persuasion suggest.

By analysing a corpus of business-to-business cold sales calls, we identified a key practice that salespeople use to persuade prospects to agree to meet with them in sales calls. The practice mobilises a range of conversational resources and relies on the normative organisation of appointment-making as a multi-activity project that starts by securing agreement to meet and then continuing to schedule it (Humă & Stokoe, in press). While this might seem obvious, we found that some practices are more effective than others at successfully completing these projects. For example, when salespeople try to secure a meeting through a request, or by 'self-inviting' (e.g., Extract 1: '<u>C</u>an we come and have a <u>chat</u> about u:hm your phone systems'), such actions were more readily refused or rejected (Humă, 2018). By contrast, the salespeople in our collection minimise the risk of a negative outcome by restricting prospects' opportunities to take a stance towards the meeting. This was achieved by rendering an acceptance of the meeting unnecessary and by closing down the sequential space where an acceptance/refusal could be voiced; that is, by holding the floor and not allowing a gap to emerge. Thus, we identified how salespeople bypass interactional moments where prospects could easily refuse to meet with them which then led to them swiftly securing sales appointments. Compared to the persuasive practices described by Humă et al. (2019) whereby salespeople designed their meeting requests – through preambles and minimised contingencies – to encourage acceptance and discourage rejection via turn design and preference organisation, the practice documented here relied on turn-taking and overall structural organisational resources. Considered together, these papers provide compelling evidence that the 'conversational fabric' of persuasion does not differ in substance from ordinary conversation, as Lakoff (1982) suggested. Instead, what sets aside persuasive conduct is the demonstrable use of conversational resources for restricting interlocutors' opportunities to resist speakers' courses of action.

The interactional and sequential organisation of spontaneous persuasive conduct that we have observed provides support for the respecification of persuasion from *attitude change* to *recipiency management*. Instead of conceptualising persuasion as an outcome, we should conceive of it as an interactive activity[1]. While in some settings, persuasive practices are enlisted as resources for dealing with actual resistance and changing a 'No' into a 'Yes' (e.g., Sikveland & Stokoe, 2016), in our data as in many other naturalistic settings (e.g., Pinch & Clark, 1986) persuasive conducted is geared towards dealing with potential resistance. Thus, there will be no noticeable *change* in attitude or behaviour. Instead, we can observe speakers mobilising conversational resources to manage the recipiency of their requests, offers, proposals, and invitations such that a disaligning response becomes difficult to deliver. Using a discursive lens which tracks the step-by-step unfolding of persuasion, we are able to observe both participants' contributions to the ongoing activity and thus capture the interactive features of persuasion which have so far escaped social psychologists' empirical scrutiny.

4   Conclusion

We are used to thinking about persuasive communication in terms of 'messages'; that is, discrete stretches of talk that supposedly differ from the rest of the surrounding talk through the speaker's ostensible intention to influence the recipient's attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours. But persuasion is not always accomplished through slogans, jingles, catch phrases, or other 'magic bullets'. More often than not, in everyday interactions, persuasion stretches over several turns at talk, usually co-produced by both 'persuader' and 'persuadee' (Gibson & Smart, 2017). In many cases, there is no single persuasive message as such, and persuasion

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[1] Anita Pomerantz (2018), personal communication

cannot be pinned down to one word, phrase, or action nor to a set of stylistic features of the message. Still, persuasion is not an elusive or mysterious phenomenon, at least not more than other psychological topics like attitudes or identities. We need to rethink how we conceptualise and examine persuasion. Conversation analysis and discursive psychology, through their toolkit for approaching the co-ordinated production of talk-in-interaction, enables us to understand and explicate persuasive conduct. Furthermore, relying on naturally occurring conversations instead of invented persuasive messages enables us to uncover new persuasive practices which challenge extant conceptualisations of social influence.

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