

Examining a Collaborative Conversational Feature between Australian Men and Women

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Abstract

Many past studies of gender interaction discussed differences in masculine and feminine conversational styles. In particular, collaborative talk is regarded as a feminine conversational style. For example, Holmes (2006) makes a summary that most gender studies found that women tend to be collaborative while men tend to be challenging in everyday communication. However the author of this study believes that both men and women adopt collaborative features in their conversations. The purpose of this study is to find whether a collaborative feature in everyday conversation is confined to being only a women's conversational feature or if it is also apparent in men's conversation. In particular, this study focuses on looking at one of collaborative conversational features of one sentence expansion (OSE) which was defined by Lerner (1991).

The data of this study was collected in Australia. All participants of this study are Australians who are native speakers of English. This study adopts both quantitative and qualitative analysis. For the quantitative analysis, a total of 12 conversations were recorded with a voice recorder: men only, women only, and both mixed conversation. The quantitative results of this study show that while men showed 23 cases of OSE while women showed 12 cases of OSE. For the qualitative analysis, this study adopts Discourse Analysis (DA) to examine how cases of OSE in this study were delivered by participants of this study. The results show that both men and women similarly used cases of OSE in this study.

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Literature review

Men and Women's Talk

Holmes (2006) says that to some extent, people are always aware of whether they are talking to a woman or man, and they bring to every interaction their familiarity with gender stereotypes and the gender norms to which men and women are expected to conform. A number of sociolinguists have investigated gender stereotypes in talk. For example, men swear and use slang more than women do. Men tell jokes and women do not. Women can smooth over difficult social situations while men find this more difficult. Men tend to talk about competition, sports, and doing things. They also tease more and are more aggressive than women. Women tend to talk about themselves, feelings, affiliation with others, home and family (Lakoff, 1975, Poynton, 1989, Tannen, 1993, and Wardhaugh, 2002). Holmes (2000) summarised gender stereotypes which were commonly mentioned in the past studies of gender stereotypes below.

Masculine	Feminine
direct	indirect
aggressive	conciliatory
competitive	facilitative
autonomous	collaborative
dominates talking time	talks less than men
interrupts aggressively	has difficulty getting a turn
task-oriented	person-oriented
referentially oriented	affectively oriented

(Holmes, 2000: 3)

As past studies of gender talk summarised that collaborativeness was one of the features of women's talk. Therefore this study focuses on looking at collaborativeness of not only women's conversations but also men's conversations. The author believes that collaborativeness is also seen in men's conversations

One Sentence Expansion (OSE)

A OSE has been used as a collaborative feature in conversations. Coates (2007: 49) points out that co-producing an utterance helps to develop the speakers' idea or story by adding just a single word or entire clause to an utterance. Sacks also (1992, v1: 652) calls it '*co-producing an utterance*' in talk. '*Co-producing an utterance*' occurs when a party produces what could become a sentence and another speaks and produces a completion to that sentence.

A OSE occurs when the original speaker delivers a syntactically complete utterance which is often semantically complete as well. The next speaker then expands the original speaker's utterance. The next speaker is, however, the person who makes the original speaker's utterance an in-progress utterance although the original speaker's utterance is delivered by the speaker as a syntactically complete utterance. For example,

Louise: first of all they hit rain then they hit hail
Roger: n then they hit snow.
(Lerner, 1991: 448)

This example shows that the first speaker Louise provides a syntactically complete sentence which can stand alone and therefore does not require completion. However, the next speaker Roger, then expands the first speaker Louise's utterance.

In addition, when the original speaker's utterance is expanded, the next speaker often uses a device to expand the original speaker's utterance. It can be a preposition such as 'to', 'for' or 'with' and so forth. It also can be a conjunction such as 'and', 'but' or 'because' and so forth. Lerner (2004) refers to such a device as an *increment* initiator. The device encompasses a range of grammatical practices that can be used to explicitly connect a next turn constructional component a possibly completed turn constructional unit.

Thus, for this study, a case of OSE which is counted as a case should include the following features:

1. The original speaker delivers a syntactically complete utterance, in other words, it does not need to be developed but it can stand alone.
2. The next speaker develops the original speaker's syntactically complete utterance.

Methodology

All participants were informed that their conversations would be recorded at the time they were recruited. In addition, in order to protect participants' privacy, they were informed that their personal information such as their actual names, their actual friends' names, and the names of their actual workplaces would be replaced by other names created by the researcher. All participants in this study were asked to record their own conversations and they were guided in how to use the audio recording device before they started recording their conversations. The author of this study was not present while the conversations were being recorded to avoid any authors' influence on participants' conversations (Cameron, 2001).

Participants were engaged in everyday situations during the recordings including the following:

- Participants having dinner, lunch, snacks with tea or coffee in participant's place.
- Participants having a break or having lunch (including dinner when they were working late) at work and talking.
- Participants having a party in participants' place.

The settings above do not constitute institutional settings in which there is some kind of control over participants (Drew and Heritage, 1992): in these settings, participants could be expected to provide the ordinary talk which is normally seen when participants talk with friends or family in casual settings (Cameron, 2001). Thus by recording conversations in these settings, the author of this study was able to collect data relating to ordinary conversations among participants.

Three groups of participants were used for recording their conversations for this study below.

1. Mixed-gender conversations
2. All women conversations
3. All men conversations

For this study, 12 conversations in total were collected which included five men-only conversations, three women-only conversations and four mixed gender conversations. The length of each conversation varied.

The data analysis

This study adopts mainly qualitative analysis. Schegloff (1993) explains that quantitative analysis for conversation such as counting cases of particular conversational phenomena does not provide strong support for making generalisations about conversation. This is because each person is unique when they talk. Perakyla (2004) also points out that researchers often have limited time to transcribe their data and deal with a massive amount of conversation. However, in order to make qualitative analysis, quantitative observations are often combined. Heritage (2004), for instance, explains that a single case study can be applied to future studies. Perakyla (2004) also explains that in order to select samples for qualitative analysis, researchers need to access to a large collection of data. The aim of this study is not to generalise about the feature of OSE between men and women but rather to use a quantitative approach as a basis for qualitative observations.

Results

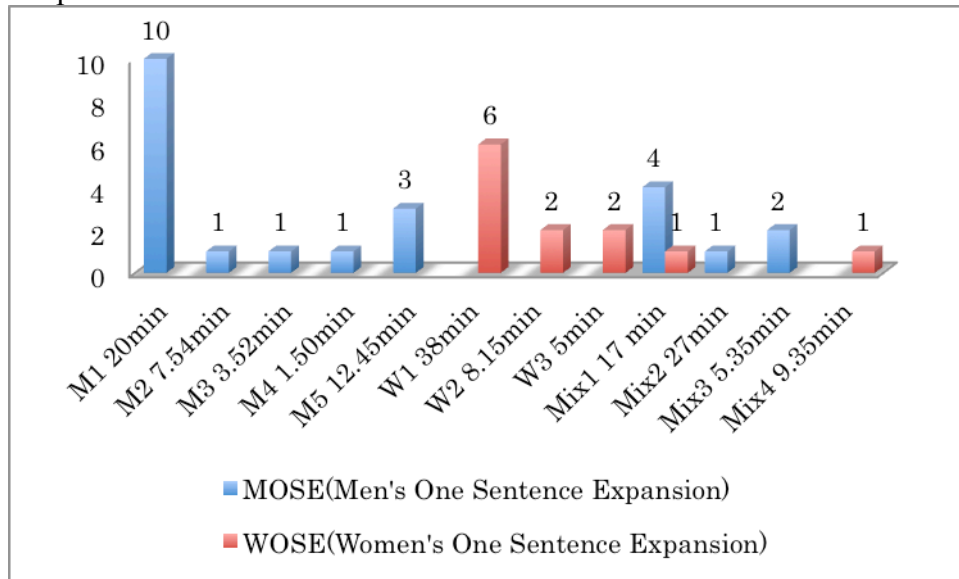
Table 1

Time	Male only	Female only	Mixed both	All male talk	All female talk
Minutes	2781	3075	3610	6391	6685
Hours	46.35	51.25	60.17	106.52	111.42

Table 2

Type of collaborative strategy	Male only	Female only	Mixed both genres	Mixed male initiated	Mixed female initiated	All male initiated	All female initiated
One sentence expansion	16	10	9	7	2	23	12
Total	52	35	26	16	10	68	45

Graph 1



The quantitative results show that both men and women showed cases of OSEs. Men used 23 cases and women used 12 cases in total. In this study, male participants used nearly twice as many cases of OSE as female participants used. However, it is important to note that the length of each conversation is different, which might affect the numbers of cases seen in each conversation. Also it is important to note Schegloff's claim (1993) mentioned earlier that coding numbers of cases of a conversational feature does not provide strong supporting evidence for generalisation on the use of the feature which is discussed. For instance, in men's conversation 1, ten cases were seen, while in men's conversations 2 to 4 each conversation shows only one case. Nevertheless the results support a possible trend for both men and women to use OSE as a collaborative feature (Perakyla, 2004)

Qualitative analysis

For qualitative analysis, the total of four examples are examined in depth. Both Example 1 and 2 are taken from women's only conversations. Both Example 3 and 4 are taken from men's only conversations.

Example 1

585: A: Wll I just said t'the boss I said make sure we treat her well because y'know she's .hh
 586: she knows pe::ople. hahahaha
 587: K: hahahaha [ye::ah.]
 588: A: [I don't] wanna be getting on a thing and then someday they're asking her
 589: about her experiences and she goes I worked for this café (in) n'the people there
 590: were horrible. [hahahahaha]
 591: K: [hahahaha]
 592: → A: and never go eat the:re=they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.]
 593: → K: [they] spit
 594: in the fo::od.
 595: A: yeah.
 596: K: hahahahaha

Both K and A are talking about a new staff member who has just started working at A's workplace as a waitress. A does not know who the new staff member is but she has found out that the new staff member was on TV and both K and A are very

surprised that she has come to work in A's work place. In line 585, A starts telling of her concerns about the new staff member including whether she might spread rumours about the café where A works.

A's utterance in lines 589 and 590 '*...I worked for this café (in) n'the people there were horrible. [hahahahaha]*' is expanded by the same speaker A in line 592 by adding '*and never go eat the:re=they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.]*'. A's utterance in 592 '*and never go eat the:re=they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.]*' was delivered with a delay, since laughter tokens by both A in line 590 and K in line 591 were inserted in A's self expansion of her original utterance in lines from 588 and 590. A's utterance in line 592 contains a conjunction term '*and*' at the beginning which syntactically combines her previous utterance '*...I worked for this café (in) n'the people there were horrible. [hahahahaha]*' in lines 589 and 590 with the rest of her utterance in line 592 '*and never go eat the:re=they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.]*'.

K's utterance in line 593, '*they spit in the fo::od*' expands A's self expanded long utterance to produce '*I worked for this café (in) n'the people there were horrible and never go eat the:re=they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.] they spit in the fo::od*'. Lerner (1991) explained that OSE is a collaborative feature in talk. In this instance, the original speaker's discourse unit is expanded by the next speaker K. It shows both A and K are collaboratively forming one discourse unit.

Example 2

- 132: A: *yeah* so:: he is doing this and like this guy was like yeah it'll be just like the one you've
 133: currently got and blah blah blah and you'll pay this much per month. (1.0) and he
 134: said you know sort of like you beauty an- an- rick wasn't aware of what- ↑he doesn't
 135: know anything about it like (0.7) I was talking to him he goes yeah NOW I
 136: REALISE-
 137: K: he was like sort of [suckered into a dodgy deal.]
 138: A: [yeah well he's got two teena]gers,
 139: A: and you know- I- I knew tht mike was always on his PS3 playing online games
 140: [through the console,
 141: K: [↓ah:::
 142: → A: and I was li:ke [okay] he goes I got this bill for three thousand dollars.
 143: K: [hhhh.]
 144: K: =Aaargh:::
 145: A: and I was like [OH:::M:::Y go:::d.]
 146: → K: [cause he was so far over] his download.
 147: → A: yeah because he would have been downloading at least twenty gig, .hh you know
 148: and it's like fifteen cents per every megabit (.) that you're over.
 149: K: AH:::
 150: A: and I was like oh my [god
 151: K: [he should've rung them up and contested it n said look you
 152: didn't explain this [properly.]

Both A and K are talking about a story of playing online games in this example. The current speaker A in line 142 delivers '*and I was li:ke [okay] he goes I got this bill for three thousand dollars.*' which is a syntactically independent discourse unit. It also ends with a falling intonation which suggests that A's utterance is complete (Fletcher and Loakes, 2006). A's utterance in line 145 begins with '*and*', showing that A is self expanding her previous utterance of line 142.

The next speaker K in line 146 delivers '*[cause he was so far over] his download.*' which expands A's '*and I was li:ke [okay] he goes I got this bill for three thousand dollars.*'. K's expansion in line 146 of A's utterance of line 142 makes A's syntactically complete utterance an in-progress utterance (Lerner, 1991).

K's '*[cause he was so far over] his download.*' in line 146 is then expanded by the original speaker A in line 147 '*yeah because he would have been downloading at least twenty gig, .hh you know*'. K's utterance in line 146 contains a falling intonation which suggests that she is signalling the end of her utterance (Fletcher and Loakes, 2006). A's utterance in line 142 and K's utterance in line 146 form one syntactically complete discourse unit. However, A's utterance in line 147 makes K's utterance in line 146 an in-progress utterance.

In the end, a whole discourse unit has become a very long discourse unit as below.

142: A: '...he goes I got this bill for three thousand dollars.'
↓
146: K: 'cause he was so far over his download.'
↓
147: A: 'yeah because he would have been downloading at least twenty gig, .hh you know'

In this case of OSE, there are two components of surprise: '*Aaargh:::*' by the next speaker K and '*so I was like OH:::M:::Y go:::d*' by the original speaker A. These two components are inserted before the next speaker K delivers her expansion. K in line 144 '*Aaargh:::*' shows her surprise that A's boss has received a bill for three thousands dollars. A's '*so I was like OH:::M:::Y go:::d*' in line 145 also describes her surprise when she heard the story from her boss. Because these two components of surprise by both K and A are inserted, K's attempt to expand in line 146 is delayed.

K's utterance in line 146 '*cause he was so far over*' is overlapped with A's surprise '*OH:::M:::Y go:::d*' in line 145. Lerner (2004) explains that an overlap by the next speaker in one sentence construction can occur when the original speaker continues talking beyond the opportunity point space for the next speaker who tries to complete the original speaker's utterance. Both speakers continue their utterances and therefore the next speaker's affiliating utterance overlaps the previous speaker's utterance which is still in progress. In this instance, the original speaker A continues her utterance while the next speaker K expands A's previous utterance.

K's expansion of A's utterance in line 146 '*[cause he was so far over] his download.*' begins with '*cause*' which is used to explain a possible reason why A's boss was asked to pay such a huge bill (Schiffrin, 1987). It is accepted by the original speaker A in line 147. A's attempt to expand K's utterance in line 146 contains a minimal response '*yeah*' at the beginning. This A's '*yeah*' is used as an acknowledgement token (Gardner, 1998). In line 147, just after '*yeah*' A gives builds on K's utterance in line 146, which suggests that A is further acknowledging K's utterance. A mentions '*twenty gigabits*' which describes exactly how much A's boss would have used, while K in line 146 says only that he was '*so far over his download*'.

Example 3

239: L: [o of (.)] no of songs that they wanna he:ar
 240: and it's like normally (.) if (.) if I tell like a bride and groom or something to
 241: bring along a CD. (0.7) you're worried? whether they'll actually bring it
 242: along?=
 243: J: =yeah.
 244: L: and whether it'll actually work?
 245: J: ye::ah.
 246: → Al: and whether or not [it'll actually be just] stuff for you to find anyway.
 247: L: [nono]
 248: L: yeah but if it's the marine guys it's just like o:[h]
 249: K: [o:]h it's gonna [wo::rk.]
 250: L: [>it's<] it's gonna
 251: work they'll have four copies of it (.) just in case >the first one<
 252: doesn't [work (or not)]. It's all ↑good.
 253: Al: [ye:ahhh]
 254: Al: every date stamp[ed.]
 255: L: [eve]ry date and time stamped
 256: J: and it'll be like [it'll be like (.)]
 257: L: [how many tapes wrapped up]
 258: J: you know (0.3) pro professionally printed,
 259: L: yeah.

In this part of the conversation, L is talking about his work. L is in charge of DJing for a wedding, and participants are treating L's story ironically. This instance of OSE has several features discussed below. Firstly, Al's expansion of L's previous utterance in line 246 *and whether or not [it'll actually be just] stuff for you to find anyway.* contains an increment initiator 'and' (Lerner, 1991). L's utterance in line 244 *and whether it'll actually work?* which ends with a rising intonation, is followed in line 245 by J's delivery of a minimal response token 'yeah' which precedes Al's expansion component. Nevertheless, Al's utterance in line 246 is actually expanding L's utterance in line 244 since it includes an increment initiator 'and'.

Secondly, Al's attempt to expand L's utterance is partially accepted by L in line 248. Lerner (2004) explains that the original speaker often delivers either an acceptance or rejection for the next speaker when the next speaker delivers an affiliating utterance for one sentence construction. Lerner's claim can also apply to the speaker who delivers an expansion component in a case of OSE. In this instance, L in line 248 delivers a minimal response token 'yeah' which shows that L is partially agreeing with Al's utterance in line 246 *and whether or not [it'll actually be just] stuff for you to find anyway.* However, L delivers 'but' after 'yes' which is a contradiction marker (Schiffrin, 1987) and L continues his story. Thus L in line 248 is showing partial agreement with Al in line 246 but L does not show full agreement with Al's expansion.

Thirdly, this case of OSE follows a three part listing explained by Jefferson (1991) and Lerner (1991). Lerner (1991) explains that a sentence can be theoretically expanded with no limit with the use of conjunctions such as 'and' but in conversations, speakers might predict how many conjunctions will be used to expand a sentence. Jefferson (1991) finds that speakers in conversations often deliver the three part structure when they list things in their conversations. The recipient often monitors the third component as a sign of turn completion.

In this example, L's utterance lists two things he could be worried about when he tells a bride and groom to bring along a CD: *'whether they'll actually bring it along?'* in lines 241 and 242, and *'and whether it'll actually work?'* in line 244. Then in line 246 Al delivers *and whether or not [it'll actually be just] stuff for you to find*

anyway.' as the third component of L's list. Al's utterance in line 246 is presented as a completion of L's possible three-part list.

A OSE providing a third component of a three-part list was also seen in women's conversation in this study. The extract below is taken from Example 1 in the women's OSE earlier.

585: A: Will I just said t'the boss I said make sure we treat her well because y'know she's .hh
586: she knows pe::ople. hahahaha
587: K: hahahaha [ye::ah.
588: A: [I don't wanna be getting on a thing and then someday they're asking her
589: about her experiences and she goes I worked for this café (in) n'the people there
590: were horrible. [hahahaha]
591: K: [hahahaha]
592: → A: and never go eat the:re=they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.]
593: → K: [they] spit
594: in the fo::od.
595: A: yeah.
596: K: hahahahaha

A's utterance in line 592 contains the first list component '*people there were horrible.*'. A in line 592 then delivers the second component part '*they do disgusting things with their[fo::od.]*'. The third component is then delivered by K in line 593 and 594 '*[they] spit in the fo::od*' and it both expands and completes A's utterance of line 592.

As explained above, this instance in men's conversation shares similar features, in that three list components are produced: '*whether they'll actually bring it along?*' and '*and whether it'll actually work?*' by L, and '*and whether or not [it'll actually be just] stuff for you to find anyway.*' by Al. This list is collaboratively developed by two male speakers L and Al.

Example 4

28: J: hehehe and he goes (0.5) ↑why the fuck's my door shut. =and we're like meh? anyway
29: cause he went to go an to go in there and he didn't came back around us, .hhh and he
30: walks in, and the heat wave that came through-
31: → L: cause he saw the heat wave coming out of his fucking room
32: → J: and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye::ah,
33: → L: because it was beautiful because he was all cold in ours, and then he walked into the
34: next room ws a sauna.
35: J: we also (hid)-
36: L: and he's like oh no fuck ↑hahahaha

Both L and J are talking about a story of their holiday in this example. The instance of OSE is seen in lines 31 to 34. J's utterance in line 30 '*walks in, and the heat wave that came through-*' is cut off by the next speaker L. L in line 32 then delivers '*cause he saw the heat wave coming out of his fucking room*'. J in line 30 talks about the 'heat wave'. The next speaker L expands L's talk to provide details of where the heat wave was coming from, and how it was seen by their friend. Therefore, J's utterance in line 30 '*walks in, and the heat wave that came through-*' is interrupted and, at the same time, expanded by the next speaker L in line 31. L's expansion component in line 31 '*cause he saw the heat wave was coming out of his fucking room*' contains '*cause*' as an increment initiator.

L's expansion in line 31 does not end J's story. It is further expanded by the original speaker J in line 32. J in line 32 delivers '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*' which contains an increment initiator '*and*'. J's utterance describes both J and L's reactions to their friend's having been a victim of their practical joke. Thus, so far, a discourse unit is collaboratively formed by both J and L: '*he walks in and the heat wave that came through cause he saw the heat wave was coming out of his fucking room and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*'.

J's expansion in line 32 '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*' is then expanded by L in lines 33 and 34 by delivering '*because it was beautiful because he was all cold in ours, and then he walked into the next room ws a sauna.*'. L's expansion contains two uses of the increment initiator '*because*'. The first '*because*' by L is used to expand the previous speaker, J's utterance in line 32 '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah,*'. The second '*because*' by L expands his first component '*because it was beautiful*'.

In the end, the original speaker J's utterance in line 30 '*...heat wave came through-*' is expanded by both the original speaker J and the next speaker L as a long discourse unit as described below.

Line 30: '*...heat wave came through-*' (by J)
 ↓
 Line 31: '*cause he saw the heat wave coming out of his fucking room*' (by L)
 ↓
 Line 32: '*and it was ju- we're both like ↑ye:::ah*' (by J)
 ↓
 Line 33: '*because it was beautiful because he was all cold in ours and then he walked into the room*' (by L)

As the above shows, this instance is a highly collaborative OSE by male participants. Both speakers J and L are contributing to the expansion of their story using increment initiators '*cause*', '*and*' and '*because*'.

This multiple expansion model is also similarly seen in women's conversation, as shown below.

139: A: and you know- I- I knew tht mike was always on his PS3 playing online games
 140: [through the console,
 141: K: [↓ah:::
 142: → A: and I was li:ke [okay] he goes I got this bill for three thousand dollars.
 143: K: [hhh.]
 144: K: =Aaargh:::
 145: A: and I was like [OH:::M:::Y go:::d.]
 146: → K: [cause he was so far over] his download.
 147: → A: yeah because he would have been downloading at least twenty gig, .hh you know
 148: and it's like fifteen cents per every megabit (.) that you're over.
 149: K: AH:::
 150: A: and I was like oh my [god
 151: K: [he should've rung them up and contested it n said look you
 152: didn't explain this [properly.]

The extract above was taken from Example 2 in the women's OSE earlier. Both A and K are expanding the original speaker A's utterance. The next speaker K's expansion component does complete the original speaker A's utterance, but the original speaker A further expands K's expansion component. In the end, both men and women similiary showed the cases of the multiple expansion which were seen as collaborative feature of conversation.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore whether a collaborative feature in everyday conversation is confined to only women's conversational feature or if it is also apparent in men's conversation. In particular, this study focused on looking at one of collaborative conversational features of OSE. Both quantitative and qualitative analysis showed that both men and women in this study showed some cases of OSE which were collaboratively delivered. As for quantitative analysis, although coding numbers of cases of OSE does not provide strong supporting evidence for generalisation on the use of the feature (Schegloff, 1993), the quantitative results of this study support a possible trend for both men and women to use OSE as a collaborative feature (Perakyla, 2004). As for qualitative analysis, four examples (two women's only conversations and two men's conversations) were examined in depth. Example 1 (women's only conversation) showed the similar case of OSE with the case of OSE in Example 3 (men's only conversation). Example 2 (women's only conversation) also showed the similar case of OSE with the case of OSE in Example 4 (men's only conversation). All four examples collaboratively showed the cases of OSE. As a future study, this study focused on exploring conversations between Australian men and women. To explore cases of OSE between men and women in other countries might show the different features from the features which were seen in this study.

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