

The Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies Program and Linguistics  
Department Present:

“Mothering through trauma in the protection from abuse interview”

A public talk by

Dr. Shonna Trinch

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Family violence perpetrated by one intimate-partner against another that involves children becomes an overarching relationship where the rationale and tacit understandings of family- and legal-interviewing break down. Yet, culture's over-reliance of these categorization and conversation devices to make relationships jive with their socially meaningful referents (i.e., mother, father, child as well as interviewer/interviewee) causes institutional actors to confuse women's actual agency of moral stance-taking with a broken agency that makes them appear either uncooperative or damaged. The site for this analysis is the legal interview where women seek court orders, known as protection from abuse orders. Using the interviews of five women, I will show data suggesting that when women's narratives are not replete with the preferred answers paralegals seek to do their work of documenting physical violence, interactional trouble arises. But rather than suggesting the women are deficient in their answers, the data suggest interviewers are missing or refusing to ratify the ways in which women contest and challenge the moral order of family and legal interviewing to make a claim for their own logic or mothering. I will discuss the consequences for women in abusive relationships when institutional actors and lay people alike cannot recognize women's responses to violence as strategic moves to keep themselves and their children from harm.

Monday March 20, 1:15-2:45 in Bunnell 313 or by Zoom

Please contact Dr. Robin Shoaps ([rashoaps@alaska.edu](mailto:rashoaps@alaska.edu)) for the Zoom link.