

## **Day 4 (Monday June 7)**

Narrative and identities: Different approaches to narrative and identity: autobiographical, sociolinguistic, talk-in-interaction. Important notions for the analysis of identity: Agency, categorization positioning, indexicality.

### **Readings**

De Fina, A., Bamberg, M. and Schiffrin, D. (2006) Introduction. *Discourse and Identity*. Cambridge, CUP.

### ***Optional***

\*Bamberg, M. (1997). Positioning between structure and performance. In M. Bamberg, (Ed.), *Oral versions of personal experience: three decades of narrative analysis* (pp.335-342). *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 7, 1-4.

20. *Communication in Medical Care: Interaction between Primary Care Physicians and Patients* edited by John Heritage and Douglas Maynard
21. *In Other Words: Variation in Reference and Narrative*  
Deborah Schiffrin
22. *Language in Late Modernity: Interaction in an Urban School*  
Ben Rampton

# Discourse and Identity

Edited by

ANNA DE FINA  
*Georgetown University*

DEBORAH SCHIFFRIN  
*Georgetown University*

MICHAEL BAMBERG  
*Clark University*

 **CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

## Introduction

### Background

Research on language and identity has experienced an unprecedented growth in the last ten years. The time when scholars in the field needed to advocate for the centrality of language in the study of identity (see for example, Benveniste 1971 in linguistics or Bruner 1990 in social psychology) seems far away indeed. Research in fields as diverse as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, sociology, history, literature, gender studies, and social theory, among others, has now firmly established the fundamental role of linguistic processes and strategies in the creation, negotiation and establishment of identities. It is impossible to give a comprehensive view of the theoretical work in all of these areas and of how it has shaped identity studies. Our aim with this introduction is more modest: we want to briefly discuss some of the approaches and concepts that have had the greatest impact on current visions of identity, beginning with background perspectives and then turning to central constructs underlying the chapters in the volume. We then present an overview of the volume and a conclusion recapitulating some of the common ground among the contributors.

### Background perspectives

Here we describe several approaches to the study of discourse and identity that pervade the chapters in the volume. We begin with those that have become widely accepted in research on discourse and identity and conclude with some that produce potential divisions in the ways scholars examine discourse and identity.

Perhaps the most general perspective, one that provides a very basic way of thinking about identity, is *social constructionism* (e.g. Berger and Luckman 1967; Hall 1996; Kroskrity 2000): the assumption that identity is neither a given nor a product. Rather, identity is a process that (1) takes place in concrete and specific interactional occasions, (2) yields constellations of identities instead of individual, monolithic constructs, (3) does not simply emanate from the individual, but results from processes of negotiation, and entextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990) that are eminently social, and (4) entails “discursive work” (Zimmerman and Wieder 1970).

Social constructionism has generated a great deal of research on the use of linguistic strategies in discursive work to convey and build identities, on the emergence in interaction of conflicting versions of the self, and therefore on the existence of “repertoires of identities” (Kroskrity 1993), and on the effects of interlocutors, audiences and other social actors on the unfolding of identities in concrete social occasions. In brief, social constructionism has contributed to dissipating transcendentalist conceptions of identity and to directing the attention of researchers to social action rather than to psychological constructs.

Recent scholarship has also emphasized that identity is a process that is always embedded in social practices (Foucault 1984) within which discourse practices (Fairclough 1989) have a central role. Both social and discourse practices frame, and in many ways define, the way individuals and groups present themselves to others, negotiate roles, and conceptualize themselves. Taking the concept of practice as central to processes of identity formation and expression entails looking more closely at ways in which definitions of identity change and evolve in time and space, ways in which membership is established and negotiated within new boundaries and social locations, and ways in which activity systems (Goodwin 1999) impact on processes of identity construction.

Another defining trend in recent research has been the analysis of processes of *categorization and membership definition*. Taking inspiration from early work by Sacks on category bound activities and processes (1972, 1995), scholars in the Membership Categorization Analysis movement (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998b) have drawn attention to the fact that identity construction is often

related to the definition of categories for inclusion or exclusion of self and others, and to their identification with typical activities and routines. This, in turn, has prompted a reflection on the nature of identification categories and on the relationship between individual identity and group membership.

Recent approaches to categorization have highlighted the limitations of applying pre-established categorizations, emphasizing instead the locally occasioned, fluid and ever-changing nature of identity claims. Identity claims are seen as “acts” through which people create new definitions of who they are. Such a conception defies traditional sociolinguistic approaches that link already established social categories with language variables, regarding instead “the very fact of selecting from a variety of possibilities a particular variant (on a given occasion) as a way of actively symbolizing one’s affiliations” (Auer 2002: 4). Thus identities are seen not as merely represented in discourse, but rather as performed, enacted and embodied through a variety of linguistic and non-linguistic means.

A third important trend in identity studies has been the development of an *anti-essentialist vision of the ‘self.’* Work in gender studies and discursive psychology has been crucial in this respect. Gender studies have greatly contributed to our postmodern rejection of the self as something that people possess and that represents some kind of core essence of the person (Bucholtz *et al.* 1999). Gender scholars have shown that people can display “polyphonus” identities, i.e. simultaneously assume voices that are associated with different identity categories, and that they can “perform” identities, i.e. represent themselves as different from what their personal “visible” characteristics would suggest (Barrett 1999), therefore concluding that there is nothing given or “natural” about being part of a social category or group. The inadequacy of an essentialist notion of identity as being embodied in the ‘self’ has also been noted by discursive psychologists who move away from a “predefined model of the human actor” (Potter 2003) towards the investigation of how the psychological categories used to describe or define the ‘self’ are themselves configured according to specific social practices and relationships.

Work in these perspectives has also stressed the centrality of processes of *indexicality* in the creation, performance and attribution of identities. Indexicality is thus a fourth overarching concept

subsuming many of the theoretical constructs used to study identities: it connects utterances to extra-linguistic reality via the ability of linguistic signs to point to aspects of the social context. The connection between indexicality and identity has been a focus of attention in linguistics and anthropology since early work on deixis, particularly on shifters (see Benveniste 1971; Silverstein 1976) pointed to the indissoluble nexus established by these linguistic elements between the speaker and the utterance act.

Both linguists and anthropologists recognize the importance of pronouns in anchoring language to specific speakers in specific contexts and in signaling the reciprocal changes in the roles of interactants through their performance of, and engagement in, communicative acts. For example, linguistic signs at this referential level (Silverstein 1976) identify speakers not only in terms of their conversational roles or gender identity, but also in terms of how they orient to elements of the speech situation such as time and place. By using locatives and time expressions – as well as personal pronouns – language users point to their roles not only as speakers or addressees, but also to their location in time and space and to their relationship to others (present or absent).

Incorporation of the context is in itself a dynamic process through which speakers build their positions within what Hanks (1992) has named “the indexical ground.” By carrying out acts of reference, interactants continuously constitute and reconstitute their positions with respect to each other, to objects, places and times. Thus, indexing aspects of the context can never be reduced to a simple act of orientation in physical space or to the mere signaling of alternations in speech roles. Indexicality is a layered, creative, interactive process that lies at the heart of the symbolic workings of language. The idea that signs are indexical goes beyond simple referential anchoring to encompass the ability of linguistic expressions to evoke, and relate to, complex systems of meaning such as socially shared conceptualizations of space and place, ideologies, social representations about group membership, social roles and attributes, presuppositions about all aspects of social reality, individual and collective stances, practices and organization structures.

The approaches and concepts briefly outlined above rest on basic, and generally accepted, assumptions about the relationships

between discourse, identity and social processes. However, scholars of identity are also deeply divided on several theoretical and methodological issues.

At opposite extremes are two approaches: the one sustained by scholars working within the frame of Conversation Analysis and the one advocated by scholars working within the frame of Critical Discourse Analysis. The division is not exclusive to the study of identity. Rather, it derives from different conceptions of the relationship between language and social life, of the role of the researcher, and of the methodology to be followed in data collection and analysis. Scholars in the field of Conversation Analysis advocate methodological restraint, according to which analysts need to “hold off from using all sorts of identities which one might want to use in, say, a political or cultural frame of analysis” (Antaki and Widdicombe 1998a: 5) and look exclusively for categories of identity membership that are made relevant in the local context by participants. In this view, identities are locally occasioned in talk-in-interaction, they are consequential for the interaction at hand, and therefore participants clearly “orient” to them. The researcher’s task is then to reconstruct the processes of adscription and negotiation of identities as they are manifested within the activity in which participants are engaged. These arguments echo Schegloff’s polemic stance against the imposition of ad hoc interpretive categories by “politically informed” analysts. Schegloff (1997: 168) argued that only after analyzing the interactional event “in its endogenous constitution, what it was for the parties involved in it, in its course, as embodied and displayed in the very details of its realization – can we even begin to explore what forms a critical approach to it might take, and what political issue, if any, it allows us to address.” Accordingly, within this approach, the only relevant context to understand the emergence of identities in interaction is the local context.

At the other extreme of the spectrum are scholars who identify with Critical Discourse Analysis (Billig 1999). In their view, the contexts that are relevant to the expression, negotiation and perpetuation of identities are much wider, since identities are, in many ways, produced and often imposed upon individuals and groups through dominant discourse practices and ideologies. From their perspective, keeping the analysis at the level of the local interaction

only means ignoring how power struggles and wider social circumstances constrain and frame the way identities are perceived and projected in specific interactions. The consequence of such a stance is that Critical Discourse Analysts tend to privilege the analysis of political and ideological contexts in the formation of identities and concentrate on the representation of identities much more than on their projection or negotiation in interaction.

Our aim in this volume is not to argue for one position against the other, or to promote a particular agenda, but to offer analyses and reflections that can be taken as a basis for discussion by scholars who endorse different perspectives. In this sense, the volume differs from other collections in its inclusion of a range of approaches and its coverage of a variety of identities and texts/contexts: rather than share a single theoretical orientation, contributors come from different traditions and fields and use varying methodological tools. As we describe in the next section, however, several constructs re-appear throughout the volume, thus providing some overarching theoretical and methodological frameworks for the volume as a whole.

### Overarching themes, underlying constructs and persistent questions

Contributors to *Discourse and Identity* employ a variety of specific theoretical approaches and methodological orientations, including Narrative Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Interactional Sociolinguistics, and Critical Discourse Analysis. Yet all share an anti-essentialist orientation, a discourse and practice centered approach to identity, and a close focus on the interactional and local management of social categories and language along with consideration of the effects of global processes on the management of local identities. Before turning to an overview of the volume, then, we highlight some of the overarching themes and underlying constructs that find application in the volume and discuss their relevance to the linguistic analysis of identity. We present each construct as a general question that is answered through the concepts and methods (the tools, the “nuts and bolts”) comprised through each construct.

*Positioning: How do the relationships we “take up” through (a) linguistically realized action and (b) interactions with different facets of our social, cultural and ideological worlds contribute to “who we are”?*

Analyses of positioning build on the insight that identity is socially constructed at several levels: through relationships between the speaker and what is being said (including both means of production and evaluative or epistemic stance); through relationships between self and other, or speaker and hearer, in face-to-face occasions of talk and interaction; through relationships represented in the propositional content of talk (what is one textual character doing to another textual character?); through relationships to the dominant ideologies, widespread social practices and underlying power structures drawn together as Discourse (Gee 1996). One of the goals of positioning theory is to more clearly identify the mechanisms through which linguistic and social processes become reified as observable products that may be glossed by others as “identities.”

If the practices in which we routinely engage are viewed as central to processes of identity formation, what kind of personal agency is inscribed in these practices? While some researchers focus more strongly on social and institutional factors that constrain and delineate the radius of agency for individuals and groups of individuals, others credit groups and individuals with an agency that enables them to more than comply with such societal forces. This latter orientation is particularly interested in the agentive role of participants in interactions as being able to counter dominant practices, discourses and master narratives.

Scholars who have developed positioning theory (e.g. Bamberg 1997b, 2005; Davies and Harré 1990; Harré and van Langenhove 1999; Hollway 1984) investigate agency as bi-directional. On the one hand, historical, sociocultural forces in the form of dominant discourses or master narratives position speakers in their situated practices and construct who they are without their agentive involvement. On the other hand, speakers position themselves as constructive and interactive agents and choose the means by which they construct their identities vis-à-vis others as well as vis-à-vis dominant discourses and master narratives.

Positioning provides a central theoretical construct and valuable tool for analyzing identity in this volume. Authors investigate the linguistic mechanisms and discourse strategies that allow individual speakers to place themselves in positions of acceptance or rejection, for example, of ideologies of race, gender, or widely held conceptions about family roles and relationships (Bell, Moita-Lopes, Wortham and Gadsden). Linguistic strategies for projecting and constructing particular personas include modalization, constructed dialogue, meta-pragmatic descriptors and pronouns. Authors also suggest that speakers build positions vis-à-vis their former selves through the management of time categories in the reconstruction of their life experiences, since they look back at what happened in the past through the vantage point of their present experiences, therefore engaging in an ever evolving interpretation of their roles and lives (Bell, Mishler).

Authors also address the theoretical ramifications of the concept of positioning through discussion of the many facets of identity that can be the object of discursive work. Interlocutors can assume stances not only towards ideologies, but also towards absent others (e.g. characters and their actions in stories), and towards each other. Thus, in different chapters, interviewers and interviewees are shown using strategies such as the application of labels, the use of discourse responses or even silence after questions, to position each other in particular ways (Baynham, Bell, Johnson).

Investigating levels of identity construction as a process of positioning, and discovering the means adopted to enact various positions, leads to reflecting on the many ways of doing identity, ranging from the proclamation and open assignment of membership into social categories to the enactment of different kinds of selves, to indirect conveying of alignments and disalignments, to the implicit placement of social agents into pre-assigned roles. Analyses of positioning can thus productively connect the local focus of conversation analytic and the more global focus of critical discourse analytic approaches. They can also help elucidate the embrace of, or resistance to, imposed identities through narrative, as well as through other discourse genres, discursive practices and Discourse writ large. While positioning thus constitutes a sort of umbrella for different ways of constructing identity in discourse,

other more specific constructs are also used by contributors in this volume to account for particular aspects of identity work.

*Interaction order: "Who are we" when we are interacting with one another in face-to-face talk?*

The investigation of the interaction order as a central site for the construction of identities provides a significant site of analysis, and area of reflection, in the chapters collected in this volume. Many authors illustrate how a multiplicity of identities are managed through social interactions by building upon Goffman's work as a fundamental point of departure because of his insights on the importance of reciprocity in communication and on the fundamental presence of the 'other' in the public management of the self. This relational view of communication has an immediate relevance for the analysis of identity work through the constructs of footing ("the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (1981: 128)), and "face" (the positive social attributes that a person claims for him or herself in the course of social interaction (1967a)).

The management of this relational level underlies a great deal of identity work in private and public exchanges and conversations (Bastos and Oliveira, Holmes, Ribeiro). Authors illustrate how the presentation of a positive face to others underlies the choice of referring terms or the telling of stories or anecdotes and the provision of details within them: both can depict the self as a "figure" whose actions, interactions and relationships within specific story-worlds have potential relevance for the interaction. Also shown is how the identities presented by clients of public services, or by people in the work place, are shaped by the need to preserve an image of oneself which is consistent with the requirements and exigencies of the situation, the interaction, and the needs of the interlocutors. Problematizing and deconstructing face work, then, leads analysts to interpret the presentation and enactment of particular identities not so much as expressions of the 'self,' but rather as constructions that take into account both the objectives of interactional practices, and the constraints of institutional structures, that are "in play" when people communicate with each other.

Analysis of interactional processes is also based on a fundamental principle of intersubjectivity that allows identities to be achieved and built through reciprocal moves between interactants (Schiffrin). Partners in storytelling events may build dominant positions within close knit groups by consistently taking up roles as co-narrators or evaluators of the narratives told by others (Georgakopoulou). Interactants can project identifications or rejections towards their partners through cooperative or uncooperative management of conversation (Johnson, Holmes). They can also confirm and fine tune local identities that place them in relationships with others (such as “expert” versus “novice”) through the use of repair in referring sequences (Schiffrin). Many chapters in this volume show how the management of interactional resources, such as those described above, can become central to people’s intersubjective construction of identities.

*Footing, multivocality and intertextuality: “Who” is speaking “whose” words and what role are they taking in the “speech”?*

The question of “who” is speaking “whose” words – and the incorporation of other voices and texts in the here and now – has been examined from sociological, linguistic and literary perspectives, many of which underlie the chapters in this volume.

One perspective drawn upon by contributors to the volume is Goffman’s work on participation frameworks and the deconstruction of the notion of “speaker” into more subtle distinctions. Goffman (1981: 128) distinguishes between different aspects of the self in discourse production: the author (the person who designs the utterance), the animator (the person who speaks the words that may have been designed by someone else), the principal (the person who takes responsibility for the sentiments underlying the words) and the figure (the character in a story or other text). These aspects of self define how people engage in identity work by taking up one or more relationships to an utterance. Speakers may signal or convey, through a variety of linguistic means such as reference, pronominal choice, or quotation, that they are assuming “authority” with respect to interlocutors, for example by claiming expertise in certain areas of knowledge or experience (Ribeiro,

Schiffrin). They can also signal their authority to represent others in a community, thus conveying that they are not just individuals animating their own stories, but also principals who are collectively committed to particular versions of the past (Baynham, De Fina, Schiff and Noy).

Goffman’s differentiation among the speaker as the “author” of the present discourse, the “animator” as a participant in the interaction at hand, and the speaker as “figure” or character in a past world evoked in the discourse, also appears in many chapters as a particularly productive resource for the analysis of speakers’ *stances* with respect to ideologies and behaviors through narrative discourse. Contributors who examine narrative, De Fina, Kiesling, and Moita-Lopes, for example, show that because narrators can use their own characteristics or actions as protagonists in story-worlds as a point of reference to express evaluations of many facets of social experience, they are able to convey their position on a variety of social problems such as gender roles, race and ethnicity without openly asserting their views.

Other perspectives on “who” is speaking “whose” words and what role they are taking in the speech stems from the research of linguists Becker (1984) and Tannen (1989) whose work also harks back to Bakhtin (1986) on multivocality and Kristeva (1980) on intertextuality. As suggested by Tannen, all interactions are made up of prior texts that we draw upon in new ways: “both the meanings of individual words. . .and the combinations in which we put them are given to us by previous speakers, traces of whose voices and contexts cling inevitably to them” (1989: 100). This notion of intertextuality has a long and rich history in literary studies. Kristeva (1980), for example, pointed out that texts have not only a horizontal axis that connects author to recipient, but also a vertical axis that connects a text to other texts. As Fairclough (1992: 84) explains:

Intertextuality is basically the property texts have of being full of snatches of other texts, which may be explicitly demarcated or merged in, and which the text may assimilate, contradict, ironically echo, and so forth. In terms of production, an intertextual perspective stresses the historicity of texts: how they always constitute additions to existing “chains of speech communication” (Bakhtin 1986: 94) consisting of prior texts to which they respond.



Just as an utterance can draw upon previous utterances from distant prior texts, so too, can it provide material for future utterances (and/or texts) by a recipient at a later time or place. The interchange between different interlocutors (the horizontal axis) is thus crucial, as stated by Bakhtin (1986: 68):

when the listener perceives and understands the [language meaning] of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it . . . Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker.

Bakhtin's view recalls an earlier point about how information is managed through the alternation of participant roles, as well as the shared sense of meanings, actions and knowledge that are grounded in the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction. The difference, of course, is the deictic center of information and participation: the listeners and speakers who draw upon intertextual connections with remote prior texts – rather than the just-completed utterance from a prior turn-at-talk – need not be co-present. And this reduces the potential for evidence of shared meanings and shared recognition of multivocality. Regardless of this (in)ability to trace the source of prior voices and texts, however, a multiplicity of voices and words is interwoven into discourse. Thus even when one individual appears to be responsible for the production of utterances, prior voices and texts are fundamental to our understanding of identity as a process.

Various contributors to the volume work with more explicit means of exploiting multivocality as a resource for identity construction. One way is the quotation of the words of others to stress an idea, to evaluate behavior, to summarize an opinion. In connection with this question, Bakhtin's work on constructed dialogue and on dialogism in general, is a theoretical framework widely referred to by authors in the volume. Bakhtin introduced the very central concept that reporting speech is not a passive enterprise, but an active process of transformation. Any act of reporting is, in his view, at the same time an act of appropriation of somebody else's words, and a reformulation of the original act. Bakhtin (1981b) showed, for example, how reported speech in narrative can be presented on a scale of "objectivity," from a clear separation of the narrator's voice with respect to that of the speaking character, to a subtle

mixing of different voices within the same text that may make it at times almost impossible to distinguish reporting from commentary. Thus, authors in the book apply Bakhtin's ideas about voice and dialogism to show that narrators can borrow the voices of others to construct their own identity in opposition to, or in agreement with, what figures of authority express in story-worlds (Baynham, Moita-Lopes, Ribeiro, Wortham and Gadsden) as well as to convey evaluations of their role and the roles of others within present and past experiences (Bell, De Fina).

Other contributors show dialogism, multivocality, participant framework and intertextuality working at a different level: as discourses or ideologies that confront interactants, as underlying voices surrounding their own identity construction and lending meaning to categories, metaphors or images that they use to describe themselves and others and to place themselves in the social world. Interactants evoke Discourses, and confront themselves with them, for example through recourse to shared cultural models (Holland and Skinner 1987) that allow the interpretation of experience, but also evoke the fixity of social roles and relationships.

Shared cultural models constitute preferred scenarios against which people interpret not only narratives and characters, but also the value and significance of terms and category-bound expressions. Thus identities are constructed in discourse through the subtle evoking of contexts that lend meaning to implicit gender and ethnic categorization of self and others (Kiesling, Moita-Lopes). Internalized, typical scenarios set expectations for the behavior and roles of individuals in both private and public spheres, determining certain interpretations about the identities of people occupying certain positions in domains of social interaction that range from restaurants (Lakoff) to schools (Johnson) to hospitals (Bell) and insurance companies (Bastos and Oliveira). And once public figures and processes begin to constitute the frame within which individual behaviors make sense (Schiff and Noy), they can become the basis for the interpretation and communication of highly personal experiences and identities. Processes of categorization also rest on the implicit construction of shared representations about self and others that are the basis for ideologies about race and ethnicity (De Fina). Thus contributors to the volume demonstrate that individual construction of identity is in constant

interdependence with general social and ideological processes and their representation and reconstruction in public voices and discourses.

*Indexing local and global identities: How do our interactions with others contribute to our reflection and construction of who we are? How is "who we are" in our face-to-face interactions related to broader membership categories and to social, cultural and ideological aspects of the world in general?*

A central concern in many chapters in this volume is the investigation of relationships between locally expressed identities and more global, socially-shared identities. A social constructionist perspective underscores the processual nature of identity construction and its links to concrete communication events, but leaves open the question of how these relations emerge in discourse and what role different contexts play in their interpretation.

Contributors to the volume attempt to show that micro- and macro-identities constantly intersect in discourse. Such intersections are apparent when we look at how different levels of identity construction contribute to the interpretation of the roles that partners occupy in interaction. Borrowing Zimmerman's classification of different levels of identity (1998), we can distinguish "discourse identities" as those that are related to the moment-by-moment alternation of roles such as speaker-listener or questioner-answerer; "situated identities," as those that are instantiated in particular types of situations, such as interviewer-interviewee or client-healthcare provider representative; and "transportable identities" as those deriving from more general characteristics of the individual, such as gender or ethnicity. Different authors in the book show that these identities are not only constructed simultaneously in concrete occasions of interaction, but also that local ("discourse" and "situated") identities crucially contribute to the emergence of more global, transportable identities. Thus, people's moment-by-moment management of interaction, their assumption of local roles, has important consequences for the projection of their image at a more general level. Activity-based identities during an interview between two women on the importance of a local market contribute to the emergence of gender and class identities

(Schiffrin), just as managing local roles of story-teller, evaluator and co-teller demonstrates the incumbency of larger social identities of gender for teenagers in conversation (Georgakopoulou).

The concept of indexicality helps us understand how connections are established not only between language (as well as other modes of communications) and local identities, but also between language and global identities. Linguistic forms at all levels may be used to signal relationships of membership within, or dissociation from, particular groups via the association of those forms with ideologies, stances, attitudes, actions, and practices attributed to members of those groups. Any aspect of language can become indexical of social identities, from phonological variables to individual words, to complex discourse structures such as patterns of actions in narratives. Indexicality is thus a resource for the construction of discourse identities that link the micro and the macro level thanks to the shared nature of ideologies, cultural models, Discourses and social representations that assign roles, typical behavioral patterns, even physical or mental characteristics to social agents and that presuppose scenarios in which stereotypical social relationships are represented.

Like the other processes and constructs discussed above, indexing identity in everyday face-to-face interaction is both reflective and constructive of social reality. On the one hand, speakers use indexicality to project identities based on social norms and expectations about what it means to be a certain kind of person or to act in a certain kind of way; on the other hand, they can use the same tacit understandings to build new associations and therefore to construct new types of identities. Thus indexical relationships are never given, but are continuously negotiated and recreated by speakers because of the infinite possibilities inherent in the association of signs with meanings. As shown in many of the papers in this volume, processes of indexicality are deployed as resources to negotiate identities at different levels, from local relationships within the interaction to membership in social categories, domains and different communicative contexts, from spontaneous conversations to focus group interviews. Indexicality has thus pushed research in the direction of the analysis of the management of identity as a highly symbolic process subject to cultural and interactional constraints, but also in

constant flow and change according to new perceptions, new norms and new allegiances.

Indexicality also reflectively points to the importance of the kinds of discourse practices in which people engage. Although a nexus between language and identities can be studied in many different types of discourses, narrative has had a prominent role in forging this intersection. Contributions to the volume reflect the widely accepted centrality of narrative as a privileged locus for the negotiation of identities. Authors explore the power of narratives as coping devices to create coherent identities (Bell), as institutional tools to regulate identities (Moita-Lopes), and as interactionally co-constructed texts to create community (Georgakopoulou). However, they also investigate the role of other types of discourse practices in framing identities, for example the telling of personal anecdotes to build a connection between personal and collective identities (Holmes), the writing of menus, recipes and cookbooks to configure ideal housewives or clients (Lakoff), or of institutional letters to define acceptable and unacceptable public faces (Bastos and Oliveira), and the management of interviews to negotiate authority and expertise (Bell, Johnson).

### Summary

*Discourse and Identity* brings together a range of theoretical constructs and methodological approaches that collectively provide important insights about the nexus between what we say (at both micro- and macro-levels of discourse and Discourse) and who we are (including both transient and emergent presentations of self and our relatively stable identities). In addition to examining the interplay between local and global identities in different interactional contexts, social settings, and types of discourse, the volume provides opportunities for comparative analysis of particular cases across a wide range of possibilities. Authors analyze strategies of construction, co-construction, and negotiation of identities in different contexts (e.g. the work place, medical interviews, focus groups, educational settings, food-oriented texts), in different genres (e.g. narrative, interviews, conversations, accounts, menus) and among different communities (e.g. immigrants, patients, adolescents, fathers, Holocaust survivors). The volume thus builds

upon the linguistic and ethnographic orientation of scholars such as Dell Hymes and Pete Becker – an orientation that seeks generalizations through the accumulation of “particularities,” which are, in turn, discovered only through detailed microanalyses of individual cases.

### Volume overview

*Discourse and Identity* uses a variety of constructs central to the construction and presentation of identity (e.g. reciprocity, intersubjectivity, the fluidity of time, indexicality, positioning) and methodologies (e.g. interactional sociolinguistics, conversation analysis, narrative analysis) to examine local and global identities as constructed by people under very different circumstances and from very different backgrounds. Several chapters deal with group identities: immigrants (Baynham, De Fina), adolescents (Georgakopoulou, Moita-Lopes), clients (Bastos and Oliveira, Lakoff), members of hegemonic (Kiesling) and non-hegemonic (Wortham and Gadsden) social classes, and Holocaust survivors (Schiff and Noy). They do so to illuminate both the processes through which people produce these identities and the ideological and social conditioning to which they respond. Other chapters investigate individuals as articulating plural, often conflicting, identities such as mother–patient–woman (Bell); professional–private person (Johnson, Holmes); and individual–client (Bastos and Oliveira).

The volume is divided into four parts: Part I deals with the discussion of theoretical and methodological issues that are central to current debates on identity. The other three parts are organized according to domains of identity formation and negotiation: the private–public interface (Part II), gender (Part III), and transitional identities (Part IV). Below we very briefly summarize the content of each part, which are then discussed in more depth in their introductions.

The chapters in Part I, *Overview: theory, method and analysis*, focus on theoretical and methodological issues such as the contexts pertinent to the analysis of identities in talk, the appropriateness of theoretical constructs for the study of aspects of identity, the relative focus on language and the role of linguistic forms in the negotiation of identities.

Mishler opens Part I by discussing the implications of different approaches to temporal ordering in narrative for theories about identity development. His analysis focuses on linear conceptions of time and on external-world event ordering as an organizational principle for narratives.

In the following chapter, Ribeiro discusses the implications of a number of theoretical and methodological tools for the study of identity. She examines different concepts that have been used in the literature to account for facets of identity, specifically the notions of positioning, voice and footing. These notions are illustrated and compared through the analysis of a telephone conversation on medical family matters between two brothers.

Like Mishler, Georgakopoulou takes narrative analysis as a starting point to discuss a theoretical question: the interconnections between the local managements of discursive roles and “pre-existent, socioculturally available, Capital D, Discourses.” Analyzing storytelling practices among members of a group of adolescent girls, Georgakopoulou shows that the connections between local identities and larger social identities are recoverable through the analysis of participant roles.

Schiffrin’s chapter starts with a problem of reference: how can a referring term index identities in the textual and social worlds? Her answer requires a perspective on ‘self,’ ‘other’ and interaction developed from a close reading of Erving Goffman’s work, as well as some understanding of linguistic analyses of reference. To illustrate this interdisciplinary theoretical framework, Schiffrin analyzes how a single reference during an interchange in one interview is part of a complex array of identities at different levels, including animator/author (of a repair), situated role in activity-based sequences, and broad social categories (gender, social class and region).

The authors in Part II, *Private and public identities: constructing who we are*, focus on how discursive practices shape identities, on how personal and public identities interact in concrete social processes, on the degree to which public discourses constrain the definitions of personal identities and on the role of different participants in such social practices (both local interactants and removed addressees) on the way people define who they are. In the contexts analyzed, the process of identity building involves coping with the conflicting demands of professional and private

images, with the different perceptions by interviewers and interviewees on the tellability and noteworthiness of aspects of one’s identity, or with the need to create appropriate images for consumers.

Lakoff opens by looking at the interface between public discourse and personal identities that revolves around food and food consumption. She shows how discourse and practices focused on food reveal a collective shift in the identity of Americans from a people that conceives of food as simply a means of sustenance, to a people whose identity is much more defined by what they eat.

Holmes’ chapter also focuses on the interface between public and personal identities, but takes as its research domain the workplace. In her analysis, Holmes looks at how anecdotes in talk at work are used to instantiate varied personal and collective identities. The analysis illustrates that identities are achieved through interactional work and also that the identity repertoire on which individuals draw is tightly related to the activity in which they engage.

The relationship between personal identities and the identities in which individuals are positioned in particular communicative contexts is taken up also by Bastos and Oliveira in their chapter, as they investigate the social conflict produced by differences in expectations about identity and social roles held by individual clients and by their Health Insurance Service Company in Brazil. The chapter invites a reflection on how institutional contexts determine entextualization rules that, in turn, shape acceptable and unacceptable identities and on how a critical reflection on such processes can greatly impact the way institutions relate to individuals in the real world.

Johnson shares Bastos and Oliveira’s focus on the construction of public identities and on how institutional demands and expectations intertwine with individual negotiations about who we are. She illustrates the ascription of a “good-teacher identity” to a participant in a research interview and how such identity is elaborated through the collaboration of both interviewer and interviewee.

In her chapter, Bell reflects on another important aspect of the interface between private and public identities: the construction of individual identities against the backdrop of ideologies circulated in public discourse and in institutional practices. The author examines how a woman whose life has been profoundly altered by her mother’s exposure to a highly dangerous estrogen (DES),

builds an image of herself as a parent and an individual that results from a complex interaction with dominant ideologies about motherhood and health, the medical circumstances that have dominated her life, and the dialogue that she establishes with the interviewer.

The chapters in Part III, *The gendered self: becoming and being a man*, share a focus on the construction of masculinity in different circumstances and social worlds. In particular, authors analyze how general cultural models underlie and provide the context for the interpretation of locally displayed identities, how whiteness, heterosexuality and masculinity are negotiated and enacted in collective narrative practices within institutional interactions, conversations between peers, and interviews, but also how identities are shaped by these practices. Another common thread between the chapters is a reflection on narrative resources as a primary tool for building and negotiating gendered identities.

Like Bell, Kiesling is concerned with ways in which the construction and management of individual identities is affected by and reflects social discourses. In this case, the discourses examined are about race and gender. This author stresses the role of Cultural Models in the negotiation of identities at an interactional level. The discourse construction of hegemonic and subordinate categories of gender and racial belonging is also the focus of the chapter by Moita-Lopes. Focusing on interactional positioning, the author looks at the construction of whiteness, masculinity and heterosexuality in the discourse of one adolescent boy in focus group discussions taking place in a Brazilian school. In his analysis, identities are built under local and socio-historical constraints that make different kinds of meanings available on the basis of how people are positioned within relationships of power. Both Kiesling and Moita-Lopes demonstrate, with different data, the centrality of processes of opposition and differentiation in the construction of hegemonic categories.

The interactional construction of gendered identity and the role of narrative in this process are also a prominent theme in Wortham and Gadsden's chapter. Like Moita-Lopes, these authors focus on "interactional positioning" and propose a re-elaboration of the concept in order to account for ways in which narrators project

and enact identities in discourse. They also reflect on how the discourse ascription of membership categories is based on culturally available positions represented by associations between domains and actions.

Part IV, *The in-between self: negotiating person and place*, is centered on situations where identity construction is related to processes of coping with changes, troubles, or life-time transitions. In particular, contributors deal with the discursive negotiation of identity by immigrants and Holocaust survivors. In these circumstances, discursive processes of identification also imply a search for new meanings and new representations of self and others. The three chapters also deal with the relationship between individual identities and socio-historical processes and ideologies.

The opening chapter by De Fina presents a reflection on the emergence of group identity in the narrative discourse of Mexican undocumented immigrants to the US. She studies self-representations that emerge through the establishment of connections between identities and actions in stories, but also advocates for a close textual analysis of performance devices as a means of uncovering narrators' stances about socially shared self-representations. A similar attempt to bring wider contexts into the analysis of identity without abandoning the focus on interaction is found in Baynham's chapter, the second in the section. Baynham uses narratives of migration told by Moroccan immigrants to Great Britain to illustrate the unsettling of received categories of identity, to stress processes of identity formation and the building of new selves through interactional work.

The relationship between individual identity construction and social processes is also a central topic in the last chapter of the section. Schiff and Noy investigate the relationship between narrative and individual/social identity through an analysis of the life story of a Jewish woman, Bella. The narrator reinterprets her past through the help of a metaphor of brutality and chaos offered by a character, Demjanjuk, whose existence and deeds surfaced much after the time of her deportation. The authors show how narrative is socially constructed in the sense that people integrate shared meanings and metaphors within their individual accounts.

### Conclusion and anticipation

The purpose of *Discourse and Identity* is to gather together scholarship that represents the variety and richness of current approaches to identity. Within this variety, however, we found several points shared by all the authors that may be taken as guidelines for future work on discourse and identity.

The first point stems from the shared view that the analysis of any aspect of language is inseparable from analysis of its use in contexts. This has a consequence for analyses of identity. Identity is not something that speakers “have,” but something that emerges through interactional practices – including ways of using language – in contexts. Since identity is continuously and constantly produced and reproduced, sketched and designed, and often co-constructed by ‘self’ and ‘other,’ we should strive to demonstrate how identities are (re)produced through language (and other media) and how they come into existence through social interaction.

The importance of “practice” is a second point. Not only is it within social practice that identities are shaped, but also the construction and projection of identities are themselves interactional practices. The details of these interactions vary, as do approaches to their analyses. Yet practices as varied as narrative, life story, interviews, letter writing, and conversation all provide systematic (yet emergent) means of “doing” things through talk that simultaneously provide means of “being.”

A final point brought forth through this volume is that processes of identities cannot be neatly bifurcated as individual or social: interconnections between individual and social levels pervade both processes and products of identity construction. The social theorist Anthony Giddens (1991) observes four general oppositions that are claimed to thwart our efforts to situate a ‘self’ in a meaningful way within our phenomenal worlds: unification vs. fragmentation, powerlessness vs. appropriation, authority vs. uncertainty, personalized vs. commodified experience. Giddens places some of the responsibility for these oppositions, and their resulting “tribulations of self,” on the increasing availability of mediated information in modern society. Yet other features of modern urban societies (e.g. the increasing role of bureaucracies, the rise of consumerism, social and geographic mobility, alienation from traditional

institutions) can also contribute to, and complicate, our definitions of who we are. What this volume demonstrates is how recent scholarship in linguistics, anthropology, sociology and psychology has shown that it is largely within discourse that we find particularized evidence of Giddens’ oppositions, as well as efforts to reconcile (or change) them within the various social domains in which our claims to self-validity and social legitimacy are reinforced, challenged or altered.

**EDITOR**

**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

Michael G. W. Bamberg . . . . . Clark University

**EDITORIAL BOARD**

Hayward R. Alker . . . . . Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
 Ruth Berman . . . . . Tel Aviv University  
 Margaret B. Blackman . . . . . SUNY Brockport  
 Shoshana Blum-Kulka . . . . . Hebrew University  
 Courtney B. Cazden . . . . . Harvard University  
 Robert Coles . . . . . Harvard University  
 Henry Louis Gates, Jr. . . . . Harvard University  
 Shirley Brice Heath . . . . . Stanford University  
 Dell Hymes . . . . . University of Virginia  
 Vera John-Steiner . . . . . University of New Mexico  
 James R. Kincaid . . . . . University of Southern California  
 William Labov . . . . . University of Pennsylvania  
 Sarah Michaels . . . . . Clark University  
 Elliott G. Mishler . . . . . Harvard Medical School  
 Ulric Neisser . . . . . Emory University  
 Katharine Nelson . . . . . The City University of New York  
 Elinor Ochs . . . . . University of California, Los Angeles  
 James Olney . . . . . Louisiana State University  
 David B. Pillemer . . . . . Wellesley College  
 Uta M. Quasthoff . . . . . Universität Bielefeld  
 Jacqueline Sachs . . . . . The University of Connecticut  
 Roger C. Schank . . . . . Northwestern University  
 Dan I. Slobin . . . . . University of California, Berkeley  
 Catherine E. Snow . . . . . Harvard University  
 Brian Sutton-Smith . . . . . University of Pennsylvania  
 Teun A. van Dijk . . . . . University of Amsterdam  
 Sheldon H. White . . . . . Harvard University  
 W. Ross Winterowd . . . . . University of Southern California  
 Katharine Young . . . . . Merion, PA

**ASSOCIATE EDITORIAL BOARD**

Richard Ely and Gigliana Melzi . . . . . Boston University  
 Ann Densmore . . . . . Clark University  
 Alison Imbens-Bailey, Laurie Bozzi, Chienju Chang, Claudia Cooper, Terri M. Griffin,  
 Shira Horowitz, Yoshimi Maeno, Masahiko Minami, Ana Elisabeth B. Miranda,  
 Mignonne Pollard, Martha Shiro, Kendra Winner, and Anne Wolf . . . . . Harvard University

**SENIOR PRODUCTION EDITOR**

James M. Fraleigh . . . . . Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.

This journal is abstracted or indexed in *Linguistic Abstracts*; *PsycINFO/Psychological Abstracts*; *Sociological Abstracts*; *Inventory of Marriage and Family Literature*; *ISI: Arts & Humanities Citation Index*, *Current Contents/Arts & Humanities*, *Research Alert*, *Current Contents/Social & Behavioral Sciences*, *Social SciSearch*; *Linguistic and Language Behavior Abstracts*.

Microform copies of this journal are available through UMI, Periodical Check-In, North Zeeb Road, P.O. Box 1346, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346.

Copyright © 1997, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. No part of this publication may be used, in any form or by any means, without permission of the publisher. Printed in the United States of America. ISSN 1053-6981.

Send special requests for permission to the Permission Department, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 10 Industrial Avenue, Mahwah, NJ 07430-2262.

# Journal of Narrative and Life History

Volume 7, Numbers 1-4

Introductory Note . . . . . 1  
 Michael G. W. Bamberg

Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience . . . . . 3  
 William Labov and Joshua Waletzky

Narratology and Narratological Analysis . . . . . 39  
 Gerald Prince

Labov and Waletzky in Context . . . . . 45  
 Cynthia Bernstein

From Labov and Waletzky to "Contextualist Narratology": 1967-1997 . . . . . 53  
 Joyce Tolliver

Labov and Waletzky, Thirty Years On . . . . . 61  
 Jerome Bruner

A Matter of Time: When, Since, After Labov and Waletzky . . . . . 69  
 Elliot G. Mishler

Dualisms in the Study of Narrative: A Note on Labov and Waletzky . . . . . 75  
 Paul J. Hopper

Narrative Authenticity . . . . . 83  
 Elinor Ochs and Lisa Capps

Struggling Beyond Labov and Waletzky . . . . . 91  
 Janet Holmes

"Narrative Analysis" Thirty Years Later . . . . . 97  
 Emanuel A. Schegloff

Toward Families of Stories in Context . . . . . 107  
 Marjorie Harness Goodwin

(Continued)

narratives may be itself an artifact, that is, contrived. The story I tell may not have been the story I tried to live.

#### REFERENCES

- Brockmeier, J., Harré, R., & Mühlhäusler, P. (1997). *Greenspeak*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Bruner, J. S. (1986). *Actual minds, possible worlds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Davies, B., & Harré, R. (1990). Positioning: The social construction of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20, 43-63.
- Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (this issue). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts: Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society* (pp. 12-44). Seattle: University of Washington Press. (Original work published 1967)
- Propp, V. (1968). *Morphology of the folk tale*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

## Positioning Between Structure and Performance

Michael G. W. Bamberg  
*Department of Psychology, Clark University*

#### TEMPORALITY AND EVALUATION

There are two possible interpretations of what the term *narrative* implies in Labov and Waletzky's original 1967 (this issue; henceforth L&W) framework in terms of how narrative is linked to *personal experience* in particular and to sense-making in general. The first, more simplistic reading implies that narratives—particularly those of personal experience—are representations of something that once happened and what this past happening meant (or “now” means) to the narrator. The second, more indirect reading requires the act of telling—or “representing” at a particular occasion in the form of a particular story—to intervene, so to speak, between the actual experience and the story. It was the first reading of L&W that originally fascinated me and lured me into exploring narratives as a window to people's experiences. However, in the course of having worked with narratives over the last two decades, I have moved more and more to adopt the second reading.

Other contributors to this issue have commented in one or another way on this tension between a traditional, structural approach and a more performance-based, pragmatic approach to narrative and narrative analysis. Whereas the first takes its starting point from what was said (and the way it was said) and works toward why it was said, that is, its meaning, the second focuses more strongly on how it was performed as the main index for what the narrative as an act of instantiation means to the performer. It also should be noted that within this second reading the audience is much more of a factor that impinges on the shape of the narrative and its performance. What actually is being said is one of the many different performance features in what the speaker aims to achieve in the act of narrating.

---

Requests for reprints should be sent to Michael Bamberg, Department of Psychology, Clark University, Worcester, MA 01610-1477. E-mail: mbamberg@clarku.edu.



L&W's analytical suggestion to start with the identification of *narrative clauses*, that is, with "matching a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events which actually occurred" (this issue), and then take the *free clauses* as an index for the narrator's evaluative stance, appears to give prominence to form over function, inasmuch as it seems common sense that one has to first identify the sequence of temporal events before one can assess the seemingly more subjective criteria that led to an evaluative stance on those events. Thus, the events present somewhat of an "objective" basis, without which an evaluative stance could not be rationally claimed and upheld. Temporality, which later in the 70s became a fascinating topic for all kinds of cross-linguistic comparisons, seemed to form a solid basis upon which formal linguistic systems and systems in use (as in narratives) could be explored.

Without being able to follow up on the history of these hopes and their demise (and some recent transports [in state] to new hopes in the exploration of the relation between language and space), I attempt here to outline an approach to evaluation that picks up on L&W's original suggestions; however, one that is more in line with their functionalist orientation, treating temporality as one among many other performance features that all ultimately are in the service of discursive purposes and the formations of local identities.

### NARRATIVE POSITIONING

Although the notion of *positioning* was originally not developed exclusively for the analysis of narrating as an interactive activity, it nevertheless attempted to employ strategically the notion of plots and story lines. Building on Hollway (1984), Davies and Harré (1990) defined positioning as a discursive practice "whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and intersubjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines" (p. 48). Thus, in conversations—due to the intrinsic social force of conversing—people position themselves in relation to one another in ways that traditionally have been defined as *roles*. More importantly, in doing so, people "produce" one another (and themselves) situationally as "social beings."

Although this approach explicitly addresses the analysis of language under the heading of how people attend to one another in interactional settings, and although traditional narrative analysis along the lines suggested by L&W addresses the analysis of what the language is referentially "about," namely sequentially ordered (past) events and their evaluations, we have attempted to apply the notion of positioning more productively to the analysis of storytelling (see Bamberg, 1996a, 1996b, 1997; Crawford, 1996; Talbot, Bibace, Bokhour, & Bamberg, 1997) in order to link these two approaches. For this purpose, we considered the process of positioning to take place at three different *levels* that are formulated in the following as three different positioning questions:

1. *How are the characters positioned in relation to one another within the reported events?* At this level, we attempt to analyze how characters within the story world are constructed in terms of, for example, protagonists and antagonists, or as perpetrators and victims. More concretely, this type of analysis aims at the linguistic means that do the job of marking one person as, for example: (a) the agent who is in control while the action is inflicted upon the other; or (b) as the central character who is helplessly at the mercy of outside (quasi "natural") forces or who is rewarded by luck, fate, or personal qualities (such as bravery, nobility, or simply "character").

2. *How does the speaker position him- or herself to the audience?* At this level, we seek to analyze the linguistic means that are characteristic for the particular discourse mode that is being employed. Does, for instance, the narrator attempt to instruct the listener in terms of what to do in face of adversary conditions or does the narrator engage in making excuses for his actions and in attributing blame to others?

3. *How do narrators position themselves to themselves?* How is language employed to make claims that the narrator holds to be true and relevant above and beyond the local conversational situation? In other words, we hold that the linguistic devices employed in narrating point to more than the content (or what the narrative is "about") and the interlocutor. In constructing the content and one's audience in terms of role participants, the narrator transcends the question of: "How do I want to be understood by you, the audience?" and constructs a (local) answer to the question: "Who am I?" Simultaneously, however, we must caution that any attempted answer to this question is not one that necessarily holds across contexts, but rather is a project of limited range.

### Positioning: Three Examples

*Children's accounts of emotion situations.* As a first example of how the positioning approach to narratives was put to use, let me offer two illustrations from my ongoing studies of children's accounts of emotion events. When asked to give an account of a situation when "you made someone else angry," a 6-year-old answered: "It was a couple of years ago, when I took the crab away from my brother, then I stuck my fist out, and he ran into it and got a bloody nose." Typical for this answer is the positioning of the *I* as an agent who nevertheless does not have full control over the outcome of his actions and consequently cannot be held responsible. The narrator positions the *I* in such a way that the event described is characteristic of the event type "accident." The *other*, here his brother, is positioned vis-à-vis the *I* as somewhat agentive: If he hadn't moved himself into the fist, this situation would not have occurred.

In contrast to the linguistic devices employed for this type of scenario, accounts of situations when "I once was angry" typically position the *other* as being a highly individuated and often unjust agent, whose actions are targeted willfully at the *I*, construing the relationship between the two characters as one of perpetrator and victim: "When my sister slapped me across the face, just because she didn't let me in her room, and I wanted to play a game, but she didn't let me, and she slapped me across the face."

The two different types of linguistic strategies can clearly be differentiated in terms of the syntactic constructions that are employed (see for more details Bamberg, 1996a, 1996b, 1997). However, these different syntactic construction types are argued to be pragmatically organized by the discursive purpose for which they are employed: whereas constructions used for the construal of the first type of positioning serve the purpose of saving face, the strategies employed for the second positioning serve to elicit empathy and align the audience in a moral stance with the *I* against the *other*.

*Teenager's accounts of their sexual identity.* Crawford (1996) prepared a detailed analysis of all three positioning levels in two different narrative accounts of the same experience, both given by the same 13-year-old girl. The experience involved being away from home and spending an excessive amount of time on the phone. The first account takes place in a classroom context and is given to a female acquaintance of the same age:

#### Narrative 1

We were talking on the phone from the hotel ... to this kid John ... for three hours, and the phone bill came up to fifteen dollars, for one night, my Mom was like wicked mad at us. (Crawford, 1996, p. 45)

At another occasion, the same situation is presented to her best friend (female) and two overhearing boys, again in the classroom:

#### Narrative 2

When I was in Connecticut this weekend, my friends, we were stay in for competition, right, and they met this boy, right, so they called him out from the hotel, and he was having phone sex with one of my friends, you know how they have phone sex, right, like, aw, you're wearing this, oh baby, you look so fine, you know, and all, they're having phone sex, I was sittin there, I was cracking up, I was like "no sir." (Crawford, 1996, pp. 59-60)

In her analysis, Crawford first delineated the positioning devices used to set up the *we* versus *my Mom* in the first narrative, resulting in a typical teenage alignment

against an adult world, in harmony with the peer-group values. By contrast, Narrative 2 employs a rather different positioning strategy: Firstly, the descriptions of the agentive characters are different (*we* vs. *they*: *they* made the call, whereas in Narrative 1, *we* used the phone); secondly, *this kid John*, who was the recipient of the call in Narrative 1, is positioned agentively as *having phone sex* in Narrative 2; and thirdly, *I*, who is not mentioned in Narrative 1, is singled out and positioned as nonagentive (sitting) and explicitly distancing herself from what is happening. In addition to positioning the characters distinctly, the narrator (in a number of free clauses in the middle of Narrative 2) seeks to position herself to her audience as an expert on the topic of phone sex (Positioning Level 2).

In sum, the linguistic devices employed in the two narratives result: (a) in different positioning of the characters in the narrative event (the situation described) and (b) in two rather different relationships between the narrator and her two different audiences. Furthermore, Crawford demonstrated that the differences in these two positioning strategies resulted in two different moral positions and identity claims, both of them interactively and locally achieved. The first can best be described as a claim with regard to her position as a young person in conflict with the adult world of telephone bills and responsibilities, the second as a young person who is knowledgeable about topics concerning boys and sexuality. Both claims are made against the background of existing moral orders that are being tested out and questioned in the narrative discourse conducted with the audience. In other words, the two claims as to how the narrator wants to be understood as a person (who she "is") are explorations that could be modified in the subsequent course of the conversation. The narrator's implicit claim in the second narrative that "she is not that kind of girl" is clearly maintained, but "open to negotiation" (see Crawford, 1996, for an elaboration on this point).

*Women's accounts of their pregnancies.* In my third example, we (Talbot, Bibace, Bokhour, & Bamberg, 1997) attempted to distill the identity claims in an even more direct way. We analyzed narrative interviews of two pregnant women who had been diagnosed previously "at risk" due to a history of gestational diabetes, thereby, in case of a further pregnancy, placing themselves as well as their fetus at risk. By performing a discursive analysis of these women's positioning strategies, we hoped to be able to reveal their claims as to who they are and how they made sense of their situation in comparison with the master narrative of the normal course of pregnancy and birth giving.

Our analysis started with a detailed analysis of how the two interviewees positioned themselves as characters within the depicted situations as they relate to their family members, friends, and neighbors, but mainly in their relationships with their physicians. From there, moving to Positioning Level 2, we analyzed their positioning strategies with the interviewer (and behind her a more generalized

[female] audience). Let me skip a detailed account of the linguistic constructions employed by both interviewees and move straight to a summary of their claims as to how they seem to understand themselves—at least in this conversation—in light of their claims as to who they are and how they want to be understood.

Mary, the first interviewee, views herself as a self-reliant person, who is better equipped than anyone to devise a program of self-care that will meet her individual needs and ensure the health and safety of herself and her unborn baby. Her complaint regarding doctors is that they fail to respect the soundness of her judgment and the efficacy of her agency. Her identity claim as a self-reliant individual lends her authority as she advises others to claim self-reliance for themselves. She constructs her own identity by asserting that she herself is unusual and that ways of understanding pregnancy that may apply to others often are not useful to her in her efforts to cope with the adversarial challenges of a difficult pregnancy.

Sue—the other interviewee—attributes the notion of pregnancy that she disputes not to medical authorities, but to the majority of the general public, whom she portrays as uninformed. Her critique of this popular view of pregnancy is in a sense more radical than Mary's, for Sue is asserting not only that this widespread version bears no resemblance to her pregnancy, but that it fails to take into consideration the truth that complications are a common experience for many pregnant women. Bearing witness to this diversity of experience among expectant mothers, she concludes that the concept of normality embodied in the standard pregnancy narrative is in need of revision. When doctors appear in her account, they are depicted not as opponents but as benign and knowledgeable allies who help her to arrive at a more realistic appreciation of pregnancy as a potentially perilous undertaking. Far from constructing herself as asserting her power to control the outcome of events in her pregnancy, Sue insists that uncertainty is ineluctably a part of the process and that no expectant mother can eliminate pregnancy's inherent risks or dispel its mysteries. Sue constructs herself as a realist, whose authority is grounded in openness to points of view beside her own and in her realistic acceptance of the limitations to her own control. In other words, she grounds her lack of power and self-control in a position of authoritative realism.

### POSITIONING AND EVALUATION

The three examples of positioning analysis were meant to outline how this type of analysis proceeds. Although children at the age of 6 years do not seem to be able to make far-reaching claims with regard to their identity that enable us to analyze their narratives for positioning at Level 3, their choices of linguistic constructions to position themselves as characters in reported personal experiences reflect clearly the ability to construct scenarios in light of discursive purposes such as attributing

blame or saving face. Our analysis of the two reportings of the same event in the 13-year-old adolescent's narratives highlighted positioning at Level 2. Here the construction of the narrator–audience relationship by use of linguistic constructions was foregrounded. Although both narratives referred to the same event, the language used marked two different positioning vis-à-vis the two audiences: Both entailed claims regarding “what kind of girl I am,” though both claims are thoroughly grounded in the here-and-now of the conversational setting. The identity claims (Level 3) may best be understood as situationally instantiated and put up for negotiation. Our positioning analysis of Mary and Sue focused more strongly on the linguistic means employed to construct identity claims relevant for Positioning Level 3. Although these claims are nevertheless locally tied to the interview situation, they bespeak a discourse type that searches across past events (of personal experience) for evidence to make claims of a more decontextual sort. In our article (Talbot et al., 1997) we attempted to sort these discourses in relation to preexisting master discourses on the topic of pregnancy and moral identity; that is, we asked the question: Where did these discourses come from and how did they achieve their coherence and persuasive powers?

Turning back to the question of how this type of positioning analysis compares with L&W's original notion of evaluation, it should be noted that in my proposal narrative is defined considerably more broadly than in L&W: The discursive situation and the discursive purpose are as central as the semantic (temporal) organization of the narrative. In this sense, the analysis of positioning is an attempt to unite the pragmatics of narrating with the linguistic (structural) analysis à la L&W into one that emphasizes more strongly issues such as “the assignment of praise and blame” (Labov, this issue) and “viewpoint” as central to the emergence of structure and meaning in narratives.

In line with Labov's general acclaim of the analysis of language use, I hold that the analysis of positioning is basically a linguistic analysis, one, however, that takes linguistic (and extralinguistic) devices as performance features (or as “contextualization cues”; see Cook-Gumperz & Gumperz, this issue) that index how narrators want to be understood. “Temporally ordering” and “stepping out of the flow of events” are two options in the repertoire of speakers. Other contributors to this issue have pointed to other devices that figure centrally in their analyses, and Labov's own contribution clearly points in the same direction. Positioning analysis may possibly best be understood as granting more centrality to the speaker's active engagement in the construction process of narratives.

At the same time, the proposed type of analysis points up that any attempt to assemble and analyze performance features as put to use for discursive purposes needs to acquire a multiplicity of potential functions. Although the “what's-the-point-question” seems to be particularly legitimate, a story may often serve more than one purpose: Above its very referential and informative function, it may entertain, be a piece of moral advice, extend an offer to become more intimate, seek

audience alignment for the purpose of joint revenge, and serve as a claim as to "who I really am"—and all this at the same time. In addition, these functions are not only achieved with narratives that position the self as one of the central actors. They are also used in narratives about (third) persons other than the self—fictional or nonfictional, and they similarly apply to generic *others* as central characters. Thus, although narrative analysis traditionally tends to privilege narratives of personal experience as providing some special access to experience and "the person," narratives as acts of narrating in general lay themselves open to the same kind of positioning analysis.

## REFERENCES

- Bamberg, M. (1996a). Emotion talk(s): The role of perspective in the construction of emotions. In S. Niemeier & R. Dirven (Eds.), *The language of emotions* (pp. 209–225). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Bamberg, M. (1996b). Perspective and agency in the construal of narrative events. In D. Stringfellow, E. Cahana-Amity, E. Hughes, & A. Zukowski (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 20th Annual Boston Conference on Language Development, Vol. 1* (pp. 30–39). Somerville, MA: Cascadia.
- Bamberg, M. (1997). Language, concepts, and emotions. The role of language in the construction of emotions. *Language Sciences*, 19, 309–340.
- Crawford, V. (1996). *Identity construction in conversational narratives*. Unpublished masters thesis, Clark University, Department of Psychology, Worcester, MA.
- Davies, B., & Harré (1990). Positioning: The social construction of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 20, 43–63.
- Hollway, W. (1984). Gender difference and the production of subjectivity. In J. Henriques, W. Hollway, C. Urwin, C. Venn, & V. Walkerdine (Eds.), *Changing the subject: Psychology, social regulation and subjectivity* (pp. 227–263). London: Methuen.
- Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (this issue). Narrative analysis: Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts: Proceedings of the 1966 Annual Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society* (pp. 12–44). Seattle: University of Washington Press. (Original work published 1967)
- Talbot, J., Bibace, R., Bokhour, B., & Bamberg, M. (1997). Affirmation and resistance of dominant discourses: The rhetorical construction of pregnancy. *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, 6, 225–251.

# When Sentences Are Not Enough: Narrative Data and Cultural Identity

Alison Imbens-Bailey  
*University of California, Los Angeles*

One of the most compelling motivations William Labov (1972) gave for the decision he and Joshua Waletzky made in 1967 (Labov & Waletzky, this issue; henceforth L&W) to undertake their analysis of narratives of personal experience was a concern that a study of the internal structure of Black English Vernacular—its grammar and sound system—would not be able to explain why Black youth were failing in school, rather, it would take an understanding of the vernacular culture itself and analysis of the communicative competencies required to be an effective user of Black English Vernacular. What began as a method of generating casual and, as near as possible, spontaneous speech samples for analyses beyond the levels of syntax and semantics, grew to become a bedrock of narrative analysis across many social science disciplines.

In recognizing that analyzing single sentences was not sufficient for finding an explanation of the diversity of linguistic skills across a range of ages, social classes, and ethnicities, L&W made a number of important contributions to the social sciences in general and to sociolinguistics and education in particular. Two major contributions are considered here: L&W's introduction of an interview method that has since been widely adopted in the social science arena to answer a variety of research questions, and their recognition of a close link between language and cultural identity.

L&W collected narratives during 600 interviews with Anglo, Hispanic, and African Americans ranging in age from just 10 years to 72 years. Their technique for generating narratives of personal experience would prove essential for undertaking the later study of Black English Vernacular (Labov, 1972). When stand-