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Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall
Discourse Studies 2005 7: 585
DOI: 10.1177/1461445605054407

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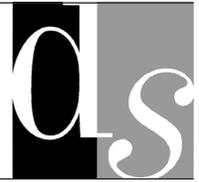
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Identity and interaction: a sociocultural linguistic approach



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 SAGE Publications,
 (London, Thousand Oaks,
 CA and New Delhi)
www.sagepublications.com
 Vol 7(4–5): 585–614.
 10.1177/1461445605054407

ABSTRACT The article proposes a framework for the analysis of identity as produced in linguistic interaction, based on the following principles: (1) identity is the product rather than the source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore is a social and cultural rather than primarily internal psychological phenomenon; (2) identities encompass macro-level demographic categories, temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles, and local, ethnographically emergent cultural positions; (3) identities may be linguistically indexed through labels, implicatures, stances, styles, or linguistic structures and systems; (4) identities are relationally constructed through several, often overlapping, aspects of the relationship between self and other, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice and authority/delegitimacy; and (5) identity may be in part intentional, in part habitual and less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation, in part a construct of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an outcome of larger ideological processes and structures. The principles are illustrated through examination of a variety of linguistic interactions.

KEY WORDS: *agency, emergence, identity, ideology, indexicality, interaction, intersubjectivity, positioning, sociocultural linguistics, stance, style*

Introduction

In this article, we propose a framework for the analysis of identity as constituted in linguistic interaction. The need for such a framework has become apparent in recent years, as linguistic research on identity has become increasingly central within sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, discourse analysis, and social psychology. But the concomitant development of theoretical approaches to identity remains at best a secondary concern, not a focused goal of the field. We argue for the analytic value of approaching identity as a relational and socio-cultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of

interaction rather than as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories. We believe that the approach we propose here, which draws together insights from a variety of fields and theorists, allows for a discussion of identity that permits researchers to articulate theoretical assumptions about identity often left implicit in scholarship, while avoiding the critiques of this concept that have arisen in the social sciences and humanities in the past two decades. Given the scope of such scholarly research, our definition of identity is deliberately broad and open-ended: *Identity is the social positioning of self and other.*

Before describing our approach, we must first acknowledge our debt to a wide variety of research in several fields that has informed our own view of identity. Such work includes speech accommodation theory (Giles et al., 1991) and social identity theory (Meyerhoff, 1996; Meyerhoff and Niedzielski, 1994; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) in social psychology, theories of language ideology (Irvine and Gal, 2000; Silverstein, 1979) and indexicality (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 1976, 1985) in linguistic anthropology, and theories of style (Eckert and Rickford, 2001; Mendoza-Denton, 2002) and models of identity (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller, 1985) in sociolinguistics, among others. In addition, we have drawn on a number of different social theories that are especially relevant to an understanding of the intersubjective construction of identity within local interactional contexts.

The framework we outline here synthesizes key work on identity from all these traditions to offer a general sociocultural linguistic perspective on identity – that is, one that focuses on both the details of language and the workings of culture and society. By *sociocultural linguistics*, we mean the broad interdisciplinary field concerned with the intersection of language, culture, and society. This term encompasses the disciplinary subfields of sociolinguistics, linguistic anthropology, socially oriented forms of discourse analysis (such as conversation analysis and critical discourse analysis), and linguistically oriented social psychology, among others.¹ In incorporating these diverse approaches under a single label, our purpose is neither to deny the differences among them nor to impose new disciplinary boundaries; rather, it is to acknowledge the full range of work that falls under the rubric of language and identity and to offer a shorthand device for referring to these approaches collectively. The interdisciplinary perspective taken here is intended to help scholars recognize the comprehensive toolkit already available to them for analyzing identity as a centrally linguistic phenomenon. As our examples below illustrate, identity does not emerge at a single analytic level – whether vowel quality, turn shape, code choice, or ideological structure – but operates at multiple levels simultaneously. Our own approach privileges the interactional level, because it is in interaction that all these resources gain social meaning. Our goal is to assemble elements of sociocultural linguistic work on identity into a coherent model that both describes the current state of research and offers new directions for future scholarship.

We propose five principles that we see as fundamental to the study of identity,

drawing examples from our own research, as well as studies by others. The first and second principles challenge narrowly psychological and static views of identity that have circulated widely in the social sciences. We argue instead, in line with abundant sociocultural linguistic research, that identity is a discursive construct that emerges in interaction. Further, we expand traditional macro-sociological views of identity to include both local ethnographic categories and transitory interactional positions. The third principle inventories the types of linguistic resources whereby interactants indexically position self and other in discourse. The heart of the model is described in the fourth principle, which highlights the relational foundation of identity. To illustrate this principle, we briefly outline our own recently developed framework for analyzing identity as an intersubjective accomplishment. Finally, the fifth principle considers the limits and constraints on individual intentionality in the process of identity construction, while acknowledging the important role that deliberate social action may play in producing identity. Throughout the article, we argue for a view of identity that is intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an *a priori* fashion.

The emergence principle

The first principle that informs our perspective addresses a traditional scholarly view of identity as housed primarily within an individual mind, so that the only possible relationship between identity and language use is for language to reflect an individual's internal mental state. While individuals' sense of self is certainly an important element of identity, researchers of individuals' language use (e.g. Johnstone, 1996) have shown that the only way that such self-conceptions enter the social world is via some form of discourse. Hence, accounts that locate identity inside the mind may discount the social ground on which identity is built, maintained, and altered.

Our own view draws from the sustained engagement with the concept of emergence in linguistic anthropology and interactional linguistics. The idea of emergence was promoted early on in linguistic anthropology by Dell Hymes, whose view of artful linguistic performance as dialogic rather than monologic led him to call for an understanding of 'structure as sometimes emergent in action' (Hymes, 1975: 71). Subsequent anthropologists, notably Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, moved the field further away from the analysis of performance as mere reiteration of an underlying textual structure that was traditionally taken to be primary. In both their individual and collaborative work (Bauman, 1977; Bauman and Briggs, 1990; Briggs, 1988), these scholars demonstrated that performance is instead emergent in the course of its unfolding in specific encounters. These ideas also inform Bruce Mannheim and Dennis Tedlock's (1995) view of culture as emergent through dialogical processes; that is, culture is produced as speakers draw on multiple voices and texts in every utterance (Bakhtin, 1981). Moreover, in functional and interactional linguistics,

scholars have argued against static structuralist and generativist formulations of grammar, proposing instead that linguistic structure emerges in the course of interaction (e.g. Bybee and Hopper, 2001; Ford et al., 2002; Hopper, 1987).

We extend the insights of this previous linguistic work on emergence to the analysis of identity. As with performance, culture, and grammar itself, we maintain that identity emerges from the specific conditions of linguistic interaction:

1. Identity is best viewed as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon.

This is a familiar idea within several very different branches of sociocultural linguistics: the ethnomethodological concept of ‘doing’ various kinds of identity (e.g. Fenstermaker and West, 2002; Garfinkel, 1967; West and Zimmerman, 1987) and the related conversation-analytic notion of identity as an interactionally relevant accomplishment (e.g. Antaki and Widdicombe, 1998; Aronsson, 1998; Auer, 1998; Kitzinger, n.d.; Moerman, 1993; Sidnell, 2003); the post-structuralist theory of performativity (Butler, 1990), developed from the work of J.L. Austin (1962), as taken up by researchers of language, gender, and sexuality (e.g. Barrett, 1999; Cameron, 1997; Livia and Hall, 1997); and more generally the semiotic concepts of creative indexicality (Silverstein, 1979) and referee design (Bell, 1984). Despite fundamental differences among these approaches, all of them enable us to view identity not simply as a psychological mechanism of self-classification that is reflected in people’s social behavior but rather as something that is constituted through social action, and especially through language. Of course, the property of emergence does not exclude the possibility that resources for identity work in any given interaction may derive from resources developed in earlier interactions (that is, they may draw on ‘structure’ – such as ideology, the linguistic system, or the relation between the two).

Although nearly all contemporary linguistic research on identity takes this general perspective at its starting point, it is perhaps easiest to recognize identity as emergent in cases where speakers’ language use does not conform with the social category to which they are normatively assigned. Cases of transgender identity and cross-gender performance (Barrett, 1999; Besnier, 2003; Gaudio, 1997; Hall and O’Donovan, 1996; Kulick, 1997; Manalansan, 2003) and ethnic, racial, and national boundary crossing (Bucholtz, 1995, 1999a; Chun, 2001; Cutler, 1999; Hewitt, 1986; Lo, 1999; Piller, 2002; Rampton, 1995; Sweetland, 2002) illustrate in diverse ways that identities as social processes do not precede the semiotic practices that call them into being in specific interactions. Such cases are striking only because they sever the ideologically expected mapping between language and biology or culture; that is, they subvert essentialist preconceptions of linguistic ownership. While the emergent nature of identity is especially stark in cases where a biologically male speaker uses feminine gendered pronouns or a speaker phenotypically classified as nonblack

uses African American English, identity is discursively produced even in the most mundane and unremarkable situations.

To illustrate the emergent quality of identity, we offer two examples involving very different groups of speakers. The first focuses on the discourse practices of hijras, a transgender category in India whose members, though predominantly born male, identify as neither men nor women. Hijras typically dress and speak like women, but violate gender norms of appropriate Indian femininity in other ways, such as through the use of obscenity (Hall, 1997). One of the resources available to hijras to distance themselves from masculinity is the linguistic gender system of Hindi, where verbal gender marking is often obligatory. In Example (1), taken from an ethnographic interview with Hall, a hijra we call Sulekha discusses her relationship with her family, who forced her out of the house in her early teens because of her effeminate behavior. Here, she reports the speech of her family members as referring to her in the masculine gender (marked with a superscripted *m* in the transcript), yet when speaking in her own voice, she uses the feminine form to refer to herself (marked with a superscripted *f* in the transcript):

(1)

K: *āpkā parivār kyā soctā hai?*

S: jab ghare nahī jātī^f hū- jātī^f hū to sab samajhte haī ki “mar gayā^m, (1.0) khatam ho gayā^m, (1.5) nātā ristā khatam ho gayā.”

K: *acchā, jab āp choṭī thī to āp ke bare me kyā socte the?*

S: *kyā* soctā log? kuch nahī soctā thā log. (0.5) kahtā hai log ki ((lowering voice)) “are, i *kyā* ho gayā^m, *hijrā* ho gayā^m. (0.2) *mar* bhī nahī jātā^m hai, (0.2) are nikal bhī nahī jātā^m hai, are bāp mahtārī kā nām *khatam* ho gayā.”

K: *hameśā bolte the?*

S: hā. (4.0) bezzatī kā *ghar* ho gayā. “kaise zindagī calegā iskā, mar jātā to acchā rahtā.” (2.0) maī sab suntī^f thī^f apnā nikal gayī^f. (5.0) *jhūṭh* kah rahī^f hū? (6.0) maī *jhūṭh* nahī^f boltī^f. (5.0) jahā par bāt gayā to *jhūṭh* bolkar kyā karūngī^f? (1.0) hā? (1.0) hamē to koi laut āyegā nahī. maī kaise kah dū ki nahī.

K: *What does your family think?*

S: When I don't go home—when I don't go everybody thinks, “He died^m! He's^m finished! All of our ties [with him] are finished!”

K: *Oh. But what were they thinking about you when you were small?*

S: What could people think? People didn't think anything. Or people said ((lowering voice)), “Oh, what has he become^m? He became^m a hijra. Why doesn't he just die^m! Oh, why doesn't he just go away^m! Oh, the name of his father and mother is finished!”

K: *They always said that?*

S: Yes. It became a house of dishonor. [They said,] “How can his life go on? It would have been better if he had just died^m!” I used^f to listen^f to all of that, and then I just ran^f away. Am I lying^f? I don't lie^f. When no one cares what I say anyway, what would I gain^f by lying? Right? Nobody will take me back anyway, so why should I tell you otherwise?

For Sulekha, feminine gender marking does not reflect a straightforwardly assigned feminine identity; indeed, as the reported speech of her relatives makes

clear, her gender identity is contested by her family. Under these circumstances, gender marking becomes a powerful tool used by Sulekha to constitute herself as feminine in opposition to her family's perception of her gender. Such identity positioning is therefore occasioned by the interactional demands of her narrative. It is important to note that hijras do not use feminine self-reference in an automatic or predetermined way; in other contexts, hijras alternate between feminine and masculine forms in referring to themselves and other hijras in order to construct a variety of rhetorical effects (Hall and O'Donovan, 1996). Though not as dramatic or as recognizable as this example, a similar process of identity construction takes place every time a speaker assigns social gender to another human being. It is the constant iteration of such practices that cumulatively produce not only each individual's gender identity, but gender itself as a socially meaningful system (Butler, 1990; West and Zimmerman, 1987).

The second example is taken from the work of Elaine Chun (2001) on Korean American men's identities. Chun points out that unlike African Americans, most Asian Americans do not have access to a variety of English invested with ethnically specific meaning. She argues that for this reason some of the Asian American men in her study draw on elements of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in order to locate themselves against racial ideologies that privilege whiteness. This phenomenon is illustrated in Example (2):

(2) (Chun, 2001: 60)

- 2368 Jin: i think white people just don't keep it real and that's why
 2369 Dave: that is = that's true man?
 2370 Jin: cause that's why they always back stabbin like my roommate who
 wasn't gonna pay the last month's // rent
 2371 JH: white.
 2372 Jin: he kicks us out [of
 2373 Eric: [the prototypical *whitey*.
 2374 Jin: ye:::ah ma::n?
 2375 JH: no social skills.
 2376 Jin: but that's not true for everyone i don't think.
 2377 EC: uh huh
 2378 Jin: cause all those ghetto whiteys in my neighborhood i think they're cool

The speakers use various elements associated with African American youth language, including idiomatic phrases like *keep it real* (line 2368) and lexical items like *whitey* (lines 2373, 2378), as well as a few emblematic grammatical structures such as the zero copula (*they always back stabbin*, line 2370). None of the participants in this interaction is a fluent speaker of AAVE, and indeed not all participants use AAVE features. But in the context of this discussion – a critique of whiteness – AAVE becomes an effective instrument for rejecting dominant racial ideologies. At the same time, an antiracist Asian American identity emerges in the discourse in alliance with other people of color.

Despite the vast difference in cultural contexts, this example bears a strong resemblance to the hijra example above in that the speakers in both cases

appropriate linguistic forms generally understood not to 'belong' to them. Both the use of feminine grammatical gender forms by hijras, who are usually assigned to the male sex at birth, and the use of African American youth style by Korean Americans actively produce new forms of identity through language by disrupting naturalized associations between specific linguistic forms and specific social categories. Yet even these innovative identities should not be understood as ontologically prior to the discourse that calls them forth. While the macro categories of hijra and Korean American have a certain ideological coherence, their actual manifestation in practice is dependent on the interactional demands of the immediate social context. Such interactions therefore highlight what is equally true of even the most predictable and non-innovative identities: that they are only constituted as socially real through discourse, and especially interaction.

The positionality principle

The second principle challenges another widely circulating view of identity, that it is simply a collection of broad social categories. This perspective is found most often in the quantitative social sciences, which correlate social behavior with macro identity categories such as age, gender, and social class. Within sociocultural linguistics, the concern with identities as broader social structures is particularly characteristic of early variationist sociolinguistics (e.g. Labov, 1966) and the sociology of language (see Fishman, 1971, among others). The traditional forms of these approaches have been valuable for documenting large-scale sociolinguistic trends; they are often less effective in capturing the more nuanced and flexible kinds of identity relations that arise in local contexts (but see, e.g. Labov, 1963). This analytic gap points to the importance of ethnography. Linguistic ethnographers have repeatedly demonstrated that language users often orient to local identity categories rather than to the analyst's sociological categories and that the former frequently provide a better empirical account of linguistic practice.

In addition, more recent sociocultural linguistic work has begun to investigate the micro details of identity as it is shaped from moment to moment in interaction. At the most basic level, identity emerges in discourse through the temporary roles and orientations assumed by participants, such as evaluator, joke teller, or engaged listener. Such interactional positions may seem quite different from identity as conventionally understood; however, these temporary roles, no less than larger sociological and ethnographic identity categories, contribute to the formation of subjectivity and intersubjectivity in discourse. On the one hand, the interactional positions that social actors briefly occupy and then abandon as they respond to the contingencies of unfolding discourse may accumulate ideological associations with both large-scale and local categories of identity. On the other, these ideological associations, once forged, may shape who does what and how in interaction, though never in a deterministic fashion.

Our own perspective therefore broadens the traditional referential range of identity to encompass not only more widely recognized constructs of social subjectivity but also local identity categories and transitory interactional positions:

2. Identities encompass (a) macro-level demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific stances and participant roles.

Examples (3) and (4) illustrate how these different levels of identity emerge in discourse. Both are taken from ethnographic interviews Bucholtz conducted with middle-class European American 17-year-old girls who grew up in the same city and were attending the same California high school. The girls therefore had access to very similar kinds of linguistic resources. Yet they habitually positioned themselves as different kinds of teenagers through their differential use of language. This point could be illustrated through a wide variety of linguistic markers; the one we consider here is the use of innovative quotative forms. Quotative markers introduce represented discourse; some forms may mark nonlinguistic affective expressions as well. The prototypical quotative form is *say*, but *go* has also entered widespread use to perform quotative functions. In more recent years, the form *be like* has been widely adopted by young people in the United States (Blyth et al., 1990; Dailey-O’Cain, 2000). Two of these quotatives are found in Example (3):

(3)

- 1 Claire: Then you say the magic word,
2 “I have a tutor.” h
3 Mary: Mm.
4 Christine: Everyone goes,
5 “O:::h,”
6 and they’re all jealous and they’re like,
7 “Oh wow,
8 I wish I had a tutor.” hh

In addition to these quotative markers, another form has emerged, especially on the West Coast: *be all* (Waksler, 2001). Because of its more recent appearance in youth discourse, it is more semiotically marked than *be like* or the older quotative forms. Whereas in Example (3), Christine uses the well-established quotative markers *go* and *be like*, in Example (4), Josie uses only one quotative form, the innovative *be all*:

(4)

- 1 Josie: They would not let me join their club by the way.
2 Mary: You tried and they woul[dn’t let you]?
3 Josie: [Oh I was all,]
4 “Can I join your club?”
5 <lower volume> {Of course I’d been sitting in the corner
laughing at them for the last twenty minutes.}

6 And they're all,
 7 "NO:,"
 8 And I was all,
 9 "I don't like you either."

Christine and Josie both index their youth through their use of these innovative quotative markers, but their choice of different markers indexes more local dimensions of their identity. Christine is a self-described nerd, who values intelligence and nonconformity and, unlike cool students, is not interested in pursuing the latest trends, whether in fashion or language; Josie, by contrast, is one of the most popular girls in the school, and her exclusive use of the innovative quotative marker signals her consummate trendiness.² These local identities are also relevant to the content of the discourse: Claire and Christine are complaining that they have to pretend to have a tutor in order to avoid explaining their high grades to their less intelligent peers, and Josie is describing her joking attempt to join the high school's Macintosh Computer Club, which is widely recognized as a bastion of nerdiness.

In the analysis of these girls' speech, classification along demographic lines of gender, age, race, and class provides part of the picture, but more can be learned by considering other ways in which these girls position themselves and others subjectively and intersubjectively. First, by viewing the girls as members of a single age cohort, we can recognize the importance of age – specifically youthfulness – as a shared social identity that is expressed through the use of innovative quotative markers. Second, through ethnographically obtained information about these girls' affiliation with contrasting, locally developed social styles at the high school, we can make sense of their divergent quotative choices. Third, scrutiny of the interactional work the speakers are accomplishing reveals how through represented discourse they make negative evaluations of other types of people (and, implicitly, positively evaluate themselves). For example, in lines 4 and 5, Christine's utterance *Everyone goes O:::h* both prosodically and lexically marks the quoted speakers' collective stance of awe and jealousy. But because this utterance is represented discourse, it also signals Christine's orientation of disdain toward her classmates' desire for a tutor and their obliviousness to her deception.

Such examples demonstrate that different kinds of positions typically occur simultaneously in a single interaction. From the perspective of the analyst, it is not a matter of choosing one dimension of identity over others, but of considering multiple facets in order to achieve a more complete understanding of how identity works.

The indexicality principle

While the first two principles we have discussed characterize the ontological status of identity, the third principle is concerned with the mechanism whereby identity is constituted. This mechanism, known as indexicality, is fundamental to

the way in which linguistic forms are used to construct identity positions. In its most basic sense, an index is a linguistic form that depends on the interactional context for its meaning, such as the first-person pronoun *I* (Silverstein, 1976). More generally, however, the concept of indexicality involves the creation of semiotic links between linguistic forms and social meanings (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 1985). In identity formation, indexicality relies heavily on ideological structures, for associations between language and identity are rooted in cultural beliefs and values – that is, ideologies – about the sorts of speakers who (can or should) produce particular sorts of language.

Indexical processes occur at all levels of linguistic structure and use. The third principle outlines some of these different linguistic means whereby identity is discursively produced:

3. Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups.

The most obvious and direct way that identities can be constituted through talk is the overt introduction of referential identity categories into discourse. Indeed, a focus on social category labels has been a primary method that nonlinguistic researchers have used to approach the question of identity. Researchers in sociocultural linguistics contribute to this line of work a more precise and systematic methodology for understanding labeling and categorization as social action (e.g. McConnell-Ginet, 1989, 2002; Murphy, 1997; Sacks, 1995). The circulation of such categories within ongoing discourse, their explicit or implicit juxtaposition with other categories, and the linguistic elaborations and qualifications they attract (predicates, modifiers, and so on) all provide important information about identity construction. For example, in (1) above, Sulekha quotes her family as condemning her in childhood as a 'hijra', a term that carries an extreme derogatory force in non-hijra Indian society: 'Oh, what has he become? He became a hijra. Why doesn't he just die! . . . Oh, the name of his father and mother is finished!' The term acquires this force through its ideological association with impotence (in fact, *hijra* is often used to mean 'impotent' in everyday discourse). This stands as the ultimate insult within normative Indian family structures, for the widespread belief that hijras are impotent positions them outside of reproductive kinship. In short, it is precisely the invocation of the identity label *hijra* that motivates the quoted speakers' lamentations. A somewhat different labeling process is seen in Example (2), where the racial label *whitey*, also generally understood to be derogatory, takes on different valences within the interaction through the use of contrastive modifiers. While Eric negatively characterizes Jin's roommate as a 'prototypical whitey', Jin describes the 'ghetto whiteys' in his working-class neighborhood as

'cool'. In this interaction, adjectives and predication reorient the social meaning of *whitey* from a fixed racial reference term to an intersubjectively negotiated identity category.

Less direct means of instantiating identities include such pragmatic processes as implicature and presupposition, both of which require additional inferential work for interpretation. For example, as Anita Liang (1999) has argued, lesbians and gay men who fear reprisal for openly displaying their sexual identity may use implicatures (such as gender-neutral references to lovers) to convey this information to savvy listeners while excluding possibly hostile outgroup members. Indeed, the ability to interpret such implicatures is recognized in gay and lesbian communities with a special term: *gaydar*. A similarly indirect strategy for positioning self or other in discourse is presupposition. In the college rape tribunal hearings analyzed by Susan Ehrlich (2001), for example, the defense exploits presupposition to situate the alleged rape victims as powerful and in sexual control. Repeated references to the attacked women's purported options and choices presuppose that they could have prevented their rapes, thus framing them as agents in contrast to the prosecution's representations of them as passive victims. Here identity is located in the situated social positions of rape survivor versus willing participant.

Recent work on stance – that is, the display of evaluative, affective, and epistemic orientations in discourse – has made explicit the ways in which other dimensions of interaction can be resources for the construction of identity. In his framework for the analysis of stance as both a subjective and an intersubjective phenomenon, John Du Bois (2002) characterizes stance as social action in the following terms: 'I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and align [or disalign] with you.' Similar concepts have emerged in related fields, including assessment (Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992; Pomerantz, 1984) and epistemic authority (Heritage and Raymond, 2005) in conversation analysis, positioning in both discursive social psychology (Davies and Harré, 1990) and language and gender research (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003), and evaluation in discourse analysis (Hunston and Thompson, 2000). All these share an analytic focus on the linguistic marking of a speaker's orientation to ongoing talk. A related but somewhat different approach considers the interactional roles speakers and listeners inhabit in conversation, as laid out in Erving Goffman's (1974, 1981) groundbreaking work on footing, participant roles, and participation frameworks.

All of these scholars' insights – and work that builds on them – are productive for the study of identity because they show how even in the most fleeting of interactional moves, speakers position themselves and others as particular kinds of people. Moreover, stances can build up into larger identity categories. In an influential paper, Elinor Ochs (1992) extends the concept of indexicality by arguing that the indexical connection between a given linguistic form and a particular social identity is not direct (see also Ochs, 1993). Rather, linguistic forms that index identity are more basically associated with interactional stances

such as forcefulness, uncertainty, and so on, which in turn may come to be associated with particular social categories, such as gender. Within interactional linguistics, Mirka Rauniomaa (2003) has developed Du Bois's (2002) concept of *stance accretion* to capture the way in which stances accumulate into more durable structures of identity. It is important to emphasize that the process of creating indexical ties of this kind is inherently ideological, creating in bottom-up fashion a set of interactional norms for particular social groups. Conversely, in the process of *indexical inversion* described by Miyako Inoue (2004), indexical associations can also be imposed from the top down by cultural authorities such as intellectuals or the media. Such an imposed indexical tie may create ideological expectations among speakers and hence affect linguistic practice.

Example (5), taken from a study of family dinnertime narratives by Elinor Ochs and Carolyn Taylor (1995), illustrates how interactional identities emerge in discourse. The following excerpt is from an interaction between a middle-class European American heterosexual couple. The wife ('Mom') has been telling her husband ('Dad') about her new assistant at work:

(5) (Ochs and Taylor, 1995: 108)

- Dad: ((*eating dessert*)) Well – I certainly think that – you're a- you know you're a fair bo:ss – You've been working there how long?
- Mom: fifteen years in June ((*as she scrapes dishes at kitchen sink*))
- Dad: fifteen years – and you got a guy ((*turns to look directly at Mom as he continues*)) that's been workin there a few weeks? And you do (it what) the way he wants.
- Mom: hh ((*laughs*))
(0.6) ((*Dad smiles slightly?*, then turns back to eating his dessert))
- Mom: It's not a matter of my doin it the way he: wa:nt – It does help in that I'm getting more work? done
It's just that I'm workin too hard? I don't wanta work so hard
- Dad: ((*rolls chair around to face Mom halfway*)) Well – You're the bo:ss It's up to you to set the standards . . .

Ochs and Taylor identify a number of interactional roles in such narratives, including protagonist, primary teller, and primary recipient. They also found that the narratives in their sample tended to involve negative evaluation of the protagonist by the primary recipient, a role pair they term *problematizee/problematizer*. In Example (5), Dad assumes the role of *problematizer* and assigns Mom the role of *problematizee* at several points. Moreover, the authors discovered that the gendered distribution of interactional roles in this example was a general feature of other interactions they recorded between demographically similar married couples. In this way, gendered identities are built not only locally within couples, but more broadly across (some kinds of) couples. Through the repetition of such processes, the interactional identities produced via stance taking accrue into more enduring identities like gender, as well as forming ideologies of gender-appropriate interactional practice.³

A somewhat related set of insights comes from the concept of style in variationist sociolinguistics. This term traditionally refers to intraspeaker

variation in language use (Labov, 1972), but more contemporary approaches (Bucholtz, 1999a, 1999b; California Style Collective, 1993; Eckert, 2000; Eckert and Rickford, 2001; Mendoza-Denton, forthcoming; Schilling-Estes, 2004), along with earlier work by Bell (1984) and Coupland (1980), understand style as a repertoire of linguistic forms associated with personas or identities. Whereas scholars concerned with stance concentrate on conversational acts such as evaluative expressions, sociolinguists of style typically look instead to linguistic structures below the discursive level, such as grammar, phonology, and lexis.⁴ In an indexical process similar to what both Ochs and Rauniomaa describe for stance, these features become tied to styles and hence to identity through habitual practice (Bourdieu, 1977, [1972] 1978). Thus through their repeated choice of one quotative form over another in interactions such as Examples (3) and (4) earlier, teenagers in California display their identity as nerdy or popular. As these examples show, one of the important insights of the style literature is that the social meanings of style often require ethnographic investigation to uncover groups that may seem homogeneous through a wider analytic lens, but become sharply differentiated when ethnographic details are brought into close focus.

In addition to micro-level linguistic structures like stance markers and style features, entire linguistic systems such as languages and dialects may also be indexically tied to identity categories. This phenomenon – long the mainstay of a wide range of sociocultural linguistic scholarship – has been especially well theorized in the literature on language, nationalism, and ideology (e.g. Gal and Irvine, 1995; see also contributions to Kroskrity, 2000; Schieffelin et al., 1998). In addition, work on language choice has also begun to appear in the emerging field of language and globalization. Given the vast scale of such phenomena as nationalism and globalization, much of the research on these issues is not interactional in its approach. However, some current studies, especially on the latter topic (e.g. Besnier, 2004; Hall, 2003; Park, 2004), consider how large-scale social processes such as globalization shape identity in interaction. Example (6) is taken from one such study, carried out by Niko Besnier (2004) in Tonga. The interaction takes place between a Tongan seller and customer at a second-hand market, or *fea*:

(6) (Besnier, 2004: 29–30)

- Seller: *Sai ia kia koe, Sōnia.*
 “Looks good on you, Sōnia.”
- Customer: Yeah- if it fits =
- Seller: ((ignoring customer’s contingency)) = Ni::ce. (10.0)
 What size is it? (2.0)
- Customer: Eight. (3.0)
- Seller: Ohh. (4.0) Too small. (2.0)
 ‘*E hao ‘ia Mālia.* (2.0) ‘*la me’a.* (2.0)
 “‘It’ll fit Mālia. I mean, what’s-her-name.”
 It’s might fit you, cuz it looks big!

- Customer: 'Io?
"Yes?"
- Seller: Yeah! (2.0) The waist, look!
- Customer: I know-
- Seller: I think it's one of those one that it has to show the bellybutton.
- Customer: No way!
- Seller: Aaaha-ha-haa!
- Customer: .Haa-ha-hah!
- Seller: That's the in-thing in New Zealand now. Even my kids say,
"Mummy, see, it has to show the b-!" Huh! I say, "No:::,
no::!" Ahahahuh-hh! Cuz that's the look now!

What is most striking about this exchange is the use of English rather than Tongan for much of the interaction. Besnier demonstrates that this language choice constructs the speakers as modern and cosmopolitan. He notes that the seller also uses a markedly New Zealand pronunciation of certain words by centralizing the vowel [i] as [ə], a highly local New Zealand speech style that further displays her cosmopolitan identity. (The knowledgeable epistemic stance the seller takes toward current fashion similarly undergirds this identity project.) In such situations, we vividly see how the vast workings of global processes, and the languages carried with them, settle into the everyday lives of ordinary people around the world.

The range of phenomena discussed in this section attests to the wealth of linguistic resources that contribute to the production of identity positions. Disparate indexical processes of labeling, implicature, stance taking, style marking, and code choice work to construct identities, both micro and macro, as well as those somewhere in between. By considering identity formation at multiple indexical levels rather than focusing on only one, we can assemble a much richer portrait of subjectivity and intersubjectivity as they are constituted in interaction.

The relationality principle

The first three principles we have discussed focus on the emergent, positional, and indexical aspects of identity and its production. Building on these points, the fourth principle emphasizes identity as a relational phenomenon. In calling attention to relationality, we have two aims: first, to underscore the point that identities are never autonomous or independent but always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors; and second, to call into question the widespread but oversimplified view of identity relations as revolving around a single axis: sameness and difference. The principle we propose here suggests a much broader range of relations that are forged through identity processes:

4. Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy.

We have described these relations at length elsewhere as what we have termed *tactics of intersubjectivity* (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004a, 2004b); we briefly summarize those discussions here. The list of identity relations we outline in this and our earlier work is not intended to be exhaustive but rather suggestive of the different dimensions of relationality created through identity construction. In addition, it is important to note that although we separate the concepts for purposes of exposition we do not view them as mutually exclusive; indeed, since these are relational processes two or more typically work in conjunction with one another.⁵

ADEQUATION AND DISTINCTION

The first two complementary identity relations we describe, similarity and difference, are also the most widely discussed in social-scientific research on identity. To highlight the ways we depart from traditional views of these relations, we use the terms *adequation* and *distinction*.

The term *adequation* emphasizes the fact that in order for groups or individuals to be positioned as alike, they need not – and in any case cannot – be identical, but must merely be understood as sufficiently similar for current interactional purposes. Thus, differences irrelevant or damaging to ongoing efforts to adequate two people or groups will be downplayed, and similarities viewed as salient to and supportive of the immediate project of identity work will be foregrounded. The relation of adequation can be seen earlier in Examples (1) and (2). In Example (1), Sulekha's use of feminine gender marking reflects neither her view of herself as a woman nor her attempt to be so viewed. Instead, it allows her to claim just enough of the semiotic trappings of femininity to produce herself as a hijra in an interaction in which – by her own report – the gendered nature of such an identity is explicitly contested. Likewise, in Example (2), when Jin uses the grammatical and lexical resources of African American youth language, he positions himself not as black but as both nonwhite and as antagonistic to white racism, and hence as sufficiently similar to African Americans to make common cause with them.

A rather different example of adequation comes from unpublished work by Adam Hodges (n.d.), who investigates the Bush administration's rhetorical strategies to gain the American public's support for the war the United States eventually waged against Iraq in 2003. In his critical discourse analysis of a speech given by President George W. Bush in Cincinnati in October 2002, Hodges finds that Bush used the relation of adequation to effectively create an association in listeners' minds between President Saddam Hussein of Iraq and the terrorist network Al Qaeda, which claimed responsibility for the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. Example (7) is taken from Bush's speech:

(7) (Hodges ms.)

- 1 the attacks of September the 11th
- 2 showed our country that vast oceans
- 3 no longer protect us from danger
- 4 before that tragic date
- 5 we had only hints of al Qaeda's plans
- 6 and designs
- 7 today in Iraq
- 8 we see a threat whose outlines
- 9 are far more clearly defined
- 10 and whose consequences
- 11 could be far more deadly
- 12 Saddam Hussein's actions have put us on notice
- 13 and there is no refuge
- 14 from our responsibilities

Hodges notes that the repeated juxtaposition of the names *Al Qaeda* and *Saddam Hussein* in this and other speeches itself establishes a discursive ground for the production of adequation between the two entities. Moreover, the framing of both of them as morally and politically equivalent – for instance, as variously a ‘danger’ (line 3) or a ‘threat’ (line 8) – further adequates Al Qaeda with the Iraqi government as represented in the person of Saddam Hussein; indeed, Bush suggests that the primary difference between these two menacing entities is one of degree, not kind. The crudeness of such rhetorical strategies offers an especially extreme example of adequation by demonstrating how speakers – and here, by extension, entire governments – position not themselves but others as sufficiently similar for a given purpose, such as identifying a target for military attack.

The counterpart of adequation, distinction, focuses on the identity relation of differentiation.⁶ The overwhelming majority of sociocultural linguistic research on identity has emphasized this relation, both because social differentiation is a highly visible process and because language is an especially potent resource for producing it in a variety of ways. Just as adequation relies on the suppression of social differences that might disrupt a seamless representation of similarity, distinction depends on the suppression of similarities that might undermine the construction of difference.

Because distinction is such a familiar identity relation, we provide only a brief illustration of how it operates. While processes of social differentiation may be found at some level in all of the examples given earlier, we return here to Example (6), the exchange in the Tongan marketplace. This interaction offers a clear instance of adequation with modern English-speaking cosmopolitanism. Moreover, by means of some of the same resources, it produces distinction as well. Besnier points out that the seller's use of centralized New Zealand-like vowels creates a relation of distinction with certain other Tongans: ‘She also distances herself from Tongan-accented English (with some difficulty at the level of syntax)

and all that it represents in the New Zealand context, including the stigma of being an underclass “Islander,” whose vowels are never centralized’ (2004: 32). In this example, even a linguistically slight similarity to the transnational prestige variety of English is sufficient to align this Tongan seller of second-hand western clothes with modernity and simultaneously to separate her from a local lower-class identity.

AUTHENTICATION AND DENATURALIZATION

The second pair of relations, *authentication* and *denaturalization*, are the processes by which speakers make claims to realness and artifice, respectively. While both relations have to do with authenticity, the first focuses on the ways in which identities are discursively verified and the second on how assumptions regarding the seamlessness of identity can be disrupted. Like the focus on distinction, a concern with authenticity – that is, what sorts of language and language users count as ‘genuine’ for a given purpose – has pervaded the sociocultural linguistic literature, although analysts have not always separated their own assumptions about authenticity from those of the speakers they study (Bucholtz, 2003). We call attention not to authenticity as an inherent essence, but to authentication as a social process played out in discourse. The interaction we have selected to illustrate this phenomenon is taken from Bauman’s (1992) analysis of Icelandic legends about the *kraftaskáld*, a poet thought to have magical powers. In his analysis of this narrative genre as polyvocalic and dynamic, Bauman points to the opening and closing of the narrative as sites where the narrator authenticates not only his story, but also himself as the teller of it:

(8) (Bauman, 1992: 130–31)

- HÖE 1 *Voru nokkrir fleiri. . . voru fleiri kraftaskáld talin þarna í Skagaafirði?*
Were any others. . . were others reputed to be kraftaskálds in Skagaþjorð?
- JN 2 *Ég man að nú ekki núna í augnabliki,*
I don’t remember that now, just now at the moment,
- 3 *en eitt ég nú sagt þér ef. . . ef þú kcerir þig um.*
but I can tell you now if. . . if you care (to hear it).
- 4 *það er nú ekki beint úr Skagaafirði,*
It is, now, not exactly from Skagaþjorð,
- 5 *og þó, það er í sambandi við Guðrúnu,*
although it is connected with Guðrún,
- 6 *dóttur séra Páls skálda í Vestmannaeyjum.*
daughter of Reverend Páll the Poet in the Westman Islands.
- 7 *Páll skáldi þótti nú kraftaskáld.*
Páll the Poet was thought, now, to be a kraftaskáld
- [. . .]
- 25 *Nú Guðrún dottir hans sagði föður minum þessa sögu.*
Now Guðrún, his daughter, told my father this story.

Bauman notes that the detailing of the chain of narration whereby the teller heard the tale also provides evidence for his right to tell it, thus authenticating both the narrative and his interactional identity as its narrator. Bauman describes this process, which he terms *traditionalization*, as an ‘act of authentication akin to the art or antique dealer’s authentication of an object by tracing its provenience’ (1992: 137). This useful metaphor highlights the temporal dimension of authentication, which often relies on a claimed historical tie to a venerated past.

In denaturalization, by contrast, such claims to the inevitability or inherent rightness of identities is subverted. What is called attention to instead is the ways in which identity is crafted, fragmented, problematic, or false. Such aspects often emerge most clearly in parodic performance and in some displays of hybrid identity (e.g. Bucholtz, 1995; Jaffe, 2000; Woolard, 1998), but they may also appear whenever an identity violates ideological expectations (e.g. Barrett, 1999; Rampton, 1995).

As an example of denaturalization, we turn to work by Benjamin Bailey (2000) on just such an identity: that of Dominican Americans. Bailey points out that in the US racial context, Dominican Americans’ own language-based identities as Hispanic (or ‘Spanish’) are displaced by ideologically motivated perceptions of their identity as African American or black based on their phenotype. In Example (9), two Dominican American teenage boys in a Rhode Island high school, Wilson and JB, jokingly conspire against a Southeast Asian American classmate, Pam, to convince her that Wilson is black, not Spanish:

(9) (Bailey, 2000: 571)

(Wilson has just finished explaining to JB, in Spanish, the function of the wireless microphone he is wearing.)

- Wilson: ((singing)) Angie Pelham is a weird person (2.5)
 Wilson: *Me estoy miando yo, mano.* [‘I have to piss, man.’] (2.0)
 JB: () (2.0)
 Pam: Yo, the first time I saw you, I never thought you were Spanish. (.5)
 Wilson: [Who?]
 JB: [(He’s)] Black.
 Pam: I never-
 Wilson: Cause I’m Black.
 JB: ()
 Wilson: Cause I’m Black.
 Pam: No
 JB: His father [is Black], her mother is-, his mother is uh-
 Wilson: [I’m Black]
 Pam: (Can he) speak Spanish?
 JB: No
 Wilson: Cause I was- [I was]
 Pam: [Yeah!]
 JB: So why (d- ?)

- Wilson: No, no seriously, I'm Black and I was raised in the Dominican Republic. (.5)
 Wilson: For real.
 Pam: Your mother's Black?
 Wilson: My mom? No, my father.
 Pam: Your father's Black, your [mother's Spanish?]
 Wilson: [My mom's Spanish]
 JB: His mom is Black- and she's Spanish.
 Wilson: Is mix(ed)
 JB: His mom was born over here.
 (2.0) ((Wilson smiles at Pam and throws a piece of paper at her))
 JB: Wilson, don't t(h)row anything to her.
 Wilson: *Excúsame, se me olvidó, que es la heva tuya* ['Sorry, I forgot that she is your girlfriend.']
 JB: *Cállate, todavía no.* ['Be quiet, not yet!']
 Pam: English!
 JB: English, yeah!
 Wilson: I said I'm sorry.
 JB: He can't speak Spanish.
 Pam: I saw you were talking to him ()
 Wilson: I understand, but I don't speak everything.
 (2.2) ((Wilson smiles broadly at Pam))
 JB: I'm teaching him. (5.5)
 Wilson: *¿Qué tú vas (a) hacer en tu casa hoy, loco?* ((slaps JB on the back))
 ['What are you going to do at your house today, man?']

Bailey's analysis shows that in this interaction Wilson and JB collaboratively construct an absurd and implausible (to them) representation of Wilson's ethnic identity as black and non-Spanish-speaking. By the end of the excerpt, Wilson blatantly violates his own immediately previous identity claims by speaking in fluent Spanish, thereby unmasking himself as not 'really' black according to the Dominican cultural framework. This jointly produced prank undermines essentialized assumptions that black skin necessarily entails a black identity and thus denaturalizes the dominant racial paradigm in the United States. In both Examples (7) and (8), then, what is at stake, in very different ways, is what counts as a 'real' identity. But where the Icelandic narrator puts forth his identity bona fides in order to produce himself as an authentic and legitimate teller of the *kraftaskáld* tale, Wilson knowingly offers false credentials only to withdraw them later, and thus unsettles the naturalized links between phenotype and ethnic identity.

AUTHORIZATION AND ILLEGITIMATION

The final pair of intersubjective relations that we describe considers the structural and institutional aspects of identity formation. The first of these, authorization, involves the affirmation or imposition of an identity through structures of institutionalized power and ideology, whether local or translocal. The counterpart of authorization, illegitimation, addresses the ways in which identities are dismissed, censored, or simply ignored by these same structures. To

illustrate authorization, we return to Bush's speech leading up to the Iraq war (Example 7). Throughout his speech, Bush uses the first-person plural pronoun to conflate the Bush Administration with the United States as a whole. Drawing on the shared national identity that emerged in the wake of the September 11 attacks, Bush invokes 'our country' at the beginning of the passage, but then uses the same pronoun to refer to the specialized knowledge available only to members of his Administration (and later revealed to be false). By the end of this excerpt, 'our responsibilities' are imposed not only on Bush and his advisors but on the American people as well. This sort of conflation is reinforced by Bush's ability as President to metonymically position himself as speaking on behalf of the nation. Just as he authoritatively adequates Saddam Hussein to Al Qaeda, he likewise uses his presidential authority to create an identification of a shared moral stance between himself and the American public. (The effectiveness of such strategies, Hodges notes, can be seen in the strong expressions of public support for Bush's position after this speech.)

Structures of authority need not be as all-encompassing as in this situation. In our final example, we demonstrate how interactional dynamics may shore up ideological structures even in the absence of a locatable powerful authority. This is the process that Antonio Gramsci (1971) calls *hegemony*. Example (10) comes from Joseph Park's (2004) multisited investigation of ideologies of English in Korea. Park shows that these ideologies permeate ordinary interactions in a variety of contexts. Example (10) illustrates one of these ideologies: that it is, in some sense, culturally inappropriate or unKorean to speak English fluently. The example takes place among Korean nationals attending graduate school in the United States. The speakers jointly mock a nonpresent Korean friend, who has left a message on one participant's answering machine in which he uses an Americanized pronunciation of the word *Denver*:

(10) (from Park, 2004; slightly simplified transcript)

- 24 Hyeju: <@[/tɛnvΛ=r/]-ga eodi-ya?@>
Denver-SUB where-IE
"Where is Denver ([tɛnvΛ=r])?"
- 25 Junho: /tɛnvʊ=r/-e iss-[@eo@>]@
Denver-LOC exist-IE
"I'm in Denver ([tɛnvΛ=r])."
- 26 Hyeju: /[[tɛn]bΛ/ ani-gu /tɛnvΛ=r/-ga eodi-ya <@ileohge@>
Denver NEG-CONN Denver-SUB where-IE like:this
"Where is Denver ([tɛnvΛ=r]), not Denver ([tɛnbΛ])?" Something like that.
- 27 All: @@@@
- 28 Junho: /tɛnvʊ=r/-eseo mweo hae-ss-eulkka @@@@
Denver-LOC what do-PST-IR
What did he do in Denver ([tɛnvʊ=r])?
- 29 All: @@@@

Here the repeated iterations of the forms [tɛnvΛr] and [tɛnvʊr] with exaggerated lengthening of the second syllable, coupled with frequent laughter (marked by

@), signal the speakers' sense that such a pronunciation is inappropriate for a Korean speaker. In line 26, Hyeju contrasts this unacceptably American pronunciation with the usual Korean realization of the word, [tenbʌ]. These speakers draw on a shared national language ideology of Koreanness to illegitimate the inappropriately Americanized identity that, in their view, their friend's pronunciation projects.

The tactics of intersubjectivity outlined here not only call attention to the intersubjective basis of identity, but also provide a sense of the diverse ways that relationality works through discourse. Relationality operates at many levels. As many sociocultural linguists have argued, including several whose work is cited earlier, even genres traditionally thought of as monologic are fundamentally interactional. Whether one's interlocutor is a lower-class Tongan woman or the entire world, the earlier examples show that identities emerge only in relation to other identities within the contingent framework of interaction.

The partialness principle

The final principle draws from voluminous literature in cultural anthropology and feminist theory over the past two decades that has challenged the analytic drive to represent forms of social life as internally coherent. This challenge, inspired by the postmodern critique of the totalizing master narratives characteristic of previous generations, surfaces in ethnography in the realization that all representations of culture are necessarily 'partial accounts' (Clifford and Marcus, 1986). This idea has long been central to feminist analysis – as well as to the early work of female ethnographers who predated the emergence of second-wave feminism in the 1970s – in which there is an ethical commitment to recognizing the situatedness and partialness of any claim to knowledge (see Behar and Gordon, 1995; Visweswaran, 1994). The feminist commitment to explicitly positioning oneself as a researcher rather than effacing one's presence in the research process, a practice which echoes the politics of location in reflexive ethnography, has exposed the fact that reality itself is intersubjective in nature, constructed through the particulars of self and other in any localized encounter. This idea fits well with postmodern theorizings of identity as fractured and discontinuous, for as anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran has noted, 'Identities are constituted by context and are themselves asserted as partial accounts' (1994: 41).

Whereas the critique of ethnography has been most interested in the partialness construed by one kind of identity relation – that of researcher and subject – our fifth principle attempts to capture not only this dynamic, but the entire multitude of ways in which identity exceeds the individual self. Because identity is inherently relational, it will always be partial, produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and other. Even seemingly coherent displays of identity, such as those that pose as deliberate and intentional, are reliant on both interactional and ideological constraints for their articulation:

5. Any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts.

Particular kinds of analysis will often bring to the forefront one of these aspects over others. However, the rich possibilities of the broad interdisciplinary research we include under the rubric of sociocultural linguistics are most fully realized when multiple dimensions of identity are considered in a single analysis or when complementary analyses are brought together.

The principle stated above helps to resolve a central and longstanding issue regarding research on identity: the extent to which it is understood as relying on agency. From the perspective of an interactional approach to identity, the role of agency becomes problematic only when it is conceptualized as located within an individual rational subject who consciously authors his identity without structural constraints. (Our gendered pronoun choice here is quite deliberate and corresponds to the fact that male subjectivity was taken as unmarked by many scholars in earlier generations.) Numerous strands of social theory from Marxism to poststructuralism have rightly critiqued this notion of agency, but the litany of dubious qualities associated with the autonomous subject now functions more as caricature than critique of how agency is currently understood. Indeed, current researchers, particularly within sociocultural linguistics, have found ways of theorizing agency that circumvent the dangers identified by critics while exploiting its utility for work on identity. Sociocultural linguists are generally not concerned with calibrating the degree of autonomy or intentionality in any given act; rather, agency is more productively viewed as the accomplishment of social action (cf. Ahearn, 2001). This way of thinking about agency is vital to any discipline that wants to consider the full complexity of social subjects alongside the larger power structures that constrain them. But it is especially important to sociocultural linguistics, for the very use of language is itself an act of agency (Duranti, 2004). Under this definition, identity is one kind of social action that agency can accomplish.

Such a definition of agency does not require that social action be intentional, but it allows for that possibility; habitual actions accomplished below the level of conscious awareness act upon the world no less than those carried out deliberately. Likewise, agency may be the result of individual action, but it may also be distributed among several social actors and hence intersubjective. The phenomenon of what could be called *distributed agency*, though not as well documented as that of distributed cognition (Hutchins, 1995), has begun to receive attention in some areas of sociocultural linguistics, often under the label of *joint activity* or *co-construction* (e.g. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; C. Goodwin, 1995; M. Goodwin, 1990; Ochs and Capps, 2001). Finally, agency may be ascribed through the perceptions and representations of others or

assigned through ideologies and social structures. As we have emphasized throughout this article, it is not a matter of choosing one of these aspects of identity over others, but of considering how some or all of them may potentially work with and against one another in discourse.

The interactional view that we take here has the added benefit of undoing the false dichotomy between structure and agency that has long plagued social theory (see discussion in Ahearn, 2001). On the one hand, it is only through discursive interaction that large-scale social structures come into being; on the other hand, even the most mundane of everyday conversations are impinged upon by ideological and material constructs that produce relations of power. Thus both structure and agency are intertwined as components of micro as well as macro articulations of identity.

Conclusion

Different research traditions within sociocultural linguistics have particular strengths in analyzing the varied dimensions of identity outlined in this article. The method of analysis selected by the researcher makes salient which aspect of identity comes into view, and such 'partial accounts' contribute to the broader understanding of identity that we advocate here. Although these lines of research have often remained separate from one another, the combination of their diverse theoretical and methodological strengths – including the microanalysis of conversation, the macroanalysis of ideological processes, the quantitative and qualitative analysis of linguistic structures, and the ethnographic focus on local cultural practices and social groupings – calls attention to the fact that identity in all its complexity can never be contained within a single analysis. For this reason, it is necessary to conceive of sociocultural linguistics broadly and inclusively.

The five principles proposed here – Emergence, Positionality, Indexicality, Relationality, and Partialness – represent the varied ways in which different kinds of scholars currently approach the question of identity. Even researchers whose primary goals lie elsewhere can contribute to this project by providing sophisticated conceptualizations of how human dynamics unfold in discourse, along with rigorous analytic tools for discovering how such processes work. While identity has been a widely circulating notion in sociocultural linguistic research for some time, few scholars have explicitly theorized the concept. The present article offers one way of understanding this body of work by anchoring identity in interaction. By positing, in keeping with recent scholarship, that identity is emergent in discourse and does not precede it, we are able to locate identity as an intersubjectively achieved social and cultural phenomenon. This discursive approach further allows us to incorporate within identity not only the broad sociological categories most commonly associated with the concept, but also more local positionings, both ethnographic and interactional. The linguistic resources that indexically produce identity at all these levels are therefore

necessarily broad and flexible, including labels, implicatures, stances, styles, and entire languages and varieties. Because these tools are put to use in interaction, the process of identity construction does not reside within the individual but in intersubjective relations of sameness and difference, realness and fakeness, power and disempowerment. Finally, by theorizing agency as a broader phenomenon than simply individualistic and deliberate action, we are able to call attention to the myriad ways that identity comes into being, from habitual practice to interactional negotiation to representations and ideologies.

It is no overstatement to assert that the age of identity is upon us, not only in sociocultural linguistics but also in the human and social sciences more generally. Scholars of language use are particularly well equipped to provide an empirically viable account of the complexities of identity as a social, cultural, and – most fundamentally – interactional phenomenon. The recognition of the loose coalition of approaches that we call sociocultural linguistics is a necessary step in advancing this goal, for it is only by understanding our diverse theories and methods as complementary, not competing, that we can meaningfully interpret this crucial dimension of contemporary social life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to the many audiences and readers who have provided feedback at various stages in the development of this project, and particularly to Dick Bauman, Niko Besnier, Elaine Chun, Barbara Fox, Barbara Johnstone, and Sally McConnell-Ginet for suggestions and encouragement. Special thanks are also due to Sandro Duranti for incisive comments as well as for his original invitation to us to present our joint work at the UCLA symposium *Theories and Models of Language, Interaction, and Culture*, which spurred us to think more deeply about the interactional grounding of identity. Naturally, we alone are responsible for any remaining weaknesses.

NOTES

1. The term *sociolinguistics* sometimes carries this referential range, but for many scholars it has a narrower reference. *Sociocultural linguistics* has the virtue of being less encumbered with a particular history of use.
2. In other parts of the country, these markers may have very different – indeed, reversed – semiotic valences. Thus, Maryam Bakht-Rofheart (2004) has shown that at one Long Island high school a group that self-identifies as the ‘Intellectual Elite’ and that is identified by others as nerds rejected the use of *be like* as undesirably trendy and embraced *be all* as a form that lacked such associations.
3. It is important to note that interactional roles such as problematizer/problematizee (or primary storyteller or recipient) are not merely the building blocks of more persistent forms of identity such as gender; rather, they are situational identities in their own right – that is, they serve to socially position speakers and hearers.
4. Penelope Eckert (2000, 2004), for instance, links the realization of vowel quality to discourse topics and interactional goals (e.g. ‘doing drama’).
5. Indeed, in some situations the same person can enact both dimensions of a contrastive identity pairing, especially in performance contexts (e.g. Pagliai and Farr, 2000).

6. We take the term *distinction* from Pierre Bourdieu (1984), whose own conceptualization of it is concerned with the production of social-class difference by members of the bourgeoisie. We broaden its reference to include any process of social differentiation.

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