

The Co-Construction of Roles and Patterns of Interaction in Family Discourse

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the discourse analysis of spoken interaction in the family context. Specific aspects of family discourse are discussed, including the co-construction of identity, the specific roles and identities of family members, and the patterns of interaction found in the discourse. Since gender is an important aspect of family roles, an overview of the research on gender and spoken interaction is included. The concepts of framing and power, as they relate to family interaction are also discussed given the salience researchers have attached to these concepts. This is followed by a review of the literature on language and identity, including the co-construction of identity in interaction, and discourse analysis studies on particular family member roles and family identity. Discourse patterns specific to family interaction are discussed in the last section. The review concludes that although discourse analysis research on family talk has shed light on family-specific patterns of interaction, it has nevertheless focused on a narrowly-defined concept of what constitutes a family and has largely been based on short-term data collection.

INTRODUCTION

Family discourse is significant not only because everyone experiences spoken interaction with family members (or caregivers), but also because the types of miscommunications and strategies found in discursive interaction within the family unit are also evident in the larger society. The family is, as such, a microcosm of many of the relationships and interactions in society at large, in and across all social groups. Understanding the types of communication strategies people use, the types of power alignments and negotiations of roles people enact, and the issues and problems that arise therein can inform human communication in all societies.

Family discourse is co-constructed by family members, each of whom has certain expectations and goals for each particular interaction. During spoken family interaction, family roles are constructed, refuted, and negotiated by the interactants. These roles are often based on each individual's gender and position in the family. In this way, gender and family discourse are inextricably linked to one another. Although the institution of the family has long been studied in many fields, linguists have only recently (within the past decade) begun examining family

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interaction as a distinct discourse practice with specific patterns, sequences, and motivations.

Gender and Spoken Interaction

Gender as a variable of language has been examined under many paradigms, starting with dialectology studies and variationism in sociolinguistic studies (e.g., Labov, 1990; Trudgill, 1974)² and a polarity was found in primitive cultures in early anthropological studies. Anthropologists drew attention to the way human societies view gender as a social category and how this view created linguistic differences among the genders which, in turn, perpetuate the concepts (Coates, 1993).

The concept of gender has changed since early linguistic studies, in which gender and sex (the biological male and female distinction) were considered to be one and the same (Labov, 1990; Lakoff, 1975; Trudgill, 1974). Feminist theories have since argued that there is an important distinction between the two (e.g., Bergvall & Bing, 1996; Cameron, 1996; Freed, 2003). To briefly consider the history of the field of language and gender studies, I will mention the most prominent theories that have arisen in the field.

Language and gender studies started to emerge in the 1960s, as sociolinguists gave detailed descriptions of language by looking at the differences between dialects of people from different places, and between men and women. These differences came into the spotlight in the 1970s, along with the feminist movement. A well-known book by Robin Lakoff (1975), *Language and Women's Place*, was based upon the differences in men's and women's language. In it, Lakoff proposed what later became known as the deficit theory, which stated that men were in dominant positions in society, and their language practices reflected and perpetuated this upper position, whereas women were marginalized, so their language reflected and reinforced this lower position. Later, Deborah Tannen popularized another dichotomous model, the difference theory (first proposed by Maltz and Borker, 1982), which acknowledged differences in the conversational styles and conversational goals of men and women without ascribing these differences to male dominance (Tannen, 1986, 1990).

Moving beyond the essentialist view that gender was something one was simply born with, West & Zimmerman (1987) proposed that gender is something a person does, rather than has. "Doing gender," they say, "involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'" (p. 126). This performative model looks at gender as an interactional achievement. Although West and Zimmerman had proposed a new constructivist approach, changing the way researchers conceptualized gender, they were later criticized for not going far enough beyond the dichotomous view of gender (Bergvall & Bing, 1996; McElhinny, 1995). Bing and Bergvall (1996) suggest that future language and gender research consider that "[in] order to move beyond binary thinking to an acceptance of diversity, we need to examine the presuppositions that underlie our questions, seek metaphors and new models, and study different communities of practice without preconceived ideas about language and gender" (p. 24).

Gender is currently conceptualized as being a socially constructed aspect of identity,³

² Both Trudgill (1974) and Labov (1990) found in their research in the 1970s that women used more standard or prestigious forms of speech than men. At that time it was proposed that this was because women were more socially insecure or were held to higher standards than men were.

³ A view of gender as "a socially constructed aspect of identity" has been labeled both "social constructionist" and "postmodernist" (stemming from postmodern theorists such as Judith Butler, 1990, 1992).

created through language, which can have varying amounts of feminine and masculine characteristics, and is quite fluid and changeable, rather than inherent and fixed (Cameron, 2003). Cameron (1999) notes that gender “has constantly to be reaffirmed and publicly displayed by repeatedly performing particular acts in accordance with the cultural norms... which define ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’” (p. 444), and further asserts that gender identities are unstable and variable; people perform different gender identities in different contexts. It is with this view that gender identities within the institution of the family will be examined.

FRAMING AND POWER IN DISCOURSE

In order to study talk-in-interaction within the family setting, some related theoretical bases for examining interaction must first be outlined. Within the study of discourse and interaction, there are two important theoretical concepts that form the basis upon which people interact, including the expectations they bring to the speech event context, and the ways people try to accomplish their own goals. The expectations people bring to a speech event are also called *frames* (Goffman, 1997a, 1997b; Tannen, 1993, 2003b, 2004). Within such frames, people try to accomplish their own goals and control the course of the conversation and others’ actions through negotiations for *power*. These two concepts and their connection to family discourse will now be discussed.

Framing

Sociologist Erving Goffman looked at how language is situated within specific social situations and how it both reflects and creates meaning within those situations. Within this participation framework, Goffman (1981, 1997a, 1997b) proposed the interactional concept of *framing*, including the individual’s displays of *footing*, *stance*, and *alignment*.

Deborah Tannen has since taken Goffman’s idea of framing and has expanded it and defined it in terms of relationships between men and women and in family settings. The origins of framing will first be discussed, followed by the ways the concept has been further developed for discourse analytic research.

The Origins of Framing

Goffman (1997a) proposed using the term framing based on Gregory Bateson’s (1972) use of the term for linguistic study. Bateson was an anthropologist who, while studying the play of monkeys, developed a theory of play based on *frame* and *context*. Bateson considered how monkeys knew that their playful nips were, indeed, play and not combat. He determined that the monkeys had to be able to metacommunicate signals that contained the message, *this is play*. With this example of fantasy and play, Bateson introduced a discussion about frame and context. He purported that for such a situation there were frames of *play* and *non-play* that were based on psychological concepts. He defined these “psychological frames” as “a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)” (Bateson, 1972, p. 186).

Subsequently, Goffman (1997a, 1997b) developed a new way to look at the way we understand social reality, by proposing a situational perspective to answer the question an individual is faced with in any face-to-face situation: “What is it that’s going on here?” Based on Bateson’s (1972) definition of frame, Goffman proposed *frame analysis* to analyze the

“organization of experience” (Goffman, 1997a, p. 155). Goffman defined the frame of an activity as the organizational premises into which individuals fit their actions. In this sense, an activity can be fabricated or faked (where reality is merely mimicked). And for every strip of everyday activity there are most likely differently framed episodes (or “roles”), which have different realm statuses. According to Goffman, everyday activity “contains quickly changing frames” and, thus, frames can quickly shift from literal to fictive and to the somewhat fanciful realms in between (1997a, pp. 160-161).

To illustrate the complexities of framing, Goffman (1997a) offers an example of a very ordinary circumstance: that of a chess or checkers game. If two men sit at a table, the choice between playing chess or checkers is quite significant for the two men, since each involves different strategies and different “game-generated characters”, and thus, different frames. In addition, the notions associated with playing the two games may be different. In America, there may be the idea that chess is cultivated, whereas checkers is not (Goffman, 1997a). However, to an onlooker, such as a janitor or a policeman, it simply looks as though the men are playing a board game. From their frame, it does not make a big difference which game is being played. Goffman (1997b) took this frame analysis and examined verbal communication, or *talk*, through its scope. He looked at the social presuppositions that exist in spoken language use and “who can say what to whom, in what circumstances, with what preamble, in what surface form” (1997b, p. 189).

Framing Used in Discourse Analysis

Deborah Tannen (1993) used the idea of framing to describe everyday conversation through the analysis of spontaneous spoken discourse. Following Bateson (1972), Tannen defines a frame as a *metamessage* on what was being said: “Bateson demonstrated that no communicative move...could be understood without reference to a...metamessage about what is going on – that is what frame of interpretation applies to the move” (1993, p. 3). Thus, metamessages frame the talk (or non-verbal move) in a particular way.

Tannen (1993) further categorizes frames into two categories: *schemas*, which are structures of expectations associated with situations, people, objects, and the like; and *interactive frames*, which are more in the Bateson and Goffman sense of what people think they’re doing when they talk to each other (1993, p. 4). Tannen’s use of schema comes from Chafe (1977, as cited in Tannen, 1993, p. 16) who used schema to refer to the identification of an event and who also used the term frame for the sentence-level expression about individuals and their roles within a given event. Tannen conducted a study in which young Greek and American women watched a movie and then told another woman what they had seen in the film. She outlined sixteen general types of evidence highlighting the speakers’ expectations about the film content. The categories included the storytelling frame (focused on recounting events of a film), and a film-viewer frame, and various expectations about events, including personal encounters, confrontation, accident frame, and reaction to theft. The ways the participants referred to certain events in the film showed the expectations they had about the film (e.g., they mentioned that it had no dialogue because films generally have dialogue), and the expectations they thought the listener had about the recounting of the film (e.g., they inserted judgment phrases about what the characters are doing).

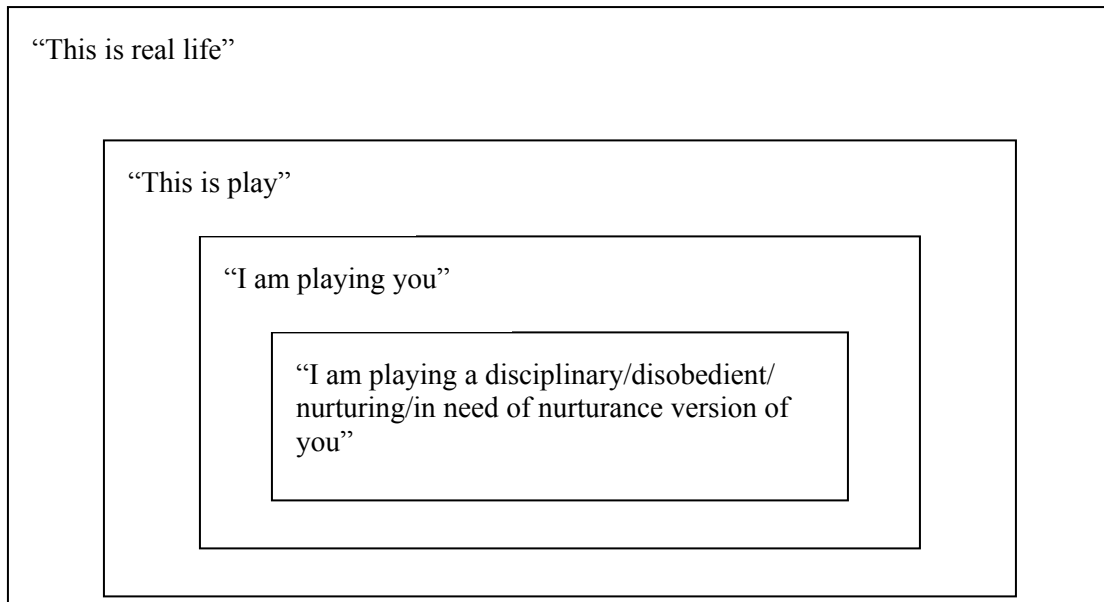
Tannen and Wallat (1993) also conducted a study focusing on frames by looking at doctor-patient interaction in an examination room. In the study, Tannen and Wallat found that the doctor shifted between three main frames: a social encounter, the examination of the child (including an *outer frame* of a commentary to a videotape to be used later to teach medical students), and

consultation with the mother. When the doctor shifted frames, she ignored other participants (e.g., when she talked to the child, she ignored the mother and the video crew, and when she talked to the mother, she ignored the child and the video crew). In their study, many knowledge schemas that pertain to a pediatric interaction were also highlighted. These were sometimes conflicting, as when the mother's and the doctor's schemas regarding health and cerebral palsy differed – the mother's being based on experience specifically with her child, and the doctor's being based on training and broader experience. The mother believed the child was having trouble breathing, but the doctor disagreed (Tannen & Wallat, 1993).

Tannen (1993) and Tannen and Wallat (1993) used framing in a more delineated sense than the ambiguous, overarching sense in which Goffman (1997a, 1997b) used it. Tannen proposed breaking it down into different senses (e.g., schema and interactive framing), which helps to clarify different types of frames but yet fails to categorize the many possible senses of frame.

The terms frame and framing have since been used by many sociolinguists and discourse analysts to refer to expectations and perceived interactional goals in the Goffmanian sense, following Tannen's (1993, 2003b, 2004) and Tannen and Wallat's (1993) work with frames. In one such study, Gordon (2002) looked at embedded frames within the talk and role play of a mother and her daughter. In her study, she looked at role play situations in which a 2-year-old girl, Natalie, instigates the role play of prior text (i.e., earlier conversations) with her mother, in which she tells her mother to play the child and Natalie will be "Mommy".

FIGURE 1
Gordon's embedded frames for play: three levels of non-literal play
(adapted from Gordon, 2002)



The frames shown in Figure 1 are embedded by "metamessages sent by Janet's and Natalie's utterances, situated both inside and outside the play frames themselves" (Gordon, 2002, p. 689). In this way, frames can be simultaneous, overlapping, easily shifting, and multilayered.

Blum-Kulka (1994) also used the term frames in her family discourse studies. She looked

at *frames within frames* in family dinner talk, saying that discussion topics can be seen as being organized within macrolevel thematic frames, each with its own local topics, roles, and rules of procedure. She defined three major thematic frames: situational concerns (e.g., contextual concerns, such as getting another serving), the immediate familial (e.g., news, telling about the day), and the nonimmediate (e.g., past stories, the weather). Within these frames (i.e., frames within frames), depending on the culture, different participants were able to talk more or less, different genres were employed, and different levels of politeness were expected.

In the studies of family discourse outlined above, frames are looked at both in situations where there is conflict (i.e., when different family members have different frames or expectations, which are then conflicting), and in situations where there is mutual agreement (i.e., when all participants are working together to accomplish the same interactional goals). We also can see analysis examining both local frames, which look at the moment-by-moment topics and local conversation strategies (e.g., compliments, queries, accusations, and their responses) and larger discourse situational frames (e.g., telling a story, giving an account).

Frames are a useful concept for describing the various ideas and expectations participants of any spoken interaction bring to the situation, yet we must be careful to not allow the term frame to be used as a ubiquitous term meaning all ideas, all expectations, all mindsets, and all possible activities in any given circumstance. In the existing literature, framing is used in various ways (cf. Goffman, 1997a, 1997b; Tannen, 1993, 2003b, 2004; Blum-Kulka, 1994). However, although it is useful that frames are not locked into constraining definitions that limit their usefulness in describing discursive situations, the ways we are using them in our own research must be made clear.

Power

The notion of power, as it is displayed through discourse and interaction, has always been an important part of discourse analysis. However, power has been viewed in different ways by different methods of language and discourse study. Power, according to Thornborrow (2002):

...means different things to different people; it is multi-faceted, and can take many different forms... This quantifiable notion of power also means that we can describe some person... as more or less powerful in relation to another... in a family context, parents more than children. (p. 5)

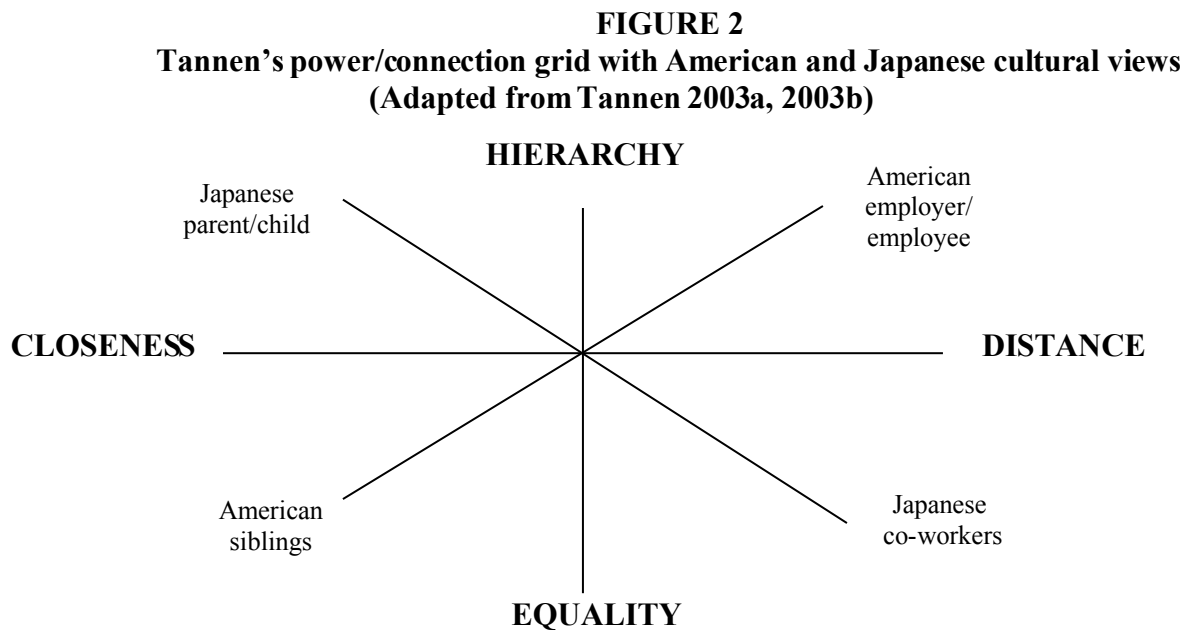
In anthropological studies, power is not often looked at as a variable, in and of itself, but instead is sometimes discussed within the description of the culture and practice of a particular group of people. Gender is usually not explicitly discussed as being linked to power in these studies but is often considered a variable in the descriptions. In an extreme case of gender and status being inseparably linked, Chemela (2004) found that speakers of Eastern Tukanoan in the Amazon region reproduce power asymmetries between men and women where women marry outside of their own language group in "a phenomenon known as language exogamy" (p. 13). Hence, the father's language is the standard and public language, while the mother's language is sub-standard and used only in private, and children grow up speaking the father's language. Language is therefore linked to patriarchal descent and men are in a linguistically dominant position.

Power and dominance are the key concepts for critical discourse analysis (CDA) in looking at how people in hierarchically higher positions, majority groups, and organizations use and maintain

power and control over other people and minority groups (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Gee, 1996, 1999). CDA proponents tend to see power as pre-existing talk and interaction, and based on social relations such as institutional role, gender, or ethnicity. However, this view tends to downplay how powerful talk itself can be; some ways of talking are more powerful than others.

As discussed earlier, the concept of power has also been debated in gender and discourse studies concerning male dominance over females in everyday communication. Lakoff (1975) compiled a list of features of talk that were less powerful and typically used by women. However, linguistic form may not be as important in determining an utterance's power as the person who uses it, and for what purpose it is used (Thornborrow, 2002). Gal (1995) asserts that through language, power is manifested: "the strongest form of power may well be the ability to define social reality, to impose visions of the world...such visions are inscribed in language and, most important, enacted in interaction" (p. 178). In this way, we can construct our world, and experience in it, through discourse, and we can create and sustain our identities and roles through dialogic interaction.

Power and solidarity was a concept first presented by Brown and Gilman (1960), and later extended by Brown and Levinson (1987) in their model of politeness. Stemming from this, Tannen (2003a, 2003b) views power (control) as it is juxtaposed with solidarity (connection) in the family setting. Tannen proposes a multidimensional model of power and connection (see Figure 2). She cites many prior studies looking at power struggles and conflict within families (e.g., Watts, 1991; Varenne, 1992), but asserts that there is also a struggle for connection among family members, an aspect that has been largely ignored: the family is the best example of the dual need for both connection and control in human relationships.



Whereas business relationships are based on hierarchy and distance in American culture (the power axis), family relationships, such as those between siblings, are egalitarian and close (the connection axis). Conversely, in Japan, family relationships are extremely hierarchical yet close, and business relationships are based more on equality but with respect (distance).

Within the family, this tension between connection and control can be seen in the shifting between two frames: the socialization frame, in which everyone is enjoying one another's company, which is egalitarian; and the caretaking frame, in which parents take the stance of caring for and instructing their children, which is hierarchical (Tannen, 2001). Tannen discusses the way these two frames tend to clash more as children get older and want to be treated as equals (i.e., in the socialization frame), while the parents may revert to the caretaking frame.

Conversation analysts have also examined power as it manifests in institutional discourse (Drew & Heritage, 1992). Although Drew and Heritage (1992) purport that the family is not an institution in the way that workplaces or schools are, it is likely that, similar to other institutions they studied (e.g., schools, offices/workplaces, and work-related situations such as news interviews), the family is also a context where there are hierarchies. Consequently, each family member has particular interactional goals, and their conversations are constrained by certain norms, or rules, that exist in the family context.⁴ Therefore, we can consider what goals family members bring to any interaction and what hierarchies (or perceived hierarchies) exist in the particular situation.

To this end, Thornborrow's (2002) conceptualization of power encompasses the notion that the family context can also contain a hierarchical system. In her book on power talk in institutional settings, she writes:

...the approach I adopt to power in this book is to see it as a contextually sensitive phenomenon, as a set of resources and actions which are available to speakers and which can be used more or less successfully depending on who the speakers are and what kind of speech situation they are in...power is accomplished in discourse both on a structural level, through the turn and type of space speakers are given or can get access to, and, on an interactional level, through what they can effectively accomplish in that space. (p. 8)

Thornborrow's definition of power is therefore based on a reflexive relationship between talk and the institutional context it is found in, in which the social meanings are co-constructed by participants through talk, but the talk is always grounded within a specific, local context. She criticizes many former studies on power in discourse for making the assumption that the setting predetermines hierarchical imbalances and for ignoring the ways power is constantly negotiated by interactants through talk (pp. 9-10).

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

Within the context created within a particular family unit, family roles emerge. In order to look at the construction of identity, we must first look at the foundation of learning within a family structure: socialization.

Socialization

Ochs (1986) defines socialization as "an interactional display (covert or overt) to a novice

⁴ In personal communication on February 24, 2007, John Heritage stated that the family is an institution and can be considered to be a part of institutional discourse; he said that in their 1992 book on institutional discourse, he and Paul Drew had taken a narrow view of what constituted an institution as including only professional/workplace organizations.

of expected ways of thinking, feeling, and acting” (p. 2). Ochs and Schieffelin (2001) further define language socialization as including both socialization through language and socialization to use language: to know about the ways language influences acquisition of sociocultural knowledge, we should examine “the language used both *by* children and *to* children in social interactions” (p. 263). In this conceptualization, language socialization is done both through language (as a medium) and by *doing language* (learning what to say).

Language acquisition is tied inextricably to sociocultural knowledge acquisition (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2001; Maccoby, 1992). When tracing its developmental origins, the concept of language socialization was born out of the prior theories of behaviorism and psychoanalytic theory (Maccoby, 1992). In the 1980s, Ochs and Schieffelin developed the paradigm of language socialization to address the deficits in previous research (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2001). The study of language socialization is a form of ethnomethodology that currently uses microanalytic methods from Conversation Analysis (CA) but goes beyond the local text-based system analysis of CA to include local social structures such as gender and status, and more global structures, including the political environment and other larger social trends (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004, pp. 349-351).

According to Ochs (1986), children acquire social competence through acquiring interactional routines, through understanding how language reflects social status and role, and through developing the ability to express feelings and affective stance in context. More recently, Kulick and Schieffelin (2004) have expanded the scope of language socialization to include not only socialization to cultural norms but also to the related emergence of *bad subjects*, or those who flout the desired outcomes of socialization. Kulick and Schieffelin posit that socialization is done largely based upon the concepts of desire and fear, and examine how these affects were changed in Kaluli culture with the introduction of Christianity into their culture. Their description of the cultural value changes that missionaries brought to the Kalulis is an example of language socialization of adults.

The theories of language socialization come largely from linguistic anthropology and ethnographic studies. Linguistic anthropology also informs the relationship between language and identity and how individuals produce particular identities through language (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Linguistic anthropological research not only looks at the rituals of language use but also at the people who use language to “produce and reproduce particular identities through their language use” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 369). Bucholtz and Hall posit that only recently has the concept of identity emerged as a topic in its own right within the field of linguistic anthropology, and that its focus on “cultural subjectivities” is evident in many genres, including narratives, oral traditions and life stories, interviews, literary practices, media discourses, and even through humor (p. 369). They claim that identity can be characterized through the concepts of sameness and difference, and through the way in which these complementary perspectives are organized into social hierarchies; additionally, the concept of markedness or of deviation from the norm also informs identity.

Identity

Norton (2000) pushed for change in the conceptualization of identity in SLA theory by incorporating the theory of subjectivity from feminist poststructuralism. Subjectivity includes the thoughts and feelings of the individual and his or her understanding of himself/herself and his/her relation to the world. It has three major aspects: (a) a nonunitary nature (contradictory and dynamic rather than fixed), (b) a site of struggle (a person may resist a marginalized role), and (c) change over time (Norton, 2000, pp. 124-128). Due to this multifaceted and changing nature of identity,

individuals must decide which identities are contextually relevant to a given situation, with consideration of the activity, goals, and identities of other participants. Gumperz (1982, 1992) proposed that individuals do not choose and construct social identity alone, but rather that identity is co-constructed by all participants in a given interaction. Therefore, we can say that social identity is multifaceted and dynamic and that both the individual and other interactants in a given situation continually construct and reconstruct one another's identities through interaction.

Numerous studies have been done investigating the way gender identity is acquired and constructed. These studies range from the demonstration of gender identity in children to that of adults, and to the comparison of these identity constructions across different cultural situations.

The majority of studies in language socialization have been done on the acquisition of sociocultural knowledge of children. Early theories saw parents as teachers in a mono-directional interactional structure, but later studies found parent-child interaction to be a bi-directional process with emotion/affect and mutual cognitions, while still maintaining the imbalance in power that exists between parents and children (Maccoby, 1992). Few studies looked solely at gender socialization, however. This may be due to the belief that gender identity is largely conveyed through nonverbal behavior and that linguistic gender differences are not often explicit (Philips, 1980).

The Co-construction of Roles and Identities

John Gumperz (1982, 1992) first popularized the notion that meaning, context, and identity were all achieved through cooperative interaction. Gumperz (1982) states that "communication is a social activity requiring the coordinated efforts of two or more individuals" (p. 1), and that "speakers must enlist others' cooperation and actively seek to create conversational involvement" (p. 206) to create meaningful dialogue. In addition, interactants must interpret the meaning of what is said through *contextualization*. Gumperz (1992) defines contextualization as including the assumptions that *situated interpretation* of an utterance is derived from context-based inferences which are constrained by "what is said and how it is interpreted," such that, in any interaction, participants use world knowledge which is "reinterpreted as part of the process of conversing so that it is interactively, thus ultimately socially, constructed" (p. 230). Gumperz further asserts that the interpretation of meaning is constrained by (cooperative) sequencing, negotiation of meaning, and conversational management. In this way, meaning is created through interaction within particular situations by specific people who have certain shared knowledge. As such, this coordinated dialogue is *co-constructed* interaction.

Jacoby and Ochs (1995) define *co-construction* as "the joint creation of a form, interpretation, stance, action, activity, identity, institution, skill, ideology, emotion, or other culturally meaningful reality...including collaboration, cooperation, and coordination" (p. 171). They go on to explain that co-construction can include arguments and negative interactions, as well as positive ones. Jacoby and Ochs further explain that co-construction involves both the fact that the things in people's heads "are made relevant to communication through social interaction", and the idea that humans bring these inner ideas to the external by the way in which they constitute, manage, and negotiate social reality through a sequential flow of interaction (p. 175).

The telling and retelling of narratives is one way in which people, and families, in particular, construct identity. We create, or construct, a sense of who we are through telling stories about ourselves, whereby we place ourselves in relation to others. In this way, family storytelling

is critical for children's developing sense of identity. Young children gain an understanding of their role within the family through participation in the co-construction of narratives (Fivush, 2002). As Coates (2003) states, "family talk can be seen to construct and maintain political order within families" and can be used to "confirm roles and power structures within families" (p. 158).

There are several studies by discourse analysts who look at family narrative telling and the ways in which family members co-construct their own identities and the larger family identity, as well (Gordon, 2004; Ochs & Taylor, 1992a, 1992b; Paugh, 2005; Taylor, 1995). Some of these studies will now be presented in detail as the role of the mother, the role of the father, the role of the children, and the construction of family identity are examined.

FAMILY ROLES

The Role of the Mother

The role that has been researched the most is that of the mother. Mothers are key figures in families, in the socialization of children, and in the creation of family identity. Mothers are reviled and revered, and are both the most respected and the most taken for granted within a family. Women who become mothers take on the identity of a mother to such an extent that sometimes their other identities are completely subsumed or overshadowed by the persona of motherhood.

Holmes (1997) found that women construct themselves (they are doing female identity) in many feminine-based roles, including "good daughter" and "good mother." Conversely, men construct themselves in conservative or masculine ways which are often functional, such as being in control, competent, or knowledgeable (judging themselves on performance and ability). Within this contrast, we can see that women are more focused on performing certain roles, and on demonstrating being good at them, according to societal standards.

In a related study, Henwood (1993) looked at the changes in the role of mothers as they get older, and the social construction of identities in the framework of the family as people age. One aspect Henwood examined was the "discourse of femininity," which includes mother-daughter closeness (p. 306). Mother-daughter closeness includes being able to confide in one another about personal things others would consider inconsequential, and the ability to rely on one another for aid. She found that as mothers and daughters age, the daughters often resist the mother-daughter closeness as they seek independence, and mothers feel that the new lack of mother-daughter closeness is a threat to face and to their identities as mothers, in general. In addition, older women who do not fit a societal ideal of a grand-maternal image may be categorized as evil figures, and stoical acceptance may be the only way elderly women can face these changes. The metaphors for mothers, and the idea of the good and bad mother, are also explored. The "good mother" is the idealization of mother as a self-sacrificing angel and the "bad mother" is the possessive, dominant mother who tries to serve her own emotional needs through the exploitation of the relationships with their children, both of which are typical cultural maternal representations (p. 316). Women who seek closeness with daughters find it hard to avoid falling into the bad mother category. In this way, we can see that the role of mother changes over time, as children and parents age, and can be very hard to negotiate for older women with their children.

Schiffrin (2000, 2002) also focuses on the identity of a mother as it relates to that of a daughter, where she examines the ways one Holocaust survivor discusses her relationship with her own mother over 70 years. As the daughter, Ilse both blames and absolves her mother for her actions during the Holocaust (including abandoning her during the war). Ilse also discusses her

own identity as a mother herself, and from this stance, tells how she cannot understand her mother's actions. In her criticism of her mother, Ilse is implying that the expectations are for a mother to protect and stay with her children, rather than abandon them.

Most studies, however, focus on mothers in interaction with younger, school-aged, or stay-at-home children, as the next few studies demonstrate. In examining the role of mother, in particular, Ochs (1992) found that mother-child talk, and the construction of the role of mother, differed between American culture and Samoan culture. In America, white middle-class mothers minimize the hierarchy between themselves and the child, whereas Samoan mothers maintain a strict power hierarchy in the position of mother. Ochs concludes that in this way, Samoan mothers give their positions as mothers more import, whereas the American mothers studied minimized their roles, even to the extent of becoming invisible.

The role of mother has shifted, over time, as societal changes take place. Fivush (2002) discusses how the role of mother within the family, as demonstrated through family narratives, has shifted since the post-World War II times:

In the traditional nuclear families of the 1950s and 1960s, the mother played a pivotal role in family story telling. Women traditionally play the role of family historian, keeping track of transitions and turning points in the larger family network and managing the everyday emotional life of the nuclear family. As women entered the work force in greater numbers, the emotional balance of family life changed. In many ways, family story telling has become an even more important part of family life for dual-earner families; it is through co-constructed narratives that families maintain a sense of identity as an emotional unit. (Fivish, 2002, para. 2)

Mothers did have more of a home management role when they typically stayed at home. Nevertheless, there are still family interaction patterns that exist, based on 1950s concepts, such as "Father knows best" (Ochs & Taylor 1992a, 1992b, 2001; discussed below), even when many mothers work outside the home now. Ochs and Taylor (1992b, 2001) found that mothers often set up narrative telling sequences and are the "introducer" of narratives and "telling your day" routines within the family. It seems that one responsibility for a mother is to manage family interaction.

Tannen (2003a, 2003b) says that the struggle between power and connection (see Figure 2, above) within a family is most clearly illustrated in the role of the mother, pointing us to the study done by Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, and Rosenberg (1984). Ervin-Tripp et al. (1984) found that children often expect mothers to comply with their wishes, in their roles as caregivers. Tannen (2003a) queries whether this phenomenon is because children have less respect for their mothers, feel closer to them, or both, using this example to discuss the way a mother struggles to create closeness and connection among family members (p. 184).

According to Gordon (2002), mothers must balance a complexity of frames during family interactions (such as the embedded literal and play frames in Figure 1, above). Mothers constantly perform multiple tasks (e.g., play with children and *work* as mothers at the same time), thus constantly negotiating shifting and simultaneous frames.

The Role of the Father

To date, few studies have examined the role of the father exclusively. In fact, there is only one discourse analysis study (Marinova, 2007) focusing on father discourse alone in the family setting. This is a major gap in the literature that needs to be pursued further.

The sole discourse analysis study focusing on the father's construction of identity has just recently been published (Marinova, 2007). In it, Marinova examines the ways that a father constructs his identity as a parent and caretaker through discussions with his daughter regarding her preparations to go on a semester abroad. The father takes the stance of a concerned parent through (a) expressing concern about his daughter in discussions with others, (b) giving directives to his daughter, (c) providing reasons and warnings, (d) asking his daughter for information, and (e) giving her advice (p. 107). In the study, the father, Greg, talks to the daughter, Susan, about concerns he has about her lack of preparation for the trip using a parental *caretaking frame* (Tannen, 2001). One example of their discussion is included here:

- 1 Greg: Do you have any idea of the different options of – is it a six weeks to two month window on doing the passport?
- 2 Susan: Yeah, I guess so.
- 3 Greg: <chuckles> You might not have to—you might have to like, you know, spend a lot of extra money if you let it go past, I think, six weeks to two months is the <sighs> window. You're getting close to that window.
- 4 Susan: /??/
- 5 Greg: Okay you are—we're going to have a meeting on this are [you]
- 6 Susan: [I know]
- 7 Greg: It seems like you've been ducking this thing pretty big, you don't want to talk about this.
- 8 Susan: I was WORKING on Saturday.
- 9 Greg: I know I know but basically you have a re—an avoidance kind of thing going on, you know, it's "don't talk to me now—about it" and you know obviously we're getting real concerned.

(Adapted from Marinova, 2007, p.110)

Although the father starts out more conversationally, asking if the daughter knows the time required to apply for a passport, he quickly accuses her of not taking responsibility and expresses the concern he and her mother have about her inaction. Through this talk, the father reinforces the hierarchical role he has as a father and constructs his identity as a caring parent.

Several studies look at the father along with the mother and other family members. Tannen (2003a) looks at the different perceptions mothers and fathers have about parenting, based on a paper by her student, Maureen Taylor. Taylor (as cited in Tannen, 2003a), in studying family conversations from a public television documentary, found that the mother (Pat) and father (Bill) had different reactions to their children growing up and moving away. Bill looked at the children leaving as healthy, as fostering emotional independence for their daughter, and as a type of freedom for him (i.e., he is liberated from the financial burden of responsibility for supporting them). Conversely, Pat does not like the emotional distance and worries her daughter is afraid of her and does not like to lose closeness with the children. In this way, we can see demonstrated that the mother's role was emotional (i.e., she had felt closer to the children as they were growing up), and the father saw his role as predominantly that of financial support for the children.

Ochs and Taylor (1992a, 1992b, 2001) look at the way the role of the father is often set up in family interaction as the *problematizer*, or the judge of others' activities. This role and the larger Father knows best framework of family narratives are discussed in detail below.

A text-based study by Sunderland (2000) looked at the way the role of the father is portrayed in parentcraft (parenting) texts and publications. In studying the written discourse on fatherhood, Sunderland found that the idea of shared parenting is certainly not yet *equal* parenting. She found that books on parenting mainly were for mothers or referred to mothers and mothers' tasks. References to fathers were therefore marked, with sections or chapters entitled *Fathers*, *The Role of the Father*, and *For the Father* (and the remainder of the book or publication was, hence, meant for the mother). In texts, sharing the responsibility often meant positive aspects of childcare for the father, and for the mother, the maintenance work. The discourse implied the dynamic of part-time father and mother-as-main-parent, through wording such as that the father can help, or should take a turn stepping in or giving the mother a break. In addition, Sunderland found that the most prevalent reference in the parentcraft texts to fathers was what she refers to as father-as-baby-entertainer discourse, with references to the ways a father can play with the baby. She categorized other text references into the roles of father-as-mother's-bumbling-assistant (implying that mothers are the experts in childcare) or father-as-line-manager (using words like plan, protect, and ensure). Sunderland's textual analysis of written discourse regarding the role of the father certainly reflects a sexist, hegemonic cultural standard.

The Role of the Children

Many parents look at family interaction as a way to socialize children, not only in polite talk practices, such as waiting for their turn, but also for contributing relevant information to the conversation (i.e., staying on topic), as well as learning to assert themselves (Blum-Kulka, 1994; O'Reilly, 2006; Sterponi, 2003).

Children are hierarchically below the parents in most decision-making processes, and are sometimes in marginalized roles in family interaction. Blum-Kulka (1994) found that the degree of adult domination varied per culture (she examined Israeli, American-Israeli, and American families at dinner), reflecting cultural attitudes toward child participation. In American families, children participated more than in Israeli families. In addition, she found that younger children contributed less to the family conversation, but the amount of talk time for younger versus older children varied in different cultures.

Gender differences exist for children, too. Ely, Gleason, and McCabe (1996) studied the language parents use to address Canadian children and found that parents focus more attention on the speech of the girls than the boys, and on the girls sharing information, reflecting the societal standard that girls are more verbal than boys. In fact, girls are directed to speak more with their mothers, in particular, such as in the example in the study where a mother asked her daughter, "Why didn't you talk to your Mommy, Honey?" (p. 22).

The Family Identity

Families co-construct the concepts of the way the family should behave (in private) and the image of the family they wish to portray to others in public. This *family identity* is often based on ideas of morality and societal norms of what responsibilities families have within the larger society. Families create this identity in many ways. One way in which family members collaboratively construct their image is through ideas of morality. Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik (2007) note that "[a] universal function of the family is to raise children to think and feel in ways that resonate with notions of morality that relate to social situations, specifically to expected and

preferred modes of participation in these situations” (p. 5). This construction of morality includes learning how to treat others, how to build relationships, how to enact particular social identities, and how to understand things in the world, and includes both affective and cognitive development of children. These concepts include how to recognize danger, how to clean up after oneself, how to be a good sport and play nice, how to be open to new ideas and consider things carefully, and what being “good” consists of (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2007).

Another study by Sterponi (2003) looked at the ways Italian families construct morality through family dinner narrative events by the strategy of accountability. Accountability is when an interactant must explain unusual or unexpected actions, generally through excuses or justifications (p. 80). Parents taught children to take responsibility for their actions by questioning them, such as “How come you scratched Ivan today?” (p. 84), or “Why are you pulling such a long face now?” (p. 85) to which children had to give an account. Sterponi claims that through the discursive practice of accountability, “morality is interactionally enacted and transformed” (p. 94) through a collective discussion, positioning family members as a unit (through its collective moral assessments).

Gordon (2004) looked at the way one family collaboratively created their political identity, as Democrats who supported Al Gore, through discourse. In this study, the parents (Clara and Neil) were socializing the child (4-year-old Jason) into their political beliefs through strategies including the selection of terms they used for the candidates (e.g., “our guy” and “the guy we like” for Gore, pp. 615-616; Bush as someone “Daddy doesn’t like” and is an “alcoholic”, p. 621), repeated discussion of Bush’s drunk driving arrest (a negative evaluation), and general negative terms for Bush and his associates (e.g., that “W is snippy”, p. 621). The parents also explicitly state several times that they are Democrats and include their son in discussion (“we’ll just have one big party” if Gore wins, p. 625). In this way, they are socializing Jason into being a Democrat, creating family cohesion, and creating a shared identity (p. 627) within the family that transcends individual identities, such as mother and father.

Families can also think of themselves as a team, and through this conceptualization, family members can align with one another. Goffman (1981), through his *framework of participation*, described *alignment* as being when interactants negotiate interpersonal relationships by demonstrating that they have the same frames. Such alignment occurs when interactants are operating within the same frames. In other words, conversational participants are synchronized with one another’s stance or position. Since frames are constantly changing, alignments are also constantly in flux. Thus, frames and alignment are mutually interdependent. Gordon (2003) subsequently coined the term *supportive alignment* to mean alignments “in which one participant ratifies and supports another’s turns at talk and what he or she has to say, creating ties of cooperation, collaboration, and agreement” (p. 397). Gordon studied how stepfamilies form teams and alignments, depending on who has shared knowledge of the particular topic at hand. She gives examples of her father (Jim) and herself aligning to discuss her grandparents, information that her stepmother (Anna) and stepsister (Emily) have no prior access to or knowledge of. Cynthia and Jim co-construct information about her grandparents’ histories and Anna and Emily participate only minimally, asking a few questions or making a few comments. In another topical frame, Jim, Anna, and Emily are discussing a school homecoming dance and a potential date for the dance for Emily. Jim and Anna are conjoined in a so-called parenting of Emily, in a way tag-teaming her with questions and concerns. Cynthia, who has little knowledge and is not a parent to Emily, participates minimally in this segment of interaction. Gordon, in this study, shows how family members create different teams and alignments, interactionally, by cooperating and conjoining

with other members, based on the topics at hand.

In some cases, family members align along gender lines. Coates (2003) gives us an example in which the female members of the family align “in a way that gently undermines the father’s authority” (p. 168), thereby trying to thwart the traditional dominant male role. In her example, the father tries to tell a long story about women who were dressed in army fatigues and were “glammy,” and the mother and the daughter insert teasing comments throughout the story. It is clear from the many disfluencies in the father’s speech that the mother’s and daughter’s comments interrupt the flow of the father’s narrative. Coates (2003) maintains that female members of families often collaborate on stories, but males generally do not and generally prefer to tell a solo narrative (pp. 170-171).

Taylor (1995) notes that children understand the importance of what others think of the family. In her study on the way family members co-construct meaning when there is an argument, the children, Dick and Janie, notice that the video camera is capturing the argument their parents are having. Dick says, “Daddy we’re being filmed,” becoming what Taylor calls the “panopticonlike monitor of the family” (p. 293), a role typically filled by parents. In addition, Janie, after asking whether the camera is capturing “just the picture or the talking too,” says “but then it’s gonna hear your fight” (p. 294) in a shouted whisper. This shows that Janie realizes that the outside world would hear the fight and is concerned for the family image. The parents then work to undo the damage, in what Taylor refers to as *co-deconstructing* a label, where the parents do spin control through a debriefing. The father says, “You think it was a fight?” (p. 296) in an effort to minimize the effect, and to show that he doesn’t perceive it as such. The parents then ask why Janie thought they should not do it on camera, and the father asks if it’s because it’s “none of their business” and Janie agrees “mhm”. The mother then says that it’s okay, “they wanna see what we’re like even when we’re private,” and in so doing, justifying and normalizing the interaction. In spite of this action by the parents, after the dinner, Janie and Dick tell the researcher “[Mommy and Daddy] were talking mean to each other,” followed by Janie asserting “cuz they act normal” (p. 303) while nodding yes, in what Taylor assumes is a pre-emptive spin control on the taped family interaction, further demonstrating the concern the children have for the family’s image to others, and how they collaborate to appeal to cooperative spirit within the family and to construct harmony.

PATTERNS OF FAMILY INTERACTION

Several patterns of interaction specific to the family have been noted by researchers studying family discourse, including dinnertime *telling your day* sequences, *Father knows best* sequences, and *talking through another*. Through patterns such as these, we can see the ways that family members use discursive strategies to display power, reinforce connection, and accomplish their communicative goals.

Telling Your Day

Blum-Kulka (1997) and Ochs and Taylor (1992a, 1992b, 2001) have examined patterns in which family members relate narratives of the day’s activities to one another, often at the dinner table. Blum-Kulka (1997) studied dinnertime discourse among Israeli and Jewish American families, looking at how the particular speech event of dinner talk is a site for socialization into pragmatics and communication skills. She looked at how narrative events, such as the telling of the

events of the day, occurred and found that family dinner table narratives are jointly constructed, with a high amount of collaboration from most members. Blum-Kulka found that mothers in Israeli families were more active in initiating stories than fathers, but in American families, fathers contributed more to talk, generally, including narrative initiation.

Within the ritual of telling your day, Blum-Kulka (1997) noted that families must balance issues of power and solidarity. The speech event of family dinner itself, and narratives in particular, are meant to enhance family solidarity or, as one parent in her study put it, “strengthen the sense of family” (p. 144). Parents, in the hierarchical position (of control), used more direct style control acts. Yet the informality of the event of dinner talk speaks to solidarity building.

In their examinations of family dinnertime narratives, Ochs and Taylor (1992b, 2001) found a specific pattern of telling your day that they refer to as Father knows best.

Problematizing and Father Knows Best

Ochs and Taylor (1992a, 1992b, 2001) looked at the way in which mothers and fathers often take on specific roles in family conversations. In their studies, Ochs and Taylor found that mothers often are *introducers* of a topic, primarily asking the children to relate something to their fathers. The fathers then become evaluators, or *problematizers*, while the children are both the *protagonists* of the stories they are being urged to tell, and are *problematizees*, or the ones being judged or evaluated. This shows a clear family power structure, where the father, as the main problematizer, was at the top. The children were at the bottom of the power hierarchy, and the mother was somewhere in the middle. At times, the mother also problematizes what the children have done, but she often found herself the problematizee, being criticized for her actions by the father, and sometimes even by the children.

An example of this is given by Ochs and Taylor (2001) at the dinner table between a mother (Mom), a father (Dad), and a 5-year-old girl (Jodie), at the very beginning of the dinner conversation:

- 1 Mom: ((to Jodie)) oh:: You know what? You wanna tell Daddy what happened to you today?=
2 Dad: ((looking up and off)) =Tell me everything that happened from the moment you went in – until:
3 Jodie: I got a sho::t?=
4 Dad: =EH ((gasping)) what? ((frowning))
5 Jodie: I got a sho::t
6 Dad: no
7 Jodie: ((nods yes, facing Dad))
8 Dad: ((shaking head no)) – Couldn’t be

... (lines skipped)

9 Jodie: I just went to the doctor and I got a shot
10 Dad: ((shaking head no)) I don’t believe it
11 Jodie: ri:??ly:: . . .

(Adapted from Ochs & Taylor, 2001, p. 434)

Here, the Mom sets up the conversation, or is the introducer of the topic. Jodie is the protagonist, the principal character of the story, and the one being set up for scrutiny. Dad is the problematizer, whose narrative role is as a co-narrator “who renders an action, condition, thought, or feeling of a protagonist or a co-narrator problematic, or possibly so” (Ochs & Taylor, 2001, p. 439).

In another example, the father is criticizing the mother while she is at the sink doing dishes and the father is eating an ice cream sundae. The son is sitting at the table doing homework:

- 1 Dad: *((eating dessert))* Wel – I certainly think that- you’re a – you know you’re a fair bo:ss – You’ve been working there how long?
- 2 Mom: fifteen years in June *((as she scrapes dishes at kitchen sink))*
- 3 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.
- 4 Mom: hh *((laughs))*
(0.6) *((Dad smiles slightly?, then turns back to eating his dessert))*
- 5 Mom: It’s not a matter of my doin it the way he:want - 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
- 6 Dad: *((rolls chair around to face Mom halfway))* Well – You’re the bo:ss It’s up to you to set the standards...

(Adapted from Ochs & Taylor, 2001, pp. 439-440)

Ochs and Taylor (2001) say that here the father is problematizing his wife as “too lenient a boss and thus incompetent in her workplace as well” (p. 439). And, since the fathers are neither asked nor do they offer to tell their stories very often, they seldom are set up for scrutiny by others. In the few cases where fathers do tell of their problems, the mothers do not offer advice or problematize them. In addition, Ochs and Taylor say that women sometimes do self-problematizing, when they tell a story, and then discuss their options and what they will do about it. Fathers often give advice to mothers, in these instances, and this may socialize the children into doing so, too. In one example, Ochs and Taylor show where the child problematizes the mother. The son tells a story of eating a chili pepper that he thought was a green bean, and the mother implicates herself as being at fault for that, and then the sons picks up on this and yells that it was “your fault—your fault” (p. 445).

The mothers play an active role in the construction of this power dynamic when they set it up by urging the father to be the problematizer. Ochs and Taylor (2001) say that the Father knows best ideology related to the traditional family notions of the 1950s and the television program of the same name ironically showed that Father did not, in fact, know best, but learned that Mother had been right all along. However, the ideology was often maintained in family interaction in which the mother deferred to the father’s ego. Even today in postfeminist America, the Father knows best routine may be getting daily reinforcement “with considerable (and perhaps unwitting) help from wives and mothers” and was not as explicit or ironic as the 1950s sitcom but nonetheless present (Ochs & Taylor, 2001, p. 433). In this way, Ochs and Taylor (2001) argue that “a gender ideology with a deeply rooted politics of asymmetry that has been contested in recent years is still in reverberating evidence at the two-parent family dinner table, jointly constituted and re-created

through everyday narrative practices” (p. 446).

Coates (2003) gives us another example in which the father is positioned as the recipient of a story told by his daughters. The story was instigated by the mother, and one of the daughters, Celia, is the main narrator, with her sister Phoebe co-narrating. A portion of the excerpt Coates showed is included here:

- 1 Mother: Tell Daddy – cos I’ve never told him I don’t think what
happened at Nanny’s when you dropped her out the window onto the (.)
bay window.
- 2 Celia: you knew I dropped her out the window didn’t you?
(see) he doesn’t
oh well I got in a temper with her= <laughter>
- 3 Phoebe: =threw my shirt out
- 4 Mother: This was when they were staying at Nan and Gramps
- 5 Celia: threw her shirt- threw her shirt and it went out the window
- 6 Phoebe: you know the windows go out like that=
- 7 Mother: =onto the asphalt of the bay
- 8 Celia: so (.) I went to get a broom to try and get the shirt in and (like) I dropped
the broom
- 9 Phoebe: and a curtain pole
- 10 Celia: well I got a curtain pole
a metal curtain pole
so I tried to get the broom and the shirt back with that
then I dropped that out
and I- I thought ‘well that’s the longest thing
Phoebe I’m going to have to dangle you out’ <laughter>
- 11 Phoebe: (don’t forget) the curtain pole
- 12 Celia: so I got her by the ankles <laughing>
and then she was going ‘just a bit more’ <laughter>
and just reaching and reaching
and then I said ‘Whoops’ <laughter>
and then she went tumble tumble tumble <laughter>

(Adapted from Coates, 2003, pp. 158-159)

Coates points out that during the narrative, the father, as the recipient, does not participate in the telling of the story or in the laughter, which mirrors the role of judge or problematizer set forth by Ochs and Taylor (2001) above.

Tannen (2003b) comments on this Father knows best pattern as resulting from gender differences in assumptions about talk in relationships. She purports that the mother tries to create closeness and involvement (connection) by asking the children what they did that day. This type of connection talk is common among conversation in women’s friendships (in some cases as *troubles talk*). The mother is trying to involve the father with the children’s lives and activities by asking them to tell him what they did, but the father doesn’t ask about their activities because he does not assume that it creates closeness and instead “may well conclude that [he is] being asked to evaluate and judge the children’s behavior” (p. 55). Tannen argues that the mother’s initiation of the telling your day routine does not intentionally set up the father as the judge, but this Father knows best

dynamic emerges from the differences in gender-related patterns for men (fathers) and women (mothers).

Tannen (2003a) further says that fathers probably do not share their own work problem stories because they do not want advice and possibly because they do not want to be placed in the one-down position. In the rare cases where the fathers do self-problematize, the women most likely did not give advice or try to make them feel inferior because they may have taken it in the spirit of troubles telling and connection. In this way, Tannen says that we can see: (a) power and connection are “inextricably intertwined”, (b) understanding the relationship between power and connection is essential in understanding issues in gender and language, and (c) understanding the relationship between gender and language is fundamental to understanding family interaction (p. 187).

Speaking for Another and Talking through Another (Ventriloquizing)

Some discourse analysts have examined another pattern seen in family interaction whereby interactants talk as though they are taking on the identities of someone else. This is referred to as *speaking for another* (Schiffrin, 1993) or *talking through another* (Tannen, 2003b, 2004).

Schiffrin (1993) gave an example of speaking for another when someone was offered a piece of candy: the addressee said no, but another person gave a further explanation for her by saying, “she’s on a diet” (p. 234). In cases such as this, the act of speaking for another can be taken in different ways, such as interrupting (or, butting in) which is negative, or interactionally involved (or, chipping in) which is positive, depending on the context and the relationships between the interactants.

In the realm of family interaction, parents often speak for their children, particularly in public places, such as doctor’s appointments (Stivers, 2007). This phenomenon of parents speaking for children has not been yet widely researched and warrants further inquiry.

Tannen (2003b, 2004) later looked at what she dubbed talking through another, one specific instance of what she calls *constructed dialogue* (i.e., where people are animating another’s speech). She further defined the discursive phenomenon of *ventriloquizing*, as a strategy “by which family members, in communicating with each other, speak through non-verbal third parties—preverbal children or pets” (Tannen, 2004, p. 400).

Tannen (2003b, 2004) found that (human) family members used the strategy of ventriloquizing a pet for many communicative functions, including praising, conveying an apology, reinforcing solidarity among family members, constructing family roles, such as Mommy and Daddy to their pet, and switching in and out of argument frames. One example of this that Tannen (2004) gives is when the mother, Clara, criticizes the son, Jason, for not putting away his toys, by animating the family dogs in saying, in a high pitched voice, ““We’re naughty, but we’re not as naughty as Jason, he’s naughtiest. We-we just know it!”” (p. 408). Another instance given is when a wife and mother, Kathy, chastises her husband, Sam for ignoring their daughter Sophie and making her cry by saying, ““I was just missing you Daddy, that was all . . . And I don’t really feel too good”” (Tannen, 2003b, p. 59). In these ways, Tannen says that speakers reframe the situations or add complex layers of framing through the strategy of talking through another.

The three interaction rituals discussed here, telling your day, problematizing, and talking through another, are all ways family members use discursive strategies to try to display power, reinforce connection, (or perhaps both, simultaneously), and accomplish their communicative goals within family discourse.

CONCLUSION

From the literature on family interaction and research on the discourse strategies used by family members to co-construct identities and establish routines, several patterns emerge. Like any group of people who have regular communication, families develop unique routines and ways of interacting. Søndergaard (1991) refers to a family's own idiosyncratic dialect as a *familylect*. In addition, there are patterns specific to families (e.g., Father knows best, telling your day) that do not tend to occur in contexts outside of the home. Yet, despite unique discourse elements within families, similar communication strategies appear across families and across institutions. The ways family members negotiate interactional goals, power dynamics, and the co-construction of one another's identities is reflective of the ways people communicate in every day speech events in all situations.

As Tannen (2003a) concludes, family interaction is an ongoing struggle simultaneously for power and connection, as well as a "continuing negotiation of gender identities and roles" (p. 200). In these ways, family interaction mirrors human interaction in general. As a microcosm of the larger society, the family unit can be an important resource of spoken interaction for discourse analysts for better understanding human interaction and communicative conflict.

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Although there is now a growing collection of studies focusing on family talk, they are fairly limited in the types of families they have examined and the length of time the studies have been conducted. There are several directions future research can take to expand upon the current research.

First, many researchers have a narrow definition of what constitutes a family. As an example, the Ochs and Taylor (1992b, 2001) Father knows best model of family is not generalizable to all families at all times. Ochs and Taylor purport that family members have specific interactional roles (e.g., mother as introducer, father as problematizer, children as problematizees), but these roles are not consistent for the interaction of adult children with their parents or for families with only one parent, same-sex parents, or other non-traditional family structures. In this way, it seems that Ochs and Taylor's (1992b, 2001) model assumes that only families with young children, two parents, and a mother who assumes a specific (traditional) gender role fit the family description. Similarly, many other researchers have only examined two-parent (mother and father) families with young children. Further research should examine how family roles are co-constructed in a variety of family types and how gender identities within families are renegotiated over time, as children become adults.

Additionally, many studies have been like cross-sectional snapshots of particular families at a particular time. At most, some studies have recorded and analyzed the spoken interactions of particular family members for several weeks. Although these studies are useful in showing the discourse strategies and patterns found in family interaction and in family member interactions outside of the family context, they do not show the development of family identity or family member roles over time. We must also be wary of drawing long-term conclusions from an ethnographic present, that is recorded in such temporally-based research.

The changes in frame and identity for family members over a longer span of time would lend more insight into the ways family roles develop and into the changes in discourse strategies or in interaction over time. In addition, we would be able to better see how adult children socialize

their parents (a reversal of the socialization patterns for young children), how particular individuals shift in their own identities and roles over time, and how certain outside influences may affect family identities throughout a lifespan. Heath (2007) argued that language socialization continues throughout life and not just at the early ages, which is what language socialization research has focused on almost exclusively; but also continues through adolescence, into adulthood, and the senior years. Penelope Eckert (2003) also states her belief that “age-related ideology is inseparable from gender ideology” and that the study of gender must “move into the study of the life span and the gendering of life stages” (p. 396). Likewise, the study of the construction of family roles and family identity must be conducted over the life span to examine patterns and development over time.

A few studies have examined mothers and their struggles with the shift in role and identity as their children get older. Nearly no studies exist on how fathers approach this same shift in role and identity. Schiffrin (2000, 2002) looked at a mother and how she constructed her own identity through narrative with her adult daughter, but this mother was not studied over her life span, but at just one instance in time. Elinor Ochs (2007) argued that language socialization is not simply a transmissional model, but a bi-directional model between older and younger generations, and can even be seen going from children to parents (even though most language socialization research focuses on what children learn). This reverse in direction is evident, for example, when the younger have more expertise over technology and can teach the older. Further research should be conducted investigating the ways parents display identity and negotiate shifting roles through discourse over time, and even become the ones being socialized into new ideas, at times.

In another study, Henwood (1993) examined the ways women felt at later stages of life and how they struggled to accept and negotiate their changed roles with their children, particularly with their daughters. More studies looking into the ways people’s identities shift over time and the ways these shifts are evidenced in discourse and interaction would be beneficial to the field.

Ochs and Schieffelin (2001) posit that “socialization is a continuous and open-ended process that spans the entire life of an individual” (p. 293). In addition, Schieffelin (2007) encourages researchers to explore the development of *personhood* by using insights into its development across generations. We must therefore track the lifespan of individuals to examine the ways people continuously learn about their family roles and co-create their related identities through talk.

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