Telling Stories

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A Tripartite Self-Construction Model of Identity

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THE PURPOSE of this study is to explore how people negotiate their place in the world through the discursive manipulations of identity. A social constructionist perspective is assumed, where identity is constructed online through discourse in social interaction. Constructionism views identity as a dynamic, fluid, multiplicitous construct able to adjust to the demands of the almost infinite array of contexts. Interactional sociolinguistics emerged out of a constructionist framework (De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg 2006, 1–6), where the microanalysis of discourse affords diverse opportunities to uncover that which would otherwise be rationally invisible (Garfinkel 1967, vii; Shotter 1993, 102). This chapter explores the dynamics among social identities and between identities and discourses by analyzing those locations within a narrative where identity constructions are evident. The problem posed by the emergent quality of identity is addressed here. In particular, I discuss the question of how good interactional analysis can maintain a dynamic view of identity and yet account for the more stable “brought along” features (Auer 1992; Williams 2008). As described by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Rauniomaa (2003) develops Du Bois’s (2002) notion of stance accretion, in which patterns of local positioning in discourse build up and contribute to more global and durable social identities.

This chapter argues for the incorporation of the social psychological tripartite model of identity (Brewer and Gardner 1996; Sedikides and Brewer 2001) into an interactional sociolinguistic framework for the purposes of discourse analysis. The tripartite model of identity, originally conceived as a cognitive structure of self-knowledge, is composed of three layers of identity: personal, relational, and collective. In the present study, these three layers are adapted into an interactionist approach as three social orientations or ways of being. This will allow for a more emergent view of identity than the original model allowed. These orientations allow for a comprehensive account of a wide variety of identities and relationships in which people engage on a day-to-day basis.

The particular sociopolitical context studied in this chapter is that of immigrants to Israel. In particular, I analyze two texts from the narrative of an Ethiopian Israeli female college student (whose pseudonym here is MA), discussing the strategies she implements to manipulate her identity constructions in order to manage impressions.
(Goffman 1959) and gain social capital. The desire for social capital is not viewed here as duplicitous but as natural for all social interaction. MA can already be said to be successful in that she is a first-generation college student in a prestigious program. Her successes are her community’s successes, and the research here analyzes the interactional effectiveness of her self-presentation. The excerpts provided below construct an immigrant experience, an ethnic minority experience, a friendship experience, and a personal experience of changing schools. Thus, the model aids in viewing the construction of different types of social processes as they unfold and intertwine in discursive interaction. The contextual and identity processes intertwine as they emerge simultaneously.

To support these claims, two pieces of discourse taken out of a semi-spontaneous (solicited yet not elicited) narrative are analyzed. The definition of narrative follows Labov and Waletzky (1997; originally published 1967), who proposed the following components: abstract, orientation, complication, resolution, coda. Before the analysis, advantages of the social constructionist/interactional approach for discourse analysis are outlined. Next, the tripartite model as it was originally conceived is described. Finally, the tripartite model is revised to fit an interactional approach to discourse analysis.

Social Constructionism, Interactionalism, and Discourse Analysis
Shotter (1993) develops a rhetorical/responsive version of social constructionism, where smaller, everyday discourses borrow from and influence the larger discourses circulating throughout societies. For this reason, a method of analysis based on indexicality (Silverstein 1976; Ochs 1992; Auer 1992) is useful to help explain the relationship between specific discourses and the larger social framework. Ochs (1992) expands on Silverstein’s method to include indexical relationships where language is constitutive of a social structure (i.e., gender, ethnicity) and temporally transcends the time of the discourse event to recontextualize events in the past and the future. It is this view of discourse that seems most appropriate for discourse analysis, because it is through discourse and its indexical nature that the world, identities, and relationships are constructed.

Central to Shotter’s account is what Wittgenstein terms the “hurly-burly,” what Bakhtin (1981) calls “the background of language,” and what Shotter labels background conversation. The hurly-burly is polyphonic and organizes the world in all its diversity (Shotter 1993). There are constant discourses in the background of our lives, which we draw from in our everyday discourses and relationships. It is against this background that all our utterances are judged (Shotter 1993, following Wittgenstein 1980), which is why it is necessary to analyze discourse within the larger social/historical framework in which it occurs.

Interactional sociolinguistics was born and raised in the context of Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical sociology. Dramaturgy is an approach accounting for how interactants seek to manage impressions, thereby gaining in social capital. This idea is essential for understanding how and why the manipulations of identity construction operate in discourse. A further contribution of Goffman (1974) is the idea that there
are multiple embeddings of the self in one’s narrative. These different embeddings (principal, emitter, animator, figure) create further possibilities for the manipulation of identity construction. Essential here are the distinctions between the narrator and herself as a figure in her own story (see Schiffrin 2006 for a fuller description).

The rhetorical/responsive social construction is the approach that yields the richest data in discourse analysis because of its two central claims: (1) Discourse constructs our worlds, and (2) the dialectical relationship between small discursive events and larger hurly-burly discourses creates an infinite potential for the analysis of social relationships and identity construction. The next section reviews the tripartite model of identity as it was originally conceived in mainstream social psychology.

The Tripartite Model of Identity in Social Psychology

Brewer and Gardner (1996) propose a theory that integrates three types of self-representation: personal, relational, and collective. The major body of research based on this model is concerned with self-worth, social motivation, and cross-cultural understanding. The approach has been applied in cross-cultural studies, contrasting collective/relational perspectives of the East to the more individualistic/personal perspectives of the West (Matsumoto 1999; Kitayama et al. 1997). More recently, research in this framework has been presented in Sedikides and Brewer (2001). Their main purpose is to explore the relationship among the three fundamental categories of self-knowledge: personal, relational, and collective. The theoretical assumptions in these studies treat identity as a relatively stable and quantifiable entity.

The cognitive structures that make up each of the three branches of the model can be traced to Linville’s (1987) “Self-Complexity as a Cognitive Buffer against Stress-Related Illness and Depression.” Self-aspects are defined as multiple cognitive structures that represent knowledge of self. Self-aspects activate based on a number of factors, such as context, thoughts, and other activated self-aspects. A limited number of self-aspects are active at any given time. Thus, Linville’s (1987, 674) model allows for variability of self-representations across contexts. The tripartite model groups these self-aspects into “distinct forms of self-representation with different origins, sources of self worth, and social motivations” (Brewer and Gardner 1996, 83).

Using the tripartite model has led some (e.g., Deaux 1992, 1993, as interpreted by Brewer and Gardner 1996) to claim that collective identities are integrated into personal identities. Others (Onorato and Turner 2004) claim that, when salient, collective identities suppress personal identities. This follows from earlier work by Haslam and Turner (1992), wherein self-categorizations at different levels can be antagonistic and even incompatible.

Two common assumptions are maintained throughout all these research efforts in quantitative social psychology. First, the self is stored in memory as a cognitive structure and is part of a “mental” system. Second, the cognitive structures are formative, and language has primarily a referential/representational role. Both these assumptions contrast with those of social constructionist approaches, which understand social linguistic processes as primary in worldmaking, thereby allowing for a more fluid and dynamic account of the self. The following section shows how the tripartite model is incorporated into a social constructionist approach.
Incorporating the Tripartite Model into an Interactional Sociolinguistics

Some renovations to the tripartite model are necessary in order to incorporate it into an interactional sociolinguistics. The first major change must be from conceiving the self as a product of the mind (cognitive structure) to regarding it as a social interactional/relation. According to a revised tripartite model of identity, people interact and construct themselves through discourse in one of three orientations: personal, relational, or collective. In contrast to an account of identity as a product of the mind, here identity is constructed in conversation intersubjectively (between interlocutors) and intertextually (with various larger and smaller discourses influencing local conversations). The reconstruction of the self is an indexical process, both constitutive and recontextualizing (Ochs 1992).

Linville’s (1987) self-aspects become identity actualization, whereby indexing a particular identity in conversation creates that identity anew. Identity actualizations are an adaptation of Chafe’s (1994) active, semiactive, and inactive foci of consciousness. In the present study, identity orientations are actualized, semiactualized, or not actualized in the discourse through the use of self-oriented speech. Actualization is a process of creation and recreation. This is the major theoretical shift that the construct must undergo in order to participate in this type of constructionist program.

The content of the utterances of interest in this study is self-oriented and thus also reconstructs the self anew. Methodologically, one of the changes that needs to take place to conform to social constructionism is a shift from the use of questionnaires to discourse analysis. Questionnaires are designed by researchers, and the formulations of identity categories therein are not necessarily those of the people whose identities are being studied. Discourse analysis affords the researcher the opportunity to study the nuances of how people depict themselves. The remainder of this section defines each social orientation using the relevant elements of the original definition (Brewer and Gardner 1996) and its reconceptualization in this approach.

**Personal orientation.** Brewer and Gardner (1996) state that all the layers of identity are social, even the personal one. They explain that the personal frame of reference is based on interpersonal comparison. Knowledge of this kind differentiates the self from others, for example, when a person is described as intelligent, athletic, or talented. In this project, the personal orientation is actualized when one’s way of being in the world actualizes one’s own uniqueness.

**Relational orientation.** This orientation deals with one’s way-of-being in a particular relationship with a significant other. For example, social roles such as employer and employee, father and son, or student and teacher are included in this construct. Actualizing one’s identity in this way is not possible without a significant other. People are constantly engaged in a multiplicity of relationships, and the actualizations of oneself (as well as one’s experience of self) can be qualitatively different in each person, as are one’s ways of speaking.

**Collective orientation.** Identity at this level is a further social option for the actualization of oneself in the world. Here, identity is characterized by an impersonal
relationship with a group and the ways of being upon actualizing oneself as a group member. Relevant here are the customs and cultures of different groups, as well as their language practices and interactional norms.

The tripartite model affords an opportunity to investigate the levels of identity constructed by discursive interactions. The discourse is constitutive of the three social orientations. In this way, a dialectic relationship between discourse and social relationships is studied. The remainder of this chapter presents a fine-grained discourse analysis of the narrative of an Ethiopian Israeli female college student in order to explain how she manipulates identity constructions so that she can negotiate her place in the world.

Data Analysis

The following excerpts were taken from a narrative of an Ethiopian Israeli female first-year college student during a focus group session in an extracurricular English oral proficiency program. The story is part of a larger corpus of narratives from Ethiopian Israeli college students. The story was told to a group of six students and the researcher. This one was selected because all the three orientations are actualized, and it explicitly exemplifies the negotiation of a minority position to one of strength. MA tells a story of an event that occurred in the fourth grade. Two excerpts from her story are provided here.

Excerpt 1: Creating an Alliance

The first excerpt comes out of the orientation section, even though it precedes the abstract and a second orientation of the larger narrative. It takes place in the same speaking turn and in the same context as the rest of the narrative. These utterances are important to the main storyline of the narrative because the storyteller positions herself in opposition to the Other. The segment is divided into three major sections. Lines c–k are included to give context to the small story (Georgakopoulou 2006) and to show topic transition into the story. The focus of analysis is on lines l–p, within which the small story is contained. Lines q and r are included to show the transition out of the story. The character “Tanya” (a pseudonym) introduced here is not mentioned again, which is evidence that this segment is less central. Code switching from English into Hebrew is indicated with italics:

31/c in the other school everybody liked me
    d so here its going to be the same.
    e I go there
    f everybody’s white of course
    g just me black.
    h and suddenly I was like become very very quiet child
    i from (P) child that all the time you can hear and and eh in the band and and school play
    j y’know, its all the time I I be there
    k suddenly I was very very quiet and eh
    l I remember one eh one girl she was eh:
m her name was Tanya
n she was Russian
o and she was also new immigrant
p so me and her y’know become eh best friend
q and then when eh:
r I don’t know if you know about it but in elementary school there is eh like eh
eh like king of the: of the: of the: eh of the class

MA engages in the three social identity orientations in the telling of the short
aside above. Lines c–d are the orientation, lines e–k are the complication, and lines
l–p are the resolution. Lines c–k provide the transition in the story of transferring
from a religious school (where boys and girls study and play separately) to a public
coeducational secular school. According to MA, a major difference between the
two social settings runs along ethnic lines, as can be seen by the white/black con-
trast in lines f and g, implying perhaps that there were more “blacks” in her previ-
ous school. The transfer to an environment that positions her minority status as
more salient creates a vulnerability which MA must negotiate, and this influences
her subsequent utterances. This is a story of forming a friendship in the face of a
threatening majority.

The vulnerability is embodied in lines h–k, where MA constructs a shift from
actualizing a personal orientation (i.e., “I became quiet”) to a relational one, with
Tanya being the significant other. The contrast between the selves underscores the
rhetorical contour given to the utterance in line h “and suddenly,” which introduces
the shift in personal way of being, and is also repeated in line k. The repetition in-
creases the strength of the drama developing in the story. Of great importance here
is the shift in social setting coinciding with a shift in identity orientation.

The collective orientation is made salient here by making use of color as a way
to talk about ethnicity: white and black. The tension between the two ethnicities is
built upon in the main story line in excerpt 2 below. According to De Fina (2006,
364), color is often a defining property of category membership, and in many cases
“the assumption is that there is a scale of color/ethnicity in which colored people are
closer to each other than they are to white people.” Color is indexically constitutive
of ethnicity in this segment. White and black are understood as opposite ends of a
social spectrum (assuming the color scheme of ethnicity is scalar).

If color is chosen as a way for MA to construct herself, does this choice not also
operate within a personal orientation, because her color is her own? Skin color dif-
fferences among Ethiopians is a topic that is part of the hurly-burly of their commu-
nity, as it is in other communities of color (Salamon 2003, 7). This is reminiscent of
Deaux (1992, 1993), who claims that collective identities are integrated into personal
identities. How much of the collective (and relational for that matter) is also personal?
The question will remain unanswered; this excerpt does not provide a sufficient ba-
sis for addressing it. An issue this chapter deals with is: How do the different orien-
tations work together to satisfy interactional concerns?

The next part of the text to be analyzed begins with line l, where the resolution
begins with “I remember” and shifts from personal to relational orientations. “As Bil-
lig (1997) reminds us, Wittgenstein argued against the view that psychological expressions such as *I remember, I think, I feel* stand for internal processes which provide their criteria of use. Rather the criteria for use emerge from the communicative practices in which these words are embedded” (Wetherell 2007, 664). Even though “I remember” appears to be self-oriented speech, it is not a construct to be analyzed as part of the approach developed in this chapter. The phrase functions more as a discourse marker than as a feature of identity.

In lines 1 and m, the word “girl” is followed immediately by two feminine pronouns, which actualize a (collective) gender orientation. The subsequent utterances construct a relationship with Tanya, which is partly based on the shared collective orientation of gender. Out of the commonly shared collective attribute, the relational orientation becomes salient and a friendship is constructed. The girls share another orientation of a collective kind, which aids in the construction of their alliance, namely: “new immigrant.” Israel, a country with a very high proportion of immigrants, encourages this collective identity. This status affords certain monetary and social benefits at the beginning of the adaptation process, and in the last twenty years immigrant political parties have been born. Immigrant category membership represents an inherent foreignness with respect to the dominant culture, and even across ethnic groups of new immigrants a commonality can be found in opposition to the hegemonic identities. MA deals with her initial vulnerability by forming an alliance with an individual who shares the same vulnerability. Operating relationally helps deal with problems she presented along personal and collective lines, especially those related to “color.”

To conclude, a few social relationships are constructed and negotiated in the telling of this story. They operate within all three orientations of the tripartite model of identity. The friendship between MA and Tanya is a relational one, where Tanya becomes a significant other for MA. However, their relationship is born out of social processes operating in the collective orientation, through an emphasis on gender and immigrant status. These orientations are able to bridge national and ethnic lines. Finally, the relationship between lines c–k (the orientation and complication) and lines 1–p (the resolution) constructs the opposing position MA takes toward the dominant culture in her new setting, and so she creates an alliance in facing this conflict. The micropositioning of resistance toward hegemonic identities is indexically constitutive of her identity as an Ethiopian by imbuing it with a resistant character. This is evidence of the relationship between the relational and collective orientations. Interactionally, by telling this story to a group of her peers who have recently entered a program in a college with a huge majority of white students, this story may serve as a tool to create new alliances in order to negotiate a social context much like the one negotiated by MA in her story.

**Excerpt 2: Fighting an Adversary**

The second excerpt is a continuation of the same discursive event from which excerpt 1 was taken. Here MA has already launched into the resolution of the larger narrative. The excerpt begins with an attempt to break up a lunchtime fight between the two kings of her fourth-grade class:
I come in the middle and I try to separate them and the other king of the class took me and I was very small at that time I was small and thin and and y’know (laughing) I was very, its hard to imagine me like this, I was was very thin so skinny and he took me push me away and say nigger (P) and this period of time I never will forget it rea really I I become like like a monster like a monster and I was so small so thin like a wonder women I don’t know from where I got the (?????) power I really don’t know I stand up and I I kicked his ass (everybody breaks out laughing) I kicked his ass and everybody stand like that was in shock because they never heard me nothing I was so quiet and so small and so not known I think that most of them didn’t know my name also (P) really so (P) I kick him I killed him with punches and from that day MAZ (background coughing) that was my name (P) MAZ. The the MAZ. MAZ was like god in class

A fine-grained analysis of the text can begin with the evaluation of the way in which this excerpt operates within the personal orientation. What self-constructions create a unique self? In line z, there is the first occurrence of a physical description of the body as meek. MA, as a figure (in the sense of Goffman 1974) in her own story, casts herself in a weak position, which is reaffirmed in line gg, where the adjectives small and thin are both buttressed by the discourse marker so. In lines ee and ff, she self-constructs as a “monster,” which stands in direct contrast with the previously mentioned self-construction (weak). The term “monster” is ambiguous as to its evaluative nature (positive or negative), but it certainly conveys power. This is supported by the subsequent utterance in line hh, “wonder woman,” which conveys power but does so positively. Operating in a personal orientation, MA has manipulated different ways-of-being in her story to produce contrasting selves to serve the rhetorical pur-
poses of her narrative. As rhetorical mechanisms, they serve to increase the reportability of the critical event (Labov 1997; Polanyi 1981). On the one hand she is meek, and on the other hand she is powerful, and it is her powerful self that wins the day, as can be seen in line kk, which contains the critical event of the narrative.

Relationally, MA positions herself here in the role of adversary. She is a fighter, a combatant in opposition to the king of the class, who represents the dominant culture, which is both ethnically white and religiously secular. (Excerpts from the text in which MA explicitly constructs these aspects are available upon request.) Note the opposition in the relational orientation here with that presented in the analysis of excerpt 1, where she formed an alliance to negotiate her vulnerability rather than engage in head-on combat. The conflict being negotiated in the story is essentially an opportunity for MA to actualize herself, and with no adversary this would not be possible. This is the debt the self owes to the other, for without the relation between the two (even if antagonistic), she would not have had the opportunity to actualize herself in this way. Her toughness is born out of her relationship with her adversary. In the later lines (tt–ww) of her narrative, she describes this attribute as salient in other relationships as well.

In the collective orientation, MA has her group association thrust upon her in a most antagonistic way. The term used to describe her as a member of a group is “derogatory.” It is important to note that the actual event was in Hebrew, and the actual word MA heard (kushi) was different from the one she reported (nigger). The two terms have different connotations in their respective languages. Not every translator would have made this same decision in choosing from a wide range of English words that can replace the original word (e.g., black, Ethiopian). But in making her choice, MA encodes her attitude toward the word and the event by choosing the most derogatory English word among those available. And so here another contrast is constructed to serve the rhetorical purposes of the narrative—to tell a good story: the minority group member versus the dominant culture member. Moreover, as a representative of her minority group, MA wins a victory for her people in besting her adversary in this narrative, and in each retelling of the story another victory is acquired. In this way, she indexically amasses power for herself and her group.

The three orientations operate here in concert. Within the personal orientation MA is strong and victorious, within the relational orientation she is combative and adversary, and within the collective orientation she is a minority member successfully resisting antagonism from the dominant group. Operations in each orientation interact to support each other, the overall point of the story, and her self-construction. The personal (thin, weak) and collective (Ethiopian) orientations position her in direct contrast to the relational (adversary) and personal (tough) orientations that win the day in her story. Here local positioning builds resistance toward the hegemony, indexing the more collective Ethiopian orientation. In this light, the story is one of a struggle of the self, where the particular constructions in MA’s discourse are crucial.

Until reading the words “wonder woman,” one reviewer assumed that the speaker was male, because it narrates like a boy’s story. This reading reveals another collective representation operating in this text: The gender category is being deconstructed, negotiated, and reconstructed. In this story, MA enters the world of masculinity, fights
on boys’ terms, and comes out on top. She relocates the line that would distinguish between the genders. She enters the boys’ world as a lady and plays out the role of “wonder woman” (as opposed to superman). She implicitly claims that being strong in this way can no longer be relegated to the masculine but now is also part of the feminine. The act of praising here recontextualizes the gender category, thereby reconstituting it (Ochs 1992). She indexically redefines what it is to be a woman, and in her own way she has creatively reconstructed the female gender category.

The tripartite model is also useful in understanding the interaction between storyteller and listeners. In telling the story, MA recreates herself as a hero in front of her new peers (audience), who were not present at the actual event, but they can now associate the type of person in the story with the storyteller. MA creates an impression and manages the way they view her (cf. “impression management,” Goffman 1959). Both of MA’s stories can be used a resource by the Ethiopian student audience members to negotiate their new academic context in a white majority college. In this way, MA positions herself as a source of strength for and among her peers.

Discussion
The analysis here affords new opportunities for conceiving and researching the self. What was developed in the original model as a cognitive structure is here adapted as a more interactional construct. Rather than assume causes and motivations of the speaker, the approach here views the speaker in the agentive role (Harré 1999) negotiating a social context through the manipulations of identity construction, which then indexically constitute more global and durable identity constructs. The three orientations help discourse analysts track the actions of interlocutors as they present themselves in situated contexts in three kinds of orientations that are socially constrained. The model is comprehensive in that the three orientations cover interaction in a wide range of contexts.

The analyses expose the manipulations of the speaker in her self-constructions. Within the constraints represented by the tripartite model, she is afforded a great many choices regarding how to construct herself, choices she can base on her judgment of their interactional efficacy. In every case one orientation is chosen, when another could have been implemented. For example, in excerpt 1, MA constructs herself and the story within the personal orientation, focusing on her experience of personal struggle, which rhetorically and interactionally allows her audience to identify with her. Thus, she emphasizes the personal orientation at the expense of other orientations.

This choice allows MA to construct her vulnerability, which serves the rhetorical goal of constructing a weak self and creating narrative tension, eventually overcome at the end of the narrative. In the narrative as well as in her college life, she is faced with a social problem, and by constructing this past victory, she is able to construct a strong self in the present. It becomes evident how the model allows for a sense of self-continuity by discursively building a connection between animator and figure (Goffman 1974). She was strong in the past, and she is strong in the present. The micropositionings throughout the narrative function at both the textual level and the interactional level, bridging past and present selves. She engages in the same type of
positioning across time, evidence of “stance accretion” (Rauniomaa 2003 and Du Bois 2002, as reported by Bucholtz and Hall 2005). In a Bakhtinian sense, the constructions are dialogically related one to the other (Bakhtin 1981, 275–300). The previous construction, being judged as successful, sets a precedent for the next one, and that construction is used as a lens through which the previous one is viewed and reconstructed. From this we can see the dialectic nature of the self-constructions across time and discourses.

What of the relationship between the orientations? We have already seen evidence for the intentional manipulations of the speaker (agent) in choosing one orientation over another for interactional efficiency, but is there any other relationship between them? The analysis reveals a range of relationships manipulated for the purposes of creating a positive impression of self for an audience or as rhetorical devices increasing tellability (Labov and Waletzky 1997; Polanyi 1981) of the narrative. The personal orientation depicts a struggle between selves, and the triumph of the desirous self (“I am tough”). The relational social orientation negotiates between the self and allies or foes and reveals the processes of identification that MA claims for herself and those she resists. In the texts above, the collective social orientation pits the speaker in the minority position of a religious Ethiopian against a white secular hegemony. The identities at each level penetrate each other, in that the relational orientation constructs foes and allies along collective lines, and the personal orientation affords the speaker the ability to overcome her social struggle against an antagonistic dominant culture. The analyses present evidence for the collaborative nature of the orientations, as they rhetorically aid the storyteller in constructing her narrative so that it can be used purposefully in interaction.

The choice to actualize one orientation over another depends on the context within which the interaction takes place. Furthermore, what purposes do each of the orientations serve so that speakers will choose one over the other in order to manage impressions and fulfill other interactional ends? From the analysis of excerpt 2, the personal orientation is seen as preferred for creating a positive impression of strength, because of the pattern of micropositionings that have formed in the narrative. Further, perhaps because of the historical moment within which the discourse takes place, individualistic values (personal orientation) seem to be the most impressive (Stolorow and Atwood 1992; Harré 1989).

The relational orientation helps the storyteller to cast herself either with or against a significant other and to actualize herself in the relationship. Absent the relationship with friend or foe, the particular self-construction actualized in a relational orientation would not be possible. The construction of a relationship with a foe or friend is a discursive manipulation making full use of the processes of identification for the purposes of taking a more socially advantageous position.

The collective orientation casts one into the narrative of a community, and as a figure in that narrative, one is judged against the conversational background of that community. This strategy can be implemented by speakers when they manipulate the accessible information in the hurly-burly (which is also available to listeners), and thus construct themselves as figures in an already ongoing story. This explanation is particularly salient in the case above, because all the members of the audience are
Ethiopian Israelis (except the relatively silent facilitator) and thus can easily access narratives that pit the Ethiopian immigrant against hegemonic Israeli society.

The analysis here has shown how the various self-actualizations indexically reconstitute and recontextualize (Ochs 1992) larger social structures, in particular gender and ethnicity. In excerpt 2, the storyteller’s negotiation of a masculine world in a traditionally masculine way is explicit. In fact, a “girl” can be “king of the class” in school, a position often reserved for “boys.” Furthermore, not only is gender reconstituted here but so is ethnicity. Ethnicity is reconstituted here to allow for an Israeli Ethiopian identity that is powerful and resistant in minority contexts. MA’s story takes place at a historical moment when Ethiopian Israelis are struggling to better their position in Israeli society. The accretion (Rauniomaa 2003 and Du Bois 2002, as reported by Bucholtz and Hall 2005) of resistance local positionings in discourse by MA may index more durable features of Ethiopian identity. By reconstructing identities in new ways, MA redefines larger social structures, for example, gender and ethnicity. If MA is not alone in her pattern of construction, then these discourses may lead to social change.

So, how does MA manipulate her identity constructions to negotiate her social context? She constructs a story, where she initially presents herself as disadvantaged sociopolitically, relationally, and even physically, so that she can later reconstruct herself as the heroine triumphant against all odds. This is a rhetorical device designed to increase tellability (Labov and Waletzky 1997; Polanyi 1981), which enables her to better manage the impressions of her audience. In her narrative, MA presents herself as a potential leader for her peers. She has negotiated the same challenging situation facing them today in the past (negotiating the social context of a white, hegemonic school), and she has done so successfully.

Conclusion
This chapter is an attempt to change the way in which we talk about the self (Shotter 1993; Billig 1987; Shotter and Billig 1998). Rather than labeling an utterance that presents self-orientation as a reference to the self, we should label it as a self-construction, in line with the theoretical assumptions guiding this chapter. A fine-grained analysis of identity actualizations aids in resituating the self as a dynamic, fluid process that can adapt to a continually changing world while maintaining those identities that are “brought along.” Those identities that are “brought along” are reconstructed at every actualization in discourse for interactional purposes, and thus are dynamic in character.

The tripartite model of identity has proven adaptable to a constructionist program and useful in an interactional discourse analysis framework. The contribution that the model makes to discourse analysis of this kind is provided by the distinct layers of identity and the composite self-constructions (self-aspects), in which various combinations are manipulated to serve interactional ends.

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