25 Gender and Family Interaction

DEBORAH TANNEN

1. Introduction

In the quarter-century after the field was launched by the publication of Robin Lakoff's *Language and Woman's Place* (1975) and Mary Ritchie Key's *Male/Female Language* (1975), a mountain of research on gender and language arose – research well documented in the present volume. During the same years, discourse analysts began undertaking studies of language in the context of family interaction. For the most part, however, the twain didn't meet: few scholars writing in the area of language and gender focused on family interaction, and few researchers concerned with family discourse focused on gender. This gap has been addressed by the Georgetown Work–Family Project, in which both parents in four dual-career couples with children living at home self-recorded all their interactions for a week. In this chapter, I cite examples from this study, which I co-directed with Shari Kendall, as well as a brief excerpt from a naturally occurring conversation taken from a public television documentary, to demonstrate: (1) how gender-related patterns of interaction influence and illuminate family interaction, and (2) how this insight sheds light on the ideology of language in the family as well as on theoretical approaches to discourse. In particular, I question the prevailing inclination to approach family interaction as exclusively, or primarily, a struggle for power. I argue – and, I hope, demonstrate – that power is inseparable from connection. Therefore, in exploring how family interaction is mediated by gender-related patterns of discourse, I also suggest that gender identity is negotiated along the dual, paradoxically related, dimensions of power and connection.

2. Power and Connection in the Family: Prior Research

Researchers routinely interpret family interaction through an ideology of the family as the locus of a struggle for power. In my view, this ideology needs to

be reframed. Power is inextricably intertwined with connection. Discourse in the family can be seen as a struggle for power, yes, but it is also – and equally – a struggle for connection. Indeed, the family is a prime example – perhaps *the* prime example – of the nexus of power and connection in human relationships. Thus, a study of gender and family interaction becomes a means not only to understand gender and language more deeply but also to reveal, contest, and reframe the ideology of the family and of power in discourse.

Early research on discourse in family interaction focused on power. The earliest, Richard Watts's *Power in Family Discourse* (1991), was unique in analyzing conversations involving adult siblings and their spouses rather than the nuclear family of parents and young children living in a single household. For Watts, as his title suggests, power is the force defining familial relations. A year later, Hervé Varenne's *Ambiguous Harmony* (1992) examined a conversation that took place on a single evening in the living room of a blended family: mother, father, and two children – a teenage son from the mother's previous marriage and a younger child born to this couple. Varenne (1992, 76), too, saw power as the central dynamic, explaining: "The power we are interested in here is the power of the catalyst who, with a minimal amount of its own energy, gets other entities to spend large amounts of their own."

Shoshana Blum-Kulka's *Dinner Talk* (1997) indirectly addressed the interrelationship of power and connection in the family. Comparing dinner conversations in three cultural contexts – Americans of east European Jewish background, Israelis of east European Jewish background, and Israeli families in which the parents were born and raised in the United States – she examined the parents' dual and sometimes conflicting needs both to socialize their children in the sense of teaching them how to behave properly (hence, power), and at the same time to socialize with them in the sense of enjoying their company (hence, connection).

Millar, Rogers, and Bavelas (1984, 232) write of "control maneuvers" and note that in interpersonal relationships, conflict takes place "within the power dimension of relationships." I neither deny nor question this assumption, but I would complexify it by emphasizing that power and solidarity are in paradoxical and mutually constitutive relationship to each other. Thus family interaction (including conflict) also takes place within the intimacy dimension, and we can also speak of "connection maneuvers." My goal in this chapter is to explicate how what researchers would typically regard as control (that is, power) maneuvers can also be seen as connection maneuvers, in part because connection and control are bought with the same linguistic currency.

3. The Ambiguity and Polysemy of Hierarchy and Connection

Elsewhere (Tannen 1994), I explore and argue for the ambiguity and polysemy of power and solidarity – or, in different terms, of hierarchy and connection. Here I briefly recap the analysis developed in that and other essays.

In conventional wisdom, as well as in research tracing back to Brown and Gilman's (1960) classic study of power and solidarity, Americans have tended

to conceptualize the relationship between hierarchy (or power) and connection (or solidarity) as unidimensional and mutually exclusive. In this view, family relationships are seen as prototypically close, so Americans frequently use the terms "sisters," "brothers," and "family" to indicate "close and equal." If someone says "We are like sisters," "He is like a brother to me," or "They're like family," the implication is, "We are close, and we are comfortable together – no status games, no one-upping." The prototypical hierarchical relationship, in this schema, is also distant: boss and underling.

In contrast, for members of many other cultures, such as Japanese, Chinese, and Javanese, the archetypal hierarchical relationship is the parent–child constellation: extremely hierarchical but also extremely close. By the same token, sibling relationships may or may not be close but their relative ages always affect their relationships. In reality, then, power (or hierarchy) and solidarity (or connection) do not fall on a single continuum with hierarchy and distance at one end and equality and connection at the other. Instead, they must be conceptualized as a grid with two axes: a vertical axis with hierarchy at one end and equality at the other, and a horizontal axis running between the poles of closeness and distance. Conversations, and relationships, can be positioned anywhere on the grid, resulting in complex combinations of hierarchy and connection.

Understanding how language functions to negotiate hierarchy and connection in interaction must begin with the awareness that these two dynamics are ambiguous and polysemous. They are ambiguous because an utterance can express one or the other; they are polysemous because an utterance can express both at once. Here is a brief, quotidian example. On a chilly fall day, I was walking with a colleague, a woman, when we spotted an older colleague walking toward us. My companion greeted him and asked, cheerily, "Where's your coat?" He replied, "Thanks, Mom." She was taken aback by his remark, since she had intended her greeting in the spirit of connection. But her question "Where's your coat?" was ambiguous: in addition to being a friendly greeting, it could also be a mother's protective reminder to a child. In this case, it was also polysemous: it functioned as a friendly greeting, thereby positioning the two colleagues toward the closeness end of the closeness–distance axis, but it simultaneously reminded her addressee of a mother's warning to a child, thereby positioning the interlocutors closer to the hierarchical end of the hierarchy–equality axis. I doubt it was a coincidence that the speaker who was focused on the connection level of her remark was a woman, while the one who focused on the hierarchy level was a man, but I cite the exchange here only to illustrate my notion of ambiguity and polysemy.

4. Mother: A Paradigm of the Ambiguity and Polysemy of Power and Connection

It is no coincidence, moreover, that the coatless professor in the preceding example perceived a hierarchical positioning in terms of a family constellation, specifically a mother–child relationship. The family is a key locus for understanding the complex and inextricable relationship between power (negotiations along the hierarchy–equality axis) and connection (negotiations along the

closeness–distance axis). And nowhere does this relationship become clearer than in the role of a key family member, the mother. For example, Hildred Geertz (1989 [1961], 20) writes that there are, in Javanese, "two major levels of language, respect and familiarity." She observes that children use the familiar register when speaking with their parents and siblings until about age 10 or 12, when they gradually shift to respect in adulthood. However, she adds, "Most people continue to speak to the mother in the same way as they did as children; a few shift to respect in adulthood" (22). This leaves open the question whether mothers are addressed in the familiar register because they receive less respect than fathers, or because their children feel closer to them. I suspect it is both at once, and that trying to pick these motivations apart may be futile.

Although the linguistic encoding of respect and familiarity as morphologically distinct registers is a phenomenon not found in English, nonetheless there are phenomena in English that parallel those described by Geertz. Ervin-Tripp, O'Connor, and Rosenberg (1984) looked at "control acts" in families in order to gauge power in that context. They found that "effective power and esteem were related to age" (134). Again, however, "the mothers in our sample were an important exception to the pattern" (135). "In their role as caregivers," the authors note, mothers "received nondeferent orders, suggesting that the children expected compliance and believed their desires to be justification enough." As with Javanese, one could ask whether children use more bald imperatives when speaking to their mothers because they have less respect for them, or because they feel closer to them, or (as I suspect) both.

Recent research has seen an increase in interest in the discourse of mothers, especially in interaction with daughters (Dills 1998; Gordon 2002; 2007; Kendall 2008; Schiffrin 2000; 2002; Tannen 2006). Though far less attention has focused on the discourse of fathers (but see Gordon, Tannen, and Sacknovitz 2007; Marinova 2007), comparisons of mothers' and fathers' discourse have emerged not only from the Georgetown Work–Family Project (Tannen, Kendall, and Gordon 2007) but also from a larger study, led by Elinor Ochs at the UCLA Center on the Everyday Lives of Families (Ochs and Kremer-Sadlik 2013). Many of the papers that examine mothers' or fathers' discourse, or compare the two, directly or indirectly examine the interrelationship of power and connection. For example, Ochs and Campos (2013) observed that when parents returned home from work, their children frequently failed to greet them because they were distracted by screen media. The authors note that when a parent's greeting (a connection maneuver) is not reciprocated, the elder is showing respect to the younger, a reversal of the expected hierarchy-related exchange.

5. Power Lines – or Connection Lines – in Telling Your Day

A great deal of the research on family discourse has focused on talk produced in the context of dinner table conversation. The dinner table is a favorite site, no doubt, both because dinner is a prime time that family members typically come together

and exchange talk, and also because it is a bounded event for which speakers gather around a table and which is therefore relatively easy to record. Both Blum-Kulka (1997) and Elinor Ochs and her students (e.g., Ochs and Taylor 1992) identify a ritual that typifies American dinner table conversation in many families: a ritual that Blum-Kulka dubs "telling your day." When the family includes a mother and father (as the families recorded in both these studies did), mothers typically encourage children to tell their fathers about events experienced during the day.

Ochs and Taylor (1992, 310) give the examples of a mother who urges, "Tell Dad what you thought about gymnastics and what you did," and another who prompts, "Chuck did you tell Daddy what happened at karate when you came in your new uniform? What did Daisy do for you?" The authors note that in a majority of the instances recorded in this study, fathers responded to the resultant stories by passing judgment, assessing the rightness of their children's actions and feelings, and thereby setting up a constellation the researchers call "father knows best."

In the families Ochs and her students observed, mothers usually knew what the children had to say. This was true even of mothers who worked full-time, because generally they had arrived home from work earlier than the father, and they had asked the children about their day during the time they had with them before Daddy came home. (Later research by Ochs and her colleagues supported this pattern with a larger sample; Ochs and Campos (2013) note that among the 32 families studied, fathers came home on average two hours later than mothers; during weekdays, mothers were the first to make contact with children more than three-quarters of the time, fathers less than one-quarter.) At the dinner table, Father could have asked "How was your day?" just as Mother did before dinner. But in these families, he usually didn't.

Ochs and Taylor (1992) identify the roles in these narrative exchanges as "problematizer" and "problematizee." The problematizer reacts to a family member's account of an experience in a way that is critical of how the speaker handled the situation. For example, when an eight-year-old child, Josh, who has been doing homework, announced, "I'm done," his father asked in a "disbelieving tone," "Already Josh? Read me what you wrote." Thus the father questioned whether Josh really was finished or not (313). In Ochs and Taylor's terms, he "problematized" Josh's announcement "I'm done."

The family power structure, Ochs and Taylor observe, is established in these storytelling dynamics. Just as Mother typically prompted a child to tell Daddy what happened, older siblings were much more likely to urge younger ones to tell about something that happened than the other way around. In this sense, older siblings were treating their younger siblings more or less the way parents treat children (a pattern that I observed in my own research on siblings (Tannen 2009) and that, I also observed, younger siblings often perceive and resent).

Ochs and Taylor found that children were most often problematizees – the ones whose behavior was judged by others. Rarely were they problematizers – the ones who questioned others' behavior as problematic. This puts children firmly at the bottom of the hierarchy. Fathers were the most frequent problematizers and rarely were problematizees: rarely was their behavior held up to the scrutiny and

judgment of others. This puts them firmly at the top of the hierarchy. Mothers, however, were not up there, as parents, along with fathers. Instead, mothers found themselves in the position of problematizee (the one whose behavior was held up for judgment) as often as they were problematizer (the one who was judging others). Thus fathers judged their wives' actions in addition to their children's, but mothers judged only their children's behavior, not their husbands'. The storytelling dynamic placed mothers in the middle of the family hierarchy – over the children, but under the father.

The authors also observe that mothers often problematized their own actions. For example, a woman named Marie owned and ran a day care center. At dinner, she told of a client who was taking her child out of the center, and paid her last bill. The client handed over more money than was needed to cover the time her child had spent in day care, so Marie returned the excess. But she later wondered whether she had made a mistake. After all, her policy required clients to give two weeks' notice before withdrawing a child, and this mother had not given notice. So perhaps the client had intended the overpayment to cover those two weeks, and Marie should have kept it, enforcing her policy. The father made clear that he endorsed this view: "When I say something I stick to it unless she brings it up … I do not change it" (Ochs and Taylor 1992, 312). Marie was the problematizee because her action was called into question. She had problematized herself by raising the issue of whether she had handled the situation in the best way; her husband then further problematized her by letting her know that he thought she had not. Ochs and Taylor found that this pattern was common: if mothers questioned their own actions, fathers often "dumped on" them by reinforcing the conclusion that the mothers had not acted properly. In contrast, the authors found that in the rare instances when fathers problematized themselves, mothers did not further problematize them.

Ochs and Taylor thus identify a crucial dynamic in middle-class American families by which the family is a power structure with the father at the top. They further show that mothers play a crucial role in setting up this dynamic: "Father as problematizer," they argue, is "facilitated … by the active role of mothers who sometimes (perhaps inadvertently) set fathers up as potential problematizers – by introducing the stories and reports of children and mothers in the first place and orienting them towards fathers as primary recipients" (1992, 329). For me, the most important word in this excerpt is "inadvertently." I would argue that the "father knows best" dynamic results from gender differences in assumptions about the place of talk in a relationship, and that it reflects the ambiguity and polysemy of hierarchy and connection. When a mother asks her children what they did during the day, she is creating closeness by exchanging details of daily life, a verbal ritual frequently observed to characterize women's friendships (see, e.g., Coates 1996; Tannen 1990) and family relationships (Tannen 2006; 2009). In this sense, it is a connection maneuver. If the father does not ask "How was your day?" it does not mean that he is not interested in his family, or does not feel – or wish to be – close to them. It may only mean that he does not assume that closeness is created by the verbal ritual of telling the details of one's day.

EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 3/11/2016 4:09 PM via GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
AN: 714688 ; Holmes, Janet, Meyerhoff, Miriam, Ehrlich, Susan.; The Handbook of Language, Gender, and Sexuality
Account: s8986927

When Mother prods a child, "Tell Daddy what you did in karate today," she is, it is true, initiating a dynamic by which the father will assess the child's actions and thus be installed as the family judge. But I would bet that her goal is to *involve* the father in the family, bring him into the circle of intimacy she feels is established by such talk. From this point of view, the "father knows best" dynamic is as much a misfire as is the common source of frustration between women and men that I have described elsewhere (Tannen 1990): a woman tells a man about a frustrating experience she had that day, performing a ritual common among women friends that Gail Jefferson (1988) dubs "troubles talk." Since troubles talk is not a ritual common among men friends, he thinks he is being asked to solve the problem, which he proceeds to do – to her frustration. She protests, which frustrates him. Similarly, the mother who prods her children to tell their father what they did that day, or who talks about her own day, is trying to create connection. But the father, not recognizing the ritual nature of her comment, thinks he is being asked to judge.

In this view, it is not the mothers' initiation of the "telling your day" routine in itself that sets fathers up as family judge. Instead, the "father knows best" dynamic is created by the interaction of gender-related patterns. Fathers take the role of judge of actions recounted in stories because they presume that's why they are being told the stories. Fathers are less likely to talk about their own work problems because they don't want advice about how to solve problems there, so they see no reason to talk about them. Many men feel that rehashing what upset them at work forces them to relive it and get upset all over again, when they'd rather put it out of their minds and enjoy the oasis of home. They may also resist telling about problems precisely to avoid being placed in the one-down position of receiving advice or of being told that they did not handle the situation in the best way. On the few occasions that Ochs and Taylor found fathers problematizing themselves, it is no surprise that mothers did not further dump on them – not necessarily because mothers felt they had no right to judge, but more likely because they took these revelations in the spirit of troubles talk rather than as invitations to pass judgment. These clashing rituals result in mothers finding themselves one-down in the family hierarchy without knowing how they got there.

Wagner (2010) applies Ochs and Taylor's framework to the discourse of seven lesbian families, replacing the term "problematizing" with the term "evaluating" to further distinguish between positive and negative responses. She found that in five of the seven families, one parent evaluated the other's speech and actions more often than the reverse, and in all but one of these cases, negative evaluations accounted for the imbalance, whereas positive evaluations were equally distributed or nearly so. (Of the other two families, one was evenly balanced, and one had almost no evaluations at all.) This suggests that gender is not the only factor influencing the "telling your day" family ritual, though another of Wagner's (2010, 33) findings is suggestive of another frequently observed gender-related conversational pattern: she found "a high incidence of joint elicitation and narration by the parents, and an active attempt to include children in conversations."

I have discussed the Ochs and Taylor example at length to demonstrate how gender-related patterns of discourse can explain a phenomenon observed in family

interaction in prior research, and how what has been accurately identified as a matter of negotiating power is also simultaneously and inextricably a matter of negotiating connection. This analysis supports my contentions that (1) power and connection are inextricably intertwined; (2) the relationship between power and connection is fundamental to an understanding of gender and language; and (3) the relationship between gender and language is fundamental to an understanding of family interaction.

6. Self-Revelation: A Gender-Specific Conversational Ritual

The "telling your day" ritual, for many women, is just one way that connection is created and maintained through talk. Another way is exchanging information about personal relationships and emotions. Here, too, conversations that take place in families reflect the divergent expectations of family members of different genders.

One way that many women create and maintain closeness is by keeping tabs on each other's lives, including (perhaps especially) romantic relationships. When male and female family members interact, gender differences in expectations regarding the use of talk to create closeness can lead to unbalanced interchanges. The following example, which comes from the Georgetown Work–Family Project, illustrates just such a conversation. In this example, one of the project participants recorded a conversation with her unmarried brother. The sister (a woman in her thirties) is asking her brother (who is a few years younger) about his girlfriend, Kerry. Clearly the sister is looking for a kind of interchange that her brother is not providing:

Sister: So how's things with Kerry?
Brother: Cool.
Sister: Cool. Does that mean very good?
Brother: Yeah.
Sister: True love?
Brother: Pretty much.
Sister: PRETTY much? When you say PRETTY much, what do you mean?
Brother: I mean it's all good.

The conversation takes on an almost comic character, as the sister becomes more and more probing in reaction to her brother's minimal responses. Evident in the example is a process I call, adapting a term that Gregory Bateson (1972) applied to larger cultural processes, complementary schismogenesis. By this process, each person's verbal behavior drives the other to more and more exaggerated forms of an opposing behavior. In this example, the sister asks repeated and increasingly probing questions *because* her brother's responses are minimal, and his responses may well become more guarded *because* her questions become increasingly insistent. Indeed, she starts to sound a bit like an inquisitor.

Moreover, this conversation between sister and brother sounds rather like a mother talking to a teenage child. (Recall that the sister is older.) It is strikingly similar to the conversation represented in the next example, which took place between a mother and her 12-year-old daughter. This conversational excerpt was identified and analyzed by Alla Tovares in connection with a seminar I taught on family interaction. The excerpt comes from a documentary made by filmmaker Jennifer Fox entitled *An American Love Story*. The documentary aired in five two-hour segments on the United States' Public Broadcasting System in September 1999. In preparing the documentary, Fox followed the family of Karen Wilson, Bill Sims, and their two daughters, in Queens, New York, over two years beginning in 1992. In this episode, the younger daughter, Chaney, was anticipating her first "date" – a daytime walk – with a boy, despite her parents' misgivings. The boy (who was 13) failed to appear on the appointed day. After the entire family spent several hours waiting for him, Chaney got a telephone call explaining that his grandmother had refused permission for him to go. Karen tries to discuss this development with Chaney, who responds minimally:

Karen:	That's too bad. Aren't you mad?
Chaney:	No.
Karen:	I mean just in general.
Chaney:	What do you mean?
Karen:	Not at him, just in general.
Chaney:	No, not that much.
Karen:	Disappointed?
Chaney:	No, not that much.
Karen:	Relieved?
Chaney:	No. [*laughs*]
Karen:	What- [*also laughing*]
	Give us a feeling here, Chaney!

Through her questions and comments, Karen is showing her daughter the kind of conversation she expects to have – one in which Chaney tells how she felt about what happened. I doubt that Chaney is unable to hold such conversations; I would bet she has them frequently with her best friend, Nelly. But, like many teenagers, she seems reluctant to divulge her feelings to her mother.

On a later day, the boy shows up unexpectedly, and Chaney goes out for a walk with him. When she returns, a similar conversation ensues. The trouble starts immediately, as Chaney heads for her room:

Karen:	Come sit and tell us all about it.
Chaney:	I have to call Nelly.
Karen:	Come, tell us all about it first.
	I am your first priority here.

Chaney complies by sitting down, but she volunteers nothing. She offers only cryptic and minimally informative answers to her mother's questions. Throughout the conversation, Chaney laughs or chuckles.

Karen:	Did he hold your hand?
Chaney:	Yeah. [*laughs*]
Karen:	How did that feel?
Chaney:	His hands were cold.
Karen:	Did you kiss?
Chaney:	Yeah.
Karen:	Where?
Chaney:	Where do you think? [*chuckling*]
Karen:	On your lip?
Chaney:	Just a short one.
Karen:	[*whispering*] Oh my god!
	[*normal voice*] Where. At our door?
Chaney:	Yeah.
Karen:	What did you think?
Chaney:	Nothing.
Karen:	Did you have any feelings about it?
Chaney:	Yeah.
Karen:	A good one or a bad one, or a stupid one?
Chaney:	Good.
Karen:	Wh- When are you going to see him?
Chaney:	Mmm, probably in June.
Karen:	Mm, that's nice and safe.
Chaney:	[*laughing and trying to get up*] Bye!
Karen:	So are you happy to see him?
Chaney:	Yeah.
Karen:	Is he the same you thought he would be?
Chaney:	He's just the same.

At this point, Chaney rises and retreats to her room. To learn how she felt about her date, we would have to listen in on her conversation with Nelly. And that must be a source of frustration to Karen as it would be to most mothers of teenagers. Although Chaney answered her mother's questions, the interchange, like the exchange between brother and sister in the preceding example, feels more like an interrogation than a conversation.

Why is the mother in this example and the sister in the earlier one so intent on getting a family member to divulge feelings? I have argued elsewhere (Tannen 1990), drawing on a large body of language and gender research, that women and girls typically define their relationships with friends along the connection axis: best friends tell each other "everything." (See Eckert, Chapter 27, and Goodwin and Kyratzis, Chapter 26, in this volume, for a somewhat different view on girls' linguistic practices.) This includes not only large and small life events but also how they feel about those events. They define and evaluate family relationships the same way: a good relationship is a "close" one, and that means a relationship in which one tells the other what is happening in one's life, and how one *feels* about it. When children are small, the confidences go one way: mothers want to know what their children are experiencing and feeling, though they typically do not confide their own feelings to their small children. When daughters become

adults, however, as noted by Henwood (1993) and as I found in my own research (Tannen 2006), both daughters and mothers typically evaluate their relationship in terms of how "close" they are – and this is gauged by relative mutual revelation about feelings. I found a similar pattern among adult sisters (Tannen 2008; 2009): complaints often focused on a sister's failure to reveal personal information and/or feelings about them.

7. Balancing Power and Connection in a Family Argument

In this section, I examine several examples from the family discourse recorded by another of the couples in the Georgetown Work–Family project. In each of the following examples, the mother and father use complex verbal strategies to balance the needs to negotiate both power and connection as they go about the tasks required to maintain the daily life of their young family. In addition, their discourse strategies simultaneously create gender-related parental identities.

The couple, Kathy and Sam, have a two-year-old daughter, Kira. Both parents work outside the home, Sam full-time and Kathy a reduced schedule of 30 hours per week. Each regularly takes off one day a week to spend with Kira, who attends day care only three days a week. One day, Kathy and Sam are both at home, Kathy in the kitchen by herself and Sam taking care of Kira in another room, when he calls out:

> Sam: Kathy! Kath! Let's switch.
> You take care of her.
> I'll do whatever you're doing.

Kathy responds from the kitchen, "I'm making popcorn," then adds, "You always burn it."

Clearly what is at stake, and what ensues, can be understood as a series of control maneuvers. Sam wants to switch roles with Kathy, so she will take over childcare and he will take over popcorn preparation. Kathy resists this switch. In a direct confrontation over power, she might simply refuse: "No, I don't want to switch." Instead, by saying "You always burn it," she resists relinquishing her task by appealing to the good of the family rather than her personal preference. Insofar as she resists doing what Sam wants her to do, her statement is a control maneuver. But to the extent that she appeals to the family good, it is a connection maneuver. At the same time, however, by impugning Sam's popcorn-making ability, she is putting him down, a hierarchy-inflected move.

Because Kathy has based her resistance on her husband's putative deficiency, he responds on this level:

> Sam: No I don't!
> I never burn it.
> I make it perfect.

Although they continue to exchange accusations, self-defense, and counteraccusations about popcorn-making skills, Sam and Kathy execute the switch: Sam takes over in the kitchen, and Kathy takes charge of Kira. However, she continues to try to engineer her return to the kitchen. In this endeavor, she addresses the two-year-old:

Kathy:	You wanna help Mommy make popcorn?
Kira:	Okay.
Kathy:	Let's not let Daddy do it.
Kira:	Okay.
Kathy:	Okay, come on.

Here, again, Kathy's utterances are a blend of power and connection. Insofar as she is trying to get her way and regain control of the popcorn preparation Kathy is engaged in control maneuvers. But by suggesting that Kira "help Mommy make popcorn," she is proposing to satisfy both herself and her husband: she would thereby return to the kitchen, yes, but she would also fulfill Sam's request, "You take care of her." Moreover, by involving Kira in the plan, Kathy is involving the child in the interaction. Furthermore, her linguistic choices ("Let's not let Daddy do it") align herself with her daughter: "Let's" merges mother and daughter; "not let" includes the child in the mother's perspective as someone who has authority over Sam's actions; and "Daddy" adopts the child's point of view in referring to her husband. All these are connection maneuvers, though they create connection to Kira rather than Sam.

From the kitchen, Sam overhears this conversation and resists in turn. While Kathy continues to urge their daughter to accompany her, Sam follows a strategy of "the best defense is a good offense":

Sam:	I know how to make popcorn!
Kathy:	Let's hurry up so Daddy doesn't …
Sam:	I can make popcorn better than you can!

The argument between Kathy and Sam continues, as Sam retains the role of chef and maintains that his performance in this role is successful, while Kathy becomes increasingly apprehensive of impending failure:

Kathy:	Just heat it! Heat it!
	No, I don't want you …
Sam:	It's going, it's going. Hear it?
Kathy:	It's too slow.
	It's all soaking in.
	You hear that little …
Sam:	It's not soaking in, it's fine.
Kathy:	It's just a few kernels.
Sam:	All the popcorn is being popped!

Soon Kathy tries another strategy to regain control of the kitchen, or to salvage the popcorn, or both:

Kathy: You gotta take the trash outside.
Sam: I can't, I'm doing the popcorn.
Kathy: I'll DO it, I'll watch it.
          You take the trash out
          and come back in a few minutes and –

Again, Kathy proposes to reclaim the popcorn preparation, but she phrases her proposal in a way that seems to benefit him rather than her: she'll help Sam do his job of taking out the trash. This reframes the meaning of her taking over popcorn-making as temporarily spelling Sam while he fulfills another obligation.

In the end, Sam keeps control of the popcorn – and it burns. This result lends credence to Kathy's reluctance to accede to his request to do it. What is interesting for my purposes here, however, is how Kathy's attempts to prevent this outcome are a blend of control and connection maneuvers.

Another aspect of this example that intrigues me is Kathy's use of Kira as addressee in her negotiation with Sam over popcorn-making. When Kathy said "Let's not let Daddy do it," she communicates her wishes to her husband by addressing their child. By involving a third party, her attempt to get her way (a control maneuver) becomes less directly confrontational (the power play is mitigated) and also entails aligning herself with Kira (a connection maneuver).

In the next example, Kathy is at home with Kira when she hears Sam's car approaching the house. (Kendall's (2006) study of dinnertime homecomings includes analysis of this exchange.) Kathy prepares Kira for her father's arrival in a way that seems designed to inspire excitement and anticipation, encouraging involvement between the child and her father in much the same way that mothers do when they encourage children to tell their fathers about their day.

Kathy: Daddy's home.
Kira: Da da.
Kathy: Daddy's gonna be home in a minute.
Kira: Da da pop.
          Da da pop.
          Da da pop.
Kathy: You gonna give Da da a pop?
Kira: Yes. Shoes. Shoes. ahh.
Kathy: You gonna tell Daddy to take his shoes off?

In this interchange, Kathy is negotiating connection by orienting Kira toward integrating the father into the family circle. Kira's minimal utterances, "Da da pop" and "Shoes," could be interpreted in many different ways. The expansions Kathy supplies ("You gonna give Da da a [fruit] pop?" and "You gonna tell Daddy to take his shoes off?") frame Kira's words as plans to involve her father in interaction. This too negotiates connection.

When Sam enters the house, however, he is tired, hungry, and out of sorts. As he sits at the table trying to eat something, Kira tries to climb on him, and he has a momentary eruption of irritation:

Sam: No! I'm eating! [*very irritated*]
       Daddy eats. [*conciliatory*]
Kira: [*cries*]
Kathy: O::h. [*sympathetic tone*]
Sam: Da da eats. [*more conciliatory*]
Kira: [*cries louder*]
Sam: Wanna come up?

In a sense, Sam's first three statements are control maneuvers: he wants to prevent Kira from doing what she wants to do – climb into his lap. But the progression of modifications to his linguistic strategies evince a subtle negotiation of closeness. When Kira begins to wail, Sam retreats from his refusal and ends up inviting her to climb on him ("Wanna come up?"). In building up to that invitation, he repeats the reason for his initial resistance three times: that he is eating. But each time he repeats this proposition, the way he words it and the tone in which he speaks bring him closer to his daughter.

The first iteration, "I'm eating!" is spoken in a very irritated tone and is preceded by the harsh injunction "No!" Furthermore, in using the first-person pronoun "I," Sam describes what he is doing from his own point of view. This contrasts with the perspective of his next iteration, "Daddy eats." Not only is this statement spoken in a more conciliatory tone, as if he is trying to make amends for the harshness of his previous burst of annoyance, but he also shifts to Kira's perspective when he says "Daddy eats." "Daddy" identifies him from his daughter's point of view, not his own. The third repetition, "Da da eats," moves even closer to the child's perspective, since "Da da" is what she calls him. These linguistic forms bring the father progressively closer to the child's perspective, even as he is softening in his resistance to her attempt to climb on him, and moving toward offering her what she wanted (but no longer wants now that he has made her cry). Sam's responses to Kira, then, in these few brief lines, are a subtle negotiation of power and connection.

At this point, Kathy joins the interaction in a way that blends power and connection in particularly complex and intriguing ways. She explains to Sam why Kira is crying, indirectly chastising him for causing this reaction. At the same time, she explains Kira's own feelings to her and suggests how she might, when she learns to talk, use words rather than tears to express those feelings and get her way. Because Kathy does all this by talking through Kira, she is connecting the three of them as a family unit:

Kathy: She got her feelings hurt.
          …
       I think she just wanted
       some Daddy's attention.

> You were missing Daddy today, weren't you?
> You were missing Daddy, weren't you?
> Can you say,
> "I was just missing you Daddy
> that was all?"
>
> Kira: [*cries*] Nnno.
> Kathy: And I don't really feel too good.
> Kira: [*cries*] No.
> Kathy: No, she doesn't feel too good either.

Just as Sam moved progressively closer to Kira's point of view as he repeated his explanation that he was eating, in this example Kathy's repeated explanations of why Kira is crying follow the same progression. In the first line ("She got her feelings hurt"), Kathy speaks of Kira in the third person, so mother and daughter are linguistically distinct. She next addresses Kira directly ("You were missing Daddy, weren't you?"), bringing her into alignment with the child. She then models for Kira what the child might say to articulate her own feelings ("Can you say, 'I was just missing you, Daddy, that was all?'"). By animating Kira's feelings from the child's point of view ("And I don't really feel too good"), Kathy linguistically merges with her daughter. Finally, she mitigates her alignment with Kira and reorients to Sam by addressing him and referring to Kira rather than animating her ("No, she doesn't feel too good either").

Kathy's explanation of why Kira is crying ("She got her feelings hurt") is an indirect criticism because it implies that Sam should not hurt his daughter's feelings. After a short amount of intervening talk, she makes this injunction more explicit:

> Kathy: Why are you so edgy?
> Sam: Cause I haven't eaten yet.
> Kathy: Why didn't you get a *snack*
> on the way home or something?
> Save your family a little stress.
> Kira: Mm mm
> Kathy: Yeah give us a break, Daddy.
> We just miss you.
> We try to get your attention
> and then you come home
> and you go ROW ROW ROW ROW.
> Kira: Row Row!

This last example is especially fascinating as an instance of what I call ventriloquizing – communicating to a second party by animating the voice of a third. Whereas Sam speaks only for himself ("I haven't eaten yet"), Kathy speaks for (and as) Kira when she says "We just miss you. We try to get your attention …" Then, still speaking as Kira, she mimics how Sam comes across from Kira's point of view: "you go ROW ROW ROW ROW." In this utterance, Kathy is animating Kira animating Sam. So the linguistic strategy by which Kathy tells

Sam that he should alter his behavior (a control maneuver) also linguistically merges the three of them (a connection maneuver).

8. Gender and Family Interaction: Coda

In all these examples, I have tried to show that whereas family interaction is, as researchers have assumed and shown, an ongoing power struggle, it is also simultaneously an ongoing struggle for connection. Furthermore, family interaction is a continuing negotiation of gender identities and roles. In analyses of the interactions tape-recorded by this family as well as others in the study, Kendall (2007) has shown that whereas both mothers and fathers espouse an ideology of equal co-parenting and wage-earning, in their ways of speaking the mothers frequently position themselves as primary childcare providers and their husbands as breadwinners. Alexandra Johnston (2007), the research team member who spent time with Kathy and Sam and transcribed their conversations, observed that one way Kathy positions herself as primary caretaker is by frequently correcting Sam's parenting, whereas Sam rarely corrects hers. This, indeed, is what Kathy is doing in the last example by implicitly criticizing Sam for hurting Kira's feelings and by suggesting that he "save [his] family a little stress" by getting a snack on the way home.

In this way, the final example, like all those preceding it, illustrates that we need to understand family interaction – like all human interaction – not only as negotiations for power but also as negotiations for connection. Given the ambiguity and polysemy of power and connection, linguistic strategies that can be identified as control maneuvers must also be examined as connection maneuvers. Power and connection are the dimensions along which human relationships are negotiated, and they are inextricably intertwined with the way gender identity is negotiated. Thus an appreciation of the interplay of power and connection, and of the ways power and connection underlie gender identity and gender performance, is necessary to understand family interaction as well as the relationship between gender and language.

Acknowledgments

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EBSCO Publishing : eBook Collection (EBSCOhost) - printed on 3/11/2016 4:09 PM via GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY
AN: 714688 ; Holmes, Janet, Meyerhoff, Miriam, Ehrlich, Susan.; The Handbook of Language, Gender, and Sexuality
Account: s8986927