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Reported Speech in Talking Race on Campus

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In talking race, university students sometimes report the speech of others, or themselves, to recreate what happened during an incident. Reported speech is used within narratives to vividly convey what was said, purportedly through the actor's own words or as evidence to support general claims. The speaker is not merely reporting speech but also assessing the problematic character of the actions performed through others' words. Reported speech is relevantly tied to assessment. Assessment reveals the reporting speaker's positioning toward the reported speech. The reported speech used in talking race presents the other as ignorant, biased, racist, ridiculous, or honest. African Americans discursively portray Whites as unwilling to admit racism, as stereotyping, or as duplicitous in intergroup relations. Whites, on the other hand, frame African Americans as exaggerating racism or as overemphasizing their ethnicity. Representing others' actions through invoking their words is a way of criticizing, challenging, or resisting such troublesome racialized events.

I was very proud of the fact that Black students decided to stand up. Martin Luther King said, you know that a man can't ride your back unless it is bent. And that was one of the things we spoke about at the rally — was that it was time for us to stand up, so that nobody would ride our backs on campus anymore. (Student, Racism 101, Lennon & Bagwell, 1988).

People were saying everything was an isolated incident, an isolated incident, but you started to see isolated incidents at the University of Michigan. You started to see isolated incidents at the University of Massachusetts. You started to see isolated incidents at Mount Holyoke and so forth. So now we have thousands of isolated incidents that were going on. (Student, Racism 101, Lennon & Bagwell, 1988).

A lot of what you begin to see now are a lot of White students saying, Enough. I am sick of hearing about racism. We dealt with that six months ago. And so I think, in reality, things are even worse. Things possibly are worse now than they were six or seven months ago. (Student, Racism 101, Lennon & Bagwell, 1988).

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A variety of discourse formats are used in talking race: People tell racial narratives (e.g., stories of racism or interracial conflict), assert general propositions (e.g., "things will never change"), give examples from their own direct experience or from readings or the media, or provide explanations (e.g., "people prefer to hang out with their own kind"). A rich source of materials for analysis is how some speakers quote the words of others, or themselves, so-called reported speech. Prior discourse analyses of race and racism have concentrated mostly on narratives and accounts but have overlooked this phenomenon of reported speech. The practice of reporting another's speech is seen in the epigrams. "Martin Luther King," "people," and "a lot of White students," respectively, are used as sources for quotes. These quotes draw on another's words while shaping them for the reporting speaker's own purposes. This "double-voiced" quality (Volosinov, 1973) is what makes reported speech such an intriguing site for analysis of talking race.

This investigation will examine (a) reported speech as a conversational practice and consider (b) how it serves to discursively construct realities about race. Under "practice," the different forms reported speech can take are examined, how reported speech is connected to assessments and how reported speech interactionally functions in context. Under "discursive construction of realities," participants' ways of using reported speech to represent racialized incidents and events are examined.

Reported Speech

The transmission and assessment of the speech of others, the discourse of another, is one of the most widespread and fundamental topics of human speech. In all areas of life and ideological activity, our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words, which are transmitted with highly varied degrees of accuracy and impartiality. The more intensive, differentiated, and highly developed the social life of a speaking collective, the greater is the importance attaching... to another's word, another's utterance, since another's word will be the subject of passionate communication, an object of interpretation, discussion, evaluation, rebuttal, support, further development and so on. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 337)

In the course of talking race, participants quote the speech of others or of themselves. Although we commonly think of quoting to invoke the words of an authority (as Dr. King is quoted in the first epigram), reported speech can be put to multiple uses. It can be used to discredit the original source (as in the second epigram, "People were saying everything was an isolated incident") or to summarize the attitudes of others (as in the third epigram, "A lot of White students [are] saying. Enough. I'm sick of hearing about racism"). Reported speech can serve various functions: to dramatize a point, to give evidence for a position, to epitomize a condition, and so on.

Various distinctions have been made about reported speech (Sternberg, 1982). Reported speech is commonly thought of as direct or indirect speech (Coulmas, 1986; Li, 1986). Direct speech purportedly reproduces the words of the original source, whereas indirect speech conveys the propositional content but not the source's words. Direct quotes allow for the performative aspects of the original speech because the reporting speaker can draw on the original language as well as the prosodic and stylistic dimensions of those words (Bauman, 1986). The notion of indirect speech has been criticized (see Coulmas, 1986; Sternberg, 1982). For the present investigation, I draw on a typology of reported speech in conversation from Payne (n.d.). Payne adopts the notion of "summary quotes" instead of indirect quotes. Summary quotes have three subtypes: (a) summary quotes of an individual, for example, "A Black girl said to me last year that uhmm she hangs out only with Black people because she chooses to"; (b) summary quotes of a group, for example, "A lot of White people—like in the video, they were saying that they don't even like to talk to Black people"; or (c) summary quotes of a prototypical group member, for example, of a prototypical White racist—"You know that kind of thing, you know Blacks are okay to be friendly with." This typology usefully distinguishes between the reported speaker as an individual or an aggregate and whether the reported speaker is the current speaker or another. In addition, reported speech has the following characteristics:

1. The reporting speaker may quote another person or quote him- or herself.
2. The quote may be of what was verbally said or of what was thought, what may be called reported thought.
3. The quote may be verbal or nonverbal, where the latter includes bodily movements and vocal qualities such as intonation or regional/ethnic accent or dialect.
4. The quote can report the words of a single person or of a dialogue between two or more persons.
5. The quote can be of what was actually said or be fictional, that is, contrary to fact—what should or could have been said or what will be said.
6. The quote can be overtly marked by a reporting clause, a shift in intonation, or in writing by quotation marks; or it can be unmarked.
7. The quote can be continuous or interspersed with the reporting speaker's commentary.

Strictly speaking, the notion of reported speech is a misnomer, not only because of the issue of the reproduction or accuracy of the material quoted but, more basically, because the previously uttered words are now being used in a different context (Sternberg, 1982). As Tannen (1989) observed, reported speech is really "constructed" speech in that the quoted prior text serves the purposes of the current speaker in the present context, such as to "involve" the hearer in the present speech event. Reported speech is "recontextualized" in the reporting context (Shuman, 1993).
In talking race, participants are commonly engaged in telling narratives, giving explanations, or making assessments of some incident or troublesome state of affairs. Reported speech fits into these speech activities as a form of "evidence" and as a way to hold another "responsible" (Hill & Irvine, 1993). Quoting another's words can convey an air of "objectivity" about what happened in that the recipients can "see for themselves" what another said and did (Holt, 1996).

Using the utterances of others seems to offer rich material for understanding how members construct a "portrait" of the other (Basso, 1979). The notion "portrait of the other" is meant to capture how out-group members are presented through reported speech. As Basso found in his study of Western Apache jokes about Whites, most portraits framed out-group as ridiculous or were critical. This finding can be broadened beyond humor and jokes to other discourse types such as reported speech.

Studies of Racism and Interracial Contact

University campuses, traditionally thought of as alternative places in society, as havens for free expression and respect for differences, have not escaped ethnic and racial friction. Campuses across the United States have witnessed uncivil exchanges and hate incidents, such as racist and anti-Semitic graffiti, notes, slurs, and ethnic name-calling (Sidel, 1994). These conflicts heighten the sense of difference and group boundaries as reflected in so-called voluntary segregation in social life among many groups on campus (Asante & Al-Seen, 1984; Gitlin, 1992; Scott, 1992). Such tensions are fueled by a decline in enrollments among traditionally underrepresented groups and by a resurgence of an activist conservative agenda that calls into question recently enacted progressive policies.

Simply bringing members of different ethnic groups together on campus does not ensure amiable relations. The interpersonal contact hypothesis predicts that negative stereotypes and prejudice will abate as historically segregated groups come into contact. However, the data do not support the hypothesis (Hewstone & Brown, 1986). Contact needs to be frequent and intimate enough to overturn prevailing stereotypes and the sense of difference. For without such "quality communication," the perception of difference increases intergroup distance (Tzeng, Duvell, Ware, Neel, & Fortier, 1986). Such sense of distance may be heightened by misunderstandings resulting from diverging cultural communication styles (Kochman, 1981), which make for "difficult dialogues" (Houston, 1994; Orbe, 1994). Low levels of "communication satisfaction" resulting from those few occasions of intergroup contact reinforce one of the most common communication strategies—avoidance (Hecht, Ribeau, & Alberts, 1989; Martin, Hecht, & Larkey, 1994).

As previously segregated groups increasingly come into contact at schools and the workplace, there has been a change in the face of racism—to a "new racism" (Miles, 1989) or a "symbolic racism" (Sears, 1988). Unlike the "old racism," expressed in explicit racist ideologies, the new racism is less transparent. This new racism gets articulated in code words, symbols, and the dominant group's resentment and resistance toward policies that benefit minorities (Southern, 1987). The new racism invokes a more subtle discourse that justifies current systems of inequities (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) and even denies being racist (Billig et al., 1988; Van Dijk, 1992). This new racism is perceived in radically different ways by Whites and African Americans (Hacker, 1992). It is a reoccurring experience for many Blacks (Essed, 1991; Feagin, 1991), whereas many Whites deny seeing such racism or refuse to accept responsibility for it (Martin et al., 1994; Pinderhughes, 1989).

Talk about race typically occurs within what persons define as their own racial group (Van Dijk, 1987). People acquire and learn to articulate their racial attitudes from a variety of sources (e.g., mass media, parents, schools, firsthand experiences), but one of the most important is how such viewpoints are interpreted within peer group discussions. Participants, especially Whites, would likely be more reticent or circumspect talking race in cross-racial groups (Kochman, 1981; Martin et al., 1994; Pinderhughes, 1989). Whites are aware of norms against "sounding prejudiced," so they design their talk to appear "reasoned" and their narratives to provide "evidence" for their positions (Billig et al., 1988; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

Van Dijk (1987, 1993) found that Whites, in talking race, discuss a narrow range of topics, focusing on sociocultural differences with the implicit message of the minority's inferiority. The stories told about race are generally argumentative, used to justify negative conclusions about Blacks, and express blame and resentment. Such narratives were often "complaint stories" focusing on a complication that lacks a resolution. Although only a few Whites spoke in explicitly racist language, their speech style and rhetoric revealed a "double strategy" of positive self-presentation and a negative other-presentation along with a critical distance toward minorities.

Essed (1988, 1991) examined the narratives or accounts of "everyday racism" experienced by Black women (cf. Louw-Potgieter, 1989). Essed derived a cognitive model reflecting the knowledge systems on which these accounts of racism are based. This model involves five categories: (a) context (the characters, time, and place), (b) complication (acts that deviate from the norm), (c) evaluation (the narrator's identification of the acts in question as racist), (d) argumentation (reasoning involving inference or comparisons for how the narrator infers that the acts are racist),
and (e) decision (what the narrator does in response). The argumentation category was found to be especially salient because it involves the Black women's everyday reasoning for inferring racism based on deviations from norms as well as comparisons to one's own prior experiences, to other Blacks, or to Whites.

The present study attempts to extend Basso's (1979) notion of a portrait of the other by examining the reported speech of African Americans and Whites in talking race. In other words, how does quoting the words of another serve to discursively construct that person and his or her actions? The project is to describe discursive constructions about race, racism, and interracial contact (Edwards & Potter, 1992). Its purpose is to closely examine how college students talk race and engage in the critical speech activities of formulating and criticizing, responding to opposing viewpoints, and characterizing the other. These issues are examined through participants' uses of reported speech. To my knowledge, no other study has looked at reported speech as a site for race matters. Other discourse analyses (Essed, 1991; Van Dijk, 1987; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) use broader categories in which reported speech gets coded as other kinds of activities. The second goal of this investigation is to examine reported speech as a communicative practice: What forms does reported speech take? How does reported speech interactionally function in context? What does reported speech make relevant?

Materials and Analytic Method

Participants were given the documentary Racism 101 (Lennon & Bagwell, 1988) to watch at home with at least one other person whom they considered to be a member of their own group. Volunteers were solicited from two undergraduate courses and requested to contact others (e.g., roommates, friends) with whom to watch and discuss the documentary. The group size for watching the documentary in a volunteer’s residence ranged from 2 to 5 participants. After viewing the videotape, participants were requested via written instructions to discuss their reactions to Racism 101 in an informal and natural way (the researcher was not present). Specifically, the instructions read, “After the video, please discuss on the audiotape your opinions about the quality and quantity of interracial communication on college campuses, such as U. For example, problems with interracial friendships, voluntary segregation, and so on.” The participants were given a tape recorder and asked to record their discussions. Anonymity was assured.

Thirty-eight students participated in the study: 20 African Americans, 12 Whites, and 6 Latinos. These postviewing discussions ranged in length from 15 minutes to more than 1 hour, with a median length of about 30 minutes. The audiotapes were transcribed using a simplified Jefferson format (Atkinson & Heritage, 1984). Some participants used forms of vernacular English, which are preserved in the transcripts.

Racism 101 (Lennon & Bagwell, 1988) investigates the state of race relations and racism on North American university campuses. The documentary begins by observing that it is about 25 years since Dr. King’s “I Have a Dream” speech of a color-blind society, but on many of America’s universities there are a growing number of racist incidents and ethnic conflicts. One of the hopes of the civil rights movement of the 1960s was that through school desegregation the next generation of Whites and African Americans could learn together, get to know one another, and achieve racial harmony. The documentary is organized around the theme of the continuing problems of race and racism at university campuses. For instance, the documentary reconstructs a racial brawl at the University of Massachusetts, the furor caused by racist jokes aired over a radio station at the University of Michigan, and the controversy arising from the journalistic practices of a conservative newspaper at Dartmouth College. These incidents galvanize an African American student response through organized demonstrations and demands for redress from university administrations. Many Whites and other ethnic groups on campus give support to the African American cause, but campuses are far from unified on these issues. The final portion of the documentary shifts to more everyday life on campus and shows interviews with a number of students in dormitories and in fraternities and sororities who express varying viewpoints on racial issues.

In listening to the audiotapes of the students talking race, various themes regarding race, racism, and interracial contact became readily apparent from the data. The notion of “theme” is taken broadly here as a recurring topic that participants discussed. From these themes, reported speech emerged as the area for analytic investigation.

Given the interest in reported speech as a practice in the discursive construction of the other and in its conversational structure, a method that combined social constructionism with conversation analysis seemed most useful—conversation-analytic constructionism (Buttny, 1993). Conversation-analytic methods (Heritage, 1984; Psathas, 1990) are useful in describing the structure or organization of a phenomenon such as reported speech.

Transcripts containing reported speech, and the surrounding sequential context, were excerpted for analysis. The transcripts were read numerous times, and the audiotapes were repeatedly listened to. From these observations, claims were formulated about what the participants are doing; these were further checked by reexamining the transcripts and tape
recordings. This method involves a back-and-forth among the transcripts, the audiotapes, and the claims to check, to refine, and to formulate better one’s analytic claims. There were more instances of reported speech than could be covered in the article. Those instances selected for analysis were the most illustrative in exhibiting features of talking race.

Observations of the transcripts and tapes are guided by the following methodological concerns: What identifying characteristics allow participants (and analysts alike) to hear a segment of talk as reported speech? What forms does reported speech take? How does reported speech fit within larger discourse formats such as narratives? What is the reported speech being used to do by participants? Conversation-analytic methods are well suited to address these issues in that they focus on how talk in interaction unfolds on a moment-by-moment basis. This unfolding of talk is approached by looking at sequential relevance: Having identified a meaningful unit of talk (such as reported speech), the analyst looks at how this talk was made relevant from the sequential context. Also, the analyst examines what the reported speech projects or makes relevant and—given that typically, there are a range of relevant next moves to a priori—considers what this particular move displays about the participant’s understanding, positioning, or alignment.

In addition to issues of conversational structure, reported speech is interesting for how it is used to construct a portrait of the other. Discursive action methods (Edwards & Potter, 1992; Edwards, Potter, & Wetherell, 1993) are useful for describing how actions and persons are socially constructed through talk. Reported speech is used by participants as a communicative practice to reconstruct what was said so as to convey a version of events and the persons involved in doing them. Reporting speech is not a neutral, disinterested activity. Persons report speech along with assessing or evaluating it. Such evaluative components are useful methodologically in that they allow us to hear how the speaker wants the recipient(s) to take the actions and persons portrayed through the reported speech. In other words, we can look at how the reporting speaker evaluates the reported speech as a way to understand how the actors being quoted and what they did are being framed.

REPORTED SPEECH IN TALKING RACE

The following three themes emerged from the data: everyday racism, perception of stereotypes, and intergroup distance. Although these content themes are familiar, the analytic challenge is to uncover the features of reported speech as conversational practices and the participants’ discursive constructions in using reported speech.

Everyday Racism on Campus

Throughout the transcripts one finds a number of student narratives of racist incidents or bigotry on campus. Reported speech appears within such narratives to tell the particular events of what the characters said and did—what happened. Quoting another, oneself, is a way to convey the actions of the narrative. However, narrators do not simply report what was said; they also evaluate it. So, reported speech is relevantly tied to the speaker’s evaluation. For instance, in the following transcript C tells of how “the same exact letter” (that constituted one of the racist incidents in Racism 101 [Lennon & Bagwell, 1988]) was “thrown in . . . my dorm.” C’s narrative uses a summary quote of the White students’ response to the racist event (line 8) in contrast to what they could/should have said (line 11).

No. 1 (4 Latino women)

1 C: uhm that was something that really caught my attention
2 because in my undergraduate program as well as something
3 the jiggerboos and open hunting season on porchmonkeys and
4 the same exact letter that was hung ( ) was thrown in my building
5 and my friend was the RA and
6 it was the worst experience that I ever had in my life,
7 it was ridiculous the way the White students reacted
8 was like well I didn’t put it out
9 and it became an individual thing
10 and it wasn’t a matter of
11 someone of my race offended you and something should be done
12 and the students were taken out of the dorm

The reported speech here (line 8) animates C’s presentation of the White students’ response to the racist note. Their denial of responsibility gets articulated by a summary quote of the prototypical White student response, “well I didn’t put it out” (line 8). This reported speech allows C to quote the words, not of a single individual, but of her formulation of the aggregate of White students.

This reported speech is made relevant by C’s prior assessment, “it was ridiculous the way the White students reacted” (line 7). This is not to say that other discourse forms could not have been used at line 8 instead of the reported speech—clearly we could imagine other coherent moves in
this slot, such as counterfactual descriptions, for example, “it was ridiculous the way the White students reacted, they didn’t do anything” (italics indicate constructed transcript). Given that this reported speech is, in fact, used here after C’s assessment, the question should be, How is this demonstrably relevant for the participants? The reported speech allows C to show, rather than simply tell, how the White students were “being ridiculous” by using their own words. The reported speech works as a piece of evidence to support that prior assessment.

C’s criticism is further developed by juxtaposing what the White students actually did—denied responsibility as “an individual thing” (line 9)—in contrast to a more appropriate group-level response, “someone of my race offended you and something should be done” (line 11). This response, in truth, did not occur, but C draws on the resource of an apocryphal quotation (Payne, n.d.) to show what could or should have been said (also called “hoped for speech” [Cohen, 1996]). So here the quotation is used to do the complaint of contrasting what happened to what could/should have happened.

Perhaps the most striking difference apparent in the transcripts is that African American students see racism as a recurring feature of their lives on campus, whereas Whites do not mention such racism and in some instances claim that it is exaggerated. How do participants discursively treat such differences? In the following transcript an African American narrates an instance of such divergence.

No. 2 (2 African American men)
1 M: we was talking about track and
2 he was telling me about one guy on the track team that was kicked off
3 because he said like racist you know like words ( )
4 and was saying like well he (does this stuff a lot)
5 and a lot of White people like himself doesn’t like it
6 but for some reason he didn’t see it as racist?
7 he just saw them as stupid
8 and you know I couldn’t understand ( )
9 yeah =
10 N:
11 M: = see the person as stupid but not racist

The reported speech takes the form of a summary quote (lines 1-7) to narrate a puzzling occurrence of a White student’s refusal to attribute racism of another White but, instead, calls him “stupid.” M then expresses bewilderment at the White student’s reluctance to see the event as racist.

M’s bewilderment is positioned immediately after the summary quote (lines 8 and 10). Again we see the narrator both reporting the speech of another and assessing it, although in this case the assessment is positioned after the reported speech. The assessment is relevant to clarify the teller’s positioning vis-à-vis the reported speech; sequentially, it may come prior, after, or embedded within the reported speech—as can be seen in Transcripts 1, 2, and 3, respectively.

The White student is portrayed by M not as a racist (like the White racist athlete) but as not being conscious of racism. The quoted White student is, in a sense, favorably represented—as not liking the White racist athlete and calling him “stupid.” But, at the same time, the quoted White is portrayed as not going far enough, by refusing to label him what he really is in M’s eyes, a racist. In both Transcripts 1 and 2, the Whites are portrayed through quotes as lacking awareness of racism, although in Transcript 1 they are criticized for it, whereas in Transcript 2 the narrator is more reticent. The reported speech of the White students works as an instance of fact construction (Potter, 1996)—of a White myopia to racism on campus.

An opposing viewpoint, expressed by some Whites, is that the charges of racism on campus are exaggerated. The following narrative by a White female student reconstructs a past event in which African American students are portrayed as making something out of nothing—a racist incident out of just a couple of drunken White guys. A summary quote is used to convey a gloss of what the White male students said in contrast to what the African American female students made out of it (lines 7-8 and 18-19).

No. 3 (2 White female students)
1 A: these two guys White males were falling down drunk in the elevator and they
2 happened to get in the elevator with two African American women who were I
3 think pledging a sorority at the time so they had on the African American sorority uniform and as part of the pledge period they weren’t allowed to speak to anyone?
4 so apparently, these drunken idiots probably woulda harassed me
5 6 B: Hhhhh
6 7 A: ( ) and it became a huge racial issue and ( )
8 because he commented on her clothing which I mean in some cases these days
9 turns into a sexual harassment issue if you know somebody
10 B: What'd he say
11 A: it was a year and a half ago?
12 B: um huh
13 A: but I mean these students were- I think they were suspended or something but it
14 seemed really silly to me: that () at the time it just seemed like it
15 shouldn't have- considering the context? I don't think it was
16 B: Right
17 A: I think it was somebody was stupid and drunk and I don't
18 remember there were
19 any you know I suppose overt racist comments but things that
20 them asking her about her uniform and saying something about
21 that sort of thing so I mean but everything turns into an issue

In this story, A uses the contrastive evaluative terms, “blatantly racist” (line 15) and “stupid and drunk” (line 17). Interestingly, these contrastive labels are similar to those of Transcript 2, “racist” and “stupid.” In both cases the African Americans involved see the events as racist, whereas the Whites identify those events as merely stupid. These differences in perception are discursively articulated by the Whites through undermining the African Americans’ charges in their accounts of what happened.

For instance, in Transcript 3, A portrays the African American women as exaggerating by claiming that a major incident, “a huge racial issue” (line 7), was made out of something minor as articulated in the summary quote, “he commented on her clothing” (line 8). This ascription of exaggerating gets reiterated again with a similar summary quote, “things that she inferred about them asking her about her uniform and saying something about her clothing::” (18-19). These descriptive terms, used in juxtaposition to each other to gloss what was said and done, reflect the speaker’s negative evaluation of the event. Such representations of the incident, of course, are neither neutral nor disinterested but display the narrator’s work to undermine the African Americans’ charges.

A initially narrates the incident (lines 1-9), but her interlocutor, B, asks for more specifics, “What’d he say” (line 10). B’s query here suggests that a direct quote, rather than a summary quote, can more adequately convey “what really happened” for a controversial event like a racist slur. A direct quote can represent (or construct) the specifics of what was said and done from the the participants’ point of view in the reported situation. The summary quote, “he commented on her clothing,” not only glosses the event but also implies the narrator’s choice of words rather than those of the characters involved. Speaker A cannot report what was actually said, as evidenced by her account (line 11), so she repeats the gist and consequences of the incident as well as her assessment of it (lines 13-20).

By way of summary of this section, these three narratives reconstruct symbolic acts of racism (e.g., written notes and verbal slurs) committed by Whites against African Americans. As seen in Transcripts 1 and 2, the narrators see the incidents as racist and portray the Whites involved as failing to respond appropriately. The White narrator in Transcript 3 portrays the African Americans as exaggerating the character of the incident and further denies that it is racist.

In these three transcripts of stories of alleged racism, we see that the reported speech fits within the narrative format to convey the crucial acts of what happened in the incident. Much of what we tell stories about is “things we do with words.” More basically, reported speech, even as a summary quote, allows the narrator to reconstruct more specifics of the event, so the crucial acts of the story lend themselves to presentation via reported speech. The reported speech works to give voice to the actors in the events so as to critically portray their actions.

Perceptions of Stereotypes

Stereotyping is conventionally conceived of in the social sciences by cognitive, perceptual processes. But the awareness of stereotyping also can be discursively portrayed (Billig et al., 1988). African American participants seemed especially aware of the White students’ stereotypes and perceptions of them. Reported speech can be employed as a device to articulate such stereotypes. For instance,

No. 4 (2 African American women)
A: I really liked what one guy was saying
because it was really honest
one of the students he was saying- you know from a White
perspective
I know it was really hard for him and he was being really honest
about how there is an element of surprise when
[When a Black
person says

B: something intelligent

}
A: Something intelligent right?
and a lot of times I feel I felt that since freshman year:: =
B: That's right
A: = you know they hang- I feel sometimes they hang on your every word

Here, Narrator A reports the speech of a White student from the Racism 101 (Lennon & Bagwell, 1988) documentary by directly quoting his words, "an element of surprise." This phrase triggers B's recall such that she can complete A's utterance. Speaker A uses this quote as a comparable instance to her own experiences on campus. Her experience of being seen by Whites in such a stereotypical way gets articulated by an extreme case formulation (Pomerantz, 1986), "they hang on your every word."

The reported speech from the documentary sequentially works as a rationale for the student's own problem telling about being treated as a stereotype. This sequential organization is similar to Transcript 1 in which the narrator quotes a portion of a racist note from the documentary as a prelude to her experiences of a racist incident involving "the same exact letter" (Transcript 1, line 4) as seen in Racism 101. The troublesome reported speech from the video makes relevant the speaker's own telling of troubles.

Even though the reported speech in Transcript 4 negatively stereotypes African Americans, Speaker A favorably portrays the White speaker in a prepositioned evaluation, "it was really honest," and in an embedded evaluation, "it was really hard for him and he was being really honest." So, we do not find an invariant out-group hostility and an in-group allegiance in the participants' evaluations. Some portrayals are more complex; as seen here, and in Transcript 2, out-group members are both favorably and critically assessed.

Thus far, we have seen that participants can resist the derogatory messages of the reported speech by critically evaluating it. The reporting speaker can challenge the veracity of the reported speech in various ways. In the following transcript, C reports the speech of a White student (lines 4-6 and 9-10) and then directly quotes herself as rebutting it (lines 7-8 and 11).

No. 5 (3 African American women)
1 C: a lot of White students feel that if you're Black you are here
2 because of a scholarship or affirmative action.
3 I mean me and another White student talk about this,
4 he say he can look around the room and pick which Blacks are
5 here because of academics and which Blacks are here because of
6 affirmative action by what they say in class
7 and I was like you can't say that but you can say
8 the same thing some of these White students here
9 he was kind of like it's true for some of them but really it's mostly
10 affected by Blacks and every Black here is on a scholarship
11 and I was like Hhh I'm not! you know that type of situation and
12 that's how they
13 feel that if you're Black and you're here at U it's because somebody
14 handout and you don't really deserve it so you're beneath them
15 and if you don't
16 succeed it's your own fault and you was never really inclined to
17 succeed you was
18 just here as a free ride you know and you're supposed to drop out

This reported speech of the White student (lines 4-6 and 9-10) illustrates C's initial general statement of the stereotype, "if you're Black you are here because of a scholarship or affirmative action."

The reported speech (lines 4-11) takes the form of a reported exchange between C and the White student. This exchange is structured in a four-part sequence: (a) a summary quote of the White student's perception of African Americans as products of affirmative action (lines 4-6), (b) to which C directly quotes herself to deny the criticism because it also includes the White students (lines 7-8), (c) the White student is quoted as responding with a stereotypical generalization (lines 9-10), and (d) C quotes herself in rebutting the stereotype through a counterexample (line 11). This reported exchange format allows C to have the final word. C's evaluation gets articulated in her reply to the White student in the reported speech.

Speaker C uses this reported speech to epitomize Whites' stereotypes of African Americans on campus as products of affirmative action. The reported speech becomes relevant as an example to support her prior claim about White students' attitudes (lines 1-2). The reported speech works within a narrative and as evidence in a claim-evidence sequence. On completion of this reported exchange, she returns to her general point about White students' perceptions of African Americans (lines 11-15).

The following transcript contains another instance of a reported exchange in which the reporting speaker rebuts another's stereotype, although here it concerns an African American's stereotype of Whites. The exchange is structured in a similar way: an initial reported speech of another's stereotype (line 2) followed by a direct quote of the reporting
speaker’s rebuttal (lines 4-5, 7). (Background note for Transcript 6: Speaker B, who is White, was a manager of the radio station, and the person quoted is an African American assistant manager at the station.)

No. 6 (2 White women)

1 B: she refused to play a White artist of jazz because
2 she said that White people couldn’t play jazz .
3 and to me that was racism right there and
4 I would say to her if you want us to play Black musicians
5 who are good at modern rock
6 which was our primary format
7 you damn well better well play White jazz artists
8 and what would happen is that alternative music meetings would
9 be where all the
10 Black people went and modern mus- modern rock music would
11 be where all the
12 White people went (. ) and it really became a White against Black

The spoken quotations used in this transcript work to convey the actions of the narrative. In both Transcripts 5 and 6, an out-group member is ascribed as stereotyping through reported speech, and then the narrator directly quotes herself in refuting the stereotype. The teller’s version of events not only can rebut the other but can foreground or focus on the specifics of her response through direct speech.

The narrative form allows the teller to reconstruct the cast of characters and what was said and done, as well as to assess the political-moral significance of the event. The narrator does not let the narrative stand alone; B evaluates the reported speech of the African American assistant manager as “racism” (Transcript 6, line 3). Again, reported speech makes relevant an assessment from the narrator.

Spoken quotation seems to be an especially potent device for challenging not only the propositional content of the quote but also the source. For instance, in the following we see an African American speaker mimicking “sounding White” in doing reported speech (lines 4-5).

No. 7 (African American man and woman)

1 M: it’s like they look at me and go like (mimic a stereotypical White voice)
2 Gee them niggers they just must of gotten in on affirmative action
3 or something like that you know

Here, M uses a summary quote of the prototypical White students’ perception of him as the African American in class (line 5). Again, we see this theme of the African American perception of the White stereotype of African Americans on campus as products of affirmative action (cf. Transcript 5).

Speaker M voices this prototypical White stereotype through what Basso (1979, p. 45) calls a distortion principle in sounding White. This distortion of the quotation works as a commentary on how to hear what is said; specifically, to mock, to ridicule, or to parody and thereby undermine the content of what is being said and its prototypical author (Besnier, 1993; Goffman, 1981; Macaulay, 1987). This mocking practice by African Americans has been identified as “marking” (Mitchell-Kernan, 1986). It reports not only what was said but the way it was said, in order to offer implicit comment [italics added] on the speaker’s background, personality or intent. … The meaning in the message of the marker is signaled and revealed by his/her reproduction of such things as . . . most particularly, paralinguistic mimicry. (Mitchell-Kernan, 1986, p. 176).

In short, the distorted voice or marked prosodic cues works to negatively evaluate the propositional content of the reported speech (Alvarez-Caccamo, 1996).

Comparable to reported speech, speakers also can quote their own thoughts, what has been called, reported thought. In Transcript 7 (lines 2-3), M quotes his thoughts to display the pressures of being the object of a stereotype. The reported thought also works as evidence for his prior proverbial claim, “the weight of the world is on my shoulders” (line 1).

We see this device of reported thought again in Transcript 8. Speaker M ridicules his White classmates’ nonverbal behaviors and reports his own thoughts in response to being seen as “the Black guy in class.”

No. 8 (African American man and woman)

(a continuation of Transcript 7)

7 F: So you never feel individualistic,
8 you also feel as if you’re M the Black guy in class=
9 M: =Yeah exactly
10 F: So everything you do is because you’re Black
11 M: Everytime something regarding race comes up they go like
12 whoosh and I’m in the
corner going like my Go(h)d why(h) you looking at me I’m not the only- I didn’t
13 like die and say I wanted to be a spokesman for my race somewhere
14 ya know if
15 there was an application I didn’t put it in ya know ( ) but they look
16 at you like that
17 and unfortunately there’s very little I can do about that, because
18 I am the only
19 Black in almost all of my classes I’m the only Black person in
20 there

Here, Speaker M narrates the experience of being the only African American
in a class and being looked at by Whites for “the Black point of view.”
Again, M marks the White nonverbal behavior by characterizing their
heads turning as “whoosh” (line 11).

Narrator M uses reported thought in managing this dilemma in a
humorous way but also as something beyond his control. In both Trans-
scripts 7 and 8, the narrator, M, constructs the event of “how Whites see
him” (or, generally, see African Americans in a predominately White
institution) as something over which he has no control.

Narrator M adeptly uses humor and laughter particles to minimize the
situation by playfully exaggerating it, for example, the Whites all turning
their heads to look at him by “whoosh” (line 11) and his denying wanting
to be a spokesman for my race” (lines 13-14). Exaggerating an event for
humorous effect allows the speaker to capture a truth about it—to epitom-
ize an experience.

By way of summary of this section, we saw that reported speech can
discursively portray others’ stereotypes, but perhaps the most interesting
finding was how participants use reported speech to resist or challenge
types. Throughout we have seen how reported speech makes rele-
vant an assessment that allows the reporting speaker to criticize the
stereotype (Transcript 4). We also saw a reported exchange format
that shows the rebuttal of another’s stereotype (Transcripts 5 and 6).
Third, reported speech was used in mimicking or marking the out-group’s
stereotype. This form of reported speech seemed especially artful in
ridiculing not only the propositional content but also the source of the
stereotype (Transcripts 7 and 8). The evaluative comment is implicated
through the speaker’s exaggerated voice quality.

Intergroup Distance

A theme prevalent throughout the discussions is the virtual absence of
social contact between Whites and African Americans outside of class. As
one of the students in the documentary put it, “This is a campus of
segregation for the most part. And I’m not even going to say segregation
in terms of unwanted segregation or unfair segregation; I think it’s more
segregation by choice in terms of the social area” (Racism 101, Transcript,
p. 22). How do today’s students make sense of such intergroup distance,
so-called voluntary segregation?

Participants draw on the reported speech of out-group members as a
way to explain, or criticize, them for this lack of social contact. For
instance, Transcript 9 starts with an attribution of what “White people
say” as a way to give evidence for White students’ attitudes toward
African Americans. This speaker uses a summary quote to explain the
social distance as based on Whites’ purported fear of approaching African
Americans.

No. 9 (3 African American women)
A: a lot of White people- like in the video they were saying that they
don’t even like to talk to Black people because they’re scared that
they might say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing whatever it is

Speaker A generalizes, “a lot of White people,” and then self-repairs to
cite the White speakers “in the video they were saying,” to display how
she knows (Pomerantz, 1984). Again, we see reported speech used as a
form of evidence in a claim-evidence sequence.

Whites are portrayed as not knowing how to act around African
Americans. This supposed fear that White students have of saying or
doing “the wrong thing” is challenged by A’s postpositioned comment,
“whatever it is.” This comment may be heard to cast doubt or display
skepticism about the prior summary quote.

Another case of being skeptical about the reported speech is seen in the
following transcript. Here, A directly quotes a White student from the
documentary (lines 2-3) and then proceeds, in collaboration with B, to
ridicule and challenge this account.

No. 10 (2 African American women)
1 A: It killed me that one of the guys said ( ) he said something like
2 where do you see Black people at you don’t see them on
judge them but at the same time and I always grew up that way but that kinda
comes in conflict when you have people who takes the attitude you know
that I am a Black person ya know and that's part of who I am? and I want that
acknowledged?

In his explanation, B quotes Martin Luther King on the value of being color-blind (lines 5-7) and then contrasts this to the reported thought of ethnic African Americans to express their attitude (lines 9-10). This contrast between the King quote and the ethnic, African American attitude can be heard as a criticism of the latter, given that King is widely regarded as the foremost leader in the civil rights movement. By invoking the words of King, B can use these to countervail against the formulation of the African American ethnic position. This is one of the few cases in which reported speech is used to invoke an authority; the prior transcripts involve utterances of reported speech to criticize or ridicule the reported speaker(s).

In the transcripts examined thus far, most of the reported speech presents critical portraits of out-group members. But there are some instances of in-group members being critically portrayed through their reported speech, for example, as guilty of voluntary segregation. In Transcript 12, A uses a summary quote of other African Americans, criticizing her contact with Whites (lines 3-4) as a way to explain the distance between African Americans and Whites.

No. 12 (3 African American women)
1 A: but it's just the surroundings and the environment and the people I hang with
2 they're for me- even when I do communicate with White people it's like
what are you doing talking with this White person what's wrong with you
4 you’re becoming an oreo or whatever the terminology is
5 B: Oh yeah that happens to me too but I mean it’s weird because . . .
6
Here, A is lamenting the current state of interracial relations on campus. She uses a summary quote of other African Americans’ criticism of her (lines 3-4) to illustrate how group boundaries can be interactionally maintained through speech.

Another instance of reported speech used to articulate the seeming intractable problem of intergroup difference is seen in the following.

No. 13 (Whites: 1 man and 3 women)
1 M: Along those same lines someone said to me a Black girl said to me last year
2 that uhm she hangs out only with Black people because she chooses to
3 she gets along with Black people better than White people
4 and in general she doesn’t like White people
5 and I’ve heard a lot of White people say the same thing about Black people
6 I think in general people hang out with other people who are like them
7 and who have things in common with them
8 and in general there’s a basic background difference between Whites and Blacks
9 and I think people sense that and don’t inter-hang out really

Here, a White man summarizes a quote of what “a Black girl said” (lines 2-4) and then immediately conjoins this with a summary quote of what “a lot of White people say” (line 5). Speaker M uses this reported speech as evidence for his general claim about cultural “difference” to explain this lack of social contact. So, in Transcripts 12 and 13, we see the speaker offering folk-sociological explanations about the state of interracial relations and using reported speech as evidence for these.

DISCUSSION

The main concern of this investigation has been to find out how students talk race by looking at their use of reported speech. These seemingly innocuous conversational practices of reported speech offer an interesting site for understanding participants’ discursive constructions. Reporting another’s, or one’s own, speech works to reconstruct the particular actions of racialized events and one’s assessment of them.

It is important to bear in mind that these conversations occurred after watching the documentary, Racism 101 (Lennon & Bagwell, 1988), and were occasioned by the researcher’s request for participants’ viewpoints. Given these cautions, the discussions did seem naturalistic and resonated with other situated contexts of talking race.

Turning to the issues involving reported speech as a conversational practice, we saw that it can take various forms—a direct quote or a summary quote of an individual or of the group. Direct speech is a powerful way to hold another accountable because it more fully reconstructs the particular speech acts of the event purportedly through the person’s own words. Summary quotes present the teller’s gloss on what happened. For instance, in Transcript 3, after hearing A’s summary quote of an alleged racist incident, the interlocutor asks for a direct quote, “What’d he say,” as a way to better understand just what happened by “hearing” what was said. Another comparison of direct and summary quotes was seen in the “reported exchanges” (Transcripts 5 and 6) in which the reporting speaker initially summarized what her antagonist, an out-group member, said but directly quoted herself in rebuttal. This asymmetry between a summary quote of the other and a direct quote of one’s self has the consequence of underscoring what the teller said and did. Also, the out-group member’s problematic actions are presented initially followed by the teller’s rebutting response.

Reported speech can summarize what an individual said and even what a group or aggregate said (Payne, n.d.). Summary quotes of the group seem especially pertinent for participants to make group-level ascriptions in talking race, for example “I’ve heard a lot of White people say the same thing about Black people” (Transcript 13). Perhaps the most interesting way to summarize a group is through a quote of the prototypical group member. This resource allows the reporting speaker to epitomize the group through their characteristic utterances, for example, “the way the White students reacted was like well I didn’t put it out” (Transcript 1), or a White person to quote, what he takes to be, the prototypical, ethnic
African American view, “I am a Black person ya know and that’s part of who I am? and I want that acknowledged?” (Transcript 11). So, the distinctions Payne (n.d.) draws of summary quotes seem useful for capturing the reported speech of an individual or an aggregate.

Reported speech as a conversational unit fits within larger discourse structures such as narratives and claim-evidence sequences. Within narratives, the reported speech conveys the actions of the story, because much of what we tell stories about is what we and others did with words. For instance, the whole narrative in Transcript 2 is told as a summary quote of a prior conversation. More commonly, the reported speech works to convey crucial actions within the narrative (Transcripts 1, 2, 6). Reported speech, especially direct quotes or prototypical summary quotes, works to vividly portray or highlight the key actions of the narrative.

Another environment in which reported speech can be made relevant is where the speaker quotes a segment from the documentary and then proceeds to tell a story of a comparable incident from the speaker’s own experience (Transcripts 1 and 4). The reported speech from the documentary warrants the reporting speaker’s own narrative.

Many studies have looked at reported speech within narratives, but in my data, reported speech was just as readily found in “claim-evidence sequences” (cf. Baynham, 1996, for reported speech in classroom talk). Reported speech is used to provide the evidence, in the form of a personal example or secondhand account in support of a claim. The claim-evidence format readily allows for making general assertions about interracial conditions.

These various forms that reported speech can take may be seen as conversational resources that speakers can make relevant for invoking voices in reconstructing events. Clearly narratives could be told and claim-evidence sequences made without the use of reported speech. But given that reported speech is used, what is it doing, how does it function? As we have seen, reported speech works as a way of (a) providing evidence (Hill & Irvine, 1993). By quoting another’s words, the teller is purportedly removing his or her own interpretation and “objectively” (Holt, 1996) reporting what another said. Also, invoking another’s utterances is a way to (b) hold the person accountable (Buttny, 1993) or responsible because through the reported speaker’s own words, or summary thereof, the reprehensible action gets recreated through talk. Most of the instances of reported speech quote out-group members to criticize or complain about some troublesome incidents, for example, refusing to admit racism, stereotyping, and so on. Direct reported speech works to (c) involve recipients (Li, 1986; Tannen, 1989) because they are shown, rather than told, what happened through the reported actor’s own words (Stemberg, 1982). Reported speech also allows reporting speakers to (d) distance themselves from the message (Macaulay, 1987) because they position themselves as merely the animators but not the sources of what is being said (Goffman, 1981). In discussing contested topics such as race and racism, this distancing function of reported speech seems especially salient.

Reporting speech is not simply reporting; it is also editorializing—making evaluations or assessments. Reported speech makes relevant, or is made relevant by, an assessment from the reporting speaker. This is the third main point about reported speech as a conversational practice; reported speech is relevantly connected to an assessment. The reported speech does not stand alone. In each and every case of reported speech we find an assessment of some sort. The connection between reported speech and its assessment gets accomplished in various ways: The assessment component can be prepositioned (Transcript 1), postpositioned (Transcript 2), or embedded within (Transcript 6) the reported speech. The interlocutor(s) present may produce assessments or second assessments (Transcript 4). Also, assessment may be done through the exaggerated prosody or voice quality of the reported speaker, that is, as a way to undermine what is being said (Transcript 7). It is in this assessment slot that we see the participants’ contesting, criticizing, or challenging the problematic interracial events reconstructed through the reported speech. This connection between reported speech and assessment fits the above passage from Bakhtin (1981). The assessment component tells interlocutors how to interpret or frame the reported speech; it displays the reporting speaker’s positioning toward the quote. These assessments most explicitly reveal the students’ discursive reasoning in talking race.

In looking at the content of the participants’ reported speech and assessments we move to our second main issue, the discursive construction of interracial realities on campus. Given that most of the reported speech conveyed problematic incidents, the students’ responses largely were to bemoan these and to complain about the dire state of race relations, or to contest them through challenges, rebuttal, or humorous ridicule. One way in which these incidents were contested was by contrasting opposing positions in order to implicitly undermine one of them: an incident as “racist” versus “stupid” (Transcripts 2 and 3), what the Whites said versus what they should have said (Transcript 1), what a White said versus what the 2 African Americans made out of it (Transcript 3), or King’s color-blind society versus the ethnic African American attitude (Transcript 13). Another way to contest an undesirable event was to ridicule it through humorous exaggeration: marking (Mitchell-Kernan, 1986) or parodying (Macaulay, 1987) a White voice (Transcript 7), all the White students’ heads turning as “whoosh” (Transcript 8), or claiming to feel like an “alien” (Transcript 10).

This discursive reasoning in the reported speech sequences provides rich materials for examining the reporting speaker’s portrait of the other
(Basso, 1979). Given that the assessment of the reported speech is largely critical, it is not surprising that so are the portraits of the other. In general, the speech of others across racial lines is presented as insensitive, ignorant, biased, racist, or ridiculous. As we have seen, African Americans portray Whites as unwilling to admit racism, as stereotyping, or as duplicitous in intergroup relations; Whites, on the other hand, portray African Americans as exaggerating racism or as overemphasizing their ethnicity.

Portraits of the other are inherently relational, so in constructing an image of out-group members, an image of in-group members also is (implicitly) being discursively created. The reported speech of African Americans typically positions in-group member(s) as the unjustified recipient of racist actions, for example, receiving racist notes or slurs, being negatively stereotyped, being treated differently in social relations. Indeed, most of the instances of reported speech in this study are uttered by African Americans, reflecting their heightened awareness of racism and interracial contact. Being the victim of an injustice makes one more likely to recall and articulate such incidents. Among Whites, reported speech constructs their actions as ordinary, reasonable, or at worst, “stupid,” but blown out of proportion by African Americans. These findings are consistent with past studies that also show the asymmetry of perception of everyday racism between people of color and Whites (Essed, 1991; Feagin, 1991; Hacker, 1992). The present study adds to this work by highlighting how participants’ talk recreates situated events and therein discursively constructs interracial realities (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Although most of the cases of reported speech portray out-group members in a negative light, there were notable exceptions to this pattern. For instance, there were some positive portrayals of out-group members (e.g., “it was really honest”; Transcript 4), as well as some critical portrayals of in-group members, particularly over voluntary segregation (Transcript 12). The transcripts do not convey a unitary discourse of in-group allegiance and out-group hostility. These data suggest a qualification to the intergroup perspective, which postulates an in-group favoritism and out-group hostility (Tseng et al., 1986). There are multiple discursive positions in which students participate and interactively construct viewpoints through talking race. Indeed, racial attitudes are interactionally tried out, articulated, justified, contested, acquired, or altered through such within-group discussions (Van Dijk, 1987; Wetherall & Potter, 1992).

Using reported speech to contest, to challenge, or to criticize problematic events may be heard to reflect a sense of powerlessness on the part of the students—powerless in the sense of being unable to affect change or improve conditions on campus. Much of the African Americans’ reported speech is used to tell experiences of being the recipient of racism, stereotyping, or being a minority on a predominately White campus. For instance, a student comments on his lack of control, “they look at you like that and unfortunately there’s very little I can do about that, because I am the only Black in almost all of my classes I’m the only Black person in there” (Transcript 8). Even the Whites’ speech reflects a sense of powerlessness. The Whites’ powerlessness is not nearly as pervasive, it is more a sense of a frustration in communicating with African Americans, for example, “one of the biggest problems that people have— that White people have relating to Black people on campus is how to deal with the issue of race” (Transcript 11). From a communication satisfaction perspective (Martin et al., 1994) this implicit sense of powerlessness would be a way of explaining the avoidance of interracial contact on campus.

Through talking race and being a witness to the wrongs of everyday racism, participants can challenge current practices through narrating problematic events and holding others accountable (at least within the group). Power is a multifaceted concept and is central to discussions of race and racism (Sanjek, 1994). When we listen to students talking race, we can hear “the power of the spoken word.” Discursive speech is that discourse practice that allows us to draw on others’, or our own, words of strength and resistance. Or, especially in these data, reported speech makes others’ words visible as a way to reconstruct events and to criticize them. So reported speech can be seen to display a performative power for participants by building conversational alliances and counteralliances (Alvarez-Caccano, 1996). It is only through the conversational practices of discussing the troublesome features of interracial contact that we learn how to better recognize and criticize such problematic communication.

NOTES

1. The notion of race, and the particular racial categories, White or African American, are taken as sociohistorical constructions rather than fixed, physiological designations (Hacker, 1992, chap. 1: Miles, 1989; Sanjek, 1994). The concept of race reflects sociohistorical and political conditions, not a scientific grouping of peoples.

   The group-identity labels, African American and White, are used because these seem to reflect the current preferred usage among these respective peoples.


REFERENCES


Strangers in a Strange Land
Interaction Management on Internet Relay Chat

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This article examines a set of interactions (logs) taken from the form of computer-mediated communication known as Internet Relay Chat (IRC). The authors were particularly concerned with the interaction management strategies adopted by the participants in the logs during the opening and closing phases of the interactions to develop interpersonal relationships and communicate socioemotional content, as illustrated by their attempts to initiate and/or close interactions with others using the medium. The article compares these strategies and their structure with those proposed for face-to-face (FTF) interactions and proposes an explanatory framework for the interaction management of opening and closing phases in IRC. It is suggested that interaction management in these phases of IRC logs is similar to that in casual group FTF interaction in terms of the general functions of the strategies used, but that the content, structure, and ordering of the strategies are subject to adaptation.

In the past 25 years, a great deal of patterned, routine, and convention-based behavior has been found in social interaction, across a range of media types. A useful umbrella term used here for such regulatory features is interaction management, although labels such as discourse management and regulation of interaction (Burgoon, Buller, & Woodall, 1995; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974) also have been used. Taken as a whole, this body of research suggests that the management of interactions is an important aspect of interpersonal interaction and communication of socioemotional content generally. It is unclear, however, to what extent this holds true for the more recently developed medium of computer-mediated communication (CMC).

Early studies of CMC (e.g., Kiesler, Seigel, & McGuire, 1984) argued that text-only CMC systems (the ones considered here) filter out most

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