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4 Personhood, Positioning, and Cultural Pragmatics: American Dignity in Cross-Cultural Perspective

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This essay contends that the communication of personhood is a transitory, sometimes durable interactional accomplishment that creatively invokes cultural meaning systems. A cultural pragmatic perspective that integrates communicational and cultural dynamics is discussed, developed through the concept of positioning, and demonstrated with several instances of interactive talk. The demonstration yields some of the interactional workings of one cultural model of personhood that is prominent in America today, a deeply structured system of values referred to here as a code of dignity. This coding of communication is comparatively analyzed, thus drawing attention to its tendency to supplant others. Implications of the approach and findings are discussed.

Every social interaction presupposes and creatively invokes culture, intelligible forms of action, and identity, with these further implicating social relations, institutions, and attendant feelings. Interacting through symbolic forms carries with it claims, tacitly or consciously, about the kind(s)

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of person one (and other) is, how one is (currently being) related to others, and what feelings are to be associated with this social arrangement. Whether one immediately understands, or agrees with, the persons, relations, and feelings being shaped through the symbolic action, once caught up in it, one will find oneself a subject in it, variously (often institutionally) related through it, and feeling from "good" to "bad" to neutral about it. In spite of one's intentions to convey such messages, one will find that in effect he or she will have done so (Carbaugh, in press-a, in press-b; Goffman, 1967).

In this essay, I want to explore just how the above process works. Through discussing the communication of personhood, I want to develop the idea that, through primarily linguistic interaction, participants publicly constitute social standings (not necessarily "statuses") as moral agents in society. I build on the assumptions that various forms and meanings of personhood are discursively constructed and that these discursive constructions are historically grounded, culturally distinct, socially negotiated, and individually applied (Carbaugh, 1990b, 1990c). The general argument is that personhood is a transitory, sometimes durable interactional accomplishment that creatively implicates cultural meaning systems.

Several recent studies suggest, I think, more general problems to which the essay responds. One involves the difficulty of hearing "macronotions"—such as society, class, ethnicity, institutions, culture—within "microprocesses." The essay attempts to show that the micro-macro distinction or concentric, or hierarchical, models are less helpful than another, one that unveils in interactional processes the radiants of, for example, culture. From this view, it is not, then, that culture, or society, or class is merely "environmental" to, or a logical context for, interaction, although each may be that to some degree, but, moreover, that such things are immanent in the actual patterning of the actual interactions themselves (Sapir, 1931). As much has been demonstrated in studies of racial discrimination in South Africa (Chick, 1990), gender (West & Zimmerman, 1991) and cultural identity generally (Wieder & Pratt, 1990). Race, gender, culture, and so on are not just abstract concepts but feature in the actual patterning of interactive processes, with the study of this process being of the utmost importance. The approach taken here is indebted to authors such as Goffman (1967) and Geertz (1973; see also Shweder, 1992). Yet it seeks, moreover, as others have, to integrate the interactionist focus of the former with the more heavily cultural focus of the latter. Specifically, it proposes an integrative view of macro- and microprocesses, to hear, in situated interactions, culture at work (e.g., Basso, 1990; Katriel, 1991; Varenne, 1977).

Similar lines of work address a second related problem: Can one hear in interaction notions previously deemed "psychological" or "mental"? Several authors have proposed relocating mental notions, moving them from behind, in the brain or head, or somehow underlying human action, into concrete

discursive practices. Rather than moving notions (e.g., culture) from the outside into discourse, as above, the problem here is moving notions from the inside (e.g., personality) out. Of special concern here has been the refiguring of concepts such as "self" and "person," along with notions like personality and attitude and so on beyond exclusively mindful matters, to discursive practices. Philosophical (Harré, 1983, 1991a, 1991b), anthropological (Lutz, 1988), discursive psychological (Billig, 1987, 1991; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and social constructionist (Gergen, 1985) works have advanced discourse-based theories of these various, previously held to be mental, concerns. Such studies enrich communication theory as they suggest, similar to ethnomethodology, how concepts about mentation do not just refer to mindful matters but also consist in socially based, objectively identifiable, interactional dynamics. In these studies, however, one sometimes finds more by way of abstract statements about discourse, or persons as discoursed, and less by way of attention to actual moments of mutually intelligible, everyday social interaction. While usefully advanced is a view of the rhetoric of psychology, or the communication of sociology, often missing is the interactional meaningfulness of such accomplishments to participants, the so-called native view. Further, and related to the above, if interaction is used as data (this being rather rare for some), it is treated more as a messenger about particular persons, consciousness, or intimate relations, or more as an objective "technology of talk," and less as a resource within a sociocultural system. My contention is that an allied yet distinct approach is warranted, an approach that renders the cultural features of concrete interaction audible and that helps us hear in communicative practices not just selves but the forming of communal persons, and not just interactive dynamics, but the expression of systems of cultural meanings (see Moerman, 1988, and the special symposium on ethnography and conversation analysis in *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 1991).

CULTURAL PRAGMATICS

Some scholars and lines of research have been searching for ways to hear communal processes in dialogical action. Many such efforts are erected around one central premise: Ways of speaking are inextricably tied to ways of being. The accent on "speaking" draws attention to intelligible forms of acting, including means nonverbal and linguistic, while the accent on "identity" highlights ways of being (kinds of personas, or beliefs about identities with one's unique self being one such kind), including social relations, institutions, and feelings. One of the earliest modern writings on the topic is Bakhtin's demonstration of ways that, for example, speech genres are caught up in systems of joint action, enabling some actions and persons while constraining

others, amplifying some ideas while muting others, thus invoking in joint actions ideological systems. Bakhtin refers to this process as "cultural communication" (Bakhtin, 1986). Although not drawing explicitly on Bakhtin, Philipsen (1987) has noted similar dynamics and made a plea for explorations of "cultural communication" especially through forms such as rituals, myths, and social dramas that create and realize models for "membering" and "remembering." Similarly, Eriksen (1991) has shown how ethnic identities are contextually managed through forms of interaction in cultural contexts. Fitch (1991) has interpreted how the symbol of "mother" gets culturally coded into everyday communicative forms in Colombia, a coding that helps extricate the cultural shaping of the identity from other patterns that are more general. A closely related and well-established body of work in the coordinated management of meaning seeks to integrate cultural dimensions, interactive episodes, and identity (Cronen & Pearce, 1991-1992).

The current study adopts a similar approach as it seeks to integrate both pragmatics, socially situated symbolic interaction, and its cultural dimensions, the systems of meanings that are presupposed for and implicated by that very interaction. The approach draws attention to the linguistic and momentary character of meaning-making in any society (thus pragmatic) and the conceptual and actional forms for persons, relations, and feelings that are both immanent in and a necessary condition for that symbolic interaction to be, indeed, richly meaningful (thus cultural).

The cultural dimension suggests focusing upon the twin interactional accomplishments of coherence and community: What are the boundaries of indigenous coherence being created with this pragmatic action, and for what community is this conceptual and actional form intelligible? Note that the questions are mute on the criterion of approval or agreeableness. Agreement of opinion is not a requisite condition for coherence. Communities differently position members, as do families, and are sometimes subsequently laden with disapproval and conflict (e.g., Carbaugh, 1992). Questions of (de)legitimacy thus are central, as are the processes in which such questions are raised and addressed. In such times, the discourse being used creates for the involved participants some common ideas about "its" (and "others'") places within these essentially contestable social interactions. A cultural study thus attempts to explicate the larger discursive system of coherence in which interactional positions for social persons and their relations, even if contested, are more deeply meaningful. One method of analysis, and explanation, involves attending carefully to the cultural structuring of personhood in interactional processes. Attending to cultural features and meanings of person(s) enables one eventually to posit the common premises, symbolic categories, dimensions, and domains of meanings that are getting coded (about, e.g., identity) in those particular forms of action (Carbaugh, 1988a, 1988b, 1990a; Carbaugh & Hastings, 1992).

COMMUNICATING PERSON, SELF, INDIVIDUAL: A DESCRIPTIVE THEORY

Claims about personhood need to be distinguished, analytically, from related concerns about self and individual. Where "person" highlights culturally located agents-in-society, "self" highlights a more phenomenological locus of experience (awareness or consciousness) and "individual" a more biologically based member of humankind (Harris, 1989). These distinctions roughly parallel Harré's treatments of social being, personal being, and physical being, with Harré's concept of $self_2$ drawing attention to the former, and his $self_1$ deliberately straddling all three (see Harré, 1979, 1983, 1991a, 1991b). While explorations of each are necessary and productive, the former is the main focus in what follows (and, arguably, provides the socioculturally efficacious, discursive sense of all three).

Following upon earlier work (Carbaugh, 1988a, 1988b, 1988c; Harris, 1989), I use the concept "personhood" to summarize how agents-in-society are constituted in the cultural practices of social interaction. Based on ethnographic evidence, I presume that every communication system, through its situated symbolic practices, constructs two reciprocally related kinds of participant role: (a) cultural notion(s) of person, for example, an ethnically, nationally, gendered, or class identity (Geertz, 1976, p. 225; Hymes, 1961, p. 335), and (b) a system of social kinds that elaborates the basic cultural notion(s). When using language, individuals creatively invoke (or are heard to invoke) some features of their social and cultural roles, with each being possibly positioned relative to the other (this is demonstrated below). This suggests the following: For the construction of cultural models of person and the various social kinds, there are various means and meanings of communication available, with each being distinctive in its rituals of entry, performance, evaluation, and departure. In the United States, for example, if one performs "being a mother," or "a wife," one symbolizes a distinctive social position, but, moreover, one has symbolically invoked a system of social practices, relations, and properties. Doing "mother," in other words, does not just invoke a social standing but invokes many (e.g., father, husband, daughter, son). In so acting, or being identified as so acting, a terminological or symbol system (of persons, relations, actions) is implicated that radiates cultural dimensions of sex, gender, and age status as well as domains of meanings including domestic and possibly political, economic, and religious messages. Attending to the interactional accomplishment of social identities, one "can show how members of various social kinds are reckoned to have differing agentive capacities and hence to be unlike each other as authors of actions" (Harris, 1989, p. 604).

Through analyses of social interaction, the social kinds (if one starts there) may be eventually linked to cultural models, with the latter identifying the

larger symbolic boundaries of coherence in being such a person. Possibly highlighted then are social positions of the person (e.g., as mother), cultural notions of what person is, can, and should be (e.g., as an African or American). For example, whether it is intelligible to be a disembodied spirit, as some Native Americans believe, depends both upon the cultural notions that render such a being commonly meaningful and upon the social kinds for whom such a being is accessible and performable. The communication of personhood, then, invites questions about a system of discursive practices, tacking among social kinds and cultural notions, with elements of each being played with or against the other(s). Exploring the cultural pragmatics of agents-in-society may help unveil how social kinds and cultural notions of being get interactively expressed and related. And, further, through comparative study, cultural distinctiveness and cross-cultural generalities for conceiving, evaluating, and acting personhood may be suggested (see Fitch, 1991).

Person as a Discursive Activity: Positioning

The primary site in which common sense is made of persons-in-society is *discursive activity*, expressive practices that make available particular positions for participants to take up and address (and with which to hear others taking up and addressing; see Davies & Harré, 1990; Harré & Van Langenhove, 1991; Hollway, 1984; Tannen, 1990). Such activity demonstrates the various interactional ways in which cultural agents, and social kinds, are interactionally (de)legitimated. Through such activities, there is an intricate and ever-present social playing of positions, each with its moral messages of rights and duties from unquestioned cultural beliefs of "person" generally, to the interactional accomplishment of the more specific social kinds and their interrelations. In short, each discursive utterance simultaneously positions, within sociocultural discourses, its producer as well as the recipients of the messages. This focus on discursive activities of positioning helps draw attention to the interactive dynamics of identities within utterances and events, and the ways these vary systematically by contexts, among specific participants, on particular occasions, with each such utterance event locating and relating persons through particular speech sequences and genres (Bahktin, 1986; Hymes, 1972; Levinson, 1989).

Persons as Variously Located with Various Qualities

What is the nature of the positions being interactionally foregrounded, muted, or elided? The primary site, or place, of person positions varies by the culturally shaped, discursive context. Various loci of such agentive activity however can be usefully identified, with each at different times becoming the primary site of positioning activity. A fundamental, and most general, locus is whether persons are present or not and addressed as (if) present within the interaction or not. If focusing on those present, interaction can fluctuate

variously among a speaker, addressee, or audience focus. If focusing on the not-present, persons can be addressed *as if* present, or not. Regarding qualities, person positions can be deemed material to immaterial, passive to active, resource endowed or deprived, and so on. For example, one may discuss a mutual friend, "Steve is a superb rock climber," attributing qualities to a nonpresent material other (thus attempting to identify the nonpresent other) and in so doing say something about oneself as present speaker (one who would evaluate, compliment), while also positioning the present recipient of one's message (one allegedly interested in Steve and/or rock climbing and/or speaker's evaluation). As a second example, consider the witches (men and women) of Salem, Massachusetts, who sometimes address "fairies" and other nonmaterial yet "present" persons. In such discourse, an agent-in-society is addressed, in the immediate present, although this agent is not a material presence (Mahoney, 1993).

Such examples make apparent the need for distinctions between persons as agents-in-society whether present or not, the focus of interaction or not, material or not, and so on. Further distinctions are required among agents, whether a site of self (or a site of consciousness) and/or an individual (a material member of a kind), a point to which I return in concluding. Similarly, various forms of ancestor worship and voices, as well as the treatment of sacred animals (e.g., cows in India, alligators in Tallensi), demonstrate how the status of person as an agentive discourse in society need not necessarily coincide with a material presence or even a site of human consciousness (e.g., an unconscious person, the "brain dead"). While more could be retrieved from the examples (speakers' claims to moral positions and so on), these serve to illustrate various locations and qualities of persons through discursive activities (see also Levinson, 1989, esp. pp. 168-174).

Conversational Moves and Further Dimensions of Agentive Action

Personhood is interactionally managed through various moves and dimensions of discourse, each of which may occur simultaneously. Sometimes a position or social standing is explicitly claimed, "I'm your teacher," a basic first order action that could be called an *explication*. Such involves an explicit *avowal* of a speaker to being a particular kind of person or an *attribution* about another (present or nonpresent); for example, "Keith is brilliant." Each such explication of a position, moreover, implicates others. To avow one position (e.g., as teacher) is to implicate another for one's recipients (e.g., as students). To attribute a position to another (e.g., as excellent teacher) is to implicate others for self as utterer of that message (e.g., as gracious supplicant). Thus much positioning work is done more subtly, through intonation and other means of inviting inferences about the positions of one or an other (see Gumperz, 1982). For this dimension of action, one could discuss *implications*

of personhood. If one explicitly takes up one position, one thus implies things about it as well as addresses an other, or one set of positions, rather than others. An example captures some of the complexities in this dynamic. Upon returning home one evening, I found my spouse attempting to open the door to the house. I asked, "Did you try the key?" and was met with "looks that could kill." The example shows the extent to which social positions are so implicated. Through questioning the obvious, I was trying to implicate one position for myself (e.g., as good-natured problem solver, joker) but had another nonverbally implicated for me by my spouse (e.g., an unwanted critic of her intellectual capacities), mainly because I had implicated her as a particular kind of person (e.g., mentally challenged, problem creator). In a sense, there are "shadows" of identities, or implicated agent positions, in all discursive practices, to borrow Goodwin's (1990) descriptive term. Each such configuration draws participants into particular social positions and relates them accordingly. The implications are often very richly textured as they convey messages through various forms of talk, about persons, social relations, institutions, and the domains and dimensions of the social activity itself (Carbaugh, 1989).

Further moves or dimensions of agentive interaction take the form of extensive explications or implications of social positions. I refer to these as *elaborations* simply as a way to describe the degree to which a particular bid for agentive standing is developed over time and is perhaps being negotiated (explicitly or implicitly).

As further claims are being made about the nature of persons, and how they are related, the moral grounding for each is established or shaken. For example, a particular social standing may be explicitly avowed by one, or attributed to another, with further interaction negotiating the validity of this standing, "My, yes, he is a solid scholar." As a result, we can eventually hear, if subsequently validated, the *social ratification* of a person as such an agent. If, on the other hand, a particular standing is avowed, or attributed, and subsequent talk (and symbolic action) ignores that standing or explicitly denies it (e.g., "that's not the way a professor acts"), we can claim the momentary *rejection* of that person as such an agent and perhaps infer another for him or her.

Some Derivations and Uses of the Dimensions: Issues of Voice

The above conversational moves and dimensions of agentive action help ground certain kinds of claims. For one, the dimensions can help identify some agentive positions as explicated, immaterial, and socially ratified, such as in some seances, while others are implicated, present, and denied, such as the blue-collar women below when they discuss unemployment. On occasions, when a speaker explicates, or implicates, and elaborates him- or herself as a kind of person, and if further interaction ratifies that speaker as such, we could claim the speaker indeed had a socially efficacious *voice*; that is, the speaker was able to

speak, spoke, was heard, and socially validated as such. All conditions would be necessary for the constitution of voice. On the other side, as one attempts to explicate, or implicate, and elaborate a social standing (for one and/or others), and if there is no subsequent uptake or ratification by others of one so positioned, or if one is explicitly rejected, then one's voice, as such, has been refused, or denied, or another devalued voice has been attributed (if implicitly)—and so on.

Contested positions are also usefully disentangled as one traces the discursive processes through which each such position is explicated, implicated, and/or elaborated as well as the processes by which each becomes or is partly ratified or rejected by others. Current environmental debates provide a rich location for such studies. "Developers" and "environmentalists" often elaborate one position while rejecting another, with the motives and meanings of each grounding the discursive contest (Carbaugh, 1992).

The dimensions also help unravel contradictory conversational messages, for example, as a speaker explicates one social position while implicating another. During a recent gathering of academics at Oxford, where status games run deep, one participant said, with somewhat of a delightful irony: "I like to be modest about all of the things I've done. When I go places to speak, it annoys me when they introduce me by referring to . . ." and then listed several prominent accomplishments. The dimensions help unravel some of the complexity by pointing to an asynchrony between the speaker explicitly avowed (e.g., a self-professed preference for modesty, a propensity for understatement) and the one being implicated through the avowal (e.g., one somewhat vain, filled with pride by listing accomplishments). An ironic position is created that explicates modesty while implicating arrogance. Similar dynamics occur in communication systems generally, as in some prominent scenes of U.S. culture where individuality is explicated while collectivity is implicated (Carbaugh, 1988c) or in one organizational setting where workers explicate themes of "equality" yet elaborately implicate dramatic inequities among social positions (Carbaugh, 1988b).

Dimensions of Social Relations

As agents are discursively located and interactionally negotiated, fundamental dimensions of meaning about social life are being activated. These often involve assessments regarding the design and distribution of material (e.g., economic) and symbolic (e.g., knowledge) resources. Whether and how these are discursively designed leads to various conceptions and evaluations of social relations from *equal* (i.e., the equitable distribution of resources) to *unequal* (i.e., the resource endowed and the resource deprived). Such assessments are invoked through social interaction as various positions and their differences in rights and duties are morally conceived and socially arranged. A second general dimension of assessment, sometimes coterminous with the first, involves the degree to which discursive positions are construed as *close*, psychologically intimate, or

more *distant*. When the former dimension is highlighted in discourse, issues turn on equal and unequal distribution of resources, relations of power, and issues of control surface. When the latter dimension is highlighted in discourse, issues turn on the closeness or distance of participants, and relations of intimacy (high degree of closeness) or solidarity (relatively high distance, yet equal) surface. Taken together, all combinations are interactionally possible, though not always salient, such as relations of equality and closeness (e.g., some forms of spousal discourse), equality and distance (e.g., solidarity), inequality and closeness (e.g., parent-child), and inequality and distance (e.g., CEO-assembly line worker). Through discursive activities, not only are social positions, capacities, and qualities constituted but social relations and institutions as well. As Goffman (1967) put it: "The line maintained by and for a person during contact with others tends to be of a legitimate institutionalized kind" (p. 7).

The loci and qualities of agents, as well as the dimensions of agentive interaction and social relations, are especially useful in contexts where social standings are being contested (Carbaugh, 1988b, 1992). Further, conflicts and confusion between diverse cultural agents, such as Russians and Americans, show how deeply discourse runs into cultural meaning systems (Carbaugh, in press-a, in press-b; Chick, 1990; Philipsen, in press; Wieder & Pratt, 1990). To demonstrate some of the cultural foundations of these processes, and the ways in which these interact, I take a descriptive turn first to a popular, cultural discourse in which the person, as "American," is established (the term in quotation marks being a popularly used geographic and national designator). This makes it easier to identify and compare its cultural shape relative to Others. I conclude, then, by discussing some of the implications of the general approach and analysis.

AN AMERICAN CODING OF DIGNITY

As people in America speak and listen in public, at times they create a common position for themselves as Americans. This cultural discourse is partly constructed through these key cultural symbols (in quotes) and their associated premises: The person is "an individual," with "a self," that vilifies "social roles, institutions, and society." Drawing on previous analyses of an American televised "talk show," I will describe and interpret instances of public talk that makes creative uses of each of these cultural features of personhood (Carbaugh, 1988c).

The Person as "an Individual": Translating Social Differences into Human Commonality

Consider the following social interactions. The first involves responses to a question about whether women should be permitted, or required, to engage

in combat duty while performing military service. Speakers A and B are audience members. Speaker C is a feminist author. D is the president of the National Organization of Women.

Extract 1 (Carbaugh, 1988c, p. 22)

1) A: Nobody wants to do it [combat duty] but by the same
2) token I think that a woman ain't made to do some of
3) the things a man can do.
4) Audience: I agree . . .
5) B: Some women are actually
6) C: some women are stronger than
7) men.
8) B: That's true.
9) Audience: (Applause)
10) D: Some individuals are stronger than some individuals.

A second example arose after a discussion in which a few women with working-class, unemployed spouses implicitly blamed "the feminists" for crowding others, especially unemployed men, out of the job market. E is an audience member who described her situation to F, a panelist and female director of the Democratic National Committee. G is the host of the program, Phil Donahue.

Extract 2 (Carbaugh, 1988c, p. 23)

11) E: Three years unemployed. No compensation, no nothin'.
12) F: That's what's happening throughout this country.
13) Especially in the industrial heartland. And it's
14) what's happening to families like yours. It is
15) happening to men and women. You and I are not opposed
16) to each other, we are not on different sides. We are
17) on the same side of individuals who are trying to
18) make it.
. . .
19) G: If a man and a woman are both out of work and there
20) is one job opening and they are both equally
21) qualified, who should get it [the job]?
22) Audience: The man. (Applause)

These interactions pose and respond to a fundamental question: How shall participants be characterized with regard to present issues? More specifically, through what terms shall agents be described as the topics of military duty and unemployment are discussed?

Note first the two positionings of persons being proposed here. One involves the explication of social difference through gendered positions,

making "men" and "women" the principal agents in the action. In both extracts, this motivates a second position, an explication of common humanity through an inclusive symbol whereby the principal agent becomes an "individual." Note further that, by characterizing the issues through a gendered discourse, speakers position themselves as ones who orient to the difference (with regard to the present issue). This often is heard as if one proposes, acknowledges, promotes, and so on, the difference, and overlooks the commonality. Likewise, by characterizing the issues with "individuals," speakers position themselves as ones who orient to commonality, thereby promoting it, and thus overlooking the gendered differences. Therefore positions are being explicated as the gendered terms of difference ("men" and "women") are played against another term of commonality ("the individual"). At the same time, other positions are being implicated for the utterer as one who would orient to (uphold, or criticize, or negotiate) the explicated position(s). Thus the dynamics of positioning occur in two directions. One involves the playing of each explicated position (of difference and commonality) against the other. The second dynamic involves what each such position immediately implicates for the person who is speaking it. Is she or he at this moment ratifying, rejecting, negotiating the—gendered or common humanity—position? In short, the dynamic involves a play between the familiar cultural positions being discussed and the immediate interactional position being implicated for one who would so position persons.

Note how the play between the explicated and implicated positions occurs within a general vacillating cultural form. That is, the interactional process moves in a "back-and-forth," spiraling sequence, tacking between the positions of difference and commonality, with each position motivating the other, as speakers with each in turn become positioned by the one, then the other. Through this form, social positions of difference and common identification are being expressed.

If we listen a bit more closely to the content of the gendered positions being mentioned here, we find each is being built on specific premises of difference. For example, in lines 1-3 about combat duty, explicated is a gender-based, biological difference in physical capacity that is used to justify differences in moral rights (as men and women) and institutional duties (as soldiers in the military). Similarly, in extract 2, regarding unemployment, some characterized the "unemployed" as "husbands," leading in line 22 to applause for the familial difference (between men-husbands and women-wives) as a justification for awarding "the man" a job (presumably as primary wage earner in the family). This positioning of gender difference (re-)creates a sense of "man" as physically stronger and the primary wage earner and thus implicates for "woman" a position that is physically weaker and less than, or other than, the primary age earner. Further, this positioning process brings rather close to the interactional surface a domain of family life with "man's" moral place being measured economically and "woman's" being measured relationally (as wife and emotional supporter of the unemployed husband).

This gendered discourse about the military, employment, and family life is speaking about nonpresent and/or hypothetical persons. In so doing, it casts characters with regard to these issues along gender lines. Yet, as it does, it implicates for the present speakers an identity as one who would so position, that is, as one who would publicly acknowledge, address, and perhaps promote differences of gender. Thus, as speakers invoke a gendered position in their talk, they position themselves (and talk about the issue) within a culturally based and historically grounded system of personas, social relations, and institutions. As the discourse is being spoken, others are being invited to speak and hear the issues in this way, each gender being distinctive (e.g., men are men and women are women), based upon differing capacities (e.g., physically), and with differing responsibilities (e.g., militarily and familially). Structuring discourse this way thus implicates one's self (and others) as ones who in some way come into contact with, "live" (or should live, or should contest living) at least on some occasions this difference, as a basic condition of social life. Spoken as such, distinctive positions for "man" and "woman" are being created and are thus made basic determinants of social positions, relations (e.g., soldier, wife, husband), and institutions (e.g., armed services, family).

Yet, this discourse of difference, like many others concerning race, class, and so on, amplifies the sounds of social stratification (along gender lines) and divisiveness (e.g., disagreements over the nature, value, and application of the gendered difference). Through the vacillating form, this precipitates challenges to this kind of discourse itself, and its speakers, and generates counterproposals that explicate yet another type of position. For example, through the comment on lines 5-7, one belief of difference was challenged as the audience member and the feminist author co-constructed the premise: "Some women are actually . . . stronger than men." This saying invites a characterization of persons in terms other than social difference. Similarly, the gendered answer (line 22) to Donahue's question (lines 19-21) while applauded or ratified by many was not unanimously endorsed. The discourse of difference thus stratified participants not only through the vision of social life it created (i.e., by drawing distinctions between men and women) but also because the immediate social reaction to this discourse was itself somewhat divisive (see, e.g., lines 4, 8). Thus, as discourse explicates gender difference, it implicates differences of opinion about that difference and thus precipitates a site of contest, not necessarily between men and women but between the different evaluations, from ratifications to rejections, of the value and use of gendered discourse. Created in the face(s) of this difference is a felt need for, and expression of, a position of commonality.

After the challenge on lines 5-8, the president of the National Organization of Women (NOW) said: "Some individuals are stronger than some individuals." Similarly, on lines 16-18, the female director of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) said: "We are on the same side of individuals who are

trying to make it." In both of these examples, the language shifts from a gendered positioning to another that does not deny, nor does it elaborate, gender but repositions the debate onto a different agentive plane, to a more inclusive cultural space, a common denominator of persons, where all are deemed "individuals." The language the director of the DNC uses is particularly interesting in this regard, because it artfully builds such a space (see lines 12-18). She prepares the position carefully through inclusive and centralizing geographic terms ("this country" and "the industrial heartland"), familial images ("families like yours"), conjunctive phrasing ("men and women"), explicit negations of difference ("not opposed to each other," "not on different sides"), pronominal shifting (from "you and I" to "we"), with the eventual "we" as "individuals" (line 16) functioning as a potently inclusive anaphoric reference that entitles all of the above, previously quoted phrases.

The explicating of persons as "we-individuals" thus carries a possible arbitral tone through the assertion of an alleged (and perhaps unquestionable here?) universalizing cultural premise of common humanity: Each person and every people (men and women, blacks and whites, rich and poor, and so on) are all at base individuals. Elsewhere I have referred to this potent symbol and premise as part of a political code because it derives prominently from the U.S. Constitution. Part of its cultural force is as an "equivocal affirmative" in that its common use at once affirms, or asserts, what is both radically distinctive to each person (as a uniquely particular self) and what is universal to all persons (as an organismic embodiment of humankind). In an "individual" breath, dual beliefs in a distinctive humanness of each and a common humanity for all are affirmed (Carbaugh, 1988c, pp. 21-39 ff.). These beliefs are elaborated through statements such as (with the words in quotations being explicated cultural terms): "We-individuals" as citizens in "this country" are "not opposed to each other" but "on the same side." Such statements implicate cultural beliefs about the person and its associated political institutions (e.g., the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights) and thus potently foreground, if equivocally, commonalities in person capacities and duties (as "individual" citizens). The movement between positions is thus not a mere shift of phrase but the marking of a cultural transition from social identities and institutions of difference to another, a cultural persona of a common humanity, a potent political agent.

I hasten to add that, in the extracts presented here, some tensions are possibly discussable but significantly not taken up. We cannot claim to know exactly of what the phrase "the same side" or those "trying to make it" consists (because this was not explicated). While the cultural and political beliefs just cited provide one possible account of "the same side" (i.e., we-individuals), there are possible others, for example, of women against the patriarchy. In fact, using the principle of the vacillating form, we can expect the sequence to turn yet again back upon itself, as the mentioning of "the same side" precipitates yet an "other side." That such a position is not taken up

attests, I believe, both to the robustness of the cultural position described above and to the difficulty of formulating a position "other" than "individuals who are trying to make it." But, if we were to speculate about possible "other (third?) sides" on this occasion, those brought close to the interactional surface by these speakers are perhaps "Republicans" (for the director of the DNC) or "men" (for the president of NOW), neither being pursued here. Perhaps such a form, so positioned, occasionally plays itself out.

Note a related consequence of the above vacillating cultural form. Because of its solidified positioning of an "only one" (self) or an "everyone" (we-individuals), discourse of social group difference is difficult to elaborate and sustain. Explications of identities that build images of difference based upon gender or ethnicity or class or social groupings, rather than those based upon commonality (or an everyone-or-only-one kind of talk), seem eventually to succumb to "inclusive" language. In this case, especially domestic discourses of difference from unemployed family members get quickly talked over and supplanted by another that is more inclusive and politically based. U.S. public discourse, political language, consumerism, and some parts of television, being in a sense numbers driven—here's a little something for everyone—easily assumes an inclusive political position as a common denominator and mutes, or quickly refracts, some of the more particular group-based and serious discourses of difference. Such a vacillating tendency between positions of commonality and difference seems somewhat general and almost inevitable, although its nature and use needs are understood, so that voices worthy of being elaborated, whether of difference or commonality, are indeed heard (see Scollon & Scollon, 1981).

The "Individual" Has a "Self": From Relational Constraints to Independence

The one cultural premise stated above, that each person is unique, is elaborated with cultural terms of "self" and its closely associated terms, as one who has "rights" and makes "choices." Use of these terms and their meanings position participants as uniquely independent sites of personal reflectiveness. What is deemed worthy of elaborate expression, from the vantage point of this system, is the highly particular, idiosyncratically distinct world of the one (Carbaugh, 1988c, pp. 41-86 ff.).

Consider the following story told by a nun about the effects of an "anger clinic" that she attended.

Extract 3: (Carbaugh, 1988c, pp. 69-70)

23) Nun: Before that [the clinic] I was a people pleaser. I
24) grew up being a people pleaser. I'm fourth in the family
25) and that made a lot of difference. The only way I could

26) get along is really by pleasing my parents all the time.
27) I learned I don't have to please anybody else, I can
28) please my self. And once I became really convinced I can
29) please my self, I don't have to do what you're telling
30) me, then I became free and I was able to tell them,
31) "hey, I don't want to do that!"
. . .
32) Donahue: Thanks a lot sister . . .
33) Audience: (Applause)

In lines 23-26, the nun is narrating a phase of life in which she is positioned solely within a relationship in which her primary task was to work for others, as both a "people pleaser" and "fourth in the family." So positioned, duties to others overshadowed senses of her self. In lines 27-29, she repositions her story through "self," relocating her as one who now is not solely a constrained relation ("people pleaser") but a "self" who is "free" from such constraint and, further, she is able to say so (line 31).

Stories such as this one again show a vacillating form of positioning, yet here the movement is not from positions of difference to commonality, as above (although there are similarities), but from an explicit, constraining relatedness to an extricable, uniquely independent site of reflectiveness and expressiveness. Her story tells us why she went to an anger clinic: to learn to extricate her being from obligatory constraints and thus to discover her self. Forms such as this one, not without a deep structural link to the *Odyssey,* demonstrate a voyage in which there is positional movement from one caught up in a historical system of constraining relations to the charting of new territory in which one's uniqueness and independence are discovered.

Of what does this renewed position consist? Consider the following metaphorical utterances (each in fact was made but not within the following sequence).

Extract 4: (Carbaugh, 1988c, p. 79)

34) I filled myself up with drugs.
35) To be angry with a stranger or someone who only knows
36) you a little bit is to reveal a piece of your self
37) that you don't want that other person to see.
38) Now that I have a part-time job, I feel much more secure
39) within myself.
40) The problem is that we never really learn who we are
41) before we give ourselves away to somebody in marriage.

As is demonstrated here, the resources of "self" are material (the body, its parts, and what they contain, e.g., "drugs"), symbolic (e.g., information "revealed," feelings of "security"), or both material and symbolic (e.g.,

something "given" to another "in marriage"). From this position, all such resources (including one's physical capacities, thoughts, feelings, consciousness) are conceived as within a contained body, with a necessary and deeper awareness of these resources becoming a motive for the journey of "self" (Carbaugh, 1988c, pp. 77-84).

Given a discursive form like this one, in which the relationally constrained person (social deixis) and the independent self (personal deixis) are played against one another, the task of "self" becomes the shaping of a position, a site of extricable oneness, in which personal uniqueness of resources and freedom from past constraints can become realized and expressed.

The "Self" Vilifies "Social Roles" (Institutions, History): The Renunciation of Sites of Restraint

As "self" becomes positioned in discourse, it runs rather uneasily into other positions that are institutionally constrained and/or historically grounded. These positions are identified variously as "social roles," the "society," "history," or "this country." Specific examples include "husband" or "wife," or any such term that implicates duties to another, or "worker" and "soldier," or any such term that implicates institutional ("stereotypical") constraints on one's actions. The nun's comments above are partly constructed in this way with the roles of "child" and "people pleaser" explicating the constraints on action that hampered "self" (not to mention being a "nun"). Extracts 1 and 2 likewise show how the duties or expectations of constraining positions, as "man"/"woman," are played against another, the freer "individual." Positioning in this way consists in an agonistic form of discourse in which a site of enslavement is identified, such as "social role," or "society," and is subsequently vilified and renounced, because such positions constrain "self." This motivates a repositioning of person onto the preferred, freer plane of self. The form thus again plays the culturally solidified positions of constraint and difference against its more liberating senses of "self" (Carbaugh, 1988b, pp. 87-107 ff., 1988-1989).

Consider the following utterance, made by a woman during a discussion of gender roles:

Extract 5: (Carbaugh, 1988c, p. 100)

42) While we're talking about men and women, if people would
43) just concentrate on themselves, and their goals, and
44) being individuals. Society says that you have to earn
45) money to be of any value. I feel that that's very
46) ingrained in men right now. That is what women are
47) fighting. I feel that I am fighting that right now
48) myself.

The form of this utterance is agonistic, or polemical; it plays two positions for persons, one against the other, while preferring the one over the other. In particular, the playing of the position goes this way: the terms, "men" and "women" (42, 46), and "society" (44), identify historically grounded, socially differentiated, institutionally bounded notions of being; so positioned, one's place is said to be duty-ridden, predicating actions here as a "have to" (44); it is deemed a cultural rut, enslaving, or "ingrained" (46); and, because such positions are duty-ridden and enslaving, they must be fought (47). The preferred position from which, and for which, the fighting is done requires and prefers "concentration" on "self" (43, 48) and "being individuals" (44).

In folk terms of the preferred position of the person, "If we could just be ourselves, and stop trying to be something else, we all would be better off." Put in terms of folk forms for action that are associated with the position, "If we could just sit down and talk it out, we all [each of us] would be better off." Such positions and forms of action seek to shed one restraining position, the common sense of which includes institutional and historically based identities (e.g., men, women, the unemployed, blacks), in favor of a freer other, the "self." Or so they say in some American scenes.[1]

Coding Dignity over Honor

The above symbols, forms, and premises of positioning can be summarized as a coding of personhood, a symbolizing of the person through particular symbols, forms, and their meanings. Treating this discursive position as a deeply coded one is an effort to cast more generally the beliefs and values immanent in this kind of discursive action. Following prior work about similar discursive activities, I call the code a code of dignity (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1974; Carbaugh, 1985; see especially Philipsen, in press).

When a coding of dignity is occurring through terms like *individual* and *self,* a model for the person is being presupposed and implicated, preferred and promoted. One cluster of values relates to indigenous conceptions of the person and thus I refer to them as an ontological dimension of the code. These values support the cultural notion of personhood described above and thus figure prominently in the coding of the person as such: the *intrinsic worth* of each person, the ability to recognize and support individuals as holding some socially redeemable value, even if this is difficult at first to notice; *self-consciousness*, or self-awareness, or personal reflectiveness, the ability to ascertain who one is and is not, what one can and cannot do, to know one's necessities, abilities, capacities, and limits, independent of, as well as within, one's typical roles; *uniqueness*, to know how one's necessities, abilities, and capacities differ from others'; *sincerity*, or authenticity, or honesty, to be forthcoming and expressive about oneself, to coalesce one's outer actions with one's inner thoughts and feelings.

The above clustering of values of person are associated with and overlap one another. This other clustering of values adds a pragmatic dimension to

the code and thus refers to valued means of sociation, or preferred ways of relating person, so conceived, with others. The basic social principle is *equality*—to ensure persons have inalienable rights to being and acting and (equal) opportunities to make choices, and to conduct evaluations, if necessary, on the basis of standardized criteria (applied to each equally). Favored actions include *cooperative negotiation*—saying who one is and what one strives toward, to ably hear who another is and what he or she strives toward, and to conduct action with both in view; *validation of personal differences*, acknowledging through cooperative conduct the unique qualities of each person; *flexibility*, being willing to change one's sense of oneself, others, one's relationship with others, one's habits of action, and so on (e.g., "to grow") as a result of cooperative conduct.

In the above extracts, all of these values for persons, sociation, and pragmatic action are appealed to. Note, however, the exigencies for this coding of the person. What precipitates the coding of dignity are discourses in which different, often stratified positions and domains are being explicated or implicated (e.g., gender and family or the military, race, and education). These alternate social positions bring into discourse a coding based not upon personal uniqueness but upon institutional and historical precedence, a positioning of honor. Philipsen (in press) has elaborated the code of honor, with its attendant emphasis on political connections, historical precedence, magnanimity, loyalty, piety. From the vantage point of a code of dignity, the positions of honor are often heard as relationally constrained or stereotypically obliged. Such a hearing presses the code of dignity into service. This is nicely exemplified above as women discussed, through a version of the honor code, "unemployed" men and the "man's" need of a job to support the family, but were responded to in another code that emphasized equal standings while muting the gendered and familial divisions of labor. Thus the vacillating forms in use here suggest deeply different systems of values about what person, relations, and pragmatic action is (and should be). Displayed therefore is not just differences in the positioning of the immediate persons but deeper differences between ways of culturally coding social interaction, persons, and life itself.

How the Code of Dignity Hides Its Cultural Features and Forms

There is an irony built into the above discourse of dignity. It consists of a general dynamic: the common meanings made when coding conversation this way are highly individualized and liberating, while the forms and moral status of those very meanings are largely collectivized and constraining. Put differently, discursively coding the person in terms of dignity amplifies meanings of individual and self while muting the common cultural premises and forms that make those very meanings possible (Carbaugh, 1988c, pp. 28-33, 57-59, 84-86, 109-112 ff., 1988-1989).

For each feature—each symbol, form, and premise—of the code of dignity discussed above, we can formulate a statement that must be practically necessary for the discursive action to take the shape it does. For each, the meaning the form promotes (i.e., individualized persons and actions) silences the form of those meanings (i.e., collectivized persons and actions). Consider the following summary of the ways the coding of dignity works:

a. the cultural construction of individuality,
b. the collective celebration of the unique self,
c. the communal rejection of group-based roles and identities.

For the first two, the common meanings of, for example, individual boundedness and uniqueness hide the connecting forms of action (the cultural and collective) that are required for their promotion and realization. Similarly, in the third, the overt meanings, such of obligation or conformity to a group, or audience, are renounced, just as the group conforms in being ones who so obediently renounce. In this way, each feature of the code both grants through its cultural contents, yet takes away through its cultural forms, the conditions of its making. Bateson, of course, reminded us that being agents-in-society is inherently double binding, and here we have demonstrated in discursive practices just how this is so.

One possible danger of this coding to which I now turn—there are others—is its unreflective application, especially in intercultural contexts. It is sometimes naively used to assert or to replicate its own presumably universalizing sense: that is, that all people are at base individuals, or constructable as such. This is especially troublesome in multicultural contexts such as some courtrooms and classrooms, where the coding of dignity confronts deeply different others, whose codes for being operate quite differently.

Coding Dignity in Cross-Cultural Perspective: Personhood and Politeness

Larry Wieder and Steven Pratt (1990) have discussed a psychology classroom in America's heartland that was convened on the topic of race and ethnic relations. The professor of the class had asked the students to get together in groups to discuss their own cultural heritages. For students tutored in the code of dignity, this presented no problem. One's unique background could be put into a disclosive form of action, thus positioning that person as an able discussant. For others, especially for some native (Osage) people, this was not permissible. To position as a native first of all required a relational assessment of the situation, leading to the culturally salient condition of being with tribal members previously unknown to them. If Osage wanted to display the native identity under this condition, they must orient to the cultural rule of modesty: Do not sound more knowledgeable than other group members,

especially when discussing matters of the tribe's heritage. Under this condition, the most knowledgeable natives produced appropriately vacuous comments, ostensibly about their cultural heritage, saying, for example, "I don't know, what do you think?" Ironically, such statements explicated (but implicated much more deeply) to present natives true membership as a native, while those natives voluble on the topic explicated, in effect, nonmembership as a native (although at the same time aligning them with the position being presupposed and valued by their professor). The complexity in the situation runs deep, as those natives highly disclosive on the topic displayed, in the special sense introduced above, some position of dignity, while simultaneously dishonoring another, of their tribe.

Many other cultural positions and their other-than-dignity workings could be described, ranging from the positioning of persons as sites of transindividual consciousness as is the case in the Russian *dusa* or soul (Carbaugh, in press-a, in press-b; Wierzbicka, 1989), as dispersable particles and substances as is the case among some Hindi speakers (Marriott, 1976), as well as other positions that are astrally projectable, among many others (see the reviews in Carbaugh, 1988c, pp. 15-19, 112-119; Shweder & Bourne, 1984). Each such cultural agent, so acted and conceived, provides a radically alternate conception of persons, social relations, emotions, and actions. Such dynamics run deeply into many discourses and cultural worlds, even into aspects of Western worlds where parasocial positions are at work (Caughey, 1984). Further, there no doubt are other general ways of culturally coding positions than the ones of dignity and honor discussed above.

Of special interest with regard to intercultural dynamics are differences in what is preferred as "positive face" among various peoples, especially the nature and value of likeness or difference among persons. Ronald and Suzanne Scollon (1981), building on politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978), have described how Athapaskans prefer positioning with cultural others on the basis of deference (thus asserting and assuming difference), while Anglos position with cultural others on the basis of solidarity (thus asserting and assuming similarity). They note how assertions of solidarity hold a kind of logical and often cultural power over others, as when the code of dignity presumes a common humanity for all (e.g., basically as individuals who can and should speak their mind). Coding persons and actions this way can lead easily to supplanting others' faces, those for whom real differences are presumed and preferred (see also Chick, 1990). The extent to which oral and literate discourse positions persons with culturally distinctive faces and the extent to which the coding of dignity supplants others—perhaps even in academic theories (see Barnlund, 1979), face-to-face interaction (Liberman, 1990), and upon mediated occasions (Carbaugh, in press-b)—needs to be understood. Each such discursive activity activates cultural positions, and how this is so warrants our serious attention (see Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 13-15). We can and must better understand the cultural pragmatics that

are at play, for such dynamics, especially in the New Europe, increasingly animate the stages of our multicultural world.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Throughout the above discussion, I have used the concepts of personhood and cultural agent rather interchangeably. I have attempted not to become too committed to either one. My purpose has been to begin by granting equal status to a diverse range of cultural positions, from those humanly embodied (a more familiar sense of personhood) to others that are not necessarily embodied in human organisms (other cultural agents). Examples of the latter include sacred crocodiles among the Tallensi that are considered to be persons because they "combine the human spiritual aspects with a living body" (La Fontaine, 1985, p. 127), the witch's "fairies" mentioned earlier that are not necessarily embodied at all, or still others for whom a human body is insufficient for granting the status of "person," although still presumably holding some social position (La Fontaine, 1985, p. 131). Some of these notions risk sounding rather fanciful or farcical because they challenge deeply held positionings of "person" in which the human body contains the site of conscious activity. This is a strong and pervasive belief about persons and cultural agents, but it is no less cultural in its form and meaning because of that.

For purposes of reflecting upon one's own cultural ways, and for better theorizing, it would behoove us to distinguish the qualities of claims we are attributing to a discursive position and whether these consist (a) in a socially explicated, implicated, and ratified being (a person, or agent-in-society); (b) in a phenomenal site of consciousness, awareness, or reflectiveness (a self); and/or (c) in an organismic entity (an individual member of humankind or some other species). The distinctions are important because they help disentangle the array of cross-cultural data being accumulated about personhood and discursive practices, such as those mentioned above. The questions here, of course, are not whether, for example, a disembodied consciousness is "real" but whether and to what degree this kind of agent is coded, explicated, elaborated, and ratified (or renounced) in a discursive scene or system.

Furthermore, the distinctions help cut into the sources of some public disputes that are very lively, at least in some corners. For example, many environmental discourses revolve precisely around the cultural status granted certain agents such as owls, plants, valleys, animals, and so on. Current U.S. vice-president Albert Gore has been criticized for granting "butterflies" the same status as "people." The issue, so presented, draws attention to the "butterfly" as a cultural agent-in-society and suggests asking whether, and to what degree, this agent resembles other agents (especially "people") in terms of its social standing. If a "California valley" is a "legal person," as a famous

court case declared, then what about "owls," "butterflies," and so on. Environmental debates are notable sites for alternate positionings of persons, places, animals, plants, and so on and warrant our careful study.

With regard to other court cases, the abortion debate rests heavily upon the question of what a "constitutional person" is. What status, if any, does (and should) a "result of pregnancy" have as a cultural agent? From the vantage point of legal discourse? Moral, domestic, political, and religious discourses? What various positions of agents and persons are being created in this debate? Of what does each consist? Similarly, what of surrogate parenting? What standing does a woman donor of an egg have regarding the result of the egg's use? Is she more like a "man" who donates sperm or a "woman" who gives birth? Or is there another position needed? If a "child" is a fully fledged constitutional "person," able to exercise a legal proceeding (e.g., divorce from his or her parents), what effect does this have on other institutions of social interaction such as the family, school, or law enforcement agencies? On another front, some feminist discourse rests firmly on the explication, and assertion, that female consciousness, or feminine consciousness, is inherently transindividual, thus positioning a kind of cultural agent (but not necessarily a biological type?) as distinct from a traditional male or masculine one (Gilligan, 1982; Tannen, 1990; but see Goodwin, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1991). These practical issues and cultural matters would repay careful scrutiny through cultural pragmatic studies of personhood and positioning.

Like the concept of personhood, the concept of positioning adopted here needs further development (see especially Levinson, 1989). From the vantage point of cultural pragmatics, I attempted to draw attention to these aspects of the positioning of persons: (a) to the cultural premises, symbols, forms, and meanings of positioning, and their sometimes unreflective use, especially in intercultural encounters that involve an American coding of dignity; (b) to discursive activity, especially to situated social interactions as the site of person—social and cultural—positions, treating discourse as if prior to positions, and not the other way around (I shall return to this shortly); (c) to the forms of interaction through which positioning gets done. Particularly noteworthy was the way one positioning of the person occurs as a response to another. This suggests a perhaps general cyclical or spiraling form of positioning that inheres within a relationally based, vacillating process. Some resulting questions are these: What is the nature and function of this position, so discursively produced? Yet further, to what prior position, or role, or social or cultural agent, is this one responding? Is this one knowingly responding to another at all? What does the play between or among these positions produce? (d) Positioning thus consists in a *system* of terms (pronouns, nouns, conjunctions, and so on), forms, and their meanings, including a consideration of oppositional positions (and their terms, forms, and meanings). Considering one term (e.g., a pronoun or a noun) therefore is deemed insufficient for locating the cultural positioning of persons in conversation. (e) Some

positions suggest a code, or a deep structuring of beliefs and values that is immanent in various forms, terms, and meanings of persons and actions.

Different types of analyses are suggested with the vocabulary introduced earlier, specifically a move-by-move account of explications, implications (avowed and addressed), elaborations, ratifications, rejections, and so on. Thus what I present here is only one working-through of the general possibilities, with a special focus on agentive qualities, codes, and vacillating forms. Others are, of course, invited to develop these and other features of the framework as well as the discursive activities that amplify (or mute) them. Of particular interest is a system for interpreting implications, with messages about persons, relations, institutions, emotions, and discourse itself (Carbaugh, 1989, 1990b) being already of some value in, for example, discursive studies of self (Harré, 1991a, 1991b), with other such studies being recommended (Varenne, 1990). Other investigators have used the system to describe students' statements about their forms of communicative action (Baxter & Goldsmith, 1990), to explore relations between oral and literate forms in a classroom (Gnatek, 1992), to examine various forms of actions in a new age community (Mahoney, 1993), to comparatively assess discourses of two cultural communities (Philipsen, in press), and to further explore the discursive bases some Americans use to build a renunciative voice (Scollon, 1992).

I mentioned that cultural pragmatic studies of positioning take discourse as primary, then ask of it what positioning of persons is getting done here? Or, put differently, cultural pragmatic studies hypothesize that social and cultural kinds of positioning are occurring in discourse, then collect a corpus to discover if this is indeed the case and, if so, how so, with what consequences? One begins, then, not by assuming a typology of persons, relations, or actions as something prior to discursive action but by assuming that activities of positioning indeed take place in discourse and then investigating the nature of that activity in that discourse through a conceptual framework. What positions are getting discoursed here? What are their social locations, qualities, processes of ratification (or refusal)? What social relations are being constructed in these activities? The framework suggests ways to pose such problems and a vocabulary with which to address them. Beginning with discourse, and questions about it, helps construct a communication theory as well as a communicative explanation of positioning. One therefore does not begin with blank grids of content to fill but with parameters of positioning along which to look and listen (see Zeitlyn, in press). Investigating this way enables one to describe a particular shaping of discursive activity and eventually to posit a system of culturally potent terms and forms of expression that accounts for persons being conceived, and conducted, as such. The resulting argument is that the discursive activity, as a culturally shaped form of communication, provides one account for persons and agents, on some occasion, being what they are.

It is only appropriate that an essay on positioning conclude with a bit of authorial self-explication. I cannot escape the position I address. I cannot

either, nor could anyone, address all of its implications. Yet there are two features of my authored position I want to mention in ending, feeling they are not yet elaborated quite enough. Each is a voice of criticism that I have discussed in detail elsewhere (Carbaugh, 1990a). One has to do with my discourse as a user and critic of academic theory. In particular, I have attempted to adapt and develop a communication theory that explores sociocultural notions of the person. My main objective has been to integrate a cultural dimension into interactional studies, believing as I do that meanings of identity, positioning, personality, and the like, as well as concerns more macro (e.g., culture, race, ethnicity), are at base at least partly the result of everyday communicative practices. By exploring such concerns this way, we can better grasp how the moment-to-moment living through of everyday practices constructs positions for ourselves, others, and relations among us. Yet, also, I adopt and advocate the approach and its related others not only for the study of personhood and positioning but indeed for the study of all social and even physical matters, such as studies of time (e.g., Brockmeier, 1992) and space (e.g., Carbaugh, 1992). Part of my effort has been constructed, then, from an academic position with the development of academic concerns, theories, and methods in mind. Further, I draw attention to my discourse as an exercise in cultural criticism. I deem it essential that popular American discourse includes a reflective ability, an ability to see itself as a cultural artifact, an ability that I have tried here and elsewhere to develop. My tactic has been to select typical everyday discursive practices and describe some of what they interactively produce. I also have tried to loosen their grip on *us* by discussing some implicit ironies and paradoxes in their use. Thus this essay is caught in the vacillating movement described above including reactions to prominent theoretical *and* cultural concerns. My main proposal in these academic and cultural matters is then to conceive of persons more as transitory interactional accomplishments that creatively implicate, produce, and develop cultural meaning systems (which are themselves thus cross-culturally variable). My main emphasis has been treatments of identity that rely exclusively on immutable psychological or biological endowments (with these being, from the vantage point of my proposal, the result of a potent discursive heritage). People are not everywhere positioned the same, nor are they anywhere positioned the same in all social contexts. Needless to say, I believe our cultural practices, and our theories too, should recognize as much and move themselves along as well.

NOTE

1. That "self" is no less a historical and institutional practice tends to escape the common cultural sense. Further, that each individual's self-concept is in its way subject to constant explication, elaboration, and ratification/rejection also escapes the common cultural sense. This

is the result of cultural conceptions of persons based more upon biology and psychology and less upon social and cultural communicative processes. Some of the ironies and dynamics of this belief are taken up below and elsewhere (Carbaugh, 1988c).

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