Building iterativity into positioning analysis:

A practice-based approach to small stories and self

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1. Introduction

Within biographical research on narrative and identities, there has been a
longstanding tradition of investigating how socioculturally available –so called capital
D- discourses (variously called 'meta-narratives', 'master-narratives', 'scenarios',
etc.) are drawn upon by tellers in order to make sense of themselves over time and of
the defining events that have happened to them (e.g. see Kerby 1991). The concept of
positioning has informed numerous studies of narrative and identity with this focus
and Davies and Harré's (1990) paper remains seminal in this respect. In it and in
subsequent work, *positioning* was introduced as an alternative to cognitive and non-
discursive concepts such as roles, norms and intentions. It set out to capture 'clusters
of rights and duties to perform certain actions' and features of an individual's 'moral
landscape' (Harré and Moghaddam 2003: 4) which are assigned, re-assigned, and
dynamically negotiated in conversations. It is clear from this that individuals are not
just assigned positions deterministically and based only on personal characteristics, be
they positive or negative, but they may more or less ephemerally 'seize', negotiate
and resist any such positions in local conversations. Despite the stated interest in the
interpersonal and interactional aspects of people's positioning of one another, the
approach by Harré and colleagues has often been queried for employing made-up

examples of narratives rather than actual data from interactional contexts. This goes hand in hand with another commonly voiced critique (e.g. Bamberg & Korobov 2006, Potter & Wetherell 1998) that positions ultimately do not escape a mentalist status of a sort of non-discursive moral order.

An alternative –more interactional- conceptualization of positioning has emerged from language and social interaction-focused narrative analyses that have put forth the fluidity and contingency of positioning processes through details intrinsic to an interaction. Their guiding assumption has been that positions do not have an off-the-shelf life, grounded in e.g. master narratives and pre-positioning, i.e. deterministically designating, a subject when realized in discourse. Instead, they are interactively and agentively selected, resisted and revisited by speakers in social interactions. Importantly, these processes of selection and negotiation are more or less indirectly marked or cued in interaction by specific devices that can be subsequently used as an analytical platform for the exploration of speakers' identities (for examples, see Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008, Deppermann 2007, Georgakopoulou 2007, Lucius-Hoene and Deppermannn 2000; Wortham 2000).

One of the most influential moves towards such an interactional approach to positioning is traceable to Bamberg's (1997) three analytically separable yet interrelated levels. The first level (Level 1) explores positioning in the tale-world, i.e. it examines how the narrator as character is positioned vis-à-vis other characters in the world of the story. It therefore involves the representation of characters (e.g. descriptions, evaluations) and event sequences and the ways in which these relate to social categories. The second level looks at positioning as an interactional

accomplishment between the narrator as teller in the here-and-now and their

interlocutors. Finally, Level 3 seeks to provide an answer to the question of 'who the

teller's self is as a more or less stable entity holding above and beyond the current

storytelling situation. With these three levels, Bamberg's aim has been ground self

and identity in the interactive engagement of storytelling. His focus is on how people

use stories as interactional resources to convey a sense of who they are and not on

how stories represent identities.

Bamberg's model has been taken up in numerous studies of interview and

conversational stories and this is arguably the outcome of two major points of

resonance built in it. First, it fruitfully draws upon the widely held inextricability of

the two worlds involved in any storytelling: that of the *told* world (level 1) and of the

telling world, i.e. the here-and-now of storytelling (level 2). Tellers are assumed to

position themselves in both these worlds and to draw strategically on the

opportunities for self-presentation afforded by their deictic separation/separability on

the one hand and, on the other hand, by the possibilities for the teller to stress and

maximize their interconnections. Secondly, the three levels of positioning offer a

tangible and easy to operationalize analytical apparatus for linking local telling roles

with larger social identities.[1]

One of the ongoing points of discussion regarding Bamberg's influential approach

involves how the analyst arrives at the teller's sense of self as pertaining beyond the

local telling context (Level 3). An open question in this respect concerns the

analytical status of master discourses/narratives. How does level 3 differ from

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[1] Bamberg & Georgakopoulou (2008), for instance, offer five discreet analytical steps for the scrutiny of the levels of positioning in strips of narrative interactional data.

previous accounts of positioning that have been criticized as static and as posing the existence and significance of master discourses a priori of actual storytelling data? How can master discourses be located through fine-grained analysis of specific storytelling instances? How far can we go with the analysis of a strip of data without needing to invoke the relevance of the concepts of positioning and identities, which can be characterized as second order concepts and therefore as not being immediately part of a close up textual/interactional analysis? (cf. Rampton 2010). These are questions with no fast and easy answers: establishing links between language choices and social processes, including identities, has not proven straightforward in any strands of discourse and narrative analysis. Positioning has in fact exemplified the tension between the task of accounting for the details of interactions and not losing sight of extra-situational resources and processes (e.g. larger social roles and identities beyond the here-and-now).

This article subscribes to the view that an analysis of positioning should be able to tell us not just about the fleetingness but also about the stability of storytellers' positions. It should contribute to the question of what tellers signal as more or less stable and consistent aspects of their self and biography. In Bamberg's (2010) terms, the analysis should be committed to tackling the pressing overarching dilemmas that the storytellers themselves are also faced with. These involve issues of continuity, i.e. having a stable sense of self over time, in the face of change; issues of uniqueness and conformity, that is, whether it is possible to consider oneself as unique in the face of being the same as every other person; and issues of agency, the extent to which a teller is at liberty to create positions for themselves as opposed to being constrained by how others position them (112).

The present discussion will attempt to contribute to these issues by proposing a practice-based approach to positioning in narrative that highlights the importance of *iterativity* processes both at the methodological and the analytical level. This will necessitate a shift from an emphasis on this story to an emphasis on this type of story and its conventional associations with the local context in which it occurs. Attention to issues of regularity and sequential patterning in interactions runs through many different strands of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics: from the conversation-analytic question of 'why this utterance here?' which dictates attention to the local occasioning and the sequential implicativeness of an utterance to the corpus linguistic pursuit of collocations. In this case, I am drawing on the resonance of this quest for systematicity in the verbal and sequential choices in storytelling. However, I am going beyond the here-and-now storytelling event to the trajectory and circulation of a story in different environments as well as to the recurrence of a specific kind of story in similar social settings. Iterativity remains under-explored in studies of narrative, which tend to base their observations on single interviews (cf. on this point, Riessman 2008). At the same time, within sociolinguistics, exploring processes of solidification of social roles and identities can be characterized as a recent focus. There is increasing recognition, mainly informed by the work of USA-based linguistic anthropologists, such as Agha (2007), Bauman and Briggs (e.g. 1990, Briggs 1998), to mention just few, that going beyond single events allows analysts to tap into enduring social processes, including the formation of recogniseable social roles. So far, such roles have mostly been documented on the basis of their connections with speech styles (e.g. chapters in Eckert & Rickford 2001) and not with individuals' biographical trajectories, as those are charted in storytelling (but see Johnstone 2009,

Wortham 2006 for exceptions). The focus has also been on repeated enactments of social roles, e.g. explicit formulations and characterizations (e.g. Georgakopoulou 2008, Wortham 2006). The aim of this article is to advance this line of inquiry by linking positioning processes with specific types of stories and types of social settings.

1.1. Linguistic ethnography as a way of capturing iterativity

Capturing iterativity starts with the modes of data selection and the researcher's role in the process. It is essential to access data that allow the analyst to capture not only what is going on in local interactions but also what the participants' socio‑spatial orientations are: who does what and how in local interactions across space and time. It is also important to tap into the tellers' reflections on their narrative practices. The method of linguistic ethnography is particularly well suited to this. Linguistic ethnography brings together a number of different research traditions (e.g. interactional sociolinguistics, discourse analysis) on the basis of a commitment to 'providing a sense of the stability, status and resonance that linguistic forms, rhetorical strategies and semiotic materials have in different social networks beyond the encounter-on-hand; an idea of how and where an encounter fits into longer and broader biographies, institutions and histories; and a sense of the cultural and personal perspectives/experiences that participants bring to interactions and take from them' (Rampton 2007: 5). Linguistic ethnography can be vital for tackling the dilemmas of positioning that we saw above, by allowing the analyst to have a sense of how the uniqueness of the here-and-now storytelling moment figures within the teller's biographical trajectory. It can also provide insights into what master discourses may

be operative in a given storytelling context through the analyst's attention to the participants' sense-making devices both in local interactions and outside of them. As I will show below, a multi-method approach to the collection of data that includes both spontaneously arising narrative interactions and reflexive narratives in e.g. interview contexts, facilitates the inquiry into how widely circulating discourses are engaged with on the ground: what do the participants invoke as relevant and resonant for them, where does this derive from and what possible contestations accompany such enactments? What positionings are available and circulated in the local social network? What is silenced?

2. Data

The data for this chapter come from the study of a London comprehensive school entitled Urban Classroom Culture and Interaction (UCCI, 2005-2008) in which I was involved as part of the ESRC Programme in Identities & Social Action (www.identities.org.uk). [2] The project involved two phases of data collection in two classes of a London comprehensive school, following nine students from year nine and into year ten. The school in question was attended by approx. 1000 students with an extremely diverse population. The aim of the project was to study, through a focus on interactions, what kinds of identities the students constructed for themselves and others in their daily lives at school. Following up on previous studies of London schools (Rampton 2006), we were particularly interested in how the students' discursively constructed engagement with new media impinged on and shaped their identities at school. In the course of the project, the following data were collected:

- systematic ethnographic observations recorded in a field diary;

[2] The project team comprised Ben Rampton (Director), Roxy Harris, Alexandra Georgakopoulou, Constant Leung, Caroline Dover and Lauren Small.

- 180 hours of radio-mic recordings of interactions in class and in the playground from 9 focal students (5 female, 4 male, 14 years old when the project started) who were from a range of ethnicities and varied greatly in their academic performances;

- 10 hours of research interviews with the focal students;

- playback sessions with the focal students with selected key‑excerpts from the radio-mic data;

- supplementary documentation covering Year 9-10 demographics and school performance, staff and parent handbooks, lesson handouts, etc.;

- a Teachers' project with focus group interviews, questionnaires and playback sessions.

3. Iterativity within a practice-based model to positioning

A practice-based approach to positioning departs from the assumption that language performs specific actions in specific environments and is also part of other social practices, shaping and being shaped by them. At the root of this dense contextualization lies the multiplicity of all communicative phenomena, including stories. 'Narrative' is pluralized into many genres, interactionally drafted in different contexts (for details, see Georgakopoulou 2007a: ch 2). In previous work (2006, 2007; also see Bamberg 2006, Bamberg & Georgakopoulou 2008), I developed small stories research as a practice-based framework for the analysis of stories and identities. Small stories include a range of discourse activities which were traditionally either under-represented or not viewed as stories within narrative analysis: short (fragmented, open-line) tellings about self and other, of ongoing,

future or shared events, allusions to tellings, deferrals of tellings, etc. Small stories research has highlighted the need for such small stories, be they in conversational or interview contexts, to be included in the remit of narrative and identity analysis as equally worthy data as the life stories which have monopolized the attention of narrative studies.

My approach to identity work within small stories is aimed at uncovering the interconnections amongst three layers of analysis, which I call *ways of telling-sites-tellers*. Ways of telling refer to the communicative how: the socioculturally shaped and more or less conventionalized semiotic, in particular verbal, choices of a discourse activity. Sites refer to the social spaces in which activities take place and capture the conglomerate of situational context factors ranging from physical (e.g. seating) arrangements to mediational tools that the participants may employ. Recent research in sociolinguistics has demonstrated the importance of physical, lived and practiced space for language and social interaction (e.g. Blommaert, Collins & Slembrouck 2005). The emplacement of activities shapes the semiotic resources employed for their accomplishment and, equally, discourse activities constitute a place as an arena for specific social practices. Places come with specific affordances or constraints as well as with normative expectations and valuation scales of what languages, genres, discourse activities etc., are appropriate, how and by whom (idem). With the concept of sites, I have been able to bring into the analysis the under-represented dual focus on social spaces in the here-and-now of the storytelling activities and in the stories' taleworlds.

Finally, the notion of tellers attends to the participants of a communicative activity as complex entities: social actors with social identities, here-and-now communicators with particular in situ roles of participation (cf. *discourse identities*, Zimmerman 1998) and individuals with specific biographies and self-projects. Self-projects consist in the ways in which tellers see themselves over time through the stories they tell. These involve a whole repertoire of embodied and semiotic resources, ranging from 'physical bodies, senses and perception' to 'capacities, habitual practices, likes, dislikes, desires, fears, commitments, social status and category memberships' (Rampton 2007: 3).

My contention is that there is durability and contingency involved in all three layers. This means that the identification of iterativity cannot offer us comprehensive insights into the whole of a teller's self-project but glimpses of aspects of self that in specific stories and contexts are construed as important and relevant for the participants.

3.1 Iterativity in the ways of telling.

As I suggested above, capturing iterativity in the ways of telling necessitates an emphasis on types of stories as recurrent ways of acting and interacting, embedded in recurrent social practices and engendering specific types of expectations about what story is to be told where and by whom. The stories' about-ness, the types of events and experience they narrate, is important in this respect. The relations of a current telling with previous and anticipated tellings are also significant. Above all though, ways of telling capture a story's sequential features and, to do so, they draw significantly on conversation analytic modes (e.g. Jefferson 1978). Sequentiality

includes how stories are methodically introduced into and exited from conversations, what types of action, telling roles and rights they raise for the interlocutors, what modes of interactional management between interlocutors are to be found in them.

To make the above tangible, I will single out *breaking news* as an example of an iterative type of small stories in the data and I will explore the kinds of positioning that it allows through its inter-animations with sites and tellers. I have defined breaking news as small stories of very recent ('yesterday') and/or still happening, evolving ('just now') events that routinely lead to further narrative making with *updates* and/or *projections*. Breaking news were especially frequent within the context of the female students' new media engagements. These included a broad range of discursive (re)constructions of experiences and events in new media environments, ranging from reported interactions on the MSN to text-messages being received and discussed on the spot. New media engagements were a routine phenomenon in the students' peer-talk in the classroom.[3] A survey of the 9 focal students' new media engagements showed that breaking news stories on average represented over half of the engagements (for details, see Georgakopoulou 2013). A female student who I call Nadia was the most prolific student in terms of new media engagements overall and of breaking news that reported some kind of a new media experience (on average, 12 stories a period).

The plot of breaking news is both media-related and media-afforded. The reported events are about good or bad experiences that the tellers have had in new media

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[3] As I have shown elsewhere (2011), media engagements permeated classrooms as an unmarked state of play rather than momentarily (re)defining arrangements within them. I have also discussed in detail (idem) what their implications are for the management of the school day and the relations between teachers and students.

environments, particularly social networking sites, programmes that they have watched on TV, music that they have downloaded from i-tunes, etc. The presence of new technologies can also contribute to the plot: e.g. a text-message can be read aloud as evidence for the events narrated. Breaking news stories serve as prime arenas for the joint drafting of norms of conduct in new media environments, which nonetheless impinge on the participants' everyday lives. This happens in the context of two types of emplotment: *routines* and *transgressions*. Routines report ordinary mediated encounters with characters behaving appropriately (e.g. making contact, being available). In contrast, transgressions report mediated encounters that go wrong and may reveal unwelcome gaps between mediated and non-mediated life experience, as for instance, when characters create online personas that do not correspond with their offline ones, or when they promise contact and they do no make it. Transgressions also routinely report incidents of improprieties in relation to the use of new media (e.g. hacking, stealing people's account details, etc.).

As we will see below, positioning Level 1 in breaking news is premised on characters behaving (in)appropriately within new media environments. In turn, their actions create for the tellers positions of a socially networked and popular character (normally in routines) or of a troubled and victimized character (normally in transgressions). From there on, the interactional management of these taleworld positions (Level 2) is based on the participants co-constructing for the tellers appropriate ways of acting and counter-acting in such scenarios.

Excerpt 1

   1. Nadia: Oh how can yesterday yeah

2.   I was like who is my boo WHO is my boo

3.   (   ) (canine) d-dum

4.   Andy (.) d-dum

5.   Jack (.) d-dum

6.   All of them yeah

7. Shenice: Mm

8. N: All of them (.) a:ll of their screen names yeah? was I'm your boo

9. S: Aah

10. N: All of them (.) I was like (1) ra (1)

11.   I was like (.) what's your screen name about?

12.   it's for you innit? I was like

13. S: ((laughs))

14. N: I was like (2) you do realise there's about [and I put them all in a

       conversation]

15. S: [your face you're like]

16. N: Today yeah (2) I put them all in a conversation together and I wrote hi

17.   everyone started writing hi innit?

18.   yeah (.) and all you see is

19.   >I'm your boo I'm your boo I'm your boo I'm your boo< I'm your boo

20.   in all different kinda writing though (.)

21.   like (.) >capitals not capitals some capitals not capitals< get me

22.   and it was so: funny (.) I was like ((laughs))

23. S: Ra boy

24. N: Urgh man Nee keeps saying that I'm his future wifey

25. S: That's disgusting

13

26. N: No it isn't

27. S: [Who's Knee?]

28. N: Knee as in Knee cap?

29. S: [Yeah (.) who's that?]

30. N: [One boy that lives in] Hampstead

31. S: [(   )]

32. N: [He's funny]No: he usually-

33.   I'll tell him to come see me in Kilburn star

34.   Yeah (.) he's always in Kilburn

35.   Yeah he's like (.) look at this picture of my beautiful (.) future wifey

36.   And he show- (.) he put a picture of me >and I was like< (1)

37.   are you mad a- you have seen me ri:ght?

38.   he's like yea:h >I was like< (.)

39.   Where does the beautiful come into it? ((giggles))

40.   He's like [oo:::::::::h]

41. S: [Don't say that] Nadia

42. N: Just agree with me!

43. S: No:

44. N: Just AGREE!=

45. S: =Okay (.) fine

46. N: Tha:nk you.

The above story is one of 9 thematically affiliated stories told by Nadia in a double

period of Design and Technology. What is typical about the story is how Nadia

positions herself as character and is positioned by other characters within the tale.

Nadia as a character is instrumental in networking and creating occasions for interactions within new media environments (e.g. lines 16-22). This iterative positioning within the taleworld by Nadia is upheld both in the here-and-now of the telling of the stories and in the broader context of her peer-group roles and relations. We can illustrate this with the two characterizations of Nadia as 'future wifey' (line 24) and 'beautiful future wife' (line 35). Of the two, Nadia does not contest the choice of the relational term but the characterization of her as 'beautiful' (lines 39-40). This is an iterative positioning of Nadia as a here-and-now interlocutor vis-à-vis taleworld characterizations of her as 'pretty', 'beautiful', etc. The reaction of Shenice, one of Nadia's 'BFFs '('best friends forever') is also typical (lines 41, 43): the local social network in the here-and-now of the storytelling tends to uphold positive characterizations of Nadia. Studies of self-presentation have shown how the tellers may create a distance between their here-and-now and the there-and-then self strategically: for instance, inserting positive attributes about themselves in the taleworld can be an effective means for positive self-presentation in the here-and-now (e.g. Georgakopoulou 1997). We can assume this kind of positive self-presentation for Nadia too: by self-effacing in the here-and-now and by letting other characters in the taleworld position her positively and her interlocutors uphold those positions, Nadia seems to be diffusing the responsibility in the social field for what may come across as 'bragging'.

Nadia's taleworld positions of popularity, intense networking activity and 'good looks' were corroborated in other data sources too, including the fieldwork notes. Participation in new media sites and ability to operate in them was highly valued by all the different social networks in the school. Our ethnographic observations showed

that in the girls' peer groups, such participation was intimately linked with notions of popularity.[4] Nadia was viewed by her peers as somebody who is 'frequently contacted' (e.g. texted, called, chatted to on MSN) and 'not blanked', particularly by boys. She also enjoyed popularity (as the leading figure of the year's 'popular' group of girls). As I have argued elsewhere (2013), this was partly owed to the leading roles she assumed vis-à-vis new media engagements.[5] New media engagements that facilitated a positioning of a popular and socially networked character were reported in routine breaking news, not in transgressions: it is worth noting that the former made up the majority of the stories that Nadia told. (Two-thirds of her breaking news were routines).[6]

The above pieces of evidence suggest a mutually constitutive relationship between the positions that Nadia interactionally constructs in stories about new media engagements and those e21routinely ascribed to her by the local social network. We can tentatively unpick this relationship as follows: for those who 'hold' them, certain positions, valued in specific social networks, are conducive to creating specific peer-group roles and relations. Put differently, individual biographized (primarily through stories) trajectories can impinge on socialization roles. At the same time, positions

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[4] Our data pre-date Twitter and the Facebook explosion but the notions of new media popularity that we found to be operative in our study are readily compatible with the concepts of followership and the high number of friends on Facebook as indicators of networking esteem.

[5] The fine-grain analysis of Nadia's media engagements showed that Nadia serves as an assessor of other people's media engagements on the basis of e.g. quality of performance (e.g. songs), good knowledge of the sources, competent uses of new media, etc. Her own contributions tend to be positively assessed. Furthermore, she gate-keeps and polices media engagements in cases of teachers trying to join in (for details, see Georgakopoulou 2013).

[6] This fact becomes more significant by comparison. In the case of Habibah, a focal female student who was, after Nadia, the 2nd most prolific in terms of media engagements, transgressions by far exceeded routine breaking news stories. A detailed discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of this chapter (see Georgakopoulou 2013). What is of interest here is how specific iterative emplotment can be conducive to specific kinds of positioning and not others.

within social groupings can also reinforce and feed into the interactional construction of positions in stories.

I will probe more into this relationship by looking into transgressions. Transgressions in the taleworld tend to implicate positions of victimhood and trouble for the teller. They also present a strong element of complication and world-disruption (Herman 2009). How does Nadia navigate such complication, even in the few cases in which she tells such stories? The following excerpts are from a story about Nadia's face-pic having been stolen and put on various sites without her permission. As I have shown in a detailed analysis of what is a lengthy storytelling event that develops with different audiences (Georgakopoulou 2012), Nadia first etsablishes the events and through her different tellings co-constructs their implications for her. In the 1st telling (excerpt 2 below), Nadia has just established that her classmate David was involved in the stealing of her picture.

Excerpt 2, Min 1.47-2.50, Nadia is walking with her classmates to Drama class. Participants: N(adia), D(avid), R(yan)

14 N: But why did you have it?

15 D: stole it ((lowering voice))

16 N: EXACTLY! d'you know how SAD that makes /you

17 R(yan): ( ) what did you steal?

18 N: he stole my picture put it on his phone (.) he's got it (.) now Jo has got it

19 R: yeah so what's wrong with that

20 N: /D'you know how mad my brother will get if he knows=

21 R: =What picture?

22 N: A picture of me I've got sunglasses on ((loud commotion))

23 N: What the fuck man

24 R: (   ) give me the fucking water man give me the fucking water

25 D: (Hugs (.) I'm sorry (   )

26 N: ((mic muffleds as they hug?)) you know ( )

27 D: why?

27 N: Cos everyone keep stealing my picture

28 and putting it on Hi five (.) and putting it on face-pic

29 and putting it on websites (.) and don't know these people (.)

30 and these lot are doing it (.) and then they are supposed to be my bredrins

31 and they fucking do it::

32 AAHH:::::::: YOU LOT MAKE ME MAD YOU'RE SO BLACK.

2nd Telling of the story.

Excerpt 3, Period 7, Drama has begun, Min 9.15-10.20.

1 J(aved): Oi Nadia, who's got your picture (.) you was explaining the story (.)

2 I didn't catch it

3 N(adia) Robert stole my picture

4 he asked me to send it to him I said no

5 so he stole it on his computer

6 put it onto his phone

7 >sent it to David who sent to Joe and I don't know who else<

8 I don't know who has that picture

9 J: I like that picture of you (.) I didn't say that (.) I didn't say that

10 N: >yea yeah yeah< I know (.) I do/

11 Miss Reen: /Nadia as long as it's not of you naked sweetheart

12 N: No it's not but it's just a piss take Miss

13 Miss R: Why what's happened to it?

14 N: I don't want people to have my picture (.) and they still take it (.)

15 and put it on stupid sites (.) when I check on Hi5 there's my picture up

16 tryina' say she's me (.) there's some chick in /South who tries to say she's me

17 Lisa: / I got the solution to your problem (.) don't take pictures ((laughs))

18 N: ((sighs)) too late for that (.) there's already pictures of me everywhere (.)

19 I don't /

20 L: Still//

21 Miss R: right I need you sat together (.) we're gonna do a sort of (question

package) ok/ (   )

22 I <u>do</u> care because yeah (.) if a chick is saying she's me now

23 Miss R: ((trousers up)) I'm fed up of seeing your bits

24 N: if a chick is saying she;s me yea:h (.) hear it if a chick is saying she's me yea:h

25 If she's using my face I don't really care yea:h

26 but you know how there's bare girls innit

27 so watch (.) if a chick said ah yeah you're kinda nice (.) though still (.)

28 like I'll do this and the other with you

29 <u>that</u> face gets labelled a sket. Am I a sket? NO!

30 So I don't know WHAT!

((1 minute later))

55 M(iranda): Don't trust anyone (with)

56 N: I don't trust (.) I don't send my pictures to <u>no one</u> (.) only my / bredrins

57 M: / /So how did he get it (.) he's / /(   )

58 N: / / Cos he STOLE it

59 M: ((inaudible))

60 N: yeah it was my display picture (.) and he stole it> copy and pasted it

everywhere< and put it=

61 M: = No no (.) the stealer programme ain't you got that? I have that=

62 N: =no but I can still take you lots' picture (.) you don't need / no pro-

63 M: / How?

64 N: Just (.) click screen innit

65 M: Is it a // nice one?

66 N: //And he STOLE my picture (/) he stole yeah (.) try say

67 Miss R: Nadia!

68 N: try put it on his phone (.) that's the joke about it (.) if you stole my picture

69 yeah and just had it on his computer whatever (.) but he stole it (.) out on his

70 phone and sent it to people

71 M: who else has be been sending it to?

72 Miss R: I'M NOT ASKING YOU AGAIN! CHAIRS (.) HERE (.) with me (.)

73 what's the matter with you?

There are two elements that typify Nadia's transgressions and have implications for

her positioning: the first is that the evaluative characterizations tend to be uttered by

Nadia in the here-and-now vis-à-vis other parties, present or not and not in the

taleworld. We can see this in lines 16 and 32 of excerpt 2 above, in which Nadia

characterizes her interlocutors, and characters in the story, as 'sad' and 'black' (slang

for 'bad'). In similar vein, Nadia tends to shift telling modes from the specific (near past) events to generic accounts (Excerpt 2, lines 27-31; Excerpt 3, lines 14-16) to alternative hypothetical scenarios (e.g. Excerpt 3, lines 24-30), and to future scenarios (Excerpt 2, line 20). These shifts in mode are important for putting forth different positions. By highlighting the habituality of transgressive events, Nadia stresses their seriousness beyond the specific narrated world. She also articulates which course of actions she deems acceptable or not beyond the specific set of events (e.g. Excerpt 3, lines 27-31). Moving away from the specific narrated world also involves a measure of reflection and taking stock of events that have just happened .My contention is that this process goes hand in hand with Nadia constructing a position for herself of somebody who, when victimized, ultimately regains control.

I will provide more evidence for the coalescing of this positioning from Nadia's interviews data but before, I will focus on the interactional management of positioning in the case of transgressions. This presents a patterning that applies across the data. There is little contestation or feedback on the actual inappropriateness of the events and actions reported. Instead, what tends to become the topic of interactional drafting is how the tellers as main characters in their stories should deal with instances of inappropriate behaviour. This makes relevant positions of personal accountability, knowledge and competence in new media as arenas where the onus is on the teller to manage risk and to avoid trouble. We can see this in Excerpt 3 above, both in Lisa's (lines 17-20) and in Miranda's contribution (lines 55-65). Both place the onus on Nadia protecting herself. Nadia's new media engagements, as I have suggested, construct knowledge and competence in technologies. Her reaction to Miranda's suggestion that she use a specific programme for protection (l. 62, 64) is

compatible with this. Nadia counter-acts the suggestion with knowledge of how a stealer programme works and in doing so asserts a position of expertise. I will return to this point in 3.3. below.

3.2 New media engagements in sites of tales and tellings

A main assumption within the heuristic of ways of telling-sites-tellers is that a sense of who the teller 'is' is arrived at from the connections between ways of telling with the sites of taleworlds and tellings. This link resonates with Zimmerman's characterization of 'situated identities' (1998) which occupy a meso-level of practical action: they provide links between the participants' local participation roles in a specific setting with their larger social roles (94). In our case, new media engagements lie at the heart of such links inasmuch as they shape both the sites of the taleworlds and the sites of the telling. As we saw in the examples above, within the taleworld, new media provide the productive settings of plots where appropriate actions and behaviour for the character (including the teller as character) are created. Within the classroom, new media engagements are constitutive of the tellers' situated identities. The expectation would be that the participants' situated identities would be in the form of an 'identity set', that is, teacher-student, with different permutations, e.g. a good student, a bad student, a disciplined student, etc., coming into play in a particular situation. Nonetheless, the students' stories do not make this identity set relevant but instead other situated identities such as a friend, a member of a peer-group and a popular and new media culture user, consumer, connoisseur, and so on. I have shown elsewhere (2011) that more than an illicit, side activity in parallel with the classroom instruction, new media engagements in pupils' peer-talk have

developed, in Bourdieu's terms, into a social field that carries a lot of symbolic capital for the participants (1986: 176ff) and that tends to resist regulation or appropriation from the teachers. Rather than being egalitarian, social fields are arenas for the struggle over resources. On that basis, the students' degree and type of new media engagements have implications for their roles and relations within the peer-group and for how they present self. By extension, positive positionings around new media-related identities carried a lot of symbolic capital for the participants. Such positionings involved the tellers actively participating in and telling stories about new media environments, about how they cater to their relational enhancement in them, and about how they manage risk and trouble. I will return to this point below.

3.3 'Who' are the tellers?

Through exploring the interconnections of the ways of telling with the sites of breaking news stories, we can begin to have an analytical sense of what tellers in similar environments signal as 'constant' about themselves; how they depart from it, where and why. This includes who tells what kinds of stories and in what kinds of telling roles. The rationale of this analysis is that certain types of narrativized experiences foreground certain types of telling and tellers. From this point of view. the triptych of ways of telling-sites-tellers can act expansively on the very useful model of Bamberg's positioning. Put differently, it can be seen as productively building on it and adding layers to the three levels of positioning rather than as departing or subtracting from them. Specifically, the concept of 'tellers' can subsume all three levels of positioning: i.e. Tellers as/with characters, tellers as/with interlocutors, and tellers as individuals enacting and even constructing their

biographical trajectories and their sense of self through their storytelling practices. All these three facets are subject to contingency but also to iterativity that is in turn shaped by patterns of contingency and iterativity at the level of ways of telling and sites.

The analysis above of the ways of telling and sites of breaking news has already provided a description of positioning at the level of the taleworld and at the level of telling, what in Bamberg's model would be Level 1 and Level 2. The difference is though that this description is 'thick': the scrutiny of iterativity allows us insights into what tends to happen in those two levels of positioning in a particular type of stories told over and over by the same teller in similar sites. It therefore goes beyond the single storytelling event. The iterative positioning at Level 1 and 2 of Nadia in routines is about her as a popular and socially networked character. In transgressions, we have begun to see how Nadia's positioning is still of a 'smart' individual in new media who ultimately manages trouble. This is not only done in the actual tellings of the story with Nadia's attempts to formulate generic scenarios out of the individual events, as we saw above, but also in reflexive environments that are temporally removed from the events and their telling. The participants' reflexivity is an important component of an analysis that sets out to capture iterativity. There is reflexivity that can be more or less indexical (i.e. implied, Silverstein 1993) but also readily apparent to the analyst in situations in which the participants are specifically asked to produce their own commentary on their narrative practices.[7] Such situations are well-recognized as revealing of orientations to normative expectations.

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[7] I have in other work critiqued the tendency to do identities analysis on the basis of interviews alone, which treat participants' meta-representations as unmediated and completely transparent statements (Georgakopoulou 2009). But the place of interviews in this study is specifically as part of a multi-method and multi-sited research that benefits both from ethnographic observations and from an

The participants' reflections on new media engagements placed emphasis on the individual's ability to handle new media competently and knowledgeably so as to avoid and manage any breachings of norms emerged as highly valued. Exactly as in the interactional management of stories, which we saw above, a premium was placed on the individual being able to act in a 'smart' way in new media so as to maximize opportunities for socialization while at the same time managing trouble and transgressions. In particular, the positioning of a girl, able and empowered so to manage risk in new media and to handle them competently also emerged as valued in the ethnographic study of the different peer groups of the particular school. It was also corroborated by a comparative case-study of the girls who in the survey of new media engagements appeared to be prolific.[8] Nadia's response to the story of excerpts 3 & 4 when played back to her by Lauren, the fieldworker, in the playback interview session is in line with this aspired to positioning:

Excerpt *, Playback interview session with Nadia

1 L(auren): alright I'll just play the next one (.) and I've got some questions for you ok? 2 So this is just the next bit ((extract played))

3 N(adia): seriously (.) I sound like a man

4 L: but how do people get your pictures then?

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emphasis on micro-interactional data. Interviews and playback sessions in this respect serve as part of the attempt to get at a thick description. We also wanted to see how time may have affected the solidification of certain practices but we still accept that interviews are themselves interactional data, like any other conversational data.

[8] A case in point was Habibah who routinely constructed positions of victimization and trouble through her stories of new media engagements. This positioning went hand in hand with Habibah's troubled positioning across the communicative range of her new media engagements (for details, see Georgakopoulou 2013).

5 N: O:h (.) they're my friends (.) I send it to them.

6 L: Okay//

7 N: But //only p- I don't sent my picture to just anyone (5 seconds)

8 L: Okay if you go on websites and stuff (.) do you put your pictures// on

9 N: I put my picture on one of my friend's website (.) and then bare people stole it

(0.5)

10 L: Okay.

11 N: And like some girl was claiming she was me (.) an - cos someone goes to me oh

12 (.) one of my friends said to me (.) this girl's saying she's you and I was like

13 WHAT? and then this boy added me (.) and I didn't know who he was

((further down))

22 N: // So I was like (.) why is this girl beggin it for (.)and then she got boyed off

funny though   min 8.33

((further down)) min 16.45

188 L: okay let me ask you a bit more about face pic and stuff then (.) because we are

189 talking about what you do (.) or how you know people are who they say they are

190 so if you find out someone's using false information (.) what do you do about

191 that?

192 N: you boy them off (.) you make them cry (.) and then you >block and delete

193 them< and say don't ever talk – chat to me again

194 L: so how do you go – how do you do that then?

195 N: what? boy them off?

196 L: yeah

197 N: cuss them down

198 L: okay

We can see above how between Nadia's first telling of the events and her reflections on it, Nadia has formulated a generic scenario for dealing with comparable transgressions that involves 'blocking and deleting', 'boying off'[9] and 'cussing down'[10] culprits. The recurrence and idiomaticity of the lexical choices for the recommended course of action attests to a level of crystallization in it. The generic course of action also seems to suggest that Nadia has moved from having been exposed to risk to re-claiming agency in navigating that risk. It is notable that other girls in reflexive environments displayed inability to position themselves in empowered ways vis-à-vis transgressive events.

Transportable identities (Zimmerman 1998), identities that are brought along by tellers and may be brought about in a local context, however elusive, remain at the heart of positioning analyses and the usual analytical step is to try and piece together local interactional processes with the tellers' 'extra-situational' identities. For the present analysis, this is both an impossible and a reductive task: impossible to capture the whole of a teller's self-project and reductive to link communication practices with one or another identity aspect. That said, in the tales and tellings of stories of new media engagements, Nadia and her interlocutors operate as girls of a specific age and with specific regulations from adults, be their parents or teachers, interacting with boys, getting in trouble with boys etc.. So to suggest that gender (in its co-articulations with other identities, e.g. ethnicity, age, peer-group roles) is relevant in these cases seems to me to be a rather uncontroversial statement to make. What is less straightforward to do is to forge links with meanings of gendered identities as they are

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[9] To be rude or to ignore. www.urbandictionary.com
[10] To insult a person with a better insult than the insult they used to insult you. www.urbandictionary.com

locally constructed through media engagements and 'resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through and are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 9). I have argued elsewhere (2013) that Nadia's gendered engagements with new media present distinct resonances with discourses about new femininities (see McRobbie 2007) and meanings that converge around them in a variety of public and policy domains (e.g. the press, schools, parents). I have also made this argument more robust by examining other competing gendered discourses in the school and showing how discourses of risk and trouble, also typical of young women's experiences, figure more prominently in the case of some girls, not others. This discussion is beyond the scope of this chapter but indicative of where the analysis that I presented above can take us. What is notable here is that at the specific point of time at which media-related breaking news stories figured very prominently in Nadia's everyday school life and presented a specific iterativity in terms of their ways of telling and the sites in which they occurred, Nadia as a teller of such stories presented a positioning of her as a socially networked, agentive, competent female new media user as a stable, consistent and relevant aspect of herself.

Conclusions

This chapter has set out to contribute to the ongoing debate within interactional approaches to positioning in narrative regarding the ways in which we can analytically tap into aspects of teller's self that can be seen as more stable or continuous. Bamberg's level 3 positioning which answers the question of 'Who am I?" has inspired a lot of those discussion and it formed a productive point of departure

here too which I sought to extend in two ways: a) with the addition of ethnographically grounded understandings of who people are in specific contexts, b) with placing narrative analysis within a multi-method that ensures access to the participants' moments of reflexivity on themselves and their stories. I specifically posed ways of telling, sites and tellers as the three main constituent elements of a practice-based approach to narrative and argued that iterativity is the key-element in the exploration of all three and ultimately in the uncovery of aspects of self that are presented as relatively stable. I singled out breaking news stories as a specific kind of stories occurring in specific sites and showed how their ways of telling (re)shape the environment of a London senior school classroom where they routinely occur as an arena for the performative re-enactment of the participants' new media engagements outside of school. By focusing on the breaking news told by Nadia, one of the female pupils in the school, I showed how the interweavings of ways of telling, sites and tellers attest to an interactional positioning of Nadia as an agentive, knowledgeable and empowered new media active consumer who succeeds in increasing her sociability and networking with boys while managing potential risks and trouble associated with transgressive behaviour by other participants, mainly men, in new media arenas.

The intimate links between the kinds of positioning a teller does and the types of stories told in specific sites, as documented above, call for a view of positioning as a process of situated snapshots of aspects of a teller's self with built in contingency and iterativity. As I suggested, this builds on and expands previous interactional accounts of positioning aiming at ever more nuanced analyses. Furthermore, the framework of positioning presented here brings to the fore the need for attention to an under-

represented area of positioning analysis, namely what kinds of stories that are available or not in what kinds of environments, tied in with what kinds of activities and in turn what this implicates for the tellers' self-projects: what kinds of self-projects are engendered, necessitated or constrained for which tellers. Finally, the importance of new media-related breaking news stories suggests that, having been closely tied to (life) stories through which tellers rehearse, reflect and confer meaning on their experience, positioning analysis can usefully shift its attention to positioning through stories that announce and perform events and through tellings that are very close (temporally speaking), even parallel, to the told. In the era of web 2.0 and Twitter, to claim that such stories are worth the analytical attention not least on the basis of how they are actually proliferating and rapidly becoming the norm is not a misplaced statement.

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