

6

Performing Identity: A Topological Perspective

1 Introduction: Users in Uses of Language

Thus far we have considered youth justice conferencing from the point of view of *uses* of language, looking at the kinds of meanings that are made as the macro-genre unfolds. We now shift perspective to think about *users* of language and the kinds of identities that can be played out across the ‘different discursive environments in which *identity work* is being done’ (Benwell and Stokoe 2007: 5) within a youth justice conference. In other words, we are concerned with how conference participants enact different ‘personae’ through their communicative choices.

Language-based perspectives on identity consider how users of language vary in the way in which they project different kinds of social identities through choices in their linguistic style (Coupland 2007). Approaches include variationist sociolinguistics, which explores linguistic variables that correlate with predetermined social categories (Labov 2006; Trudgill 1974), interactionist and ethnomethodological perspectives (Zimmerman and Weider 1970; Berger and Luckmann 1966; Antaki and Widdicombe 1998) such as Membership Categorization Analysis, which considers the common-sense identity categorizations that organize

our social world (Sacks 1992; Jayyursi 1984), positioning theories that focus on how people take up various social roles in discourse (Davies and Harré 1990) and a range of post-structuralist perspectives such as those that view identity as a performance (Bauman 2004; Butler 1990). Hasan's (2005, 2009) work on semantic variation is also very relevant; her programme attends to the ways in which semiotic resources are differentially distributed amongst users—both in terms of which options are available and, among those available, which are likely to be taken up in specific contexts of instantiation.

Our perspective, drawing on Firth (1957), is grounded in the idea that users of language perform their identity within uses of language. In other words, to understand how identities are performed in context, we need to understand not just how the systems of language are used (*langue* and *parole* in Saussure's terms), but also how resources are allocated to users of language and how they are used to affiliate. In this way we hope to better address Firth's user-focused goals:

The unique object of Saussurian linguistics is '*la langue*', which exists only in the *collectivité*. Now at this point I wish to stress the importance of the study of persons, even one at a time, and of introducing the notions of personality and language as in some sense vectors of the continuity of repetitions in the social process, and the persistence of personal forces. (Firth 1957: 183)

This user-oriented perspective also considers two important dimensions of meaning-making which impact on the kinds of meaning a user, or in more Firthian terms a 'persona', can construe in a particular interaction within a youth justice conference:

- The influence of the conferencing macro-genre on the range of meanings open to a persona at different points in the unfolding discourse
- The patterns of meaning that characterize the different 'roles' a persona takes up at these points in the macro-genre, which is inflected by the linguistic repertoire the language user has accrued in their lifetime

The latter perspective is particularly focused on a kind of pattern relevant to how social bonds are forged and maintained through combinations

of ideation and evaluation. In other words, it considers evaluations about things, which we referred to as 'couplings' (Martin 2008) in the previous chapter.

2 How Can Young Persons Enact a 'Sincere' Persona in YJCs?

Young offenders are in a challenging semiotic position in a YJC in terms of enacting identity: they need to convince the other participants in attendance that they are being sincerely contrite and, in addition, have the potential to be reformed. At the same time, there are many factors leading Young Persons (YPs) to assume a 'small target' identity, admitting only what is necessary in the Record of Events in the commissioned recount (as we have seen in Chap. 3). Hayes (2006), among others (Retzinger and Scheff 1996; Van Stokkom 2002; Harris et al. 2004), has raised the problem of sincerity in relation to remorse, apology, shaming and forgiveness in conferencing. While the sincerity of the YP is obviously important to Victims, Convenors, Police/Liaison Officers and other participants, it is not at all clear what behaviours are 'read' as sincere given that the macro-genre makes it difficult for the YP to speak as young people are often imagined to speak when 'being themselves'.

Dissatisfaction in relation to sincerity can in fact erupt in later stages of the macro-genre, as it does on several occasions following the Interpretation of the recount in the Affray YJC. The following are some selected examples:

Extract 6.1, Affray YJC

- Convenor:** So do you think that this whole process is a waste of time? Do you really care about what comes out of this? Seriously, honestly.
- YP:** Yeah, I do.
- Convenor:** Ah, no, honestly? You can say it.
- YP:** No. I do.

- ...
Arresting Officer: Be upfront, man.
YLO: Be honest. OK. Because it's no use sitting here saying, 'I'm gonna change, blah, blah, blah, lies, oh, I'm not really saying what I'm thinking' because I know this isn't you. OK. Because I've spoken to you before. If someone had a go at you like this, just react how you would normally. Say what you think.
YP: Yeah.
 ...
ECLO: You got a temper?
YP: (yeah)
ECLO: OK. At least you're being honest now. It's alright, man. It's alright to say how you feel. That's what, mate – That's what this lady's trying to get you to do, to be honest.

In effect, the macro-genre leads to a possible conundrum: How can YPs sound sincere when they can't be themselves (or at least not the selves that adults may expect them to be based on their interactions with them in social processes of other kinds)? How can a YP employ, for instance, the kind of talk conference participants might associate with teenagers, when this discourse is at odds with the heavily scaffolded nature of the interaction?

We can reinforce this point by drawing on a commissioned recount from a mock conference improvised on our behalf by staff and students of the Performance Studies Department at the University of Sydney (from a period when we were trialing our recording procedures). The professional actor cum research student playing the young offender role produced the following text, with explicit markers of adolescent identity strongly foregrounded through numerous instances of slang, swearing and colloquial phrasing which the actor uses to perform his 'part' in the mock drama:

[colloquial phrasing in bold, swearing bold underlined below]

[A]nd so, so it's a Sunday night and **me, me and Trav** were out and just, you know, **hanging around** and **mucking about**. (...) We'd run out of

cigs so we just kind of, we just kind of (...) went to the **servo** and stuff and, and (...) the car door was open and the key was in the ignition and my **mate was like** 'Yeah, do you want– Yeah, we should **jump in** the car and, you know, and **jump in** and kind of–' and I **was like** 'Oh, I think, you know, are you sure about it?' And so he, then we kind of, we kind of, **yeah**, we just **jumped in** it and – I was in it for a while and, and, and then, you know, then he starts screaming at me, you know, '**Shit**, she's coming!' You know, 'Just **burn** it, **burn** it **mate!** Go, just get out!' And so I kind of shut the door and don't think, and **I'm just out of there**, you know, just round the corner and then kind of on the road and stuff and then I realized like 'Oh **shit**, I've taken the car' and then we, and then we kind of feel like 'Oh OK, we can't do much now'. So we kind of drive around for a while. We didn't **fang** it or anything and, you know, we each **had a go** and yeah, then, a bit later, after we kind of drove around for a while, yeah, I kind of **took a corner** too, too, sort of quickly and, and just sort of, you know, didn't-before I knew it, I was just (...) and (...) in Mr Hemford's umm front yard and in his fence and, and then again, you know, just, I just didn't know what was going on and just **shit-bolted** out of there and [...] you know, and I was a bit, kind of, **weirded** out, like, so I was just kind of, kind of, just sitting at the bus stop and stuff (...) till the **cops** came and saw us. **Yeah**, they just came and got us.

In terms of the highlighted phrasing, the mock recount is absolutely untypical of recounts by YPs in our data. In addition, the actor deploys a great deal of soft focus (hedging phrases such as *kind of* and *and stuff*) and draws heavily on the adverb *just* to minimize his actions, intensify them or make them precipitous.

[*softened focus* in bold italics; minimizing **just** in bold; intensifying/precipitating **just** in bold underlined]

[A]nd so, so it's a Sunday night and me, me and Trav were out and **just**, you know, hanging around and mucking about. (...) We'd run out of cigs so we **just kind of**, we **just kind of** (...) went to the servo *and stuff* and, and (...) the car door was open and the key was in the ignition and my mate was like 'Yeah, do you want– Yeah, we should jump in the car and, you know, and jump in and *kind of*–' and I was like 'Oh, I think, you know, are you sure about it?' And so he, then we *kind of*, we *kind of*, yeah, we **just** jumped in it and– I was in it for a while and, and, and then, you

know, then he starts screaming at me, you know, 'Shit, she's coming!' You know, '**Just** burn it, burn it mate! Go, **just** get out!' And so I *kind of* shut the door and don't think, and I'm **just** out of there, you know, **just** round the corner and then *kind of* on the road *and stuff* and then I realized like 'Oh shit, I've taken the car' and then we, and then we *kind of* feel like 'Oh OK, we can't do much now'. So we *kind of* drive around for a while. We didn't fang it *or anything* and, you know, we each had a go and yeah, then, a bit later, after we *kind of* drove around for a while, yeah, I *kind of* took a corner too, too, *sort of* quickly and, and **just sort of**, you know, didn't-before I knew it, I was **just** (...) and (...) in Mr Hemford's umm front yard and in his fence and, and then again, you know, **just**, I **just** didn't know what was going on and **just** shit-bolted out of there and [...] you know, and I was a bit, *kind of*, weirded out, like, so I was **just kind of, kind of, just** sitting at the bus stop *and stuff* (...) till the cops came and saw us. Yeah, they **just** came and got us.

Although these tempering features are found in our data, they are much less frequent than in the recount cited above (Zappavigna et al. 2007, 2008). It is clear that in order to project an adolescent identity the actor in question draws on lexical resources which are almost never taken up by YPs in YJCs (e.g. slang, swearing) and vastly overplays grammatical resources which are less frequently found. The result is a caricature of adolescent speech—dramatically effective perhaps as an instance of 'method acting', but uncharacteristic of YPs' behaviour in our data.

What this divergence underlines is the sense in which identity is shaped by genre. The commissioned recount assigns YPs a role to play, and they recognize and accommodate the formal institutional setting in which they are expected to provide an account of their offence. Adjusting to the genre in this way, they are no different from any other participants in the conference process. At the same time, adult participants in the process may have expectations about adolescent discourse comparable to those of the actor caricaturing this discourse and these expectations may bear critically on how they judge the sincerity of YPs. Recognition of the difficult task the YP has in construing any kind of contrite, apologetic persona led us to the task of mapping out just what

are the personae that are available to YPs in the conference and how we can model the identities that the YPs draw upon at different steps in the conference.

3 Modelling Identity: A Topological Perspective

In order to address this question of how to model identity, we have drawn on Maton's Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton 2007, 2009, 2014), specifically the dimension of Specialization. Maton explores how social fields of practice represent fields of struggle for legitimacy. These struggles involve both the knowledge that constitutes fields of practice and the people who have that knowledge—the knowers.

The LCT dimension of Specialization conceptualizes practices and actors' dispositions within these fields in terms of two independent sets of relations: (i) *epistemic relations* between sociocultural practices and the part of the world they are oriented to (that is, the relations between a practice or field and the knowledge involved in understanding its object of study); and (ii) *social relations* between sociocultural practices and their actors or authors (the relations between a practice or field and the people that are involved in it). The strengths of epistemic relations (ER) and of social relations (SR) can vary independently from stronger (+) to weaker (−), generating four principal modalities or *specialization codes*.

These specialization codes involve different principles upon which the legitimacy of a social practice may depend. Knowledge codes (ER+, SR−) are codes for which legitimacy depends on what you know and how (your legitimacy is based on your knowledge); knower codes (ER−, SR+) are codes where what matters is who you are (your position in a hierarchy of knowers and/or your dispositions and values); elite codes (ER+, SR+) are codes where both specialist knowledge and dispositions underpin legitimacy (your knowledge and your position as a knower); and relativist codes (ER−, SR−) are codes where 'anything goes' (you don't need any specialist knowledge, nor do you need to be a particular knower). These

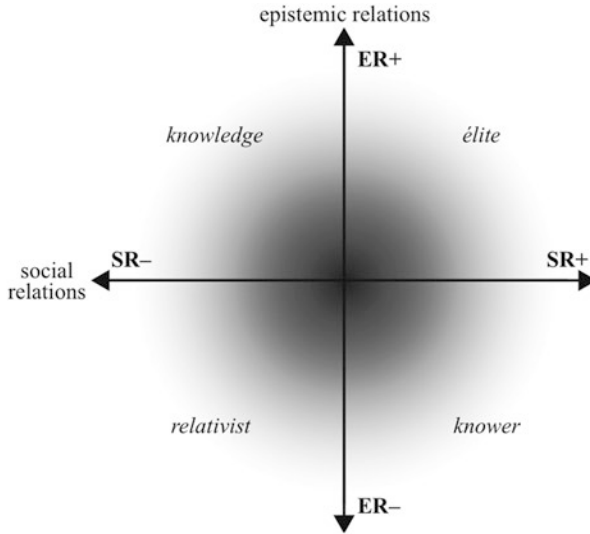


Fig. 6.1 The Specialization plane (Maton 2007: 97)

four codes and the epistemic and social relations that give rise to them are illustrated in Fig. 6.1.

These concepts are being widely used to explore social practices and actors' dispositions across a range of fields, most notably in education. They enable analysis of the organizing principles underlying *both* the social field of practice (such as Youth Justice Conferencing) *and* the dispositions actors bring to those social situations (as illustrated by their practices within the conferencing). Such an analysis highlights contestations over the ways in which legitimacy is defined and the degrees to which the specialization codes characterizing different social groups may 'code clash' or 'code match' with those dominant within the context being studied. In other words, specialization codes provide a means for exploring why specific actors may adopt specific subject positions within specific social contexts.

To illustrate these codes, we might consider the historical debate over evolution: we can consider Wallace, whose scientific expertise (knowledge code) underwrote his vision of evolution; Darwin, whose expertise and gentlemanly social status *together* (elite code) afforded both this

vision *and* its promotion; Bishop Wilberforce, whose Church of England faith and values (knower code) led him to challenge scientific opinion; and contemporary bloggers who opine freely on the Web without privileging specialist knowledge or specialized dispositions (relativist code). Differences in Specialization can have profound effects on people's lives. In the English-speaking world, for example, appointment to an academic position ideally depends more on a scholar's record of teaching, research and administrative service than on the university granting their PhD (a knowledge code); in China, on the other hand, the standing of a scholar's undergraduate university may also be a key factor, with some top universities reluctant to appoint applicants with an undergraduate degree from a middle- or low-ranking university no matter how much they have achieved in academic life since that time (an elite code).

As Maton (2014) emphasizes, the form and strengths of epistemic relations and social relations may differ according to the specific object of study. This means that the salient features that characterize the differing strengths of epistemic and social relations in one field or practice may be very different from those in another field. In order to see how these relations play out in a specific field, then, they require what has been termed an 'external language of description' or 'translation device' (Bernstein 1996/2000; Bernstein 2000) for, as it were, translating between the concepts and the concrete particularities of the research focus (Maton and Chen 2016; Maton and Doran 2017). Such a device allows analysis that can highlight the form taken by ER+/-, SR+/- within the specific study. For our specific purposes of exploring identity construction in YJC, this process of enactment comprises two stages. First, we recontextualize, from a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, epistemic relations as an ideational dimension (concerned with what is being talked about) and social relations as an interpersonal axiological dimension (concerned with social values), as shown in Fig. 6.2. This is *not* to suggest that epistemic relations equate to the ideational and social relations equate to the axiological; it is to highlight how these concepts are being enacted from a linguistic perspective within the context of our specific research focus.

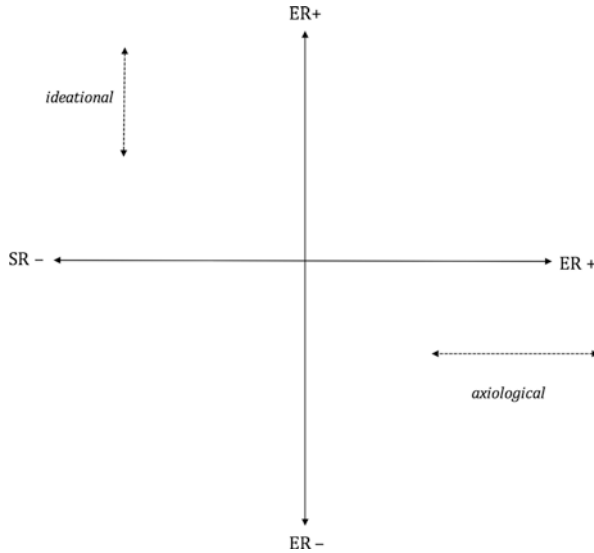


Fig. 6.2 Enacting Maton's 'specialization plane' to analyse identities in YJC

We will now specify how the dimensions outlined earlier play out within our data, beginning with the commissioned recount.

4 YP Identities in the Commissioned Recount

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, designers and advocates of conferencing seem to have in mind an ideal YP persona who provides a detailed recount of the offence and is convincingly remorseful about what went on. However, as we have seen, it is far more common for YPs to enact a 'small target' persona who construes a minimalist account of the offence with details 'extracted' by the Convenor (as we have seen in Chap. 3), and who enacts next to no evaluation of what went on so that regret has to be 'promoted' by the Convenor (as we have seen in Chap. 4). On this basis, the ideational dimension (epistemic relations) of our topology traces an axis of 'forthcomingness' depending on how detailed the

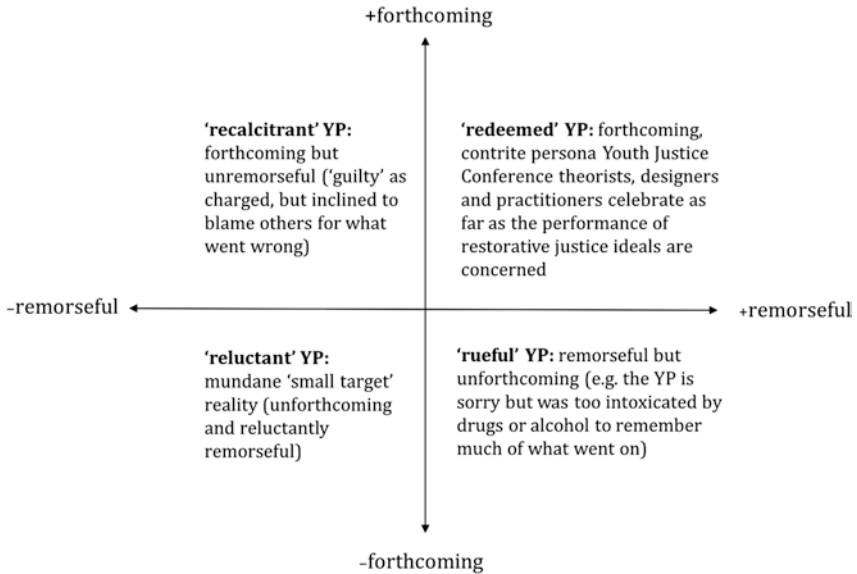


Fig. 6.3 YP personae topology for commissioned recount and rejoinder steps in the YJC macro-genre (retrospective)

YP's recount of the offence is, and the axiological dimension (social relations) traces an axis of 'remorsefulness' depending on how contrite the YP's attitude to what occurred is (Fig. 6.3). Thus, in our data, epistemic relations are recontextualized (via a focus on the ideational) as degrees of 'forthcomingness', and social relations are recontextualized (via a focus on the axiological) as degrees of 'remorsefulness'. This language of enactment establishes a topology of possible personae, including four principal types: a redeemed persona that is both highly forthcoming and remorseful (+forthcoming, +remorseful), a reluctant persona that is neither forthcoming nor remorseful (–forthcoming, –remorseful), a recalcitrant persona that is forthcoming but not remorseful (+forthcoming, –remorseful) and a rueful persona that is not forthcoming but is remorseful (–forthcoming, +remorseful) (Fig. 6.3).

For example, the 'angry boy' identity enacted in the School Library YJC is an instance of the 'guilty' YP persona (upper left quadrant). This

persona is characterized by a fulsome disclosure of the offence but without the corresponding lack of remorse:

Extract 6.2, School Library YJC

YP1: When it all comes down to it I know I wouldn't change anything I've done for anything. Like I still feel like – like a girl's getting picked on and that. It's not right for a guy to pick on a girl and I've just been brought up to stand up for girls and guys shouldn't do it. If a guy's got a problem do something to a guy not to a girl.

This persona contrasts sharply with the significant degree of remorse shown in the recount provided by the 'redeemed' YP (upper right quadrant) in the Train Tracks YJC:

Extract 6.3, Traintracks YJC

Convenor: So what have you thought about since, um, since this incident?
YP: How stupid I was. I was just, you know, I dunno, I was just stupid, I think, at that time. I'll think twice next time before I do something like that again.

Convenor: So how long after the incident did you have a chance to sort of reflect back on it and think about what happened.

YP: Pretty much that day. I called home and I was describing to my mum doing that stupid incident that night because that day I (wanted to) go back and apologize cause (...) I always go there and I felt so bad cause they're always nice to us and we went and done stupid things. (...) Yeah, I was stupid.

Both of these personae produce forthcoming recounts and thus reside in the upper quadrants of the topology, based on their relation to the ideational axis. However, they differ along the axiological axis in terms of the degree of self-reflection and regret which they enact in the conference.

The two other possible personae proposed by our topology are less forthcoming in their recounts. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, the small target 'accused' persona (lower left quadrant) is the most

frequent identity enacted by YPs in our sample of conferences; we have already given examples of unforthcoming commissioned recounts where the details have been extracted by the Convenor, virtually a word or short phrase at a time from reluctant YPs. Equally unforthcoming, but more remorseful, is the ‘ashamed’ YP (lower right quadrant), who typically offers drugs or alcohol as the reason why he or she cannot remember details of the offence. They may also claim to not have knowledge of facts relating to the offence as a way of excusing their behaviour; for example, the YP in the Affray YJC claims that he forgot he was carrying a knife in his pocket at the time of the offence:

Extract 6.4, Affray YJC

- YP:** (I) didn’t know I even had it on me.
Convenor: Ahum.
YP: Forgot I had it on me the whole time and then I couldn’t remember I had it until they (...) and pulled it out and showed them. It doesn’t even work. You can’t even use it.

The major distinction between these two unforthcoming personae is the degree of remorse shown regarding the offence, represented topologically as the distinction between the two lower quadrants.

5 YP Identities and the Admonition

A further crucial step in understanding YP identities at stake in the macro-genre is during the admonition. We saw in the examples of Youth Liaison Officer (YLO) discourses provided Chap. 2 that, during the admonition, YLOs often encourage the YP to think about the ‘choices’ that they make in terms of potential ‘consequences’. The YLO’s admonition is a future-oriented genre, where the YLOs implore the YPs to think about how their behaviour will impact on their ability to make the most of future opportunities, particularly in relation to employment:

Extract 6.5, Running Shoes YJC

YLO: That's why you need to grow up now and start proving to people you are not the little boy that acts like an idiot. You need to grow up. If you kept behaving this way, you know, your reputation will still follow you. You need to grow out of it. And you know hopefully you can get another job. Your mum says you are a better person when you are working. Maybe that's something you should throw your energy into is finding a job. Put your name out there. That's the things I like to remind you.

The YLOs typically stress the importance of the YPs not reoffending for fear of creating a permanent criminal record that will limit their future prospects:

Extract 6.6, School Library YJC

YLO: If they can do that sort of thing again, they won't get a youth conference. (I'll) refer for a charge. And when they get criminal conviction out of that, they won't get a passport to go to America or New Zealand or European states. They won't be able to apply to go into the defence forces simply because they've got a criminal conviction and a criminal conviction involving offence of violence against a person. If they want to apply for truck drivers job, or whatever laboring job, that employer will do pre-employment check based on the criminal record. So they fill in the application to gain an apprenticeship or whatever they want to do, that employer then does a check through the criminal record section of the NSW Police Department. It comes back, they've got criminal record. That employer then gets that application of theirs and throws it in the shredder. Because they then go through their other applications, they have no adverse history. So that's the idea of Young Offenders' Act, that's why we refer to a conference. So that we sit down and discuss the issues. Get it all out in the open and then they can move on. Everyone can move on.

The YLOs will also often attempt to undo the YPs' alignment with mates who may be pressuring them into criminal behaviour:

Extract 6.7, Mobile Phone YJC

YLO: It's a tough time in – in your life when you're getting peer pressure from everybody, and you want to look cool. We understand you want to look cool and hang out with different people, but there's cool and then there's cool, really in trouble, and it's – let me tell you it's not cool. Where you'll end up from getting into all the – all these problems and mixing with the wrong people – there's only one place you'll end up, and usually that's big – big boys' gaol, and there's always somebody tougher than you there, and if they're not tougher, they've just got many more of them to be tough. So, you know, you can't win with it. It – you – it's pointless trying to even – even match up with them.

YLOs may also suggest the personal responsibility that the YP has in governing the unfolding of their future and taking on the advice they have been given in the conference:

Extract 6.8, Mobile Phone YJC

YLO: You know, just – and only you can learn. You can – you can either go, you know, take what we're saying and take it on, or you can ignore it, but – and we'll see you again later. But it's up to you. I don't want you to – to do that.

The YLOs will also emphasize the importance of education in being able to enact the right kind of persona:

Extract 6.9, Mobile Phone YJC

YLO: But your education is, you're right, it is the biggest thing now, because it depends whether you get into your trade, and most trades – and I know I've got a son the same age and he's just left year eleven and doing a pre-apprenticeship course, and they have to sit tests. They have to sit tests to even get into all these things. Same with the army to do trades, all that sort of stuff. It's no longer just 'Yeah, I'll take you on for a trade', you got to pass tests, and –

and the only way you can pass those tests is by learning. You don't have an education and you're really limited as to what you can do. And you have good job, good money, you have good life. You don't have a good job, you have no money, you have no choices. But you have money, you have choices. But you know, you do it honestly so and so you can feel good about yourself. Be someone that that everybody's proud of, you know.

As we proposed in relation to the commissioned recount, we can also think about the persona being valorized in the admonition genre topologically. The YLOs seem to be promoting an ideal YP who makes rational decisions about their future and who decides to reintegrate with family and community. Here again we are recontextualizing the LCT specialization plane of epistemic relations and social relations as ideational and axiological axes. The ideational axis now involves reasoning about possible effects (how rational will the YP become) and the axiological axis now involves a moral orientation to possible futures (how reintegrated will the YP become). The identities imagined can be glossed as those that are reintegrated (the rational, re-affiliating ideal), delinquent (neither rational nor re-affiliating—YPs who get inadvertently caught up in offending behaviour because they continue to hang with mates), criminal (rational but not re-affiliating—YPs who choose to hang with their mates and purposefully pursue a life of crime) and law-abiding (re-affiliating but not rational—YPs who steer clear of their mates and stay out of trouble for fear of being caught). These personae that the YP might adopt following the conference are outlined in Fig. 6.4. In this model, the ideal prospective YP persona is re-affiliated into key fellowships, including his family and ethnic community, and chooses, through rational deliberation, to avoid the negative influence of other groups, especially 'mates' with a propensity for delinquent behaviour.

We can contrast this identity profile with the profile generated for the commissioned recount and rejoinder steps in the YJC macro-genre that were introduced earlier. As outlined in Fig. 6.5, these unfold during the conference from a past-oriented logic of redemption to a future-oriented logic of reintegration (from retrospective personae to prospective personae).

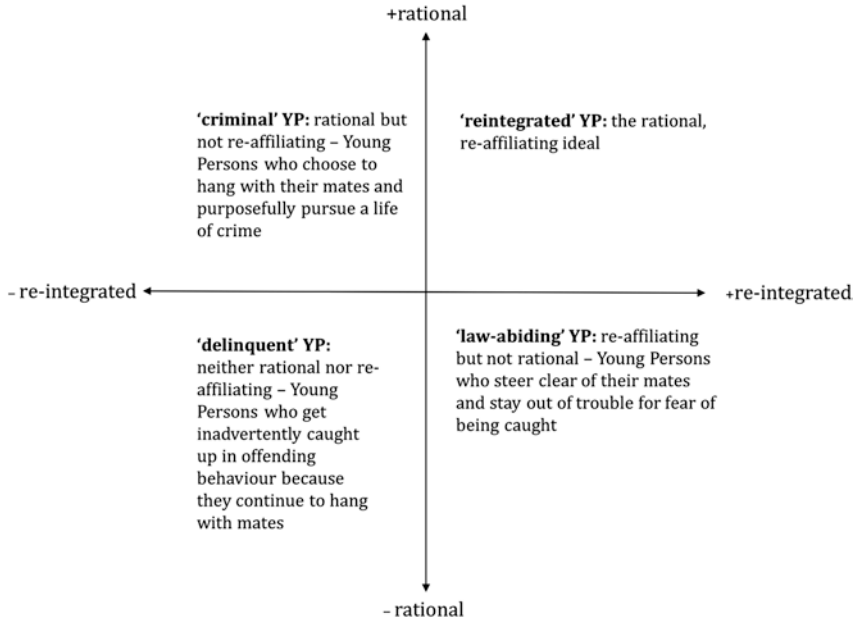


Fig. 6.4 YP personae topology for admonition step in the YJC macro-genre (prospective)

The main point we are making here is that the personae YPs are expected to construe ideationally, enact interpersonally and compose textually are sensitive to the staging of the macro-genre as it unfolds. The ideal retrospective identity is not constructed out of the same semi-otic resources as their prospective one. As ever, the choices we make as users of language depend on their use—or, to put this more technically, coding orientations (i.e. predispositions to meaning) interact with genre.

As Maton has pointed out to us (personal communication), the ideal retrospective YP for the Convenor in the commissioned recount and rejoinder steps in a YJC and the ideal prospective YP for the YLO in the admonition step (Fig. 6.5) perform comparable personae—both embody an identity capable of displaying publicly that they are self-disciplining social subjects who have internalized the power that will ensure they maintain ways of acting, thinking and being appro-

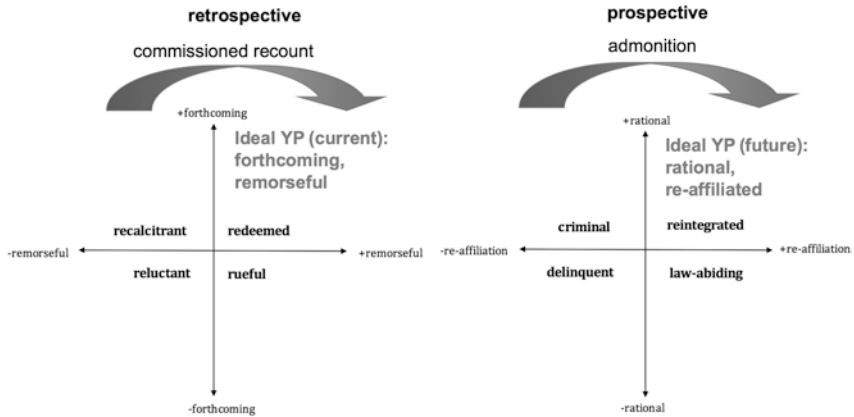


Fig. 6.5 Retrospective and prospective identity profiles for the commissioned recount and admonition genres

priate to a citizen (after Foucault 1977). These YP personae can be further generalized to the personae celebrated by constructivist discovery learning educators in student-centred classrooms, where the same kind of social subject is facilitated to learn via osmosis—to the exclusion of social subjects of other kinds (Rose and Martin 2012). Generalizations of this kind across personae show how we might eventually conceptualize affiliation, seen in terms of how personae negotiate feeling, as a hierarchy of bond complexes—of shared values at ever-higher levels of abstraction, configuring subcultures—and eventually master identities organized by gender, ethnicity, class, generation and dis/ability.

As Maton further notes (personal communication), we can ‘translate’ from the ‘external languages’ used to describe the retrospective and the prospective personae in the two stages of the macro-genre back into the internal language of description of ER/SR (the specialization plane outlined in Fig. 6.1). This enables us to see the two personae as instantiations of the same organizing principles: they are the ways that specific modalities of ER and SR play out in those stages. While they may appear different empirically, they are both underpinned by the same organizing principles, as shown by Specialization codes.

6 Support Person Identities

It is of course not only the YP who is positioned to produce particular identity performances in the macro-genre. For example, the identities enacted in the avouchment by Support Persons are less future-oriented than those proposed for YPs in the Caution; they have more of a focus on vouching for a YP's current capacity to behave appropriately. Two dimensions are important in relation to Support Person personae in this genre:

- (i) Change, an epistemic relation between current and future behaviour (how far under way), where the epistemic relation involves ideational management of transformation
- (ii) Faith, a social relation between the Support Person and the YP (how good inside), where the social relation involves an axiological orientation to the YP's true character (Fig. 6.6)

The idealized Support Person in conferencing is the 'guarantor' (upper right quadrant, Fig. 6.6) who has faith in the YP's character and the possibility for transformation. This persona is usually enacted by a parent who expresses negative emotions about how the offence has impacted on them but praises the virtues of the YP and his or her capacity to change. It is possible for this kind of Support Person to apologize on behalf of the YP:

Extract 6.10, School Library YJC

Support Person: I don't condone his actions at all and I'm really sorry to everyone for what he did to everyone

Guarantors, in our sample of conferences, are usually mothers who are positioned by the macro-genre and used by the Convenor (and sometimes an Ethnic Community Liaison Officer (ECLO) or YLO) to foster shame and contrition in the YP (as we will see later). By way of contrast, the 'disowner' divests themselves of responsibility for the YP. For example, in the following extract, the Support Person wants her son to be dealt with by authorities in a non-diversionary legal process:

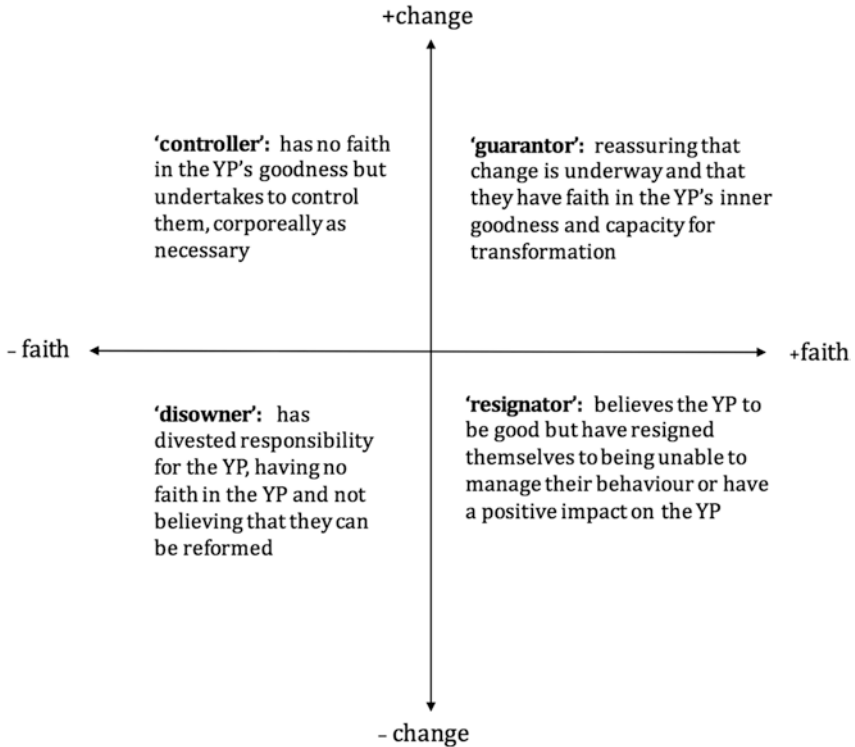


Fig. 6.6 Support person personae topology for the avouchment step in the YJC macro-genre (retrospective)

Extract 6.11, Guidedog YJC

Convenor: Sharon, what – how did you find out? Were you the first one of the family to find out?

Support Person: Yeah Constable Kennedy rang me up on the mobile phone asking if I knew where Nathan was and I said no and and I just straight away I said 'well, what's he done?' and he said 'you wouldn't believe it. He's stolen a wallet off a blind lady'. And I went 'I beg your pardon'. And he said it, repeated himself again and I (...) he goes 'Do you know where he is?'. I went 'No' but I said 'Oh'. Me

and my older daughter go straight in the car and went down to Morwood because I thought if he's got money that's – they usually – where the kids go and so yeah that's how I found out. And then I rang my mum later on that afternoon and said 'Nathan's stolen a wallet from a blind lady'. And my mum's a bit naive when it comes to Nathan. She seems to look for the best in Nathan and I (...) and she goes 'oh, he wouldn't have done that' and I said 'Well, he has and so if you see him, grab hold of him because I need to speak to him' because I was going to take him straight to the police station up at Hardacre because I actually said to Constable Kennedy 'Well when you see him charge him'. I said 'It's disgusting'. I said 'I want him charged'. I said 'He's not learning any other way' and I said 'That poor lady', you know, I was actually disgusted.

As we can see, ideal support persons (so positioned in Fig. 6.6) are closely aligned with the ideal YP (so positioned in Fig. 6.4). They believe in the YP's potential for reintegration.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the range of identities made available for YPs and Support Persons at critical stages of conferencing (testimony, rejoinder and admonition), adapting Maton's work on specialization codes. This meant recontextualizing his ER and SR axes from the perspective of ideational and axiological meaning in SFL, selecting dimensions sensitive to the goals of YJCs and mapping identities accordingly. This mapping highlights some of the key values underpinning the design of conferences, with ideal YPs and Support Persons positioned to publicly confirm that YPs have the confidence and self-discipline to behave as responsible citizens. The way in which conferences foster these ideals, through a process of ritual redress, will be the focus of the next and final chapter of this volume.

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