

What Does "Identity" Mean?

- Identity is an accomplishment, not a thing.
- Identity is fragmentary and in flux.
- People change identities to suit the needs of the moment.

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What Does "Identity" Mean?

- Identities are . . .
 - Stable features of persons that exist prior to any particular situation.
- AND
 - Dynamic and situated accomplishments, enacted through talk, and changing from one occasion to the next.

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We don't know these people.
What identities do they have?



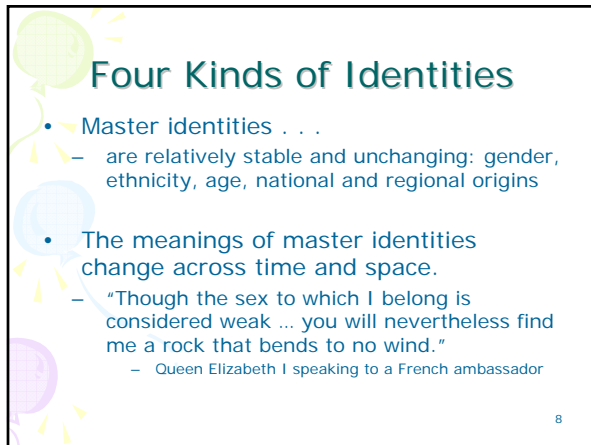
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Four Kinds of Identities

1. Master identities
2. Interactional identities
3. Personal identities
4. Relational identities

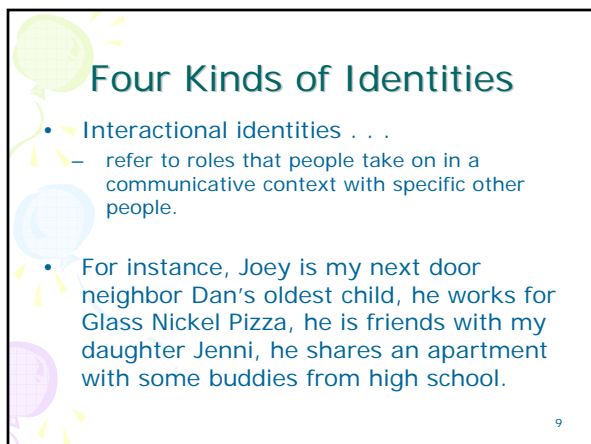
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Four Kinds of Identities

- Master identities . . .
 - are relatively stable and unchanging: gender, ethnicity, age, national and regional origins
- The meanings of master identities change across time and space.
 - “Though the sex to which I belong is considered weak ... you will nevertheless find me a rock that bends to no wind.”
 - Queen Elizabeth I speaking to a French ambassador

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Four Kinds of Identities

- Interactional identities . . .
 - refer to roles that people take on in a communicative context with specific other people.
- For instance, Joey is my next door neighbor Dan’s oldest child, he works for Glass Nickel Pizza, he is friends with my daughter Jenni, he shares an apartment with some buddies from high school.

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Four Kinds of Identities

- Personal identities . . .
 - are expected to be relatively stable and unique.
 - reference ways in which people talk and behave toward others: hotheaded, honest, forthright, reasonable, overbearing, a gossip, a brown-nose.
- Personal identities are frequently contested.

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Four Kinds of Identities

- Relational identities . . .
 - refer to the kind of relationship that a person enacts
 - with a particular conversational partner
 - in a specific situation.
- Relational identities are negotiated from moment to moment and are highly variable.

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Conceptualizing Identities

	STABLE PREEXISTING		
SOCIAL CATEGORIES	MASTER	PERSONAL	PERSONAL UNIQUE
	INTERACTIONAL	RELATIONAL	
	DYNAMIC SITUATED		

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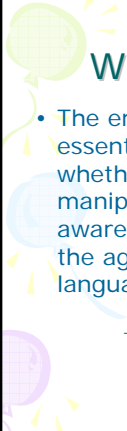


What Kind of Identity?

- Identity, whether on an individual, social, or institutional level, is something that we are constantly building and negotiating throughout our lives through our interaction with others.

– Joanna Thornborrow. (2004). Language and identity. In *Language, society and power*.

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What Kind of Identity?

- The emphasis is on identities not essentially given but actively produced – whether through deliberate, strategic manipulation, or through out-of-awareness practices. This both captures the agency of speakers and views language as social action.

– Paul Kroskrity. (2000). Identity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 9(1-2), 111-114.

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What Kind of Identity?

- The focus on an individual's freedom to manipulate a flexible system of identities fails to adequately take into account that some identities – notably race and caste – are imposed and coercively applied. There are political economic constraints on processes of identity-making.

– Paul Kroskrity. (2000). Identity. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 9(1-2), 111-114.

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Language Use and Master Identities

- National and/or regional
 - Shared participation in literacy activities
- Ethnic
 - Language use: AVE and heritage languages
 - Discursive practices like indirection in African-American or traditionalism and purism in Arizona Tewa
- Social class and/or rank
 - Working class neighborhoods in Belfast demonstrate strong loyalty to class through pronunciation.


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Language Use and Master Identities

- Professional
 - Examples include the specialist vocabularies of doctors and lawyers, and the Socratic discourse style of lawyers.
- Gender
 - Transgender and queer identities are indexed by discursive practices that challenge binary gender.
- Age
 - Discursive practices and language varieties index social ages, such as teenager or elder.

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Terms of Address and Interactional Identities

- Naming
 - How do you name yourself
 - To your parents?
 - To your friends?
 - To your professors?
 - To your best friend?
 - To your partner?
 - How do these people name you?
 - Has your name changed over time?

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Terms of Address and Interactional Identities

- Many languages have different 2nd-person pronouns:
 - French has tu and vous
 - Spanish has tu/Usted
 - Italian has tu/Lei/voi
 - German has du/Sie.
- Korean, Japanese, and other languages have honorifics.

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Terms of Address and Interactional Identities

- Test your understanding of T/V forms in languages you know by deciding what form to use with the following addressees.

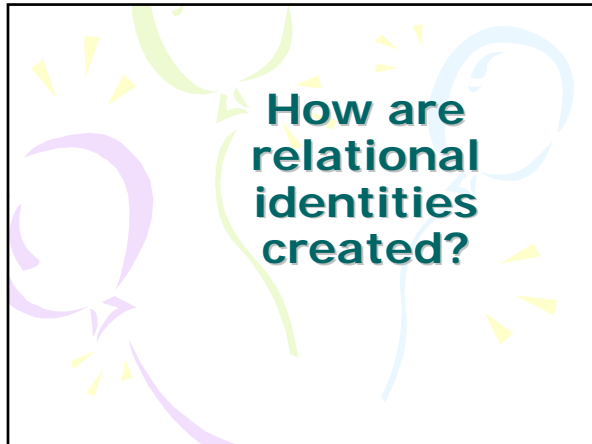
1. Your teacher
2. Your best friend
3. Your parents
4. The waiter
5. Your neighbor's kittens
6. The stranger you ask for directions
7. Your brother
8. Your doctor
9. The baker
10. Your partner

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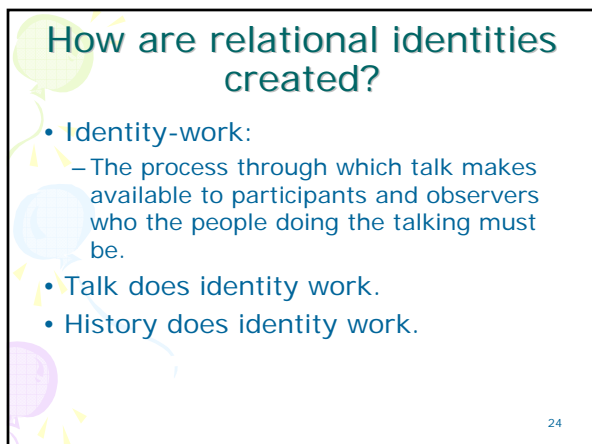
Naming Practices and Master Identities

- 'A Boy Named Sue'
- Boys with names most commonly given to girls (Taylor, Dominique) may be prone to misbehavior at school as they get older.
 - David N. Figlio 'Boys named Sue: Disruptive children and their peers.' *NBER Working Paper* 11277, April 2005.

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How are relational identities created?

- New Ideas from Erving Goffman
- Meanings that are intentionally given
 - The content of an utterance
- Meanings that are given off
 - The interactional meaning of an utterance

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How are relational identities created?

- New Ideas from John Gumperz
- Contextualization clues
 - Those features of talk that people use to arrive at the interactional meanings of what is being said.
- Crosstalk
 - Crosstalk occurs when conversational partners misinterpret contextualization clues.

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How are relational identities created?

- Goffman claimed that everyone is concerned, to some extent, with how others perceive them. We act socially, striving to maintain the identity we create for others to see. This identity, or public self-image, is what we project when we interact socially. To lose face is to publicly suffer a diminished self-image. Maintaining face is accomplished by taking a line while interacting socially. A line is what the person says and does during that interaction showing how the person understands the situation at hand and the person's evaluation of the interactants. Social interaction is a process combining line and face, or face work.

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How are relational identities created?

- Altercasting
 - References the work a person's talk does to maintain, support, or challenge a conversational partner's identities.
 - Highlights how the way we talk and act toward others (alters) puts them in roles (casts them).
 - Karen Tracy

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Multiple Identities



Myrna Nieves



Guillermo Gómez-Peña

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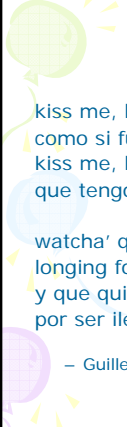
Puzzle

I do not know
why I am writing in English
a second language
a wave where
spaces open into a void
and you just need to jump off a cliff

A language where approximate sounds
suggest what I would like to say
A language with blanks
—like in a test—
which my memory will fill
sometime in the future

—Myrna Nieves

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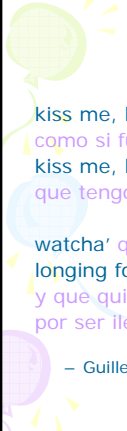
BÉSAME MUCHO

kiss me, kiss me my chola
como si fuera esta noche the last migra raid
kiss me, kiss moi mi chuca
que tengo miedo perderte somewhere in L.A.

watcha' que maybe mañana yo estaré en la pinta
longing for your ass (digo eyes)
y que quizá me deporten de nuevo a Tijuana
por ser ilegal

– Guillermo Gómez-Peña

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Identities Across Cultures

- Code-switching
- Language Crossing
- Conversational Inference

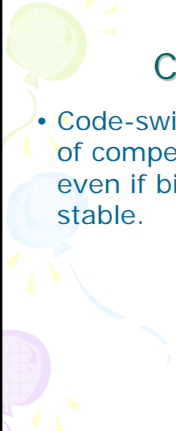
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Code-Switching

- Code-switching is the use of two languages simultaneously or interchangeably.
- *Sometimes I'll start a sentence in Spanish y termino en español*

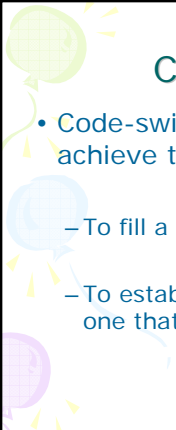
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Code-Switching

- Code-switching implies some degree of competence in the two languages even if bilingual fluency is not yet stable.


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Code-Switching

- Code-switching may be used to achieve two things:
 - To fill a linguistic/conceptual gap, or
 - To establish an identity different from one that can exist in either language.

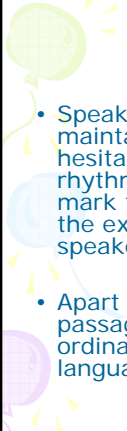
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Code-Switching

- While in some places and cases code switching is the exception, in many multilingual and bilingual communities it is and should be seen as the norm.
- Where code-switching is the norm it is perceived as fluid, unmarked, and uneventful, and where it is the exception it will be perceived as marked, purposeful, emphasis-oriented, and strange.

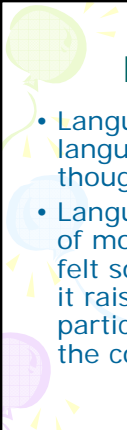
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Code-Switching

- Speakers communicate fluently, maintaining an even flow of talk. No hesitation pauses, changes in sentence rhythm, pitch level or intonation contour mark the shift in code. There is nothing in the exchange as a whole to indicate that speakers don't understand each other.
- Apart from the alternation itself, the passages have all the earmarks of ordinary conversation in a single language.

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Language Crossing

- Language crossing is the use of a language which isn't generally thought to 'belong' to the speaker.
- Language crossing involves a sense of movement across quite sharply felt social or ethnic boundaries, and it raises issues of legitimacy that participants need to reckon with in the course of their encounter.

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Language Crossing

- Ben Rampton studied language crossing among adolescent friendship groups in England and found:
 - The use of Punjabi by young people of Anglo and Afro-Caribbean descent
 - The use of Creole by Anglos and Punjabis
 - The use of stylized Indian English by all three

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Language Crossing



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Language Crossing

- Black youth language creates an aura of toughness and street smarts. Essentially, it has become a prestige language for today's youth just as hip hop fashions and music have come to dominate adolescent buying habits.
- Crossing into AAVE allows young people to experiment with alternative identities and has the potential for breaking down ethnic barriers by creating new forms of youth culture.
- The potential for this sort of development among the droves of white hip hop fans in suburbia exists even in the face of substantial opposition from other whites and blacks.

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Mike's Crossing into AAVE

- Mike lived in a wealthy New York City neighborhood and attended an exclusive private school. Mike and most of Mike's friends were white. At around age 13, he began to identify quite strongly with the hip hop culture. He wore baggy jeans, a reverse baseball cap, designer sneakers, and developed a taste for rap music.
- At around the same time he began to change the way he spoke, 'crossing' into AAVE.
- His family members said he "sounded like a street kid or hoodlum."

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Mike's Language Crossing

- Mike (age 16): You ever hear of Frank Frazetta? Dis is some phat shit, yo. Yo, when the dude dies, this book will probably be worth like a thousand dollars. Yo tell me that shit is not phat!

- C. A. Cutler (1999). Yorkville Crossing: White teens, hip hop, and African American English. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 3(4) 428-442.

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Learning Activity

- Read *The Green Suit* by Dwight Allen.
- Focus on one of the main characters (Peter Sackrider, Elvin, or Petra Saunders).
- Describe how master, interactional, personal, and relational identities are created for your character.
- How does the "direct speech" of your character and others help to create their identities?

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