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Discursive Struggles of Culture



Let me begin this chapter with an utterance from a 46-year-old man who was being interviewed about his voluntary kin, that is, those persons he regarded as family although they were unrelated to him according to the mainstream cultural metrics of biological bonds or legal ties. The interview participant was describing his relationship with Jim, a pseudonym for a member of his second family:

Well, sometimes it's difficult and challenging when they're [the members of his voluntary kin family] going through some very difficult times. Sometimes they make decisions that you wouldn't make for yourself. . . . For example, Jim, you will notice that I didn't include his partner Ron as my voluntary kin, but obviously Jim is there, Ron is there. But I think that it is a bad relationship and that's a very difficult thing to have to go through. But obviously I would never let those feelings out because Jim is an adult and can make his own decisions. But it's difficult to see people you love and support in clearly bad relationships. But all you can do is support the process. (Baxter, Braithwaite, & Bach, 2009, Interview 52)

The study participant was constructing a certain meaning for his relationship with Jim as he talked about it to the interviewer. It is, the interviewer is told, like all of his voluntary kin relationships in that it is effortful and challenging because he feels that he can't interfere when those fictive kin are experiencing difficult times that result from poor decisions. From a dialogic perspective, this participant's utterance can be conceptualized as an utterance chain—an utterance riddled with potentially competing discourses of a variety of kinds. In this chapter, I concentrate on discourses that circulate in the broader culture and that animate speaker talk as resources to help speakers and listeners (relationship partners if the utterance is part of a conversation between the two partners or, as in this instance, third parties such as interviewers) construct the meaning of that talk. As we shall see shortly, these discourses are referred to as *distal already-spoken* because they were spoken by many other cultural members in utterances that long predated either the participant's familylike relationship with Jim or the participant's relationship with the interviewer formed at the time of the interview.

The participant's talk invokes a discourse of connection in his mention of enduring "love and support" during the "difficult" process of watching Jim experience a "bad relationship" with Ron. The participant is constructing his own relationship with Jim as one of loyalty and commitment for the long haul despite its challenging nature at the time of the interview. The participant's talk invokes a second radiant in a discourse of connection by informing the interviewer that Ron is not part of his own voluntary kin network; instead, we get the sense that the participant is willing to make a sacrifice and put up with Ron's presence when he accompanies Jim. According to a discourse of connection, the participant is appropriately willing to make sacrifices on behalf of his relationship with Jim.

What makes this relationship with Jim challenging for the participant is rendered sensical by a discourse of individualism. Jim is "an adult who can make his own decisions," and voluntary kin members should respect this independence, even when it is apparent to the participant that Jim has made a poor decision in choosing Ron as his romantic partner.

This participant's talk also is animated by a discourse of discretion, one in which the decision to withhold opinions is legitimized as a positive relational act that protects Jim's right to make his own decisions. However, the participant suggests, through his use of *but*, that such discretion is frustrating for him, a frustration that makes sense to fellow cultural members who swim in a discourse of expression, in

which parties have a right to express their thoughts freely, and a discourse of rationality, in which open talk is often viewed as a means to solve problems.

Although this excerpt from a much longer interview is fairly short, it underscores the point of this, and the next, chapter: Utterances are intertextual acts—utterance chains—riddled with a myriad of competing systems of meaning that are resources that enable meaning making. According to dialogism, the utterance chain is the central building block by which meanings are made.

This chapter elaborates on the general concept of the utterance chain, distinguishing four constituent types of links in the meaning-making chain. In this chapter, I will focus in depth on one of these links—what I refer to above as the distal already-spoken link, that is, those competing discourses that originate in the culture at large and that are given voice by speakers in the process of constructing meanings in the moment. This chapter underscores that relating is a profoundly sociocultural process, in contrast to dominant approaches to interpersonal communication that tend to view relationships as isolated dyads or small groups driven by internal relational dynamics, largely psychological in nature. From a dialogic perspective, an utterance should be analyzed for the competing discourses that circulate in it instead of being understood as a window to the speaker's internal motivations, feelings or cognitions. Utterances that refer to such internal conditions are intelligible to us only through the discourses that give them meaning. In the next chapter I will examine in depth the remaining three kinds of links in the utterance chain. Throughout these two chapters, I will use the utterance chain as the organizing scaffold for discussing the major discursive struggles that can be identified in existing dialectically positioned scholarship.

❖ THE UTTERANCE CHAIN

Just as the sentence can be regarded as the basic unit of language, so speech communication is built on the foundation of the utterance (Bakhtin, 1986b, p. 73). Put simply, a single utterance is bounded by a change of speaking subjects; it is a turn at talk. However, from a dialogic perspective, an utterance is not conceptualized as an isolated communicative act that bears a one-to-one correspondence with a speaker's inner motivations, thoughts and feelings.¹ It is, instead, conceptualized as an utterance chain, and thus theoretical attention shifts from the utterance, *per se*, to the utterance chain.

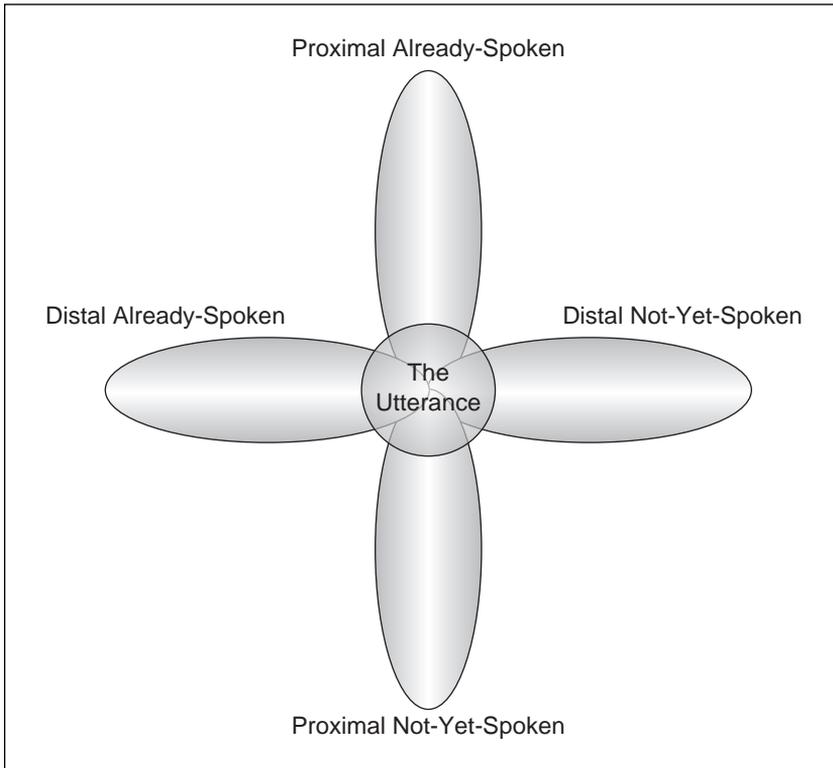
Bakhtin's (1986b) rejection of the utterance as autonomous, or independent, from other links in the utterance chain is part of the Voloshinov/Bakhtin critique of Saussure's (1983) work, discussed in Chapter 2. As Bakhtin (1986b) expressed it (this time writing under his own name):

[T]he single utterance, with all its individuality and creativity, can in no way be regarded as a *completely free combination* of forms of language, as is supposed, for example, by Saussure (and by many other linguists after him), who juxtaposed the utterance (*la parole*) as a purely individual act, to the system of language as a phenomenon that is purely social and mandatory for the individuum [individual]. (p. 81)

By contrast, argued Bakhtin (1986b), the utterance is a profoundly intertextual social unit. Simply put, each individual utterance can be thought of as the site in the utterance chain where already uttered discourses voiced by others come together with discourses anticipated in others' responses (p. 91). Meaning making happens in the utterance chain—the “chain of speech communion” as Bakhtin (p. 93) called it. A given utterance “is filled with echoes and reverberations of other utterances to which it is related” (p. 91).

Baxter and Montgomery (1996), elaborating on Bakhtin's discussion, presented a typology of four distinct forms of utterance links that are implicated in a given utterance: *distal already-spoken*, *proximal already-spoken*, *proximal not-yet-spoken*, and *distal not-yet-spoken*. Distal versus proximal captures the temporal proximity of prior (and anticipated) utterances to the immediate utterance. Figure 3.1 presents a visual metaphor of the components of the utterance chain. This flowerlike visual metaphor presents the utterance as the center, interdependent with four kinds of petals that can be understood as the four kinds of links in the utterance chain. These petals are comprised of discourses that come together in a given utterance to construct its meaning.

The distal already-spoken link in the utterance chain refers to utterances circulating in the culture at large, which are given symbolic life when voiced by speakers. As we will see below, mainstream U.S. society, like all societies, is a swirl of systems of meaning—discourses—that cultural members voice in constructing meaning. For example, imagine someone describing to a friend a new romantic relationship in this way: “We had great chemistry right away, and we're spending a lot of time together, I guess, but I want to take it kind of slowly to make sure it's the real thing. I don't want to be hurt again.” Many different cultural discourses inflect this utterance to make it understandable to the friend (and to us). The discourse of romanticism that circulates in mainstream

Figure 3.1 The Utterance Chain

American society makes understandable the description of “great chemistry” and “the real thing.” The competing discourse of rationality helps make intelligible the efforts by the speaker to proceed “kind of slowly.” The discourse of individualism provides the backdrop against which the friend is positioned to understand the speaker’s expressed desire to protect self from hurt that competes with the discourse of community through which the friend can understand the meaning of spending “a lot of time together.” Considered as a whole, the speaker’s utterance displays discursive struggle, most clearly marked by the use of “but” and the qualifiers “I guess” and “kind of.”

The proximal already-spoken link is a discursive site in which the relationship’s past meaning bumps up against the meaning of the relationship in the present. The relational meaning system—what kind of relationship the parties regard themselves as having—is always an inheritance from past interactions that serve as a backdrop for current interactions. With every utterance in a conversation, parties potentially act (consciously, or more likely unconsciously) to move the relationship

to a new state. Oftentimes, the relational meaning system of the past is simply reproduced—although never completely; the old adage that you can never step into the same river twice holds true for relational rivers as well as literal ones! However, the relationship's meaning system potentially is up for grabs with more dramatic changes, perhaps even competing relational meanings. This discursive struggle of the past and the present is examined in the next chapter.

The contrast between the already-spoken and the not-yet-spoken focuses on utterances from the past as opposed to the anticipations of not-yet-spoken utterances. Both proximal not-yet-spoken and distal not-yet-spoken examine the role of anticipated response and evaluation by others. The proximal not-yet-spoken link focuses on the interaction of speaker with the hearer and anticipates a more immediate response than the distal. The speaker is both similar to, yet different from, the hearer. Whenever a person speaks, he or she potentially anticipates the reaction or response of this similar-yet-different other and has the opportunity to fold that anticipation into the utterance itself. For example, when a person says to the partner, "I know you won't like this idea, but hear me out," the partner's difference is salient, and the speaker is attempting to deflect it in how the utterance is expressed. Difference—the divergence of speaker-hearer meaning systems—is in play with similarity—the convergence of speaker-hearer meaning systems—in the proximal not-yet-spoken. I will examine this in depth in the next chapter as part of a discussion of identity construction in relating.

The distal not-yet-spoken link moves beyond the immediate conversation between speaker and hearer to an anticipation of how generalized others—Bakhtin's (1986b) superaddressee—will respond to an utterance. At this fourth kind of link in the utterance chain, discursive struggles usually emerge as variations of the struggle between competing discourses of the conventional and the ideal—that is, struggle between different systems of meaning with respect to what is normatively regarded as the prescriptive ideal by social network members and culture in general. For example, a couple who decides to define their relationship as one of cohabitation may bump up against friends and family who reject this as a legitimate relationship form. We can hear this struggle in one party's query to the partner, "Should we tell my family about our decision to live together when we go to the family picnic this weekend? They're pretty conservative, you know, and I don't want to make a scene." The discursive struggle of normative evaluation is discussed in depth in the next chapter.

❖ DISTAL ALREADY-SPOKENS OF CULTURE

Some dialogic echoes are from already-spoken utterances by cultural members other than the parties of a given relationship. Bakhtin (1986b) referred to such utterances as already spoken “cultural communication” (p. 93). Rare indeed, claimed Bakhtin, are moments in which speakers are “biblical Adams, dealing only with virgin and still unnamed objects, giving them names for the first time” (p. 93). We enter an utterance stream already embedded in a culture that long ago named objects and developed world views—what I call *discourses*, or systems of meaning.²

These distal already-spoken discourses are ever-present in the utterances of a given conversational moment. And of course, cultural communication, like all communication, is constantly in motion, as utterances in the moment function to reconstitute culture, perhaps reproducing it but also opening space for its systems of meaning to change and evolve. If you return to the conversation that opened Chapter 1, you will recall in my abbreviated analysis mention of the discourse of friendship with two strands—one that values similarity and one that values a friendship as a unique and private dyadic unit. The discourse of friendship—and the multiple strands of meaning of which it is comprised—is one system of meaning among many that collectively comprise mainstream Anglo European U.S. culture. Whenever relationship parties engage in communication with one another or with third-party others, these cultural discourses can be heard; there is no such thing as culture-free interpersonal communication. A dialogically informed analysis of relationship communication thus begins with an identification of the distal already-spoken that interanimate talk.

Bakhtin (1981d) understood language as inherently verbally ideological: “We are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view” (p. 271). As such, one can never speak of a language, for this is a monologic conception of what a language is. Instead, Bakhtin understood language as inherently dialogic, a struggle among different ideological points of view, or what he called *heteroglossia* (p. 272). An utterance should not be analyzed as “a struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions” (p. 272). Instead, argued Bakhtin, an utterance is chained to heteroglot already-spoken:

It is entangled, shot through with shared thoughts, points of view, alien value judgments and accents. The word, directed toward its

object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic layers. . . . The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads. (pp. 276–277)

Contrary to the traditional view of culture as a unitary and coherent system, contemporary theorists of culture “take cultural disjunctions and contradictions largely for granted” (Swidler, 2001, p. 12). Bakhtin’s (1981d) view of culture aligns with these contemporary theorists; culture can be understood as a process of interanimation of multiple, often competing, verbal ideological languages. Some verbal ideologies reflect already-spoken traces from past historical epochs. Other verbal ideologies are given life in the social standpoints at play in a given conversation; that is, interaction between individuals who are gendered, raced, and classed cultural members. These verbal ideologies “are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values” (pp. 291–292).

As a way to help us concretize the distal already-spoken, I will discuss several basic discourses that circulate widely in mainstream U.S. culture. Following Quinn and Holland (1987), these cultural discourses can be understood as

presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behavior in it. (p. 4)

On its face, a cultural discourse or model bears resemblance to the concept of schemata employed by scholars of interpersonal communication who take a cognitive approach. But there is one important difference: A cultural discourse or model emphasizes the meaning constructions shared by cultural members, in contrast to the focus on the purely personal model represented by schemata (Bachen & Ellouz, 1996; Shore, 1991).

The interplay among some of these discourses helps us to understand why certain discursive struggles keep popping up in the relational dialectics theory (RDT)-based research literature, which for the most part is based on samples of middle class Anglo Americans.

My claim in this chapter is that the reason why some discursive struggles are apparently so pervasive in the research is because they voice basic circulating discourses, or systems of meaning, in mainstream U.S. society. RDT has never made a claim about the universality of dialectical tensions; in fact, there is every reason to expect that competing discourses will be culturally specific (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996). Let me turn to some of the prominent cultural discourses that circulate in mainstream U.S. society. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to a discussion of two families of discursive struggles that dominate the dialectically based research: discursive struggles of integration and discursive struggles of expression.

Some Prominent Cultural Discourses That Animate Talk in and About Relationships

The Discourse of Individualism

Because this discourse is complex and a foundation for other derivative discourses, I will discuss it in greater depth than will be characteristic of my treatment of the other discourses. In seeking to understand the habits of the heart of early Americans, Alexis de Tocqueville (1835/1969) first used the term *individualism* to refer to Americans' excessive self-interest that threatened a sense of community. Subsequently, several scholars have elaborated on the discourse of individualism. Sampson (1993), borrowing from Macpherson (1962), referred to this discourse as *possessive individualism*—a belief that the person is a self-contained, autonomous entity, “the owner of one’s own capacities and self” (p. 33). Such a belief seems natural to those of us socialized as members of contemporary mainstream U.S. culture, but it is far from a universal understanding (Geertz, 1983). Habermas (1975) argued that individualism grew hand in hand with the rise of bureaucratic state authority and capitalism. According to Sampson, individualism positions Self in opposition to Other:

The more the other is involved in the life of the person, the less the person is involved in his or her own life. . . . Others are posited as potential thieves of one’s personhood. The more others take priority, the less priority exists for the individual. (pp. 33–34)

Other is valued to the extent that he or she is serviceable to Self, serving the individual’s self-interests and sustaining his or her independence of action.

According to individualism, personhood is privately owned. Cognitions, personality traits, motivations, and other psychological

concepts are located inside the person and thus controlled exclusively by him or her. Individualism is a discourse that serves as the theoretical backdrop for much of the research in interpersonal and family communication (Lannamann, 1992, 1995); the autonomous self is positioned nonproblematically as the central mechanism of communicative production. In this research tradition, self precedes communication, rather than being constituted in communicative practices between persons.

Bellah and his colleagues (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985) have elaborated on the discourse of individualism by identifying two interdependent strands: expressive individualism and utilitarian individualism. Common to both strands of meaning is the core belief in "an autonomous self existing independently, entirely outside any tradition or community" (p. 65). Expressive individualism, epitomized in the writings of the poet Walt Whitman, emphasizes the value of self exploration and self expression. It idealizes an autonomous self who acts free of constraints and conventions, a "life rich in experience, . . . luxuriating in the sensual as well as the intellectual, above all a life of strong feeling" (p. 34). Utilitarian individualism, epitomized in the writings of Benjamin Franklin, idealizes the vigorous pursuit of self-interest with a goal of individual self-improvement and achievement.

These two strands of individualism are woven together in the mainstream American culture through the metaphor of the manager-therapist (Bellah et al., 1985). The manager-therapist role combines the ideal of the contractual give-and-take of utilitarian individualism with the ideal of expressive openness featured in expressive individualism. Individuals relate to others on hedonistic grounds in order to have their individual needs actualized. Open disclosure is valued as a means to self-actualization through others' support. The discourse of individualism, then, values Other only because of his or her serviceability to self. Individuals choose to associate with others who are similar to oneself, in what Bellah and his colleagues referred to as *lifestyle enclaves* (p. 71), thereby celebrating narcissism (p.72) through therapeutic communicative practices of reciprocal support. If others cease to be serviceable to Self's needs, they are expendable with limited sense of commitment and obligation.

In the scholarship of cross-cultural communication, a number of scholars have identified individualism-collectivism as an underlying dimension of cultural variability, with mainstream U.S. culture high in individualism (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Kluckholm & Strodbeck, 1961; Triandus, 1995). Individualism privileges the needs, values, and goals of the individual over those of the group. This cultural dimension is not conceptualized as an absolute either-or; rather, both discourses

circulate in all cultures, with one more dominant over the other (Hofstede). Thus, although the discourse of individualism is widely accepted as the dominant discourse in mainstream U. S. culture, it coexists with a discourse of collectivism.

The Discourse of Community

Bellah and colleagues (1985) have identified two interwoven strands of meaning in the mainstream U.S. cultural discourse of community: the biblical tradition epitomized in the writings of the Puritan John Winthrop, first governor of the colony of Massachusetts, and the republican tradition epitomized in the writings of Thomas Jefferson. The biblical tradition idealizes a person's obligations and responsibilities to his or her community in the service of what is morally just. This tradition values the interdependent whole in service of the collective best interests of all. Bellah and his colleagues quote from Winthrop's famous sermon, "A Model of Christian Charity" in which we are presented with the image of the "city set upon a hill" that he and fellow Puritans intended to found—a community in which "We must delight in each other, make others' conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together, always having before our eyes our community as members of the same body" (p. 28). It is this archetype, for example, that renders intelligible a view of marriage as a lifetime commitment of obligation and responsibility for the collective good not only for the couple but for the larger institution of marriage itself and the function it serves in the broader societal order. The republican tradition underscores the person's identity as a citizen with corresponding civic obligations in the public sphere. Together, these two traditions argue for placing the needs of the communal group above those of the individual person.

The Discourse of Privacy

One offshoot of the discourse of individualism is the discourse of privacy—the belief that the autonomous individual owns information and should have the right to control access to that information as she or he sees fit. In fact, this discourse provides the backdrop to Petronio's (2002) communication privacy management theory, which is devoted exclusively to understanding how persons embedded in a variety of social systems coordinate disclosure and privacy. The position of RDT is that there are many discourses that can inform the meanings surrounding acts of expression and nonexpression, including but not limited to the discourse of privacy. For example, a pair's joint effort to sustain certain topics as "taboo," that is, off limits for discussion, could be rendered

meaningful through the discursive logic of privacy (“it’s none of my partner’s business, and so we don’t talk about it”), or it could be rendered meaningful through alternative discourses, for example, a discourse of caring (“We will only hurt each other if we talk about these issues”), or a discourse of pragmatism (“We only repeat the same old arguments and don’t get anywhere, so why bother talking about it?”). The discourse of privacy, in short, is only one discourse that makes meaningful our acts of nonexpression. In mainstream U.S. society, where individualism is so dominant, the discourse of privacy may be the baseline discourse from which communicators operate. Cultural members take for granted the rights of individual ownership of information; this discourse makes understandable statements such as “It’s none of your business,” “It’s my secret and you can’t tell it,” or “I plead my Fifth Amendment rights.”

The Discourse of Rationality

Because members of mainstream U.S. society swim in a discourse of individualism, the discourse of rationality is taken for granted as the natural way to understand human action. Stated simply, this discourse presumes that if a person wants or desires something, believes that a given action is a means to attaining that something and is capable of engaging in the action, then the person will undertake the action (Rosenberg, 1988). Human actions, then, become intelligible through a means-end logic: understanding wants (the desired end) and the actions that can fulfill those wants (the means). The value attached to certainty is high in the discourse of rationality. In order to understand a person’s actions, we need certainty about the person—a capacity to predict their wants and desires. We also need certainty in predicting the person’s beliefs about which actions are appropriate in a given situation. The individual person values certainty, as well; he or she needs to be confident that outcomes predictably follow from actions. From inside the discourse of rationality, it seems only natural to speak of the importance of having goals, making plans to accomplish those goals, making wise choices, and understanding that actions have consequences.

The Discourse of Romanticism

The discourse of romanticism is a system of meaning “in which the affective component is regarded as primary and all other considerations are excluded from conscious reflection” (Spanier, 1972, pp. 481–482). This discourse makes sense in tandem with individualism, for it presumes an autonomous individual who is free to make romantic choices based on his or her internal feeling states. According to Schwartz and Bilsky (1987), the self-direction, achievement, and individual enjoyment

values of individualism are fully compatible with the discourse of romanticism, in contrast to the collectivist values of other orientation, conformity, and group-based security. Five constituent beliefs of romantic love have been identified for mainstream U.S. culture: (1) a belief that love conquers all, (2) a belief that there is for each person one and only one true love match, (3) a belief that the beloved will meet one's highest ideals, (4) a belief that love at first sight is possible, and (5) a belief that we should follow our hearts rather than our minds when choosing a partner (Knee, 1998). The discourse of romanticism, it is fair to argue, values the excitement and spontaneity of adventure. According to the discourse of romanticism, each romantic relationship is unique, never replicable. The discourse of romance also values total openness between the two soul mates as part of their totalizing immersion in one another.

Various Relationship-Specific Discourses

Discursive templates circulate throughout mainstream U.S. culture for any number of commonly identified relationships—same-sex platonic friendship, opposite-sex platonic friendship, the long-distance couple, “friends with benefits,” relationships at various stages of romantic involvement, marriage, extramarital affairs, and family, to list only a few. For the most part, scholars with a psychological orientation have studied these at the individual level of analysis and under a variety of conceptual labels, including *schema*, *prototypes*, and *lay theories*, among others. When approached at the individual level, the issue of cultural commonality is ignored, as is the issue of how these discursive templates are voiced by persons in constructing meanings.

Consider the discursive template of the “real family,” often invoked by members of stepfamilies to foreground their idealization of what a family is and thereby to construct their own stepfamily as somehow artificial, feigned, or otherwise not “real” (Baxter, Braithwaite, & Bryant, 2006). The “real family” is based on biology and law (Schneider, 1980) and is idealized to have open and honest communication that flows among all family members (Baxter, Braithwaite et al., 2006). Against this discursive construction, the stepfamily inevitably falls short, unless an alternative discursive template of family is constructed, perhaps one based on mutual affection or shared fate (e.g., Galvin, 2006). Just as the discursive construction of family is subject to competing ideologies—blood and law versus alternatives, for instance—so are the discursive constructions of other relationship types. Furthermore, discourses often clash with one another. For example, as the movie *When Harry Met Sally* suggests, a man and a woman can't be both friends and romantically

involved (or can they?). A culture's discursive templates of relating provide a backdrop of distal already-spoken that are rife with potential for dialogic struggle in the moment as parties undertake the business of defining their relationships to themselves and to third-party outsiders.

And So Forth

This short list of cultural discourses is far from exhaustive; obviously, anything about which culture speaks is part of distal already-spoken systems of meaning. My goal in this section has been simply illustrative, suggesting that whenever persons come together communicatively, they are not "biblical Adams," but instead speak with cultural traces that animate the meaning-making process with respect to relationships and individual identities within those relationships. Let's turn to two families of discursive struggle that are likely to emerge when several of these cultural discourses are put in play with and against one another: integration and expression. These two families of struggle are arguably the most frequently identified in the RDT-informed research literature. However, two caveats are necessary before I proceed.

Researchers are embedded in the cultural discourses that circulate in the society, and as I have noted above, the interpersonal communication literature is steeped in the discourse of individualism (Lannamann, 1992, 1995). Thus, it is accepted as natural to write unproblematically about individual motivations, needs, and wants, rather than discourses. In the next two sections, I have taken the liberty of translating this research literature from a heavily psychologized vocabulary to the discourses that render such references intelligible. For example, when I encountered a statement in the research such as "Participants reported feeling a tension between a desire for more time alone and a simultaneous desire for time together," I engaged in a translation process of sorts. Reference to "tension between" marks a competition. Reference to "a desire for more time alone" makes sense within a discourse of individualism, in contrast to the discourse of community that makes intelligible the reference to "a desire for time together." This translation work is more than a superficial exercise in which one vocabulary set is substituted for another. As discussed in the first two chapters, dialogism and RDT are committed on theoretical grounds to the study of the discourses that animate language use and meaning making. Reports of parties' feelings or cognitive states are intelligible to us only when they can be framed within the appropriate systems of meaning.

The second caveat is an observation about methods. In general, the dialectically informed research literature discussed in the next two sections of this chapter has drawn heavily on individual self-reports, either

in surveys (the quantitatively oriented work) or in interviews (the qualitatively oriented work). Self-reports, especially when produced through qualitative methods, can be analyzed productively as utterance chains, and I do so in the pages that follow. However, it is fair to say that the bulk of this research has tended to position self-report data as mere representational conduits for speakers' inner thoughts and feelings, rather than framing them as utterance chains. Furthermore, underrepresented in research to date are utterance chains that are implicated in the conversational exchanges between relationship parties. Reliance on self-reports overemphasizes meaning making to third parties (researchers) and provides us with limited insights into the meaning making that unfolds in the moment between relationship parties.

❖ THE DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE OF INTEGRATION

Bellah and his colleagues (1985) regarded the discourse of individualism as the first language of Americans, who speak in more muted ways in the second language of community (p. 20). Their discussion of these first and second languages nicely exemplifies Bakhtin's (1981d) notion of centripetal-centrifugal struggle between competing discourses. The discourses of individualism and community circulate as distal already-spoken in the interpersonal communication of persons socialized in the mainstream Anglo-American culture. Thus, it is hardly surprising to see traces of the discursive clash of these two verbal ideologies in RDT-based research conducted with members of this cultural group.

A number of researchers have identified a struggle of integration that elsewhere I have labeled *autonomy-connection* (Baxter, 1993): the discursive struggle between individual partner autonomy or independence, and relational connection or interdependence. This struggle clearly shows the salience of the distal already-spoken cultural discourses of individualism and community. A second discursive struggle that implicates the tension between individualism and community is what I have elsewhere labeled *inclusion-seclusion* (Baxter, 1993). In contrast to *autonomy-connection*, which locates the struggle internally within the boundaries of the relationship, *inclusion-seclusion* addresses the pair's independence from (and integration with) the social network. The more secluded a dyad is from the social network, the more the pair legitimates their dyadic autonomy and the discourse of individualism; the more embedded a dyad is with the social network, the more the pair legitimates their dyadic connection and the discourse of community. Research on these two contradictions and other variations of the discursive struggle of integration has been

studied both deductively and inductively. I will organize my discussion (and translation) of the research findings by these two approaches, for they lead us in slightly different directions.

Deductively Oriented Research

Several researchers have examined in a deductive manner what I am translating as the discursive struggle of autonomy-connection, starting with researcher-defined conceptualizations and operationalizations to which relationship parties react in an open-ended and/or a closed-ended manner. When used to solicit open-ended data, relationship parties have been presented with a description of the struggle and asked whether it was present and how it was experienced. In soliciting closed-ended data, relationship parties have been presented with a description of the struggle and asked to rate its importance on a Likert-type scale. This deductive approach has marshaled claims about the relative frequencies and importance of the autonomy-connection struggle compared to other deductively based struggles.

Consistently, the autonomy-connection struggle is reported to be both frequent and important, although its salience appears to vary by temporal issues related to where the relationship is in its developmental course and by communication event. In particular, the autonomy-connection struggle has been reported more frequently than other deductively defined struggles for romantic relationships (Baxter, 1990), marital relationships (Pawlowski, 1998), and postdivorced pairs (Graham, 2003). Furthermore, the autonomy-connection struggle has been perceived by relational partners as highly important in both romantic relationships (Baxter & Erbert, 1999) and marital relationships (Pawlowski). Among romantic pairs, the frequency of the autonomy-connection struggle appears to increase as a relationship's development progresses (Baxter), although for marital partners the frequency of this struggle appears to be greatest in the beginning stages of relationship development (Pawlowski). Autonomy-connection appears to be a common, and important, underlying theme as parties make retrospective sense of a variety of types of turning point events—events that function to propel the relationship toward, or away from, closeness (Baxter & Erbert). In addition, autonomy-connection appears to be an underlying theme in many marital conflicts (Erbert, 2000).

A smaller body of research has examined the inclusion-seclusion struggle in a deductive manner that parallels the study of the autonomy-connection struggle. Although Pawlowski (1998) found that her married participants reported frequent struggles with inclusion-seclusion and

rated the importance of inclusion-seclusion at a level comparable to autonomy-connection, Baxter and Erbert (1999) found that romantic partners rated inclusion-seclusion important in only a subset of turning point events in their relationships' development. In particular, events that involved issues of external competition for the affection of the parties, dyadic quality time away from others, and making up events following conflict featured the salience of inclusion-seclusion struggle. Erbert (2000) found that inclusion-seclusion was salient for marital conflicts that involved decisions about holidays and time use.

Although I have authored studies in this deductive tradition early in my engagement with RDT, I have shifted over time to favor an inductive, qualitative approach to the study of this and other discursive struggles. I have been persuaded by two limitations with the deductive approach. First, although the descriptions of the integration dialectic are similar from study to study at an abstract level, they are far from identical at a particular level. Some wordings are more individually centered (descriptions of intra-individual tension), whereas others are more centered in the relationship (descriptions of shared tension or tension between relationship parties). Some wordings focus on the organization of time spent alone/together, whereas others emphasize identity constructions. There is substantial room for oversimplification when researchers gloss over these differences to infer more general claims about the autonomy-connection or inclusion-seclusion struggles. The inductive, qualitative work allows us to infer the various strands of meaning at play within the broader discourses of individualism and community. Furthermore, as I have noted above, both the deductive and inductive research in general positions the combatants in struggle as psychological characteristics (motivations, needs, and wants) rather than discourses. Thus, translation work was needed on my part to focus on the discourses that render such psychologized descriptions intelligible. I turn now to this cluster of inductively based work, because it underscores the multivocal ways in which the discursive interanimation of individualism and community organizes meaning making in talk.

Inductively Oriented Research

The bulk of the research has taken an inductive approach, examining issues relevant to the discursive struggle of integration in enacting a wide range of relationships. Heterosexual dating and romantic relationships among younger adults have garnered substantial research attention (Baxter, Braithwaite et al., 1997; Chornet Roses, 2006; Feeney, 1999; Feeney & Noller, 1991; Sahlstein & Dun, 2008), as have dating and

romantic relationships among older adults (Aleman, 2003, 2005; Dickson, Hughes, & Walker, 2005). The discursive struggle of individualism and community can be identified in the dialectically informed research on the enactment of long-distance relationships (Sahlstein, 2004, 2006; Stafford & Merolla, 2007; Stafford, Merolla, & Castle, 2006), marital relationships (Baxter & Braithwaite, 2002; Hays, 1996; Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002; Kline, Stafford, & Miklosovic, 1996; Kvigne & Kirkevold, 2003; Medved & Graham, 2006; Pawlowski, 2006; Sahlstein & Baxter, 2001; Stafford & Kline, 1996), lesbian relationships (Suter, Bergen, Daas, & Durham, 2006; Suter & Daas, 2007), and relationships between ex-spouses (Graham, 1997, 2003; Masheter, 1994; Schrodt, Baxter, McBride, Braithwaite, & Fine, 2006). The discursive struggle of individualism and community can also be identified in the dialectically based work on the enactment of friendship among young adults (Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Johnson, Wittenberg, Villagran, M., Mazur, & Villagran, P., 2003; Rawlins, 1983a, 1989, 1992; Sias, Heath, Perry, Silva, & Fix, 2004) and the enactment of sociality for persons who reside in retirement communities (Aleman, 2001; Williams & Guendouzi, 2000). The enactment of a variety of family relationships also appears to be animated by a discursive struggle of individualism and community, including parent-child relationships (Afifi, 2003; Afifi & Keith, 2004; Baxter, Hirokawa, Lowe, Pearce & Nathan, 2004; Braithwaite & Baxter, 2006; Braithwaite, Toller, Daas, Durham, & Jones, 2008; Miller-Day, 2004; Penington, 2004; Pitts, Fowler, Kaplan, Nussbaum, & Becker, 2009; Stamp, 1994; Stamp & Banski, 1992); grandparent-grandchild relationships (Erbert & Aleman, 2008), stepparent-stepchild relationships (Baxter, Braithwaite, et al., 2004; Cissna, Cox, & Bochner, 1990), relationships with in-laws (Prentice, 2009), and voluntary or fictive kin relationships (Baxter, Braithwaite et al., 2009).

Taken as a whole, these studies underscore the importance of appreciating subtle differences in how the discursive struggle of individualism and community plays itself out in constructing meaning. Rather than present a detailed treatment of this body of work organized by relationship type, I emphasize instead a more selective discussion of some studies in order to illuminate the various radiants of meaning (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996) in the struggle between discourses of individualism and community. Although the discursive struggle of integration can be reduced to a simple binary (as the deductively oriented work demonstrates), it is important to appreciate that the discourses of individualism and community interpenetrate along multiple radiants of meaning. I have identified nine different radiants of meaning in the research relevant to the discursive struggle of integration.

*Individual Identity Construction
Surrounding Physical (In)Dependence*

The discursive struggle of individualism and community surfaces in some of the research as a matter of identity construction in relating, specifically, the extent to which one's personal identity is that of an autonomous, independent being as opposed to a personal identity as someone who is physically dependent upon others. Clearly, constructing an identity as an autonomous being draws upon the discourse of individualism. An identity as a dependent being implicates the discourse of community in that the individual is understood as inherently interdependent with others rather than independent from others. This radiant of meaning features prominently in the dialectically based research with older adults who are experiencing physical decline associated with advanced aging or the loss of independence associated with major illness.

For example, this radiant of meaning can be identified in Williams and Guendouzi's (2000) study among older residents of a retirement community. With respect to relationships outside of the community—family and friends who did not reside in the retirement home—elderly residents constructed an identity of autonomy; these social network members were no longer actively involved in providing day-to-day care, which liberated the residents' identities to emphasize self as an independent adult. At the same time, the physical decline of their bodies constructed identities of dependence with staff members within the residential home. Residents thus had multiple identities depending on the person with whom they were relating, and even exchanges with staff members were sensitive to the importance of sustaining an identity of independence in residents to the extent possible.

Two dialectically informed studies have focused on older survivors of stroke (Kvigne & Kirkevold, 2003; Pawlowski, 2006) in which struggles of meaning unfolded with respect to identity construction as independent versus dependent beings. Stroke victims experienced physical problems that required very concrete forms of assistance from their spouses and other caregivers in order to function on a daily basis, yet this bodily dependence struggled with a competing identity as an independent adult; stroke victims did not wish to be seen as burdens on their families or as helpless persons. The support from caregivers was seen as an act of love, but it risked at the same time the prospect of threatening the victim's identity as a functioning, contributing adult member of the family.

*Individual Identity Construction
as Coupled or Free of Commitment*

This radiant of meaning implicates individual identity construction as (in)dependent, but the basis of that (in)dependence is emotional and social rather than physical. The studies in which this form of the discursive struggle of individualism and community can be identified also implicate the discourse of romance and tend to be concentrated in the dating research, although not exclusively so.

An example from the dating research is a study of later-life women by Dickson and her colleagues (2005). The researchers found that their sample of women cherished their identities as independent women, and they expressed fear of losing monetary independence and assuming the burdens of a caretaking role if they became too interdependent with a later-life man. The women found themselves resisting their dating partner's desire for marriage, preferring instead a companionship without long-term commitments. These identity concerns make sense to us from the perspective of the discourse of individualism. Yet at the same time, these women were attracted to the idealization of romance and expressed a desire for interdependence and the affection, intimacy, and companionship it afforded. Discourses of community and romance make these women's feelings comprehensible to us.

Identity as part of a couple features as a radiant of meaning in the marital research, as well. For example, the selection of a surname upon marriage—wife adopts husband's last name, wife keeps her own surname, or the couple adopts a hyphenated surname—appears to implicate discourses of individual identity and couple identity for women more so than men (Kline et al., 1996; Stafford & Kline, 1996). Women who elect to keep their own surname are concerned about their autonomous identity independent from the spouse. Ironically, for some women, that autonomous identity from the husband is constructed by drawing upon a discourse of community in which they keep their maiden names as a way to honor their own family heritage.

Individual identity can also be identified as a radiant of meaning in the discursive struggle of individualism and community among mothers and daughters. As Miller-Day (2004) has eloquently expressed, the relationship between mothers and daughters is one of "velvet chains" (p. 3), "a loving one that seems to bind women together across generations, even while they pursue separate identities" (p. xii). Miller-Day's study of three generations of women found that the process of developing an identity that is differentiated from the mother while still remaining emotionally close to her is a life-long project riddled with many dangers that

range from the inability to separate (enmeshment) to emotional and behavioral estrangement.

*Voluntary Versus Involuntary
Interdependence With a Relational Other*

The discourse of individualism presumes that individuals have full choice in their selection of relational partners. However, the discourse of community emphasizes membership in a larger social group where choice may be constrained. This radiant of meaning is emphasized in research on nonvoluntary relationships (Hess, 2000, 2002) such as families. In instances where family members don't necessarily like one another, they are still stuck with each other.

This discursive tension between choice and constraint in the selection of others with whom one is interdependent can be heard in the talk of ex-spouses (Graham, 1997, 2003; Masheter, 1994) who continue to grapple with issues of behavioral interdependence involving coparenting. Although the marriage is voluntarily dissolved, the mutual biogenetic or adoptive link to the child is ongoing, and thus so is the coparenting relationship between ex-spouses.

This voluntary/nonvoluntary radiant of meaning can also be heard in the talk of stepfamily members. For example, Cissna et al. (1990) identified a basic discursive struggle between the marital and stepparent relationships. The adults voluntarily entered into their marriage, and they emphasized the importance of establishing the solidarity of that relationship, including communicating to the children that their marriage would come first in the family. At the same time, the marriage event created a nonvoluntary relationship between the stepparent and the stepchild. This relationship was regarded as very challenging, as efforts to create a legitimated bond of trust between stepparent and stepchild bumped up against the forced status.

Emotional Distance and Closeness

The discursive struggle of individualism and community also is played out on an emotional plane with separation and integration framed, respectively, in terms of emotional distance and closeness between relating parties. Although emotions are represented as internal states of individuals in this research, what renders them intelligible to hearers is their framing within discursive systems of meaning.

An example of this emotional radiant of meaning can be found in a study by Baxter and her colleagues (Baxter, Braithwaite et al., 2004) in

which they sought to understand the stepparent-stepchild relationship from the stepchild's perspective. The researchers identified a dialectic of integration framed around issues of emotional distance and emotional closeness. On the one hand, stepchildren spoke of an awkward emotional distancing from the stepparent that purportedly was the result of several factors, including the stepparent's outsider status to the family, a felt loyalty to the nonresidential parent, and a feeling that the stepparent was a wedge between them and the residential parent. On the other hand, stepchildren spoke of desired or actual emotional closeness to the stepparent that resulted from the observation that the stepparent had provided them with parent-like care giving and had made the residential parent happier.

Self-Interests Versus Others' Interests

In some dialectically informed research, the discursive struggle of individualism and community is evident in a radiant of meaning surrounding priority to one party's self-interests as opposed to giving priority to the partner's interests. Giving priority to the individual's self-interests is an act legitimated within a discourse of individualism, whereas an other-orientation that gives priority to the needs and interests of the other is intelligible from a discourse of community.

An example of this radiant of meaning comes from a study by Baxter and her colleagues (Baxter, Hirokawa et al., 2004) among a population of low-income, rural Iowan women in their decision making about alcohol consumption during pregnancy. These women were socialized to a cultural discourse of individualism that values individual choice in how to think and act, including a pregnant woman's decision about whether to drink alcohol. Because this decision was an autonomous one, it was deemed inappropriate for others to interfere and try to influence her drinking. The discourse of individualism underscored self-interest, allowing a pregnant woman a discourse of justification of her choice to drink during her pregnancy because of the benefits it provided to her (e.g., a release from stress). Competing with the discourse of individualism was a discourse of responsible motherhood, grounded in the cultural discourse of community. According to the discourse of responsible motherhood, motherhood begins with the pregnancy. With motherhood comes the moral obligation and responsibility to place the fetus's needs as primary. A mother who fails to do everything possible to protect her unborn baby from risks (e.g., fetal alcohol syndrome) is being selfish and irresponsible. According to the discourse of responsible motherhood, a mother is socially accountable for her actions, and others are given social license to hold a mother accountable for her actions.

A second illustration of self-interests versus other-interests comes from a study of successive generation planning among farming families (Pitts et al., 2009). On the one hand, the senior generation is drawn to a discourse of individualism in seeking to maximize their profits in the sale of the farm, thereby assuring their retirement income. At the same time, the discourse of community renders intelligible the competing interest of selling low in order to maximize the affordability of the farm to the younger generation family member(s).

Competing Individual Rights

This radiant of meaning is similar to the self-interests/other-interests radiant just discussed, in that the issue is whether self will be privileged above other. However, competition of self and other is made meaningful in a vocabulary of rights as opposed to a vocabulary of needs and wants, benefits and rewards, and sacrifices and costs, as typifies the radiant of meaning surrounding self versus other interests. The rights radiant implicates talk of entitlements, prerogatives, infringements, and (in)justice.

This struggle can be heard, for example, in ex-partner talk about the meaning of the divorce decree (Schrodt et al., 2006). Some ex-partners emphasized their individual rights in coparenting, invoking a meaning of the divorce decree as a legal contract that can be invoked as a mechanism to protect those rights and interests. Other ex-partners emphasized their ongoing interdependence with the former spouse as a member of a co-parenting team; these ex-spouses were more likely to invoke a meaning of the divorce decree as a heuristic guide to coparenting decisions but to be used with flexibility in response to the needs of the individuals involved. The coparenting team is a construct that is meaningful from within a discourse of community.

Competing Demands on Time and Energy

The discursive struggle between individualism and community often is defined as a competition between competing demands for time and energy for the relationship parties. The discourse of community privileges spending time and investing energy in the relational partner, whereas the discourse of individualism privileges a decision by a person to honor the other demands on his or her time and energy.

Illustrative of this meaning strand within the discursive struggle of integration is the work by Stamp and his colleague (Stamp, 1994; Stamp & Banski, 1992) on the transition to parental status in married couples. Whereas the spouses could devote their relational energies exclusively

to the marriage before the birth of the baby, the baby's birth presents a competing focus of time and energy as spouses enact the labor-intensive role of parent. Paradoxically, execution of the parenting role requires increased coordination efforts and interdependence between the adults as parents, yet at the same time limits their interactions as husband and wife. The partners construct their parenting roles and their spousal roles as a matter of competing demands on their time and energy in a zero-sum manner; time devoted to their individual role as a parent is framed as time away from the dyadic community of their marriage.

Also illustrative of this radiant of meaning is the research on competing demands for time and energy in fulfilling both home and work obligations. As the demographic profile of the American family increasingly evidences workforce participation by both spouses, the married couple faces the discursive struggle of sustaining both private life (marriage and family) and work outside the home (Hays, 1996). Individual achievement is valued and expected in the world of work, yet, especially for women (Medved & Graham, 2006), this is often in competition for the communal liens on time and energy associated with enacting spousal and parenting roles on the home front.

Time together versus time apart also is a core radiant of meaning in the enactment of long-distance relationships. In analyzing couple talk about their long-distance romantic relationship, Sahlstein (2004) identified complex ways in which separation from the partner was in play with and against proximal togetherness. Partners legitimated their time apart from within a discourse of individualism, emphasizing how alone time serviced their individual life commitments such as work and embracing their own individual interests without regard to the partner's preferences. However, the absent partner was a social ghost of sorts, ever-present and sometimes complicating social network relations for individuals as they conducted their separate lives. Togetherness was legitimated from within a discourse of community; it was a time to emphasize couple time, yet the ghost that was ever-present for the partners was the realization that they each had another, independent life.

Competing Loyalty Demands

A related radiant of meaning in the discursive struggle of individualism and community is that of competing expectations of loyalty. Often, how a person spends his or her time and energy is regarded as a marker of loyalty, but loyalty is enacted (and violated) in ways other

than time/energy expenditure. For example, Baxter and her colleagues (1997) identified, among both platonic friends and romantic partners, a struggle surrounding “taking sides.” On the one hand, the discourse of community implicates an expectation to defend one’s partner in the presence of criticism or opposition from others; yet, at the same time, embedded in the same discourse of community, those others similarly expect loyalty to them and thus taking their side. Rather than privilege the discourse of individualism, in which the individual is legitimated for taking positions and sides based on his or her own autonomous decision-making process, the person is caught in the privileged discourse of community, with all parties feeling betrayed because loyalty to one person is framed as disloyalty to another.

Participants in this study gave voice to a second kind of loyalty struggle with respect to whether to form a relationship with a third party that would garner the disapproval of the current relationship partner. On the one hand, according to the discourse of individualism, partners cannot monopolize one another’s autonomous decision about who is in or out of their respective social networks; yet, within the discursive frame of community, parties feel comfortable making claims about others with whom the partner affiliates.

Dyadic Segregation and Integration

In contrast to the prior eight radiants of meaning—in which the interplay of autonomy from, and connection with, the relational partner is centered—this final radiant of meaning constructs the boundary between the relationship as a unit and others outside of that unit by focusing on the independence or connection of the relationship pair with others. Whereas the first eight radiants of meaning are relevant to Baxter’s (1993) autonomy-connection struggle, this radiant corresponds to the inclusion-seclusion struggle.

Illustrative of this struggle is Prentice’s (2009) study of relationships between married couples and their in-laws. Intelligible within a discourse of individualism, married couples expressed a desire to spend time alone as a couple, free of obligations to the in-law relations. Yet at the same time, these married couples attended to a cultural discourse of community that makes sense of their feelings of responsibility to the larger extended family beyond the boundary of their nuclear family unit. At once separate from, yet integrated with, the larger familial unit of in-law relations, these couples reported ongoing balancing between these competing commitments.

Cultural Variations

We have limited insight into cultural variations in the discursive struggle of integration. An interesting exception is a study of platonic friendships among Taiwanese international students studying in the United States (Chen, Drzewiecka, & Sias, 2001) in which the researchers identified a knot of discursive struggles, many evidencing the culture-specific nature of friendship. Because the Taiwanese culture emphasizes friendship within the group of a larger social circle, the study's participants voiced tensions that related to group membership. Interdependence among friendship group members involves an expectation to provide mutual aid and care, called *gan qing*, and often implicates the related concept of *ren qing*, the asking and giving of favors. Although these participants benefitted personally from *gan qing*, they also articulated constraints imposed by the expected interdependency and its social obligations. Some participants expressed resentment because their group membership tied them to features of Taiwanese culture that they didn't like and were trying to escape from; yet, at the same time, the group was a source of the familiar and thus comforting. Participants also spoke of feeling caught between various dyadic friendship disputes that could erupt in the larger group, thereby requiring complex negotiations of loyalty to multiple individuals at the same time.

Fitch's (1998) in-depth ethnographic study of interpersonal connection in Colombia underscores, as well, the cultural variability that surrounds the discursive struggle of integration. In Colombia, Fitch argued, persons are defined in large measure through their web of connections; in this cultural discourse of community, individuals are evaluated based on how well they sustain and show the importance of their connections. Because people have a large number of varied types of connections, inevitable struggles emerge in which responsibilities to one relationship conflict with the expectations of other relational partners. While this struggle of loyalties appears similar to struggles identified in the U.S.-based research with respect to how a given relational pair integrates with the social network, it is culturally different because the very identity of the Colombian person is built on a scaffold of connection in a way that is quite different from the American discourse of individualism. In fact, argued Fitch,

When describing relational *partners*, Colombians seemed often to envision a larger cast of participants than North Americans do. Friendship seems to happen more commonly in groups than in dyads, for example, and references to "my family" almost certainly include extended family in most cases. Even romantic partnerships and

marriage may be less intrinsically conceptualized as dyadic arrangements in Colombia. . . . It could be that the dyadic emphasis of much personal relationships research in the United States is a further reverberation of individualistic bias. (pp. 178–179)

Once the conception of a relationship as a dyadic phenomenon is problematized, struggles of integration and separation between two partners and with the larger social web take on very different meanings.

Summary

I have devoted substantial space to the discursive struggle of integration because of the size and scope of the relevant research to date. This struggle varies by culture, as the Chen et al. (2001) and Fitch (1998) research studies nicely illustrate. For members of mainstream U.S. society, the struggle of individualism and community probably occupies the primary discursive motif that organizes all of our communicative practices; its pervasiveness cannot easily be ignored in the meaning-making process. Although this discursive struggle can be studied at an abstract level, where subtle nuanced differences are glossed, I have emphasized the polysemy of this struggle in identifying nine different radiants of meaning.

My treatment of the discursive struggle of integration has been oversimplified in its suggestion that individualism and community can be isolated from a larger discursive web. From a dialogic perspective, communicative life is riddled with a myriad of discourses, all in play with and against one another at the same time. This web or knot of discursive multiplicity is important to appreciate and understand. I turn next to the dialogic struggle of expression, which is often at play with individualism and community, because parties' communicative actions to regulate information are a frequent way in which individualism and community are negotiated.

❖ THE DISCURSIVE STRUGGLE OF EXPRESSION

I start this section by drawing upon the distinction between a twitch and a wink, as described by Geertz (1973, p. 6), who asked his reader to consider

two boys rapidly contracting the eyelids of their right eyes. In one, this is an involuntary twitch; in the other a conspiratorial signal to a friend. The two movements are, as movements, identical; from an

I-am-a-camera, “phenomenalistic” observation of them alone, one could not tell which was twitch and which was wink, or indeed whether both or either was twitch or wink. Yet the difference, however unphotographable, between a twitch and a wink is vast; as anyone unfortunate enough to have had the first taken for the second knows. (p. 6)

The twitch-wink distinction is one of meaning; while the wink is a meaningful communicative gesture of a conspiratorial nature, a twitch is meaningful merely as an involuntary movement.

Similarly, we can engage in a parallel analysis of a communicator’s action to express or to refrain from expression. When a communicator refrains from expression, its meaning can be varied. It might become meaningful through the discourse of privacy, in which case the gesture of nonexpression is understood as an instance of protecting one’s rights to privacy. However, refraining from expression can also be made meaningful through the discourse of rationality; not everything needs to be made explicit, and some thoughts can most efficiently and effectively be communicated through taken-for-granted unsaid elements in the communication situation. Other efforts to refrain from expression can be rendered meaningful through the discourse of community; in enacting discretion, parties can protect one another’s face and sustain their often fragile social connection. Still other instances of nonexpression become intelligible through the discourse of utilitarian individualism; an individual may refrain from expression in order to serve his or her self-interests in some way, for example, preventing a past mistake in judgment from coming to light.

And what about acts of expression? They, too, can be made meaningful in different ways, depending on the salient discourses within which they are framed. Some acts of expression implicate the discourse of expressive individualism, manifesting one’s right to freedom of expression through catharsis. Some acts of expression implicate a discourse of utilitarian individualism—intelligible to us as acts of impression management in which parties attempt to put forth a positive image of themselves for others’ consumption. Other acts of expression can be rendered intelligible within the discourse of community. For example, Bakhtin’s (1993) notion of answerability, introduced in Chapter 2, argues that we are ethically bound to respond to one another and give them the gift of our otherness—our excess of seeing. For example, a parent may feel obligated to give advice to a child as a way to help him or her grow as an individual.

We could doubtless identify other discourses at play in the meanings associated with acts of expression and acts of nonexpression. However, true to the dialogic spirit, discourses often compete with one another, thereby resulting in dialogic struggles of expression. Research on *expression-nonexpression*, *openness-closedness*, *disclosure-privacy*, among other terms frequently invoked by researchers, has often ignored these differences in meaning; for all intents and purposes, research on the discursive struggle of expression has reduced it to a behavioral dilemma: to be open or not. This glossing of possible differences in meaning can be understood as the equivalent of conflating a twitch and a wink, focusing on the behavior of (non)expression rather than viewing the act as a meaningful symbolic gesture.

My early quantitatively oriented work was guilty of this conflation, as is other deductively oriented, quantitative work on expression-nonexpression. I will organize the research findings related to the discursive struggle of expression in a manner parallel to the discussion of integration above.

Deductively Oriented Research

Baxter (1990) tackled the expression dialectic in developing romantic relationships by differentiating openness-closedness from revelation-concealment. The former referred to what relationship parties say and what they don't say to one another. By contrast, the revelation-concealment dialectic focused on what a couple says and doesn't say about their relationship to outsiders. She solicited participant open-ended recollections of the openness-closedness dialectic between partners by asking participants to focus on their individual behavioral choices between talking openly and not talking openly. Results of the 1990 study indicated that this dialectic was present throughout the development of a romantic relationship, but it was especially frequent during the initial stage of formation. Although this study informs us about frequency of a behavioral dilemma for participants, it fails to address expression-nonexpression as a discursive struggle—that is, a symbolic act that contributes to meaning making.

Baxter and Erbert (1999) followed up on this study by soliciting turning points of relationship development for romantic partners, asking participants in their study to indicate on 1–5 scales the importance of a variety of dialectics at each identified turning point. As with the Baxter (1990) study, they presented participants with a definition of openness and closedness that focused on behavioral dilemmas rather

than struggles of meaning. When this contradiction of expression manifested itself as a matter of how open to be with persons outside the relationship, a contradiction of revelation and concealment, it was similarly described as a behavioral dilemma.

Respondents reported that openness-closedness was a pervasive dilemma in participant retrospective accounts of the development of their romantic relationships. However, results were suggestive of possible differences in the meanings attached to nonexpression. For example, closedness in the turning point of quality time—occasions when the partners went off by themselves, apart from others, to experience intensive couple time—appeared to be framed as celebrations of the unsaid beauty of the moment. This hints at discourses of rationality and of romance in which words are regarded as unnecessary and arguably damaging to the romance of the event. By contrast, closedness in the turning point of external competition—when at least one party faced competing demands on time and resources—was commonly framed through discourses of community (other-oriented protection) or utilitarian individualism (self-interested protection). Network interactions—turning points in the relationship's development that were driven by interactions with third party outsiders (e.g., advice from friends, pressure from family)—were likely to be important developmental points for the revelation-concealment dialectic, but the study does not inform us about how this tension functioned as a discursive struggle of meaning.

Although these researchers suggested the value of shifting from behavioral dilemmas to struggles between meaningful symbolic acts, especially in light of their findings with respect to the different meanings of closedness depending on the type of turning point, the study failed to advance much beyond the behavioral choice to talk or not to talk.

Pawlowski's (1998) study of marital partners' accounts of their relationship's development at beginning, middle, and developed stages focused on both openness/closedness and revelation/concealment dialectics, modeling the description of these contradictions after Baxter's (1990) study. That is, expression-nonexpression was presented as a matter of behavioral choice. She found that openness/closedness was evident across all developmental stages, but it was most frequently reported during the middle stage of relationship development. Overall, openness/closedness was rated by her participants as the most important of all of the contradictions studied. Revelation/concealment, by contrast, was relatively infrequent among her participants; however, wives rated this contradiction of greater importance than did husbands.

Erbert's (2000) study of marital couple's conflicts presented participants with a priori definitions of contradictions in order to discern their centrality to reported conflicts during the past year of marriage. He modeled his definitions after those employed in the Baxter and Erbert (1999) study, finding that openness/closedness joined autonomy-connection as the two most central contradictions that animated marital conflict.

The last of the deductively oriented studies to be discussed is Graham's (2003) study of the frequency with which several basic contradictions were identified in the turning points retrospectively identified by participants in their postmarital relationships. Graham modeled her a priori definitions of contradictions after Baxter's (1990) study; that is, expression-nonexpression was presented as a behavioral dilemma of talking or not talking. Openness/closedness was not as salient as the other two contradictions under study. Graham's examples hint at the possible discursive struggles that underpinned the behavioral dilemma of talking or not talking, but we lack systematic understanding of the meanings of these behavioral choices. For example, the discourse of rationality appears to underpin her participants' discussion of safe and pleasant conversations and how these functioned to bring an end to having the same fight (p. 209). Her quoted examples also hint at the discourse of privacy as a framing of closedness, as partners sought to establish their new identities apart from their former partners. However, in the end, this study failed to move beyond the behavioral dilemma of talking or not talking, consistent with the other deductively oriented work reviewed in this section.

Substantial deductively based, quantitative work has examined the phenomenon of topic avoidance, that is, respondents' self-report of the frequency with which they avoid talking about certain topics with specified recipient-targets (e.g., Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Afifi & Guerrero, 1998, 2000; Baxter & Wilmot, 1985; Dailey & Palomares, 2004; Golish, 2000; Golish & Caughlin, 2002; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995b; Roloff & Ifert, 1998, 2000; Sargent, 2002). From the dialogic perspective of RDT, this body of work can be criticized on two counts. First, it fails to examine the struggle between expression and nonexpression, focusing exclusively on nonexpression in the form of topic avoidance. This is analogous to one-handed clapping, in that it ignores the other hand—expression in this instance. Low reported frequencies of topic avoidance cannot be regarded as the equivalent of expression. Second, this body of work shares with other deductively oriented research discussed in this section a focus on avoidance as a behavioral choice rather than a meaningful symbolic act.

Some of this research has examined motivations for topic avoidance (e.g., Afifi & Burgoon, 1998; Caughlin & Afifi, 2004; Guerrero & Afifi, 1995a), finding that individuals report a variety of motivations for topic avoidance, including self-protection, other-protection, relationship-protection, partner unresponsiveness, conflict avoidance, desire for privacy, lack of closeness, and social appropriateness. These motivations are relevant to some of the underlying discourses identified above. Self-protection and social inappropriateness, for example, make sense inside a discourse of utilitarian individualism; protection of the other party and of the relationship appear relevant to a discourse of community; and partner unresponsiveness and conflict avoidance seem to invoke a discourse of rationality. Other research in the topic avoidance tradition is framed using Petronio's (1991) communication privacy management theory, which implies an underlying motivation of privacy and its obvious link to a discourse of privacy (e.g., Caughlin et al., 2000); but much of this research presumes privacy as the underlying system of meaning when, in fact, the data are only self-reports of behaviors of openness or closedness.

The work on reasons for topic avoidance joins a larger research tradition in which reasons for disclosure and reasons for concealment have been examined (e.g., Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Derlega, Metts, Petronio, & Margulis, 1993; Rosenfeld, 1979; Rosenfeld & Kendrick, 1984). However, motivations or reasons, which reside inside individual minds, are not the same as symbolic acts that are enacted socially. What motivates a given speaker's action may play a role in rendering it meaningful, if that motivation becomes known to, or is inferred by, the listener as a reason for that action. In fact, Caughlin and Afifi (2004) have found that attributed motives for topic avoidance on the part of self and by the partner mediate relationship satisfaction. But being motivated in a certain way doesn't necessarily result in meaning that will be legitimized for the action as communication unfolds. Although Partner A may intend to protect his or her right to privacy, an instance of topic avoidance may be heard instead as a self-interested act designed to protect A from criticism. Thus, the topic avoidance research, in general, fails to inform us about the meanings of topic avoidance in the communication between interlocutors. Of course, some individuals may be so artful at avoiding topics that their interaction partners are oblivious that an act of avoidance is being attempted. However, if partners perceive that a topic is being skirted, topic avoidance becomes a meaningful act between the parties and subject to meaning making. The same argument can be advanced with respect to disclosure—it can be rendered meaningful between parties as an act of catharsis, a self-interested

matter of impression management, delivery of a relational obligation, and so forth.

In addition, the work on motivations/reasons is from a researcher's point of view; open-ended qualitatively oriented work holds greater potential for insights about the reasons for behavioral choices from the perspective of the relationship parties themselves. Nonetheless, the deductively centered work on reasons for topic avoidance/disclosure is a step in the right direction toward understanding how expression and nonexpression could be rendered meaningful by parties as they communicate.

In contrast to the body of deductive and quantitative research summarized in this section stands more inductively based qualitative work. To a much greater extent, this body of work informs us about the discursive struggle of expression and nonexpression—at least how relationship parties construct that struggle to third-party interviewers, and I turn to a discussion of it next.

Inductively Oriented Research

Insights into the discursive struggle of expression can be gained from the dialectically informed research on dating and romantic relationships (Baxter, Braithwaite et al., 1997; Baxter & Widenmann, 1993; Chornet Roses, 2006; Derlega, Winstead, & Folk-Barron, 2000); long-distance romantic relationships (Sahlstein, 2004); married couples (Baxter, Braithwaite, Golish, & Olson, 2002; Braithwaite & Baxter, 1995, 2006; Hoppe-Nagao & Ting-Toomey, 2002; Stamp, 2004); lesbian relationships (Suter et al., 2006; Suter & Daas, 2007); parent-child relationships (Braithwaite et al., 2008; Miller-Day, 2004; Pitts et al., 2009); grandparent-grandchild relationships (Erbert & Aleman, 2008); in-law relationships (Prentice, 2009); stepparent-stepchild relationships (Baxter, Braithwaite, et al., 2004); friendships (Bridge & Baxter, 1992; Rawlins, 1983b, 1989, 1992); and social network relationships more generally (Baxter, Hirokawa, et al., 2004; Ford, Ray, & Ellis, 1999; Foster, 2005).

Five discourses can be heard in (non)expression understood as a meaningful symbolic act: individualism, community, romance, rationality, and privacy. In many instances, these discourses are competing with one another in the valenced meaning that is constructed for expression and nonexpression. However, quite frequently, a single discourse ruptures, and it appears to compete with itself. That is, a disjuncture erupts within a discourse and renders meaningful both acts of expression and acts of nonexpression. Discursive disjunctures can be identified in the research relevant to integration, as well, but they are

much more common in the discursive struggle of expression. They productively remind us that a discourse may not function as a unitary system of meaning characterized by seamless coherence. Instead, as noted by Billig and his colleagues (1988), discourse may “contain its own negations” (p. 23). “Discourse,” they claimed, “which seems to be arguing for one point may contain implicit meanings which could be made explicit to argue for the counter-point” (p. 23). In this section I will continue the practice I employed in reviewing (and translating) the research on integration, opting for illustrative studies to discuss rather than providing an exhaustive summary of all of the research.

Disjuncture Within a Discourse

Discursive disjunctures are especially prominent in the research in which the discourse of individualism is in play, especially the radiants of meaning surrounding rights and interests. However, discourses of community and rationality also feature disjunctures. An illustration of such semantic fragmentation is found in Foster’s (2005) moving autoethnographic analysis of the discourses about motherhood that circulate in the public sphere and in the private sphere; a discourse of self-interested individualism appears to legitimate both secrecy and disclosure. The researcher observed that the canonical narratives of motherhood that circulate in both public and private spheres legitimate a woman’s secrecy with respect to her experiences with pregnancy, particularly personal experiences with unanticipated loss through miscarriage and unanticipated pregnancy. Such silencing of talk about these personal experiences is legitimated, in part, through the discourse of utilitarian individualism—the belief that a woman could experience hurt and nonsupport from others if she made her miscarriage known, or if she failed to muster sufficient elation at the prospects of an unanticipated pregnancy. (Additionally, Foster argued for a legitimizing discourse of privacy, that is, the belief that a woman was entitled to her right to privacy about her pregnancy, but I will not elaborate on this discourse given the focus of this section.) Paradoxically, observed Foster, such silencing actually functions to undermine the self-interests of women who have these experiences, functioning to isolate them from others who are having similar experiences. Her argument for public and private expression surrounding pregnancy experiences draws upon the value of women gaining affirmation of their experiences through communication with others, thereby better serving their individual interests.

A second example of a fragmented discourse with respect to expression and nonexpression can be found in the research on post-divorce

children who are caught in the middle between their divorced parents (Afifi, 2003; Braithwaite et al., 2008). Children are exposed to a variety of kinds of parental disclosures that position them awkwardly—for example, details of marital infidelity that led to the divorce or financial details (Afifi, McManus, Hutchinson, & Baker, 2007). On the one hand, these disclosures recognize that children are not mere objects of custody but rather directly affected parties who are entitled to information about events that affect them and whose self-interests are served by knowledge; individualistic discourses of rights and self-interests clearly make such disclosures understandable to us. At the same time, however, such information often tells children more than they want to know about their parents, often jeopardizing subsequent interactions with them. Children apparently appreciate being kept in the information loop with respect to the current interactions between their parents, yet at the same time they feel as if this positions them to be used as informational conduits or conflict mediators, burdens they do not embrace because they are not rewarding. Thus, the self-interests legitimated in the discourse of individualism warrant both parental candor and parental discretion with respect to their children.

A more complex discursive web that animates the meanings of expression and nonexpression is one in which a given discourse both fragments internally, competing against itself in legitimizing both expression and nonexpression, and competes with another discourse at the same time. A rich example of this complex web can be found in a study by Ford and her colleagues (1999) that examined the experience of adult incest survivors. The key radiant of meaning making for this struggle was on moral terms with the potential good of making known the perpetrator's actions struggling with the potential risks to the victim of disbelief, blame, or ostracism, and risks to the entire family of irreparable disruption. Continued secrecy, of course, risked continued personal tragedy for the victim as well as ongoing risks to fellow family members with the continued presence of the perpetrator. Thus, the discourses of community and utilitarian individualism were invoked in positioning both disclosure and secrecy as morally good and bad.

Competing Discourses: Individualism in Play

Typically, the discourse of individualism competes with the discourse of community in constructing the meaning of (non)expression. What varies from study to study is which discourse is aligned with which communicative act. However, occasionally the discourse of individualism also is positioned in play with discourses other than community.

An example of the discourse of individualism making sense of expression in contrast to the discourse of community legitimating non-expression is a study by Baxter, Braithwaite et al. (2002) involving interviews with older wives whose husbands lived in residential facilities because of their diagnosed adult dementia (usually Alzheimer's disease). Wives talked of substantial uncertainty and frustration about information openness with their spouses. Husbands purportedly were saddened and upset when their wives talked about issues related to home and children, thus framing discretion by the wives as a positive communicative practice that protected the best interests of the husband. This meaning of nonexpression is intelligible from within a discourse of community, where interests of the other party are given priority in making sense of action. At the same time, however, these wives longed for the presence of their "real" husbands—the husbands of their memory prior to the onset of the dementia. They reported despondency, sadness, and frustration because of their status as married widows (Braithwaite, 2002; Rollins, Waterman, & Esmay, 1985). The wives reported that they did share information about home, children, and other personal matters as a way to affirm the return of their marriages, no matter how fleeting the experience. Wives admitted that they selfishly longed for these encounters, for it reduced their loneliness and sense of loss. Thus, openness for these wives was made sense of through the self-oriented discourse of utilitarian individualism.

Individualism in play with the discourse of privacy can be identified in Prentice's (2009) study of in-law relationships. During the courtship stage in which a child was dating the person who would become their son-in-law or daughter-in-law, parents spoke of feeling constrained not to express their liking for the person. Such discretion is intelligible through a discourse of privacy; the parents did not wish to be seen as interfering in the private relationship business of their child and thought that expressing their opinion of the person being dated might be regarded as an invasion of the child's privacy. However, parents felt frustrated by such discretion because it constrained their right to engage the person on their own terms. Such frustration is understandable to us from the individualistic right to expression.

Competing Discourses: Community in Play

As noted above, the discourses of individualism and community are often interdependent in constructing the meaning of (non)expression. However, the discourse of community is also put into play with and against other discourses.

An illustration of the interplay of individualism and community, but a counter example in which the discourse of community legitimizes expression against the individualistic legitimation of nonexpression, can be found in a study by Derlega and his colleagues (2000) on disclosures of positive HIV/AIDS status. The researchers found that intimates engaged in disclosure of their status out of a sense of duty or obligation to the partner and to the relationship, a sense-making of expression through the lens of a discourse of community. Concealment of health status was rendered sensible by intimates through either the discourse of privacy or utilitarian individualism—the right to privacy and the desire to sustain a positive self-presentation to others, respectively. Both privacy and the avoidance of negative reactions from others are self-serving, legitimized within a discourse of utilitarian individualism.

The discourse of community in play with another discourse, in particular the discourse of rationality, comes from the study by Pitts and his colleagues (2009) on planning for the generational succession in ownership of the family farm. On the one hand, many family members gave voice to a discourse of rationality in opining that it wasn't necessary to have explicit communication and planning surrounding the generational succession issue; such succession would just happen naturally as it had for several generations, from father to son, or it was spelled out in the will, thus making communication about it unnecessary. Competing against this sense making was a discourse of community in which family harmony and issues of fairness to all of the children were regarded as important and were served by explicit talk.

Competing Discourses: Rationality in Play

The discourse of rationality often legitimizes either expression or nonexpression, usually in play with additional competing discourses. In general terms, the discourse of rationality involves beliefs that (non)expression is (in)effective, (in)efficient, and/or (un)necessary to successful understanding between relational partners.

An example of the discourse of rationality in play with other competing discourses can be found in the findings reported by Erbert and Aleman (2008) in their study of grandparents who engage in surrogate parenting of their grandchildren. In part, the researchers found that grandparents felt that they needed candor in their relationship with their grandchildren for reasons that make sense within a discourse of rationality. For example, grandparents needed information about the

whereabouts of the grandchild so that they could enact proper supervision and thus enact good parenting practices. However, the expressed need for complete information from the grandchild risked alienation from the grandchild, who felt overly controlled by parenting practices that had too few degrees of freedom; such a response from the grandchild potentially violated an effort to build a bond of trust between grandparent and grandchild, an important ingredient in relating from within the discourse of community. Grandparents also felt that candor with the grandchild was important with respect to the circumstances of the absent parent. As one grandparent expressed it, "That's the only kind of relationship you have where it can work" (p. 684). This perspective is comprehensible from within a discourse of rationality; candor was deemed efficacious. However, at the same time, grandparents often reported that they felt that the truth about the absent parent hurt the grandchild; to know that a parent was missing because they were in jail or in rehab may have been truthful but nonetheless damaging to the grandchild. Such concern for the grandchild's welfare rings true within a discourse of community in which the desire to protect the other is valued.

Competing Discourses: Privacy in Play

Although the discourse of privacy is invoked to legitimize nonexpression, it does not emerge as the most frequent discourse that animates the discursive struggle of expression. Further, it is interwoven with other discourses in a complex web of meaning.

An example of one such web of meaning is Braithwaite and Baxter's (1995) interview study of the marriage renewal vows of older adults. On the one hand, participants talked about holding public renewal ceremonies so that others—family members and close friends—could witness their testimonials of love and commitment for the spouse. In other words, the act of public declaration is what rendered the testimonials meaningful to the parties themselves. In addition, the public testimonial of enduring commitment provided a sort of modeling for others to observe, especially adult children who were thought to benefit from seeing a successful marriage. The public declaration of commitment makes sense from a discourse of community, in which marriage was constructed as a socially embedded institution. At the same time, however, participants went to great length to describe the ways in which they and their respective spouses constructed a ceremony whose meaning was fully understandable only to the two spouses. Participants told of special rings whose meaning was known only to the married couple, and so forth. Participants argued that although marriage was a public institution, it was also a private relationship in which only the spouses could

and should participate. The choice of ceremonial features that underscored marriage as private clearly draws upon the discourse of privacy in order to be intelligible.

Competing Discourses: Romance in Play

From the perspective of the discourse of romance, love is a totalizing experience in which parties should hold nothing back, including information about themselves. True love, according to this system of meaning, is finding one's soul-mate, and this requires complete openness. However, this discourse often competes with other discourses.

In his focus-group study of how some Americans make sense of dating, for example, Chornet Roses (2006) found that dating was often constructed from a discourse of romance; it was envisioned as a romantic journey in the search of one's true love, and such a quest featured total and complete psychological, emotional, and physical immersion between self and other, including open disclosure. However, bumping up against this image was the discourse of utilitarian individualism, in which dating was constructed as a risky business, and in which the parties could be hurt or forced into premature or unwelcome commitments that constrained individual freedom. As a consequence of this discursive tension, dating was widely constructed as something high in communicative ambiguity. Dating parties talked of performing a dance of ambiguity with one another largely for reasons of self-protection. Ambiguity was a safety net that protected parties while still affording them dating experiences, albeit of a more muted nature than idealized in the discourse of romance.

Cultural Variations

Fitch's (1998) ethnographic study of Colombian communication and relating usefully underscores how the discursive struggle of expression varies by culture. As noted above in the discussion of integration, the Colombian conception of personhood is not built on the cultural discourse of individualism the way it is in mainstream American culture; rather, Colombian personhood is a web of connections to others. This conception frames what can be said as well as what cannot be said in ways quite different from the cultural discourses that animate the mainstream U.S. experiences summarized above. Among Colombians, *confianza* gives license to sincerity, but this is not the same meaning of openness and candor that typifies mainstream American meaning making. *Confianza* is not animated by a logic of disclosure of an inner self. Although Colombians organize their close relationships by a logic of

confianza, it is constrained by social expectations of respect for authority and hierarchy, which also animate close relationships. Authority and hierarchy entail behavioral expectations of formality in communication. To mainstream American cultural logic, disclosure and discretion occupy the heart of the discursive struggle of expression, whereas in Colombia, the struggle more centrally is between sincerity and formality.

The study of Taiwanese international student friendships by Chen and colleagues (2001) also reminds us that the discursive struggle of expression is culture-specific. On the one hand, the Taiwanese participants felt that friendship means that two people value one another enough to judge and criticize one another. In this way, friends can display caring for one another. On the other hand, friendship is built on acceptance of one another's faults, and exists in a more general cultural motif that favors harmony over criticism and conflict.

Summary

I have addressed at length the discursive struggle of expression in order to make an important point. Just as twitches cannot be equated with winks, so one act of (non)expression cannot be equated with another, except in the most abstract and general of ways as behavioral acts. Expression-as-rationality is not meaningful in the same way as expression-as-self-protection, which is different from expression-as-obligation, which is unlike expression-as-romance. Nonexpression as an enactment as one's right to privacy is not the same thing as nonexpression as self-interested protection, or nonexpression conceived as protection of the other or of the relationship. As our journey through the research has illustrated, the discursive struggle of expression takes on different meanings, just as we witnessed with respect to the companion discussion of integration in the prior section of this chapter. Taken as a whole, the research work published over the past decade strongly underscores Baxter and Montgomery's (1996) argument that contradictions have multiple radiants of meaning that should not be oversimplified.

❖ CONCLUSION

The research on the discursive struggle of expression often implicates discourses of individualism and community, which comprise the discursive struggle of integration. This is hardly surprising. As Baxter and Montgomery (1996) argued, contradictions rarely stand alone but

rather are in multivocal conversation with one another. They described this conversation metaphorically as a knot of contradictions.

In addition, this knot is polysemic; both the discursive struggle of integration and the discursive struggle of expression have multiple radiants of meaning that interanimate in complex webs of meaning. Further, as the discussion of discursive fragmentation demonstrates, a given discourse easily can turn on itself and do counterpoint work in legitimizing opposing actions.

I have argued in this chapter that discursive struggles of integration and expression are pervasive in the dialectical literature because relationships are not isolated from the larger cultural streams in which they swim. Discourses that circulate throughout a culture are given communicative life in the interactions in and about relationships. The first link in the utterance chain is the site where culture and relationship meet.

Although substantial research has been generated over the past decade on the struggles of integration and expression, it can be criticized on several counts. First, very little work informs us about cultural variation. Since the core argument of this chapter is that relationships are embedded in cultural discourses, future research needs to take a comparative approach, identifying the dominant discourses that characterize given cultures and how their interpenetration animates meaning making.

Second, much of the work tends to be overly reliant on self-reports as a method. Although any utterance can be analyzed as an utterance chain—whether in the context of an interview or in a conversation between relationship partners—our understanding of how discourses compete in making meaning will be better served by a methodological tool kit that draws richly upon a variety of types of data, especially conversations between relationship parties as they construct their relationship, and their individual identities within that relationship, in the moment of interaction. Additionally, I have underscored in this chapter the value of open-ended qualitative approaches because they give us access to speakers' language use, and it is this detail that allows us to study discourses and their complex radiants of meaning.

Third, my treatment of the research literature in this chapter has gone through what I have called a translation exercise. Very little of the research has addressed directly the issue of discourses, and I have had to infer these by rereading the studies and asking myself the question "What system(s) of meaning make this statement intelligible?" Future researchers need to center this question in their analyses if they are using RDT as their theoretical framework.

❖ ENDNOTES

1. Although dialogism is unique in supplanting the notion of the utterance with the utterance chain, it is not unique in rejecting the utterance as an isolated act of an autonomous speaker. For example, conversation analysts have understood for quite some time that turn-taking, the parsing of one utterance from another, is a negotiated matter that requires careful coordination between speakers and hearers (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Further, the negotiation of the utterance as a turn at talk is a culture-specific process. What is heard as a completed utterance in one culture can be regarded as incomplete to members of another culture (e.g., Philips, 1983). Some relationship scholars have also observed that the meaning of a given utterance can only be understood by embedding it in the larger conversational stream consisting of the prior utterance and the subsequent utterance (e.g., Rogers, 2006; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967).

2. We might just as well refer to these distal already-spoken discourses as *ideologies*, in that they are patterns of belief, ideas, and values used to create meaning (Freedon, 2003). In a general sense, ideologies define what exists, what is good, and what is possible (Therborn, 1980). I prefer the term discourse to ideology to remind the reader that these cultural systems of meaning come to life in communicative action; they do not float out there as abstractions, nor do they reside inside of individualized psychologized minds. Their existence resides in communicative practices.