CHAPTER 1

Social Identities as Communication

POPULAR DISCOURSES OF IDENTITY

One of the central questions of social and communication theory, indeed of philosophy and psychology, has been Who am I? Popular responses to this question have been given in at least three different idioms. As with the literature reviewed above, one has taken as its basic starting point the biological composition of human organisms. On this basis, the question Who am I? is responded to by reference to basic human biology, and presumable types of biology. For example, a person might claim to be a kind of person such as a male or female, based upon his or her biological sex. Similarly, one might claim to be a kind of person such as a caucasian, Black, Asian, Irish, Italian, Native American, and so on, based upon his or her genetic composition. For each such claim, one can trace at least some of its force to the basic factors of human biology.

This first set of responses constitutes a sometimes potent *idiom of biological identity* and is the basis, for example, for some of the government policies concerning Native American tribal membership, for deciding who indeed is a "real" Indian (according to the government). Some of these policies are based upon "blood quantum." In some cases, to qualify for tribal membership, one's body must contain a minimal proportion of Indian blood or a certain biological composition. For example, at least one of one's grandparents must be or have been a full-blooded Indian. An equivalent biological composition would also suffice, so that a parent of one-half blood, or all grandparents of one-quarter blood each, and so on would be sufficient to qualify for tribal membership. Without having this biological make-up, regardless of how one acts, or thinks one is acting, one cannot, according to this policy, become a member of a Native tribe.

An analogous argument could also be developed about one's sexual composition, or racial composition, or ethnic composition,

basing such claims upon one's permanent, or ascribed, biological make-up. From the vantage point of this response, "who I am" is contingent upon an individual's basic physiology. This is, of course, an assessment that is made independently from an individual's actions, or thoughts. For example, one can lay claim to being a biological Native American, without doing any action as a Native American. That biology forms powerful sources of claims about identities, at least in some scenes, cannot be disputed, as the examples above, and events in parts of the world under the rubric of "ethnicity," or even "ethnic cleansing," make all too apparent.

A second popular idiom has taken as its starting point the psychological composition of human individuals. On this basis, the question Who am I? is responded to by reference to an individual's human psychological traits. For example, a person might claim to be, like Woody Allen, a bit neurotic, depressed, or obsessive. Similarly, one might attribute psychological qualities to others, some perhaps even identifiable as paranoid or psychotic. On a larger scale, whole groups of people might be identified as narcissistic. For each such claim, one can trace some of its force to the internal domain of human psychology.

This second response is couched in a popular *idiom of psychology* and is the basis for claims being made about the enduring dispositions of individuals. Some such qualities are said to be rather stable, with others being more transient, but all such claims rely upon a particular kind of internal cognitive reality for this claim of identity to make sense. From this vantage point, the question Who am I? is contingent upon the individual's (in psychotherapy) or group's (in social therapy?) internal traits, or psychological make-up.

Some popular claims of identity are also forged with hybrid versions of both of these idioms. For example, as a female, it is sometimes presumed that whatever one "is," one is that kind of person not only because of biological factors, but also because the individual is psychologically composed in that particular female way. Similarly, as an African, presumably for some, one is not only a particular kind of biological entity, but also psychologically composed (or programmed or endowed) in a particular African way.

The biological and psychological claims of identity are mostly operationalized at the level of individuals. That is, through these idioms, we lay claims to identities, or attribute identities to others,

largely on the basis of biological and psychological factors and dimensions that apply to that particular individual or organism. This is the case, for example, when white parents adopt black children with the stated objective of creating a multicultural world. Their belief is that the biological and psychological composition of their child is "black" just as theirs is "white" and their family will demonstrate how these different identities, so conceived, can live together. As a result, each of us can be led to thinking that "who I am" is, at least to some degree, predetermined by basic biological or psychological factors and dimensions. Whether male or female, Italian or Indian, black or white, presumably one is who one is by being so—biologically and psychologically— designed.

Up to this point, in this admittedly sketchy story about popular forms of identification, we have neglected "environmental" factors, or the contexts in which people live. In other words, up to this point our discussion has neglected this form of our basic question: is "who I am" dependent partly, at least in some ways, upon where I am? A third set of responses has taken as its starting point the largely cultural and social structural factors of human living. On this basis, the question Who am I? is responded to by diagnosing one's cultural orientation and one's position in the social structural arrangement of society. For example, a person might claim a particular identity because of one's nation of origin or a group's presumed features. One might claim to be "American," or "British," or "Finnish," based upon one's place of birth or residence, or use these identifiers as a way of saying, respectively, that one is talkative, refined, or silent. Similarly, one might claim to be "poor" or "wealthy," "professional" or "laborer," based upon one's position in the social structures of society. The opening of the "Chunnel" (the tunnel under the English Channel between Britain and France), for example, if one believes some news reports, has been oriented to very differently by the British and the French. The former have shown a rather haughty indifference, as the latter have excitedly charged into the event rather opportunistically. That owners and shareholders of the Chunnel orient to it differently than do the laborers who built it reveals the social structuring of identities in this process.

This third set of responses creates a popular *idiom of cultural and social identity* and is the basis for claims being made about *people* as members of groups. As such, *people* are assigned partic-

ular qualities or features because they are group members, or because they hold a particular social position. Each is being identified as a bearer of that group's habits or customs or position of living. As we of course know, any one individual within the group may or may not conform to the particular quality or feature being attributed to it, but nonetheless, it is presumed, being a member of that group exposes (or socializes) or predisposes one into that particular being. From the vantage point of this third response, the question Who am I? is contingent upon particular cultural orientations or social structural positions within the life of a society.

Each of these three idioms for claiming an identity is only sketched here, yet each can be distinguished analytically, one from the other. Whether one is laying claim to a biological, a psychological, or a sociocultural identity, each can be distinguished from the other, at least in the abstract. In real scenes of social living, however, these claims to identity, and the resulting processes through which they are made and remade—which I call cultural discourses—can easily overlap and ambiguously affirm, or deny, one another. For example, saying in a scene that "I am a woman" is, perhaps at once, to say something—or at least to be heard possibly as saying something—about one's biology, psychology, culture, and social position. Making this claim in another scene, perhaps, can be heard to say something that is explicitly, or intentionally, biological, psychological, and social-structural, yet also as something that is beyond any culture, or underlying every culture. Some claims within the women's movement are being so stated.

One commonality runs across these claims as they are typically made. Each presumes the primary site of identity is "in the individual." If we ask where, fundamentally, identity is located, I think this question is largely responded to, at least in prominent American scenes, on the basis of a primary psychobiological idiom, with culture and social structure heard as laminations onto, or social developments of these. When formulating an alternate response to the question (e.g., identities are in social patterns), one might be challenged by Americans: Where is identity, if not fundamentally in people? If no other location can be found (that is, if and when the primary site of identity is presumably biological and psychological), then identities become, at base, like material resources, properties or possessions of individual persons. As such, they become something that derives from, or if not deriving from then a basic part of, their biological and psychologi-

cal conditions of living. This is a prominent American conception of identity (Carbaugh, 1988b, 1994).

With this cultural view and these popular idioms, social identities are conceived or conversed as something inside the agent, something an individual "has" or "has become"; they are a part of one's internal "self." This sense of internalizing an identity, of having it inside as a deep part of one's being is important, especially to Americans today. Yet, identities are also, perhaps, something more than this. They can be (thought of as) something people "do" on occasions. They are, in this sense, something invoked, used, interpreted with, displayed, performed, and so on in particular social scenes (e.g., Wieder and Pratt, 1990). What if we conceive of them in this way?

With the following studies, I want to draw attention to the communication of identity. This suggests shifting attention to an alternate site of identity. The basic site of identity, in this view, could be formulated in this way: What exactly one is being, or saying, or doing, by being such a person as a worker, or a woman, or a man, or an environmentalist, or a German, is largely contingent upon the scene in which one is acting, and the way that scene is set, cast, and communicationally improvised. Focusing on this performative mode of identity, or selves, as in social interactions in actual scenes, in a particular social somewhere and not just an abstract anywhere, leads me, following others, to add a fourth "cultural pragmatic idiom" to the above.

While each of the above claims to identity is analytically distinct, the discourses being used to state and interpret them, the situated communication of them, needs to be understood, especially as these are used in particular scenes. I propose the cultural pragmatic approach as a way of doing this, as a way of embracing and extending these by exploring actual scenes where people are living together. This suggests shifting attention from psychobiological factors to conversational scenes. I enter the academic and popular discussions about selves and identities, then, not fundamentally on the basis of biology, psychology, culture (in the abstract, encompassing sense), or social structures (in the predetermined sense), although each of these can and does hold considerable importance in some conversational scenes. I do enter on the basis of actual scenes of social interaction in which selves are fashioned and conducted. From this vantage point, we examine social life as scenes of practical living, and identities as something created and subjected

to particular conversational dynamics. For example, this perspective opens the possibility, if not the likelihood, of hearing in some scenes males and females who act not as "men" or "women" but as "colleagues," muting for now their gendered compositions. With this approach, gender becomes less a condition for all conversation, and more a quality of communication in some conversational scenes. As a result, we can add an alternative basis to our thinking about the ways biology, psychology, culture, and social structure get played into social scenes. From this vantage point, the question Who am I? depends partly on "where" I am, with whom I am, and what I can ably do there, in that scene, with those people, given the (material and symbolic) resources that are available to the people there. The primary ontological site of identity is, then, not solely psychobiological, although these might turn out to be active features in some scenes. Who I am, from this vantage point, depends upon both actual scenes and sequences of living, and what I become as I interact through these situated, communication practices. To be able to develop this, however, we must enrich our sense of the communicational bases of identity.

IDENTITY AS COMMUNICATIVE PERFORMANCE: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL FOUNDATIONS

How does one begin conceiving of identities as communicative accomplishments? Building on these introductory comments, I develop here three specific working assumptions from which to start examining social identities as communication. I propose first, as stated above, that we think of identities as dimensions and outcomes of communication practices; second, that we think of each identity as a system of communicative practices that is salient in some but not (necessarily) all social scenes; third, that we think of communication, and the everyday practice of social identities, as a cultural accomplishment.[1] Let us examine each.

The first working assumption suggests that we think of selves as both dimensions and outcomes of particular communication practices. If a message about identity is a dimension of communication, this suggests that communicative actions carry weight, in part, because they show who the people are who are engaged in that very action. For example, to praise one's child for her high grades is, in part, to be one who is a parent. The same communi-

cative scene—of having one's school performance appraised—is also creating part of what it is to be a child. Such scenes creatively invoke identities of parent and child, and create social relationships between them (e.g., one who can evaluate, and one who is subjected to evaluation). Presumably, a dimension of all communicative actions and events is presenting who one is, and who another is, by the way that very event is being conducted. This insight was established forcefully by Goffman (1967), as he demonstrated how selves are fundamentally subjects in social presentations, with each sense of self hinging upon the ongoing lines of face-to-face interaction. Goffman's insights about self-presentations is thus partly the basis for the present proposal.

The first working assumption also suggests thinking of selves as an outcome of communication. This implies that one's sense of who one is derives from the particular arrangement of social scenes in which one participates. Boldly, it asserts that whatever identity is deemed important derives from the social scenes in which one lives. Without a social scene in which to enact an identity, and without having some degree of validation of that identity in those scenes, as many immigrants know, the force of that identity is communally empty, or without social life. This emphasizes the importance of actively and efficaciously practicing an identity within and/or across social scenes. To assume an identity is, then, something more than a simple declaration or avowal of that identity in a particular scene. It is to know ways to express that identity efficaciously, that is, to express it and have it validated, through a variety of actions, in a variety of scenes (see chapter 8 for further discussion).

Thinking about identity as communication is, then, to think of it as both a general dimension of all communicative action, and as a particular outcome (e.g., a particular identity) of specific communicative actions in the scenes of social life.

The second working assumption suggests some fine-tuning of the above, that is, to think of any particular identity as a set of communicative practices that is more salient in some social scenes than in others. Just as an individual is more adept at some identities (e.g., being a teacher, or an American) than others (e.g., being a business executive, or a Russian), so too are social scenes designed for some identities more than others. This is a way of elaborating our shift of focus, and moving the site of identity from the individual into actual scenes of communicative actions (see

Bakhtin, 1986, p. 87). From this view, who you are does not rely solely upon your body or mind, although your body and mind are played forcefully into certain scenes (at least in some cultural landscapes). The alternate basis suggests thinking that who you are hinges upon your actual conceptions and conduct of identity in real social scenes. Any social scene supports some communicative performances more than others, some identities more than others. The scene, how it is being scripted, cast, and acted; or the game, how its rules work and who can play; or the text, how it is being written and read; or the social fabric, who is spinning it, into what design—all of these suggest metaphors about scenes and the ways each designs particular versions of selves. Any scene, through the nature of its communication, then, involves individuals in playing some arrangement of selves over all possible others.

The third working assumption draws attention to the social and cultural, less as prefigured templates and structures, and more as features of actual communication practices. Through a social emphasis, and following the above, attention is drawn to communication as actional and eventful, as performance in the actual scenes and sequences of interactive living (Goodwin, 1990, pp. 8–10). For example, if speaking is necessary, who speaks first, who next, and who gets to speak at all, can matter. Ways it can matter can say something about social identities, who each person is, the ways they are being related, and even what role institutions play by way of organizing these identities and relations. How social interaction like this is being managed, moment by moment, and how that management displays and relates social identities perhaps through institutions, keeping these concerns in mind is to hear the social life of communication.

As mentioned in the introduction, the cultural axes of action draw particular attention to participants' meaning systems. What is it that these people, in this scene, think they are doing by communicating in these ways? One tries to interpret the participants' meanings of their communicative practices, how they cohere through their communicative actions, their ideas about who they are and the activities they are doing. One seeks to know how present concerns are significant and important to them, keeping the symbolic landscape of their community in mind. This is to hear cultural life in communication (Basso and Selby, 1976, pp. 3–6; Geertz, 1976). Knowing what coheres conversational scenes from the view of participants, in a way that resonates with their terms and mean-

ings, this is to hear in community scenes, cultural communicative action (Carbaugh, 1991; Hymes, 1972; Philipsen, 1987).

Together, then, and in summary, one might think of social identities as a dimension and outcome of communication performances, as more salient in some scenes than others, and as socially negotiated and culturally distinct. To address the problem this way means that responses to the question Who am I? may be developed at least in part by explicating the shape of particular communication practices in particular scenes, and by exploring how those practices activate, for the people in those scenes, means of social identification and meanings of cultural lives (Carbaugh, in press).

One important implication of relocating identity into scenes of practice is the opening it creates for possibilities in conversation (rather than a reliance upon preconditions of necessity). For example, whether one is a Native American or White is, from this view, contingent upon whether one is being subjected to—or making a bid for—a conversational scene in which one is deemed a Native American or White. This might suggest something radical for some readers: There are, possibly, some scenes where one's identity can be conversed in a way that is mute on its ethnic composition. Some e-mail connections, and interactions among young children, provide evidence of this fact, as do, more subtly, some face-to-face encounters in which people identify and orient to each other through their communication, not on the basis of ethnicity, but through practices that identify participants in other ways. Whether this identification is beneficial or detrimental of course depends upon the particular dynamics of that scene and the cultural landscape of which it is a part (see the introduction and chapters 5–8 for discussions on this general theme).

If this can be so, if we imagine social identity as communication in these ways, as a dimension and outcome of communicative practice, as salient in some but not all social scenes, and as activating participants' frames of coherence and community, how might we formulate a general framework for this kind of understanding?

A SIMPLE RECIPE FOR SOCIAL IDENTITIES AS COMMUNICATION

Following the foundations laid above, I want to continue by distinguishing social and cultural levels of identification. I will take

up this difference in more detail in chapters 4, 7, 8, and 11. Here, I want simply to introduce a basic distinction between what I call "cultural agents" and "social identities," then propose a form of statement for thinking about the communication of social identities. As we shall see, the basic difference between "cultural agents" and "social identities" is a matter of emphasis, with each influencing the other.

The Cultural Agent

The communication of identity, as a "cultural person," is built through certain unquestioned premises, or taken-for-granted features of conversation (Fitch, 1994; Hopper, 1981). Premises can be thought of as basic beliefs and values about what constitutes person, about what person is (and should be), what person can (and should) do, can (and should) feel, and ways "it" can (and should) dwell in nature. These premises create a scene of coherence about what has often been called "personhood." For example, in many American scenes, it is widely assumed that people are, in the first and last analysis, "individuals." This belief is elaborated as people talk about individual "rights," "needs," and "equality." A further belief is that the "individual" has a "self" or something inside of himself or herself that is special, unique, yet rather stable across scenes and times (e.g., their "personality"). These ideas about the person, as an "individual" with a "self," are valued, and are often elevated above "social roles" or "society" as a source of identity (Carbaugh, 1988b, 1994). These themes are taken up in chapters 7 and 8. From the vantage point of this American model of identity, then, in some prominent American scenes, people are conversed as "individuals," and because of this, "relationships" and "communities" are not given, but must be made, constructed, or built (Varenne, 1977).

As different premises for the cultural person hold sway in some other scene and culturescape, then the American model of the agent, of course, does not hold. For some Hindi-speaking people, in other scenes, the person is conversed not as "an individual" but as a "dividual" (Marriott, 1976, p. 111). The basic ingredient in this Hindu "cultural agent" is not the human body, but various more fundamental particles and substances. Any organism might be changed materially, as these particles are shifted, or are recombined, and reshaped. This quality is expressed through the Hindi

concept *rasa* (juice) and is used in scenes of marriage: "A woman merges and loses her entire personality into her husband's *substance* at the wedding . . . she actually changes her natal essence for that of her husband's, she merges it with his quite literally— not through sex and childbirth as romantic western readers might be inclined to think, but in a truly material sense" (Bharati, 1985, pp. 220–221). An actual person, here, is conversed not as contained in a single biological or organismic membrane, but as deriving from more basic particles and substances that can be differently arranged, at different periods in one's life, making one a different material being, for example, by going through a marriage ceremony.

The examples given here mark a shift, at the cultural level, between scenes of identification. From the vantage point of the American premises, the Hindu person is nearly unintelligible. As such, an American, with typical American premises, would find it hard to believe, even incredible, that a social ceremony *literally* changes the biological or "natal essence" of a person. Similarly, from the vantage point of this Hindu model, the American "cultural agent" seems less intelligible and incredible. This is the way shifts in the scenes of identification, at the cultural level, can seem incoherent, one to the other (Carbaugh, 1993b, 1993c).

An Emphasis on Social Identification

In the following essays, however, I want to focus primarily not at this cultural level of personhood, but at the social level of identification. Again, the two levels are distinctive, but interrelated. The basic move is this: Within any cultural communication system, erected upon cultural premises of the person and action and nature, there will be available a variety of social identities. For example, on the basis of American premises, there will be a variety of discourses available for communicating specific social identities such as an American man, woman, husband, wife, teacher, student, worker, owner, environmentalist, developer. Each discourse of identity will play upon certain presumed (i.e., cultural) premises about what a person is (and should be), can (and should) do, feel (and should feel), and how that person dwells within nature (Carbaugh, 1994). Other people, with other cultural premises, will make available their own discourses of social identities, erected upon their cultural premises of the person. At both levels, even if

the identities are called the same thing, for example, "a marital partner," the cultural premises—and larger cultural landscape—of the social identities will probably vary (e.g., an American "marital partner," a Hindu "marital partner"). In short, any set of premises for a cultural agent will support a variety of social identities. And, as intercultural marriages make readily apparent, any one social identity (e.g., "spouse") will vary by different cultural premises (e.g., American and East Indian).

The focus of the following studies is upon social identities that are situated in American scenes. How can we understand social identification as a conversational and cultural accomplishment?

Recall that my basic proposal is built upon cultural axes and scenes, and upon Burkean processes of identification (discussed in the introduction). As further developed in this chapter, this suggests treating identity as a dimension and outcome of communicative practice. The proposal suggests shifting attention to cultural scenes of conversation in order to understand the particular social identities enacted there. Focus is drawn later to psychological, biological, cultural, or social structural conditions, and earlier to situated, conversational practices. A statement of the following basic form should help us operationalize that conceptual shift, and focus upon the communication of social identities:

> I know who I am, in part, by the way I symbolize in situated social scenes.

First, note the "in part." With this phrase, I want to show that I think this way of conceiving social identities is only part of whatever a whole picture of identity might be. "Being" and "social identity" can and do reside, also, outside of communicative scenes, sometimes in very lively ways. For example, parts of who one is might be revealed in moments of personal reflection, or in transcendental experiences with natural environments, or in physiological mechanisms that are beyond participants' range of expressions. While these experiences can be productively treated as communication, they are also, as any such experience would be, more than that. I do not want to preclude this "more" from the general picture or sound of identity. In other words, a communication theory of social identity can, I think, tell us a lot for example about being a fan, a worker, a husband or wife, a man or woman, a developer or an environmentalist, but I do not think it

can account for everything that is relevant to any one social identity (Carbaugh, forthcoming).

With that caveat made, note how the statement can be played with. A shift in pronouns and predicates can help shift the focus from one person to interactions among the present participants. For example,

> I know who you are, in part, by the way you symbolize in situated social scenes.

Or,

> You know who I am, in part, by the way I symbolize in situated social scenes.

A collective orientation can of course also be formulated:

> We know who we are, in part, by the way we symbolize in situated social scenes.

Playing with the forms of pronouns thus helps one shift the focus to various participant identities, or roles, or "selves–2" in Harré's sense (Harré, 1991a). It also can help identify the nature of social relationships and how these are being created between persons. For example, one might reformulate the statement by saying:

> I know how we are related, in part, by the way we symbolize in situated social scenes.

One can also explore how social relationships are differently symbolized within or between social scenes (e.g., Baxter, 1993; Rawlins, 1983, 1992). In this sense, analyses using the form can help capture not only the communication of social identities, but dialectical dynamics as well, including social relations of intimacy, solidarity, and power (e.g., Brown and Gilman, 1960; Brown and Levinson, 1987; and chapter 8 below).

Playing with the basic verb *know* should also prove instructive. Perhaps *know* suggests something too mindful, or too guided by perception and cognition, and one wants to emphasize social activity. This could be formulated:

> I show who I am . . . , *or*, You show who you are . . .

While this captures active, perhaps even strategic features of identities (e.g., I pretend who I am . . .) , some might be bold enough to claim that such action is indeed formative of that very identity. This point can be made:

I constitute who I am . . . , *or*, You constitute who you are . . . ,
or, You constitute who I am . . . , *or,* We constitute who they
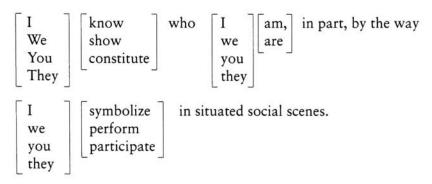are, in part, by symbolizing in situated social scenes.

The last preposition, "in situated social scenes," gives the state-
ment its crucial toe-hold in the actual practice of social living. This
condition again emphasizes the situating of identities and selves
into cultural scenes, with scenes here, intended broadly, implying
particular physical settings, cultural senses of those settings, and
the larger cultural landscape of which each is a part. This includes
(1) the material conditions (2) among particular participants (3)
who are engaged in specific activities and events (4) in particular
ways (5) about specific topics (6) through their own norms (6a)
for acting (6b) and for interpreting that action (Hymes, 1972).
Attention is thus drawn to actual communicative practices, the
social identities activated through them, and the larger scenes of
which they are a part.

This poses a challenge to those who make general claims about
any one identity (e.g., "the feminists" or "white men") or any one
social arrangement (e.g., "the patriarchy"). In what social scenes
are people operating, as such? In what particular ways, about what
topics, and so on? It is time our knowledge of social identities, their
affordances and limitations, as well as the institutions and societies
they help create, were built upon the subtleties and requirements
of social interaction itself (Moerman, 1988, pp. 1ff).

I have left perhaps the most important term for last: *symbol-
ize*. Other terms could be substituted for this term, such as *prac-
tice, communicate, perform,* or *participate.* The point is to draw
attention to the various means of communication (including
silence and absence) through which action gets done, and the var-
ious meanings these means can have for participants.

Some particular ways communication gets done and the
meanings it holds in some scenes are elaborated in the following
studies. At a general level, though, the ways of symbolizing that
are available to a people are historically rooted, occur in verbal
and nonverbal channels, and guide the conduct and interpretation
of activities.

Before concluding these remarks, let us summarize the full ver-
sion of the basic form of statement with which we have been
working. A full-blown version with a variety of options would
look something like this.

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{I} \\ \text{We} \\ \text{You} \\ \text{They} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{know} \\ \text{show} \\ \text{constitute} \end{bmatrix} \text{who} \begin{bmatrix} \text{I} \\ \text{we} \\ \text{you} \\ \text{they} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{am,} \\ \text{are} \end{bmatrix} \text{in part, by the way}$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} \text{I} \\ \text{we} \\ \text{you} \\ \text{they} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} \text{symbolize} \\ \text{perform} \\ \text{participate} \end{bmatrix} \text{in situated social scenes.}$$

This framework for thinking about social identities as symbolized in scenes underlies the studies that follow, and is used to explore just how various social identities, various versions of the "I," the "you," and the "we," and social relationships among them, are being practiced in particular social scenes.[2]

Symbolizing: Forms, Symbols, and Meanings

Before sketching the "symbolic" component, one must identify and describe a communication practice, a pattern of communication that recurs with cultural significance. Then, one can interpret the particular forms, symbols, and meanings of identification that comprise it. When each—a symbol and its meanings, or a form and its meanings—is present in communication practices, a social identity is being symbolized in distinctive ways.

Following Burke (1968) and others (e.g., Frentz and Farrell, 1976), a *communication form* can be understood as a recurring interactional sequence that has a cultural and symbolic integrity. Some examples of generic communication forms are rituals, myths, social dramas, and agonistic discourses (Philipsen, 1987; Carbaugh, 1988/1989). Some examples of American communication forms are "being honest," "sharing feelings," and "communication" (Carbaugh, 1988b; Katriel and Philipsen, 1981). Let me reiterate: Even if "identity" is not being discussed explicitly as part of the form of a communicative practice, it is being implicated at some level in the cultural meanings of that practice.

Symbols of identity are particular words, phrases, or images that are used to identify a person as an example of a kind of person. Examples would be "a real Indian" (Wieder and Pratt, 1990), "a man" (Philipsen, 1992), or a "self" (Carbaugh, 1988b). Each communication form, and each symbol of identity, when used in

a social scene, implicates some meanings rather than others. In other words, the effective meaning of a particular symbol, or form, is contingent upon its use by someone, and the particular social scene in which it is used (Hymes, 1962). The *meanings* of communication forms and symbols are interpreted below through such various concepts as "premises," "semantic dimensions," "dialectics," "norms," "rules," and "codes." Together, then, the symbolizing component of identity consists, minimally, in a communication form and its meanings, and/or in symbols of identity and their meanings, as these are being used in situated communication scenes.

Any communication practice can be understood, then, as part of a cultural landscape, a landscape in which particular socially situated, symbolic identities—so formed, symbolized, and meant—are being actively played (Carbaugh, 1991, in press). A more detailed discussion of particular communication symbols and forms appears in the appendix. In the meantime, each part of the book will demonstrate, in various ways, how symbolizing in particular social scenes helps constitute the practice of social identities. By explicating the communication of social selves, we can develop a way of thinking about identity that is not grounded solely in human biology or psychology, but also in particular social scenes of symbolic activity: This is the proposal. Now, let us see what it produces when applied to particular social scenes.