

**Mediating Private and (Counter)Public Discourse:  
Genre, Addressivity, and the Semiotics of (not) Belonging**

**Organizers:**

**Lauren R Zentz (University of Houston) and Chris Taylor (Rice University)**

**Chairs:**

**Chris Taylor (Rice University) and Lauren R Zentz (University of Houston)**

**Discussants:**

**Susan Gal (University of Chicago) and Andrew P Graan (University of Chicago)**

The talks in this panel examine how the dichotomizing labels *public* and *private* function as "shifters" (Silverstein 1976) or "duplex signs" (Jakobson 1957) which construe social-semiotic relations in terms of relative intimacy and openness, through various fields of discourse that include political oratory, legal contracts, hip hop music, and "gossip" (Besnier 2009, Gal 2002, Gal and Woolard 1995).

For example, Gal and Woolard (1995:135) argue that in everyday encounters, as well as in anthropological investigation, formulations of "the public" and "the private" warrant examination as "folk notions" or ideologies concerned with "groupness, interest, and communication." Crucially, these dichotomizing ideologies hinge on and emerge through contextually-situated formulations of the public/private distinction, often employed in linguistically-oriented research on the politics of "addressivity" (Agha 2011, Bakhtin 1986, Bell 2007, Noy 2009). Specifically, work along these lines has focused on genres whose addressive structures hybridize the ideologically public and private, challenging a dichotomizing logic by drawing attention to "the play of meaning along the ambiguous boundary...between types of talk defined as 'public' and those defined as 'private.'" (Hill 1995:197)

The case studies we discuss illustrate how such "leaky boundaries" (Hill 1995) between modes of generic addressivity can be strategically manipulated for managing impressions of multi-faceted selves (e.g. Hill 1995, 2005, Johnstone 1998, 1999). As we shall argue, the private/public dynamic exploits "recursive" (Gal 2002) relations between modes of semiosis through which "the public" may exist in stereotypically "private" interactions (and vice versa, e.g. a whisper at a party or the "family" room in a private residence).

To throw light on the logic undergirding these categorical tensions, we leverage Gal's (2002) work on generic boundaries and fractal recursivity in the public/private distinction.

Specifically, we examine genres including political speeches, "local news," and "free radio" (Urla 1995) that mediate publics, counterpublics, and senses of (not) belonging through ritualized structures of addressivity. Conceptualized here as relational tactics that include linguistic strategies for social address and cultural arrangements for the targeted-dissemination of discourse, these tactics and arrangements direct messages in speech implicitly and explicitly at an imagined, projected grouping of people (i.e. "a public"), united by mutual interests or shared experiences.

With an aim to elucidate the complex interconnections between the so-called public and private spheres, this panel examines how semiotic "structures of addressivity" (Noy 2009) mobilize *publicized* and/or *privatized* types of communication, working in tandem to imagine and engage publics and counterpublics. Drawing on fieldwork carried out in various locales, the talks in this panel aim to illuminate the political implications of addressivity, insofar as genericized modes of address shape collectively-held ideas concerning not only what types of talk "count" as public or private, but also which social actors "count" as legitimate constituents of a public .

Collectively, we examine the inclusionary and exclusionary effects of addressive strategies for imagining publics, with an eye to understanding how social actors position self and other ideologically as participants (or non-participants) in activities that sustain senses of public-as-imagined-community, in contrast with formulations of "the private" as intimate, familiar, and socially-exclusive.

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Debra Vidali  
Emory University

### **Frames of Inhabitation: Enactments of "Public" and "Private" from Fieldwork to the Stage**

This paper examines how concepts of "the public" and normative citizenship surface as speakers animate and populate political worlds through the use of commonly circulating phrases, and through enacted dialogues with political figures and social types. The central focus is on how speakers inhabit different stances related to public/private belonging, in naturally occurring conversation, research interviews, and staged performances within verbatim documentary, ethnographic, and generative theater productions. Addressivity is a key dimension as speakers generate dialogical formulations positioning themselves and others as stakeholders/non-stakeholders within arenas of common social and political concern. In current scholarship, much emphasis is placed on indexical functions of pronouns or collective nouns, and genre structures themselves (Vidali 2010). For example, Warner examines linguistic projections that construct an "imaginary reference point of the public" (2002). Lee (1998, 2001) highlights the importance of "performing the people," e.g. self-referencing which authoritatively states the existence of a "we." Crucially, such acts must occur in a legitimate linguistic varieties and genres (Gal and

Woolard 2001:5) to have weight. In this paper I consider the phenomenology of engagement and argue that the projection of inhabitation, through dialogical tensions, affect, and physical comportment also works to anchor speakers/stakeholders as "belonging" or not. The material stems from a multi-year project (2006-2012) on the relation between media use and political engagement among young American adults in Atlanta. The project involves research with over 100 young adults as well as theater projects that activate the words, stories, and dilemmas around public engagement and belonging encountered in the research.

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Chris Taylor  
Rice University

### **"Reppin' My City:" The Public Politics of Addressivity in a Hip Hop Genre**

In his work on stancetaking in U.S. politics, Lempert (2011) compares explicit modes of speaker address – including the use of participant deictics – with the addressivity implicit in taking stances on “issues” that represent the interests of imbricated publics. Such implicit forms of addressivity-via-stancetaking may incorporate modes of explicit address, including pronominal forms leveraged rhetorically to cultivate senses of collectivity and (not) belonging.

My paper explores the exclusionary effects of mobilizing addressivity to demarcate the semiotic contours of interrelated publics in popular music. Specifically, I consider how the generic representation of indigineity in rap lyrics leverages both explicit terms of address and implicit modes of addressivity to imagine a local public and its relation to a broader, exogenous listenership. To this end, I discuss a genericized mode of address in hip hop termed “reppin’” (Morgan 2002), through which rappers speak from and for specific places as emblematic sites where communal knowledge is produced.

My analysis examines interrelated formulae used to assert or challenge such local knowledge through “public discourse.” These formulae combine second- or third-person pronouns with the verb *to know* to form a negative epistemic construction: *You/They don't know about X*. The X-slot of this construction foregrounds indexicals of an essentialized indigineity, negotiated through the implicit and explicit addressivity of reppin’. I argue that repetition of the epistemic formula *You/They don't know about X* helps shape and reify a semiotics of indigineity by constructing senses of (not) belonging that exclude based on one’s orientation to competing regimes of vernacular practices.

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Chaim Noy  
University of South Florida

### **Audiences’ utterances: how addressivity structures shape museum performance**

Inspired by Bakhtin’s notion of addressivity, which relates to communicative structures and engagements, I examine museum goers’ inscribed utterances in two heritage museums in the United States and Israel. The notion of addressivity or addressivity structures was adopted fruitfully by linguistic anthropologists (Hanks 2000; Noy 2009), as it became clear that spoken

or written utterances are highly situational and interactional, and that interactants perceive and act upon subtle nuances in their addressivity (those “critical deictic parameters of communication,” Hanks, 2000). I bring together the fields of linguistic anthropology, on the one hand, and museum studies (and specifically audience and visitor studies), on the other, to see how institutions and audiences communicate publically. I begin with briefly examining monuments and museums’ texts, which are addressed to the visitors, and in a complementing way, I then examine the written inscriptions produced by visitors. The latter inscriptions are produced on public surfaces that are offered by museums, in the shape of two types of public visitor books, in the first case, and public Post-It notes (presented as part of an interactive exhibition), in the latter. I wish to show how different addressivity structures supply bases for coherent situated communication, and furthermore, that they serve as the bases for these utterances’ performative qualities. Produced on public settings, what utterances accomplish has much to do with who they address (and they don’t), and with how their authors construct their imagined or real addressees.

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Xochitl Marsilli-Vargas  
University of California at Berkeley

***“What you really mean is...”: Addressivity, Listening Genres, and the Public Circulation of Psychoanalysis in Buenos Aires***

This paper analyses how certain forms of addressivity originated inside the private space of psychoanalytic therapy are embedded and displayed in everyday practices outside the clinical setting, semiotically redefining the boundaries of the private and the public self (Gal 2002) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Psychoanalytic sessions have been traditionally understood as a private space established between an analyst and an analysand, where flows of ideas, free associations, and unconscious awakenings allowed the analysand’s conscious apprehension of her most private (unconscious) self. Such a reified private space contrasts with the mediated representations of psychoanalytic forms that have surpassed the clinical setting and entered everyday interactions. I analyze the broadcasting of analytic sessions in popular televised and radio shows, as well as advertisements reenacting analytic encounters, to argue that they express and foster a “listening genre” that creates unique forms of addressivity, also present in everyday informal interactions. Through the circulation of these mediated forms, the listener/addressee learns to look for meanings that surpass the referential denotation of utterances, or “the real meanings” of enunciations (Benveniste 1958). This semiotic form of interaction addresses a particular kind of self that is ideologically and indexically grounded (Gal & Woolard 1995, Silverstein 1979), creating intimate/private spaces inside distant/public arenas in the course of interaction. This paper elucidates how these forms of addressivity help locating the ephemeral and elusive forms of the private and the public self that develop in practice (Hanks 1996).

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Ruth Harman  
University of Georgia

### **All the Classroom's a Stage: Performance, Performativity and Critical Discourse Awareness**

Recent socio cultural literacy research has highlighted how those positioned as “non-native English speakers” in K-12 and university contexts often experience difficulty in their academic and social trajectories in the United States because of teachers’ addressive practices, manifest in their allocation of who is ratified or unrated in classroom interactions (Bakhtin, 1981; Fairclough, 2003; Goffman, 1974; Morgan, 2004; Miller, 2012). This qualitative study investigates how K-12 bilingual teachers and researchers, in the context of a graduate language education course, developed meta discourse awareness of their social positioning in classroom contexts through the public space of performance and post-performance discussions about the re-enacted scenarios from their everyday school lives. Drawing on theories of performativity and performance, the paper discusses the inherent dialogicality of performance in terms of how multiple addressees are invoked through the hyper reflexive gestures, intonation, and lexical choices that both re-play and distort everyday institutional practices (Butler, 1999; Goffman, 1974; Phelan, 1993).

The study draws from linguistic ethnographic and SFL methodologies (e.g. Eggins & Slade, 2002; Rampton et al, 2004) to explore the epistemic stance of performers in the unfolding of interactions and their shift of stance in post performance discussion. Findings reveal that performance and post performance discussion provided participants with an embodied interpretive frame (Bauman & Briggs, 1996) to examine how U.S. and international students co-construct a deficit perspective of bilingual learners by conforming to normative US discourse conventions. In subsequent discussions, participants disrupted these hegemonic tendencies.

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Lisa Schwartz  
CU-Boulder

### **Reconfiguring Semiotic Processes of Belonging in an Urban Arizona High School: Fractal Recursivity in Classrooms and Digital Domains**

Youth's participation with new media are characterized by belonging and participation in "networked publics" (Ito, 2008) as well as digital spaces that provide sites free from adult supervision (boyd, 2008). Mediating between the public and private affordances of new media presents a challenge for appropriating these tools in schools. I argue that new media has ushered changes to the landscape of learning "in-school" and "out-of-school" that can benefit from applying Gal's (2002) approach to investigating the evolving fractal recursivity that emerges in the construction of public and private spaces. Using Gal's work as a frame for examining the semiotic processes that produce dichotomies of "in-school" and "out-of-school" and public and private, this paper shares research from a collaborative endeavor among the researcher, students and an English teacher in an Arizona borderlands high school. Data was collected during the "Arizona Firestorm" (Santa Ana, 2012), foregrounding the significance of signs for coding social and spatial divisions. The research challenged normative semiotic processes and exclusionary practices by developing interstitial spaces and hybrid genres for participants to experiment with re-configuring private and public partitions. I examine how four young Latinas employed stylized photos, inventive spelling, and visual media from personal and popular media spaces to expand and index their belonging in different online and offline contexts. I share how these youth positioned themselves for audiences across public and private spaces by eschewing teacher, peer or family as unquestioned super addressee (Bakhtin, 1986). Overall, this work adds to understanding the complexity of new media use.

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*Discussant: Andrew Graan, U of Chicago*

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**BREAK**

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**Recoding Discourses in Higher Education:  
Critical Views on Recruiting Materials for Latin@ College Students**

In this discussion, I employ a critical lens to examine the promotional efforts of Washington State University Tri-Cities (WSUTC) as it works towards federal HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) designation. This process entails the production of informational materials focused specifically on recruiting Latin@ students and families. I examine circulating discourses involving "public" universities in community contexts that employ elitist rhetoric in their recruiting materials, thereby perpetuating the exclusive nature of institutions of higher education and further blurring the dichotomy of the public/private distinction (Gal, 2002; Hill, 1997). The process of recruiting and admitting students to "public" institutions is highly politicized and based on promoting the interests of universities. Thus, it is imperative to call attention to the subtle ways in which perceptions of accessibility to high education are constructed through "authoritative representations of language" (Gal & Woolard, 1995) that marginalize specific groups. I build on Stanton-Salazar's (1997) point that minority students who successfully navigate networks of higher education do so by "decoding" the system. Rather than obligating students to decode the system, I contend that institutions looking to increase Latin@ enrollments and engage minority students should *recode* they way they communicate with prospective students. Specifically, I conduct a critical discourse analysis of the promotional materials used by WSUTC to recruit Latin@ students. I point out examples in, three overarching domains of discourse within the promotional materials, of rhetoric that may impede or deter students from attending college. I conclude by offering strategies for identifying and recoding problematic discourse across institutional contexts.

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Lauren Zentz  
University of Houston

**"They Don't Have the English to Get Them Work'': Constructing An Indonesian Public's  
Language Needs**

This data analysis will explore constructions of a genericized public's needs for an English language "good", and following this, implications for policy legislation and educational resource distribution in Indonesia.

In an informal interview with a representative of the regional bureau of the Indonesian Department of Education, I asked about the importance of English. He responded that "the population is so high here, in order to decrease unemployment we need more people to be able to work outside the country. He said the problem is not that people are incapable or unwilling to work, but rather that they don't have the ie English to get them work" (Fieldnotes, 04/11/2010). However, my own conversations with local residents as well as ILO and the IMO economic migration data (2010) indicate that most Indonesian economic emigration is for low-wage labor, primarily to countries where English use is negligible.

By discussing a generic English that "everyone needs", an "Indonesian public" who all need "the English language" is constructed, and educational resources are devoted to spreading English education throughout the nation—though unevenly and contradictorily as it remains a "foreign language".

In this talk, I will examine constructions of a public of Indonesian citizens who equally need fluency in a generic English language. Such discourses combine with the mass-mediated spread of English as semiotic commodity to perpetuate a public belief that "everyone" needs "all of" English, while my findings show that even among those of elite status, few actually use English at work or at leisure.

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Alexandra Jaffe  
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### **Mixed publics and the mediation of space and place on Corsica**

This paper examines new initiatives on Corsica that deploy multimodal (linguistic, visual, musical) resources to define cultural places and to shape experiences of and trajectories through space and place. These include the marking of culturally significant sites with smartphone flash codes that take visitors to website content that includes recordings of traditional musical and poetic genres, and bilingual texts about those genres and their relationship to the site that has been tagged. They also include more conventional uses of "heritage" signage embedded in walking trails, and the discursive framings of space, place and heritage in tour guide narratives. These representational practices address multiple publics, including "outsiders" (tourists) and cultural "insiders" (Corsicans). This presentation focuses on some of the tensions associated with the commodification of language and heritage for outside consumption and distribution and the ways in which the boundaries between the "public" and the "private" are mobilized to insulate the "internal" from the "external" cultural and linguistic market. Drawing on fieldwork on heritage trail walks and the flash code project mentioned above, I look at the way that different publics are construed or imagined by particular representational strategies, as well as how those



practices presuppose (or attribute) differentiated levels of “intimacy” (indexically linked with the “private”) of audiences/publics and the cultural and linguistic content displayed. Finally, I explore the ways in which these strategies are connected to broader material and symbolic economies, and Corsican social actors’ efforts to position themselves in both global (and plurilingual) and local frameworks of value.

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**Elocutionary incandescence:  
Charisma, oratory, and early subaltern publics in provincial south India**

For some thirty-five days in early 1908 the cotton mill and port city of Thoothukudi, Madras, witnessed a series of large open-air meetings and work stoppages led by a strange and fateful trio of charismatic young activists at the energetic apogee of the Swadeshi movement, India’s first modern political mobilization (1905-1908). While established men had conducted Anglophone meetings for some decades, Dravidophone political oratory was a new thing, most addressed to upper-caste students and professionals in Madras, who would become the new public of a self-ruling India, organizers imagined. The mill laborers – ‘coolies’ – who gathered on the beaches of Thoothukudi were people who had been left out of the formal structures of politics theretofore. Organizers were thus imagining/interpellating a new kind of public vis-à-vis the British Raj on the one hand and the established elite in the metropolitan cities on the other. This new subaltern public would indeed foreshadow the normative publics of later twentieth century political mobilization. And it alarmed all but the young Swadeshi leaders. The movement ended in an uprising and police shooting in the nearby district headquarters of Tirunelveli, the uprising provoked officials to prosecute the three leaders along with Swadeshi activists across Madras and India. Within a year all political activity of this sort had ceased, and the Swadeshi movement was over. Thoothukudi, thus, is a story of the fateful oratorical mobilization of a new kind of public imagined within and against the multiple publics that would vie for hegemony in twentieth century India.

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Deborah Cole  
University of Texas-Pan American

**“What if I were an Indonesian?”: Negotiating public addressivities for a re-imagined nation**

This paper draws on fieldwork in Jogjakarta, Indonesia in 2007-2008 to analyze ongoing public negotiations of what it means to “be Indonesian”. I focus on a daylong public forum that brought together media reporters, local government officials, and other interested parties to openly discuss the nature of national identity in the post-Suharto era. Previous work in Jogjakarta in 2001-2002, documented a revaluation of the Indonesian motto “unity in diversity” that reframed

the semiotic oppositions between local diversities (ethnic, religious, cultural) as the source of an Indonesian national identity (Cole 2010) after decades of a widespread public valorization of a national unified identity that erased these oppositions. This forum marks a shift back to the earlier focus on unity through the promotion of a national identity whose semiotic value relies instead on the maintenance of the opposition between an Indonesian public and other national publics (the Dutch, the Japanese, the Malaysians, the Australians.).

An analysis of the variety of speech genres that occurred at this event (songs, speeches, formal question and answer, casual conversations) as well as the variety of voices and personae that participated (a young student, the Mayor, representatives from the press, and academics) reveals how inclusion and exclusion are constructed through the reframing of addressivity structures. Further, this analysis enables a clear view of how the uptake, reorganization, and re-voicing of segmentable discursive frames contribute to what Gal (2002) has called a *continuity effect*, as we observe how highlighting and erasure variably modify the semiotic field through time.

Key words: Indonesia, nationalism, fractals, identity

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### **Represented speech: Private lives in public talk in the Indonesian bureaucracy**

Using linguistic features stereotypically associated with public and private life within one utterance is a common social practice in settings characterised by diversity. In Indonesian settings, movement between public and private can be interactionally achieved by using features stereotypically associated with Indonesian or one of Indonesia's many regional languages. In this paper I focus upon "represented speech" (e.g. Agha, 2007; Tannen, 1989) in a government meeting in Indonesia. In focusing on represented speech, I show how Indonesian bureaucrats move between personal life worlds and public life by alternating between linguistic features associated with Indonesian and those associated with Javanese. In interpreting these practices, I point to how this alternation helps to mediate complex social relations and construct a myriad of situated social identities.

**Keywords:** Represented speech; codeswitching; bureaucratic talk; Indonesia

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*Discussant: Susan Gal, U of Chicago*

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