Dad: then you let it bother you then – you – get all ups-set You: give her the money and You'll be upset for weeks

Mom: [No no no – I'm not upset – it's just

(0.4) *((Mom plops corncob down, raps knuckles on table))*

Mom: I guess I just wish I would have s:aid – I'm not upset with what happened – I just wanted – I think I – would feel better if I had said (something)....

In questioning her own actions as protagonist (*Do you think I should've stuck to that? or just done what I did?)*, Marie invites her husband's evaluation and exposes herself to his critical uptake as he problematizes both her past actions (*You: give her the money*) and her present feelings (*... you let it bother you then – you – get all ups-set You'll be upset for weeks*). She is left to backtrack in self-defense, countering his portrayal of her present state and (re)defining her self-problematization on her own terms (*... I just wish I would have...*), no longer as a question inviting further dumping on.[13]

In our corpus, the uptake on self-problematizing further distinguished women's and men's narrative practices; in contrast to this dumping-on response, women did not further problematize men after the men problematized themselves. When women took the opposite tack and presented themselves as problem-solvers rather than self-problematizers, another asymmetric practice entailed the husband's dismissing his wife's solution and problematizing it until she conceded at least partially. An example of this is seen in (5), Mom's Dress Story, when Mom offers her own solution to the two-dress situation (*So what I'll probably do? – is wear it to the dinner the night before...*), to which Dad responds, "(Doesn't) that sound like a – (total:) – w:aste?" Mom initially rebuts (*no?:*) but, in the face of Dad's skepticism, concedes "...even if it were a complete waste," thus implicitly problematizing herself by Dad's terms in acknowledging that she might have been wasteful.

Our data also suggest that women's self-problematizing may have socializing effects. This was vividly illustrated in a lengthy story focusing on a mother and her son in a restaurant (the same family as in Jodie's TB Shots Report and Mom's Dress Story). In this narrative, the son, Oren, recalls eating a chili pepper his mother thought was a green bean. Although Oren initially frames the experience as funny, his mother tells him it wasn't funny, that his mouth was burning and hurting. While problematizing his stance as narrator, she also implicates herself as a culprit, thereby self-problematizing as protagonist. In the course of the story, Oren eventually takes on his mother's more serious framing of events, to the point of shouting, "YOUR FAULT – YOUR FAULT." She agrees, nodding her head and saying, "It *was* my fault." While she is saying this, he leans over and pinches her cheeks hard. She gasps and pulls his hands away, saying, "OW That really hurts honey?" As she holds a napkin to her mouth and cheeks, her son comments, "Your fault – I get to do whatever I want to do once – (That was my fee?)," laughs, and adds, "Just like it happened to me it happens to you." Just as husbands piled on to wives' self-targeting, Oren thus follows up on his mother's self-problematizing, extending condemnation and executing punishment for her self-problematized actions. In so doing, he seems to be assuming a dramatic version of what, in this corpus, was a male narrator role.

This discussion calls attention to an appropriate ending caveat to our findings throughout this chapter. Namely, there is family variation even within this sample of seven families of similar socioeconomic status and racial-cultural background. There were men who took up the role of monitor and judge with what seemed almost a vengeance; there were others who displayed much less assertion of the prerogatives of power as primary recipient. Furthermore, we do not wish to fix particular men's (or women's) narrator personae based on two evenings in the lives of these families. Our aim is not to polarize the genders, but, rather, to shed potential new light on some underexplored aspects of gender construction and socialization in everyday narrative activity.

Conclusion

Synthesizing these findings – with the caveats noted above – we construe a commonplace scenario of narrative activity at family dinners characterized by a sequence of the following order. First, mothers introduce narratives (about themselves and their children) that set up fathers as primary recipients and implicitly sanction them as evaluators of others' actions, conditions, thoughts, and feelings. Second, fathers turn such opportunities into forums for problematizing, with mothers themselves as their chief targets, very often on grounds of incompetence. And third, mothers respond in defense of themselves and their children via the counterproblematizing of fathers' evaluative, judgmental comments.

In the first stage, we see mothers' narrative locus of power; in the second, however, we see that such exercise of power is ephemeral and may even be self-destructive by giving fathers a platform for monitoring and judging wives and children. In the third stage, we see mothers striving to reclaim control over the narratives they originally put on the table. Given our impression of the recurrence of these preferences and practices, it seems that the struggle of the third stage is not ultimately successful in that the fathers reappear as primary recipients and the cycle of narrative reenactment characterized by this generalized scenario prevails. It may be that all parties obtain a particular type of satisfaction or stasis through this interplay such that it serves underlying needs, self-conceptions, and communicative goals. However, in this generalized scenario, mothers seem to play a pivotal role in enacting and socializing a hegemonic activity system (Engeström 1987; Gramsci 1971) in which fathers are regularly reinstantiated as arbiters of conduct narratively laid before them as in a panopticon.

In the family interactions we observed, when women directed their narratives to their husbands (or when children directed their narratives, voluntarily or not, to their fathers), they disadvantaged themselves by exposing their experiences to male scrutiny and standards of judgment. They performed actions as narrators that rendered them vulnerable to repeated spousal/paternal criticism of them, especially as protagonists. Through such means and with such effects, "Father knows best" – a gender ideology with a deeply rooted politics of asymmetry that has been contested in recent years – is still in reverberating evidence at the two-parent family dinner table, jointly constituted and re-created through everyday narrative practices. In this chapter, we hope to have raised awareness of the degree to which some women as

wives and mothers may wittingly or unwittingly contribute to – and even set up – the daily reconstruction of a "Father knows best" ideological dynamic.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This chapter is the result of the equal work of both authors. We are grateful for the support this research has received from the National Institute of Child Health Development (1986–1990: "Discourse Processes in American Families," Principal Investigators Elinor Ochs and Thomas Weisner, Research Assistants Maurine Bernstein, Dina Rudolph, Ruth Smith, and Carolyn Taylor) and from the Spencer Foundation (1990–1993: "Socialization of Scientific Discourse," Principal Investigator Elinor Ochs, Research Assistants Patrick Gonzales, Sally Jacoby, and Carolyn Taylor). We thank Marcelo Diversi for his assistance in editing the final version of this chapter. A preliminary version of this article appeared in the proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference (Ochs & Taylor 1992c).

NOTES

1 Clearly, our findings are implicative for certain family cultures and are not inclusive of the range of linguistic, ethnic, economic, and other forms of group variation within the United States. This study is offered as a basis for possible future studies of family narrative activity as a medium for constituting gender relations in other socioeconomic and cultural settings for which we do not presume to speak here. At the same time, while we suggest a certain resonance in these findings, we recognize the limits of our corpus and do not wish to overgeneralize regarding narrative practices even for white middle-class families.

2 This choice of five-year-olds follows from our interest in the roles played by children of an age to be fully capable of collaboration in family talk but still in their earliest, most pivotal years of language socialization (prior to much formal schooling). We also wanted at least one older child in the families so as to capture sibling as well as parent–child interaction.

3 For simplicity, we will often refer to participants by only one family role, e.g., to women as *mothers*, men as *fathers*, and girls and boys as *children*, but we note again, in keeping with our introductory perspectives, that at any one moment each participant may be constructing more than one family identity, e.g., also as spouses, as siblings, as females, as males.

4 All family names are pseudonyms. Transcription procedures are essentially those established by Gail Jefferson (see Atkinson & Heritage 1984:ix–xvi):

[	a left-hand bracket indicates the onset of overlapping, simultaneous utterances
=	two equals signs (latches) link utterances either by two speakers where the second jumps in on the end of the first, without any interval, or by the same speaker when lengthy overlap by another speaker requires that a continuous utterance be interrupted on the transcript to show simultaneity with another
(0.4)	indicates length of pause within and between utterances, timed in tenths of a second
a – a	a hyphen with spaces before and after indicates a short pause, less than 0.2 seconds
sa-	a hyphen immediately following a letter indicates an abrupt cutoff in speaking
(())	double parentheses enclose nonverbal and other descriptive information
( )	single parentheses enclose words that are not clearly audible (i.e., best guesses)
you	underlining indicates stress on a syllable or word(s)
CAPS	upper case indicates louder or shouted talk
:	a colon indicates a lengthening of a sound, the more colons, the longer
.	a period indicates falling intonation

, a comma indicates a continuing intonation
? a question mark indicates a rising intonation as a syllable or word ends
Note: bounding question marks (e.g., *Did you go to the ?animal hospital?*) are used (instead of rising arrows) to indicate a higher pitch for enclosed word(s).
h an *h* indicates an exhalation, the more *h*'s, the longer the exhalation
.h an *h* with a period before it indicates an inhalation, the more *h*'s, the longer.

5 For tables detailing the quantitative findings of this study, see Ochs and Taylor (1992c).
6 For more detail and elaborated consideration of the roles of children in the narrative activity of this corpus, see Ochs and Taylor (1992b).
7 When a narrative is interrupted or dropped and taken up again after an interval of at least two other turns, we consider the restart to constitute a new "round."
8 Only 10 percent of all problematizations were "self-inflicted," meaning that 90 percent of the problematizations targeted others. The percentage of problematizing directed toward oneself was highest for women, although still only 12 percent. In keeping with our present focus on exploring women's roles in particular, we will discuss and illustrate these self-problematizations in more detail following our examination of cross-spousal problematizing.
9 Accounting for the percentage differential in cross-spousal targeting, the children, albeit infrequent problematizers, did twice as much targeting of fathers as they did of mothers.
10 Perhaps contrary to general expectation, spouses in our corpus did not tend to elicit narratives from each other about their workdays (Mom's Job Story being an exception), so that parental "what-my-day-was-like" narratives, unlike the narratives of children, tended to be directly self-initiated to the spouse without elicitation.
11 Out of the 39 narratives introduced by women, 62 percent included at least one instance of someone's problematizing a family member at the dinner table. In contrast, only 44 percent of the narratives introduced by men and 41 percent of those introduced by children evidenced such problematizing.
12 On average, men problematized in narratives that they introduced themselves only 1.2 times per narrative, i.e., less often than they problematized in narratives introduced by women (1.8 times per narrative). In contrast, women problematized in narratives that they introduced themselves 1.4 times per narrative, i.e., much more often than they problematized in narratives introduced by men (only 0.5 times per narrative).
13 Regarding the roles and implications of problematization or challenges in co-narrators' theories of everyday events, and the potential here for Marie to incorporate her husband's challenge into something of a paradigm shift in her own stance, see Ochs, Smith, and Taylor (1989) and Ochs, Taylor, Rudolph, and Smith (1992).

REFERENCES

Atkinson, J. Maxwell, and John Heritage (eds.) (1984). *Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Bentham, Jeremy (1791). *Panopticon*. London: T. Payne.
Cole, Michael, and Sheila Cole (1989). *The Development of Children*. New York: Scientific American Books.
Dunn, Judy (1984). *Sisters and Brothers*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
Engeström, Yrjö (1987). *Learning by Expanding: An Activity-theoretical Approach to Developmental Research*. Helsinki: Orienta-Konsultit Oy.
Foucault, Michel (1979). *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Random House.
Freud, Sigmund ([1921] 1949). *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth Press.
Goodwin, Marjorie Harness (1990). *He-Said-She-Said: Talk as Social Organization among Black Children*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Gramsci, Antonio (1971). *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci.* Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith. New York: International Publishers.

Hartmann, Heidi I. (1981). The family as the locus of gender, class, and political struggle: The example of housework. *Signs* 6(3):366–94.

Kohlberg, Lawrence (1966). *The Development of Sex Differences.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Maccoby, Eleanor E., and Carol N. Jacklin (1974). *The Psychology of Sex Differences.* Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Ochs, Elinor, Ruth Smith, and Carolyn Taylor (1989). Detective stories at dinnertime: Problem-solving through co-narration. *Cultural Dynamics* 2(2):238–57.

Ochs, Elinor, and Carolyn Taylor (1992a). Science at dinner. In Claire Kramsch and Sally McConnell-Ginet (eds.), *Text and Context: Cross-disciplinary Perspectives on Language Study.* Lexington, MA: Heath, 29–45.

Ochs, Elinor, and Carolyn Taylor (1992b). Family narrative as political activity. *Discourse & Society* 3(3):301–40.

Ochs, Elinor, and Carolyn Taylor (1992c). Mothers' role in the everyday reconstruction of "Father knows best." In Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz, and Birch Moonwomon (eds.), *Locating Power: Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference.* Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group, 447–62.

Ochs, Elinor, Carolyn Taylor, Dina Rudolph, and Ruth Smith (1992). Storytelling as a theory-building activity. *Discourse Processes* 15(1):37–72.

Osmond, Marie Withers, and Barrie Thorne (1993). Feminist theories: The social construction of gender in families and society. In Pauline G. Boss, William J. Doherty, Ralph LaRossa, Walter R. Schumm, and Suzanne K. Steinmetz (eds.), *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach.* New York: Plenum Press, 591–623.

Schieffelin, Bambi B. (1990). *The Give and Take of Everyday Life: Language Socialization of Kaluli Children.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Stack, Carol (1974). *All our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a Black Community.* New York: Harper & Row.