DOING GENDER IN CONFLICT TALK: AN ANALYSIS OF GENDERED DISCOURSES IN A U.S. REALITY TV SHOW

CHIT CHEUNG MATTHEW SUNG
Lancaster University

ABSTRACT. *This paper presents an analysis of gendered discourses in conflict talk by drawing upon interactional data from the U.S. reality TV show* The Apprentice. *It explores the ways in which women professionals enact their gender identities while engaging actively in conflict talk which is stereotypically coded as 'masculine'. Specifically, I shall look at the different ways in which they construct their gendered identities by aligning themselves with different gendered discourses. It is found that these woman professionals are shown to draw upon different gendered discourses in constructing their feminine gender identities, namely the dominant discourses of femininity and resistant discourses. The paper also shows that the enactment of gendered identities in conflict talk may vary from one context to another.*

Keywords: Gendered discourses, identity, conflict talk, discourse analysis, reality TV, media.

CHIT CHEUNG MATTHEW SUNG

TRABAJAR EL GÉNERO EN CONVERSACIONES CON CONFLICTO: UN ANÁLISIS DE LOS DISCURSOS DE GÉNERO EN UN *REALITY SHOW* DE LA TELEVISIÓN ESTADOUNIDENSE

RESUMEN. *Este artículo presenta un análisis de discursos de género en conversaciones con conflicto extraídas de datos de interacción del* reality show *estadounidense* The Apprentice. *El artículo explora la manera en que las mujeres profesionales recrean sus identidades de género cuando están inmersas en conversaciones con conflicto, estereotípicamente entendidas como "masculinas". De modo específico, vamos a contemplar la forma en que ellas construyen su identidad de género usando distintos tipos de discursos de género. Pudimos observar que estas mujeres profesionales emplean diferentes discursos de género al construir sus identidades, a saber, discursos dominantes de femineidad y discursos resistentes. Este artículo también muestra cómo la representación de la identidad de género en conversaciones con conflicto varía según el contexto.*

Palabras clave: Discursos de género, identidad, conversaciones con conflicto, análisis del discursos, *reality show*, medios de comunicación.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language and gender research has been a thriving field of study over the last two decades. However, while there has been a burgeoning body of research on discourse and gender in different parts of the word, very few studies have investigated the representations of language and gendered discourses in the media and the popular culture (cf. Litosseliti 2006; Talbot 2010; García Gómez 2012). This paper aims to examine the representations of gender and workplace communication in the media by drawing upon interactional data taken from the debut season of the U.S. reality TV show *The Apprentice*. In particular, I shall look at the specific ways in which women professionals enact their feminine gender identities while engaging in conflict talk which is stereotypically coded as 'masculine' in the context of 'simulated' workplace communication.

2. CONFLICT TALK AND GENDERED DISCOURSE

According to Vuchinich (1987: 597), verbal conflict can be defined as "a form of social interaction characterized by at least two persons verbally opposing each other". It involves one person opposing another verbally by "disagreeing with,

challenging, correcting, downgrading, threatening, accusing, insulting or in some other way finding fault with another person" (Vuchinich 1987: 592). In most cases, conflict talk can be seen as a type of 'negatively affective talk' (Holmes 2006), since it tends to entail 'face threatening acts' (Brown and Levinson 1987). And since elements of confrontation, aggression and competition are likely to be involved, conflict talk is sometimes perceived as a 'masculinized' discourse (Baxter 2003).

In sociolinguistic studies on conflict talk, researchers are particularly interested in the interactive processes through which conflicts emerge and develop in order to study conflict as a skilled and differentiated communicative behavior (Farris 2000). Earlier studies emphasized gender differences in language use during conflict talk. In one study, for example, Makri-Tsilipakou (1991) reveals gender differences in expressing disagreements through the analysis of disagreements between Greek men and women by drawing upon data from couples and close friends. Her study found that men's disagreements in cross-gender conversations are strong, often without any accounts for their disagreements. On the other hand, in conversations among women, their disagreements are shaped as partial agreements through the use of agreement prefaces placed before the actual disagreement, and the disagreement component often involves intra-turn delay, including hedges, pauses, models, and accounts. In another study, Gunthner (1992) also found some interesting gender-linked discourse patterns in talks involving disagreements in Chinese-German interactions. It was discovered that whilst female speakers hardly contradict their interlocutors and tend to offer assent during conflict talk, male speakers keep on fighting back. In a more recent study, Pines *et al.* (2002) provide evidence of significant gender differences in terms of both the style and content of arguments in divorce mediation. It was found that while men's arguments tend to be more legalistic, women's arguments are likely to be more relational. In addition, women's argument style is more emotional than that of men, with women expressing more and richer emotions. In order to explain the gender differences, the authors suggest that men tend to suppress their emotion, whereas women are likely to express feelings of pain and hurt more freely during marital conflict.

However, the emphasis on gender differences in conflict talk is not without its problems, given that individual differences within each gender are likely to be greater than the differences between men and women. It is also important to consider context parameters, such as social status, institutional role, and cultural background, which may interact with gender in the construction of interlocutors' social identity. García Gómez (2000), for example, challenges the gender differences found in conflict talk as reported in earlier research. By analyzing the

gendered patterns of speaking in talk-show verbal conflict in Spain, García Gómez (2000) found that men and women use interactional patterns typical of the other gender. In particular, it is found that women adopt the discourse patterns typical of male speakers. For example, there is evidence of women constantly interrupting the speech of men, challenging men's utterances, and making face-threatening acts to men. In doing so, women seem to socialize into a competitive style of discourse and adapt to the male-dominated discourse in the public sphere. García Gómez (2000) therefore notes the instability and variability of gender identities, arguing that the discursive strategies employed by both men and women do not support the stereotypical notions of men's and women's talk.

While there have been studies on gender and conflict talk, little is known about the media representations of gender and conflict talk at work. As men have traditionally occupied key positions in many workplaces, it has been noted that workplace norms are predominantly masculine (Baxter 2010; Mullany 2007, Sung 2013a). As a result, many women professionals in the workplace face challenges in adapting to the 'masculine' workplace culture and are often perceived as deviant exceptions to the (male) norms (Holmes 2006; Schnurr 2009, 2010). In particular, it may be considered problematic for these women professionals to 'do gender' and 'do conflict talk' simultaneously, since the latter typically entails the use of stereotypically masculine discourse strategies, which may be seen as incompatible with the stereotyped expectations of women's speech style and the enactment of a feminine gendered identity (Schnurr 2010). This paper therefore aims to explore the ways in which women professionals construct their gender identity while engaging in conflict talk by looking at the 'simulated' workplace interaction in a U.S. reality TV show.

3. DATA AND FRAMEWORK

Data in the study are drawn from the debut season of *The Apprentice*, a popular reality TV show in the U.S. Filmed in 2003, the show was broadcast weekly on National Broadcasting Company, or NBC, in the United States from 8 January 2004 until 15 April 2004. It had an average viewership of 20.7 million people each week in the U.S. In the debut season of *The Apprentice*, sixteen contestants compete in an elimination-style competition, vying for the top job at one of Donald Trump's companies and an accompanying $250,000 salary. During the 15 episodes of the show, they embark upon a televised, extended job interview in order to become an apprentice of Donald Trump, a well-known American real estate magnate as well as host and executive producer of *The Apprentice* (Sung 2011, 2012, 2013b).

In *The Apprentice*, the contestants comprising eight men and eight women are split into two teams based on gender. Each week, the teams need to select a project manager to lead them in the assigned task of the week. The two teams compete against each other in a business-oriented task which is intended to test their business skills and expertise. The assigned tasks include selling lemonade on the streets of Manhattan, promoting an advertising campaign and managing a multinational company. Every week, the winning team receives a spectacular reward, while the losing team faces Donald Trump in the boardroom, where Donald Trump meets with the members of the losing team to figure out the reasons for the failure in the task and who is primarily responsible for the failure. At the end of the meeting, Donald Trump makes his final decision as to who did the worst job in the task and, as such, should be dismissed with immediate effect. In view of its popularity in the USA and around the world, *The Apprentice* is considered a valuable site for investigation.

By drawing upon the notion of 'gendered discourses', this paper pays particular attention to the gendered interactional styles that are employed by the speakers, as well as the gendered discourses they align with in negotiating their gendered identities (cf. Mullany 2007). In other words, 'discourse' is not only understood as language beyond the sentence level (Cameron 2001), but also conceptualized in a broader sense as "practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault 1972: 49), or as recognizable ways of seeing the world (Sunderland 2004). In the latter sense of the term, 'gendered discourses' can be seen as "a particular set of ideas about gender in some segment or segments of society" (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003: 42). In relating gendered discourses to the construction of gendered identities, I take the position that men and women draw upon different gendered discourses in constructing their gendered identities (Sunderland 2004). As Litosseliti (2006: 58) aptly notes, "gendered discourses *position* women and men in certain ways, and at the same time, people *take up* particular gendered subject positions that constitute gender more widely". In other words, the gendered identities of men and women are dependent on the 'subject positions' created in discourse. By using the idea of 'gendered discourses', it is possible to examine the ways in which different discourses contribute to the construction of different identities or subjectivities, as different discourses position people differently in relation to the world (Coates 1996; Holmes and Marra 2010). This paper therefore examines the ways in which women professionals perform different feminine gendered identities in contexts of conflict talk by drawing upon different gendered discourses, including dominant discourses of femininity, as well as resistant discourses (cf. Coates 1996, 1999; Preece 2008).

4. DATA ANALYSIS OF GENDERED DISCOURSES

4.1. COMPETING DISCOURSES OF FEMININITY

In the analysis of Excerpt 1, we shall see that competing discourses are drawn upon by two female contestants, Katrina and Omarosa, in creating different gendered identities in conflict talk. While they employ a great deal of normatively masculine, adversarial discourse strategies in the conflict talk, they construct their feminine gendered identities in various ways by aligning themselves with different gendered discourses. In the excerpt below, they are engaged in a heated argument, which comes after Omarosa has become the target of the group, because she is viewed as being uncooperative with the group and unfriendly to the other members. In view of the uneasy situation, Katrina talks to Omarosa about the tension caused by Omarosa within the group, which leads to the conflict talk as shown below.

EXCERPT 1 (Episode 3)

1	KAT:	wait
2		I'm telling you this because I care +
3		and I really //want–\
4	OMA:	/but\\ I can't tell that Katrina
5		because we sleep in the same room
6		yet you couldn't say to me I had a problem with XYZ =
7	KAT:	= because I felt like you were being fake
8	OMA:	I think being fake is waiting until I'm in front of seven women
9		and then attacking //me\
10	KAT:	/no no\\ no no no no
12		I'm very nice to everybody
13		I get along with everybody here
14		//I get along\
15	OMA:	/but that's–\\
16		that's where the faking //comes in\
17	KAT:	/you know what?\\
18		you know what?
19		because I am a good person
20		I am true to myself =
21	OMA:	= this is where the personal attacks come in
22		I didn't come here to make friends
23		I said that from day one
24		and if you all stop being so freaking sensitive

25	KAT:	I'm not sensitive //honey\
26	OMA:	/you just\\ told me
27	KAT:	I'm not sensitive
28	OMA:	you just told me I'm a good person =
29	KAT:	= <u>I am</u> a good person
30	OMA:	I'm a good person
31		but what does that have to //do with this?\
32	KAT:	/you know what?\\
33		you know what?
34		life is too <u>short</u> to be a <u>bitch</u>
35		do you think you're gonna be successful in the business world
36		if you make enemies with //everybody that comes in front of you?\
37	OMA:	/I have– I have–\\
38		guess what?
39		I went from the projects to the White House
40		how successful was that?
41		you don't sit with the president of the United States +
42		by not being successful
43		I've been successful <u>again</u> and <u>again</u> and <u>again</u>
44		and it <u>works</u> for me
45	KAT:	Omarosa life's /not Omarosa\\
46	OMA:	//( )\
47	KAT:	I like being a good person =
48	OMA:	= you're a /good bitch\\
49	KAT:	//if that–\
50		if that makes me a bad businesswoman
51		then let it [beeps] be
52	OMA:	you're a good //businessperson\
53	KAT:	/I go\\ to sleep living with myself okay Omarosa
54	OMA:	good
55	KAT:	and you know what
56		I'm gonna be successful =
57	OMA:	= you are //successful\
58	KAT:	/no no no\\
59		and you know what?
60		//you know what Omarosa?\
61	OMA:	/you are successful\\
62	KAT:	//I'm gonna be–\

63	OMA:	/( )\\
64	KAT:	Omarosa <u>shut</u> <u>up</u>
65	OMA:	you <u>shut</u> <u>up</u>
66		don't talk to //me like that\
67	KAT:	/I'm gonna be\\ successful
68	OMA:	that's //where this conversation ends\
69	KAT:	/( )\\
70	OMA:	don't touch me
71		//don't touch me\
72	KAT:	/Omarosa Omarosa\\
73		I'm gonna be successful upholding the highest of scruples
74	*OMA:*	*of all the women*
75		*I think Katrina is a bit naïve*
76		*I feel bad for her because she really is looking to gain friends*
77		*as opposed to focusing on winning*

In the excerpt, Katrina can be seen drawing upon the dominant discourses of femininity in performing her gendered identities in conflict talk. At the beginning of the excerpt, Katrina demonstrates her explicit concern for Omarosa's positive face needs by saying *I'm telling you this because I care* + (line 2). Here, she uses the meta-statement *I'm telling you this* (line 2) in order to emphasize the importance of what she is about to tell Omarosa, and it is followed by the explanation as to why she needs to talk to Omarosa, namely, that she cares about Omarosa. By framing the conversation in Omarosa's interests and by emphasizing that explicitly, she can be said to establish solidarity and collegiality with Omarosa and orient to the traditional feminine ideals of showing others care and concern, despite the animosity of the whole group against Omarosa. However, Omarosa disagrees with Katrina rather explicitly: *but I can't tell that Katrina* (line 4), and criticizes Katrina for being fake (lines 8–9). In response, Katrina rejects Omarosa's claim that she is fake, and self–categorizes herself as a nice person by saying *I'm very nice to everybody* (line 12) and *I get along with everybody here* (line 13). Furthermore, she emphasizes that *I am a good person* twice in lines 19 and 29. In doing so, she orients to the dominant discourse of femininity, that of 'being nice', in constructing a conventional feminine gender identity (Coates 1996, 1999).

On the other hand, Omarosa challenges Katrina's orientation to the traditional discourse of femininity by rejecting its place in the competition. For instance, she questions the relevance of being a good person to the discussion (line 31). Katrina, however, responds by issuing a warning *life's too short to be a bitch* (line 34), which criticizes Omarosa for acting like a bitch. She goes on to produce a challenging question, *do you think you're gonna be successful in the business*

world if you make enemies with everybody that comes in front of you (lines 35–36), accusing Omarosa of acting not nicely and questioning her philosophy of being successful. In producing such a challenging rhetorical question, she assumes a pedagogical and didactic tone. By doing so, she takes on a 'teacherly' role, putting herself in a one-up position. In response, Omarosa counters Katrina's accusation by emphasizing the fact that she is successful (lines 39-44), directly rejecting Katrina's questioning her ability to succeed. She does so by providing evidence to prove her point: *I went from the projects to the White House* (line 39), which is immediately followed by the rhetorical question *how successful was that?* (line 40). Omarosa's response here serves to emphasize and draw attention to the degree of her success, directly challenging Katrina's accusation. In so doing, Omarosa presents herself as a successful, competent and professional individual, while at the same time realigning herself in a one-up position by challenging Katrina's accusation. Omarosa goes on to emphasize her success by repeating the word *again* three times with emphatic stress in *I've been successful again and again and again* (line 43).

It is interesting to note that Katrina aligns herself with the conventional discourses of femininity by saying *I like being a good person* (line 47), reiterating that she is a nice or good person. Again, she enacts a conventionally feminine gender identity by evoking the traditional feminine ideal of nicety (Coates 1996, 1999). However, Omarosa directly challenges Katrina's statement by producing a contradictory comment: *you're a good bitch* (line 48). By using the term of insult *bitch* (line 48), this not only seriously attacks Katrina's positive face, but also directly contradicts Katrina's categorization of herself as *a good person* (line 47). Such a negatively affective speech act could make the conflict more personal and emotional. Perhaps what is more interesting here is the collocation *good bitch* (line 48). Here, given the context, *bitch* refers to somebody who is weak, vulnerable and subservient, as opposed to a spiteful woman. By qualifying Katrina's self-assessment of *a good person* as *a good bitch*, Omarosa denigrates the importance of being a good person, at least in the competition. Rather, she sees being a nice person as equivalent to being weak and vulnerable. In so doing, she implies that being nice is not valued in the corporate world but is viewed as a sign of weakness. Here, it can be seen that Omarosa shows a certain degree of subversion of the dominant gendered discourse surrounding the nicety of women.

It is also worth noting that the conflict talk between Katrina and Omarosa is characterized by confrontational stances and competitive speech styles which are indexed for masculinity. By drawing upon a range of these adversarial discursive strategies in 'doing conflict talk', including disruptive interruptions and unmitigated directives, they present themselves as assertive women professionals

at work. For example, Katrina emphasizes that *I'm gonna be successful* (line 56), and Omarosa produces a statement of agreement by saying *you are successful* (line 57). At that point, Katrina cuts Omarosa off and makes herself heard again by uttering the disagreement particles *no no no* (line 58), followed by the phrase *you know what* (line 59), which serves to signal the importance of her upcoming statements. However, Katrina is interrupted by Omarosa, who repeats *you are successful* (line 61). Having been cut off by Omarsosa, Katrina issues a strong and direct directive in the form of an imperative, *Omarosa shut up* (line 61). Omarosa replies in kind with a similar bald-on-record and explicit directive in the form of an imperative preceded by the directive pronoun *you*: *you shut up* (line 65), which is followed by another imperative *don't talk to me like that* (line 65). Her second imperative seems to signal that Katrina's bald-on-record imperative has violated the politeness norms in the workplace, and is therefore considered negatively marked and inappropriate within such a context. However, instead of responding to Omarosa's directive, Katrina continues to repeat her statement: *I'm gonna be successful* (line 67). Having been ignored, Omarosa makes the metalinguistic comment *that's where this conversation ends* (line 68), showing her refusal to interact with Katrina anymore. Here, we can see that the ways in which they do conflict talk clearly challenge the traditional gender stereotype that women tend to use cooperative and 'feminine' speech styles (cf. Tannen 1994).

It is indeed interesting to note that Katrina and Omarosa can be viewed as constructing different kinds of femininities by drawing upon different gendered discourses which are in conflict with each other (cf. Baxter 2010). Here, we can see the existence of competing discourses of femininity in the enactment of feminine gender identities (Coates 1996, 1999). It is notable that Katrina orients to the norms of traditional femininity by emphasizing that she is a 'good' and 'nice' person in the interaction. As Coates (1999) suggests, girls are under social pressure to be nice, and doing niceness is the ideal of femininity. Coates (1999) also points out that one of the dominant discourses of femininity is that women should be 'nice'. In the conflict talk, Katrina clearly aligns herself with the traditional discourses of femininity by attempting to project a 'nice' feminine image. She does so by self-categorizing herself as *a good person* (lines 19, 29, 47) repeatedly in the conflict talk and by making the overt statement that *I'm very nice to everybody* (line 12). Notably, she also argues for the need to be 'a good person' in order to succeed in the business world, which is evident in the criticism she makes to Omarosa: *do you think you're gonna be successful in the business world if you make enemies with everybody that comes in front of you?* (lines 35-36). In other words, she believes that she needs to maintain the ideal of femininity of 'being nice' even in the workplace. In the meantime, however, she also constructs

an assertive, successful, competitive businesswoman image, which is evident in the way she argues with Omarosa, whereby she uses strong, assertive discourse strategies in stating her position.

By contrast, instead of drawing upon the traditional discourses of femininity, Omarosa articulates an alternative, resistant discourse (Coates 1999; Sunderland 2004). As seen in Excerpt 1, Omarosa openly disagrees with Katrina's philosophy of 'being nice', and questions the need to be 'a good person' in order to succeed in the business world (lines 38-44). Rather, Omarosa thinks that 'being nice' in the business world can be equivalent to 'being fake' (line 16). In other words, she resists the traditional discourses of femininity, thereby casting doubt on the necessity, and perhaps the sincerity, of 'being nice' in the business world. In supporting her view, she provides counter-evidence of how successful she is (line 38-44). In so doing, Omarosa also emphasizes precisely the way she works in the business world, which does not necessarily agree with how other women, including Katrina, work. And most importantly, she finds it perfectly appropriate for herself, which is evident in what she states emphatically: *it works for me* (line 44). This underscores that she has her own way of succeeding in the business world. Furthermore, Omarosa rejects the dominant discourses of femininity which place emphasis on valuing friendships and maintaining harmonious relationships with other women. In the excerpt, she overtly states that *I didn't come here to make friends* (line 22). And in her individual interview, she also comments that *I think Katrina is a bit naïve, I feel bad for her because she really is looking to gain friends as opposed to focusing on winning* (lines 75-77). In criticizing Katrina for being naïve, Omarosa explicitly challenges the importance of developing friendships and gaining friends. Rather, she sees winning as the priority in the business world, which is often seen as a masculine activity. Thus, in constructing her gender identity, Omarosa draws upon a resistant and subversive discourse in the context of the workplace. Here, we can see an example of doing 'a different femininity', or articulating an alternative discourse of femininity which displays resistance to the dominant androcentric discourses (see Coates 1999). 'Being nice', to Omarosa, is not relevant in her construction of gender identity.

Interestingly, the conflict talk in Excerpt 1 raises the question of whether a woman needs to be 'a nice person' in order to succeed in the business world, in view of the observation that 'being nice' may be perceived as a sign of weakness. The question here seems to tie in with the issue of 'double bind' that women often face in the workplace: when women are feminine and unassertive, they are perceived as weak; but when they adopt more masculine discourse styles, they are viewed as aggressive and confrontational (cf. Lakoff 1990; Baxter 2010). While Omarosa and Katrina have not reached a consensus over such a question in the

conflict talk, there is evidence that the dominant discourses of femininity are being challenged and resisted openly by women professionals who question the conventional ways of being 'feminine' in the workplace.

4.2. DRAWING UPON A RESISTANT DISCOURSE

I shall now move on to examine how Katrina constructs a very different gendered identity in another context. Rather than orienting to the conventional discourses of femininity, she displays resistance to the dominant gender ideology by contesting and subverting the 'dominant discourses of femininity in relation to image and sexuality' (Mullany 2007), with the aim of achieving empowerment in the workplace. In Excerpt 2, we shall see that Katrina complains to Bill that the group has ignored her opinions, and in doing so, draws upon the resistant discourse, rather than the dominant gendered discourse, in enacting her gendered identity.

EXCERPT 2 (Episode 10)

1	KAT:	they're not riding rickshaws
2		in fact they're not gonna even see the rickshaws
3	BILL:	how do you know they're not gonna see the rickshaws?
4	KAT:	cos Heidi told me
5	BILL:	really huh
6		so what else do you know?
7	KAT:	if you guys ask me I'll tell you
8		you guys haven't stopped to actually ask me my opinion on things
9	BILL:	if you guys would've asked for my opinion I mean +
10		I feel like we've asked
11	KAT:	you guys have not asked for my opinion
12		and every time I've said anything
13		you guys have shut me up +
14		I'm being honest with you
15		it's convenient for you to use me when my looks take + our–
16	BILL:	wait a minute
17		you don't use that yourself?
18		are you kidding me?
19		it's not convenient for you either?
20		we're a team
21		and we're either gonna win as a team or lose as a team

22	KAT:	I'm successful for a reason
23		and it's not solely because of my looks
24		and I feel like every idea I came up with yesterday you tossed
25		I'm sick and tired of it
26		so I'm just like not gonna get involved anymore
27	*KAT:*	*Bill doesn't listen to any of my ideas*
28		*he uses me whenever it's convenient for him*
29		*whenever we go to a sales pitch he turns to us and says*
30		*oh these beautiful women will be driving*
31		*but what about my ideas?*
32		*I'm not a pinup doll*
33	KAT:	riding a rickshaw
34		because a woman would be riding a rickshaw that looked cute
35		and that's really offensive to //me\
36	BILL:	/right\\
37	KAT:	to be honest with //you\
38	BILL:	/right\\
39	KAT:	because I'm not successful because I dress cute =
40	BILL:	= I never– I don't– I– I– I believe in a democracy
41		I would never wanna run it like + Troy =
42	KAT:	= I think– I think you believe that +
43		but your actions don't
44	BILL:	yeah well
45	KAT:	//(portray that)\
46	BILL:	/apparently\\ in your opinion they don't //and\
47	KAT:	/I just\\ don't agree with your leadership style
48	BILL*:*	*the bottom line is that*
49		*Katrina doesn't like the way I lead*
50		*my advice to her is step aside then*

In Excerpt 2, Katrina shows resistance to being constrained by the dominant world view that women professionals take advantage of their feminine appearance in their careers. Excerpt 2 begins when Bill asks Katrina how she knows everything about the other group: *so what else do you know?* (line 6). Instead of answering the question directly, she responds by saying *if you guys ask me I'll tell you* (line 7) with a smile voice, and goes on to complain that the group has not asked her opinion in the task: *you guys haven't stopped to actually ask me my opinion on things* (line 8). This is where the conflict talk emerges when she accuses the group of ignoring her and overlooking her contributions. Note that the use of the adverbial *actually* (line 8) serves as a hedge in minimizing the force

of the complaint. In response, Bill repeats her accusation and reformulates it using the conditional *if*–construction: *if you guys would've asked for my opinion I mean* + (line 9). In doing so, he also shows his surprise before challenging and rejecting her claim. He goes on to express his disagreement by contradicting her: *I feel like we've asked* (line 10). Note, however, that in his response, he employs the pragmatic particle *I mean* (line 9) and a pause (marked with +), which function as attenuating devices to soften his disagreement. He also prefaces his disagreement with the pragmatic particle *I feel like* (line 10), which indicates tentativeness and serves to hedge its illocutionary force.

In the excerpt, Katrina expresses her dissatisfaction that the group has not valued her or her ideas, in an attempt to get the group to value her abilities and contributions. For instance, she reiterates her complaint in a more forceful manner without mitigation, *you guys have not asked for my opinion* (line 11). She goes on to give details of being ignored: *and every time I've said anything you guys have shut me up* + (lines 12-13). And she uses the meta-linguistic statement *I'm being honest with you* (line 14), serving as a disclaimer. It allows her to be direct without being perceived negatively. Also, it may possibly mitigate the face threats involved in her upcoming complaint about Bill by indicating that she is just being honest, rather than antagonistic.

Furthermore, Katrina displays resistance to the use of her appearance to get things done at work, as she goes on to make another complaint that the group uses her looks when it is convenient (line 15). In response, Bill challenges her complaint by using the rhetorical question: *you don't use that yourself?* (line 17). And by saying *are you kidding me* (line 18), Bill again questions the validity of her accusation. He then goes on to emphasize that they are part of *the team* (line 20), and that they are going to win or lose *as a team* (line 21). By highlighting the concept of *the team* (lines 20 and 21) and using the inclusive pronoun *we* twice (lines 20 and 21), he attempts to build solidarity and establish an in-group identity, possibly creating alignment with Katrina. However, she insists that she is successful not because of her looks (line 23). She goes on to express her dissatisfaction, *I feel like every idea I came up with yesterday you tossed* (line 24). Note that she mitigates the force of her complaint with the pragmatic particle *I feel like* (line 24) as a softener. She also makes explicit her disappointment with Bill's rejecting of her ideas: *I'm sick and tired of it* (line 25), and her refusal to get involved in the task: *I'm just like not gonna get involved anymore* (line 26). Notice, however, that she uses the hedges *just* (line 26) and *like* (line 26), which seem to have the effect of toning down the force of her refusal to contribute, thereby possibly mitigating the potential face threat involved.

Interestingly, Katrina can be viewed as drawing upon a resistant discourse in constructing her gender identity, as opposed to adopting the dominant discourses of femininity. The enactment of feminine identity here is clearly different from the identity that she constructs in Excerpt 1. As can be seen in Excerpt 2, she expresses her resistance in using her appearance to gain success in her work, and displays her dissatisfaction that her ideas are not valued by the group. As Coates (1996) suggests, one of the dominant discourses of femininity is that women should care about their image and appearance (Coates 1996, 1998; Mullany 2007). Instead, Katrina places emphasis on her ability, ideas and opinions, as opposed to her appearance, and attempts to demonstrate her own ability to do the job. In so doing, she distances herself from the dominant discourses of femininity.

During the conflict talk, Katrina overtly states that *I'm successful for a reason and it's not solely because of my looks* (lines 22–23). In so doing, she tries to emphasize her ability and skills, while downplaying the reliance on her feminine appearance in achieving success. By making this explicit, she seems to distance herself from 'the dominant discourse of femininity surrounding feminine image in particular relation to sexual attractiveness' (Mullany 2007: 199). In effect, she also challenges and resists Bill's suggestion that she draws upon her feminine image and sexual attractiveness in getting things done in the workplace contexts; and as such, she subverts the positioning offered by the dominant discourse of femininity. In addition, by saying *because a woman would be riding a rickshaw that looked cute and that's really offensive to me* (lines 34-35), she also expresses her strong disapproval of women being used for their attractive appearance, which is seen as demeaning and insulting to women. In so doing, she resists being associated with the gender stereotype of women using manipulative feminine traits closely associated with the dominant discourses of femininity. One reason may be that such a stereotype is taken as underestimating women's abilities in the process of decision-making, thereby reducing women to merely decorative objects. Another reason may be that when women are perceived to be gaining kudos due to sexual attractiveness, they are subjected to negative evaluation in the workplace (Mullany 2007). Here, we see that Katrina is constructing a resistant and combative gender identity, displaying resistance to the dominant discourses of femininity surrounding feminine image and sexuality. And she does so by rejecting any denigration of women's abilities and resisting the use of women's looks solely in the business world. In other words, she takes on a more agentive identity through the attempt to get empowered, assume key positions in the workplace, and take up a more active role within the team.

It is also interesting to note that whilst she uses assertive speech styles in expressing her complaint and rejecting the traditional gender stereotypes, she

also utilizes hedges and other mitigating devices in voicing her dissatisfaction. In doing so, she presents herself as an assertive and self-assured professional who is eager to break through the glass ceiling through her own ability and expertise, while employing hedging devices in her discourse for the enactment of her feminine gender identity and her professional identity. Here, she can be seen to be engaged in what is called the 'balancing act' by integrating both elements of masculine and feminine stylistic features in 'doing conflict talk' (see Holmes 2006; Schnurr 2010).

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As can be seen in the analysis, different gendered discourses are being drawn upon by professional women to construct different kinds of gender identities in conflict talk. For example, the analysis of Excerpt 1 shows that these women professionals draw upon very different gendered discourses in order to create different gendered identities in the same interaction. While the alignment with the dominant discourses of femininity positions Katrina in more conventional ways, more radical and subversive discourses offer Omarosa alternative ways of doing femininity (cf. Coates 1999: 129). And instead of using 'femininity' in the singular, the pluralized 'femininities' should be used to draw attention to the different and various ways in which women construct their gendered identities through discourse (see Coates 1999). As Coates (1999) puts it, there is no single unified way of doing femininity. The analysis shows that a range of gendered subject positions are available to women in constructing their gendered identities.

In addition, the data shows that the same woman draws upon different discourses of femininity in different contexts and portrays different gendered identities at different times. In other words, the enactment of gendered identities in conflict talk is shown to vary from one context to another, thereby lending support to the claim that gendered identities are fluid and are constantly constructed in interaction (Bucholtz and Hall 2005). As can be seen in the analysis, Katrina aligns herself with different gendered discourses in different contexts of conflict talk, depending on the aspects of identity she wants to foreground and the specific goals she wants to achieve. In Excerpt 1, she aligns herself with the dominant discourses of femininity by stressing the feminine ideal of 'being nice' in the conflict talk with Omarosa. In another context (Excerpt 2), she distances herself from the traditional discourses at other times by resisting the stereotypical feminine role of seductress with the use of her feminine image in the talk with Bill. By adopting a resistant discourse (see Excerpt 2), she attempts to achieve empowerment within the group and distance herself from traditional

gender stereotypes at work. As Holmes (1997: 197) aptly points out, when people construct their gender identities in ongoing interaction, they "may reinforce norms at one point, but challenge and contest them at others". By taking up different gendered discourses in different contexts in enacting her gendered identities, she enacts her professional identity without compromising aspects of her conventional feminine identity, which might otherwise result in negative evaluations.

It is also noteworthy that the gender representations in *The Apprentice* seem to challenge the traditional gender stereotypes that women's speech style is always polite, co-operative and other-oriented (Tannen 1994; Holmes 1995). As evident in the analysis, women professionals draw upon assertive and sometimes aggressive discursive styles which are stereotypically associated with masculinity in conflict talk. It is therefore argued that the characterization of men's and women's speech styles by the simple dichotomy of 'competitiveness' versus 'cooperativeness' is problematic, since it fails to reflect the complexity of women professionals' communicative styles. Instead, the professional women in the TV show are shown using competitive and aggressive discursive strategies, as well as displaying confrontational and aggressive stances during conflict talk. In other words, it appears that certain well-entrenched and long-established gender stereotypes are de-constructed in the reality TV show (cf. García Gómez 2000).

What is perhaps more interesting is the 'gender work' that is performed by women in conflict talk. As evident in the analysis, women professionals reconcile the competing demands of enacting their feminine gender identities and adopting stereotypically masculine ways of speaking by drawing upon different gendered discourses. As engaging in conflict talk is often conceived as a 'masculine' activity, the use of masculine discursive strategies seems to be the normative way of speaking in such contexts. However, these professional women also orient to certain norms, ideals and expectations of femininity while using elements of 'masculine' speech styles in conflict talk. In so doing, they enact different feminine gender identities either by aligning themselves with the dominant discourses of femininity or by distancing themselves from these discourses (cf. Coates 1997). In other words, 'doing gender' is still evident in conflict talk for women professionals, but attention should be drawn to the participants' orientations towards certain ideals of femininity and to the various gendered discourses which position women in different ways. As Litosseliti (2006: 61) puts it, 'we *produce* or *construct* our multiple gendered selves through the choices we make from different discourses available' (emphasis in original).

In closing, it should be acknowledged that the present paper only examined the representations of gender identities in a single reality TV show. It is still

unclear whether such diversity of gendered identities is represented in the mass media in general. And given the relative paucity of research on the media representations of gender and workplace communication, future research is needed to explore the gendered discourses that prevail in different forms of the media.

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APPENDIX: Transcription Conventions

yes	underscore indicates emphatic stress
[laughs]	paralinguistic features in square brackets
+	pause of up to one second
xxx // xxxxx \ xxx	
xxx / xxxxx \\ xxx	simultaneous speech
=	latching between the end of one turn to the start of the next
(3)	pause of specified number of seconds
( )	unintelligible word or phrase
(hello)	transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance
?	raising or question intonation
-	incomplete or cut-off utterance
[*comments*]	editorial comments italicized in square brackets
words in italics	commentary from behind-the-scene individual interviews