Intimacy and Distancing:
Young Men's Conversations About Romantic Relationships

Neill Korobov
Avril Thorne
University of California, Santa Cruz

This study examined how 32 pairs of 19- to 22-year-old Euro-American male friends constructed intimacy when telling romantic-relationship stories in casual conversations. Analyses centered on the emergence of two types of conversational positions: intimate *positions and* distancing *positions. Intimate positions constructed young men as warm, caring, and emotionally vulnerable; distancing positions functioned to diminish intimacy, care, and vulnerability. Although intimate positions were present, they did not arise in a straightforward or unmarked way. Instead, intimate positions were often eclipsed or supplanted by distancing positions. The findings provide a conversationally nuanced understanding of how young men practice intimacy by constructing themselves as moving both toward and away from close relationships with women. For emerging adult males, we suggest that such shifting positions can help to develop a clearer sense of what one wants, and does not want, in a love relationship.*

Keywords: *emerging adulthood; romantic relationships; intimacy; masculinity; discourse; positioning*

One of the hallmarks of the transition from adolescence to young adulthood is the development of intimate peer relationships. Erikson (1968, 1982) reasoned that adolescents ideally transition into young adulthood having achieved a confident sense of identity that provides the base from which mature forms of relational intimacy develop. One hallmark of relational intimacy, finding a mate, has become quite a prolonged process in Western

We are very grateful to our undergraduate research assistants, Sara Spowhn and Dina Khait, for their thoughtful coding and discussion of the narratives. Preparation of this manuscript was supported by a grant from Consulting Psychologists Press to the second author and by a postdoctoral traineeship from the National Institute of Health (T32 HD46423) to the first author. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Neill Korobov, Department of Psychology, 277 Social Sciences 2, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA 95064; e-mail: Nkorobov@ucsc.edu.

Journal of Adolescent Research, Vol. 21 No. 1, January 2006 27-55
DOI: 10.1177/0743558405284035

cultures, particularly in educated communities, who are increasingly delaying marriage until their mid or late 20s. In such cultural settings, a moratorium on mature intimacy has become somewhat normative, and societal strictures on what constitutes appropriate intimacy practices have loosened (Arnett, 2004; Côté, 1996). This protracted period of intimacy exploration tends to require considerable volition, versatility, and tolerance for uncertainty (Arnett, 2004; Côté, 1996; Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenberg, & Verma, 2002; Montgomery, 2005; Putnam, 2000).

Romantic relationships are a felicitous site for exploring how emerging adults practice intimacy (Brown, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Montgomery, 2005). Unlike early adolescent romantic relationships, which are often transient and capricious (Feiring, 1996), romantic relationships in emerging adulthood are more often freighted by what Brown (1999) and Arnett (2004) call a sobering 'pragmatic perspective.' This sobering pragmatism is characterized by such identity-formative questions as, Can I be committed to this person? Are we compatible? and Can I tolerate his or her shortcomings, values, and lifestyle? Because 'companionate marriages' characterized by emotional depth are increasingly common in Western cultures (Goldscheider, 1997) yet are often deferred until the late 20s (Arnett, 2000, 2004), emerging adults are able to entertain such sobering questions slowly, often across multiple relationships. The trade-off is that emerging adults must learn to cope with the ambivalence and ambiguities of multiple relationships and protracted explorations (Arnett, 2000, 2004). The intimacy skills required to navigate the vagaries of emerging adulthood can thus be said to uniquely drive identity formation by equipping emerging adults to navigate multiple intimate relationships as a route to discovering who they are and what they value.

Romantic relationships develop in a web of relational contexts that are shaped by friendships with peers (Brown, 1999; Feiring, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Hartup, 1993; Shulman & Seiffge-Krenke, 2001). In wading through the complexities of dating and romantic attachment, emerging adults rely heavily on friends for support and advice, especially during college (Montgomery & Côté, 2003; Prager, 1995). Because college-age friends tend to live in very close quarters, they are likely to have many opportunities to disclose fears and uncertainties and sort through the subtleties of their romantic feelings (Brown, 1999; Connolly & Goldberg, 1999; Eder, 1993; Furman & Buhrmester, 1992). New friendships during college may encourage the exploration of fresh alternatives and the trying out of new romantic identities (Prager, 1995). New friends may be chosen precisely because they have no firsthand knowledge of who one was prior to college, thus increasing

the chance that a variety of intimacy skills can get tried out in improvisatory ways (see Rawlins, 1992; Rubin, 1985).

Although gender is a central ingredient in the way peer cultures regulate the development and expression of romantic intimacy, research on how adolescents talk about romantic relationships is relatively recent (see Feiring, 1999). In developmental psychology, studies of young men's intimate relationships have burgeoned only in the past decade. Many of these initial studies tended to approach male intimacy from a clinical or deficit perspective, based on findings that young men's heterosexual experiences tend to be defined by lust, objectification, and a pursuit of sexual gratification (see Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Pleck, 1995; Pollack, 1998). Some recent studies, in contrast, have begun to unearth themes of intimacy, vulnerability, and companionship in young men's talk about relationships (see Chu, 2004; Frosh, Phoenix, & Pattman, 2002; Graber, Brooks-Gunn, & Galen, 1998; Korobov & Bamberg, 2004; Tolman, Spencer, Harmon, Rosen-Reynoso & Striepe, 2004; Way, 2004).

These recent discoveries of intimate adolescent male experiences have tended to emerge qualitatively, primarily through semistructured interviews, focus group discussions, or ethnographies. A common qualitative finding is that adolescent males (in a variety of contexts) often appear thoughtful, sensitive, and relationally astute (Chu, 2004) and open in discussing their longings for intimacy and closeness in both their friendships with other males and with females and girlfriends (Frosh et al., 2002; Tolman et al., 2004; Way, 2004; Way & Chen, 2000). Apposite for the present study, Deborah Tolman et al. (2004) have argued that adolescent male heterosexuality is not a unilateral drive toward acquiring 'belt notches" but is actually a complex process shaped by private yearnings for intimacy and emotional connection with females. These private yearnings for intimacy are, however, constantly buffeted by the pressures to conform to sex-role stereotypes (Egan & Perry, 2001; Levant, 1997). Developmental researchers have argued that the negotiation of such pressures constitutes important identity-building projects for young men during adolescence and emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Frosh et al., 2002; Korobov, 2004; Korobov & Bamberg, 2004; Tolman et al., 2004).

The nature of such negotiation processes, however, has rarely been charted at the level of social interaction. In developmental research, conversational dilemmas and negotiation processes typically have been presented in packaged form as short excerpts taken from interviews. Such excerpts tend to be used to illustrate broad content themes or else, as anecdotes to illustrate a compendium of quantitative findings. Although broad content themes can

bring participants' voices to the findings, they obscure the dynamic development of the themes as conversations unfold; the potential complexity, nuance, and contradictoriness of young men's voices and perspectives get streamlined or washed out. To remedy this problem, the present study takes a detailed look at how young men actually talk about romantic relationships in casual conversations. A conversational, or discourse, approach can capture the subtle and back-and-forth process by which young men potentially shift between displaying and mitigating intimacy when telling stories to each other about romantic relationships.

A DISCURSIVE APPROACH

Like other recent qualitative studies of young men's talk about intimate relationships, the present study reflects a sociocultural interest in intimacy as a delicate but central aspect of identity. However, the present study is unique in that it derives from a discourse-analytic commitment to the microlevel of social interaction (Billig, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). A discursive approach is concerned with identifying how speakers *rhetorically* and *argumentatively* organize their talk as a way of situating their identities against a backdrop of various social expectations and can uniquely capture the inconsistencies and shifts that occur as emerging adults practice intimacy skills. Far from being a sign of an incoherent identity, the ability to shift positions is arguably useful for regulating social interaction and for securing a measure of social fluency that allows speakers to traverse multiple (and sometimes conflicting) ideologies.

The present study draws on programs of discursive research that have detailed the subtle and often indirect ways that young men transact compliance and resistance to normative masculinity in everyday conversations (Gough, 2001; Korobov, 2004; Korobov & Bamberg, 2004; Speer & Potter, 2000; Wetherell & Edley, 1999). The common thread in this body of work has been the finding that as boys become more socialized throughout adolescence, they become increasingly adept at indirectly aligning themselves with the stereotypical aspects of normative masculinity while *at the same time* engaging in talk that is meant to sound egalitarian, sensitive, intimate, or vulnerable (Korobov, in press). These concessions to traditional masculine norms are usually subtle, tongue-in-cheek, and playful, often brought off through the casual insertion of disclaimers, softeners, hyperbole, innuendo, and irony. To date, qualitative developmental research has underexamined how such transacting occurs in either interviews or everyday conversations

and how such processes become instrumental for males in their emerging adult romantic relationships.

FROM INTERVIEWS TO CASUAL CONVERSATIONS

The present study explores how young men construct and evade intimacy by examining their unscripted conversations. This method represents a shift away from the use of both scales and measures and from the more recent use of various kinds of semistructured interviews in studying young men (see Way & Chu, 2004). Most semistructured interview formats are built around an interactional dilemma. On one hand, participants are encouraged to say whatever comes to mind, but on the other hand, interviewers often elicit what have been called "freestanding opinion packages" (Puchta & Potter, 2002). These consist of bundled packets of opinions or attitudes that are amenable to coding and counting. These types of responses are typically elicited when interviewers "go meta"—for example, when they ask topical questions ("So what do you think about . . . ?") or streamline a range of evaluations with summative questions ("So what you are saying is . . . ?"). The result is that participants end up packaging their perspectives about topics in a detached way for interviewer consumption.[1] The central problem is that these types of procedures often strip off the rhetorically embedded nature of evaluations. This is unfortunate, because speakers' evaluations are often replete with subtle and complex rhetorical contrasts, mitigations, and disavowals. Ongoing shifts in speakers' evaluations tend to be bleached out through interview procedures that transform such rhetorical complexities into freestanding entities that are attributed to the individual, to the neglect of the social interactions or social contexts in which the talk emerged.[2]

We chose to look at casual conversations between emerging adult friends because we believed that they would offer less packaged responses and more of the kind of back-and-forth positioning dances that seem to be more typical of conversations produced "on the fly." In casual conversations between friends, we expected that positions that displayed intimacy would emerge in an improvisatory way, such that they could be contested, taken back, mitigated, amended, laughed off, or altogether rejected. Our interest in capturing this kind of movement meshes with our general interest in offering a detailed examination of the negotiation processes, dilemmas, and tensions that are presumably typical in emerging adults' experiences of romantic relationships.

THE MICRODEVELOPMENT OF IDENTITIES IN "SMALL STORIES"

In casual conversations between friends, we anticipated that positioning dances would emerge in coconstructed stories told about everyday events. However, unlike the life-story approach (Linde, 1993; McAdams, 1993) or life-event approach (Labov & Waletzky, 1967/1997; Thorne & McLean, 2002) to storytelling,[3] the current study focuses on "small stories" or "minimal narratives" that arise in the course of mundane conversation (see Bamberg, 2004a, 2004b; Moissinac & Bamberg, in press; Ochs & Capps, 2001). As Ochs and Capps (2001) note, the vast majority of stories that get told in daily life are not about extended life stories or momentous life events, but are small stories that come fleetingly into social interaction, are often short in duration, are coconstructed by multiple tellers who are not always receptive, and which contain a variety of moral messages and positions with regard to master narratives and cultural discourses. Small stories reflect the transitory "drive-by" interactions that are common for college students as they catch up with one another (Putnam, 2000). As such, small stories are venues where emerging adults are apt to shift between multiple identities as they refine and edit the meanings of their romantic experiences. To capture the incremental refinement and adjustment of identity positions, the present study pursued a microdevelopmental view of identity development (see Korobov & Bamberg, 2004).

METHOD

Participants

The participants for this study were 64 male students between the ages of 19 and 22 ($M = 19.7$ years, $SD = .8$ years) who were living away from home at a public university in Northern California. Half of the participants ($n = 32$) took part in the study to satisfy a course requirement in psychology.[4] The research was described as a study of friendship dynamics, and participation was restricted to native English speakers. Each of these 32 students was asked to bring another male friend that he had known for at least 6 months, resulting in 64 participants and 32 friendship dyads. Dyads reported having been friends for a median of 1 year (range = 5 months to 6 years). Their reported closeness, compared to their closest same-sex friend, was a median of 4 on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very*). The large majority (90%) of the sample self-identified as either Caucasian or White.

Catch-Up Conversations

Each dyad participated in a 10 min audio-recorded "catch-up" conversation that took place in a casual lounge-type room in an academic building. The room had couches and children's artwork on the walls (no two-way mirrors). The participants sat catty-corner on the couches and often enjoyed snacks and drinks while conversing behind a closed door. The conversations were unscripted and nonmoderated by a third person. Participants were told that the purpose of the study was to understand how friends talk to each other. They were told to use the 10 min to simply catch up and talk about anything whatsoever. The directions were intentionally left vague so as to not preemptively frame these conversations or introduce researcher expectations. Understandably, the conversations usually sputtered for the first few moments but then (in nearly every conversation) very quickly transformed into ordinary and everyday sounding conversations, replete with a glut of everyday discursive elements, such as the use of common slang, figures of speech, personal stories, jokes, and arguments. Following the conversations, participants individually completed a number of questionnaires, one of which asked them to indicate how long they had been friends. They also rated the closeness of this friendship compared to their closest same-sex friendship and how typical this conversation was of the kinds of conversations they usually have with this friend; both of these ratings used a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very*). As previously noted, the median length of friendship was 1 year, and the median closeness was 4. The median typicality rating of this conversation, compared to the kinds of conversations they usually had with this friend, was also 4.

The conversations were transcribed and then parsed into utterances. Utterances were defined as self-contained thought units, often taking the form of simple sentences or clauses (e.g., "I ran fast," "oh yeah," "then I stopped," or "what's that?"). Utterances were useful not simply as an index of the thickness of the dialogue but also as a unit of analysis for coding *intimate* and *distancing* styles of positioning, as well as the shifting patterns that took place between the two. A detailed coding manual (Korobov & Thorne, 2004) is available on request. The two reliability coders were college students who each completed approximately 40 hours of narrative and discourse-analytic training.

Coding for Stories and Romantic-Relationship Stories

All of the conversations were initially coded for the presence of stories. A story was defined as a series of narrative clauses in the simple past tense or in the historical present tense (see Coates, 2003). To achieve an acceptable rate

of agreement, only stories that contained at least six narrative clauses were included. In coding seven randomly chosen transcripts (approximately 85 pages of text), independent coders agreed in identifying 28 stories and disagreed on 6, yielding an acceptable rate of agreement for stories (82%).[5] These 28 stories, which constituted 70% of the full sample of 40 stories, were used for all reliability coding.

Each story was then coded as either a romantic-relationship story or as a nonromantic-relationship story. A romantic-relationship story was defined as a story that focused on one's own or another male's sexual or romantic involvement or interest in a female, where such sexual involvement or interest was clearly nonplatonic. Stories concerning homosexual involvement or interest were originally included but were excluded in the end because of a very low base rate (only 1 story). In coding the 28 stories, independent coders reliably differentiated romantic-relationship stories from nonromantic-relationship stories (agreed on 27 of 28 stories; *kappa* = .90).

Coding for Intimate and Distancing Positions

Each romantic-relationship story was then coded for the presence of intimate and distancing positions. A guided listening method was used to do this, which involved studying the transcript while listening to the playback to hear paralinguistic cues (laughter, sighs, pauses). Intimate and distancing positions were coded at the level of the utterance. In other words, coders marked every utterance as either indicative of an intimate position, a distancing position, a mixed position (i.e., it contained both intimate and distancing mechanisms), or none of the above. Independent coders reliably differentiated these four types of utterances (overall *kappa* = .87).

Intimate positions were defined as conversational positions that characterize one or both of the story characters as moving toward one other or toward a positive, warm, engaged, or supportive characterization of each other and/or the relationship (*kappa* = .85). Intimate positions were defined as comprising 10 discursive devices, the most frequent being (a) *constructions of mutuality*—characterization of the relationship as having an equal give-and-take or positive togetherness with reference to distinct activities ("we take turns listening to one another"); (b) *constructions of vulnerability*—characterization of the self as weak, fearful, or apprehensive because of relational dynamics ("I couldn't date again right away; it was just too much"); (c) *references to shared history*—characterization of the relationship as having a positive history of togetherness during an extended period of time ("we've been in love for a long time"); (d) *displays of empathy*—displays of understanding and/or acceptance of the partner's feelings ("I can totally under-

stand that she feels upset"); and (e) *constructions of closeness*—general displays of relational commitment, depth of feeling, or care ("our relationship is very powerful now").

The following is an excerpt from a narrative that is parsed by utterances to convey the general feeling of a string of intimate positions. (See appendix for transcription conventions.)

> with Stephanie / like (.) we'd have this long talk / and then like talk about all these things / and be all (.) / you know / (.) talk about everything / (.) like take turns listening to each other / and then like / (.) I'll give her a massage / and then she'll give me one

> *Distancing positions*, in contrast, function in the opposite direction to position the male away from or against an engaged, supportive, knowing, or warm characterization of the partner or relationship. As such, distancing positions work to mitigate intimacy, sentimentality, and positive characterization of the relationship and/or partner (*kappa* = .91). Distancing positions could be accomplished by any of 13 discursive devices, the most prevalent being (a) *displays of uncertainty or ignorance*—characterizations of the self as uncertain, ignorant, or tentative with claims regarding one's knowledge of the partner, the relationship, or the speaker's feeling about the partner or relationship ("I have no idea what I feel about her"); (b) *negative dispositional scripting of the partner*—characterizations of the partner's personality or disposition as being negative in general, repeatedly, or habitually ("she's always grumpy"); (c) *depersonalization*—effacing the *I* voice by switching to the impersonal or abstract *you*, *one*, or *it* voice to characterize men in general or relationships in general ("you have to be careful 'cause relationships can be tricky"); and (d) *pathologizing of relational dynamics*—characterizations of one's relationship as psychologically aberrant, dysfunctional, or unhealthy ("there's no trust between us anymore").

The following is an excerpt from a narrative that is parsed by utterances to convey the general feeling of a string of distancing positions.

> she's like been doing this little thing / where she's just like every once in a while / like whenever she sees Dan / she's like, it's all::: weird / and then like afterwards / she's like oh::: my god he's such an <u>ass</u>hole (.) / and all this stuff (.) / and then she'll start crying / . . . and so now everybody's like GET OVER IT

Coding for Intimate and Distancing Positioning Shifts

Central to this study was the expectation that intimate positions would arise in a kind of back-and-forth dance with distancing positions. To examine this assumption, a graphic representational system was used to identify the kinds of shifting patterns between intimate and distancing positions across each romantic-relationship story as a whole. Each story was sorted into one

of five kinds of shifting patterns: (a) *mixed shifting pattern*—reflecting an apparently random and constant alternating between intimate and distancing positions; (b) *intimate-to-distancing shifting pattern*—reflecting a story that begins with a preponderance of intimate positions and then gradually shifts and ends with a preponderance of distancing positions; (c) *distancing-to-intimate shifting pattern*—reflecting a story that begins with a preponderance of distancing positions and then gradually shifts and ends with a preponderance of intimate positions; (d) *distancing saturation pattern*—reflecting a preponderance of distancing positions and very few (if any) intimate positions; and (e) *mildly intimate pattern*—reflecting the mild occurrence of intimate positions and very few (if any) distancing positions. Independent coders reliably differentiated these five types of shifting patterns (*kappa* = .93).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section is divided into two parts. The first part presents the key quantitative findings. The second section discursively examines the five kinds of intimate and distancing shifting patterns.

Frequency and Length of Romantic-Relationship Stories

A total of 112 stories were identified across 32 transcripts. Of these 112 stories, 40 (36%) were identified as romantic-relationship stories and were the focus of the present study. The 40 romantic stories were told across 16 different conversations. The median number of romantic stories per conversation was 2. With the exception of 2 conversations that contained 7 stories each, the other conversations contained between 1 and 3 stories. The mean length of each story was 38 utterances (*SD* = 17), with 3 of the 40 stories being outliers in length (each consisting of more than 80 utterances).

Frequency of Devices for Intimate and Distancing Utterances

Table 1 shows the types of discursive devices that constituted an intimate or distancing utterance and their relative frequencies across all romantic stories. Overall, distancing utterances ($n = 559$) were more than twice as prevalent as intimate utterances ($n = 225$). The five most prevalent discursive devices for constructing intimacy were constructions of mutuality, constructions of vulnerability, references to shared history, displays of empathy, and constructions of closeness. The five most prevalent discursive devices for constructing distancing positions were displays of uncertainty or ignorance,

TABLE 1: Frequency of Intimate and Distancing Devices Across All Romantic Stories

Device	*Total Utterances*
Intimate devices	
Construction of mutuality	45
Construction of vulnerability	39
References to shared history	36
Display of empathy	25
Construction of closeness	24
Construction of guilt	16
Self as provider	13
Display of self-reflection	11
Positive characterization of partner	9
Display of affection	7
Total	225
Distancing devices	
Display of uncertainty or ignorance	115
Negative dispositional scripting	73
Depersonalization	66
Pathologizing of relational dynamics	46
Masculine membership tokens	45
Taboo language	37
Negative characterization of self	37
Negative characterization of partner	33
References to sexual activity	29
Et cetera clauses	28
Display of nonchalant indifference	21
Objectification of partner	20
Display of anger	9
Total	559

dispositional scripting, depersonalization, pathologizing of relationship dynamics, and the use of masculine membership tokens.

Intimate and Distancing Positioning Shifts

We next examined patterns of intimate and distancing positioning within each of the 40 romantic stories. Figure 1 shows the relative frequency of each of the 5 positioning-shift patterns. Mildly intimate stories, that is, stories comprising predominately intimate positions, were rare ($n = 2$). Overall, the frequencies confirmed our expectation that intimacy tended to be mitigated by distanced positions because the majority of stories ($n = 25$, or 63%) showed some sort of shifting pattern between intimacy and distancing, as shown in

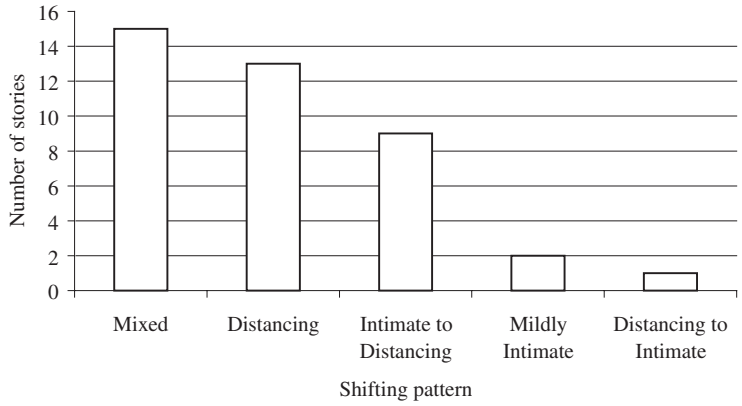

Figure 1. Frequency of positioning shift patterns across all romantic stories (*n* = 40).

TABLE 2: Frequency of Intimate and Distancing Shift Patterns for Each Dyad

	Shifting Pattern					
Dyad Number	*Mixed*	*Nonintimate*	*Intimate to Distancing*	*Mildly Intimate*	*Distancing to Intimate*	*Total*
28 to 29	2			1		3
32 to 33	1	2				3
60 to 61	2					2
70 to 71	2					2
80 to 81			1			1
82 to 83		1	1			2
88 to 89	3	1	2		1	7
90 to 91		1	1			2
106 to 107	2	2	3			7
112 to 113	1					1
118 to 119		1				1
130 to 131	1					1
138 to 139			1	1		2
146 to 147		3				3
148 to 149		1				1
154 to 155	1	1				2
Total	15	13	9	2	1	40

the mixed ($n = 15$), intimate-to-distancing ($n = 9$), and distancing-to-intimate ($n = 1$) patterns. The remaining stories were saturated with distancing positions ($n = 13$). Table 2 shows the frequency of each shifting pattern for each

dyad, revealing that dyads who told multiple romantic-relationship stories did not tend to focus on any particular shifting pattern. Of the 11 dyads who told multiple romantic stories, the majority (8) used multiple shifting patterns.

To examine these positioning shift patterns in more detail, we now turn to a discursive analysis of one exemplar of each of the five patterns identified. These analyses are meant to illuminate how these emerging adult males shifted between intimate and distancing positions in the turn-by-turn unfolding of their talk. These analyses will also empirically detail how a variety of intimate and distancing discursive devices were identified and then graphically mapped out to reveal the general shifting pattern of each story. To visually illustrate the presence of intimate and distancing devices, the abbreviation I (intimate), D (distancing), or I/D (intimate and distancing) will appear in the right margin across from those transcript lines where those devices appeared. In the discussion that follows each transcript, the specific intimate or distancing devices (as presented in Table 1) will appear in *italics*. The first three patterns discussed are the most prevalent, beginning with the pattern with the fewest shifts (distancing saturation), and ending with the densest pattern of shifting (mixed). Finally, the two rare patterns (mildly intimate and distancing to intimate) will be illustrated.

Distancing Saturation Pattern

The following story features a cascade of distancing positions about a couple's relationship. The young men position the relationship as dysfunctional and the female character as responsible for the dysfunction. As such, the story is void of a supportive, warm, or vulnerable characterization of the male character, his partner, and/or his romantic relationship. (All names and places have been changed in all excerpts.)

Excerpt 1

Participants: Bo (B) and Andy (A)

1.	B: did you hear that Marcie and Rick hooked up	D
2.	A: YOU'RE KIDDING (.)↑little Marcie and Rick	
3.	B: ((laughing)) yeah little Marcie and Rick	
4.	A: ((laughing)) that's fucked up dude	D
5.	B: he wanted her all last year=	D
6.	A: =WOW	
7.	B: it's gonna be a disaster when they break up=	D
8.	A: =dude IT IS (.) I know 'cause they live in the	D

9.	same (.) OH that's CRAZY that's bad	D
10.	B: well cause she's she's <u>really</u> fickle too	D
11.	A: yeah	
12.	B: okay uh (.) she's like >no I don't like him I don't	D
13.	like him< (.) then one day she's like >yeah I don't	D
14.	mind him< and <u>then</u> (.) they hooked up <u>that day</u>	D
15.	A: wow	
16.	B: and then the next day she's like >ah I don't like him	D
17.	any more< and then he went away for the weekend	D
18.	and he came back and she's like >I like him again	D
19.	now< (.) so like right now they're cool (.) but it's	
20.	<u>great</u> cause <u>no</u> one wants to know <u>anything</u> about it	D
21.	A: yeah	
22.	B: so someone would be like so how are Rick and Marcie	
23.	doing and <u>everyone</u> be like I <u>don't even</u> wanna know	D
24.	((laughing)) [. . .] and so in another couple weeks (.)	D
25.	I know she'd be all >I hate him<	D
26.	B: yeah	
27.	A: she'd go nuts	D

A range of positioning devices create this densely distancing story. In lines 1 and 5, *constructions of sexual activity* ("hooked up" and "wanted her") coupled with the use of profanity ("fucked up") and *masculine membership tokens* ("dude") index stereotypical features of normative masculinity. The laughter in lines 3 to 4 work as paralinguistic cues that foreground the point of the story, that is, that the relationship will inevitably fail and that this is perhaps uncomfortable (but enticing) to watch (see the laughter again in line 24). To convey this sentiment, the boys *pathologize the dynamics of the relationship*, calling it a "disaster" (line 7), predicting it will break up (line 7), calling it "crazy" and "bad" (line 9), and noting how "great" it is that most of their friends no longer want to know anything about it (lines 20, 23), presumably on the grounds that Marcie's capriciousness is alienating.

By focusing on Marcie's capriciousness, the boys engage in *dispositional scripting* of Marcie's personality. They construct her as generally and predictably fickle (lines 10, 25, 27), constructed through the use of the iterative present tense ("she's really fickle") and the use of the modal *would* ("she'd be all" and "she'd go nuts"). Although inserted casually, such dispositional scripting suggests that the inevitable failure of the relationship is predictable given Marcie's fickle personality, thus mitigating the criticism that they are being harsh or cynical about Marcie and Rick's chances as a couple. It also accounts for their *negative characterization* of Marcie's vacillating affections for Rick (lines 12-13, 16-19), which function to preemptively insulate

Rick from the accusation that he was a bad boyfriend. Finally, it justifies "everyone's" lack of interest (line 23), thus inoculating against the possible criticism that everyone is uncaring. Overall, Bo and Andy's positioning of Rick (and his relationship) is void of any intimacy whatsoever, functioning instead as a lighthearted, gossipy story about a fickle young woman and a relationship that is unstable.

Intimate-to-Distancing Shifting Pattern

The following story is about Rich's current relationship with Stephanie, with comparisons being drawn to his prior girlfriend, Heather. It begins with a glut of intimate positions that both Rich and Mark collude in producing regarding Rich's relationship with Stephanie. However, in line 28, the tenor shifts.

Excerpt 2

Participants: Rich (R) and Mark (M)

1.	M: ((with Stephanie)) it's definitely something a	
2.	lot more powerful (.) you guys have had so	I
3.	much more time together that it's like=	I
4.	R: =with Stephanie (.) yeah (.) yeah I I'm	
5.	not saying anything bad about Heather (.) but	
6.	just <u>yeah</u> there's more now ((sighs)) we've	I
7.	become more involved and that's like (.) it's	I
8.	like more entangled you know	I
9.	M: yeah totally	
10.	R: like when you get that close with someone you're	I
11.	like (.) your heads are into each other's (.) like it's	I
12.	just SO intense (1.0) I mean it was like that with Heather	I
13.	but Heather was more just like a little doll (.) you know	D
14.	(.) like ↑ahhh::: (.) I'd like go to sleep in her bed and then	I
15.	she'd give me a little massage and then I'd just go to sleep	I
16.	and then (1.0) but with Stephanie like (.) we'd have this	
17.	long talk and then like talk about all these things and be	I
18.	all (.) you know (.) talk about everything (.) like take turns	I
19.	listening to each other and then like (.) I'll give her a	I
20.	massage and then she'll give me one and then (.) it's gets	I
21.	all (.) it's more like a (.) I guess a real mutual=	I
22.	M: =yeah yeah totally=	
23.	R: =mutual relationship (.) as opposed to like some (.)	I

24.	like cute girl that just did me favors ((laughs)) it	D
25.	sounds bad but=	I
26.	M: =it's more (.) well it's kinda more I mean (.) in a lot of	
27.	ways it's a lot more powerful but then it's kinda	I
28.	more codependent in a lot of ways too (.) you know	D
29.	R: yeah	
30.	M: and like one of those things where=	D
31.	R: =well she is a lot more dependent on <u>me</u> than I am on	D
32.	<u>her</u> (.) it's so::: fucking annoying you know	D
33.	M: right right (.) well cause you <u>have</u> friends and she doesn't	D
34.	R: yeah	

A variety of positioning devices are used to construct Rich and Stephanie as having a warm, mutual, and caring relationship. For instance, there are *numerous constructions of closeness*: "it's definitely something a lot more powerful" (lines 1-2), "we've become more involved" (lines 6-7), "it's like more entangled" (line 8), "when you get that close with someone" (line 10), "you're heads are into each other's" (line 11), "it's just SO intense" (line 12), and "it's a lot more powerful" (line 27). There are also repeated *constructions of mutuality*, or the idea of an equal give and take: "we'd have this long talk" (line 17), "talk about all these things" (line 17), "talk about everything" (line 18), "take turns listening to each other" (line 19), "I'll give her a massage and she'll give me one" (lines 19-20), and a "real mutual relationship" (lines 21, 23). Rich openly talks about *displays of affection* that he shared with his previous girlfriend, noting how they slept together (line 14) and how she would give him little massages before he would go to sleep (line 15). There is also *one reference to shared history*, as Mark underscores how Rich and Stephanie have had "so much more time together" (lines 2-3). The only distancing positions that emerge between lines 1 and 28 concern two brief *constructions of the partner as an object*, where Heather is referred to as "a little doll" (line 13) and where "a cute girl" (line 24) is alluded to at a point where Rich makes a innuendo about *sexual activity* ("did me favors"). This is done, however, as a foil to underscore the mutuality in his present relationship with Stephanie. To underscore the contrastive work that this innuendo is meant to perform, he immediately mitigates it with the *self-reflective* disclaimer of "it sounds bad but" (lines 24-25).

The shift away from intimacy begins in line 28, as Mark initiates a frame shift that *pathologizes their relational dynamics*, suggesting that Rich's close relationship is also "codependent in a lot of ways" (line 28). After securing a pass from Rich ("yeah") in line 29, Mark upgrades this assessment by *depersonalizing the relationship* in calling it "one of those things" (line 30), which

functions as a second step toward pigeonholing it as belonging to a general class of dysfunction. Rich then engages in a dispositional scripting of Stephanie's general overdependency on him ("she is a lot more dependent on me than I am one her"), then follows this up with a strong evaluation that involves taboo language and a mild display of anger ("it's so fucking annoying"). Mark then accounts for Stephanie's codependency with yet another instance of dispositional scripting, noting that unlike Rich, Stephanie generally does not have friends (line 33). Taken together, these moves immediately mitigate the stream of intimacy and advance a more ambivalent characterization of Rich and Stephanie's relationship.

Mixed Shifting Pattern

In the following story, Sam constantly shifts positions as he discusses the dilemmas of bringing his girlfriend to his fraternity parties. This story is set within a broader discussion about how Sam and his girlfriend have each recently admitted that they have cheated on each other and how they are struggling to repair the relationship and the loss of trust that has ensued.

Excerpt 3

Participants: Sam (S) and Mike (M)

1.	M: it's so tough (.) like when you go to frat parties	
2.	and stuff like=	
3.	S: =it's never anything more than kissing (.) but still	D/I
4.	M: yeah (.) so why doesn't she come with you	
5.	S: °I dunno° like I took her to a couple	D/I
6.	M: ↑she didn't like 'em'=	
7.	S: =yeah (.) she just kinda like brought me down	D
8.	(.) like I go there to kinda release (.) 'cause I do	D
9.	I've hung with her more than anyone ever in my	I
10.	whole life (.) like except for like my parents and	
11.	stuff and relatives (.) but I'm with her like every	I
12.	single day and now we sleep together pretty much	I
13.	every night (.) so it's kinda like (.) and not sex	I
14.	but just like being=	I
15.	M: =[right right	
16.	S: =[together (.) so it's kinda like (.) I don't know	I/D
17.	(1.0) it just kinda feels like I needed to release from her	D
18.	a little but like I wanted to bring her to the parties (.)	I
19.	but she was kinda like uh:: this kinda sucks uh::: and	D

20.		uh::: I'm not having any fun and uh:: I don't wanna drink	D
21.		and so then I feel like I can't drink and I feel like I can't	I
22.		dance like with my friends or with other girls and stuff	I
23.		'cause she says doesn't know anyone (1.0) even though	D
24.		she knows everyone's names (.) and she can have	D
25.		conversations with them if she wanted (.) she just	D
26.		doesn't feel like it (.) and none of them bring their	D
27.		girlfriends (.) so it makes me feel awkward if I bring	I
28.		my girlfriend 'cause I don't even know most their	
29.		girlfriends and I've know them like since the	
30.		beginning of school and I've never met some of	
31.		their girlfriends (.) and I don't feel like it was a	D
32.		bad thing (.) but she was really freaking out about it	D/I
33.		and stuff so I don't know=	D
34.	M:	=damn that's rough	
35.	S:	going to a party doesn't mean like I'm gonna make	D
36.		out with a chick (.) but still (.) I don't know	D/I/D

In line 3, Sam begins by trivializing the *sexual activity* he engaged in with other girls ("it was never anything more than kissing") but then quickly mitigates this with the tag of "but still." It is a knowing tag that functions as a display of *self-reflection*, signaling that he understands that although it is only kissing, it is still problematic. As a move toward stymieing the "toughness" of being at fraternity parties (presumably because of the sexual temptation and/or jealousy that results), Sam notes that he has attempted to bring his girlfriend with him (line 5), although this is prefaced with the "I dunno" *display of uncertainty or ignorance*. The attempt to bring her fails, which Sam personally criticizes her for "bringing him down" and preventing him from being able to "release" from her (lines 7-8), both of which function in a distancing way, as *negative characterizations of his partner* by positioning her as weighty and clingy. However, these distancing formulations are mitigated not only as they are being produced (with the softeners "kinda" in lines 7 and 8), but they are also immediately mitigated with a string of intimate *references to shared history* ("I've hung out with her more than anyone," "I'm with her every single day," "we sleep together pretty much every night") and a *construction of closeness* that centers on being together as opposed to just having sex ("not sex but just like being together"). These intimate formulations construct a positive portrait of their relationship and his devotion to her, which make his need to release from her appear now as normal and healthy.

In what follows, Sam continues to equivocate between positions: He displays uncertainty ("I don't know"; line 16) in saying he wants to release from her (line 17), then marks this with the hedge of only "a little" (line 18), and

then notes that he nevertheless wants to bring her to the parties (line 18). Then, in a string of reported speech (lines 19-20), Sam caricatures her actions at the parties. Because these caricatures are presented as habitual routines that she has enacted more than once, they function as examples of dispositional scripting. She is presented as habitually whiny at the parties and stubbornly reticent to mingle with people. However, rather than belaboring the caricatures, Sam shifts to openly talking about how it makes him feel and thus constructs himself as vulnerable (or affected by) her unhappiness. Rather than ignoring or dismissing her unhappiness, he admits that bringing her makes him feel socially inhibited (lines 21-22) and awkward (line 27), even though he has already noted that he wants to bring her. Although Sam (rather tepidly) regards the practice of not bringing girlfriends as "not a bad thing" (lines 31-32), he admits that his girlfriend really does not like it (line 32), which in turn occasions another shift as he displays uncertainty again ("so I don't know"). He constantly shifts between frustration, empathy, and confusion. His final move (lines 35-36) is a recapitulation to his opening position. He negates the inevitability of his philandering at the parties with a distancing reference to sexual activity ("make out") and an objectification of the partner ("chick") but then immediately mitigates this with the self-reflective "but still" tag and concludes with a final display of uncertainty ("I don't know").

Mildly Intimate Pattern

This next story involves both Steve and Al constructing themselves as mildly caring and affectionate toward their girlfriends during a time when the girlfriends were ill.

Excerpt 4

Participants: Steve (S) and Al (A)

1.	S: there was the time that Mary had that really bad	
2.	flu and I went out to Bloomington and missed	I
3.	2 weeks of class (.) like I was=	I
4.	A: =↑2 weeks of class	
5.	S: no it was like a week and a half (.) but um (.)	
6.	I was totally right next to her (.) I would spend	I
7.	the night next to her like every night and I never	I
8.	got it (.)	I
	couldn't believe it	
9.	A: yeah well (.) not only was I right next to her (.)	I

10.	but I'm also like (.) you know (.) givin' it to her (.)	D
11.	you know ((laughing)) but no you know just a	
12.	couple a kisses here and there (.) you know (.)	I
13.	to make her feel better	I
14.	S: yeah (.) jesus	
15.	A: oh but if I get sick ((laughs))	
16.	S: ((laughs))	

The mild intimacy in this story is brought off through a series of constructions of the self as provider. To take care of his girlfriend, Steve "went out to Bloomington" and "missed 2 weeks of class" (lines 2-3), "was totally right next to her" (line 6), and would spend every night "next to her" (line 7). These last few characterizations are arguably also *constructions of closeness*. Al follows suit by characterizing *himself as a provider* by noting that he was also "right next to" his girlfriend while she was sick. The only distancing mitigation is Al's innuendo regarding *sexual activity* in line 10 ("givin' it to her"), which is highly reminiscent of Rich's insertion of a mitigating sexual innuendo in Excerpt 2. Arguably, this innuendo mitigates the current stream of sentimentality regarding care and affection and reinscribes a discourse of sexuality into their story. However, this mitigation is quick and fleeting and is itself immediately mitigated with a "but no" and a return to a more sentimental *display of affection* ("just a couple kisses") and a positioning of *self as provider* ("to make her feel better"). The story was deemed only mildly intimate because of the participants' repeated focus on not catching their girlfriend's illnesses (lines 7-8, 15), the sexual innuendo (line 10), and the jocular one-upmanship concerning catching possible exaggerations (line 4) and claims as to who was the better provider (line 9).

Distancing-to-Intimate Pattern

This pattern occurred in only one story. In this story, Sam is critical of Mike's girlfriend (Kathy) for being possessive of Mike. He is also critical of Mike for being so nonchalant about it. By the end of the story, however, both Sam and Mike advance much warmer characterizations of Kathy.

Excerpt 5

Participants: Sam (S) and Mike (M)

1. S: you know that one time when we were all in the
2. hall talking and whatever and Kathy was like

3.	oh:: yeah that's why I don't date popular guys or	
4.	something that was like so ((laughing)) <u>fucked</u>	D
5.	<u>up</u> dude (.) an' I was like WHA:::T an' I was like	D
6.	<u>man</u> (.) I was like that's NOT cool and then you	D
7.	were like (.) psshh (.) whatever (.) like whatever	D
8.	M: [cause she yeah	
9.	S: [I was like well you should probably let him go to	D
10.	some parties and=	D
11.	M: =[yeah	
12.	S: =[and like ((laughing)) uh:: I don't know	D
13.	M: yeah (.) I don't know (.) she does make a lot of	D
14.	cracks like that ((laughing))	I
15.	S: yeah	
16.	M: but she is joking (.) so	I
17.	S: yeah	
18.	M: so that's cool though	I
19.	S: she (.) yeah (.) I don't know (.) she seems like a nice	D/I
20.	girl (.) like she's fun to talk to and stuff	I
21.	M: yeah she is really nice	I

Sam's distancing begins in his evaluations of Kathy's statement that she does not date popular guys (line 3), which, from prior context, reflects Kathy's belief that popular guys tend to cheat more. In evaluating this, Sam uses *taboo language* ("fucked up"), *masculine membership tokens* ("dude," "man"), and a *negative characterization of the partner* ("that's NOT cool") to construct a disapproving characterization of Kathy. He also positions Mike as a pushover by characterizing his reaction as a *display of nonchalant indifference* ("you were like psshh whatever like whatever"). He then engages in *dispositional scripting* of Kathy in noting that she ought to let him go to some parties (lines 9-10) and caps this off with a distancing "uh:: I don't know" *display of uncertainty* that is insinuatingly critical. This critical positioning of Kathy retrospectively casts her feeling about not dating popular guys as the fault of her own insecurities rather than anything having to do with popular guys per se.

To mitigate this criticism, Mike first eases in with several appreciations ("yeah" in lines 8, 11, and 13) and a *display of uncertainty* ("I don't know") so as to not flat-out dismiss Sam's interpretations but then *empathizes* with his girlfriend by suggesting that he understands her motives (something interior and more personal than what Sam is seeing), that is, he understands that "she is joking" (line 16) and that she routinely "makes a lot of cracks" (line 14), a useful justification, given that joking is a common practice among males. Mike presents this in a disarming way, through laughter and the use of

a vernacular expression, *cracks*, that characterizes the joking as casual and innocuous. He then tables a new interpretation about Kathy, "so that's cool though" (line 18), which functions as a *positive characterization of his partner.* After hedging with a *display of uncertainty* in line 19 ("I don't know"), Sam acquiesces and also *positively characterizes* Kathy by referring to her as nice and "fun to talk to" (lines 19-20), to which Mike adds another *positive characterization*, "yeah she is really nice" (line 21). The story ends this way, without any distancing rejoinders.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study has been to offer a discursively sensitive examination of the variety of ways that emerging adult males *shift* between intimate and distancing positions in their stories about romantic relationships. Particularly interesting was the finding that these casual conversations contained exceptionally few unmitigated intimate stories (only 2 of 40). This is not to suggest that intimacy was altogether absent but, rather, that its presence was usually hedged or marked, apparently mitigating its force. This suggests that in emerging adult males' casual conversations, displays of intimacy (and its concomitant vulnerability, sensitivity, or sentimentality) teeter on the edge of antinormativity, while *at the same time* being normative enough so as to be practiced, however delicate and fleeting these practices are.

We believe that this delicate teetering may be paradigmatic of the way romantic intimacy tends to develop during emerging adulthood. As adolescents experiment with romance and rudimentary forms of intimacy, they often do so in highly transient and recreational ways (Feiring, 1996). In contrast, the romantic stories told by the emerging adult males in this study revealed serious concerns about issues such as losing a sense of independence or accepting or deflecting responsibility for mistakes or poor choices. For example, in excerpts 2, 3, and 5, the young men all (to varying degrees) explore the tension between desiring commitment and mutuality while not wanting it to compromise their freedom or spontaneity. In excerpt 3, for instance, Sam complains about feeling inhibited by his girlfriend at his fraternity parties. Yet he acknowledges that he has cheated on her in the past and now must take responsibility for rebuilding her trust, a responsibility about which he is ambivalent. In excerpt 1, Bo and Andy seem to enjoy the irony of seeing Rick live with the consequences of wanting a girl "all last year" who turned out to be emotionally fickle.

These stories are expressly identity focused. The young men in this study are telling us what kind of romantic partners they are, what they value, what

they are willing to tolerate, and what they feel they are (and are not) responsible for within their relationships. These finding are consonant with research that has shown that it is not demographic transitions (getting married, finishing school, getting a job, etc.) that matter most to emerging adults, but rather, it is having the opportunities to explore and develop individualistic qualities of character (Arnett, 1998, 2000, 2004), such as taking responsibility for one's self and making independent decisions (see Arnett, 1998, 2000, 2004; Greene, Wheatley, & Aldava, 1992; Scheer, Unger, & Brown, 1996). Seen this way, the shifting between intimate and distancing positions can be conceptualized not only as small-scale intimacy practices but also as constitutive elements in the fabric of identity projects that thread throughout emerging adulthood.

This begs the inevitable questions: What are these identity projects? And how does shifting between intimate and distancing positions function in such identity projects? One way to answer these questions is to consider how the romantic-relationship narratives in this study differ from those typically told by younger early- and middle-adolescent males. Although early- and middle-adolescent males have been found to reveal their longings for intimacy in interview contexts (see Chu, 2004; Tolman et al., 2004; Way, 2004), considerable research suggests that the most salient romantic-relationship identity project for adolescent heterosexual males is the mastery of traditional "seduction scripts." Seduction scripts focus on displaying competence in how to attract girls, objectify females, tell stories of conquest, eroticize sex, and police failed masculinities by displaying homophobia (Bamberg, 2004a; Brooks, 1997; Frosh et al., 2002; Gough, 2001;Kimmel, 1994; Korobov, 2004; Korobov, in press; Levant, 1997; Seal & Ehrhardt, 2003; Tolman et al., 2004). It is interesting that very little of this type of project occurred in the stories in this study. Although this certainly does not mean that emerging adult males are uninterested in normative seduction metaphors, it does suggest that their intimacy practices are *expanding*, possibly so as to be able to cope with the erosion of traditional gender roles and the impracticality of using traditional intimacy scripts in real-life intimate relationships.

The constant shifting between intimate and distancing positions represents the real-time negotiation of such identity-project expansion, as shown by the high frequency of the mixed shifting pattern. The shifting, in other words, seems to facilitate identity expansion. Distancing positions afford a dip back into traditional masculine norms, which may secure a needed modicum of familiarity necessary to anchor identity exploration while additionally functioning to save face with another male. The relatively high frequency of the distancing pattern makes sense, because the males in this study were at the early stages of emerging adulthood. Displays of intimacy, on the other

hand, push identity development forward by expanding the meaning of intimacy to include not only sexual intercourse (common during adolescence) but now also mutuality, fidelity, and care. As the meanings of intimacy deepen and become more complex, so do emerging adult identities.

This expansion may be further exacerbated by the fact that most of the males in this study were in their 1st year or 2nd of college. A college education tends to lead to the breakdown of worldviews, an increased sensitivity to pluralism, and a growing intolerance of social injustices, all of which may accelerate the erosion of traditional gender scripts (see Arnett, 2000, 2004; Bruner, 1996; Perry, 1970/1999). Romantic relationships during college are also typically more intense, last longer than in adolescence, and are more likely to involve sexual intercourse and cohabitation (Arnett, 2000, 2004; Montgomery & Côté, 2003). Successful romantic intimacy during this period thus requires the ability to engage in 'cooperative conflict' (Sen, 1990) and the skills to tolerate the 'relational turbulence' and "relational uncertainty" (Solomon & Knoblach, 2004) that emerge during the transition from casual dating to more serious commitments. It is thus likely that the high prevalence of the mixed shifting pattern reflects both the cultivation of open-mindedness and the intensity of romantic experiences common during the college years.

In general, our argument is that college-age males are honing the ability to resist 'fixity,' that is, they are learning to navigate between the various poles of intimacy practices within specific contexts, neither over- nor under-indulging in traditional gender norms. By examining this identity project in detail, we can more productively argue that young men's socialization involves the fine-tuning of intimacy practices or the gradual refinement of a range of discursive techniques that allows them to maintain *more than one* ideological position within a variety of situations and in the midst of a variety of expectations that swirl within conversational interactions. In this socio-cultural view, development reflects an increasing social fluency in everyday activities, an idea that is consonant with Côté's (1996) notion that emerging adults expand their 'identity capital' in late-modern societies.

Connecting this view of development as increasing social fluency with an analysis of microgenetically emergent positions of conversationalists opens up an important realm for developmental research. A focus on the fine-tuning of identity positions offers a relatively novel method for exploring how identities get built across developmental time. It advances a new way of thinking about ontogenesis and sociogenesis. Rather than thinking in terms of speakers as conduits who simply internalize their culture or of telling stories in interaction as simply a tool for accomplishing cohesion in one's personal identity, it would be more helpful to scrutinize the ways that daily conversa-

tions and storytelling practices are themselves sites where speakers 'do' their identities. As such, the storytelling space between participants is the arena in which identities are microgenetically performed and consolidated and where they can be microanalytically scrutinized. It is in the back-and-forth of conversational positioning where we accomplish multiple identities (ontogenesis) and in so doing, where multiple social ideologies and norms are either put to use or silenced (sociogenesis).

APPENDIX
Transcription Conventions

(.)	Short pause of less than 1 s
(1.5)	Timed pause in seconds
[overlap	Overlapping speech
↑	Rising intonation
°quieter°	Encloses talk that is quieter than the surrounding talk
LOUD	Talk that is louder than the surrounding talk
underlined	Emphasis
>faster<	Encloses talk that is faster than the surrounding talk
((comments))	Encloses comments from the transcriber
Rea:::ly	Elongation of the prior sound
=	Immediate latching of successive talk
[. . .]	Where material from the tape has been omitted for reasons of brevity

NOTES

1. This is not to say that interview responses are unnatural or artificial. It is simply to say that they are elicited and then produced in a certain way. Consider the world of difference between two boys having a back-and-forth argument on the playground about a female they like and one of those boys telling an interviewer about such an occurrence. In the first situation, the boys' perspectives are likely to be batted about in an improvisational and extemporaneous way; in the interview, they are more likely to come (or become) packaged and thematized.

2. Our aim is not to criticize the practice of conducting qualitative interviews. We have used and continue to use adult-moderated interviews and group discussion formats. Our point is that researchers must, regardless of the format they use, be up-front in detailing the procedures through which participants' voices and perspectives are purportedly revealed. This entails analyzing the interviewers questions and probes with equal scrutiny and the more general dictum to treat any talk as part of a specific conversational context rather than as a transparent window into the individual's storehouse of memories, beliefs, and attitudes.

3. Both of these approaches feature stories that are told in a nonjudgmental, supportive environment insulated from the irregularities of everyday social interactions; furthermore, the stories told are typically interpreted uncritically as veridical reflections of one's personal identity or life course (see Moissinac & Bamberg, in press).

4. Unbeknownst to the participants, the study concerned the dynamics of introverted and extroverted friendships. One partner in each dyad was recruited on the basis of his score on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Extraversion-Introversion Scale (Briggs & Meyers, 1998), one of a number of surveys administered several weeks earlier during research pool pretesting; the scale was again administered after the conversations were collected. Of the 16 dyads that produced romantic-relationship stories, 9 were both extraverts, 3 were both introverts, 3 were introvert-extravert pairs, and 1 was an extravert-ambivert pair. These unequal sample sizes are problematic for assessing the relationship between personality and positioning shift patterns in romantic stories but will be the subject of a future descriptive study.

5. We did not compute kappa for identifying stories, because there is no way to count a "miss" in terms of the absence of a story without artificially inflating kappa (because most of the utterances in the transcripts were not parts of stories). Instead, we computed percentage agreement. The percentage agreement for stories is a more conservative estimate than kappa because it counts agreement only on the presence, not absence, of stories. However, kappa was used to compute the subsequent coding categories, which were bounded within stories.

REFERENCES

Arnett, J. J. (1998). Learning to stand alone: The contemporary American transition to adulthood in cultural and historical context. *Human Development*, *41*, 295-315.

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the 20s. *American Psychologist*, *55*, 469-480.

Arnett, J. J. (2004). *Emerging adulthood: The winding road from late teens through the 20s*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bamberg, M. (2004a). "I know it may sound mean to say this, but we couldn't really care less about her anyway." Form and functions of "slut bashing" in male identity constructions in 15-year-olds. *Human Development*, *47*, 331-353.

Bamberg, M. (2004b). Talk, small stories, and adolescent identities. *Human Development*, *47*, 366-369.

Billig, M. (1987). *Arguing and thinking: A rhetorical approach to social psychology*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Briggs, K. C., & Myers, I. B. (1998). *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, Form M*. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists.

Brooks, G. R. (1997). The centerfold syndrome. In R. F. Levant & G. R. Brooks (Eds.), *Men and sex: New psychological perspectives* (pp. 28-57). New York: John Wiley.

Brown, B. B. (1999). "You're going out with who?": Peer group influences on adolescent romantic relationships. In W. Furman et al. (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 291-329). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Bruner, J. (1996). *The culture of education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Chu, J. (2004). A relational perspective on adolescent boys' identity development. In N. Way & J. Chu (Eds.), *Adolescent boys: Exploring diverse cultures of boyhood* (pp. 78-106). New York: New York University Press.

Coates, J. (2003). *Men talk: Stories in the making of masculinities.* Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Connolly, J. A., & Goldberg, A. (1999). Romantic relationships in adolescence: The role of friends and peers in their emergence and development. In W. Furman et al. (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 266-290). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Côté, J. E. (1996). Sociological perspectives on identity formation: The culture-identity link and identity capital. *Journal of Adolescence*, *19*, 417-428.

Eder, D. (1993). "Go get ya a French!" Romantic and sexual teasing among adolescent girls. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and conversational interaction* (pp. 17-31). New York: Oxford University Press.

Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (1992). *Discursive psychology.* London: Sage.

Egan, S. K., & Perry, D. G. (2001). Gender identity: A multidimensional analysis with implications for psychosocial adjustment. *Developmental Psychology*, *37*, 451-463.

Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth, and crisis.* New York: Norton.

Erikson, E. H. (1982). *The life cycle completed: A review.* New York: Norton.

Feiring, C. (1996). Concepts of romance in 15-year-old adolescents. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *6*, 181-200.

Feiring, C. (1999). Gender identity and the development of romantic relationships in adolescence. In W. Furman et al. (Eds.), *The development of romantic relationships in adolescence* (pp. 211-232). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Frosh, S., Phoenix, A., & Pattman, R. (2002). *Young masculinities: Understanding boys in contemporary society.* London: Palgrave.

Furman, W., & Buhrmester, D. (1992). Age and sex differences in perceptions of networks of personal relationships. *Child Development*, *63*, 103-115.

Goldscheider, F. (1997). Family relationships and life course strategies for the 21st century. In S. Derman (Ed.), *The family on the threshold of the 21st century: Trends and implications* (pp. 73-85). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gough, B. (2001). "Biting your tongue": Negotiating masculinities in contemporary Britain. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *10*, 169-185.

Graber, J. A., Brooks-Gunn, J., & Galen, B. R. (1998). Betwixt and between: Sexuality in the context of adolescent transitions. In R. Jessor (Ed.), *New perspectives on adolescent risk behavior* (pp. 270-316). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Greene, A. L., Wheatley, S. M., & Aldava, J. F., IV. (1992). Stages on life's way: Adolescents' implicit theories of the life course. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *7*, 364-381.

Hartup, W. W. (1993). Adolescents and their friends. In B. Laursen (Ed.), *Close friendships in adolescence* (pp. 3-22). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kimmel, M. (1994). Masculinity as homophobia: Fear, shame, and silence in the construction of gender identity. In H. Brod & M. Kaufmann (Eds.), *Theorizing masculinities* (pp. 119-141). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Kindlon, D., & Thompson, M. (1999). *Raising Cain: Protecting the emotional life of boys*. New York: Ballantine.

Korobov, N. (2004). Inoculating against prejudice: A discursive approach to homophobia and sexism in adolescent male talk. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, *5*, 178-189.

Korobov, N. (in press). The management of "nonrelational sexuality": Positioning strategies in adolescent male talk about (hetero)sexual attraction. *Men and Masculinities*.

Korobov, N., & Bamberg, M. (2004). Positioning a "mature" self in interactive practices: How adolescent males negotiate "physical attraction" in group talk. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, *22*, 471-492.

Korobov, N., & Thorne, A. (2004). *Manual for coding intimate and distancing positions in male narratives about romantic relationships*. Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Santa Cruz.

Labov, W., & Waletzky, J. (1967). Narrative analysis. Oral versions of personal experience. In J. Helm (Ed.), *Essays on the verbal and visual arts* (pp. 12-44). Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

Larson, R. W., Wilson, S., Brown, B. B., Furstenberg, F. F., & Verma, S. (2002). Changes in adolescents' interpersonal experiences: Are they being prepared for adult relationships in the 21st century? *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, *12*, 31-68.

Levant, R. F. (1997). Nonrelational sexuality in men. In R. F. Levant & G. R. Brooks (Eds.), *Men and sex: New psychological perspectives* (pp. 9-27). New York: John Wiley.

Linde, C. (1993). *Life stories: The creation of coherence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

McAdams, D. P. (1993). *The stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: William Morrow.

Moissinac, L., & Bamberg, M. (in press). It's weird, I was so mad: Developing discursive identity defenses in conversational small stories of adolescent boys. *Texas Speech Communication Journal*.

Montgomery, M. (2005). Psychosocial intimacy and identity: From early adolescence to emerging adulthood. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *20*, 346-374.

Montgomery, M., & Côté, J. E. (2003). College as a transition to adulthood. In G. R. Adams & M. D. Berzonsky (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence. Blackwell handbooks of developmental psychology* (pp. 149-172). Malden, MA: Blackwell.

Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Perry, W. G. (1999). *Forms of ethical and intellectual development in the college years: A scheme*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Original work published 1970)

Pleck, J. (1995). The gender role strain paradigm: An update. In R. F. Levant & W. S. Pollack (Eds.), *A new psychology of men* (pp. 11-32). New York: Basic Books.

Pollack, W. S. (1998). *Real boys. Rescuing our sons from the myths of boyhood*. New York: Random House.

Potter, J. (1996). *Representing reality: Discourse, rhetoric, and social construction*. London: Sage.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behavior.* London: Sage.

Prager, K. J. (1995). *The psychology of intimacy.* New York: Guilford.

Puchta, C., & Potter, J. (2002). Manufacturing individual opinions: Market research focus groups and the discursive psychology of evaluation. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *41*, 345-363.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community.* New York: Simon & Schuster.

Rawlings, W. K. (1992). *Friendship matters*. New York: Aldine.

Rubin, L. (1985). *Just friends: The role of friendship in our lives*. New York: Harper and Row.

Scheer, S. D., Unger, D. G., & Brown, M. B. (1996). Adolescents becoming adults: Attributes for adulthood. *Adolescence*, *31*, 127-131.

Seal, D. W., & Ehrhardt, A. A. (2003). Masculinity and urban men: Perceived scripts for courtship, romantic, and sexual interactions with women. *Culture, Health, and Sexuality*, *5*, 295-319.

Sen, A. (1990). Gender and cooperative conflict. In I. Tinker (Ed.), *Persistent inequalities: Rethinking assumptions about development and women* (pp. 123-149). New York: Oxford University Press.

Shulman, S., & Seiffge-Krenke, I. (2001). Adolescent romance: Between experience and relationships. *Journal of Adolescence*, *24*, 417-428.

Solomon, D. H., & Knobloch, L. K. (2004). A model of relational turbulence: The role of intimacy, relational uncertainty, and interference from partners in appraisals of irritations. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *21*, 795-816.

Speer, S., & Potter, J. (2000). The management of heterosexist talk: Conversational resources and prejudiced claims. *Discourse and Society*, *11*, 543-572.

Thorne, A., & McLean, K. (2002). Gendered reminiscence practices and self-definition in late adolescence. *Sex Roles*, *46*, 267-277.

Tolman, D. L., Spencer, R., Harmon, T., Rosen-Reynoso, M., & Striepe, M. (2004). Getting close, staying cool: Early adolescent boys' experiences with romantic relationships. In N. Way & J. Chu (Eds.), *Adolescent boys: Exploring diverse cultures of boyhood* (pp. 235-255). New York: New York University Press.

Way, N. (2004). Intimacy, desire, and distrust in the friendships of adolescent boys. In N. Way & J. Chu (Eds.), *Adolescent boys: Exploring diverse cultures of boyhood* (pp. 167-196). New York: New York University Press.

Way, N., & Chen, L. (2000). The characteristics, quality, and correlates of friendships among African American, Latino, and Asian American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, *15*, 274-301.

Way, N., & Chu, J. (Eds.). (2004). *Adolescent boys: Exploring the diverse cultures of boyhood*. New York: New York University Press.

Wetherell, M., & Edley, N. (1999). Negotiating hegemonic masculinity: Imaginary positions and pscyho-discursive practices. *Feminism and Psychology*, *9*, 335-356.

Neill Korobov received his Ph.D. in developmental psychology from Clark University and is currently a National Institutes of Health postdoctoral fellow in developmental psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He studies how identities emerge, change, and develop through social interaction. His current research explores how adolescent and emerging adult males and females talk about intimacy in everyday conversations about friendship and romance. His research is situated within discursive psychology and interpretive frameworks for social science inquiry.

Avril Thorne is a professor of developmental psychology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She studies the development of self and identity while telling one's past to family members and friends. She also studies the meaning of parents' life stories for adolescents' and young adults' developing sense of self.