

# Practice and Domination: Toward a Theory of Political Micro-economy

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Older siblings play a role in their younger siblings' language socialization by ratifying or rejecting linguistic behavior. In addition, older siblings may engage in a struggle to maintain their dominant position in the family hierarchy. This struggle is seen through the lens of language and political economy as a struggle for symbolic capital. Bilingual adolescent sibling interactions are analyzed as both acts of identity and expressions of symbolic power. This paper draws a theory of *political micro-economy*, which relates face-to-face interaction to larger structures of political economy through a process of fractal recursivity.

## 1. Introduction

The present work will seek to describe the behavior of four individual members of a family as both acts of identity and expressions of symbolic power. The family observed, mother Mami, teenaged daughters Otoe, 18, and Yumi, 14, and ten year old son Ryu, are Japanese-Americans currently living in Colorado. Mami is an *issei* or first-generation Japanese American; her children are *nisei* second generation. The behavior of primary interest is the choice of code – either Japanese or English – which each family member uses in particular situations. I will argue that these four individuals relate to one another based on hierarchical rank. Moreover, there is evidence for multiple hierarchies or social arrangements, based on multiple roles or identities of each individual. Individuals must thus negotiate their relative status (and solidarity) based on the relevant hierarchy for a particular activity or frame.

In addition, I will argue that a position within a hierarchy is a social good, related to social power. That is, getting and holding a position within a hierarchy both requires and bestows power and privilege. The hierarchical structure of the family distributes power unequally among family members. Thus, the subject positions of individual actors both emerge from this structure and reproduce it. The confluence of these factors echoes Ortner's (1989) expanded practice theory<sup>1</sup>, as well as symbolic and linguistic approaches to political economy (Gal 1989, Friedrich 1989, inter alia).

In linguistic anthropology, perhaps the primary statement of political economy originates with sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. His *Ce que parler veut dire*, published in 1982, was originally delivered to the Association of French Teachers in Limoges in 1977. By the time the English translation, *Language and Symbolic Power*, was published in

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1. For Ortner, practice theory is approached via structure, actor, and practice, as well as one term not treated here: history. It is in approaches to history that Ortner suggests that practice theory parts ways with political economy. Perhaps, then, it is not surprising that this work lacks a theory of history.

1991, Bourdieu's concepts of symbolic domination and the linguistic marketplace were already being applied by linguistic anthropologists (e.g. Friedrich 1989, Irvine [1989] 1997).

Although some linguists have approached the notion of symbolic domination and the linguistic market as a metaphor, language and political economy may be better described as a metonym – reference to an institution by properties of the institution. The institution here is unequal distribution of power, control, and autonomy, as well as capital; the property by which it is referenced is the exchange of goods, the market.

What approaches to political economy in the fields of linguistic and cultural anthropology have in common with economics as a field is an interest in unintended consequences. As the individual capitalist is apt to maintain the wealth of the state as though guided by an invisible hand (Smith 1993), so the individual speaker/hearer is liable to maintain the hegemony of her culture or society in spite of her intent. Javanaud makes clear the unintended consequences of cultural practices in his 1987 review of Bourdieu's *Ce que parler veut dire*.

Bourdieu is not primarily dealing with conscious intentions. What governs groups of people (including philosophers) is not of a mechanical, cybernetical or system-theoretic nature. They act neither deterministically nor in [a] transparent teleological way. Decisions may appear free and yet are constrained. Our decisions are not normally the result of cynical calculations, even if such calculations can enter into them. Rather, our habitus implies a disposition to act conditioned by its acquisition and use on certain markets (810-11).

The behavior analyzed here can be seen as acts of identity (Romaine 1988). According to Bucholtz and Hall (2003), the study of linguistic anthropology is largely the study of language and identity. I seek here to relate notions of political economy with notions of personal or local identity<sup>2</sup>. This study entails a concern for the production of individual subject positions, including the means by which identities are created, socialized, and reproduced.

I argue that older siblings serve to socialize younger ones into locally appropriate roles, while at the same time working to build and maintain their own roles. This identity-work yields symbolic capital to the older sibling and creates the market for its exploitation by constructing appropriate social hierarchies. The notion of symbolic capital comes, of course, from studies of language and political economy. Such studies originated with Marxist scholars' turn toward symbolic anthropology and discourse analysis, as well as linguistic anthropologists' turn toward power and institutions (Gal 1989). As such, studies of political economy often take as their analytic focus nations (e.g. Irvine 1997), or major class or language divisions within a state (e.g. Bourdieu 1977, Woolard 1989). However, the 'common sense' of the nation – if there is such a thing<sup>3</sup> – must be constructed through the common senses of its members. The collective identity and collected practices that help constitute the nation are experienced at the individual level, by actors in face-to-face contact with other individuals (Suleiman 2003).

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2. See Walters (1996) on the relations of language, identity, gender, and political economy.

3. Herzfeld (2001), for example, suggests that nationalism or 'national culture' conflates cultural boundaries with the borders of the state.

The link between the individual experience necessary for socialization and the collective experience of the linguistic market is made via fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000). In mathematics, a fractal is a rough geometric shape that is self-similar at different scales. In other words, smaller portions of the form resemble larger portions, as well as the form as a whole (at least approximately). This notion of fractal geometry is useful in social science<sup>4</sup>, where individual patterns of behavior or thought can be seen to recur in larger group behavior. Irvine and Gal identify fractal recursivity, together with iconization and erasure, as semiotic processes by which individuals construct ideological representations of distinction<sup>5</sup>. Perceptions of opposition at one level of analysis are projected onto other levels, recreating the ideology of distinction. For example, opinions about an individual are attributed to a group the individual belongs to.

Fractal recursivity is not only useful for describing the individual's ideology of distinction at various levels of analysis, but also for relating individual behavior to the structure of society. Sapir ([1927] 1995) suggested that the difference between individual and society is largely a matter of the analyst's focus. Society is thus seen as the collected senses of individuals. Particular differences do not obliterate the self-similarity of the individual and the group; like any fractal, form is independent of scale.

Thus, I assume that an extremely local analysis is a proper starting point for the analysis of 'culture' or 'common sense' (Herzfeld 2001). A microanalysis of the individual members of Mami's family should illuminate notions of symbolic domination, socialization, and practice at other, more macro-levels. This is not to say that the analysis of family interaction is the only site at which to study these notions. Indeed, the insensibility of a culture from the outside suggests that analysis must ultimately look more widely for the borders of common sense. However, I hope that this analysis might provide a preliminary step to mediate between the experience of face-to-face interaction and macro-historical processes and the exercise of institutional power (Gal 1989: 349-50).

## 2. Data

What follows is a close reading of interactions between Mami and her family. Transcripts of audio recordings are included to illustrate the specific actions of each individual, and the way they construct and reflect social role. In addition to the linguistic data illustrated here, analyses are based on field notes made during participant observation of various Japanese American families in the Colorado Front Range. However, the primary focus is on code switching and code choice as a particularly visible site for the assessment of social role.

In the data that follow, Mami speaks Japanese to her children. Mami is a native speaker of Japanese, with some English proficiency. All three children are balanced,

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4. Irvine and Gal (2000) trace the notion of fractals in anthropology as far back as Bateson (1936). For discussion of fractal geometry in economics, see Takayasu et al. (2000).

5. Roughly, iconization is the process whereby indexical markers of a social group are transformed into iconic representations of the group, 'naturalizing' perceptions of the Other. Erasure is the discounting or ignoring of facts inconsistent with an ideological scheme, so that facts inconsistent with ideology do not count as counter-evidence.

simultaneous bilingual speakers<sup>6</sup> of English and Japanese. Within the home, Mami prefers to use Japanese as a means of heritage language maintenance (c.f. Cashman 2001, Langager 2001). She requires that her children speak Japanese at home, with the understanding that they will rely primarily on English outside the home. Although I gathered no data from outside the home, it seems safe to assume that very little interaction outside the family takes place through the medium of Japanese<sup>7</sup>. According to an analysis of the 2000 US census carried out by the Social Science Data Analysis Network (2002), approximately 85% of Colorado residents are English monolinguals. In addition, approximately 11% of Colorado residents speak Spanish, while fewer than two percent speak an “Asian language.”<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Japanese speaking population of the region may be assumed to be quite small.

### 3. Analysis

Since Mami speaks Japanese to her children, the language serves an indexical function (Silverstein 1995). Mami’s use of Japanese to enact behaviors such as teaching, directing action, and scolding builds a semiotic link between these acts and the language used to perform them. Thus, Japanese indexes social roles such as Teacher, Director, and Authority.

In Excerpt 1<sup>9</sup>, Mami both indexes and achieves her role as Mother through appropriate actions, which Yumi ratifies in turn. According to Ochs (1993), identity should not be understood as a static property of the individual, but rather as a position that must be constantly achieved and ratified through interaction. Yumi similarly achieves her identity as Daughter through locally appropriate behavior.

(1) Excerpt 1 ‘Sansuu no mondai’

1	M: [ni-juu kyu doru kyu juu kyu sento desu	It’s twenty dollars and ninety-nine cents.
2	Y: ee?	huh?
3	(2.0)	
4	Y: ni doru ha?	Two dollars?
5	M: ha? ni-hyaku go juu	huh? For two hundred and fifty
6	minutes de	minutes
7	Y: nn	Yeah
8	M: ni-juu doru kyu-juu kyu	Twenty dollars and ninety-nine cents.
9	sento	

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6. These claims are made without the benefit of testing or serious inquiry into the nature of the children’s linguistic competence. However, as the data show, each child is able to produce fluent discourse, both formally and pragmatically consistent with native-speaker competence in English as well as Japanese. This paper will not address psycholinguistic questions of the nature of bilingual competence.

7. One exception is the Japanese-medium supplementary school that Ryu attends on Saturdays.

8. SSDAN defines “Asian language” as any non-Indo-European language spoken in Asia.

9. Throughout the paper, Japanese data is presented in Hepburn romaji. Free idiomatic translation is included in the right column.

10	Y: socchi no hoo ga yasui jan	That one is cheaper.
11	M: ima . nana-juu go	Now for seventy-five minutes
12	minutes de . juu kyu	it's ten dollars and ninety-nine cents.
13	doru kyu-juu kyu sento desu	
14	(M): [(inaudible)]	
15	Y: [(inaudible) hyaku	the one hundred minute one?
16	minutes no wa?	
17	M: konkai hyaku minutes	This time for one hundred minutes
18	(tsukaimashita)	of service, I would give thirty one dollars.
19	san-juu ichi doru	
20	kudasareba ..	
21	docchi ga ii desu ka?	Which one is better?
22	hai sansuu no mondai	Right, it's a math problem.
23	Y: mukoo no yatsu (tte iu ka)	That one.
24	kaeta yatsu	The one that changed.
25	M: nn (soo desu) ne?	Right
26	Y: yokatta ne. ne kore	That's good, right. This one
27	wa [(dore)]	
28	M: [demo san-	But three-
29	M: ni-juu kyu doru <b>plus tax</b>	twenty-nine dollars, plus tax is included.
30	ga hairu n yo	
31	Y: n	Yeah
32	M: ii yo ne. sore demo	Good, right. Since that one's still cheaper.
33	yasui kara ne	

In Excerpt 1, Mami shows (achieves) her position as Mother by enacting several stances, which make up the role. At the same time, Yumi enacts stances proper to her role as Daughter. Mami and Yumi are discussing the price of long-distance calling cards. Throughout the conversation, Mami possesses information, which she gives to Yumi. She repeatedly (lines 1, 5-7, 10-11, 14-15) gives Yumi specific information about the cost of various cards and their denomination in minutes. Then, at lines 16-17, Mami asks Yumi to decide which card is the best value, posing the question as an academic exercise. *Docchi ga ii desu ka? Hai, sansuu no mondai.* “Which is better? Right, it’s a math problem.” These acts position Mami as Teacher in this interaction. Yumi’s responses, in turn, serve to ratify Mami’s position. She evaluates Mami’s information (line 8), asks for more information (line 13), and generally allows Mami to maintain primary speakership (Jefferson 1984). Notice how the women use questions to accomplish different roles within the interaction. Yumi’s question *Hyaku minutes no wa?* “What about the one with a hundred minutes?” requests information that Mami possesses and Yumi wishes to

know, namely, the price of the phone card. However, Mami's *Docchi ga ii desu ka?* "Which one is better?" directs Yumi to manipulate the information Mami has provided her. This is not a request for information, since Mami already possesses all of the relevant information and has just given it to Yumi. Instead, it is a directive, specifically marked as *sansuu no mondai* "an arithmetic problem."

By acting both as Teacher and as Director, offering information and directing Yumi to manipulate it, Mami enacts a position as Mother. Further, as the data show, Mother is a relatively more powerful role: she is able to direct Yumi's action (lines 16-17) and to evaluate her solution (line 21). Furthermore, she is not obliged to respond to Yumi's questions or requests for clarification (lines 2-4 and 23).

Japanese and English are each associated with different social roles, an association built through a process of indexicalization. For example, though Mami can speak English (for example, she speaks English to me), Japanese is her preferred, dominant language. When speaking to her children, she almost always uses Japanese. Thus, since Japanese is associated with a particular role within the family hierarchy, the language becomes an index of the role. Further, using another language facilitates stepping outside that role to enact other aspects of personal identity. The use of English calls upon an alternate set of identities and relationships, an alternative identity market. Excerpt two illustrates such a use of English.

(2) Excerpt 2. 'Lucky? Happy?'

1	Y: doo shiyoo ka na	What should I do?
2	M: Otoe-nee-chan ni mo aji	Ask sister Otoe to taste a little bit.
3	chotto mite moratte	
4	Y: (inaudible)	
5	M: [ha	hm
6	O: [heh	huh
7	Y: (inaudible)	
8	M: <b>lucky? happy?</b>	Lucky? Happy?

Notice that the English used here is limited to single words. Mami typically uses single words or short phrases when speaking to her children in English<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, the words used appear somewhat ill suited. Mami and her daughters are preparing dinner; Yumi is making a salad dressing. Mami instructs Yumi to let Otoe taste the dressing, and asks Otoe for her opinion. While we might expect the dressing to be described as *oishii* "tasty," Mami uses English words that express a positive connotation, but would not be expected for describing food. This may suggest a general lack of English fluency.

As we have seen, Mami uses Japanese when instructing Yumi or giving her direct commands, enacting a role as Teacher or Director, consistent with her position as Mother in the family hierarchy. However, she uses English words to elicit Otoe's opinion of the food offered. This change in language can index a change in role. Mami is soliciting

10. Similarly, when Mami speaks to me, she typically uses short phrases or simple sentences. Further, her most common speech to me is in the form of Japanese minimal responses such as *un* "all right." Unfortunately, there are no recordings or careful field notes that reflect my conversations with Mami.

Otoe's assessment, and marks the change with a change in code. The adjustment of roles allows the women to suspend the requirements of the family hierarchy, permitting Otoe to serve as arbiter.

In the next excerpt, Mami instructs her daughters in the proper methods of skewering meat in order to cook it. Two activities, cooking and teaching, are both associated with the role of Mother, and thus are enacted through the medium of Japanese. However, Mami's uncertainty, visible through the use of interrogative hedges (*nan tte iu; dokka*) and softeners, weakens her position here. While Otoe continues to use Japanese, maintaining the established frame, Yumi breaks into English. *I think they went diagonally when they pierced it*. Yumi does not receive instruction from Mami, but offers it, inverting the Teacher/Student relationship. At the same time, the switch from Japanese to English may locate this exchange outside the frame of the family hierarchy.

(3) Excerpt 3. 'Iie, Nihongo'

1	M: nan tte iu no dokka ni	What- where should I skewer the meat, that-
2	niku wo sashiten no ana	through that hole
3	ana [ga aiteru toko]	
4	O: [h niku]	meat
5	M: ni kooshite ne	this way.
6	O: datte=	well
7	Y: = <b>I think they went</b>	I think they went diagonally, when
8	<b>diagonally .. when they</b>	they pierced it.
9	<b>pierced it</b>	
10	(1.4)	
11	O: honma... hhh	really
12	Y: <b>I showed Otoe my cool</b>	I showed Otoe my cool bath towel.
13	<b>bath towel</b>	
14	O: [mmm]	mmm
15	Y: [ <b>don't you</b> ] <b>remember. was</b>	Don't you remember? Was it on this side
16	<b>it on this</b> [sside	
17	M: [iie Nihongo	No, Japanese
18	O: [hh	
19	Y: [hh	
20	O: dochi demo ii	Either is OK.
21	Y: katte ni deta no	It just came out.

Yumi's English contribution is greeted by a long silence. Otoe is the first to break this silence, speaking a single word<sup>11</sup> of Japanese at low volume. Thus, Otoe has not

11. Otoe's *honma* "really" is perhaps strategically ambiguous. It could be taken as either agreement with, or questioning of Yumi's assertion.

followed Yumi out of the established frame. She does not take up Yumi's code choice, nor does she continue the discussion.

Following this problematic exchange, Yumi changes the subject. Her remark, *I showed Otoe my cool bath towel*, is addressed to Mami in English. While the use of English marks a break from Mami's lesson, it continues the code choice made in the problematic section. Mami explicitly addresses this utterance as delivered in the wrong language: *iie, Nihongo* "no, Japanese." By censoring talk, particularly the form of talk, Mami presents herself as Authority, attempting to reestablish herself at the top of the hierarchy. Rather than acquiescing to the attempted censure, however, the daughters take up Mami's utterance as the opening of a discussion. Yumi's plea, *Katte ni deta no* "It just came out," may be taken as an appeal addressed to an Authority. However, Otoe does not recognize Mami as Authority, instead placing herself in that role and judging Yumi's contribution as in bounds. *Dochi demo ii* "Either way is OK."

Otoe often places herself in the role of Authority, as in the preceding exchange. This strategy puts her in a locally strong position relative to those being judged. This can test Mami's dominant position, as in excerpt three, and therefore challenge the family hierarchy. More often, though, Otoe serves as Authority in disputes among her siblings, as in the following passage. This is a proper role within the family frame, given Otoe's role as older sibling.

(4) Excerpt 4. 'Excuse my pleasure'

1	R: ando.	and
2	(1.8)	
3	Y: (dakara) ni man	So, twenty four thousand
4	[(yon sen)	
5	O: [ni man go sen tte. itta	(It) said twenty five thousand. It's twenty-five
6	jan .. ni man go sen	thousand.
7	(2.7)	
8	Y: ° (it worked before) ° ..	It worked before.
9	O: hh	
10	(1.5)	
11	Y: <b>it's been my: pleasure</b> ( (tsbɪn ma:j plʊʒə) ) <sup>12</sup>	It's been my pleasure.
12	O: h[hh	
13	R: [hh	
14	Y: hai. go sen mo	Right, five thousand more
15	[(inaudible)	
16	O: [no no no no no	no, no, no
17	R: [hhh	

12. Transcriber's notes in lines 11 and 18 give a phonetic transcription in order to illustrate phonotactic differences.



- 18 O: **excuse my: pleasure** "Excuse my pleasure"  
 ( (ʔkʌsʌkyu:zu ma:i purʌza:) )
- 19 R: hh ((claps hands))
- 20 O: hai yeah
- 21 O: soo soo right, right
- 22 R: a- arf arf arf arf
- 23 O: aho. aho. idiot, idiot

Here, Otoe, Yumi, and Ryu are playing a board game. It seems that Yumi is trying to cheat, offering to pay twenty-four thousand dollars (line 3), when she owes twenty-five thousand. Otoe corrects her, and Yumi gathers the correct sum. At line seven, Yumi switches from Japanese to English, offering a sotto voce aside in which she reveals that she may be in the habit of misrepresenting the sums she owes: *It worked before*. This switch from game play to evaluation is a change in footing (Goffman 1979), and thus an appropriate occasion for code switching. However, when Yumi returns to game play (line 10), her continued use of English is seen as a problem.

At line 10, Yumi adopts a very affected tone of voice as she hands over the money she owes. She speaks in a lower pitch than usual, and stretches her words, perhaps attempting to play some sort of character. Moreover, she speaks English, and uses a somewhat stilted expression. Her odd performance is greeted by laughter from Otoe, with Ryu joining in immediately after (lines 11-12). Yumi attempts to escape this laughter by returning straight away to the game. Otoe<sup>13</sup> will not allow Yumi to elude judgment, however. At line sixteen, she parodies Yumi's odd expression. Rather than simply repeating what Yumi said, however, Otoe reworks the expression slightly, rendering it utterly nonsensical. *Excuse my pleasure*. Moreover, although Otoe, like Yumi, uses a low pitch, she delivers the expression with an exaggerated Japanese accent<sup>14</sup>.

In this interaction, Otoe is able to present herself as the linguistic authority. She treats some code switching as appropriate and acceptable, as when Yumi (line 7) or Ryu (line 1) evaluate or comment on the game. Similarly, Otoe herself sometimes uses code switching to show such changes in stance or topic. This is similar to the use of code switching for realignment or control that Zentella (1982, 1997) describes among Spanish-English bilinguals. However, not all code choices are treated as legitimate. Otoe judges her siblings' language behavior, censuring inappropriate conduct. By selectively ratifying certain actions, but censuring others, Otoe helps to teach Yumi and Ryu what range of behavior is considered appropriate within the family<sup>15</sup>. At the same time, though, Otoe claims for herself the same powerful position that Mami serves in other interactions. As with all such practice, the effects of the interaction have a range of consequences for each participant.

13. Still problematic for this analysis is Otoe's "no, no, no" at line 16. If, as I argue, Otoe uses Japanese as an index of power and authority, why is this initial censure delivered in English?

14. Neither Yumi nor Otoe normally have a Japanese accent when speaking English.

15. This type of sibling behavior may also serve as a bridge to outside communities (Mannle and Tomasello 1987). However, Yumi and Ryu are well beyond the age of children most often implicated in the bridge hypothesis.

As these excerpts illustrate, the members of Mami's family conduct themselves within a family hierarchy. Their behavior toward one another is partially structured according to locally relevant norms of interaction. As Mother, Mami is entitled to judge the behavior of her children, and to direct their behavior. At the same time, she is obliged to offer them instruction and care. Conversely, the children are not expected to offer Mami instruction or judgment. That is not to say that the children do not offer these things, but that when such perturbations occur, they are marked as out of the ordinary. Silences and code switching provide particularly visible marks of these shifts.

Mami sits atop a family hierarchy. The hierarchy is further ranked by age divisions, with older sister Otoe holding more power than either of her siblings. This should not be taken to mean, however, that age itself is constitutive of position. Rather, the hierarchy is created through social practices, each of which is subject to ratification by fellow actors. As excerpt five shows, even the youngest member of the family can claim the privileged position of authority by refusing to ratify invalid acts.

(5) Excerpt 5. 'Kyu ryoobi'

1	R: °ichi ni san shi go roku	One two three four five six seven eight nine ten
2	shichi hachi kyu to°	
2	O: (inaudible)	
3	M: soo ne	That's right.
4	R: kyuu ryoobi	Pay day.
5	O: <b>hold on wha-</b>	Hold on wha-
6	<b>you're there already</b>	you're there already.
7	R: ni man go sen (aru yo) (3)	Twenty five thousand.
8	Y: (shotokuzei mo)	And income tax.
9	R: (sore ichi-man yon-sen)	That's fourteen thousand.
10	O: <b>this is hé:rs</b>	This is hers.
11	Y: <b>yeah</b>	yeah
12	R: ni-man yon-sen	Twenty four thousand.
13	O: nande?	Why?
14	R: nikai aru kara kyuu ryoobi ga	Because there are two pay days.
15	Y: aa honto da	Oh, that's right.

Excerpt five occurs just prior to excerpt four, above. Recall that while Yumi's use of English within game play was ruled out of bounds, switching to English as a change in footing received no censure. Again in excerpt five, English is used outside of actual game play. At line five, Otoe challenges Ryu, who is demanding to be paid for completing a round of the game. Otoe switches to English, marking her role as Authority<sup>16</sup>. Ryu does not respond to this challenge, however. At line seven, he reinstates his demand by

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16. Most often Otoe uses Japanese, with its indexical power, to challenge or command her siblings. However, a code switch is warranted here as what Zentella (1997) calls a Control switch.

naming – in Japanese – the figure he is to be paid. Yumi follows Ryu, both in code choice and by addressing herself to the game, not Otoe’s criticism of Ryu. Otoe’s next challenge (line 10) is made more forcefully, again in English. This time, Yumi follows Otoe, using the English *yeah* to voice agreement. However, Ryu refuses to recognize Otoe’s censure, continuing to play the game and to speak Japanese. By not ratifying Otoe’s stance as Authority, Ryu has effectively denied her that stance. This behavior, with Yumi’s eventual ratification (line 15), allows Ryu to win the exchange, and illustrates the interactional nature of these stances.

#### 4. Discussion

The family hierarchy alluded to here is not a structure that exists independently of the actions of family members. Rather, it is a web at once constraining the actions of family members, and woven by them (Geertz 1973). Mami’s behavior serves to create and to index her own identity, to socialize her children into locally relevant patterns of ‘common sense,’ and to construct the hierarchy within which it has power and significance.

This hierarchy of power and significance can be seen as a local symbolic market. The arrangement of subject positions with unequal access to approved forms of behavior, and unequal rights to exercise power bears a fractal relationship to the symbolic marketplace described by Bourdieu (1977, 1991) and others. That the individuals examined here may be seen to constitute the very market in which they participate argues against Bourdieu’s assertion that the state, in the form of the educational system, has sole control over the creation of symbolic markets. According to Bourdieu, “The educational system is a crucial object of struggle because it has a monopoly over the production of the mass of producers and consumers, and hence over the reproduction of the market on which the value of linguistic competence depends” (1977: 652). Although the educational system may be among the most common of institutions within many cultures, it does not have a monopoly over social actors<sup>17</sup>. Each individual performs within a range of institutions and frames, with a number of fellow actors. Each of these interactions can have a constitutive effect on not only the identity of the individuals, but also on market formation, distinction, and symbolic domination.

The traditional, ‘macroeconomic’ view of political economy focuses on societies, regions, and nations. A microeconomic approach to symbolic domination takes seriously Suleiman’s reminder that institutions such as the nation, as a conflation of the political state with a ‘culture,’ are comprised of individual actors. “[Collective] identities are experienced at the personal level[;] it is the individual who experiences these identities and gives them meaning in his or her social and cultural setting” (Suleiman 2003: 5). Political micro-economy takes as its focus the daily interactions of individuals as both acts of identity and steps in the constitution of symbolic markets and individual habitus.

What this study has not shown directly, what remains for future work, is the effect of face to face interaction on larger structures of society. However, it is hoped that the notions of fractal recursivity, self-similarity, and scale independence allow an avenue to

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17. For fuller critiques, see Woolard (1985), Gal (1989), Briggs and Bauman (1992), and Hill (1993), inter alia.

trace the personal practices of individual identity to social orders and schema constructions within the broader culture. We are often reminded that social positions such as gender (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992; Ortner 1996) and ethnicity (Said 1979, Suleiman 2003) are the constructions of *individual* actors within an encompassing structure. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet put it, “It is the mutual engagement of human agents in a wide range of activities that creates, sustains, challenges, and sometimes changes society and its institutions” (462). This study has been an attempt to show the micro-level construction of shared cultural schemas. Future work should take a gradually more encompassing view of social interaction among families, congregations, neighborhoods, cities, and even nations. Such an expanding focus is necessary to trace the borders of particular symbolic economies. I expect that, within a macro-economy, standards of practice among larger groups will bear a fractal resemblance to smaller ones.

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