

Co-constructing Family Identities through Young Children's
Telephone-mediated Narrative Exchanges

Catherine Ann Cameron

Psychology Department

University of British Columbia, Canada

Mailing address: Psychology Department,

2136 West Mall,

Vancouver, B.C., V6T 1Z4

Phone:(604) 822-9078

acameron@psych.ubc.ca

Julia Gillen

Department of Linguistics and English Language,

Lancaster University, UK

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Abstract

We explore here telephone interactions between young children and adult family members as contributing insights to the co-construction of identities within both the nuclear and the extended family. We deploy methods of linguistic ethnography to enrich the scope of interpreting our data beyond textual analysis. Our premise was that intimate relatives have knowledgeable appreciation of their child's affective and cognitive worlds that they can call upon to enhance emerging language use and narrative productions, even in distanced communications. Talking over the telephone has the potential to scaffold children's skills at offering clear, cohesive communications, and elaborated narratives. Examination of the corpora of four preschool children in interaction with a family member on the telephone showed them to employ extensive expressive power to negotiate considerable communicative space in having both emotional and cognitive needs met; identities are co-constructed as stories about persons and experiences are shared.

Key words: families, identity, linguistic ethnography, multimodal research methods, telephone discourse, young children

Co-constructing Family Identities through Young Children's Telephone-mediated Narrative Exchanges

This paper explores the construction of familial narratives as a contribution to investigating relations between everyday language practices, cultural learning and identity (Blackledge & Creese, 2008; Fivush, 2007; Holland & Lave, 2001; Ochs, 1993; Ochs & Capps, 2001). More specifically, it examines the nature of recontextualization processes in distanced language usage (Cameron & Hutchison, 2009; Cameron & Wang, 1999) in the context of familiar family members' communications over the telephone. Even more specifically, the narrative exchanges investigated here involve ubiquitous construction and reshaping of identities within families. In addition to contributing insights, the telephone discourses studied here may support young children's emergent meaning-making skills across multiple modes of communication.

Methodologically, we add exploratory and innovative perspectives on investigations of discourse and social life that link the micro and macro (Sarangi & Coulthard, 2000). Research in language socialization practices explores how children become competent members of their immediate and broader communities through narrative socialization and identity (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984; Ochs & Capps, 2001; Perregaard, 2010). In this paper we draw upon methods and insights of linguistic ethnography to enrich the range of semiotic resources and temporal scope of an interpretive analysis (Rampton, 2007; Maybin & Tusting, 2011).

Sociocultural theory is well placed for the examination of processes involving the shaping of identity via language learning (Wertsch, 1985). Psychological studies conceptualize identities to include concepts of continuity, a sense of uniqueness, and a

sense of affiliation based upon who one has, and who one might potentially be; and is informed by social, interpersonal exchanges (Marcia, 2002). As Lave and Wenger (1991) observed, learning throughout the lifespan always involves modifications of identity. This notion of identity does not presume the isolable individual, but rather, identities that are unceasingly reshaped in transactions with others (Sameroff, 2010). Thus identity is particularly approachable through the study of naturally occurring discourse (Göncü, 1999). Identity, for the young children studied here, is manifestly and significantly shaped through familial interactions (Ochs, 1993).

If identities are shaped in stories about persons and experiences, it becomes of interest to examine reciprocal processes of meaning making involved in story exchanges. We argue that there are particular qualities of telephone interactions that promote the scaffolding of meaning making in narratives that adults offer children (although the traffic is not one-way, as we shall show). The first of these particular telephone discourse characteristics, in its still most frequently found functional form, is aural (Cameron & Hutchison, 2009; Clark, 1996). The restriction of other semiotic channels does not lead to a dilution of quality of experience, but rather can enhance focus of attention (Turkle, 1997).

For young children, the telephone is different from their fundamental experience of face-to-face communication about the '*here-and-now*' (Brown & Belugi, 1964; Snow, 1983; 1991). Talking on the telephone demands recognition that the interlocutor is not physically present. Constraints on communicating with non-vocal strategies such as gesture, as well as dependence on a physically shared environment, necessitate explicit, generally verbal, linguistic strategies to achieve mutual intersubjective understanding

(Clark, 1996). Although some of our other studies have compared telephone- with face-to-face-communications, (Cameron & Hutchison, 2009; Cameron & Lee, 1997; Cameron & Wang, 1999) here we focus exclusively on telephone talk. Thus, our study can be located within a perspective on talk-in-interaction, mediated by a specific Information/Communication Technology (Aarsand & Aronsson, 2007).

The study reported here is part of a multi-method research programme into children's telephone-mediated dialogues conducted over more than a decade (Cameron & Hutchison, 2009; Cameron & Wang, 1999; Gillen, 2000a; 2000b; 2002; Gillen, Accorti Gamannossi & Cameron, 2005; Gillen & Cameron, 2004). Our earlier studies revealed that children aged three and four recognize that their conversant is distant and show adaptive linguistic strategies to accommodate listeners' needs; that is, they recontextualize their language usage. We have shown this to be relevant specifically to emergent literacy processes (cf., Cameron & Hutchison), for in schooled societies children's discourse shows moves toward understanding the needs of distanced interlocutors and in consequence adopting appropriate linguistic strategies (Beals & Snow, 2002; Snow, 1983, 1991).

Rather than see this as a move towards 'abstraction' we agree with the challenge posed by Bruner (1986; Bruner & Haste, 1987) to such understandings of how academic learning can be characterized: All learning is situated; thus transforming knowledge or skills from one domain to another is a recontextualization process. As Lave (1996) asserts, knowledge does not become 'abstract' in the school setting as opposed to the 'authentic' site of everyday life, or vice versa; rather, it undergoes some transformation, as it is suited to a new purpose. We deem this transformational process to reflect learning

and are particularly interested in the construction of shared communicative spaces whether in formal or informal settings.

Our experimental studies have shown young children to enhance explicitness as required by the telephone channel when this shared communicative space is set up during pedagogic interventions. For example, in a series of quasi-experimental training studies (Cameron & Hutchison, 2009), one criterion task required the production of narratives describing wordless picture stories. Training tasks involved construction of collaborative knowledge between a child, who had critical information, and an adult who was more procedurally knowledgeable in such matters as figuring out how to cooperate to identify the quickest route to a relevant target, persuade an interlocutor to provide a puppy with a good home or negotiate the choice of a video. Participants showed significant gains in complex verbal structures that enhanced oral and written narratives about the wordless picture books at posttest after the short, intensive, interventions utilizing the telephone, in contrast to children who engaged in the same tasks face-to-face (Cameron & Hutchison).

Adopting linguistic ethnography (Creese, 2008; Maybin & Tusting, 2011), as described below, the present research explores telephone interactions as constructed locally between young children and adult family members. Family members have a special role in facilitating communicative skill-development, with both cognitive and affective insights into their children's worlds that they can call upon to scaffold their child's enhanced expressivity (Göncü, 1993; González, Moll & Amanti, 2005). Assuming that the child's effective recontextualization skills enhance expressivity, we are particularly interested in the part the children themselves play in eliciting mutuality for meaning making.

There are many paths to listener awareness and a sturdy sense of self. Communicating in temporal synchrony but across space might usefully be considered a metacommunicative enrichment. Exploring the efficacy of distanced communications experienced in a wider range of cultural contexts allows us to determine whether such enhanced psycholinguistic awareness relates to identity development in the pre- and early school years. Over the telephone, and constrained by lack of visual cues but not with synchronicity, what strategies do children and their intimate relatives use to promote mutual understanding? What impediments lie in the way of enhancing effective communications? What characteristics afford space for asserting personal perspectives in such distanced exchanges? Will this context strengthen mutually satisfying expressivity? What are some hallmarks of successful distanced exchanges between the children and their adult familial interlocutors? An approach based on ethnography cannot provide full answers, but can offer analysis of 'telling cases' (Mitchell, 1984).

METHODOLOGY

We aim for ethnographically grounded analysis of communicative practices (Maybin, 2006). Carefully transcribed texts were analyzed with focus on the situated practices that shape and are themselves shaped by discourses. This necessitated the deploying techniques influenced by constraints on proximity in time and space to the data (Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2007; Maybin & Tusting 2011).

We recruited research participants in family settings where telephone interactions between a parent or grandparent and the child were to that date relatively uncommon, but where volunteers viewed launching calls for our research a welcome opportunity for additional familial contact. Working with landline phones and audio recorders we

provided, the adults used a Radio Shack® *Bug in the Ear* pick up that attached to their telephone receivers as well as to the recorders. A corpus of six to 12 fully transcribed telephone dialogues, as collected in each family over approximately six to eight weeks, constituted our core data. Face to face interviews were conducted with the adult participants at the beginning and end of the data collection period. Subsequently, telephone discussions took place between the researchers and some participants during the process of analysis as specific interpretive questions arose.

Participants described here were four pairs of lower- to middle-income family members. See Table 1 for information about child ages, family members, interlocutors, and family locations.

Table 1. Participating children and their families

Child	Family Members	Family Interlocutor	Location
Sam; age 4'6"	Mother, father, & older sister	Mother – university professor, US born	West coast urban, mother, talking from campus office
Sarah; age 4'8"	Mother, father	Mother – librarian, Canadian	West coast urban, mother talking from library
Fumiko; age 5'2"	Father, mother, grandfather	Father – mechanic, Japanese- born	East coast rural, father talking from auto-body shop

Emily; age 5'5"	Mother, father & older brother	Grandmother – researcher calling from her rural home	Child at home with family; grandmother at distance of 3000k
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At the textual level, the children's talk was studied in relation to their engagement in narratives. We explored instances of orientation to opportunities for recontextualization occasioned by the loss of non-verbal communication avenues and positive opportunities for focus upon a verbal channel (Hopper, 1992; Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974). The constraints of the telephone channel, with the absence of gestures, eye contact, nods, frowns, etc., demand explicit verbal expression.

At a further level, we use techniques from linguistic ethnography to enrich our understandings of interlocutors' contributions to meaning making. In this project our methods include:

- pre and post telephone and face to face discussions to aid interpretation;
- photography of sites and phenomena discussed to stimulate participants' recall and aid interpretation (Pink, 2006)
- participation, i.e. the first author was also a participant in the research;

Thus, participants' reflections on the practices involved were an integral part of the process. We note these interchanges not because they are normative, nor are they extraordinary, but rather because they are illustrative of a common pattern of striving for mutual co-construction among the participant pairs. We draw our examples from many

possible instances to demonstrate the intimate intricacy of the interactions. We draw more substantially on the data from one pair than the others, in part to illustrate the diverse application of our methods within as well as between participants, as appropriate to emergent issues.

THE TELEPHONE DIALOGUES

We transcribed, analyzed and mutually reflected upon exchanges that resonated with mutually constructed positive affect and ‘attunement to the attunement of the other’ that is the kernel of intersubjectivity (Rommetveit, 1992, p. 10). We show that the telephone channel afforded a degree of intersubjectivity attainment that is a central issue of psychosocial development (Göncü 1993, p. 185). The parents, enabling meaningfully detailed accounts to take shape, scaffolded many relational narratives of identity.

For example, in Extract 1, Sam is at home with his father and his mother calls home from work to check in on the progress of their day. Sam reports that he was stung by an insect and his mother’s enquiry about the sting’s healing progress leads four-and-one-half-year-old Sam¹ and his mother to a process of scientific knowledge integration (Clark & Linn, 2003), as follows: Mother does not directly challenge her son’s contradictory statements as to whether the culprit is a wasp or bee but instead asks, ‘What did // it look like?’ (1.148). Sam says ‘And it was big.’ (149); mother encourages Sam to refine whether this means fat or long ‘Did it have like a fat tail or a long thin tail?’ (152), and persists to inquire as to its colour, ‘And what colour was it?’ (158), to which Sam responds by declaring, ‘Red and red and red or yellow and black?’ (159). Mother focuses

on yellow and determines that long and yellow and black could signify a 'yellow jacket', 'a kind of a wasp' (160), maintaining some authority. Mother does not pursue Sam's statement. They add new ideas and sort through connections to pursue a collaborative identification of the culprit.

Extract 1: Sam, Conversation 1

- 145: Sam: I think it's a wasp sting.
- 146: Mother: Well (.) you saw it (.) didn't you?
- 147: Sam: Yeah (.) I saw the bee.
- 148: Mother: What did// it look like?]
- 149: Sam: //And it was big.]
- 150: Mother: It was what?
- 151: Sam: It was (.) it was pretty big.
- 152: Mother: Did it have (.) like a fat tail or a long thin tail?
- 153: Sam: Bees don't have tails.
- 154: Mother: Well, you know (.) um, (.) the (.) what's it called (.) the the the abdomen or something (.) you know the part of a bee that's yellow and black?
- 155: Sam: Yeah //it had a long one.]
- 156: Mother: //On wasps I think it's] black.
- 157: Sam: Yeah (.) it had a long one.
- 158: Mother: And what colour was it?
- 159: Sam: Red and (2) or yellow and black?

- 160: Mother: Yellow and black. Well (.) I suppose some of them (.) yellow jackets (.) are a kind of wasp and they're yellow and black too
So (.) why do you think it was a wasp rather than a bee?
- 161: Sam: Wasps are big (.) bees are small?
- 162: Mother: Oh:

This then led Sam to initiate a narrative; again Mother scaffolded Sam with acts of inquiry (Wells Lindfors, 1999) to pay attention to fine detail. Their conversation about encounters with bees/wasps lasted in total 67 turns. At l. 208, Mother said, "Maybe you should be a beekeeper when you grow up since you seem to be pretty tough about bee stings. You could make honey," turning this narrative into an opportunity to confirm Sam's personal strength and a possible identity (Fivush, 2007; Reddy, 2008).

Yet even with such efforts at precision on the part of both parties (ll. 152-153), endeavours to achieve intersubjectivity can run into considerable difficulties. In the exchange studied next, Sam shares with his mother his summer day camp experience at a water park in Vancouver's Stanley Park (Figure 1).

The first author first learnt during the post-data collection interview that some confusion had arisen during the exchange in Conversation 2 below. Having discussed the text collaboratively and arrived at some ideas as to where the confusion arose, it was decided to explore the discussed territories, accompanied by a young assistant equipped with Popsicle sticks to try out possible floating routes. Photographs were taken. These were then taken back to the family to elicit participant accounts of their understandings

and a final interpretation reached. This enabled the following annotated transcription, illustrated with explanatory images.

Extract 2: Sam Conversation 2



Figure 1. Children's water park in Stanley Park, Vancouver BC Canada

Sam: *I found a little popsicle stick and you know that stream that goes down the rocks?*

Mother, focussing on Sam's reference to a stream, and thinking that he has floated the stick in a natural stream on the way to or from the water park (Figure 2), replies,

Mother: *Mhm, it's like a salmon salmon habitat I think// isn't it?]*



Figure 2. Sign for Salmon Habitat near water park

Sam: //Yeah] cause you know that stream that goes down the rock?

They think they are "on the same page";



Figure 3. Sam's 'page' in the water park



Figure 4. Mother's 'page' in the habitat

Mother: *Yeah.*

Sam: *I I I the popsicle stick I I put it at the start of that cause you know that little waterfall?*

Mother: *Mhmm.*

Sam: *It will (.) like (.) go down the waterfall.*

Mother: *Oh.*

Sam: *I I I the popsicle stick I I put it at the start of that cause you know that little waterfall?*

Mother (attempts to confirm their synchrony by extending the informational content of the exchange from the vantage of the habitat):

And did it go all the way out to the ocean then? Or did you stop it before it went out?

Sam's intensive focus on the conversation is demonstrated through his detection of a misunderstanding, there being no egress to the ocean from the water park:

But what do you mean it went out to the ocean?

Mother innocently tries to clarify:

Did it go all the way out the stream and int, into the (.) into in to- uh (.) whatever the harbour?

Sam realizes that his mother and he are not referring to the same location and starts to probe: *No I mean (.) in in-do you mean into the other parts of the waterfall?*

Mother: *//Yeah.]*



Figure 5. Mother's waterfall

Sam: //How] //Yeah.]

Mother: //Well] where did it go- after it went through the stream?

Sam: It went on a little (.) cause you know those rocks? That the stream that goes down there? It leads to that pool?



Figure 6. Sam's pool

Mother realizes that they are not thinking of the same location and becomes

noncommittal: *Mhmm*

Sam persists in trying to get the message across:

It went down that.

Mother capitulates and terminates that thrust of the exchange:

O (.). Cool! And so did you get pretty wet at the water park?

Sam complies: *Yep.*

On this occasion, complete intersubjectivity was not attained, but that surely is subordinate to the effortful explicitness (“*It went on a little (.) cause you know those rocks? That the stream that goes down there? It leads to that pool?*”) in language deployed by the child enjoying discursive engagement with sensitive parental support. Such

adventures, even though not physically shared become more readily shared reference points, according to the adult participants, through the medium of their telephoned narratives, conducted when the adults had fewer distractions than they had at home with the bustle of family life engulfing them.

Family names were other hooks for joint solidarity in historical perspective-taking in this family's framework of resources in constructing self-identity in socio-historical context (Halbwachs ([1925] 1992 discussed by Middleton & Brown 2005, 39). Sam's mother was consistent during the telephone exchanges to ascertain precise identities of mentioned individuals and establish relevant family linkages. The following extract begins with his mother's explanations of the children in a family that has come up in the conversation with Sam in Extract 3: Mother explains (l. 98) that their guests' names are Nina, Duncan and Hugh, a baby, to which Sam responds that the baby's name is funny (99). His mother denies that the name is funny, mentioning its Scottish heritage and further normalizing the name, by reference to her Uncle Hume (100), and then tapers off by indicating he is no longer alive to which Sam, with an empathic gasp, inquires as to the uncle's age when he died. Mother starts by indicating he was not that old (102) to which Sam rejoins with condolences (103). Mom then indicates that Hume was old enough not to have left highly dependent children behind (104) and seems to decide not to maintain a sad topic that might become self-referential by changing the subject (106).

Extract 3: Sam, Conversation 7

98. Mother: Well Nina's the girl and Duncan. Duncan is the big boy. And then they have a baby whose name is Hugh.
99. Sam: Hugh. That's a funny name.
100. Mother: No no it's not. It's a Scottish name. It's sort of (.) old fashion Scottish name. I think actually Nina, Duncan and Hugh are all Scottish names. I had a I had an uncle Hume (.) which is a kinda similar name. But he died.
101. Sam (with apparent concern): hh how old was he?
102. Mother (responding to the apparent concern): Well he died when he was (.) he wasn't (.) I don't know he was like in his early fifties. He wasn't that old. He was Grandma's brother (.) he died when I was probably a teenager. Maybe about 18 or 19.
103. Sam: That's quite sad.
104. Mother: It was very sad yeah. His kids were mostly grown up but it was still pretty sad.
105. Sam: Oh.
106. Mother: Yeah. Well you know what? I think you guys gotta get going to pick up the sushi and I gotta get //{xxx}]
107. Sam: //Okay]

Adult family members commonly appealed to joint family membership history as Sam's mother did. Having explored the other children's names in the visiting family she moved on to identify with that family by indicating that they too had somebody in it with a similar name. Sam's resultant empathetic response to a casual comment from his

mother about the family member's death indicates his feelings of association with his mother's reference to the older, great uncle with the gasp and concerned question as to his age (l. 101). Mother supports son in embedding his own autobiographical narratives within a broader family history, to make connections between their understanding of their own experiences and others within a broader socio-historical timeframe (Fivush, 2007). At this juncture, Mother was concerned not to alarm Sam further by indicating that he was not that young, but also, not that old either (102), referring to the uncle's relationship to Sam's grandmother to cement the point, and his relative age to Sam's mother, who was quite 'old' at the time of her uncle's death, from what she might have presumed was Sam's position.

In the interview later Sam's mother stated that she did not want to concern Sam further, but he perseveres with his empathetic response: indicating that he was indeed a little discomfited by hearing of his uncle's death. Here, his mother agrees with his sentiments, but does not belabor the issue. At four years, seven months, Sam was evidencing a developmentally common concern about death (Silverman, 2000) that his mother did not care to endorse, and possibly was even a little concerned for her son herself. In any case, she changed the subject by moving on. Mother takes charge here and moves the conversation toward a telephone call closing (Schegloff & Sacks, 1973), and Sam is compliant. It is not surprising on other occasions to hear Sam taking masterful control of conversations when he feels strongly about a topic or expressing compassionate concern for one friend, relative, or another. Lessons are learned both from explicit as well as implicit parental modeling.

As we came to look more closely at our data, we were struck by the effects of children's interventions on the direction and tenor of the exchanges. In Extract 4 below, another family pair in their fourth telephone conversation, mother at work and four-year-eight-month-old Sarah at home. Sarah is taking an interest in her mother's own past persona as a young child (i.e. when she was 'someone like her'), initiating an exchange with her mother in which she asks Mother if she looked like a little girl with blond curly hair in a picture they are both familiar with (l. 80). The child serves almost as an interviewer and the mother as an informant, as if the disembodiment occasioned by the telephone channel facilitates the child's take up on the authoritative interviewing role. Mother is the arbiter of her own size estimates, but Sarah is an active participant in the task of mutually creating a portrait of her former-time-young mother (l. 84). Sarah takes 'small' to be miniature but Mom (87) indicates, no, bigger than that (with a minor correction to acknowledge a fetal reality), saying it is 'Bitty-Baby' size. Sarah extends her estimates to include Raggedy Ann in the sizing exercise (90) and refers to her mother's old doll (92). Mother, taking up the extended estimates actively contributes potential sources of developmental information for her interlocutor (91, 93, 95). Then Sarah engages creatively and proactively by proposing an adaptation including the old doll plus a smaller doll on top (96), which Mother confirms. Sarah accepts the co-construction of her mother's childhood self with "oh" (98) and Mother affirms this depiction (99):

Extract 4: Sarah, Conversation 4

80. Sarah: Did you look like that when you were a baby?

81. Mother: Well the thing is about me is that I did not have curly hair but I had very white hair (.) sort of white-blond hair.
82. Sarah: hh.
83. Mother: But I did look little at one point in my life.
84. Sarah: You were very tiny?
85. Mother: I was small.
86. Sarah: About the size of Play-Mobile?
87. Mother: Taller than that. Well: I suppose when I was in my mom's womb I was a sim the size of Play-Mobile. But as I came out into the world I was bigger. I was about the size of Bitty Baby I think.
88. Sarah: Huh?
89. Mother: About the size of Bitty Baby?
90. Sarah: When you were four did ya, were you the size of Raggedy Ann?
91. Mother: (hh) No: no: @ I was taller than that.
92. Sarah: Mm were the size of your old doll?
93. Mother: Maybe //a little].
94. Sarah: //[xxx].
95. Mother: Little bigger than that doll. (.) //cuz she's].
96. Sarah: //As big as] two of as big as a smaller doll on top of her head sitting?

97. Mother: (hh). Yes I would be like that big doll and then a small doll standing on top of her head probably.
98. Sarah: Oh.
99. Mother: That would probably be my size.

We can see here very considerable focus by the child, facilitated by her mother, on precise categorisation and analogising. With no gestures or other physical props, the interlocutors, 'language users as creative designers of meaning' (Maybin & Swann 2007, 497) have sketched the scope and scale of their mutually constructed imagined portrait. The non-visual telephone channel may encourage not only a playing field, where each interlocutor is required to listen carefully to the other to sustain the conversation, but also through this, enhance the child's (at least!) verbalizing fine nuances of detail.

We observed the children reflecting their older family members' discourses in both form and content. Possibly inspired by her experience of being quizzed by her mother, Sarah begins to query her. She has just finished telling her mother that she will make Mom a welcome-home card when she gets back from work and also give her a ball of crumpled paper. Mom indicates she would be delighted with a welcome-home card and would love a paper ball and asks Sarah where she learned to make such a ball. Sarah says that she made it up herself, and proceeds as follows in Extract 5. Mother seems taken aback by being asked if she had made up any stories herself (l. 64). To facilitate, Sarah offers such prompts as: 'Things you like and things you did today' (66). Mom struggles to respond to the turned table and Sarah prompts: (68) 'well you like...' which mother confirms, and Sarah gives another lead 'You like looking at pictures that we

make...' (70). Sarah knows what prompts will enhance this communicative interchange, and what leads to provide so that her mother will get a full recontextualized story across.

Extract 5: Sarah, Conversation 4

64. Sarah: Speaking of made up have you made any stories up?
65. Mother: Let me think. (.) a story about what for example?
66. Sarah: Um (.) a story about um the things you like and the things you did today.
67. Mother: Let me see what do I like?
68. Sarah: Well you like spending time with me and Ni:ls.
69. Mother: Of course I do. I was thinking of you both today.
70. Sarah: You like looking at pictures that we ma:ke.
71. Mother: I do indeed like that.

In this exchange we hear mother and daughter confirm warm mutual understanding and regard. Of course we would never be able to claim that such a conversation between the two could only have taken place on the telephone, rather than face-to-face. But it is noteworthy that it moves far away from the 'here-and-now' classically observed to be characteristic of conversation between young children and parents (Brown & Belugi, 1964; Snow, 1983, 1991). Further, Sarah takes the lead in encouraging this interactive synchrony.

Five-year-old Fumiko takes the opportunity in one of her early exchanges, when her father seems to be pursuing her account of her own day perhaps a little persistently, to take the interrogation initiative (Extract 6). Fumiko is at home with her grandfather when father calls from the auto-body shop where he works. Fumiko mirrors her father's friendly interrogation back to him (ll. 124, 128). He responds with an itemized list of the colours of cars fixed, as requested (133, 135, 137, 139). We cannot tell from information available whether he actually did fix four, each of a separate colour and why Fumiko might think he fixed a blue one (142). In this case, our examination of the data leads to our not being able to raise such questions with the father as this analysis happened longer after the exchange for a subsequent discussion to yield supporting family memories or insights:

Extract 6. Fumiko, Conversation 2

119. Father: @ that's all you did at school? That sounds //like all you did]
120. Fumiko: //Yeah and that] that's all I did at home
121. Father: Oh that's all you did all day long.
122. Fumiko: Yeah.
123. Father: Oh: that sounds like you had a very busy day.
124. Fumiko: So::what did you do?
125. Father: What did I do?
126. Fumiko: Yeah.
127. Father: Oh well I went to work like I always do.

128. Fumiko: Yeah // and?]
129. Father: // I I] fixed some cars.
130. Fumiko: Okay and? What colour of cars did you fix?
131. Father: What colour of cars?
132. Fumiko: Yeah.
133. Father: Well let's see I fixed a uh I fixed a silver car.
134. Fumiko: Yes.
135. Father: And I fixed a green car.
136. Fumiko: A:nd?
137. Father: And a red car.
138. Fumiko: And?
139. Father: And a st and a grey car.
140. Fumiko: That's all?
141. Father: That's it. // {xxx}]
142. Fumiko: //Oh] I thought you worked on a blue one.
143. Father: No, no not today I didn't work on a blue one today.
144. Fumiko: Oh:: (hx)
145. Father: Which // is your favourite colour?]
146. Fumiko: // But] I was - my favourite colour is Hm(h) blue green red.
147. Father: Blue greens and red. So you'd like to ha you'd like to have a multi-coloured car?
148. Fumiko: Huh?
149. Father: Yeah

150. Fumiko: Yeah.

151. Father: Okay okay.

We can see at certain points (l. 123, l. 147) Father's response to slight difficulties in the conversation, caused by short or somewhat confusing responses, is to attempt to deploy humour, and that this is not necessarily well understood by Fumiko. However, at the first time this happens, Fumiko's reaction is to pose a question (l. 124), thus seizing back the initiative at a point of difficulty. The second time her father offers a humorous response (l. 147) Fumiko simply sounds confused. Listening to the tape, it is apparent that Fumiko is distracted by the approach of her grandfather, which she explains to her father beyond the scope of this extract. So despite slight difficulties, the conversation is characterized by attempts on both sides to build upon the others' responses and to co-construct narratives, whether about Father's or Fumiko's day. At the same time, everyday discourse including those undertaken on the telephone, where each interlocutor cannot see the other's environment, is full of ambiguities and conversational opportunities not taken up. Learning to navigate these, in a distanced, disembodied channel, is valuable in learning both about language usage and about interpersonal processes.

Finally, we look at the construction of grandmother/granddaughter identities that in just a few turns shapes and is shaped by two intertwined narratives, one about their immediate present, i.e. the dramatic day in question as well as a past Christmas visit. It has just been Emily's first day in junior kindergarten, also her grandmother's birthday. We pick up the conversation after the first 140 turns that have mostly engaged in the child's report of her first day in preschool in Extract 7.

When grandmother perhaps sounding like she might be uttering a pre-closing comment, summarizes the day as a 'good day for Emily' (l. 140), Emily's response seems both to confirm that she registered its impact and that she found a quick technique for passing on the content, but not the closure (141). Then Emily is reminded on hearing about her grandmother's being happy, that a time when she herself was happy was a Christmas when Grandmother visited (147). This triggers for Grandma the response that she will visit Emily within the month (152, 154), which reminds Emily of her wish to visit her grandmother (153), although she is too young to fly on her own yet. Emily returns to the joy she experienced finding that during her grandmother's Christmas visit, her family encouraged her to wake her grandmother up in the morning (159, 161). Recollections elicit further recollections for both participants. The exchange further ramps up mutually happy familial memories. Grandmother seals the mutually constructed memory by referring to photographs she took at the time to help solidify the happy feeling across time and place (168).

Extract 7. Emily, Conversation 2

140. Grandmother: What a great day (.) I am so happy because I was thinking about
you all day and I thought this is a good day for Emily
141. Emily: Oh. Well this is a good day for you cause it's your birthday.
142. Grandmother: Tha:t's right and I had a birthday party didn't I?
143. Emily: Mm hm.
144. Grandmother: And you sang me?

145. Emily: Happy birthday.
146. Grandmother: Ye:s and that made me very very happy
147. Emily: Yup and, I did remember when it was Christ (.) mas upstairs and I remembered you were there.
148. Grandmother: When you got your slide.
149. Emily: Yeah
150. Grandmother: And do you know what your (.) I bet you ha (.) I have a secret you don't know.
151. Emily: Yeah?
152. Grandmother: I might be coming to visit you next month.
153. Emily: Okay and some day I can visit you on a plane.
154. Grandmother: That's right. Well I might come in October and visit you.
155. Emily: Yeah and (.) you know? What?
156. Grandmother: What?
157. Emily: I saw you on on the couch here.
158. Grandmother: Tha:t's right I sat on the couch and I read to you.
159. Emily: Yeah I didn't know that that you asked me to go with you in the sleeping room and then I saw you@.
160. Grandmother: @
161. Emily: and I climbed up (.) and climbed on you and then -(.) said wake up,
wake up.
162. Grandmother: That's right And I said Oh this is good to wake up in the morning and Emily's here.

163. Emily: @
164. Grandmother: That made me so happy.
165. Emily: That made me so happy.
166. Grandmother: That's right it was a surprise wasn't it?
167. Emily: Yeah and, I thought I um (.) I thought you were still asleep but I
heard you wa:king up
168. Grandmother: That's right and it was so nice. And I took some pictures of you
too.

Emily and her grandmother achieve mutuality over the time and distance of the long-distance-telephone communication not otherwise readily experienced because of their living 3000 kilometers apart. Their identities are co-constructed as stories about persons and experiences are shared (Reddy, 2008; Reddy & Trevarthen, 2004). Their socio-emotional connection keeps the exchange strongly positive and builds family feeling and identity via such narratives (Fivush, Bohankek, & Duke, 2008).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study was initiated by a set of questions, to which we can respond. We observed the contributions young children play in establishing mutuality in joint meaning making. They initiate joint and independent narratives; they interrogate their interlocutors; they use explicit descriptors to arrive effectively at knowledge integration; they share positively affective interactions. Utilizing the constraints of the telephone as a prompt towards explicitness, children and their family interlocutors use a wide range of descriptors and recontextualising techniques. They establish common ground through co-constructing memories as narratives. These communicative techniques afford space for

the child's establishing mutuality of understanding in these distanced exchanges. Their mutual enjoyment, clearly linked in the minds of participants to the context of the telephone channel, was attested not only through the shared laughter and chuckles so frequent in the tapes but also through the interviews. Talking together on the telephone required pausing other activities to concentrate on the flow of talk. Negotiation and establishment of identities and extensions of the territories of familial exchanges are some of the hallmarks of these clearly satisfying distanced exchanges between children and their family.

Self both emerges from and contributes to ongoing social interactions, such that how we narrate our experiences with others shapes how we come to understand these experiences for ourselves.... Through describing, explaining and evaluating our pasts in socially situated reminiscing, we come to construct an interpretive framework for understanding both our experiences and ourselves. (Fivush, Bohanek and Duke, (2008, p. 131).

Our final questions have become: what are the characteristics of these interchanges that make them so mutually satisfactory? What creates a level playing field for exchanges of ideas, experiences, and reminiscences? All interviewed parents spontaneously attested that the microgenetic experience of the telephone conversations was mutually enjoyable. The requirement for listening and negotiating turns on each side fed into enhanced confidence in the children's discourse skills. The children demonstrated at an early age an expressive power of negotiated communicative space to have their emotional, as well as cognitive, needs met.

Following other researchers including Pontecorvo, Fasulo and Sterponi (2001), Fivush (2004), and Perregaard (2010) we find value in examining instances of child-parent exchanges that may superficially be considered merely part of the mundane minutiae of their daily rounds. Shatz (2007) argues persuasively that conversations bootstrap the interrelationships across such domains as language competency, mental state understanding, and self-reflection. In a similar vein, Nelson (2007) emphasizes that word learning in its natural environment calls upon both culturally and socially contextualized processes. These pragmatic situations enhance efficacious language usage. We suggest that the socio-emotional and cognitive aspects of the exchanges we have examined, in the context of other research studies, are enriched by a power shift toward enhanced voicing that can occur whilst talking on the telephone. This supports the bidirectional perspective on socialization as demonstrated in parent-child conversations by Pontecorvo, Fasuli & Sterponi (2001).

Involvement in such a project as this can in itself be facilitatory; however, we would argue this is an ethical component of much participatory research. An ethnographic approach recognises its situated nature in the ongoing flow of daily life, instantiating opportunities to demonstrate valued practices (Gergen, Gulerce, Lock, & Misra, 1996; Gillen & Cameron, 2010; Scollon & Wong Scollon, 2007). The exchanges between the pairs reported here were positive. A linguistic ethnography approach is necessarily contingent on quality of interactions, rather than imposing a strict set of procedures and this can have drawbacks. We did receive a brief set of exchanges from one family where the interactions appeared less rich. In this case subsequent discussions revealed that we had failed adequately to communicate our research aims and the ethos of

the research. The parents had thought they should remain as passive as possible in the exchanges. In view of this failure on our part, we feel it would be unethical to include any transcripts or analyses. Overall, however, we consider that our interpretations of the interactions reported were enhanced through the flexible deployment of a variety of methods of linguistic ethnography, including interview and use of photography, co-constructed in practice with our participants. We would claim this is an appropriately participatory approach to this domain of inquiry.

In conclusion, we support Holland and Lave's dialogic view of the construction of subjectivity, seeing "the self" as 'an orchestration of the practices of others'" (2001, 15). Participating in intergenerational discussions both of direct personal experiences and those with salience to immediate family history enables the children to develop their interpretive frameworks of understanding (Fivush, Bohanek & Duke, 2008). In such interactions they can construct nuanced perspectives on their own pasts, including through reflections on others' experiences, such as Rogoff (2003) characterizes as 'guided participation.' Identities are constructed in and through relationships with significant others and we find that this is observable through multi-faceted scrutiny of telephone interactions.

NOTES

Note 1

When discussing our interpretations with this family, they communicated to us their desire for us to use the actual proper names. As will be apparent below, this helped us in that we can now report an interchange around proper names that would otherwise be difficult to include. More importantly, in this case we felt it would be unethical to refuse. Names in the other families are pseudonyms, in line with the original participant information and consent forms deployed.

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APPENDIX

Transcription conventions

:	stretched sound
(.)	micropause
=	latching between utterances
//	beginning of overlap
]	end of overlap
?	rising intonation
.	falling intonation
@	laughing (whether separate or through utterance)
<u> </u>	speaker emphasis
hh	audible intake of breath
{xxx}	inaudible talk

For the sake of readability, where an utterance begins with a word, this is initial capitalized.

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