

The Interactional Negotiation
of Individual and Collective Identities
among Married Couples

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RESEARCH REPORT

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Abstract

Literature on identities in marriage has suggested that there is a tension between the interpretation of marriage as a *unity* between two partners, and the importance of each partner within the marriage maintaining his/her *individuality*. By drawing on data from seven semi-structured qualitative interviews with married couples or couples involved in marriage-like relationships I examine some ways in which these boundaries between individual and collective identities and associated epistemic rights are drawn or become treated as blurred. Specifically, I use a conversation analytic approach to examine two sets of practices that reveal how this tension is made observable and is negotiated: 1) *the use of personal and collective pronouns* and 2) *shifts in gaze direction*. In contrast to previous research on this topic, I focus on the exploration of these phenomena in their *moment-by-moment* construction in talk-in-interaction. Based on my findings, I conclude that these practices serve to demonstrate the oriented-to ways in which marriage involves compromising one's own individual identity or epistemic rights while becoming a part of a unit and show *how* and *where* this is done in interaction.

Declaration Page

“I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.”

(Signature)

(Date)

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