

**EUROPEAN STUDIES IN LIFELONG LEARNING  
AND ADULT LEARNING RESEARCH**

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## 9. « She will never be a mason »: interacting about gender and negotiating a woman's place in adult training and education

Ingrid de Saint-Georges

### Abstract

This chapter inscribes itself in the stream of research that seeks to better understand why it is difficult for women to advance in professions considered atypical for women. Analyzing material drawn from ethnographic research carried out in a vocational training centre, this work focuses on the trajectory of a young woman who has chosen to train in the field of masonry. The study considers the stances that her trainers construct with regards to her long-term future in the professional world of masonry and how these stances may discourage her from pursuing training in the profession she has chosen.

### Introduction

Entering a profession that is not typically considered "women's work" often constitutes a challenge for women, as well as for the workforces integrating them. The challenge is many-fold. Integrating a job that has not been historically viewed as women's work questions, *inter alia*, traditional forms of work and work management. But a woman who adopts a traditionally male profession can also upset gender expectations, contributing to the redefinition of what can be deemed "feminine" or "ladylike". The challenge is not limited to entering the workplace or staying in it but rather begins in the training and education of young women who choose a course of study that distances them from traditional gender roles and choices. This article inscribes itself in the stream of research interested in better understanding why it is difficult for women to advance in certain milieu. It proposes that detailed case studies can offer insights about this question that other methods are less likely to uncover. "Thick descriptions" (Sarangi & Roberts, 1999) of what is going on in actual educational situations help to make visible the gendered issues that come into play in evaluating, accompanying, encouraging or discouraging the progression of "non-traditional" students in the field of their own choosing. Using a discourse analytical perspective, this paper examines the responses of educators and trainers to the choice of a young woman (whom I call "Erika") to follow a training scheme that will prepare her for employment as a mason. It addresses one specific question regard-

ing these responses: How do the views held by Erika's educators and trainers regarding her professional future in the field of masonry affect the pedagogical actions and decisions they are willing to make in her present training?

Since the analysis presented here is anchored within the field of discourse analysis, I will begin by presenting briefly how language and gender issues have been theorized in that field (section 2) and will also discuss some of the methodological and theoretical assumptions held by researchers situating themselves in this line of work (section 3). I will next propose a short framework for thinking about representation of the future – a model of *anticipatory discourses* (section 4). I will then use this framework to analyze empirical material drawn from Erika's case study (section 5) before drawing some conclusions about the difficulties that the educators have in envisioning a woman's participation in the field of masonry (section 6).

### Language and gender

In the U.S., the area commonly referred to as "language and gender" has attracted the attention of linguists since the early 1970s and has since then bloomed into a field in and of itself. Robin Lakoff's *Language and a woman's place* (1975) is often heralded as the catalyst for much of the subsequent research on language and gender. This research has covered a broad range of issues and generated monographs and articles in abundance, couched in academic work and more popular literature, and often making references to other disciplines (organizational behaviour, social psychology, anthropology, etc.). While this is not the place to give an extensive review of this broad-ranging literature, a few pointers to key debates and themes can serve to map the kinds of issues which have been discussed in this arena. Byrne (2004, chapter 2) provides an excellent and more nuanced overview of this research than what I am able to sketch here, and I draw largely from her summary in this brief presentation. Most of the issues highlighted here are also transversal to other fields and will serve as background to the present analysis.

Early research into language and gender has revolved around three main axes. A first set of topics has been concerned with sexist uses of language and with male/female contrasts in, among other things, intonation patterns, lexical choices and syntactic choices (Lakoff, 1975; Cameron, McAlinden & O'Leary, 1989). Beyond studies of the type "men talk like this, women talk like that", other research has focused on patterns of socialization among young boys and girls and the differences these patterns make in terms of speaking habits and privileged forms of exchange (Thorne, 1993; Eisikovits 1988; Goodwin, 1980). A third area of investigation has revolved around turn-taking in multiparty conversations, considering, for example, questions such as: Who gets the turns in

conversation? How long does s/he get to keep it? Do women interrupt more than men? Do they interrupt more in same sex conversations or in conversations with men (Coates, 1993; James & Clarke, 1993; James & Drakich, 1993; Tannen, 1993)? These studies taken together examine how participants in interaction are "doing gender" – that is, dynamically positioning themselves in interaction with others in terms of their gendered identities (West & Zimmerman, 1991). They point to differences in strategies and investigate the meanings these strategies have in different contexts: from showing collaborativeness or empathy in interaction, to displaying expertise and efficacy, occupying the floor, marking dominance or silencing the other. The study of a great many contexts of interaction has led researchers to the conclusion that differences in outcomes and effects of discursive strategies result not from any intrinsic quality of the language used (as was originally thought) but from a great many other variables such as contextual situation, power status, and the contexts and forms of socialization.

These findings cue us to one of the central controversies that has structured the field, namely the opposition between what is sometimes called the "dominance" perspective versus the "difference" or "two-cultures" approach to language and gender (Byrne, 2004: chapter 2). The "dominance" view argues that the difference in outcomes for strategies used by females and by males is mainly due to their differing status and symbolic position in society. For example, and caricaturing a bit, if in the professional setting of a meeting, a woman uses a lot of hedges ("I am not sure but", "I do not want to offend"), supportive backchanneling ("uh, uh", "yeah", "I know what you mean") and uses very polite forms of speaking ("I apologize for interrupting", "Would you mind ..."), she might come across in interactions with men as "tentative, deferential, uncertain and lacking in authority" (Byrne, 2004, p. 44-45; Lakoff, 1975). In adopting a more "masculine" or "direct" way of talking, her speech and attitudes may appear "unfeminine", unnecessarily aggressive, imposing, etc. When a male adopts either of these strategies, however, they are less likely to be assessed negatively. Both styles will appear valid and acceptable and result in getting the job done. Under the dominance view, the difference in result is explained by saying that it is not so much women's conversational style that is problematic; it is more that their ways of talking are considered lower because of the lower place they occupy in society. In fact, other powerless people in society share these patterns of speaking. Studies advocating the dominance view thus emphasize the role of status, power and dominance in explaining the difference in recognition, acceptability, and relevance that the female style elicits in interactions with males.

The view of women's language as "weak and ineffective" (Byrne, 2004, p. 48) has been criticized by many researchers on the grounds that it is unconvincing and too inflexible. They consider instead that women's communicative style is just as effective but is so in a "different way". Under this "two-culture" view, men and women speak differently not because of their different symbolic

position in society but because, socialized into different communities of practice, they hold different values and have been acculturated to different norms. As a result, speaking across gender is much akin to cross-cultural communication. The work of Deborah Tannen (1986, 1990, 1994) has probably been the most influential from that perspective. She argues that being socialized into two different worlds, men are more sensitive to the "competitive" dynamics in interaction, seeking to keep the upper hand, whereas women favour dynamics of "rapport", building solidarity and compromise. Awareness of these different communicative styles, she argues, can be a good starting point for more responsive patterns of communication. As Byrne and others (2004, p.58) point out, while this view might be appealing, it is also fraught with difficulties. In its "non-blaming" egalitarian perspective, it tends to gloss over the fact that most of the time, the male style is the prevalent norm in the public arena and workplace, clearly putting women at a disadvantage in these contexts. This approach has thus come under critique from sociolinguists for preserving the status quo, failing to question current social arrangements and providing only individual responses (learning to be more open to the other's style) to what are in fact broad-based, systemic issues. Against this landscape, Byrne (1994) suggests that:

"Sociolinguistics, as it is popularly experienced second-hand through the influential works of Lakoff, on the one hand, and Tannen, on the other, has perhaps failed women by not providing an explanation for workplace interactions which takes account of the complex everyday realities of both dominance and difference. Interactions take place within a particular social framework and so to present dominance and difference as opposing constructs is both unhelpful and inappropriate". (p. 62)

The more inclusive model Byrne advocates to do justice to the complexities of workplace interactions is also the orientation adopted in this paper. When analyzing the data, I on the one hand consider that the discussions revolving around Erika's future constitute examples of "cross-cultural" communication, and I draw from a discourse analytical framework to which Tannen has contributed, namely "interactional sociolinguistics".--in my analysis of this communication. However, I am also interested in investigating who gets the power to impose their views when considering a domain that is largely up for grab: the future. In that sense, I am also focusing on power relations, how they express themselves in specific instances of interactions and how we might imagine transforming the status quo.

### Interactional sociolinguistics as a tool for investigating gender issues

There are many possible ways of investigating issues related to language and gender in education. The work presented in this paper is anchored in "interactional sociolinguistics", a framework inspired by the microsociology of Erving Goffman, Harvey Sachs' ethnomethodology, the Batesonian psychosocial tradition and the ethnographic explorations of anthropological linguists (see, for example, Gumperz, 1982; Schiffrin, 1994; Tannen, 1989). Studies in interactional sociolinguistics focus on the study of everyday interactions (family discourse, service encounters, workplace meetings, etc.) and usually share a set of basic epistemological and methodological assumptions regarding how to conduct research.

Firstly, researchers in this paradigm tend to view situated interactions as a key site for the negotiation of social order, relations and identities. A close look at the microprocesses of interaction is deemed not only to give information on conversations as "ordered behaviour" but also to reveal the fine-grained mechanisms through which culture, society, and gender are displayed, constructed, produced and reproduced in the most mundane of interactions.

A second important assumption is that every conversation is a complex collaborative construction, requiring its participants to constantly adjust their behaviours and negotiate ideas, roles and position in the course of the exchange to build coherence, relationships, etc. Researchers are thus interested in analyzing the interpretation work that participants do and the conversational moves that they make, as well as investigating how these dynamics contribute to the unfolding of the interaction. The interpretation work relies upon making inferences about what other people might mean based on what was said or what might come up next.

Finally, this approach places an important emphasis on the context of interaction. The linguistic choices speakers make are seen to be closely intertwined with the context of speech (one does not speak in the same way when delivering a conference presentation and when meeting with a friend at the mall). Because of the importance placed on context, this approach usually relies on extensive ethnographic observations in order not to wrest discourses from their ecological context of utterance. The interactions studied are therefore always naturally occurring conversations, which are usually audio-taped or video-taped and transcribed. Fine-grained analyses of the verbal dimensions of the exchanges are subsequently carried out based on these transcriptions.

Since the 1990s, the study of interactions has taken analysts into the workplace, giving rise to currents sometimes called "organizational discourse", "workplace discourse" or "business discourse" (Drew & Heritage, 1992; Boden, 1994; Stubbe, 2001; Sarangi & Roberts, 1999; Filliettaz & de Saint-Georges, forthcoming), an area which constitutes another anchoring point for

this analysis. For researchers in this tradition it has become common to view organizations not as reified static entities with deterministic properties, but instead as complex emergent systems dynamically constituted through "acts of communication between organizational members" (Idema & Wodak, 1999, p. 7). How an organization's rules and norms concerning gender issues are negotiated in situ is what I would like to examine next, after briefly situating the data in its context of constitution.

### Ethnographic situation of the data and methodology

The interactions I will analyze shortly are drawn from ethnographic observations carried out in a vocational training centre which I call "Horizons", located in the French-speaking part of Belgium. The program offers training to long-term unemployed youth with little or no qualification, with possibilities of specialization in various trades of manual work (masonry, sheetrocking, lumberjacking, painting, cleaning and sales). As a means to facilitate reengagement into the job market, the program provides on-the-job training, general literacy and math courses, technical classroom instruction and individual follow-up for job searching. The data presented here come more specifically from "pedagogical councils". Every five weeks, the various staff members in contact with the trainees meet to discuss their progress and attempt to identify ways of helping them reintegrate into the marketplace. It is one of these meetings I will analyze.

Meetings in this training institution are conceived of as spaces of deliberation. That is, a strong philosophical commitment to democratically reached consensus in decision-making underpins the running of the pedagogical councils, whose meetings favour an unreserved exchange of viewpoints, arguments, perspectives and ideas. Despite these ideals of deliberation, the councils' meetings are of course subject to the same tensions, power struggles over meanings, and conflicts across groups as in any other institution. To some extent, these meetings are in fact instances of "cross-cultural" communication as they bring together individuals from a variety of backgrounds, including trained individuals with higher education (e.g., counsellors, social workers, teachers) as well as manual workers (e.g., monitors, foremen).

As we shall see, each of the individuals attending the meeting participates in complex and sometimes divergent "discourse systems"; indexing complex positioning in terms of gender, class, and professional occupation. In connection with their own biographical trajectories, the participants invest the space of the meeting with expectations, mental representations, opinions and manners of acting, talking, and valuing, which sometimes converge and sometimes clash (Gee, 1996). In this context, reaching a consensus on pedagogical decisions is often the object of negotiation.

Before analyzing the conflicting representations constructed about Erika's professional future and their consequences in terms of pedagogical actions and briefly developed, one more element of my theoretical apparatus needs to be Scollon, 2000; Scollon, 2001; de Saint-Georges, 2003).

### Anticipatory discourses

For the purposes of this paper, the analysis of anticipatory discourses can be defined as the study of "the ways in which discourse may be used to produce possible (and impossible) actions in the future" (Scollon, 2002). Anticipatory discourses are thus about the representations people form about the future and how these representations may lead them to certain actions or inactions in the present (Dator, 1972).

In their article, Scollon and Scollon propose that the range of positions people can take with regards to the future can be plotted on a "matrix of social action", along what they have called a "knowledge axis" and an "agency axis" (Scollon and Scollon 2000, p. 5-6; S. Scollon, 2001, p. 106). The knowledge axis points to the fact that in anticipating the future, social actors (including the researcher) position themselves regarding 1) an *ontology* of the future (will the events predicated exist or not at some future point in time?) and 2) an *epistemology* of the future (is the future known, knowable, unknown? How certain are we that a future event will occur?). The agency axis concerns the degree to which people are interested in a future shaped in a certain way and how willing they are to invest themselves in realizing it. Along these axes, I have proposed elsewhere that a number of intermediary positions could be plotted (de Saint-Georges 2003: chapter 4). For the purposes of this paper, I would like to briefly recapitulate six of them.

### Knowledge

On the knowledge axis, speakers can first express the belief that a given event will at some future time become reality. The future in this view is constructed as knowable or known, or "fixed in advance". The speaker thus foretells what s/he believes will happen. What is crucial with this position is not so much "whether or not [the speaker] is epistemologically justified" in treating the future as known, but rather "the speaker's conviction that the predicated event will at some moment constitute reality" (Fleischman, 1982, p.20). Speakers can thus make predictions about future events, present them with the force of an assertion or as part of a plan, or portray them as expected given their current state of

knowledge. Constructing such a position, Scollon and Scollon (2000, p. 4) propose, can be termed "taking an oracular stance" with regards to upcoming events.

Secondly, social actors can also express the belief that the future is not fully known. In this view, the future is a mixture of unpredictable events and predictable trends, with some futures more likely than others. Therefore one can only make reasonable guesses about it. Speakers can thus speculate, present judgments as tentative or calculate the odds of an event coming true. Scollon and Scollon call evaluating the likelihood that a future event will occur "taking a probabilistic stance".

Finally, social actors can express the belief that the future is "inherently unknowable" (Grosz, 1999, p. 21). When expressing their ignorance or uncertainty with regards to future events, social actors take on what Scollon and Scollon term an "agnostic stance".

### Agency

On the agency axis, individuals can also adopt a more or less passive or proactive attitude with regards to the future. Here again three positions can be distinguished.

Speakers can construct the position that they are "highly effective agents of change who can...bring about effects on future events" (Scollon & Scollon, 2000, p. 5). They can express their intentions to perform some future actions, display their willingness to act at a future point, refer to their ability to carry out some action, or express their commitment to some future course of events. In these cases, they take on an "agentive stance".

Speakers can also view their capacity to act as dependent upon other circumstances, other agents, stronger impetus to act, etc. In this view, the actor's capacity to affect the future is constructed as contingent or circumstantial. The contingent stance signals a lower degree of commitment to the performance of an action.

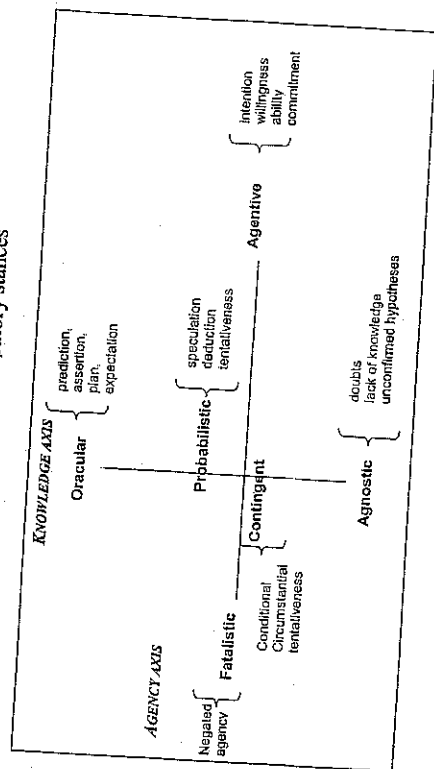
Finally, faced with large-scale forces driving the future and the uncertainties associated with it, social actors may express that they feel incapable to act. If the course of things appears inevitably set, the speaker may believe that he has no power to modify it. Agency in this case is thus negated, and speakers construct a fatalistic stance.

In actual interactions, these various stances are constructed through the choice of verbal tense, mood, modalities, adverbials or lexical expressions. For

1 For a detailed presentation of the choices available, see the taxonomy proposed in de Saint-Georges 2003: chapter 4.

example, the use of the present tense to refer to a future event ("praesens pro futuro") may signal that the future event is presented with the force of an assertion (e.g. "John leaves tomorrow"). The use of the modals "could" or "might" or other markers of tentativeness may signal a more probabilistic stance (e.g., "John may leave tomorrow"). It is possible that John will leave tomorrow"). It is usually an ensemble of linguistic means which converge to create one of the stances presented above. These are summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Anticipatory stances



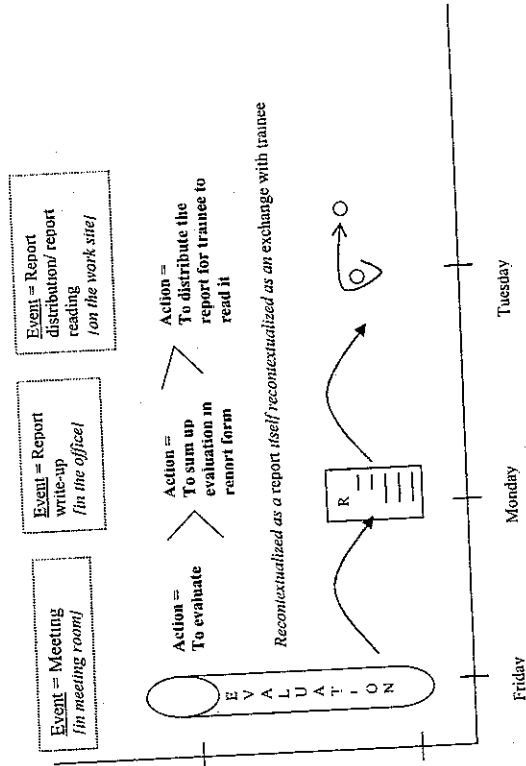
In the next section, I would like to examine which stances the meeting participants choose to construct with regards to Erika's professional future, in order to better understand gendered attitudes in the interaction.

### Analysis

As stated in the introduction, Erika could be considered a "non-traditional" student in her chosen field of education. She is the first woman to be trained in mastery at the vocational centre, and her presence in the program itself is highly significant. Construction work is indeed a "predominantly male province", and women's efforts to challenge this boundary have generally encountered (fierce) resistance (Applebaum, 1999: chapter 9). The exchanges I would like to examine here concern the first evaluation of Erika's work. At the time of the meeting of the "pedagogical council" I will analyze, she has spent four days on the work-site and then stopped attending the training program without any explanation. The goal pursued by the pedagogical council is to evaluate her participation on

the worksite (technical capacities, attitude during training, assets and limitations) over the course of these four days. Evaluations are typically summarized in a one-page report that is subsequently handed to the trainee as feedback. Based on the practices habitually linked with evaluation meetings, the typical course of action that is expected follows the chronology in figure 2 below:

Figure 2. A typical sequence of action



In the course of the council's meeting, it becomes clear very quickly that divergent views about Erika's future are constructed, notably views linked to gender and occupational group. Relations of power and gender issues arise as certain participants attempt to project certain futures which are accepted or rejected by the others. In the next section, I examine the various stances constructed and the worldviews they embody.

**Oracular and fatalistic stances vs. discourse of potentiality**

Prompted to evaluate Erika's behaviour, her monitor, Gilbert, begins with the discourse transcribed in (1). In this excerpt and the following, Anne-Marie is the pedagogical supervisor of Horizons (in charge of classroom organization) and the person who will write the report. Miike, Charles and Mark are three other monitors in masonry. Nelly is the job advisor. Also present are Pete (the math

teacher), Francis (the French teacher), Tom (the social worker) and myself<sup>2</sup>.

- (1)
- 1. Anne-Marie: okay
  - 2. during these four days what was her attitude on the work site how did it go?
  - 3. [...] ((makes a face))
  - 4. Gilbert: ((others laugh))
  - 5. how did it go?
  - 6. well she is fine
  - 7. I'll say.
  - 8. on what front?
  - 9. Anne-Marie: well for me
  - 10. Gilbert: I did not have any-
  - 11. how to say this
  - 12. /xxxx/ you should know
  - 13. Mark: come on
  - 14. Anne-Marie: you cried for me to take her
  - 15. Charles: come on say it
  - 16. Anne-Marie: no no
  - 17. Gilbert: move on
  - 18. Anne-Marie: well yes but wait
  - 19. Gilbert: I have to-
  - 20. I don't want to say stupid things
  - 21. /xxxxxx/
  - 22. Anne-Marie: I'll say that she shows good will =
  - 23. Gilbert: xxxxxx
  - 24. X: usshhh
  - 25. Anne-Marie: = but in any case er
  - 26. Gilbert: ...
  - 27. say it man
  - 28. Mike: we won't be able to do anything with her
  - 29. Gilbert: uh?
  - 30. Nelly: shhhhh
  - 31. Anne-Marie: be quiet
  - 32. be quiet
  - 33. Gilbert: yes
  - 34. she will never be a mason
  - 35. Nelly: she shows good will
  - 36. X: she ma-
  - 37. X: she masons
  - 38. Gilbert: she will never be a mason

2 This analysis is based upon the original French data, and not upon the English text, translated here for convenience of presentation. The transcription does not follow general orthographic rules but rather special conventions, given in the appendix.

This first excerpt can be divided into two segments, which correspond to the construction of two contrastive positions (the contrast is marked by the discourse marker "but" in line 26).

The first segment runs from line 1 to line 25. In this section, Gilbert first makes a series of assessments: "well, she is fine" (line 7), "I did not have any" (line 11), "she shows good will" (line 23). He thus begins by listing a series of positive statements regarding Erika's attitude on the worksite during her first four days there. In doing so, Gilbert displays awareness of an ideological stance that is very present in the organization and that we could call a "Discourse of Potentiality" (Scollon & Scollon, 2000, p.1). This could be glossed as "never say we will never make anything of a trainee", as the values articulated in the organizational rhetoric militate against determinism in social and personal trajectories. Gilbert's hesitation in making these positive statements, however, points to a hidden dialogicality between what he feels he *should* say and what he actually believes. These statements are hedged by tentative markers which display Gilbert's lack of commitment to the propositions and weaken their pragmatic force ("Well, she is fine, I'll say", "I'll say that she shows good will"). This ambivalent framing of Erika's behaviour comes under attack from the other masons: Mark: "you should know [what you think]" (line 13); Charles: "you cried for me to take her" (line 15), Mike: "say it man" (line 28). The Discourse of Potentiality is thus contested here by the other masons in the group, who do not believe that Gilbert is speaking his true mind in adopting it. The hedging work also reflects Gilbert's awareness that the deterministic discourse he is about to proffer is potentially disputable ("how to say this" (line 12), "well yes but wait/I have to-I don't want to say stupid things" (lines 19-21)). It reveals the perceived difficulty associated with challenging the Discourse of Potentiality in the context of the evaluation meeting.

In the second segment (lines 26-38), Gilbert reveals that his stance towards Erika's future is in fact at odds with the Discourse of Potentiality. He constructs a clear *oracular* stance vis-à-vis Erika's professional future through predicting that "she will never be a mason". This stance is coupled with a *fatalistic* attitude regarding the program's capacity to train her as a mason ("we won't be able to do anything with her" (line 29)). In this statement it is the monitors' power of agency that is negated, a position that is neither hedged nor contested by the other masons. Its legitimacy is, however, immediately disputed by Nelly and another participant (lines 35-37). Indeed, in her present training Erika has already spent four days doing the job ("she ma- she masons" (lines 36-37)) which goes against the affirmation that "she will never be a mason".

It appears that the motives for claiming that Erika's future is predetermined and closed do not depend on her performance at the worksite so far, but rather on a certain worldview. It is not so much her behaviour which is evaluated but her future as a mason which is subject to a judgment of social validity, as

this second excerpt shows:  
(2)

39. Anne-Marie: why will she never be a mason?  
40. Gilbert: but because  
41. mason it's  
42. a man's job you can tell me whatever  
43. you can think I am sexist or whatever  
44. I don't give a damn  
45. my wife tells me that everyday so er  
46. (*men laughing*)

The chauvinistic attitude displayed here has been noted to be a common trait in the occupational culture of construction workers (Applebaum, 1999, p.134-135). Such attitudes are thus part of a larger "discourse system" (Scollon & Scollon, 1995, ch. 6) that dictates which course of action should be selected among competing sets of alternatives and pre-shapes in part how individuals can position themselves vis-à-vis a present or future situation. It should be noted that within this discourse system, the fact that the monitors in masonry have accepted Erika's presence on the worksite points to an unusual openness, as it is already a deviation from usual practices. It is so much of a deviation, however, that despite accepting her in the program, her monitors still have difficulty viewing her as a legitimate trainee.

### Probabilistic and agnostic stance

While Gilbert's discourse could be said to express a "realistic" view of Erika's professional future, anchored in his experience and expectations about professional life as a manual worker, a more "constructivist" view is also represented in this meeting, which is more agnostic about her future. This stance can be seen in excerpt (3) which comes later in the interaction:

- (3)
1. Nelly: yes but if she is  
2. in quote  
3. not well in jobs that are more feminine  
4. and that she requests to come here  
5. it's maybe because she hopes to feel better in that type of work  
6. so I suppose she is ready to  
7. x  
8. x  
9. Charles: it's possible  
10. for my part I don't know  
11. Pete: I... I  
12. it's because we still have a lot of a priori  
but for me  
13. it's for Erika who wants to learn the trade of masonry



14. [...] to judge if she is able to learn it independently from her breasts as she said twice
15. [...]
16. but it's not easy
17. it's not an easy thing to do because
18. no that's right
19. it's not yet part of our habits to see w-
20. Anne-Marie: yes that's it
21. Pete:
22. Anne-Marie:

While Gilbert predicted an impossible future for Erika in the trade of masonry, Nelly (the job search advisor), Charles (one of the monitors in masonry) and Pete (the math teacher) convey an image which is more open. They do so through constructing a more probabilistic forecast concerning Erika's professional life. Nelly thus begins by hypothesizing about Erika's motives for coming to Horizons: "if she is/ in quote/not well in jobs that are more feminine/ and that she requests to come here/it's maybe [+speculation] because she hopes to feel better in that type of work / So I suppose [+speculation] she is ready to/" (lines 1-6). This speculative, and thus probabilistic, position is further validated by another (unidentifiable) participant (line 8: "It's possible"). Charles constructs a position that is more agnostic than oracular (line 9: "for my part I don't know" [+Agnostic]). As for Pete, he places the burden of decision on Erika herself: "But for me/it's for Erika who wants to learn the trade of masonry/To judge if she is able to learn it" (lines 12-15). Her future is therefore constructed not as predetermined but as contingent upon her perceived ability to realize her goal. Erika's own motivation is placed back at the centre.

The two perspectives about Erika's professional future and identity—constructivist and realist, oracular and agnostic—thus constitute a complex set of positionings, which are as much individual as they are linked to social group and gendered identities in this case.

### Agentive vs. fatalistic stances

Although trainees are invited to attend the meetings of the pedagogical council, they seldom do and Erika is no exception in this case. I thus do not have any transcripts which represent her own vision of her future to complement the positions already reviewed here. From my fieldwork and the discussion under consideration, however, two elements can be inferred. First, Erika exerted her agency in requesting to register in the program, getting accepted and spending the few first days on the worksite. From her presence there, it can be deduced that she is working at creating a future for herself as a mason. In coming to the centre, her position is thus an agentive stance. On the other hand, after four days

on the worksite, Erika ceased attending the program, for reasons that are not clear.

Although no direct and simplistic correlation can be established between her current absence and the stances elaborated about her future by others, we can simply note that for a variety of reasons unknown to the council participants and to the analyst, she moved within a few days from a proactive attitude (coming on the worksite) to a passive attitude ("she does not feel like doing anything anymore" [+fatalistic]).

With this third perspective, the positions constructed thus far can be represented as in Figure 3:

Figure 3. Three perspectives on Erika's future

Masons	Teachers, advisors and one monitor
Agency: -Fatalistic ('we won't be able to do anything of her') Knowledge -Oracular ('she will never be a mason')	Agency: -Contingent ('It's for Erika to judge if she is able to') Knowledge -Probabilistic ('maybe she hopes to feel better in that type of work'; 'it's possible') -Agnostic ('I don't know')
Erika	
From agentive (registering, worksite presence) to fatalistic (dropping out)	

In the next section, I will focus on attempts made by Anne-Marie, the meeting coordinator, to elicit an evaluation of the work done by Erika during the four days she spent on the worksite.

### Eliciting an evaluation

Anne-Marie's immediate goal in the meeting is not to reach consensus on the sensitive topic of whether or not a woman can become a mason. Rather, it is simply to elicit an evaluation of Erika's behaviour during the four days she spent on the worksite:

- (5)
1. Anne-Marie: okay all right
  2. now if you take away her breasts and all that makes her a woman [...]
  3. what can-

Anne-Marie repeatedly attempts to elicit such evaluations in the course of the interaction, but she remains unsuccessful. She proposes several assessments of Erika's behaviour based on what she hears Gilbert saying, but she never manages to gain the firm assent she would need in order to integrate the evaluative statements into her written report:

- (6)
- |                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| 1. Anne-Marie:  | I am asking for what she has done                  |
| 2. Charles:     | yes  |
| 3. Anne-Marie:  | I am still in that /xx/                            |
| 4. Francis:     | yes okay right                                     |
| 5. Anne-Marie:  | she is precise in her work could she in some way   |
| 6.              | could she have a good potential                    |
| 7.              | in masonry?  |
| 8.              | everyone can have good potential                   |
| 9. Gilbert:     | no it's not true                                   |
| 10. Anne-Marie: | yes it is  |
| 11. Gilbert:    | you often say about a youth =                      |
| 12. Anne-Marie: | yes everyone!                                      |
| 13. Gilbert:    | = this one maybe /xxx/                             |
| 14. Anne-Marie: | /xxxxxxx/  |
| 15. Gilbert:    | one cannot say                                     |
| 16.             | not after  |
| 17.             | not for a woman after a few days no                |
| 18.             | /xxxx/   |
| 19.x            | Gilbert you forget that /xx/                       |
| 20. Anne-Marie: | I would say it if I could but                      |
| 21. Gilbert:    | /xx/ I could not tell you anything after four days |
| 22.             |  |

With this excerpt, Gilbert goes from extreme fatalism regarding Erika's capacity ("she will never be a mason") to the other extreme, by stating that everyone has potential ("everyone can have a good potential", line 9). In employing the Discourse of Potentiality, Gilbert shows again that he has knowledge of this discourse system, but rather than appropriating it he cancels it out by making such a blatant overgeneralization. Anne-Marie immediately questions the validity of Gilbert's statement with the counter-proposal: "no it's not true", "you often say about a youth/this one maybe /xx/" (line 10, line 12, line 14). Gilbert's next move is to retract from this Discourse of Potentiality and to reiterate his commitment to a fatalistic stance ("one cannot say, not for a woman after a few days no" (lines 16-18). He then displays an apparent willingness to contribute to the evaluation process ("I would say it", line 21), but he makes this contribution contingent upon other factors ("if I could", line 21). He then concludes by confessing his inability to judge Erika's behaviour after only four days ("but I could not tell you anything after four days", line 22). With his experience, however,

Gilbert usually is in a position to form an opinion about a trainee in this time frame. In clear contradiction with this professed inability, he himself points out four turns later:

- (7)
- |                |                                 |
|----------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Anne-Marie: | y- in general                   |
| 2.             | you can point what the assets = |
| 3.x:           | yes but                         |
| 4. Anne-Marie: | = of a person are               |
| 5.             | and and                         |
| 6. Gilbert:    | yes but                         |
| 7.             | listen                          |
| 8.             | one like Tom                    |
| 9.             | you get Tom                     |
| 10.            | after half a day you know       |

Here Gilbert confirms that he can usually form an opinion about a trainee relatively fast. Therefore, his professed inability to produce an evaluation for Erika seems to be more of an unwillingness which he presents as inability.

#### Long-term future and short-term action

In my analysis above, I have concentrated on the various participant stances taken towards Erika's future and have examined how these stances could be correlated with gender and occupational background. In closing, I would like to examine the consequences of these long-term views for one action in the present. In Figure 2 I indicated how the discussions which take place in the council meetings are later recontextualized in the form of a written report, which is subsequently handed to the trainee:

Evaluation > writing of report > distribution to trainee

In excerpt (8) below, it appears clearly that the way in which the masons in the group view the present (line 2: "it's not a job for a woman", line 4: "how many female [masons] do you see") and project into the future (line 3: "she'll never land a job") impacts how Gilbert is willing to act in the present interaction (line 12: "I don't want to form an opinion now").

- (8)
- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Anne-Marie: | yes but why can you say more about a lad than a lady? |
| 2. Gilbert:    | because it's not a job for a woman                    |
| 3. Mark:       | she'll never land a job                               |
| 4. Gilbert:    | /xx/ how many female [masons] do you see?             |
| 5.x            | /xxx/   |
| 6.             | I for one never saw one!                              |

7. Anne-Marie: I don't  
I don't dispute that  
[...]
8. but that doesn't prevent you from forming an opinion about her  
and then to ponder about what she'll be able to do about it  
no precisely I don't want to form an opinion now, it's too early
9. 10. Anne-Marie:  
11. 12. Gilbert:

The vision Gilbert forms of the future as well as his current occupational world-view seem to override his ability to judge Erika's actions on the worksite, and timing is invoked to postpone the evaluation ("it's too early"). As a consequence, a decision to wait and to not hand in a report is in the end agreed upon by all:

- (9) 1. Francis:  
let's give it some time  
let's wait  
[...]
2. Anne-Marie:  
I won't hand her a report as usual because  
she-she came very few times
- 3.

All agree at this point to not submit a report. Gilbert has managed, at least for the time being, to impose his own perspective and to postpone the evaluation. Anticipation about the future has thus led to avoidance of an evaluation statement in the present. As a consequence, the typical sequence of action that was presented in figure 2 ends up short-circuited. In this case, Gilbert's fatalistic stance about Erika's future has led to a specific inaction in the present. His representations about gender issues have concurred to declare it momentarily impossible to evaluate, and thus also to guide or accompany, the first steps of the training process. While this constitutes a failure of the evaluation process, a decision to not submit a report may be considered a success on another level, as this solution leaves open the possibility for Erika to pursue her training, if she chooses to do so.

### Final discussion

In this paper I have sought to describe, through the lenses of discourse analysis, the reactions and attitudes constructed in response to one woman's decision to integrate a course of study which distances her from traditional gender roles and choices. While it is always tricky to generalize from case studies, it is useful to reflect upon the lessons that they teach. These can then be compared with what prevails in other settings and situations and pave the way for further research or for the refinement of research protocols.

In my view, at least three potential findings can be identified from this study. The first concerns the modalities of entry into the workplace which might facilitate integration. In the case study, we saw that there had been a top-down decision to integrate Erika in the workplace. The administrative gatekeepers and the management accepted her in the program, which is the first obstacle to be bypassed for integration. However, the educators who work closest to be the worksite were not ready for this integration and developed resistance strategies as a result. A first lesson then is that lasting changes in local practices (i.e., full integration of a woman into the program) can probably not be obtained simply by imposing new policies. A new set of practices and shared discourses must be developed first in order for this integration to fully take place. Developing these new practices and discourses is a process that will take some time, but it cannot be short-circuited without jeopardizing this integration. A second lesson is that at least some key actors from the ground must be persuaded of the feasibility of this integration (for example here, the educators with a probabilistic or agnostic stance). Actors with an oracular/fatalistic stance are probably not the best or most immediate agents of change and in educational situations should probably not be serving as mentors. A third hypothesis suggested by this case study is that the individuals who are least likely to have to modify their behaviours in the integration process are probably the most likely ones to accept a woman in a non-traditional course of study. While these individuals can open the doors, it is with other colleagues that the advocacy work needs to be done, in order to challenge stereotypes and current gender relations.

Finally, what this study also points to is the importance of discourse for challenging the status quo and for closing or opening up the future.

### Appendix

The transcription follows the following conventions:

- (.) or (..) = pause,
- (5s) = longer pauses;
- (a:) = vowel lengthening;
- (-) = interrupted segment;
- (CAPitals) = accentuated segment;
- ((action, movement or gesture)) = non-verbal behaviour;
- ((xxx)) = unintelligible segment
- (?) = raising intonation ; interrogative tone
- (=) = segment continues on the next line

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