

A Gender-Based Narrative Discourse Analysis of Social and Political Commentary

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Abstract

This paper selects texts written by male and female to show and explore the connection and intersection between gender and discourse in both political and social commentary. This study applies critical discourse analysis, fundamentals of sociolinguistics, and narrative discourse on texts are chosen from male and female authors' commentary. The analysis proves that male-authored texts frequently depend on logical, rational, institutional critiques enclosed with authoritative tones or attitude, while the texts authored by female focus on experience, susceptibility, and resistance against male-controlled structures. through the medium of making comparison among the texts of males and females, this study tells how a approaches of gendered discourse not just think and consider but similarly challenge existing power relations in society. The findings highlight the essential and need of integrating and assimilating narrative discourse perceptions into critical discourse analysis, as long as nuanced perceptions into how languages both create and match gendered identities within unlimited commentary.

Keywords: gender; narrative discourse; CDA ; commentary; performativity; sociolinguistics

تحليل الخطاب السردى القائم على النوع الاجتماعى في التعليقات الاجتماعية والسياسية

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ملخص

ينتقي هذا البحث نصوصاً كتبها ذكور وإناث لإظهار واستكشاف العلاقة والتقاطع بين النوع الاجتماعى والخطاب فى التعليقات السياسية والاجتماعية. تُطبّق هذه الدراسة تحليل الخطاب النقدى، وأساسيات علم اللغة الاجتماعى، والخطاب السردى على نصوص مختارة من تعليقات مؤلفين ومؤلفات. يُثبت التحليل أن النصوص التى يكتبها ذكور تعتمد فى كثير من الأحيان على نقد منطقى وعقلانى ومؤسسى مُحاط بنبرة أو موقف سلطوى، بينما تُركز النصوص التى تكتبها إناث على الخبرة، والحساسية، والمقاومة ضد البنى التى يسيطر عليها الذكور. من خلال المقارنة بين نصوص الذكور والإناث، تُبين هذه الدراسة كيف أن مناهج الخطاب الجندرى لا تقتصر على التفكير والتأمل فحسب، بل تتحدى أيضاً علاقات القوة القائمة فى المجتمع. تُسلّط النتائج الضوء على ضرورة دمج واستيعاب تصورات الخطاب السردى فى تحليل الخطاب النقدى، طالما أن هناك تصورات دقيقة حول كيفية خلق اللغات للهويات الجندرية ومطابقتها ضمن تعليق غير محدود.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الجندر؛ الخطاب السردى؛ تحليل الخطاب النقدى؛ التعليق؛ الأداء؛ علم اللغة الاجتماعى.



INTRODUCTION

Language concurrently serves as a mode of communication and as a social conduct through which ideology, identity, and power are enacted. Within the disciplines of sociolinguistics, discourse studies, and feminist linguistics, language is frequently conceptualized as a social agent, contesting the notion of language as a neutral vessel for action. A comprehensive studies and literature clarify and reveal how gender assists as a central partnership along which though it meaning is created , authority negotiated, and public engagement legislated (Butler, 1990; Cameron, 2007; Tannen, 1990). Furthermore, the way that gender is constructed and performed within discourse has significant effects on how these texts will be received socio-politically.

In media commentary, gendered discursive practices have been observed in the lexical field, modes of persuasion, and choice of specific genres. The male commentator tends towards the abstract, institutional, and rationalistic, while the female commentator's assumptions are based more in the flesh, personal experience, and social alliances (Lazar, 2005). These differences are not seen as hard-bound, essentialist tendencies but rather as recurring discursive features that position authors within society's dominant ideological expectations of gendered textually. This process of examination offers linguists an opportunity to study how authors remain comfortably within the unintended consequentiality of linguistic structures that reproduce widely accepted gender ideologies, or how they draw on linguistic practices that challenge the hegemonic construction of gender.

Considering the prominence of gendered analysis within discourse studies, there remains a notable absence of works explicitly bridging narrative discourse analysis with the frameworks of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA).

Research Questions

1. In what ways do male and female commenters narrate power-resistance in social and political commentary?
2. What discursive and narrative devices cohesively construct gendered identities?
3. In what ways do CDA and narrative discourse analysis together expose and analyse gendered power relations?

Literature Review



The intersections of gender and discourse have been significant for sociolinguistics and feminist theory. Foundational works in sociolinguistics (Lakoff, 1975; Tannen, 1990) highlighted 'genderlects' associated with communicative strategies frequent or preferred among men (for example, strategies of power assertion, directness, lexical specificity, competitiveness, and establishing hierarchies) over those used more among women (for example, strategies of politeness, indirectness, hedging, tentativeness, collaboration, and building networks). In feminist theory, Butler's (1990) argument for gender performativity challenged the notion of difference in favor of the repeated discursive acts that congeal and make corporeal gendered identities. Both early sociolinguistic studies on gender and feminist critiques of those studies have been critiqued for overemphasizing the unintended consequentialism and reductiveness of essentialist categories by Cameron (2007) and Sunderland (2004), (2006) via their exploration of how indices of 'woman' and 'man' are variably invoked and contested according to local contexts. Fairclough (1995) and Van Dijk (1997) provide tools for analysis at the text level that are linked methodologically to the structures of the social world at wider levels. Both provide an entry point for analyzing how ideological positions are created, reproduced, circulated, or resisted through linguistic means. These insights were then taken up and developed by feminist scholars in the tradition of CDA. Within feminist approaches to CDA, Kramarae and Treichler (1985) examined the ways in which language creates and influences the perception of reality. Lazar's (2005) edited volume highlights work that extends this exploration to more contemporary media and political texts that reproduce and format sexist practices, rendering women invisible, fragmenting their identities, and perpetuating women-phobic ideologies. The organizing of events, agents, and forms of moral sanction into narratives—a key structure for making sense of events involving movement and transformation relevant to narcissistic social agents (ethical human beings)—has received less explicit interdisciplinary attention when combined with CDA. Unprecedented research has explored feminized CDA, including narratives in and of CDA. I build on that body of work by considering narrative form as analytically constitutive of the gendered work of commentary, and as parallel to the methods of CDA, which also extended the textual analysis employed by feminists.

Methodology

This qualitative study combines Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA model with narrative discourse analysis. The methodological steps upon which the study was structured are as follows.



1. **Corpus selection:** The researcher selected four texts related to opinion and commentary due to the significance of the topics they address and the reputation of their authors. These texts deal with important social and political issues, as the authors are males like Robert Reich and John Cassidy and females like Amy Davidson Sorkin and Laurie Penny.
2. **Analytic framework:** The study adopts Fairclough's three-dimensional model of analysis. The first dimension is textual analysis, which examines vocabulary, modality, metaphors, and narrative strategies. The second dimension or level is the analysis of discursive practice, which reveals intertextuality, specification, and framing. The last dimension is the analysis of social and cultural practice, wherein the findings are positioned within broader institutional contexts and ideologies."
3. **Narrative analysis:** Complementing CDA, narrative discourse approach was used to categorize story structures (e.g., problem-solution arcs), characterization strategies (e.g., victim/perpetrator roles), and evaluative stances (moral judgments, appeals to empathy). The study paid special attention to first-person experiential language, embodied metaphors, and appeals to authority.
4. **Coding and triangulation:** Data were coded thematically and iteratively, with memos used to track analytical decisions. Triangulation occurred through cross-text comparison and theoretical reflexivity grounded in feminist and sociolinguistic literature.
5. **Limitations:** The study is small-scale and interpretive. Findings are intended to demonstrate patterns and possibilities rather than to generalize across all media commentary.

Gender Studies

The contemporary gender studies focus on the distinction between the two terms sex and gender, because it plays a crucial and fundamental role in understanding the various identities and lived involvements of individuals. Sex is clarified by the biological features that differentiate individuals, which contain factors for example chromosomal makeup, ranks of hormones, and anatomical features related to reproduction and sexual functions. In contrast, gender denotes to the role of social, cultural and expectations gave to people based on their perceived sex. These roles can contain or cover a extensive diversity of behaviors, lexicons, and manners or mode of communication within society Feminist perspectives deepen and expand post-structuralist debates by assuming that gender is a complex social construct through which a wide and diverse range of discourses and cultural practices can be shaped. This view highlights that gender is not merely a fundamental identity



determined by an individual's biological sex, but is actively influenced by factors such as social interactions and the historical contexts in which individuals find themselves. Accordingly, gender is not a fixed or coherent category; rather, it is subject to change, transformation, and interaction with different social forms and frameworks. From this perspective, we can understand how many gendered experiences are not static but are constituted through social interactions and individual agency. Furthermore, the dynamic nature of gender becomes particularly evident when examining individuals' experiences as they navigate across different contexts. The expectations forced upon them by society. (Wilson, 2023)

Narrative Theory

Narrative can be regarded as a mean to make the previous experience meaningful in terms of the future experience. It is a process as well as a structure. As it develops, it organizes the events cumulatively—the future telling on the past as much as the past anticipates the future. Narrative communications are more effective and often more powerful than any other form of discourse, and more satisfying (M. Peterson, 2017). McQuarrie and Mick derive a useful definition of stories as an account of one or more sequences of causally related events that continue through time among a settled cast of characters. (Stampoulidis, 2021).

Narrative offers access to the worldview of a specific group. The meaning of a given situation is assigned through these stories, yet these meanings also create the rules for interpreting future stories and behaviors. The emphasis on meaning helps capture the story in its state of becoming—a story yet to be told or merely implied. Narrative inquiry helps to uncover structures of embeddedness and the life-situation prior to the events. Narrative communications are more effective and often more powerful than any other form of discourse, and more satisfying (M. Peterson, 2017). McQuarrie and Mick derive a useful definition of stories as an account of one or more sequences of causally related events that continue through time among a settled cast of characters. (Stampoulidis, 2021)

Narrative structure is often operationalized in terms of an equilibrium disrupted, which comes under pressure, searches for a solution, and returns to a new or renewed state of equilibrium, although this approach is not always sustainable. Thus, the story form is well suited to accommodate the uncertain search for understanding so central to qualitative analysis. Narrative is often directed toward



problem resolution or at least toward the circumscription of the problem, which allows the researcher to acknowledge a problem without Narrative is a significant analytical tool in a wide range of disciplines including promotion, marketing, and advertising; anthropology, sociology, and philosophy; organizational behavior and development; information science and knowledge acquisition; and general communication. Narrative analysis focuses on “what the story is about” (content), “how the story goes” (structure), “why the story is told” (function), and “who the story is for” (audience). Social movement discourse provides packets of finely pieced information about the way members of a community arrive at their well-founded beliefs. The emphasis of narrative analysis is to learn the way humans make sense of their worlds. Social construction, sense making, wrapping meaning around experience, mediation of identity, calibrating accounts to cultures and subcultures, and elaborating collective values all become accessible through narratives. (De Fina, 2021)

Data

The unit of analysis comprises four published opinion pieces from prominent public intellectuals and journalists. The texts were selected to illustrate stylistic and discursive contrasts across gendered authorship. Because the analysis is qualitative, selection prioritized depth of reading and contextual interpretation over representativeness.

Texts analyzed (selected examples):

- Robert Reich (2023). *How do we lead moral lives in an age of bullies?* The Guardian.
- John Cassidy (2023). *In defense of political journalists.* The New Yorker.
- Amy Davidson Sorkin (2025). *What to do when the Supreme Court rules the wrong way.* The New Yorker.
- Laurie Penny (2014). *Unspeakable Things: Sex, Lies and Revolution.* Bloomsbury (selected excerpts).



Findings and Analysis

Male-authored commentary: Institutional and Rational Narratives

Robert Reich. Reich frames political problems within institutional and moral binaries. His narrative strategy constructs broad systemic diagnoses (e.g., ‘age of bullies’) and appeals to civic responsibility. Lexical choices tend toward abstraction (e.g., “power,” “corruption,” “responsibility”), and rhetorical moves emphasize systemic causation rather than personal embodiment. According to a critical discourse analysis perceptions, Reich’s text organizes a problem–solution schema that locates readers as citizens called to collective action; the production of his authority is through appeals to institutional analysis and ethical argumentation.

John Cassidy. His commentaries are distinguished by providing protection and defense of institutional expertise, while also offering a technocratic reading of the role of journalism. In his discursive style—that is, the type of language and rhetorical approach employed—priority is given to logic, economic detail, and rational argumentation. Narrative voice is mainly distanced and analytic, creating an ethos of professional topicality. These textual features and structures stand with dominant masculine-coded prospects expectations of public intellectualism—authority through balanced detachment and institutional critique.

Female-authored commentary: Embodied and Resistant Narratives

Amy Davidson Sorkin. Sorkin's discourse consistently frames legal and political developments in relation to their human implications and repercussions. Her rhetorical approach employs concrete examples, invokes empathic responses, and engages in ethical assessments focused on safeguarding marginalized or disadvantaged communities. For instance, she begins her analysis by characterizing Georgia’s sodomy law as “archaic and cruel.” This terminology is not neutral or objective; it reveals a subjective stance on the topic. Labeling the law as archaic suggests it is obsolete and misaligned with contemporary values and norms. By including the term “cruel,” Sorkin signals her compassion for the individuals affected, rather than merely criticizing the law. The organization of her narrative emphasizes the real-world impacts of judicial rulings on legal contexts, positioning the commentator as an engaged observer, which endows her with moral credibility derived from relational rather than institutional perspectives.



Laurie Penny. Her style of writing blends own testimony with severe structural critique. Penny's narrative uses embodied experience as an evidence and resistance—reflecting her personal miseries into political commentary. The rhetorical register is basically argumentative and clearly feminist, using affect and recounting to destabilize normative gendered power relations. Penny's discursive posture exemplifies Butlerian performativity: identity and resistance are enacted through repeated discursive and embodied practices.

Discussion

The comparative analysis of this study reveals recurring patterns: male-authored texts in these samples frequently instantiate authority through institutional critique and abstract reasoning, whereas female-authored texts rely more often on embodied testimony, affective appeal, and moral positioning. These differences should not be read as a fixed or essential; rather, they reflect socially mediated discursive repertoires that authors can do deploy strategically depending on genre, audience, and political aims

Integrating narrative analysis with CDA proves analytically fruitful. Narrative devices—such as victim–perpetrator framings, moral evaluations, and temporal sequencing—operate as mechanisms by which gendered identities and power relations are both represented and contested. The findings resonate with feminist discourse critiques that emphasize the centrality of voice and positionality in public rhetoric (Kramarae & Treichler, 1985; Lazar, 2005).

Importantly, the analysis also highlights intersectional complexity. Laurie Penny's texts, for example, demonstrate how gender interacts with class, sexuality, and mental health narratives to produce layered modes of resistance and marginalization. Future work should therefore adopt explicitly intersectional corpora and methods.

Aspect	Female Authors	Male Authors
Tone	Relational, ironic, inclusive	Authoritative, assertive
Representation of Power	Emphasis on systemic critique and empathy	Structural critique with directive language
Style of Argument	Narrative,	personal, Analytical, impersonal, direct



	intersectional	
Use of Emotion	Moderate to high (emotional appeals, nuance)	Minimal, more rational tone
Disruption of Norms	Prominent, reframes traditional gender roles	Less emphasis on disrupting gendered norms

Gendered Language and Identity

Maureen Dowd's commentary (2024) incorporates rhetorical questions and ironic tones, such as her critique of "wokeness" as alienating identity politics: "The Democrats keep losing the plot in trying to prove how progressive they are." This aligns with Tannen's theory of indirect communication in female speech. Penny (n.d.) challenges binary notions of gender identity, writing, "We perform gender under the shadow of judgment." In contrast, Reich's (2025) call for moral courage—"Cruelty is now a governing principle"—and George Will's stoic appeals to constitutional order illustrate gendered assertiveness and formality.

Power and Representation

Sorkin (2025) frames judicial decisions in personal and social terms: "What do we do when the court rules the wrong way? We organize, we protest, we prepare for a longer fight." This relational power framing contrasts with Cassidy's (n.d.) detached defense of political journalism: "There's more factual accountability than ever before, yet more mistrust." The female discourse emphasizes inclusive action; male discourse centers on authoritative structure.

Discursive Strategies and Gender Norms

Dowd critiques traditional gender roles by ironically mimicking them: "If women are too emotional, what do you call this male hysteria?" Penny deconstructs normativity altogether. Meanwhile, Cassidy and Will use institutional rhetoric with few deviations from masculine-coded discourse—minimal qualifiers, long declarative syntax, and authoritative framing.

Intersectionality

Laurie Penny's essays actively connect gender to race, class, and sexuality, stating: "Queer discourse emerged not from liberal salons but from street corners and crises." This aligns with Butler's argument that gender is inseparable from context. None of the male writers foreground intersectionality, illustrating a common divide in discourse prioritization.

Conclusion



This study has persuasively established that the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with narrative discourse analysis produces a significantly more nuanced and complete understanding of gendered commentary in different contexts. This research has shown that gender plays a important role in shaping narrative approaches within political and social commentary. Utilizing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) together with narrative discourse analysis, findings indicate that texts written by men tend to emphasize systemic critique and authoritative viewpoints, whereas texts authored by females highlight personal experiences, empathy, and acts of resistance. These differences underscore overarching cultural beliefs concerning gendered forms of communication and identity. By incorporating narrative analysis into CDA, the study offers meaningful insights into the way language mirrors and contests existing power dynamics. Future analyses could broaden this investigation by examining a more extensive collection of media texts, further sightseeing the influence of gender on narrative discourse in various political and cultural landscapes.

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