

Discourse and Diversionary Justice

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An Analysis of Youth Justice
Conferencing

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For Diana Eades, with great respect

Preface

The research we are documenting here grew out of a research seminar organized by Ghassan Hage at the University of Sydney in 2003, a seminar focusing on social hope as an analytical category and object of research (see Hage 2006 for his conception of social hope). Paul Dwyer was attracted to this seminar in relation to his work on ritual reconciliation ceremonies in Bougainville; and Jim Martin was attracted in relation to his interest in what he calls ‘positive discourse analysis’, where this is understood as involving a focus on what is going right in the world (that we can learn from and perhaps participate in; Martin 2004) rather than what is going wrong (the usual focus of critical discourse analysis, aka CDA, research).

At the time, Paul had his eye on the possibility of exploring a form of restorative justice which had recently been introduced in New South Wales (hereafter NSW), Australia—the diversionary justice programme known as Youth Justice Conferencing. Youth Justice Conferences dealt with adolescent offenders who would meet with their victim and other relevant members of the community to discuss relatively minor offences and work out some form of community service by way of reparation (instead of going to court, getting a criminal record and possibly serving time in juvenile detention). Paul invited Jim to join him in this research, and thanks to some seed funding from the University of Sydney in 2007 they were able to secure an Australian Research Council Discovery Grant

(DP0881513) for the period 2008–2011. The funding enabled Michele Zappavigna to join the project, initially as a research associate and then as a postdoctoral fellow, and with audiovisual recording support from staff in the Department of Performance Studies at the University of Sydney we got under way.

In general terms, the project involved a combination of ethnographic and functional linguistic research. On the ethnography side, Paul sat in on the training offered for convenors of Youth Justice Conferences, observed many conferences, interviewed practitioners and, along with Michele, undertook the audiovisual recording of the eight conferences we focused on in detail in our study. Jim drew on his background in discourse analysis (Martin 1992; Martin and Rose 2003/2007, 2008) and its applications in educational linguistics (Rose and Martin 2012) to explore with Michele the language and paralinguage of these conferences. The team met regularly over four years to contextualize the detailed linguistic analysis in relation to understandings arising from our ethnographic research.

We append a list of publications arising from this research at the end of this Preface (many were republished in Martin 2012 and are cross-referenced to that volume). Our understanding of conferencing naturally evolved during the research. Martin and Zappavigna (2016) provide a partial overview of its trajectory. The present volume consolidates our current understandings.

The authors are deeply indebted to Paul Dwyer for his critical role in this research, for his contribution to Chap. 1 of this volume and for suggestions elsewhere. We would also like to thank Yaegan Doran for his painstaking editing of this monograph and his critical feedback on each chapter (and Sue Hood for her help with proofing). Finally, we would like to thank the conference participants who agreed to participate in this research. Their goodwill resonates strongly with the restorative justice mission of the designers and proponents of Youth Justice Conferencing, an inspirational mission we are proud to endorse.

We respectfully dedicate this book to Diana Eades, one of Australia's forensic linguistics pioneers, in recognition of her tireless work on behalf of Indigenous Australians, who all too often find themselves struggling for survival in retributive justice proceedings.

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List of Related Publications by the Authors

- Martin, J. R. (2009). Realisation, instantiation and individuation: Some thoughts on identity in youth justice conferencing. *DELTA – Documentação de Estudos em Linguística Teórica e Aplicada*, 25, 549–583. [Reprinted in *Forensic Linguistics* 2012, 75–101].
- Martin, J. R. (2012). In W. Zhenhua (Ed.), *Forensic linguistics, Vol. 8: Collected works of J R Martin*. Shanghai: Shanghai Jiao Tong University Press.
- Martin, J. R., & Zappavigna, M. (2013). Youth justice conferencing: Ceremonial redress. *International Journal of Law, Language and Discourse*, 3, 103–142.
- Martin, J. R., & Zappavigna, M. (2014). Beyond redemption: Choice and consequence in youth justice conferencing. In F. Yan & J. J. Webster (Eds.), *Developing systemic functional linguistics: Theory and application* (pp. 18–47). London: Equinox. [Reprinted in *Forensic Linguistics* 2012, 227–257].
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