**ABSTRACT**

SEAN MINTY Stance and the Construction of Self in Narratives of Anxiety (Under the direction of Professor Agnes Bolonyai)

Identity is fragmented and discontinuous (Erikson, 1968; Laclau, 1990). The intersubjective nature of the Self (Verhagen, 2005) has been previously studied through analyses of discourses involving multiple Stance-Takers competing over Stance Objects (DuBios, 2007). It has become commonplace to think of the Self as a discursively interactive production. Much like language, the Self cannot exist in isolation. Identity is a joint effort. When it comes to sufferers of extreme and prolonged anxiety, I suggest that this concept of intersubjective collaboration (Verhagen, 2005) can be applied directly to the speaker without regard to other speakers. Even in isolation, the Self is talking to itself competing for a unified perspective.

Stance has been used primarily to show how a person positions himself/herself with regard to another person’s utterances (DuBois, 2007). I argue that Stance (DuBois, 2007) can be applied to autobiographical narrative constructions. That is, stance can be applied internally to a single speaker in order to show how competing perspectives work to position anxiety in relation to identity. These competing perspectives can be understood as the process of the fragmentation of Identity (Laclau, 1991). This fragmentation is evident in narrative of constructions of anxiety and panic and shows up at the level of the discourse.

This makes anxiety narratives a fertile discursive site for an analysis of both the performance of identity and the construction of emotion as it relates to panic. I will be looking to see how stance is used to both position and frame anxiety to better understand how this process discursively functions as a performance of emotion and a reflection of anxiety as competing Selves positioning for a dominant role in the evaluation of a Stance Object. (Dubois, 2007; Fairclough, 1989). I am using the grammatical postulations that Ochs and Capps (1995) arrived at in their analysis of panic in narratives of agoraphobia as a guiding heuristic from which to analyze discursive constructions of anxiety and panic. To further tease out agency and identity as it is reconstructed autobiographically, I will also take into account the semantics-syntax interface, specifically semantic role applications (Dowty, 1991), as they relate to agentive and non-agentive constructions of Self within the narratives.