

## **Abstract**

The conversations scientists have with their (non-scientific) public are being criticised and the role of the scientists in these conversations has changed. Besides these conversations, there are also popularizing science activities at which scientists interact with the public; however, these are under-researched. In this study, students that joined the international synthetic biology student competition iGEM were followed at debates and during popularizing science festivals to find out how they present themselves and doing science in the conversations with their public. Discursive psychology is used to analyse these conversations, a method that defines conversations as the primary arena of human action, which makes it possible to find out how the iGEM members construct their identity in talk. This study reveals several new insights in the interactions between scientists and their publics. The iGEM members presented themselves as knowledgeable during the popularizing science festivals. Furthermore, the synthetic biologists constructed an informal atmosphere and presented themselves as careful. At the different activities that were analysed, the iGEM members constructed their work as something not to be afraid of. The implications of these insights for the dialogue between science and society are discussed and recommendations are formulated to inspire (future) scientists to improve the conversations with their publics.

Keywords: identity, discursive psychology, synthetic biology, popularizing science activities

