HOW YOU GUYS DOIN'? STAGED ORALITY AND EMERGING PLURAL ADDRESS IN THE TELEVISION SERIES *FRIENDS*

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ABSTRACT: This study explores the sociolinguistics of mediated discourse and the use of "staged orality" in such genres. It involves a corpus-driven approximation of *you guys* as an emerging quasi pronoun for second-person plural address based on dialogue transcriptions of the sitcom *Friends*. With its 10-year time span and close interactions between its six young New Yorkers, the *Friends* corpus is a good locus to monitor linguistic variation and change. An overall analysis reveals that *you guys* is much more frequent here than in other genres and shows a modest increase over time. Syntactically, *you guys* is found to increase in more involved constructions. In terms of gender, *you guys* is shown to be equally distributed between men and women—both with regard to the speakers' identity and to the semantic referent. In sum, these findings shed light both on *you guys* as a candidate for second-person plural address and on the specific discursive conditions of the staged orality found in genres such as television sitcoms.

WHEN IT COMES TO DATA ACQUISITION, polls, surveys, and especially interviews have long been "the mainstay of sociolinguistic research" (Starks and McRobbie-Utasi 2001). As a consequence of this strong focus on elicited spoken data, other genres have in the past frequently been dismissed—not just as a source for data acquisition, but for treatment from a sociolinguistic perspective generally. For a long time, this was in particular true for mediated communication of all kinds: televised speech, journalistic texts, and more recently computer-mediated communication have usually played a marginal role in studies on language variation and change. Within this paradigm, it has become conventional wisdom that mass media do not take an active part in language change (see, e.g., Chambers 1998). However, the picture has been changing: recent studies have investigated how scripted television may reflect or influence ongoing language change (e.g., Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005; Mandala 2007; Stuart-Smith 2007), and computer-mediated communication is no longer excluded from sociolinguistics study (e.g., Androutsopoulos 2006). Finally, there is a considerable corpus of sociolinguistic studies of

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mass media in languages other than English (e.g., Androutsopoulos 2001; Muhr 2003 for varieties of German).

The study presented here takes an approach similiar to those of Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005) and Quaglio (2009): it is based on the corpus of dialogue transcripts from the television series *Friends*, a vastly popular sitcom that aired on NBC from 1994 to 2004. Its story is centered on a group of six friends in their late 20s to early 30s, three women (Rachel, Monica, Phoebe) and three men (Chandler, Ross, Joey) living in Manhattan. With this equal pairing of male and female participants and the close interactions of the same six speakers over a 10-year period, the *Friends* data make for attractive material to monitor ongoing changes within this fictional social network.

The linguistic issue under investigation here is the rise of *you guys* as an emergent second-person plural pronoun. The gap in the pronoun paradigm of contemporary standard English is well attested in historical linguistics, and the concurrent evolution of quasi pronouns for the second-person plural in various dialects has been identified as a site of ongoing language change (Kortmann 2006). While most of these items, such as *y'all* (American Southern speech), *yinz* (Pittsburghese), and *youse* (Hiberno-English and other regions), are distinctly regionally marked, it appears that *you guys* is a more generic form that can be heard across regions in North America and is even making its way into other global English varieties.[1] While the emergence of these regional second-person plural quasi pronouns in contemporary English is frequently acknowledged in the literature, and a trajectory of change is implicitly assumed in some studies (e.g., Maynor 2000), detailed empirical analysis of *you guys* has not been done.[2] This study is intended as a first data-driven treatment of *you guys* and some of its internal and external parameters. In particular, the analysis focuses on syntactic variation and the issue of gender as they appear to be particularly salient in mediating usage and perception of *you guys*.

Analyzing data such as the *Friends* corpus obviously raises methodological questions concerning the conditions of production of the discourse under scrutiny and its oral/literary status. From a genre-theoretical perspective, speech is located on a genre continuum that ranges from distinctly oral to distinctly written discourse, including hybrid genres that share characteristics of both, such as computer-mediated communication and scripted televised speech. To ground the *Friends* data within this genre continuum, data from "neighboring" genres are considered. The televised talk of *Friends* is described here as a form of staged orality whose meticulous planning allows for the explicit staging of items that are perceived as typically oral, spontaneous, or intimate, such as *you guys*. This highly specific genre setting may explain the usage patterns for the form found here; more generally, it allows putting the sociolinguistic analysis of mediated genres into context.

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ABOUT THIS STUDY: BACKGROUND AND DATA

THE RISE OF *YOU GUYS*: LANGUAGE CHANGE IN THE ENGLISH PRONOUN PARADIGM. While research into personal pronoun usage prior to the 1960s was largely limited to syntactic analysis, there now exists a considerable body of research on the sociolinguistics, sociopragmatics, and historical development of the English pronoun paradigm. Basing their research on the seminal paper by Brown and Gilman (1960), which introduced the notion of power and solidarity and the *T/V* distinction (i.e., informal/formal, so named from the distinction between Latin pronouns *tu* and *vos*), many scholars have explored the history and dynamics of English second-person pronouns. The loss of a distinct second-person plural pronoun is well documented in English (see, e.g., Wales 1996, 73–78, for an overview of research). Since the loss of the *thou/ye* distinction in standard English in the sixteenth century, the form *you* has been the default to encode both the singular and the plural, both the *T* and *V* forms in their second-person addresses. Such a finding in the pronoun paradigm is by no means extraordinary from a typological point of view, as different languages "'carve up' communicative space in different ways, resulting in personal pronoun inventories of different sizes" (Mühlhäusler 2001, 741). Even with this typological caveat in place, the functional overlap in the different uses of *you* appears sizable, in particular with regard to the additional functions of the item, such as nondeictic "impersonal *you*" (see Bolinger 1979; Wales 1996). It is not surprising, then, that a considerable number of alternative second-person plural address forms have evolved in dialects of English. Wales (1996, 73) lists more than a dozen such vernacular forms from Hiberno-English to Tok Pisin. However, all of these alternative second-person plural pronouns are clearly marked as regionalisms and are often stigmatized, such as Pittsburghese *yinz* or Southern *y'all*.[3]

One form of second-person plural address that falls outside this pattern of regional limitation is *you guys*: this construction is often described as being "general United States" usage (Wales 1996) or even as "the unmarked plural of *you* . . . in almost all of the United States" (Jochnowitz 1983, 68). In parallel with this, a trajectory of change has often been invoked both in the linguistic literature and in popular perception. Thus, Maynor (2000, 417) describes a "battle of the pronouns," based on which "a singular-plural distinction among second-person pronouns will enter the textbook paradigms throughout much of the English-speaking world, with *y'all* and *you-guys* the most likely contenders in American English." Curzan (2003, 173) remarks on "the question of whether *guys* is becoming grammaticalized as a plural marker, with the second-person plural in more standard varieties of English and with other nouns as well in other varieties"; and newspaper articles even

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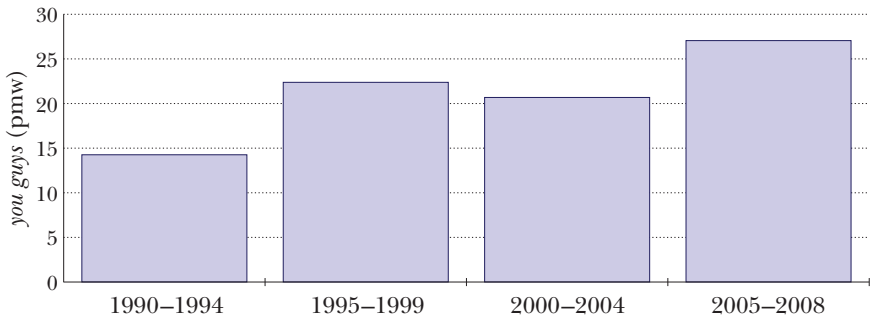
perceive a "cultural watershed" as *you guys* "is on its way to being proper speech" (Rios 2004).

But while the history and semantic evolution of *guy(s)* as a noun is relatively well charted (Clancy 1999; Curzan 2003, 172–76; McLennan 2008), the past and present development of *you guys* as a potential pronoun is surprisingly unexplored. It is safe to say that the emergence of *you guys* as a form of address is not a recent phenomenon but dates back at least to the early twentieth century: the *TIME* Magazine Corpus (Davies 2007b–) and the Project Gutenberg (1971–) collection of electronic books, both good sources for earlier literary usage, provide examples from the first two decades of the twentieth century. It is worth noting that these early instances typically occur in pronouncedly "male" settings—mysteries, adventure tales, sports fiction—and toward male addressees, as this example from 1914 illustrates:

> "I betche he ain't goin' to forget that, though," Happy Jack warned when he saw the caked mud on Miguel's Angora chaps and silver spurs, and the condition of his saddle. "Yuh better watch out and not turn your backs on him in the dark, none uh YOU GUYS. I betche he packs a knife. Them kind always does." [B. M. Bower, *Flying U Ranch* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap), 22]

While a full-fledged diachronic analysis of *you guys* is beyond the scope of this study, the popular perception of *you guys* as an item on the rise is adopted as a working hypothesis here. Data from the Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA) (Davies 2007a–) provide some preliminary evidence for this assumption: the normalized frequency of *you guys* shows a steady increase over the past two decades that is statistically significant ($p < .01$), whereas frequencies for *you* have remained virtually stable (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Occurrences of *you guys* in the Corpus of Contemporary American English (per million words; http://www.americancorpus.org)



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At first glance, *you guys* might be an unlikely candidate to take the lead in the competition for an English second-person plural pronoun, for two reasons: its internal syntax (see Zwicky 1974, 798) and its apparent gender bias.

Regarding its internal syntax, unlike its quasi-pronoun contenders and other existing pronouns, *you guys* is a two-word noun phrase of the pattern [*you* + noun_{pl}].[4] This added complexity presents some hurdles in its use as a function word, as can be witnessed, for example, in the amount of variation in its use in genitive constructions (*your guys*, *your guys'*, *you guys'*, etc.). In addition, the *you* can be deleted, but only in vocative constructions, as demonstrated in examples (1)–(4):[5]

1. YOU GUYS, come over here.
2. GUYS, come over here.
3. I want YOU GUYS to come over here.
4. *I want GUYS to come over here.

In spite of these complexities, it can be argued that *you guys* is already on the road to grammaticalization. There is a semantic restriction for nouns that can occur in the [*you* + noun_{pl}] construction. Corver (2008), in a study on vocatives, calls the items in question "evaluating epithet noun(s)," their uses being "intended as a judgment of value" (47). In other words, the [*you* + noun_{pl}] construction is a strategy to topicalize certain qualities of the noun referred to and assign them a positive or, most typically, negative connotation (e.g., *you idiots*; see also Zwicky 1974, 796). However, *you guys* does not follow this pattern. Examples where the term topicalizes the addressees' being male are (nowadays?) few and far between. Example (5), taken from the *Friends* corpus, shows such a case; tellingly, the context here is a discussion regarding the relative merits of male versus female anatomy.

5. RACHEL: Come on! YOU GUYS can pee standing up.
   CHANDLER: We can? All right, I'm tryin' that.
   JOEY: Ok, you know what blows my mind? Women can see breasts any time they want. You just look down and there they are. How you get any work done is beyond me.
   PHOEBE: Oh, ok, you know what I don't get? The way guys can do so many mean things, and then not even care. [S1, ep. 5 (see the appendix for titles, credits, and dates for the episodes cited)]

Instead, in the vast majority of occurrences of *you guys*, *guys* is no longer being used as an evaluative epithet noun, but occurs as a semantically unmarked generic noun. It can be argued that this is a form of semantic bleaching, which impacts the internal syntax of the structure and may be read as a sign of ongoing language change.

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Regarding the apparent gender bias, that the linguistic form of *you guys* is not formally gender neutral is quite obvious due to the use of the word *guys*. It is ironic that while gender-neutral alternatives for *he or she* are debated in the literature (see, e.g., Cheshire 2008; Balhorn 2009), an apparently masculine form has risen as a gender-neutral second-person plural address. As a consequence, the use of *you guys* has been criticized, especially from feminist vantage points: in essays such as Hofstadter (1991, 2004); in publications by feminist scholars such as Sherryl Kleinman (e.g., Kleinman 2002; Kleinman and Ezzell 2003; Copp and Kleinman 2008); and, increasingly, in online discussion platforms, ranging from the well-established liberal Web site AlterNet (see, e.g., the numerous comments to Kleinman's 2007 post) to blogs such as *Womanist Musings* (e.g., Martin 2008). Overtly feminist critiques tend to deplore usage of the form; thus Kleinman (2002, 300) describes how "women in my classes throw around 'you guys'—even here in the southern United States, where 'y'all' is an alternative" (2002, 300) and calls for the use of alternative forms; Maynor (2000, 417), in a brief comparison of *y'all* versus *you guys*, notes in passing that the latter "has the disadvantage of being sexist." The reverberations of these concerns over correctness have apparently been felt in larger parts of society and particularly academia: Waksler (1995, 4) poignantly describes this tug-of-war between ongoing linguistic changes and perceived male bias by noting how "colleagues have told me that they used to try to avoid using *you guys*, even though it was part of their lexicon, because it was politically incorrect, but that they have now gone back to using it."

However, it is by no means clear to what degree the gender bias of *you guys* is actually felt by speakers and whether it is reflected in use of the term. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many female speakers purport that they do not feel excluded or marginalized by the use of *you guys* and that they themselves use it to address both mixed and exclusively male or female groups (see Clancy 1999, 286). Apparently, however, no empirical evidence on the use of *you guys* with regard to the gender of speaker and addressees exists to date—in part because it is difficult to determine the precise referents of an utterance when the speech situation cannot be monitored—as is usually the case with corpus data. Finally, an element of semantic bleaching may again be at work with regard to the "gendered" nature of the item *you guys*. As Clancy (1999, 284; see also McLennan 2008) has argued, the word *guy* is undergoing change, in that "a new generic noun is developing right before our eyes": *guys* is increasingly used not only with reference to mixed groups and females, but also for inanimated (or at least nonverbal) agents. Clancy (1999, 288) evokes cases where scientists refer to their subjects of inquiry (such as insects or astronomical objects) as *this guy* or *our guys*, and

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a similar pattern of use can be found where *guys* is used in the pronominal construction:

6. ROSS: What happened YOU GUYS? [referent: dinosaurs] [S6, ep. 25]

While there are clear differences in the semantics and pragmatics of the noun *guys* and *you guys* as a form of address, this semantic change appears to be highly conducive to the evolution of *you guys* as a generic second-person plural pronoun.

THE *FRIENDS* CORPUS. *Friends* is an American television series that was produced for NBC by Kevin Bright, David Crane, and Marta Kauffman. A total of 236 23-minute episodes were produced and broadcast over 10 seasons from 1994 to 2004.[6] Its massive success—with an average of almost 29 million viewers per episode during the original airing (Ginsburg 2004)—continues into the present, with frequent reruns and successful DVD sales in the United States and many other countries.

Structurally, *Friends* is a quintessential sitcom: it revolves around six friends in their late 20s and early 30s and their lives in Manhattan; the plots focus on friendships and family issues, careers, and dating. While there are a number of recurring side roles, such as Gunther, a barista at Central Perk, or various parent figures, the majority of the dramatic interaction and dialogue is among the group of six.

As table 1 shows, despite some variety in the characters' backgrounds, they nevertheless form a relatively homogeneous group. Also, it may be noted that the ties in this social network of six are not equally strong: Ross and Monica are brother and sister; Chandler and Ross as well as Monica and Rachel have sustained friendships since high school/college; Chandler and Monica engage in a romantic relationship and eventually get married, and Ross and Rachel have an on-and-off relationship (which is inevitably crowned by a happy ending in the final episode). It could be said, then, that there is a core of four characters, with the characters of Joey and Phoebe being slightly less central.

Based on this set of characters, the 10 years the sitcom spans, and its sustained popularity, the *Friends* dialogue makes for attractive data; it has been used in a sociolinguistic approach (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005) as well as for a corpus study in the tradition of Biber (Quaglio 2009). The *Friends* scripts are not obtainable in the form of an official publication. However, transcriptions of the dialogue are available online from various online communities where fans of the series gather and exchange material.[7] While these transcripts have been compiled by laypersons and are not officially sanctioned, they have the advantage of being transcribed off the screen.

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TABLE 1
The Six Central Characters of *Friends*

Character (Actor)	*Social/Ethnic Background*	*Ties with Other Characters*	*Age*[a]
Rachel Green (Jennifer Aniston)	Upper-middle class; college educated; Jewish; N.Y. (Brooklyn)	On-and-off relationship with Ross; high school friends with Monica	23
Monica Geller (Courteney Cox Arquette)	Middle class; chef; half Jewish; N.Y. (Brooklyn)	Sister to Ross; married to Chandler by season 7; high school friends with Rachel	25
Phoebe Buffay (Lisa Kudrow)	Working class; masseuse; disturbed childhood; Upstate New York		27
Ross Geller (David Schwimmer)	Middle class; Ph.D. in paleontology; half Jewish; N.Y. (Brooklyn)	Brother to Monica; on-and-off relationship with Rachel; high school friends with Chandler	27
Chandler Bing (Matthew Perry)	Middle class; data processor	Married to Monica by season 7; high school friends with Ross	26
Joey Tribbiani (Matt LeBlanc)	Working class; actor; Italian American; N.Y. (Queens)		26

a. Estimated ages at the start of season 1.

They therefore give a highly reliable version of the dialogue actually spoken (which may differ from that of the original scripts). Random sampling has confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts (see also Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005, 285, n. 5).

The methodological advantage of a data set such as the *Friends* corpus lies in its multimodality. Parenthetical descriptions of the characters' actions add context useful in identifying and evaluating the speakers and their respective addressees, and the footage provides a wealth of additional para- and nonverbal information, from prosodic features to issues such as space management, eye gaze, or gesturing. While the study presented here is not a full-scale exploration of multimodality, this additional layer of information has been extremely helpful, for example, in determining the referents of utterances.

The corpus used in this study is based on transcripts extracted from the Friends Café Web site (http://www.friendscafe.org/scripts). While the text does contain descriptions of the settings and characters' actions, this "background noise" was not filtered out because it amounts to a small proportion of the text and the item *you guys* does not occur in it. Based on this 865,870-word

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corpus, a concordance of dialogue lines for the word *guys* was compiled. This step was made necessary by the internal syntax outlined above: in vocative constructions, the *you* may be deleted so that some relevant tokens consist of bare *guys*. Also, some transcriptions use nonstandard spellings to echo the oral nature of the material, which leads to the exclusion of some tokens based on an automated search for *you guys*, such as in example (7):

7. PHOEBE: Hey. Watcha GUYS doin? [S2, ep. 20]

Therefore, the relevant lines from the *guys* concordance were extracted manually in a second step.

To gauge the relevance of the findings for *you guys*, the corpus was then examined for the competing forms of second-person plural address. As is the case with many forms of lexical variation, this is a challenging task, as it is virtually impossible to establish an exhaustive account of all possible lexical forms. The problem is aggravated here due to the polysemy of *you*: a concordance of all *you* occurrences in the corpus was thus coded manually for the occurrence of semantically plural forms, based on the multimodal cues outlined above. While the accuracy of these manually extracted data has to be considered with some caution, they may approximate the overall distribution of second-person plural address in the corpus reasonably well. The distribution of *(you) guys* versus competing forms is outlined in the overall results below; the more specific analyses of gender and syntactic environments are limited to the concordance of *(you) guys* itself.

RESULTS

OVERALL FINDINGS. The *Friends* corpus contains 1,189 instances of *(you) guys* (182 cases of bare *guys* as a vocative, 1,007 cases of *you guys* in vocative or intrasentential position).[8] This amounts to a normalized frequency of 1,367 per million words (pmw). Quite clearly, this rate is relatively low when compared with items from the established pronoun paradigm: depending on the genre examined, certain personal pronouns can be found to have significantly higher frequencies. Biber et al. (1999, 333–34) give normalized frequencies of 30,000 pmw in conversation to 1,000 pmw in academic prose for the item *you*.[9] Maybe not surprisingly, it can be concluded that *you guys* is still a long way from being on a par with traditional personal pronouns.

How does *you guys* compare against other forms of second-person plural address in the corpus? For the reasons outlined above, to gauge and evaluate all forms of second-person plural address in a corpus of this size is challenging; the following numbers should therefore be seen as an approximation

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only. The following constructions were identified in the corpus as the most relevant variants: *you x* (with *x* other than *guys*, such as *girls*, *two*, *folks*, *all*, etc.); *x of you*; and *you* with null marking whose plural reference is discernible from the audiovisual material.[10] A comparison of these forms is given in figure 2.

The distribution is remarkable: *you guys* accounts for almost 50% of the instances, followed closely by *you*; the other two constructions are much less frequent. Even if these results may be slightly distorted in favor of *you guys* due to the manual coding process for semantically plural *you* forms, it can be concluded that the overall frequency of *you guys* in the *Friends* corpus is surprisingly high. In the absence of reliable corpus data from other genres, two conclusions are plausible. First, it is conceivable that second-person plural pronominal use of bare *you* is in fact less common than casually assumed. Second, it can be hypothesized that *you guys* occurs in the *Friends* corpus more frequently than in other environments.

Since the original broadcast of *Friends* spanned a 10-year period, it is of obvious interest to track the occurrence of *you guys* across the decade. While the explanatory power of a 10-year span with regard to processes of language change is limited, it is still of interest to see whether tendencies emerge. Figure 3 shows the occurrence of *you guys* across the seasons. As can be seen, the relative distribution of *you guys* does not change dramatically across the 10 seasons. As the trend line indicates, a modest increase is discernible. Analysis of the *you guys* values and their distribution across individual episodes reveals a slight but noticeable increase, with the final two seasons being statistically significant when compared to season 1 ($p < .05$). This is in line with the larger scenario of *you guys* as an incoming item, as outlined

FIGURE 2
Distribution of Second-Person Plural Address Forms in the *Friends* Corpus

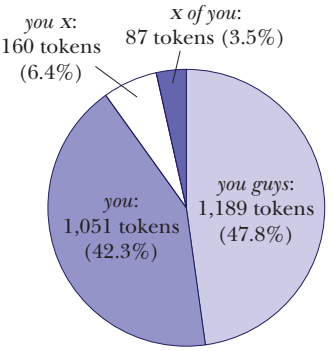

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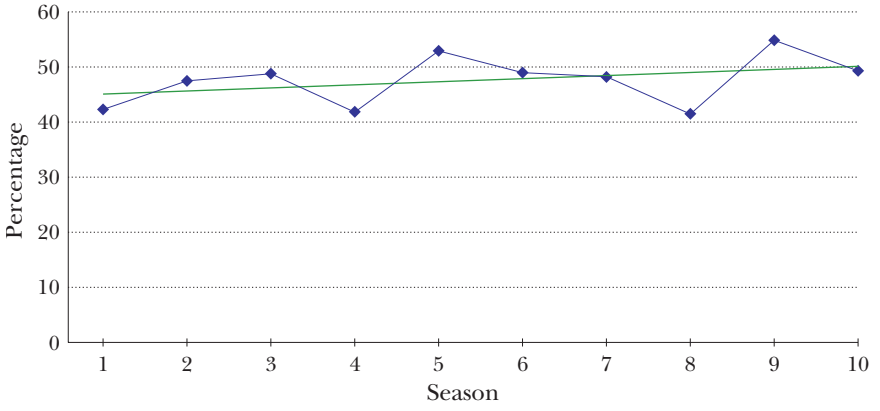
FIGURE 3
Ues of *you guys* in the *Friends* Corpus by Season
(expressed as a percentage of all tokens of second-person plural address)



in the introduction. The relatively low rate of increase (when compared, for example, to the COCA corpus data shown in figure 1) again points to the specificity of the data analyzed here. That the *Friends* dialogue shows a relatively high saturation of *you guys* throughout its 10-year span can be taken as a sign that the item, in this discursive context, serves as more than just a quasi pronoun: it is used as an index of "cool solidarity" (Kiesling 2004, 282) and group strength. In this sense, usage of *you guys* in *Friends* appears to be strongly mediated by its genre-specific givens as a television sitcom with high exposure and careful linguistic planning—while at the same time echoing an ongoing process of linguistic innovation and change.

Finally, to gauge the significance of *you guys* in the *Friends* data, I looked at its occurrence in different genres. Comparing *you guys* in an extensive continuum of genres is an endeavor that goes beyond the scope of this study. However, table 2 provides a preliminary look at three neighboring genres: computer-mediated communication (e-mail hoaxes taken from Heyd 2008); spontaneous spoken language (the spoken sections of COCA [Davies 2007a–]); and written discourse (*TIME* Magazine Corpus [Davies 2007b–] and written sections of COCA [Davies 2007a–]). While none of these sources provides exclusively spontaneous or unedited speech, these data may serve as a proxy for comparison.

As table 2 shows, the dialogue from *Friends* is clearly in the lead in comparison to other genres: *you guys* occurs in the *Friends* corpus almost four times as frequently as in the closest follower, namely, a corpus of e-mail hoaxes (375 pmw). Genres less prone to dialogicity and open multiplicity

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TABLE 2
Occurences of *you guys* in Different Genres

	Raw Frequency	*Normalized Frequency (per words million)*
Friends transcripts	1,189	1,367
Computer-mediated communications (Heyd's 2008 corpus of e-mail hoaxes)	12	375
Spoken language (the spoken sections of COCA [Davies 2007a–])	4,659	60.8
Written discourse (*TIME* Magazine Corpus [Davies 2007b–] and the written sections of COCA [Davies 2007a–])	173	1.7

trail behind even more drastically, as can be seen in the rates for the written sections of COCA and the *TIME* Magazine Corpus. While variation between genres can easily be explained in terms of their spoken/written status (see, e.g., Koch and Oesterreicher 1985; Miller 2005), the heightened frequency of *you guys* in the *Friends* data is nevertheless striking. In their study of intensifiers in *Friends*, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, 287) found that while the overall rate of intensification in the *Friends* transcripts is "remarkably similar to [that] in contemporary British English," the choice of intensifier differed: for example, the intensifier *so* occurred most frequently in *Friends*, as opposed to all other comparative corpora. A similar mechanism may be at work here: the characters in the series are portrayed as young, urban speakers who would take the vanguard in linguistic innovation. Importantly, the textual design of the genre comes into play here: while the *Friends* dialogue prima facie appears to be supremely oral (through the use of slang, characteristic intonation patterns,[11] and other orality markers), it is of course more meticulously planned, rehearsed, and refined than "real-life" spontaneous interactions. It could be said, then, that items that are part of an ongoing process of language change, such as *you guys* or the intensifier *so*, can be exploited as well-recognizable markers of orality. In this sense, the textual design of the *Friends* scripts could be described as STAGED ORALITY. This discrepancy between the somewhat artificial *Friends* data and "real" language must be kept in mind with regard to all other analyses conducted here. However, while this finding does not quite fall in line with Tagliamonte and Roberts's conclusion that "media language actually does reflect what is going on in language" (2005, 296), it does not contradict it: the *Friends* data might be thought of as an "in vitro" environment that reflects actual language change in an enhanced and heightened proportion.

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SYNTAX: INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL. With items that are on the transition from content to function word, as is arguably the case with *you guys*, it is interesting to examine how they behave syntactically. As outlined in the introduction, *you guys* is unusual in that its internal (or morpho-)syntax deviates semantically from parallel constructions and because it shows some variation (deletion of *you*); however, aspects regarding the syntactic context of *you guys* are equally relevant. In this case study, three syntactic aspects are highlighted: *you*-deletion in the use of vocatives; the position of *you guys* within the sentence structure; and its occurrence with regard to different sentence types.

Syntactically, the vocative can be seen as just one example of grammatical case among others, namely, the case denoting the role of addressee. However, vocatives stand out structurally: in contrast to the other arguments of a sentence, vocatives are redundant elements that are not syntactically embedded within the clause. As Zwicky (1974, 787) explains, "A vocative in English is set off from the sentence it occurs in by special intonation … and it doesn't serve as an argument of a verb." While vocatives can be inserted into a sentence, they are most typically found in sentence initial or final position. In addition to their structurally exposed nature, vocatives tend to be anything but neutral. Instead, they typically bear a heavy pragmatic charge, as they "identify participant roles and modulate politeness and positioning within the discourse" (Axelson 2007, 101). In this sense, vocatives are interesting not only from a structural perspective, but also for their pragmatic and interactional value.

Vocatives make up a sizable proportion of the usage of *you guys* in the *Friends* data: in total, 456 of the 1,189 items (38.4%) are used in a vocative construction. It is difficult to approximate whether this is a common ratio: in her assessment of vocative use in a spoken corpus, Axelson (2007, 102) cites vastly varying frequencies—quite clearly, vocative density is not only genre-dependent, but can vary greatly with the relationship between speakers, depending most centrally on constellations of power/solidarity (Brown and Gilman 1960), but also on additional factors such as reciprocal acquaintance, ethnicity, and age of the communicants.

Figure 4 shows the occurrence of vocative *you guys* on *Friends* over the 10 seasons. The pattern that emerges shows two drops, in seasons 3 and 7/8, which correspond to drops in the overall frequency of *you guys* across the seasons. It is not quite clear what causes these fluctuations; Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005), who find similar drops in their results, have speculated about correlations with the show's popularity and fluctuations in viewership. As figure 4 indicates, the vocative form does not display a substantial increase or decrease over the years; other than the fluctuations noted above, no clear trend emerges with regard to vocative usage.

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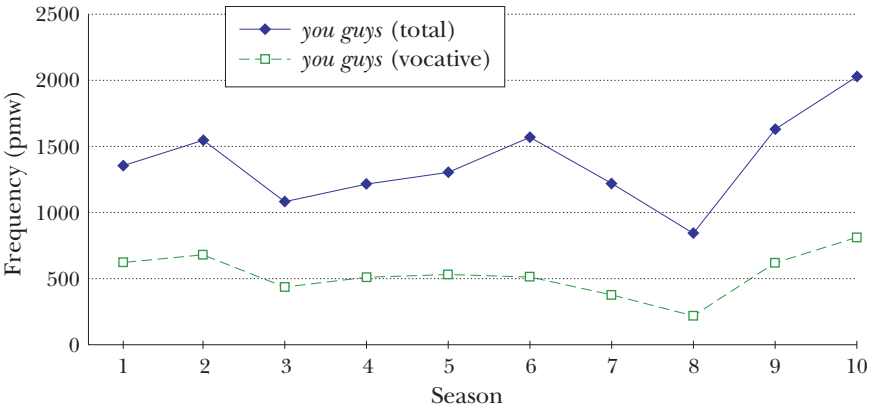
FIGURE 4
Overall and Vocative Occurrences of *you guys* in the *Friends* Corpus by Season



As outlined in the introduction, *you guys* as a vocative allows for some internal variation: namely, the *you* can be omitted so as to yield bare *guys*. Examples (8) and (9) contrast the reduced versus the full form:

8. JOEY: Seriously guys, the trash talk is embarrassing. [S8, ep. 6]
9. PHOEBE: Hey you guys, I don't mean to make things worse, but umm, I don't want to live with Rachel anymore. [S10, ep. 10]

It may be a matter of debate whether these are indeed variants or rather two distinct items. However, since they appear to be functionally equivalent in this syntactic position and other [*you* + noun_{pl}] constructions display the same pattern, it can be assumed that bare *guys* is indeed a variant of *you guys* in vocative position. A full-fledged account of the internal syntax behind this construction is beyond the scope of this article; however, the data presented here can give a first account of its nature.

Both vocative forms occur in the *Friends* corpus, with full *you guys* being more frequent (279 tokens or 23.5% of all tokens) than bare *guys* (182 tokens or 15.3%). Their development across the 10-year period is displayed in figure 5. Again, both graphs are by and large parallel to the overall trend seen in the previous figure, with the exception of season 5, during which their values are nearly equal due to a slight drop in vocative *you guys*.

In sum, vocative use makes up a substantial part of the occurrence of *you guys* in the *Friends* corpus, with the full form being more prominent than bare *guys*. As was found for overall vocative use, no clear trend emerges for the distribution of the two vocative variants. It is clear that more encompassing studies are needed: an initial look at other corpora reveals varying ratios for

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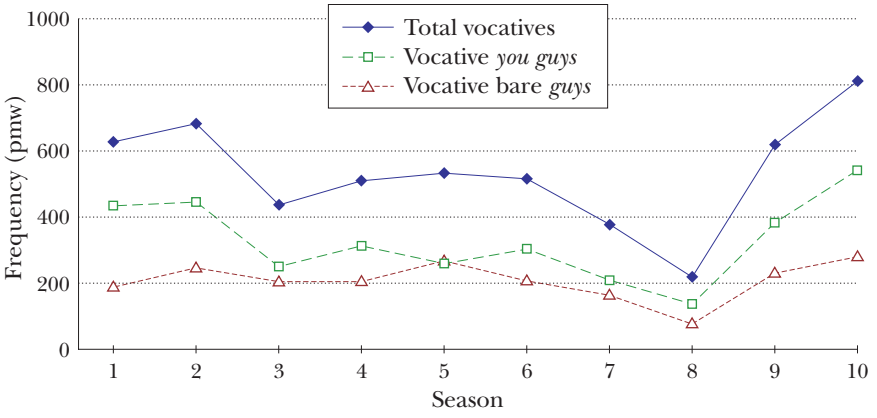
FIGURE 5
Vocative Occurrences of *you guys* and Bare *guys* in the *Friends* Corpus by Season



the use of *you guys* versus bare *guys* vocatives. The sociopragmatic background of these competing variants is currently under further investigation.

Next, I examine how *you guys* is represented in different syntactic functions, that is, within the argument structure of sentences: to what degree is *you guys* used in subject position or as a direct/indirect object? For the purpose of comparison, it is especially interesting to see whether these ratios change over time. Figure 6 shows the 10-year span of the *Friends* data and the occurrence of *you guys* as subject, direct object, and indirect object. Also included is a graph with the value for general object position (direct and indirect objects), as well as the values for vocative position discussed above.

As can be seen in figure 6, *you guys* is most frequently found in subject position: apart from the variation caused by the fluctuations in the overall use of *you guys* (see figure 4), the subject plot nearly parallels the slightly lower vocative plot. However, the more interesting development can be seen at the bottom of the grid: while *you guys* is by far less frequently found in object position, a tangible increase over the years can be discerned, as the graph for general object position indicates. To be sure, it is hardly surprising that subject position is most frequent and indirect object position is least frequent with regard to the syntactic function of *you guys*, as this mirrors argument structure in English. However, the patterning seen in figure 6 suggests a certain trajectory of change. As discussed earlier, vocative position is the only syntactic function to remain stable (with an actual slight decrease) across the 10 years, whereas *you guys* shows a modest rise in subject position and a more pronounced rise in object position. This can be aligned with the syntactic involvement of *you guys*: vocatives are the least syntactically integrated

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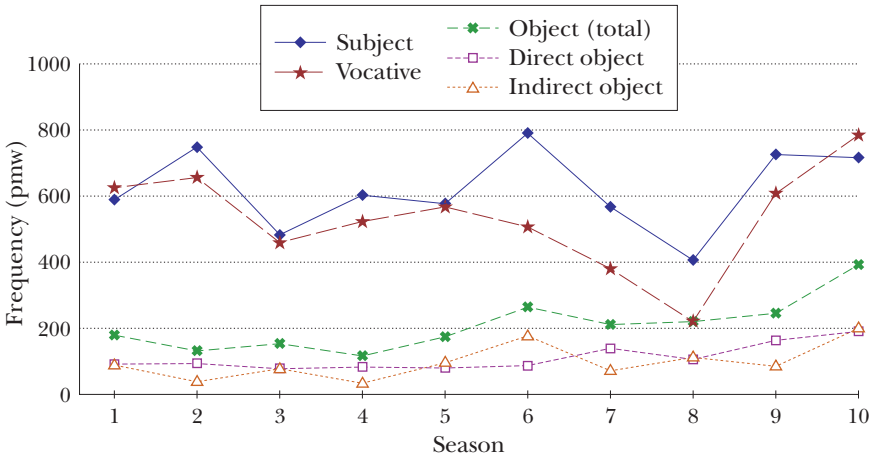
FIGURE 6
Occurrences of *you guys* by Syntactic Function in the *Friends* Corpus by Season



items; they are nonessential elements outside the argument structure. In this detached position, *you guys* perceptibly functions most often as a discourse marker. With the move to subject and even direct/indirect object position, syntactic involvement is increased: the role of *you guys* as a (quasi) pronoun becomes more tangible. In this sense, the tendencies found here can be taken as further evidence for the ongoing grammaticalization of *you guys*.

Finally, it is interesting from a pragmatic point of view to examine the major sentence types—declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamative—containing *you guys* to gauge speakers' perception of the item and its sociopragmatic power. The following examples provide instances of *you guys* within the different sentence types:

10. PHOEBE: Y'know YOU GUYS were a lot more supportive when I wanted to make denim furniture. [declarative] [S4, ep. 11]
11. MONICA: All right, were YOU GUYS smoking something in the back of our van? [interrogative] [S4, ep. 9]
12. RACHEL: Oh yeah! Yeah please, YOU GUYS have fun. [imperative] [S8, ep. 21]
13. MONICA: Hey GUYS! Hey! [exclamative] [S7, ep. 13]

This analysis of discourse function can, again, give insight into how comfortable speakers are in using *you guys* in different syntactic environments. The distribution of *you guys* across sentence types is shown in figure 7. In coding for sentence type, vocative instances for *you guys* were not included, in part because vocatives are not embedded into argument structure and

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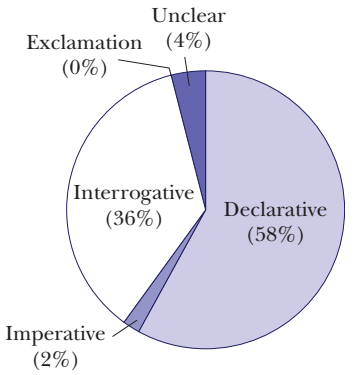
FIGURE 7
Distribution of *you guys* by Sentence Type in the *Friends* Corpus



often stand ambiguously between a preceding and a following utterance (and, indeed, are sometimes used to link utterances in the typical way of discourse markers). In addition, a large proportion of the vocative occurrences are extremely short items where the actual *you guys* is the central part of the utterance—fragments, ellipses, greetings, or exclamations as in (14) and (15):

14. ROSS: Hey GUYS. [S10, ep. 5]
15. MONICA: Subtle GUYS! [S7, ep. 19]

In general, the exclamative sentence type resists interpretation; it relies on prosodic and nonverbal features, making quantification difficult. Thus, we can assume that a certain proportion of exclamations can be found among the vocative uses of *you guys*.

Next, a very small proportion of *you guys* in imperatives is noticeable, on average, slightly more than one instance per season. This may not be so surprising, since the default in imperatives is an omitted subject. However, when a pronoun is used as the subject, it is almost always second person:[12]

16. MONICA: Okay, we'll start with the building. YOU GUYS take the first and second floor, Phoebe and I'll take third and fourth. [S1, ep. 19]
17. CHANDLER: Okay, YOU GUYS uh, YOU GUYS pick first. [S4, ep. 19]
18. RACHEL: Well, I don't know, YOU GUYS figure it out, I got to put Emma down for a nap. [S10, ep. 8]

As these examples show, *you guys* is used as an imperative subject in particular for contrastive purposes to distinguish between subsets of referents within a larger group of addressees (e.g., in 16). Regarding the low frequency

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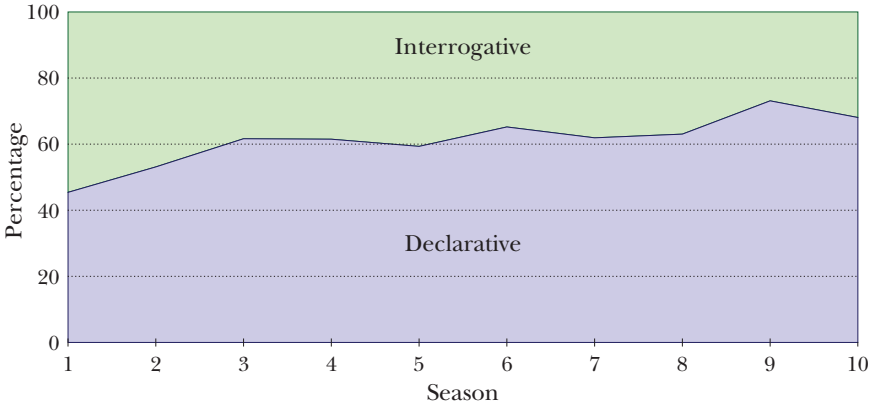
of imperative items, it may again be noted that vocative forms have been disregarded here. It has frequently been discussed that vocatives can act as a proxy for imperative subjects (although they are usually seen as distinct items; see, e.g., Potsdam 1998).

19. CHANDLER: Come on GUYS, PUSH! [S10, ep. 8]
20. RACHEL: [entering, carrying an armful of those little soaps] Hey-hey, YOU GUYS oh hurry up, get some, there's a whole cart outside… [S5, ep. 1]

Again, if these less clear-cut cases of *you guys* used in conjunction with imperatives were taken into account, the frequency for imperatives might be considerably higher.

As figure 7 shows, most occurrences of *you guys* in the *Friends* corpus are found in declaratives (58%) and interrogatives (36%). While the preponderance of declaratives is not so surprising, the high frequency of interrogatives is somewhat unexpected. In addition, the distribution of the two sentence types containing *you guys* changes over the 10-year span: assuming the overall ratios for sentence types are stable over time, *you guys* is in decline in interrogative sentences—from around half in the early years to around 30% at the end of the *Friends* series in 2004 (figure 8). While there are no robust comparative figures available for the typical ratio of interrogatives to declaratives in discourse—much less for a genre as specific as the dialogue under scrutiny here—it is a typical finding in sociolinguistic studies of English that interrogatives occur much less frequently than declaratives (see results

FIGURE 8
Distribution of Declarative and Interrogative Occurrences of *you guys* in the *Friends* Corpus by Season



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such as Cheshire 1981; Diani 2008, 305–13). A trend for a higher ratio of declaratives in the time span of the *Friends* corpus would therefore appear to bring the data closer to actual "real-life" language use.

How can this trend be explained? Again, these data are in line with the model of an ongoing process of change. Where *you guys* is used within questions, the interpersonal and interactional nature of the item is strongly foregrounded, since asking a question by definition involves the addressee in the utterance and is heavily burdened with politeness issues. Indeed, this may be one of the driving forces behind the high frequency of interrogatives with *you guys* found in the corpus. By comparison, the role of *you guys* in declaratives is much more that of a pronoun used for referential purposes, and the increase of declarative *you guys* in these data supports this. As with the findings for vocativity use outlined above, a trajectory can thus be made out from emotive, discourse-oriented use of *you guys* toward a more thorough integration of the item as a delexicalized function word: this fits in with a larger scenario of change from a nominal construction to a semantically bleached quasi pronoun.

In sum, the syntactic analysis has elucidated various aspects concerning the use of *you guys*. All in all, the data support the hypothesis of an ongoing grammaticalization process of *you guys*. While the contrastive analysis of frequencies in the *Friends* corpus with other corpora must act as a caveat to overarching conclusions, an overall trajectory of change toward a more pronominal role of *you guys*—as opposed to a less syntactically integrated discourse marker—can at least be suggested.

GENDER: SPEAKERS AND REFERENTS. Another central focus of inquiry is the dimension of gender in the use of *you guys*. To speakers of English, the idea of gender-marking in a second-person pronoun might seem unusual. While gender differentiation in first- and second-person pronouns is common in many languages (e.g., certain Afro-Asiatic languages but also Spanish or Slovene; see Siewierska 2005 for an overview), it is not found in English or closely related languages. Yet with the advent of *you guys*, an element has entered the English pronoun paradigm that is, at least at first glance, undeniably gender-marked. This raises obvious questions: how is the built-in indexicality of the item perceived by its users, and how is it used to refer to others? Is the male bias arguably inherent to the linguistic form reflected in the use of *you guys*?

Kiesling (2004, 282), in examining the indexicality of the vocative *dude*, has stressed its function as a marker of "cool solidarity": "a stance of solidarity or camaraderie but, crucially in a nonchalant, not-too-enthusiastic way." This connotation, Kiesling argues, has long made *dude* an item used primarily

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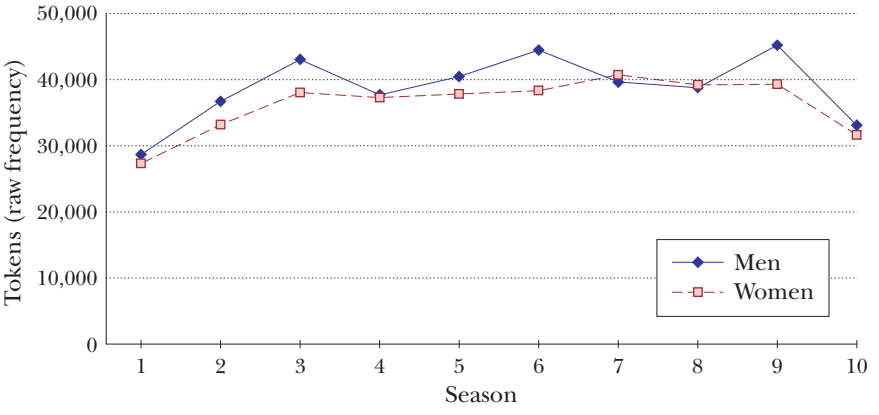
among young men asserting their masculine bonds, but it is increasingly used by and toward both sexes. While the indexicality of *you guys* may not be as pronounced as that of *dude*, there clearly is a certain connotational overlap. In this sense, the questions surrounding gender-specific use of *you guys* have an added sociopragmatic dimension, as it touches on issues of stance taking, power, and solidarity within groups of speakers.

Gender of the Speakers. As outlined in the overview, one of the defining features of *Friends* is its symmetrical cast of three men and three women. The data set thus lends itself for direct comparisons between male and female speakers in the cast. There are a number of "external" characters in each episode—from recurring supporting roles such as characters' parents, partners, or colleagues to purely functional bit parts and cameos by celebrities—yet these parts make up only around 114,000 words of dialogue in sum, around 13% of the entire corpus.

Before one analyzes gender distribution of *you guys*, it is interesting to consider how the overall dialogue is shared between male and female speakers in the corpus. Figure 9 shows the distribution over the 10 years. As can be seen, there is an almost even dialogue distribution between men and women—with a slight but distinct majority for the male characters (387,475 vs. 362,811 words). This slight preponderance for male dialogue is particularly visible in seasons 3, 6, and 9. An initial analysis of these three seasons suggests that the slight male bias is caused less by longer utterances by the men per se than by more scenes that are male-to-male interactions (e.g., long dialogues between the roommates Chandler and Joey). In other

FIGURE 9
Total Words Spoken by Men and Women in the *Friends* Corpus by Season



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words, choices in screen-writing and the staging of the dialogue—whether conscious or unconscious—had an impact on this slight unequal distribution of male and female dialogue.

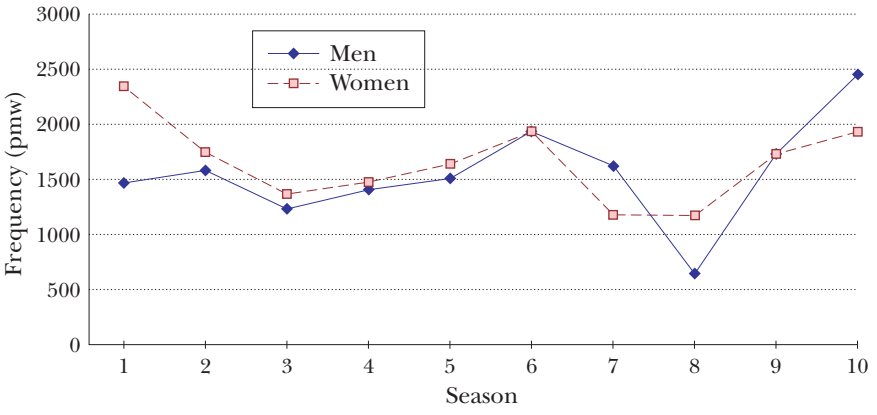
In a more general sense, this fits in well with observations from many gender-based studies that, despite popular opinion, women are not per se more talkative than men: indeed, gender differences in speaker rates are often minimal or slightly favor men (or are displayed as such in fabricated discourse such as the corpus under scrutiny here).

How, then, is *you guys* distributed between male and female speakers in the *Friends* corpus? The raw frequencies reveal that there is virtual gender equality in the use of the form: it occurs 588 times in utterances by the women vs. 601 times in utterances by the men. This proportion (49% vs. 51%) suggests that, at least in the *Friends* corpus, *you guys* is not a gendered pronoun.

Figure 10 shows the use of *you guys* by male and female speakers across the 10 years. Despite the overall equal distribution of the item, a slight but distinct tendency emerges: in the early years, the women lead in the use of *you guys*, whereas the men overtake them in the final years. In their study on intensifiers in the *Friends* corpus, Tagliamonte and Roberts (2005, 288–90) found that the female speakers used the innovative item much more frequently than the males, which they attributed to Labov's (2001) principle that "women lead the changes." While the differences are less dramatic in the present study, it is worth noting that my findings are consistent with this principle.

FIGURE 10

Use of *you guys* by Men and Women in the *Friends* Corpus by Season (expressed in tokens per million words spoken by each gender)



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In addition to the overall values for use of *you guys* by male versus female speakers, it is of interest to take a look at the frequencies for individual speakers. The *Friends* corpus, with its well-defined personnel of six central characters, affords this type of analysis. As figure 11 shows, there are considerable differences between the individual speakers. The lowest value is found for a male character, Chandler (1,006 pmw); the highest value, found in a female speaker, is almost twice as high (Rachel, 1,952 pmw). The variation found here between the six speakers shows even more strongly that use of *you guys* is not dependent on the speaker's gender.

It may be noted that the values shown in figure 11 display a slight tendency to pair together across the two sexes. Thus, the highest *you guys* frequencies are found for Rachel/Ross, the lowest ones for Monica/Chandler; Phoebe and Joey take up intermediate positions. The 10-year graphs for these characters are shown in figure 12.

As stressed earlier, the narrative design of *Friends* relies heavily on the issue of relationships, in particular on diadic relations between characters. Thus, Monica and Chandler become a couple at the end of season 4 and get married at the end of season 7, while Ross and Rachel have an on-and-off relationship (including a short-lived Las Vegas marriage and the conception of a child) that provides a narrative focus throughout the show. In this light, it may not be so surprising that these character pairs tend to pair in speech chracteristics, too. As has been argued above, staged orality is a genre feature of highly successful television sitcoms such as *Friends*; indeed, such a mass media product would be expected to be thoroughly styled. It appears that character design, in this case, goes hand in hand with discourse design.

FIGURE 11

Overall Use of *you guys* by the Six Main Characters in the *Friends* Corpus (expressed in tokens per million words spoken by each character)

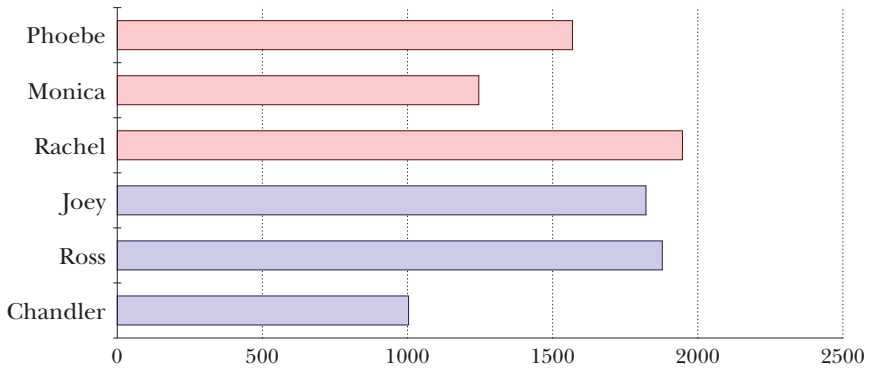

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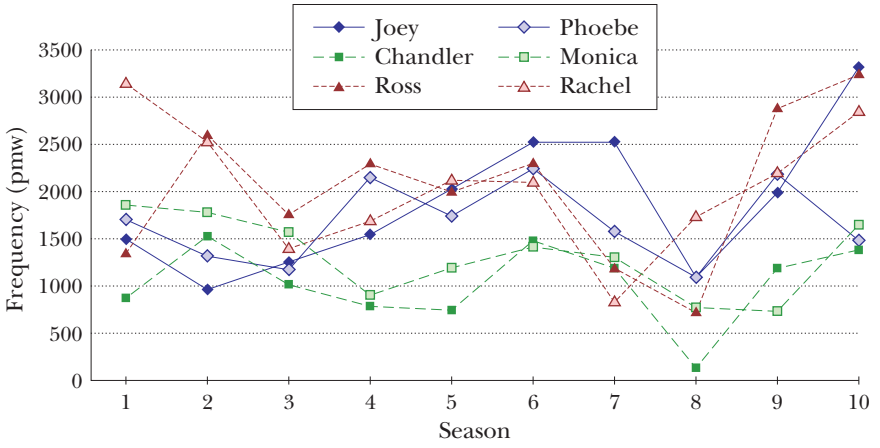
FIGURE 12
Use of *you guys* by the Six Main Characters in the *Friends* Corpus by Season (expressed in tokens per million words spoken by each character)



As for Phoebe and Joey, it was noted in the introduction that they start out as somewhat less central characters, not being tied to the others through family relations or earlier friendships. As the series progresses, they become full-fledged members of the group of six, and again, a parallel may be seen in their use of *you guys*: thus Joey shows the steepest increase in use of the item, and Phoebe is the only female speaker whose use of the item does not decrease (and in fact shows a very slight increase).

It can be concluded that the use of *you guys* appears to hinge on notions such as closeness, popularity, and solidarity; however, the precise function mediating its use by individual speakers cannot be accounted for in a corpus approach. More traditional sociolinguistic data may be needed in this case. Nevertheless, the findings presented here suggest that these sociopragmatic effects can be exploited for the creation of staged orality.

Gender of the Referents. While a speaker's gender is a common variable in linguistic analyses, address pronouns add another layer: who can be referred to by the term *you guys*? In what proportions is it used for men, women, or mixed groups? This factor may be even more important to gauge the perceived "gender value" of *you guys*.

In typical large-scale corpora that are compiled from a variety of sources, it is often close to impossible to determine the precise referent(s) of a given noun or pronoun: the co-text that concordances provide is usually not sufficient to determine the deixis of the speech situations, and even if the full texts are accessible, it may be a daunting task to determine the referents for

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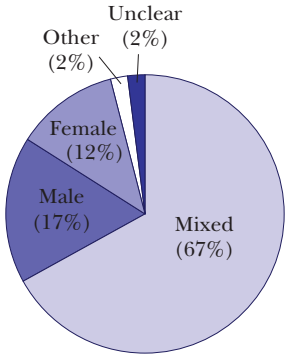
a large set of items. With smaller, single-genre corpora, like the one under scrutiny here, identifying reference becomes more manageable. In addition, the multimodal nature of the *Friends* corpus greatly enhances the analysis as visual data are available both directly (through the filmed material) and indirectly (through parenthetical descriptions of the actors in the video material). It needs to be stressed, however, that visual cues alone are not sufficient for determining the reference of an element: while addressees and referents are often identical in the use of second-person plural pronouns, they are not necessarily so. For example, *you guys* may refer to one person physically present and simultaneously to others who are absent from the speech situation, as in (21):

21. CHANDLER: Well, I thought YOU GUYS were cuddly sleepers. [addressee: Ross; referents: Ross and Rachel] [S3, ep. 3]

Quite clearly, the use of *you guys* involves issues of clusivity (i.e., who is included or excluded from the referent),[13] which may be connected to the contrastive use of the item noted in the syntactic analysis above. In any case, determining the referents of *you guys* cannot be accomplished through visual cues alone but must involve a careful interpretation of the surrounding cotext. Based on these considerations, the instances of *you guys* in the corpus were coded for male, female, mixed, or other (i.e., inanimate) reference; in a small number of cases, reference was unclear or nondescript.

The results are shown in figure 13. As can be seen, two-thirds of the items have mixed reference—in other words, *you guys* in these cases refers to at least one male and one female. The proportions are much lower for

FIGURE 13
Distribution of the Gender Referenced by *you guys* in the *Friends* Corpus



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references to exclusively males (17%) or females (12%). Interestingly, the slightly higher rate for male-only reference is not related to cases where *guys* is used as an epithet noun—the example quoted earlier is the only clear-cut case of *guys* being used in terms of masculinity:

22. RACHEL: Come on! YOU GUYS can pee standing up. [referents: Chandler, Joey, and Ross representing men in general] [S1, ep. 5]

However, in a few cases, *you guys* is arguably used to highlight the male nature of the referents within the larger context:

23. CAROLINE (Lea Thompson): I think it's great YOU GUYS are doing this. [referents: a supposedly gay couple engaging in parenting activities] [S2, ep. 6]

For female-only reference, the corpus indeed contains at least two examples where *you guys* is used to refer to women in general:

24. ROSS: Oh, YOU GUYS call him Cute Coffeehouse Guy, we call him Hums While He Pees. [referents: Rachel, Monica, and Phoebe representing women in general] [S7, ep. 5]
25. ROSS: I know! Why do YOU GUYS need to have this conversation? Huh? I mean no self-respecting man would ask a woman, "So, where is this going?" [referents: women in general] [S8, ep. 11]

These examples again show very strongly that *you guys* has undergone a considerable amount of semantic bleaching: while its indexicality as a closeness/solidarity-fostering discourse marker is still tangible in many cases, it has all but lost any gender-marking qualities. These findings coincide with a study on the noun *guy* by McLennan (2008), who analyzed the reference of the word (in all types of syntactic settings and collocations) in a small e-mail corpus. In his study, 73% of the instances of *guy* were found to refer to a mixed referent. However, only 2 of 526 instances were found to have female reference—both of them being cases of *you guys*. It can be concluded that the trend for gender-nonspecific use is present in *guys* as a noun and *you guys* as a pronoun; however, female gender reference is reserved for pronominal use.

A small portion, 2%, of the instances in the *Friends* corpus were labeled "unclear": this was the case if, despite visual cues and context information, no referent could be unambiguously determined. Typically, this was the case with relatively large or open settings and a large number of characters present. The label was also used for some instances where the referents formed a generic group that was unmarked in terms of gender, as in (26):

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26. JOEY: YOU GUYS got any of those baby chicks? [referents: staff at animal shelter] [S3, ep. 21]

Finally, another small group of examples (2%) were labeled "other." This includes most notably referents that are—at least to a degree—inanimate. The possibility of using *guys* with reference to inanimate objects has already been evoked in the introduction, and the corpus contains a few of these. However, most of the examples are better classified as "nonhuman" rather than inanimate, as they tend to refer to animals, human body parts, embryos/babies, or anthropomorphic objects:

27. PHOEBE: So when YOU GUYS get in there, really grab on. [referents: embryos] [S4, ep. 12]
28. CHANDLER: Come on GUYS, it's not like I moved to Europe! [referents: pets] [S6, ep. 20]
29. JOEY: YOU GUYS make us look good. [referents: foosball figures] [S10, ep. 18]
30. ROSS: Way to go GUYS. [referents: speaker's own hands] [S7, ep. 1]

Other, less frequent instances of "abstract" reference were designations of ethnic/national groups, such as Californians or English people. While inanimate use is becoming more frequent for *guy* as a noun, it can be assumed that inanimate *you guys*, where an object is directly addressed, will remain reserved for humorous and other nonliteral utterances. In this way, it is not surprising to find a certain proportion of them in sitcom dialogue.

Finally, gender reference was examined over the 10-year span of the corpus. As figure 14 shows, the data reveal a tendency that is quite pronounced: mixed reference is not only the most frequent type, but also shows a distinct increase over the years. Consequently, instances of male- and female-only reference decrease and ultimately converge at less than 10% each of the total occurrences. As can be seen, the male- and female-only graphs show similar patterns, with male reference slightly higher at first and start to converge by season 6.

The tendency seen in figure 14 certainly falls in line with an ongoing process of semantic bleaching. Nevertheless, the mediated nature of the data analyzed here again needs to be taken into account. As outlined earlier, the overall story line of the 10 seasons follows the coming of age and maturing process of the characters, and thus a shift from friendship within a larger clique to partnership and matrimony. By the end of season 10, all main characters except Joey have married (Chandler and Monica, Phoebe and the side character Mike) or formed a partnership (Rachel and Ross); thus the constellation within this social network has considerably shifted. It may

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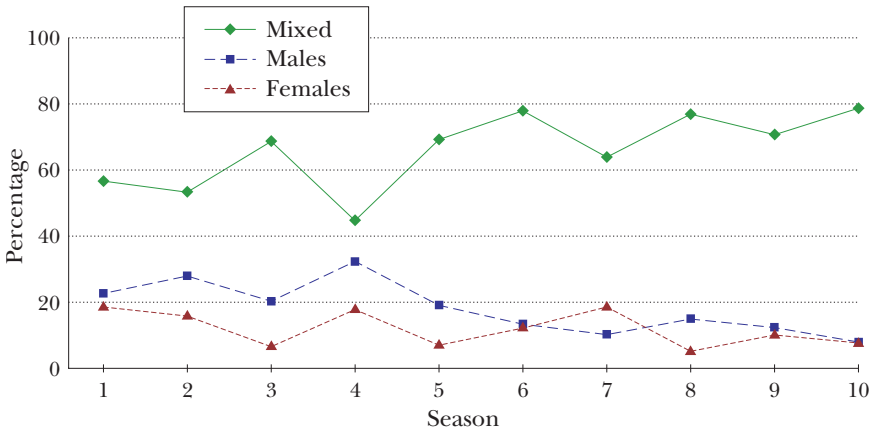
FIGURE 14
Gender Referenced by *you guys* in the *Friends* Corpus by Season



well be the case that this is reflected in the use of *you guys*: where people are increasingly addressed in terms of being part of a heterosexual relationship, it is not surprising that instances of *you guys* referencing one female and one male should increase. While the influence of such genre-specific factors cannot be exhaustively measured here, the conclusion may be drawn that in cases such as these, processes of ongoing language change and factors that are specific to mass media genres may converge in a characteristic pattern of language use.

DISCUSSION

This article provides a first approximation of *you guys* in use and its role as a quasi pronoun for second-person plural address. The syntactic analysis has explored some properties of the item's internal syntax, especially the differences between intrasentential and vocative use and the possibility of *you*-deletion in vocatives. It has also suggested that the internal semantics of *you guys* show evidence of ongoing semantic bleaching, as the construction is functional even though the item *guys* is not construed as an epithet noun. These issues are far from being fully accounted for—Zwicky's (1974, 799) conclusion that "all of these constructions with *you* require much further study" apparently still holds.

Regarding gender, the data presented here empirically confirm, for the first time, that *you guys* shows no gendered pattern of use—neither with

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regard to the speakers using it nor in terms of its reference. As the data indicate, *you guys* use is virtually identical between men and women; variation is much greater within the two groups and most likely mediated by other sociopragmatic factors. With regard to denotation, mixed groups of men and women are the most frequent referent, and male-only reference is only slightly more frequent than female-only reference. Reference to inanimate agents or abstract concepts was found to be rare but possible.

These factors were also analyzed across the 10-year time span which the *Friends* corpus naturally provides. All in all, the results were in line with an ongoing process of change from a lexical discourse marker to a function word: overall frequency increases; the structure becomes syntactically more embedded; women lead in its use and are eventually overtaken by the men; and mixed reference increases while gender-specific use decreases. In this light, the dialogue from *Friends* has proven to be a valuable source for sociolinguistic insight into a site of innovation and change in contemporary English.

These results notwithstanding, the study presented here has also shed some light on the use of mediated discourse as a source for sociolinguistic analyses. For example, the overall analysis revealed that use of *you guys* in this data set is much more frequent than in more traditional genres. It has therefore been stressed that all results presented here can very generally be seen only as a proxy for "real-life" language use. As a consequence, the type of discourse under scrutiny has been described here as "staged orality": while discourse such as the *Friends* dialogue is oral in terms of its realization, it is in fact carefully designed by a team of writers and producers—after all, it caters to an audience of millions. As a consequence, it comes as no surprise that features of orality and innovative language use would be strategically employed. The analysis has also shown that investigations of mediated discourse call for additional layers of interpretation, such as narrative development or (as was the case in Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005) viewer ratings. It should be stressed, however, that this added perspective does not diminish the value of mediated discourse studies: to the contrary, the fact that such rich background information is available may grant us new insights into processes of variation and change.

With regard to genre theory, this study suggests that staged orality in television sitcoms can be characterized as an intermediate genre between the spoken and written domains (this approach has become more or less ubiquitous in the study of computer-mediated communication; see, e.g., Herring 2001 for a general discussion). And yet, the actual linguistic features of such genres do not necessarily conform to such an intermediate positioning; as was shown for *you guys* in this study, the frequency of items considered as orality

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markers can be much higher in these hybrid genres than in traditional forms of orality. This finding may inform future studies of new or unconventional genres and their position in processes of language change.

Finally, an issue that has not been addressed in this study is that of the media's influence on language use and language change: given the large audience of *Friends*, it seems possible that the heightened frequency of *you guys* on the show might influence the language use of its viewers. Indeed, a number of sitcom catchphrases and lexical items have become firmly entrenched in popular culture and language use, such as the chat-up line *How you doin'?* from *Friends* and even more notorious exclamation *D'oh!* from *The Simpsons*. While sociolinguistic study of media effect studies is becoming more frequent (see, e.g., Stuart-Smith 2007 for Glaswegian English; Muhr 2003 for Austrian German), it is clearly too late for a real-time study of possible effects of *Friends*. Nevertheless, studies such as the one presented here may encourage a full integration of mediated genres into the canon of sociolinguistic analysis.

APPENDIX
Episodes of *Friends* Cited

SEASON 1

Episode 5: "The One with the East German Laundry Detergent." Written by Jeff Greenstein and Jeff Strauss. Directed by Pamela Fryman. Originally aired Oct. 20, 1994.

Episode 19: "The One Where the Monkey Gets Away." Written by Jeffrey Astrof and Mike Sikowitz. Directed by Peter Bonerz. Originally aired Mar. 9, 1995.

SEASON 2

Episode 6: "The One with the Baby on the Bus." Written by Betsy Borns. Directed by Gail Mancuso. Originally aired Nov. 2, 1995.

Episode 20: "The One Where Old Yeller Dies." Teleplay by Adam Chase. Story by Michael Curtis and Gregory S. Malins. Directed by Michael Lembeck. Originally aired Apr. 4, 1996.

SEASON 3

Episode 3: "The One with the Jam." Written by Wil Calhoun. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired Oct. 3, 1996.

Episode 21: "The One with a Chick. And a Duck." Written by Chris Brown. Directed by Michael Lembeck. Originally aired Apr. 17, 1997.

SEASON 4

Episode 9: "The One Where They're Going to PARTY." Written by Andrew Reich and Ted Cohen. Directed by Peter Bonerz. Originally aired Dec. 11, 1997.

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Episode 11: "The One with Phoebe's Uterus." Written by Seth Kurland. Directed by David Steinberg. Originally aired Jan. 8, 1998.
Episode 12: "The One with the Embryos." Written by Jill Condon and Amy Toomin. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired Jan. 15, 1998.
Episode 19: "The One with All the Haste." Written by Wil Calhoun and Scott Silveri. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired Apr. 9, 1998.

SEASON 5

Episode 1: "The One after Ross Says Rachel." Written by Seth Kurland. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired Sept. 24, 1998.

SEASON 6

Episode 20: "The One with Mac and C.H.E.E.S.E." Written by Doty Abrams. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired Apr. 13, 2000.
Episode 25: "The One with the Proposal." Part 2. Written by Andrew Reich and Ted Cohen. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired May 18, 2000.

SEASON 7

Episode 1: "The One with Monica's Thunder." Teleplay by David Crane and Marta Kauffman. Story by Wil Calhoun. Directed by Kevis S. Bright. Originally aired Oct. 12, 2000.
Episode 5: "The One with the Engagement Picture." Teleplay by Patty Lin. Story by Earl Davis. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired Nov. 2, 2000.
Episode 13: "The One Where Rosita Dies." Teleplay by Brian Buckner and Sebastian Jones. Story by Sherry Bilsing and Ellen Plummer. Directed by Stephen Prime. Originally aired Feb. 1, 2001.
Episode 19: "The One with Ross and Monica's Cousin." Written by Andrew Reich and Ted Cohen. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired Apr. 19, 2001.

SEASON 8

Episode 6: "The One with the Halloween Party." Written by Mark Kunerth. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired Nov. 1, 2001.
Episode 11: "The One with Ross' First Step." Written by Robert Carlock. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired Dec. 13, 2001.
Episode 21: "The One with the Cooking Class." Teleplay by Brian Buckner and Sebastian Jones. Story by Dana Klein Borkow. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired May 2, 2002.

SEASON 10

Episode 5: "The One Where Rachel's Sister Baby-Sits." Written by Dana Klein. Directed by Roger Christiansen. Originally aired Oct. 20, 2003.
Episode 8: "The One with the Late Thanksgiving." Written by Shana Goldberg-Meehan. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired Nov. 20, 2003.
Episode 10: "The One Where Chandler Gets Caught." Written by Doty Abrams. Directed by Gary Halvorson. Originally aired Jan. 15, 2004.
Episode 18: "The Last One." Part 2. Written by Marta Kauffman and David Crane. Directed by Kevin S. Bright. Originally aired May 6, 2004.

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NOTES

1. *You guys* outside of North America has not been studied yet. Anecdotal evidence suggests that it is increasingly used in British English: Wales (1996, 73) reports that "*you guys* (for both sexes) is increasingly heard amongst young British speakers of English."
2. One partial exception is McLennan (2008), whose study of the noun *guy(s)* in all syntactic contexts only touches on the pronominal use of *you guys*.
3. See Johnstone (2007) for *yinz* and Tillery, Wikle, and Bailey (2000) for an overview on *y'all*.
4. In syntactic theory, it is a matter of debate whether items of this type are to be interpreted as NPs or DPs. This discussion is not addressed in this article.
5. Examples (1)–(4) are constructed for contrastive purposes. All other examples are taken from the *Friends* corpus, unless otherwise noted.
6. Two "behind the scenes" shows aired in 2001 and 2003 are not included.
7. As Baym (2000) has pointed out, digital social networks and communities play a pivotal role for friendship and exchange between fans of television series.
8. In the following, the term *you guys* is used for all variants and spellings of the item, unless otherwise indicated.
9. These frequencies do not distinguish between different functions of *you* (second-person singular/plural, impersonal, etc.). Biber et al. (1999, 330) briefly treat the issue of second-person plural pronouns but do not indicate the frequency of *you guys*; however, they note *you all* for being "particularly common" at 50 pmw in British and 150 pmw in American conversation.
10. *Y'all* occurs just a single time in the entire corpus and is used in a metacommunicative utterance about Southern speech stereotypes. Since the *you X* constructions had to be manually extracted, only the more frequent forms were taken into account; thus, some items with single occurrence rates may have been overlooked.
11. A number of *Friends* catchphrases that have become part of popular culture hinge on distinctive intonation patterns. Among them are Joey's *How* YOU *doin'?*, Chandler's *Could X* BE *any more Y?*, as well as the responses *Yuh-huh*, *Nu-huh*, and *I* KNOW*!*
12. Third-person subjects in imperatives, as in *Everybody be cool*, are even more rare.
13. See Simon (2005) for a discussion of clusivity's role in second-person plural address.

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