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## **Playing the Straight Man: Displaying and Maintaining Male Heterosexuality in Discourse**

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### **1 Language, Gender, Sex and Desire**

In this chapter I explore the connections between language use on the one hand, and that part of a person's identity that has to do with sex and desire. I define identity as the relationship an individual creates, through his or her everyday practices, with other people in society, whether those people are directly in front of them, or some imagined stereotypical other. Identities in this view are quite complex and entail an interaction among all of the relationships a person has. One aspect of such relationships is gender. This kind of relationship is based on the sexual dimorphism of the human species, but transcends, emphasizes, and negates the 'original biology to create a system of social practices defined and recreated by those practices' (see Connell 1987: 78-82). Moreover, the practices of gender can have consequences for the body: 'We may say, then, that the practical transformation of the body in the social structure of gender is not only accomplished at the level of symbolism. It has physical effects on the body; the incorporation is a material one' (Connell 1987:87).

One of the practices that is regulated by gender relations is desire, especially sexual desire, desire being a relationship that can obtain between two

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people or groups of people. In this case sexual desire usually organizes relations between genders. In recent western history, sexuality has become an identity category as well. An (academic) dichotomy between 'queer' and 'straight' identities has developed, where straight indicates traditional (generally heterosexual) gender practices, and queer denotes non-straight. One could argue that this is simply a separate identity category of sexuality, not necessarily part of gender. However, it is impossible to define queer without reference to the normative gender practices to serve as the 'unmarked' straight category; in a structuralist sense, without straight, there is no queer. In any view, these are all aspects of a person's identity, and the separation of taxonomies of gender, sexuality, class, race, ethnicity, etc. could be argued to be simply an academic exercise that rarely enters the everyday practice of speakers going about the business of creating identities. So connections among different aspects of identity will always exist; I argue that gender and sexuality are particularly intertwined.

In this chapter I explore the discourse of heterosexuality: how a group of men define, police, and display heterosexual relationships within their same-sex group, and how these practices also help to create and display relationships among the men – relationships of homosocial desire and dominance.

The heterosexual identities I explore are not just displays of difference from women and gay men. They are also, more centrally, displays of power and dominance over women, gay men, and other straight men. A discourse of heterosexuality involves not only difference from women and gay men, but also the dominance of these groups. In fact, we will see that, through the use of address terms, men display *same-sex* dominance by metaphorically referring to other men as 'feminine', thus drawing on the cultural model of the heterosexual couple to index a homosocial inequality.

## 2 'Greek' Society and Compulsory Heterosexuality

The men's discursive indexing of their heterosexuality is embedded in a community of practice that is organized around heterosexuality and sexual difference. Thus, not only the practices within speech activities, but also the organization, purposes, and rituals of speech events and activities in this community help to create a heterosexual and homosocial community.<sup>1</sup> This heterosexual organization begins with a separation of genders: The 'greek' letter society system is arranged through an ideology of sexual difference, such that fraternities are all-male, sororities all-female.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using speech activities to denote actions smaller than a speech event but larger than a speech act. Speech activities can be made up of several speech acts; speech events are longer in duration and are made up of speech activities.

The system also polices heterosexuality through its organization and naming of social speech events and activities. The most obvious example of this is a 'mixer' speech event, at which one fraternity and one sorority hold a joint party, and 'mix' with one another. This terminology also reinforces an ideology of difference: Men and women are metaphorically different ingredients that must be mixed.

'Open' parties, while not being so overtly focused on heterosexual desire, nevertheless are similar in their focus on sex and alcohol. This focus is seen most in how the men evaluate parties, as Flyer does in the following excerpt. He is speaking during a meeting held to discuss fraternity problems. In this context, he compares his fraternity's parties to another's:

- 01 Flyer: I- I- I went-  
 02 I even went to a party the other night to investigate  
 03 just to see who was gone  
 04 not that I really wanted to go there  
 05 I didn't have a great time  
 06 I tried to get the fuck outta there but my ride dumped me.  
 07 I went to- what the fuck-  
 08 I went to see what happened.  
 09 it was fuckin packed.  
 10 it was wall to wall chicks.  
 11 chicks hookin' up with guys everywhere  
 12 they're havin such a great time  
 13 they decided to fuck on the floor or whatever (??)  
 14 ??: (who?)  
 15 Flyer: this was Sig Ep OK.  
 16 and this- what this-  
 17 I- I thought *Jesus Christ*.  
 18 this was our parties.  
 19 good music,  
 20 they had a couple of trash cans of beer  
 21 and a couple bottles of liquor.

**Excerpt 1. Flyer.<sup>2</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Transcription conventions are as follows:

	Bounds simultaneous speech.
=	Connects two utterances produced with noticeably less transition time between them than usual.
(number)	Silences timed in tenths of seconds.
#	Bounds passage said very quickly.
^	Falsetto.
TEXT	Upper case letters indicate noticeably loud volume.

In this excerpt, Flyer is in fact implying that Gamma Chi Phi's parties have become too focused on drinking and homosocial activity, by suggesting another fraternity's party was better primarily because *it was wall to wall chicks* (*chicks* is the term the men most often use for women, especially young women to whom they are sexually attracted). Moreover, these women are *hookin' up* with the men, and are having such a great time, claims Flyer, that they *decided to fuck on the floor*. Thus it is because of this heterosexual activity that the party is rated highly - notice that Flyer goes out of his way to suggest that the drinks were not special (line 20: *they had a couple trash cans of beer*). This high evaluation of heterosexual activity creates a social context in which heterosexual sex is glorified as an end in itself, thus creating an ideology of heterosexual desire as an important social goal.

Some heterosexually organized speech activities constitute these larger speech events, and have been named by the men and women. Flyer's phrase *hook up* is an example. These named sexual speech activities were explained to me by Saul in an interview:

- 01 SK: there's hookin' up, there's scamming,  
 02 what other words are there like that?  
 03 Saul: throwin' raps hhhhhhh  
 04 SK: I never heard that one, what's that?  
 05 Saul: throwin' a rap is just basically  
 06 you go up to a girl you think is attractive and uh  
 07 y'know you try to be as outgoing as you can. normally-  
 08 the best way  
 09 that I've found  
 10 to get a girl  
 11 to hold a conversation  
 12 #is to entertain em.#  
 13 an' basically throwing a rap is entertaining a girl  
 14 *with the intent to try to bring her back that night he he he he*

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°	Indicates noticeably low volume, placed around the soft words.
<i>Text</i>	Italics indicates emphatic delivery (volume and/or pitch).
-	Indicates that the sound that precedes is stopped suddenly.
:	Indicates the sound that precedes it is prolonged.
,	Indicates a slight intonational rise.
?	Indicates a sharp intonational rise.
he, ha	Laughter.
(text)	Transcript enclosed in single parenthesis indicates uncertain hearing.
((comment))	Double parenthesis enclose transcriber's comments.

- 15 SK: yeah  
 16 Saul: or with the intent of eventually setting something up.=  
 17 SK: =is there any difference,  
 18 like if you just go an t- an an an  
 19 and talk to her  
 20 like is there is there any way that *she* knows that?  
 21 lin that throwing rapsl  
 22 Saul: lthe smart l the smart girls do he he he he he he  
 23 they they they know that um::  
 24 but...we do our best to say, y'know  
 25 like, we'll throw in all kinds of disclaimers when we're talkin y'know  
 26 'y'know hey::'  
 27 'y'know but we you know what I mean'  
 28 'y'know what I'm sayin?'  
 29 that kind of things  
 30 and you'd even say that to a girl.  
 31 You'll be talkin'  
 32 and you'll say somethin' a little promiscuous maybe like  
 33 'aw you know know what I mean' type of deal so-  
 34 so yeah  
 35 SK: OK, so, and hookin' up is- is that different?  
 36 that's more of a ... after the fact kind of thing  
 37 Saul: tha- tha- that's the action. he he he he he  
 38 that's the action and that's uh...uh  
 39 ah:I mean y'know you find a girl:I,  
 40 you throw your rap,  
 41 you hook up,  
 42 and uh, usually no strings attached.  
 43 but a lot of times- not a lot of times-  
 44 depending on who the girl is  
 45 if it happens to be a drunk thing  
 46 and it's late night  
 47 and you hook up  
 48 it's usually something you try to keep as a drunk story.  
 49 but um, but, I mean, sometimes hookin' up leads to y'know  
 50 y'know you li- you end up likin' the girl y'know  
 51 and then you go into your commitment thing.  
 52 SK: yeah all right now then there's some other ones like scamming.  
 53 do you guys use that at all?  
 54 Saul: yeah:: well  
 55 scamming is interchangeable with throwing a rap.

- 56 SK: is that uh-...  
 57 in my experience that's more of a female term.  
 58 Saul: yeah gir- girls- yeah that's the way to look at it  
 59 if I go to a girl, I'm throwin a rap.  
 60 but if I'm a girl, getting the rap thrown to me,  
 61 and I'm catching on to this,  
 62 this guy's scamming on me.  
 63 SK: OK  
 64 Saul: so...that's- I guess that's the bound  
 65 that's the *fine line* between the two.  
 66 SK: do people do that a lot?  
 67 Saul: oh yeah. oh:: yeah.  
 68 e- even- even w-  
 69 I remember when I had a girlfriend and,  
 70 y'know we were committed,  
 71 and I liked her a lot but we had our problems and  
 72 y'know I'd see a girl I though was attractive  
 73 and if I could talk to her,  
 74 I'd throw her a rap.  
 75 not knowing- not thinking I was gonna hook up with her that night  
 76 but to let her know that I'm around and  
 77 eventually I- y'know I knew I'd be free and I could come back then  
 78 'hey you remember me?'  
 79 'let's go do something sometime,' y'know  
 80 (0.5)  
 81 try to leave an *impression*.  
 82 that's what throwin a rap does is tryin to leave an- an impression.
- Excerpt 2.** Saul.

In this excerpt, Saul explains a constellation of terms describing heterosexual speech activities: *throwin' raps*, *scamming*, *hookin' up*. He also names some different kinds of heterosexual relations without describing them in detail: *a drunk thing* and *do your commitment thing*. The latter two illustrate the distinction the men make between short- and long-term relationships respectively, and their importance as immediate goals of the fraternity men. Saul comments that a *drunk thing* is an experience *you might want to keep as a drunk story* (for 'Gavel', as described below). This way of viewing 'one-night stands' suggests that they are as much for the homosocial enjoyment of the fraternity, and a display of sexual prowess, as they are actual sexual attraction (although sexual attraction should be understood socially as well). The *commitment thing*, on the other hand, implies that the

man actually likes the woman and enjoys her companionship whether or not sex is involved. In fact, men were often ridiculed by other members for spending too much time with their girlfriends at the expense of the fraternity.

The men thus have a range of named heterosexual speech events, activities, and sexual relationships. Other social displays, such as the display of posters of nude or nearly-nude women in their apartments and dorm rooms, are similarly heterosexually-focused. In sum, the institutions of greek society, the speech events that make up this society, and the speech activities within those events are constructed principally around the display of sexual difference and heterosexual desire. They reflect the cultural models for men and women as different and unequal: men as dominant and hunting for sex, women as submissive and existing as sexual prey for the men.

### **3 The Heterosexuality of Homosociability in the Fraternity**

Now let us turn to how the men talk in these interactions, and how this talk serves to create and reinforce the heterosexual model. The men use several different strategies to police and construct sexuality. However, most involve the taking or assigning of specific stances either to themselves or to others, including women and subordinated men. Specifically, one revolves around the telling of stories, both performed in meetings and told in more private conversations. Another type is speech in which men take on roles of women and homosexual men - or have these roles forced upon them. A man is 'assigned' the role of a woman or gay man when he is in a subordinate position.

#### **3.1 Cultural models of sex in interaction: Public valorization of 'man as hunter for sex'**

Many of the stories the men tell present women and men in sexual relationships. These stories comprise a recognized, ratified genre in which men display sexual relationships. This 'genrification' of such narratives is an important component for policing/reinforcing hegemonic heterosexuality, because it means that one kind of sexual relationship is valorized in narrative performances.

This genre is a linguistic object, and its importance in the verbal repertoires of the men is a way of valorizing this kind of heterosexuality. There is status (and solidarity) to be gained from telling a story of this sort, or in being a character of one of these stories. In investigating how identities are created and how social values are transmitted, we need to look at the deployment of genres in the community, which includes the content of these

genres. For example, in the academic community such story-telling as is found in the fraternity Gavel round is not valued. Horvath (1987) has compared the kinds of texts (genres) told at a working-class women's party and a middle-class women's lunch, and found that there is a significant difference in the kinds of texts told by these different people, and that they reflect cultural differences. In addition, certain *forms* of speaking are likely to co-occur with these genres, so they thus become an explanatory concept as well.

### 3.2 'Fuck stories' in gavel

Gavel is a story round at the end of Sunday meetings in which men often tell of their sexual exploits over the weekend. These are explicitly named by the men as 'fuck stories.' They can be particularly graphic, and portray women as sexual objects for the men, including for men who are voyeurs. The gavel stories were one of the highlights of the week for the men; they were performances for the entertainment of the members, usually told at the expense of the performer or one of the other members. (Fuck stories are not the only kind of narrative; another common type is the 'drunk story,' in which one member tells about the usually embarrassing actions of another member while very intoxicated; drunk stories and gavel stories are often the same.)

During most of my research I was not permitted to tape-record gavel. This fact shows how important this story round is for the social cohesion of the group – it is a form of ritual gossip which may never leave the group. They are a powerful way of creating a cultural model and placing value on it.

### 3.3 Conversational narrative and alternate sexual identities

While fuck stories are perhaps the most overt and obvious genre in which a certain heterosexual norm is reproduced, the men do not see this as the only kind of relationship with women, although it is the most 'public' representation their relationships with women. Let's have a look at one of the members who displays this public/private dichotomy. First, consider a portion of Hotdog's report to Mack of his trip to Atlanta, in which he creates a stance with respect to women similar to that in gavel stories. This excerpt is from the beginning of the narrative, on the day Hotdog arrived in Atlanta.

- 01 Hotdog: Then we went to a Ma:ll  
 02           and just like sat in the food court  
 03           and just looked at all the *beautiful fuckin' hot ass chicks*  
 04 Mack:   (are they) really dude.  
 05 Hotdog: Oh my *go:d*  
 06 Mack:   Where was it?  
 07 Hotdog: In Atlanta  
 08 Mack:   I know but what school?



- 09 Hotdog: Ahh Georgia Tech.  
 10 Mack: I'm movin' to Atlanta dude  
 11 Andy: We're movin' there  
 12 Hotdog: We weren't like at the school  
 13 we were like  
 14 we were like in like the business district  
 15 Mack: Oh  
 16 Hotdog: So it was just like all business ladies dressed up  
 17 and they're like (.) *incredible*.  
 18 then that night we registered  
 19 that's that *first* night is when we went to Lulu's,  
 20 Mack: Let's move to Atlanta when we graduate Idude.  
 21 Hotdog: I want to. I *definitely*  
 want to. Definitely.  
 22 Andy: I told you I wanna move down there.  
 23 I'm movin down there as soon as I graduate.  
**Excerpt 3.** Hotdog, Mack and Andy.

In this excerpt, Hotdog evaluates a shopping mall in Atlanta by describing the physical appearance of the women he sees there. We can see the impact of this evaluation and the importance of the appearance of women through the reaction of the men: Just this description of the women prompts them to talk about moving there when they graduate. This response constructs Hotdog's evaluation, then, as the highest compliment for the city.

Contrast this positioning with the one Hotdog presents in the interview situation, and with only myself present. The following excerpt begins after I have asked Hotdog about his plans for the future, specifically marriage.

- 01 Hotdog: I don't ever intend to be close to getting married any time soon.  
 02 SK: You think you'll get married eventually?  
 03 Hotdog: Yeah.(0.8)Probably (1.0)\*let's see today's ninety three\*  
 04 I probably could see myself getting married by like  
 05 nineteen ninety seven nineteen ninety eight.(1.4)  
 06 So about (.) four years.  
 07 SK: Wow. Do you- I mean- do want to or is that just a matter of-  
 08 Hotdog: No I-  
 09 it's not that I want to I have I have had a girlfriend sinc:e  
 10 \*I guess we were\*  
 11 I was in high school we've been datin' on and off.  
 12 Kinda got a little more serious *once* we went away believe it or not.  
 13 and uh (.) yknow if things stay the same way with her,

- 14 I could see us getting married like: ninety seven ninety eight  
 15 but if: we-  
 16 if things don't stay the same  
 17 I can't see u- me gettin' married  
 18 until after the year two thousand (laughing).  
 19 I So. I  
 20 SK: I Laugh (1.7) So you guys are pretty close then.  
 21 Hotdog: Yeah. We're very close.  
**Excerpt 4. Hotdog.**

Because Hotdog evaluates all the women he sees in the Atlanta mall as sexual objects, we would get an impression that his status on the heterosexual marketplace is unattached: For most of the men, the definition of having a 'girlfriend' is monogamy with that person. Thus, if Hotdog publicly shows a face of sexual voracity, it would be logical to think that he does not have a girlfriend. However, he *does* have a girlfriend, one with whom he is 'very close,' and one whom he is considering marrying in the near future. So Hotdog represents himself with respect to women and that he represents his sexuality quite differently in two different situations with different audiences and purposes: he performs two different kinds of identity in each of these situations.

In fact, it seems that he is a little unsure of exactly how to perform his identity with me in the interview. My status is not one he is familiar with: I am similar to a member, but not quite a member. At the beginning of this excerpt, Hotdog seems to want to present the same kind of identity as he did in the Atlanta recount. He denies quite strongly an interest in getting married: *I don't ever intend to be close to getting married any time soon*. But after I rephrase the question, he reveals that marriage may only be four years off. It takes several moves on my part before Hotdog tells me about his girlfriend, even though he later says 'we're very close' (line 19).

Hotdog's relationship with me has shifted over these turns, so has his identity. He begins with a stance similar to the one he takes publicly in the fraternity, and eventually admits to having a close, loving relationship with a woman. We thus see how the linguistic construction of sexuality for these men is based not just on the actual relationships they have with women but also on the relationships they are creating with other men. This allows the men to 'have' in fact more than one (hetero)sexual identity.

### 3.4 Metaphorical representations of other members as women

Morford (1987) and Hall and O'Donovan (1996) show that an address term indexes not simply such things as power and solidarity, but specific cultural models which are part of speakers' knowledge, and which interact with

context to create local relationships between speakers. To the extent that speakers share these cultural models and scripts, the address terms are interactionally successful. Address terms in the fraternity work in this way as well, on several levels of linguistic and cultural awareness. All of the address terms I consider position a man as subordinate through the use of a female address term.

In the first case, the address term occurs within a culturally recognized phrase, thus indexing a certain heterosexual cultural model. It occurs while the men are playing monopoly, in which players pass through other players' property and pay rent. I will particularly focus on line 26, but I reproduce here some relevant context as well.

09 ((Pete rolls, moves))

10 Dave: Nice. pay me. (2.3)

11 Pete: I can't. Aren't you in jail or something?

12 Don't I not have to pay you this time?

13 IFree pass.I

14 Boss: You Igot a I free pass.

15 He's got one more.

16 Dave: No that's your last one.

17 Pete: I have one more.

I've got one left.

18 Dave: No that's it

19 Pete: I have one left. I've only used two.

20 Dave: That's right. And these over here. OK.

21 Pete: The deal was for fi:ve.

22 Dave: God damn I needed that money too you son of a *bitch*.

23 ((Dave rolls))

24 The deal was for TWO.

25 (4.3)

26 Pete: HI: HI: hi: honey I'm home.

27 Boss: I'm gonna blow by Dave right here.

28 ((Boss rolls))

**Excerpt 5.** Dave, Pete and Boss.

The phrase 'Hi Hi honey I'm home' in line 26 does a large amount of contextually-dependent identity work for Pete. First, we need to understand the game situation: Pete has landed on a property owned by Dave, which would usually mean that Pete has to pay rent to Dave. However, because of an earlier deal in which Dave gave Pete a number of 'free passes,' Pete is allowed to 'stay' at Dave's property without paying rent. Pete draws on this

metaphor and extends it. The metaphor taunts Dave and puts him down, in part by metaphorically vandalizing Dave's property, but also through the phrase 'Hi Hi honey I'm home.'

Without the correct background knowledge and cultural ideologies, the remark makes no sense, especially as a taunt. The phrase brings to mind the stereotype of a husband returning from work to a 'housewife' in a stereotypical American nuclear family, in which the woman is an unpaid houseworker. So it metaphorically positions Pete not only as one of the family staying for the night, but as 'the man of the house,' in a dominant position over his wife. This interpretation was confirmed through an informal poll of the members. Dave is then put in a metaphorically subordinate position as a housewife in a particular stereotype of a family. It thus makes sense as a taunt because Pete is not only staying for free but claiming that Dave is in a servant position to him. Without this background knowledge, the phrase makes little sense. Thus it reinforces an ideology as a woman/wife in that subordinate servant role for the man/husband, even as it is constructing a local dominance relationship between Pete and Dave.

This kind of dominance relationship was even clearer in the naming of one of the pledges. During the pledge period, the members gave all the pledges nicknames which were often insulting or highlighted the subordinate position of the pledge. One pledge was given the name 'Hazel,' and was made to perform household cleaning duties for several of the members for a few weeks. Here again, the name of the subordinate male is female. But it also refers to a 1950s television show of the same name, about a character of the same name who is a domestic worker for a nuclear-family household. The men draw on the show and the larger cultural metaphor of women as domestic workers, to name a structurally subordinate position for 'Hazel.'

One of the most common examples of this kind of positioning is the use of *bitch* to insult another man. I collected several examples of this, and heard many more which I did not record or note down. In the next excerpt, Pete uses *bitch* in the prototypical way. It takes place during the chapter correspondent election. Like several other members (including Mack), Pete suggests three offices and the proper candidate for each. Mick reminds him not to argue for other offices and Pete then argues he can say whatever he wants when he has the floor.

01 Mick: Pete

02 Pencil: You're a moron ((to Mitty, who just spoke))

03 Pete: Kurt for chapter correspondent,

04 IRitchie for sch-olarship,

05 ?: Ino

no:::::

- 06 Pete: and Ernie for historian.  
 07 ?: Ritchie for chaplain.  
 08 Pete: allright well Ritchie for historian,  
 09 and Ernie for scholarship.  
 10 Mick: We're on one vote right now.  
 11 Pete: Hey I get to say my piece I got the floor bitch.  
 12 Mick: Darter.

**Excerpt 6.** Mick, Pencil and Pete.

Here we see Pete clearly in opposition to his addressee, here Mick. He finishes his statement by calling Mick 'bitch,' normally a term used to refer derogatorily to a woman (or a female dog, from where the insult derives). This insults Mick both through the 'conventional' manner of calling him a dog, and by drawing on a social ideology of female as subordinate.

We have evidence that 'bitch' is associated with this subordinate role through another derogatory term used by the men: 'bitch boy.' This term is loaded with dominant-subordinate meaning: first through 'bitch,' and second through the term 'boy,' also used to refer to a servant. First let's look at how it is used in a meeting by Speed:

- 01 Speed: All right look.  
 02 first of all, you guys need to realize  
 03 we do *not have* to ne- necessarily make a:ll the new brothers,  
 04 put them in positions right away.  
 05 a *lot of* the new brothers already have positions.  
 06 they can get elected next year *or* next semester.  
 07 there *are* some positions that are semesterly.  
 08 we don't have to make sure that every one of them has a position.  
 09 they need time to *learn* and grow-  
 10 it's better that lthey're- lthat they're=  
 11 ?: l(I need an assistant,) l  
 12 Speed: =SHUT THE F:UCK UP.  
 13 it's better that they're-  
 14 that they're almost like I was with Tex.  
 15 I was Tex's like little bitch boy, graduate affairs,  
 16 and I learned a lot more there,  
 17 than I would if I got stuck in some leadership role,  
 18 so *fuck* `em,

**Excerpt 7.** Speed.

Here Speed refers to the fact that he was Rex's assistant in the graduate affairs position, doing any tedious work Rex gave him. It is clearly a subordinate role, and therefore 'bitch' in its subordinate, servant meaning fits in. In addition, we have the story of the origin of the term from Mack:

01 Mack: So bitch boy um  
 02 Chicken hawk and I don't know if you've ever met him KW um  
 03 one time was tellin a story  
 04 and I don't know if there were other people around  
 05 or if he's just told this story so many times  
 06 but um he apparently was at another school I think  
 07 maybe with his brother,  
 08 he was in a bar with his brother,  
 09 the details of it I'm not- I don't remember very well.  
 10 Anyway he was at this bar  
 11 and I think maybe he was talking to this- he was talking to a girl.  
 12 another guy some strange guy bigger than K though  
 13 um came over and started hassling him  
 14 either about the girl or he was standing in his place  
 15 you know the normal bar nonsense. and um  
 16 so K kinda left it be for a while and uh  
 17 he he I think he mentioned it to his brother  
 18 now they were there with a friend of his brother's  
 19 and apparently this friend of his brother's  
 20 they were at the bar  
 21 this friend of his brother's was quite a big man  
 22 very large you know  
 23 like six four you know like two hundred and fifty pounds or some-  
 thing  
 24 strong  
 25 big guy  
 26 and um so K went back over I think to talk to this girl  
 27 and uh apparently this same guy started giving him problems again  
 28 eh and this guy this big friend of Ks brother  
 29 comes up behind- behind this guy this guy that's bothering K,  
 30 and just puts his arm around him very gently  
 31 and kind of pulls him in close  
 32 and starts talking to him ::::really kind of  
 33 y- you know I don't even wanna I don't even wanna try and do the  
 voice  
 34 that K does you're gonna have to ask K for it.

35 but t- he starts really talkin to him  
 36 like he's pimpin this guy or somethin' you know  
 37 and he goes you know what we gon do?  
 38 You gon be my bitch boy fa the rest of the night  
 39 and then he just went down the list of things that he's gonna make=  
 40 this guy do for him an  
 41 it wasn't- it was demeaning things like  
 42 you know you gonna get me drinks  
 43 your gonna come in and wipe my ass and  
 44 you know nothing nothing like  
 45 I'm gonna kick your ass or anything like that.  
 46 he spoke real calmly and real coolly and  
 47 you know You gon be my bitch boy tonight. you know  
 48 and so that's where it came from and  
 49 bitch boy you know it's pretty self explanatory  
 50 you know it's just a little boy  
 51 who's gonna do all the bitch work for me I dunno

**Excerpt 8. Mack.**

The bitch boy relationship is clearly one of dominance. Not a dominance of actual physical violence, but one of potential violence symbolized by the things the dominant male makes the subordinate do. But it also has an essential sexual component as well, one that on the surface looks to be homosexual. Under the surface, though, the relationship is a metaphorical male dominant - female subordinate metaphor. Notice in line 31 that Mack says 'he starts talking to him like he's pimpin' this guy,' indicating he's treating him like a prostitute under his care. Here we see clearly Mack equate *bitch* with *woman*, stating that the relationship is metaphorically a heterosexual one, not homosexual. So in using one of the most overt named dominance relationships in the fraternity group, the men use a term that not only has a lexical association with women (*bitch*), but also draws on the metaphor of a woman as a (sexual) servant to a (physically) powerful, dominant man. Thus, the meaning of bitch boy, which Mack claims is 'pretty self explanatory' in line 44, is only self explanatory if you have access to this cultural script of heterosexual relationships of this type. Moreover, the use of the term presupposes an understanding of this relationship and through its repetition reifies the existence of the dominance heterosexual model. The 'male' half of the term (*boy*) also helps to create the subordinate position of the addressee through age and race hierarchies. *Boy* is clearly an address term used with a younger and less powerful person; a male who has not yet made it to his full dominant position. It also indexes a racial cultural model in

which powerful White men address Black men with the term, such as in Ervin-Tripp's (1969) example of an exchange between a Black physician and a White police officer. The fraternity men, then, when they use *bitch boy*, are creating a number of different identities and relationships. Most immediately for the discourse, they are creating a relationship between who is the bitch boy and who is his dominator. However, they are also crucially drawing on a shared ideology of gender relationships in which a woman is dominated by a man.

What about other address terms, especially those which are more clearly (heterosexual) male? Consider again the address terms in the monopoly game, where we saw Pete use 'Hi honey I'm home' to taunt Dave. Notice that Pete also uses the address term *dude*, particularly in line 5: 'Dave, dude, dude Dave,' in which he is clearly playing with language by using alliteration and chiasmus. Pete is here having fun with language given the resources of the game. But the relationship he has - and wants to construct - with Dave is quite different. In the *dude* situation, Pete is not clearly dominating Dave, but rather Dave has something Pete wants (the red property). So Pete is constructing a solidary and perhaps even a subordinate relationship with Dave. This is the way the two clear 'masculine' address terms are used in the fraternity (*dude* and *man*): as solidarity indexes to focus on cooperative actions, and even to diffuse tensions during confrontations. So the generic masculine address terms focus on equality and solidarity, whereas the female terms are terms of dominance and insult. Thus, not only are male and female separated, they are treated unequally. Moreover, through the term *bitch boy* (and similar creative terms such as 'Hazel') male and female are related metaphorically through an assumed heterosexual ideology.

The address terms I have considered thus do more than just position a man as a woman. They position a man as a woman *in a narrative* - a cultural script. This woman, moreover, is clearly in a subordinate position in the narrative: as a housewife, as a prostitute, as a domestic servant. Each use of the address term makes sense only if the interlocutors share access to the cultural script.

This has implications for the way we understand language to index social identity. The standard assumption is that a certain variant of a variable becomes associated with a recognized cultural group, and people who identify with that cultural group are statistically more likely to use the variant. This is the 'acts of identity' model of language and identity (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985). It requires a knowledge of groups and the way they act, and a direct, one-to-one indexing of linguistic form to group identity. What we see here is that heterosexual identities and ideologies are being created in a much more complex way: there is really no separated group of



heterosexuals in the dominant culture. This group, like men a few decades ago, is considered the norm, and is indeed hardly a coherent group. But as we have seen here that we can identify heterosexuality as part of these men's socially constructed identity. We must therefore have a model of language and identity that is itself much more complex than the acts of identity model, one that can take account of mocking and metaphorical positionings within a group that perpetuate its ideologies.

Such a model would recognize a multilayered social indexing of language, similar to Silverstein's (1996) orders of indexicality. The model would index at least four levels of social relationship: a local stance within an ongoing speech event, a position within an institution, a status in wider society, and, potentially at least, a place within a cultural model or script. And we have seen that there could be indexing within these levels as well, as local dominance relationships are indexed by a primary indexing of the cultural model.

#### 4 Summary

We have seen how language is used by the men to reproduce a hegemonic heterosexuality which is embedded in the larger context of hegemonic masculinity. We saw that their society (Greek-letter society) is organized around an ideology of difference and how the speech activities which make up this society – both mixed and single sex – are based on the notion of sexual difference and heterosexuality. There is an elaborate cultural script around different kinds of heterosexuality, and these have led to the naming of these scripts and speech activities: throwing raps, scamming, a drunk story, the commitment thing. One of the most secret and sacred genres of the fraternity is centered around narratives of heterosexuality: fuck stories. In interaction, men metaphorically represent other men as women in order to claim dominance over that man (even in play), as we saw for the 'Hi honey I'm home' line, as well as 'bitch.' The metaphorical assignment of homosexuality worked in a similar way. These two metaphors find a complex but telling synthesis in the term 'bitch boy'. Importantly, in all of these examples the men were performing relationships for the men. We thus see that heterosexuality is embedded in the more important relationships of male dominance hierarchies and homosociability.

Similar practices of cathexis have been discussed by ethnographers of other European cultures. For example, Almeida (1996) describes a variant of the 'fuck story' genre told by the men he studied in a Portuguese village. He also describes a similar dichotomy of heterosexuality focusing on women as sexual partners and women as marriage partners. The fraternity men and the

Portuguese men show how much time and effort go into displaying these kinds of heterosexuality: For both groups of men, these stories are central to their socializing, and are something exalted and enjoyed, not merely expected.

Most importantly, these speech strategies of heterosexuality are how men in both cultures create status among their peers. Heterosexuality is thus not just about sexual object choice, but it also has a social construction that is primarily used by social actors to compete within same sex groups. This pattern suggests that patterns of male domination are not simply about men dominating women. Rather, in both cultures, male domination in heterosexual displays is about men displaying power *over* other men (and women) *to* other men. The stories and other forms of heterosexual display therefore represent same-sex status competition in which heterosexual gender differentiation and dominance is not the goal, but one strategy with which to construct a hegemonic masculinity. This finding suggests that in order to understand language and gender patterns, we need to understand how language is used to create difference and status within gender groups.

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