

University of Nevada, Reno

**Identity Creation and Power Acquisition Through Language use in Preadolescent  
and Adolescent Girls**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
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by

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## **Abstract**

This research provides several insights into how preadolescent and adolescent girls use language to shape their identities and position themselves in stances of social power within their given communities of practice (Bucholtz, 1999). Specifically, it examines how female children participating in 4-H club activities are using language to build individual and group identities; how individual and group identity creation and recreation is managed through language use; how stances of power and hierarchies are created and managed through language use; how directives and indirectness are used to create and maintain social power; and how female children are modeling and employing language tactics based on knowledge acquired from adult displays of language use and exchange. The insights gained here are important because they inform us about how young girls in extracurricular situations are using language to build their identities and position themselves socially.

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## **Introduction**

This research will explore how preadolescent and adolescent girls participating in a 4-H club shape and specialize their language use within their broader speech communities. Specifically, I will be examining how they index identity within their social context, how social meaning is created through language use, and how girls use directives and other forms of authoritative speech as tools of meaning to position themselves in stances of social power. The setting for this investigation is the 4-H horse club located in Washoe County, Nevada. Peer-to-peer speech interactions among the involved youth as well as a youth-to-adult dyadic interactions within the 4-H environment will be the primary speech exchanges analyzed. The participants themselves range in age from five-years-old to sixteen-years-old. However, specific focus is given on the exchanges of eight-year-old to fourteen-year-old female participants as they have shown to be the most verbally expressive in this community of practice.

This research intends to build on major works of William Labov (1972, 1990, 2001), whose research has focused broadly on variation, gender and social class; those of Penelope Eckert (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), whose work focuses on communities of practice, linguistic variation and social meaning among adolescent children; Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011)'s contributions which focus on the embodied language practices children use to construct their social world; Mary Bucholtz (1999, 2000)'s research which investigates how language identities and cultural practices are brought into being through linguistic interaction; Lanita Jacobs-Huey (2006, 2007)'s analysis of gender-specific individual and group identity creation

through the linguistic and social landscape; and, finally Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000)'s joint work which focuses on the impacts of the ideological processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure on language differentiation.

Doing conversational analysis among these girls holds particular significance, as other researchers have noted that power relations among young girls, and later on women, are deeply entwined with, and largely achieved through language use (Bucholtz 1999, 2000; Eckert 2008, 2012; Goodwin 1990). Within their own speech communities, preadolescent and adolescent girls use language as a way to navigate the social landscape and achieve social status. Through social actions such as accusatory talk, or he-said-she-said interactions, young girls are able to verbally jockey for position and status within their peer group (Goodwin 1990). Within the context of broader speech communities, young girls are often able to create power relations with others through situations such as verbal directives, which are often able to command the action of others, greatly influencing the perception of one's own social power (Goodwin 2006). This research takes into consideration all of these influencing factors in order to perform qualitative research that reflects a real world understanding of how linguistic identity, meaning and power originates within young girls. In particular the specialized speech naturally occurring within the 4-H environment produces opportunities which highlight how linguistic identity, meaning and power are created within a given social context.

Much of the work that has been done by researchers such as Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011), and Eckert (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), are centered in highly structured environments such as school settings. This research project is unique

in that it takes place in a community of practice centered on individual, extracurricular interest in equestrian activities, reflecting a focus of solidarity. These activities carry with them a particular skill set and language index that is highly defined by the equestrian environment, producing frequent use of “expert language” (Jacobs-Huey 2006). This environment creates an ideal setting for examining language use among peers in a situation where language selection is often used to show knowledge and skill, ultimately placing the speaker in stances of advanced social standing and power. This analysis will pay particular attention to the situated meaning of directives in order to extract how a particular directive indexes identity, creates social meaning and grants perceived power within its given context. By combining these methods and applying them to the use of language directives I believe that a great deal of insight will be made towards understanding how preadolescent girls are using language directives to create and orient themselves within social status systems.

The 4-H environment is ideal for this type of research because of the roles that participants are encouraged to take on and the specialized speech that takes place between participants. Additionally, no ethnographic fieldwork has previously been done in this type of setting. This is significant because the 4-H environment is specifically designed to empower our youth and it encourages them to make new social and community connections, explore the world and how they fit in it, and to take on leadership roles. This creates unique interactions among children and places adults at the sideline. The participants themselves range in age from eight to fourteen. The primary participants are all female. They come from a variety of backgrounds which include some who live in town and board their horses nearby, some who live on the outskirts of town

and keep their horses at home, and some who come from a more rural landscape, keeping horses along with other animals on their family ranches. They come from traditional nuclear families, divorced families, and non-traditional families where extended family members are acting as primary care-givers. Some have the best of economic circumstances while others must show extra ingenuity to compensate for financial lack when bringing to fruition the 4-H experience in their lives.

Examining the natural flow and exchange of communication between 4-H participants during moments of unsupervised talk at horse shows creates a context for communication without the threat of adult interaction. This context allows for examination of a purer form of peer-to-peer communication from which to analyze how linguistic identity, meaning and power are being created among participants. Further, comparing these speech interactions with other exchanges from the same subjects in an atmosphere of adult influence will highlight how language is adapted outside the context of peer to peer interactions, and shaped or guided by those in positions of greater authority and expertise.

4-H is a way for children ages 5-18 to become involved in their community, forge new friendships, and learn responsibility all while doing something they love. Currently offering youth development to around six million young people, the United States chapter of 4-H is the “largest youth development organization” in America (4-h.org). Comprised of several different clubs such as archery, gardening, cooking, market animal, and horse clubs, 4-H is offered in every county and parish in the United States). 4-H is offered through the University of Nevada-Reno’s Cooperative Extension. At the national level, 4-



H is comprised of a community of more than 100 public universities (4-h.org). The reach of 4-H spans from “urban neighborhoods to suburban school yards to rural farming communities” (4-h.org). With over 25-million alumni, 500,000 volunteers and 3,500 4-H professionals, a vast network of supportive mentoring helps each 4-H'er develop their personal potential. As previously mentioned, the core belief of 4-H is empowerment of our youth. Children develop leadership skills through research-based experiences led by mentors, and participate in hands-on projects of their choosing. Regardless of the club joined, the 4-H pledge is universal and speaks to the values instilled within each club:

“I pledge my head to clearer thinking, my heart to greater loyalty, my hands to larger service, and my health to better living, for my club, my community, my country, and my world” (4-h.org).

Youth participating in the 4-H horse club typically own or lease a horse, although volunteering at clinics and events is acceptable if it is not possible to have one's own animal. The level of commitment and involvement varies from child to child, but basic expectations include learning about horse behavior, anatomy, confirmation (overall build of a horse), breed specific appearance, safety, feeding, routine maintenance and medical care.

Four clubs comprised the Washoe County horse chapter at the time of this research. All clubs actively participate in local clinics, shows, and community events. Horse clinics are an excellent way for 4-H participants to learn the basic concepts of horse behavior and ownership. A clinic might feature activities such as how to safely load your horse into a trailer, how to bandage a small wound, or how to show your horse in

different categories such as Western Pleasure or English Equitation. Horse shows are put on by each club at different times of the season. Shows offer participants a chance to display their horsemanship skills to their peers and community members. These activities directly reflect the work they have been putting into their horse project. For those who also plan on eventually selling their horse, this is an excellent way to introduce the horse to the community. While participants are allowed to have differing levels of involvement in the 4-H horse activities, there are different awards for participation levels. The basic expectations are that over the course of the project year each participant will attend 50% of their monthly club meetings, participate in a minimum combination of three clinics or horse shows, and turn in an annual horse project log which outlines the care details for their project horse, and expenses associated with the project. The minimum attendance earns a participant an 80% attendance award. For 100% attendance participants must attend three clinics and three 4-H sponsored horse shows where they enter, at a minimum, one showmanship class and one rail class at each show. Participants must also turn in an annual horse project log.

Each club is self-funded. Involvement within the community, such as putting on community wide horse shows or tack sales, allows each club a way to earn funding to cover their expenses while also offering fun and enriching activities to the community as a whole. While larger community projects, such as the annual 4-H tack sale, take place under the supervision of adult leaders, participants are also encouraged to organize and lead smaller fundraising events such as car washes, and hay raffles. These activities give 4-H participants an active role in supporting their club while also being involved in their community. On a local level the 4-H horse club is an excellent representation of the

growing relationship between urban and rural lifestyles that are developing in northern Nevada. The city of Reno is at the heart of Washoe County, but the city is surrounded by rural ranches, hobby farms, and suburban backyard horse owners. The result is a co-mingling of traditionally rural activities and language that is taking place in, and being influenced by a city landscape. In fact, many of the clinics and 4-H horse shows take place at the University's equestrian facility which is located just blocks from downtown Reno. The result is a symbiotic relationship which can often be heard with the hum of busy traffic, yells from a local soccer game being played at the park adjacent to the equestrian facility, and shrill whinnies of excitement from the horses being shown by 4-H participants.

The participants of the group focused upon here range in age from five-years-old to sixteen-years-old. There is only one male youth participant featured, Rick, who is five-years-old. There is one more male participant who never spoke, and he is also five-years-old. The remaining youth participants are all female and are: Betty (youth club leader), who is 15 years-old; Marissa (youth club recorder) who is 13 years-old; Amy (youth club treasurer) who is 11 years-old; Angie (youth participant) who is eight-years-old; Stephanie (youth participant) who is 12 years-old; Jennifer (youth participant) who is 10 years-old; Taylor (youth participant) age unknown; Bobby (youth participant) who is 10 years-old; Florence (youth participant) who is 10 years-old; Edith (youth participant) who is 12 years-old; Daisey (youth participant) who is 14 years-old; Zoe (youth participant) who is 9 years-old; and Beth (youth participant) age unknown. As we can see from the participants listed, the club participants are overwhelming female and predominantly range in age from eight to 15. This is an excellent reflection of the 4-H population as it is

predominantly female led, both in its youth participants and adult leaders. It is also important to note that these participants come from reasonably similar middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds. Relative equality on this level may lead to less confrontation, and it increases the probability that the children will have similar ways of speaking.

The 4-H environment presents opportunities for speech exchanges among children within structured environments, environments that allow safe forms of competitive speech, and casual environments which promote speech among peers. This type of environment is ideal for looking at how formalized structure with adult supervision and interaction affects speech tendencies in children verses peer to peer speech in moments of unsupervised interaction. This type of environment is distinct from the school setting as it is less structured, participants elect to be involved, and the participants take on a much more active role in leading activities than they do in the school environment. These factors are important because they influence the type of speech exchanges that take place. The fact that this is an elective activity means that these children are participating in this club because horses are of interest to them. Since the participants are not being forced to participate in this club, as they are in school, cliques are less likely to form, and bullying rarely, if ever takes place. Additionally, all of the youth participants are learning about taking on a leadership role within their community. This is important because factors such as self-esteem are positively impacted, which can be seen in the way that the youth participants speak to one another. All speech interactions presented here take place within the 4-H setting, either in the structured monthly meeting, or in the less structured setting of 4-H sponsored horse shows.

Methodologies of this fieldwork employ approaches outlined by Eckert (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011), and Jacobs-Huey (2006). These researchers use a combination of participant observation and discourse analysis (specifically, Conversation Analysis, or CA) to understand their findings. Under the direction of Eckert's community of practice approach, and Goodwin's assertion that language use among children must be researched from the perspective of their world rather than from an adult (top-down) perspective, my research strives to capture the natural flow of language practices (focusing on alignment and directives) among preadolescent and adolescent girls by capturing moments of peer-to-peer interactions within a youth-directed activity. I am also a regular adult participant in the 4-H community and the parent of two participants. I have been part of this local 4-H community for three years.

This research was conducted over the course of just over a year in 2015-2016, and involved engaging in participant observation during the monthly 4-H meetings as well as attending three day-long horse shows taking place near downtown Reno, NV during the summers. Besides observing, recordings were made of natural speech by the 4-H participants, both peer-to-peer and child-adult in the context of both the shows and meetings. Further participant observation was conducted through interaction and observation with my own children in their daily lives as they are participants in the club and engage in horse-related activities on a daily basis at our home. Recordings of peer-to-peer conversations were conducted by equipping 4-H participants (both of my daughters) with a recorder while they went about their normal 4-H activities. The recorder, approximately sized 4 inches long and 2.5 inches wide, was placed in the front pocket of

their shirt, which was plainly visible to all participants. This approach allows for moments of natural conversation among peers to be captured without the looming presence of the adult researcher, an ideal strategy for the community of practice approach. 4-H monthly group meetings led by adults are also included in this research. These meetings offer an ideal background for comparison of adult-influenced verses uninfluenced conversations among peers. These conversations were recorded by placing the same small recording device openly on a table centrally located in the meeting room. Consent to record for this research project was established with both the 4-H club leader, and the club community as a whole. I initially spoke in detail with the 4-H club leader in charge of the group at the time this research project began about my research goals and what that would mean for recording approaches. I explained that my goal was to obtain as much natural speech dialogue between participants as possible. After receiving consent from the club leader, I presented my research project to the club as a whole at a monthly club meeting. I explained to the parents and youth participants that I wanted to learn more about how children are using speech within their communities of practice to build identity and social hierarchies. During this time any questions were answered, and all parents agreed that recording conversations during the monthly club meetings and at horse shows was acceptable. Lastly, while I did not conduct formal interviews, I did engage in talk and discussion with my own children about the practices that would be used. In this thesis, I focus most of the discourse analysis on eight hours of recordings that best exemplify the processes I was looking to analyze.

The same core groups of girls are featured throughout all recordings, although their names have been changed to grant anonymity. The club focused upon is comprised

predominantly of female participants, and their mothers. There are two male participants in this club, both participating at the cloverbud (youngest) level, while there are around twenty female participants participating at all levels. A few of the participants fathers do attend the horse shows and the monthly club meetings, but they are out-numbered by about five to one when compared to the female adults present. As a native researcher, I hoped that my presence would have a lower impact on the speakers of focus than a non-native researcher would, giving the research a truer community of practice approach (studying the community as part of the community itself). Further details about conducting this research will be described in the following chapter.

This thesis will focus on several distinct areas of speech and its social role. In the first chapter I provide the theoretical framework which provides the basis for this research and describe the methodologies I chose to use. In the second chapter I examine how this 4-H community builds its unique identity with specific focus on locality (Eckert 2008). In the third chapter I focus upon how the ideological processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure are used to index and create identity within the local 4-H club community (Irvine and Gal 2000). In the fourth chapter I examine the processes of directness, indirectness, and the creation of social power (Goodwin 2006; Jacobs-Huey 2006). In the fifth, and final chapter, I conclude with the primary findings of this thesis, and look to the future with specific research ideas in mind.

## **Chapter 1: Literature Review and Methodology**

Language plays a powerful role in each of our day-to-day lives, inherently shaping all of our social experiences; it manifests a powerful expressive function, letting others know who we are (Jakobson 1960). The research presented in this thesis will focus on the different ways that young girls in a 4-H club use language as a tool of identity creation and how they enact stances of social power within their communities. By better understanding the ways that pre-adolescent and adolescent girls are using language to create complex individual and group identities, and build hierarchy systems of social status and power, we can also trace the way their language practices actively shape language use within their broader speech communities, highlighting the important relationship between gender and language.

Research concerning gender and language use has long been a topic of interest within the anthropological and sociolinguistic fields. From the early works of Robin Lakoff's classic 1973 article *Language and Woman's Place*, to the modern works of Anthropologists Penelope Eckert (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), and Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011), that examine talk in interactions among children and youth, the research landscape has focused growing attention on understanding gender differences in language use. Specifically, anthropological and sociolinguistic literature on gender and language among young women puts much emphasis on the role that young women are playing in shaping language use, variation, and change within their broader speech communities, how young women index identity within their social context, and their creation of social meaning and power through



language use. These broader current themes are exemplified by the major works of William Labov (1972, 1990, 2001), whose research has focused broadly on variation, gender and social class; Penelope Eckert (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), whose work focuses on communities of practice, linguistic variation and social meaning among adolescent children; Marjorie Harness Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011), whose research focuses on the embodied language practices children use to construct their social world; Mary Bucholtz (1999, 2000), whose work with adolescents in schools focuses on how language identities and cultural practices are brought into being through everyday linguistic interaction; Lanita Jacobs-Huey (2006, 2007), whose work focuses on gender-specific individual and group identity creation through the linguistic and social landscape; and Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000) whose joint work focuses on the impacts of the processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure on language differentiation.

Labov's (1990, 205-254; see also 2001) research reminds us that women play an innovative role in creating variation and change in language use. Through investigating gender and social class in the course of linguistic change, his work has shown that women are taking on the role of language innovators. Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011) further supports this idea by showing us the importance of viewing and analyzing language use among children through their world view, and paying attention to how group formation and social power are negotiated through their everyday interactions at play. Goodwin and Kyratzis' (2007, 279-289) work sums up why the examination of children socializing children brings to the forefront the importance of researching children's language use on their terms rather than on adult terms. The work of Eckert

(2008) regarding discussions of language and indexicality guides the understanding of variation through social meaning, which allows the researcher to view the contextual world of language use. In other work, Eckert (1990, 92-122) as well as Bucholtz (1999: 203-223) stress the importance of situating linguistic research within its local meaning, emphasizing the community of practice research model. Bucholtz's (1999) work on adolescent girls self-identifying as "nerds" demonstrates how identity claims are created through speech practices, and also how group boundaries of a "community of practice" are continually being established and reified. Jacobs-Huey's work (2006, 2007) reveals how identity claims are made through specific speech strategies and tactics, such as indirectness in the context of learning "expert" speech practices. Her focus on cosmetologists in training reveal the importance of situated social meaning, and gender-specific identity creation. Irvine and Gal's (2000) work highlights the ideological processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure, which may help us to reveal how individuals position themselves within groups, as well as how groups identify themselves within their larger social context. Each of their conceptual and theoretical frameworks play a critical role in helping us fully understand the role that young women play in shaping language use.

### **Key researchers**

To better understand the overall importance of each of these significant contributions to the field (and this thesis), it is essential to specifically examine some the contributions of each researcher more thoroughly. In the following sections, I discuss how each author's

works on gender and language connect and intersect with my own research project and the data I collected.

*William Labov*

Through his long career in sociolinguistic research, William Labov (1972, 1990, 2001), has presented several important insights into the understanding of how women are using language within their communities of practice, and how their usage patterns trickle down, influencing the way that children are using language amongst themselves. These ideas are important to gender and language in general because they show that women more so than men are using language in a way that puts them at the forefront of linguistic innovation, variation and change (see also Labov 2001; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992, 2003). These ideas play an important role in this research project due to the influencing factors that adult female speakers within the 4-H community of practice appear to have on the young girls participating in 4-H, which I discuss primarily in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

Labov (1990) specifically shows us that women are the social risk takers when it comes to deviating from standard language use, which in turn puts them at the forefront of ushering in linguistic change (Labov 1990, 205-254). As Labov notes “differentiation logically begins in the acquisition of the first forms of language by the language learner from the primary caregiver. In all the societies studied so far, the caregiver is most often a female” (Labov 1990, 205). As these children grow, their social lives begin to exert a great amount of influence over their day-to-day experiences. Factors such as mimicking language used by care-givers quickly develops into tools of social power, meaning that

the female-dominant language variations children are introduced to early on eventually become part of the linguistic repertoire they are using to achieve social standing and power status amongst their peer groups.

Considering that young language learners are so heavily influenced by the constant interaction of female-dominated language change that is taking place at any given time, it makes sense that these changes would be most likely to take hold within a given community of practice, such as the 4-H community. As children grow, their social lives begin to exert a great amount of influence over their day-to-day experiences and positioning themselves into stances of social status through strategic language use become increasingly important. Language use quickly develops into a tool of social power, meaning that the female-dominant language variations children are introduced to early on eventually become part of the linguistic toolbox used to achieve social standing and power status amongst their peer groups. Considering that in time these children, and in particular the girls, will find themselves engaged in linguistic competition for social status and power acquisition, we see that language use takes on greater importance through its social meaning and its community of practice (Eckert 1990, 92-122 and 2003; Goodwin 1991, 2006). These concepts are important to this research because in the 4-H setting examined here, female leaders are the norm for both the adult and youth participants. Specifically, all of the elected youth leaders are females, and the adult club leader is a female. This creates an ideal setting to explore the way that language use among female adult leaders is picked up and utilized by the female youth participants. I will specifically examine this relationship in more detail in chapter 4.

The foundational ideas presented by Labov (1972, 1990, 2001) take on a relevant role within the setting of this research project. This research focuses specifically on girls who are in the learning phases of becoming language innovators. This language innovation is plainly seen in the ways that certain 4-H members mimic language used by female leaders within the community, and in how some members bravely take social risks by deviating from standard language use during peer-to-peer conversations. As we will see in the coming chapters, these participants use specialized speech that is deeply entwined within their community of practice in a way that positions themselves in perceived stances of social status and power.

### *Penelope Eckert*

Penelope Eckert's (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012) work is central to this research as it has contributed a great deal to our broader understanding of gender and language, especially among adolescents. Her themes, which center on the concept of community of practice and the social meaning behind linguistic variation, are appropriately guiding research in a new way. Eckert (2008) emphasizes situating one's research within local meaning, which is the essence of the community of practice approach. This style of research is important to the broader understanding of gender and language because, as Eckert explains, the social landscape is constructed through the social terrain, and we construct a linguistic landscape through a segmentation of the linguistic practices in that terrain (Eckert 2008, 455). This is to say that one's social meaning is developed through their local surroundings and experiences. As a result, the language choices people are making are largely dependent upon these local ideological

influences. The implications of social terrain are easily seen in the dynamics of the 4-H participants, which I will discuss in the following chapters of this thesis.

As Bucholtz (1999) has discussed elsewhere, the “community of practice” (CofP) approach to understanding language usage and social meanings has a number of advantages of the older “speech community” model. The idea of the “speech community” as put forth by early sociolinguistic researchers such as Gumperz (1968, 1971) and Labov (1972) simply defined it as a group of speakers sharing similar verbal forms of communication and communicative norms, with Gumperz stressing the similarity of norms as paramount. These “linguistic aggregates” as Gumperz (1968) called them tended to be defined and delineated from the top-down (i.e. by the researcher) whereas conversely, the CofP’s focus on individual variation and all linguistic practices as acts of community creation provide a fluidity and a bottom-up perspective rather than relying on what Bucholtz states as the more static idea of the “speech community” delineated by outsiders (Bucholtz 1999, 203-223). Eckert’s work also supports Bucholtz’s interpretation; the community of practice approach is a critical “locus for studying how power is organized and exercised in day-to-day linguistic practice” (Eckert and Wenger 2005, 582). Eckert and Wenger assert that power must not be assumed, rather we must wait and see if power dynamics naturally arise within a given community of practice. One way to easily exam if power exists and how power relationships are functioning within a given group is to examine a groups’ insider and outsider dynamics, which is clearly seen among participants of the 4-H community of practice. Within the 4-H speaking community itself there are very specialized ways of speaking and displaying “expert language” (see Jacobs-Huey 2006) which can easily identify participants as being

community insiders rather than outsiders, and the way which this language is used helps reify the status system of the group and shapes how power is wielded.

Additionally, Eckert's (2008) work on location and style, and their intrinsic ties to language choice play a large role in the analysis of language within this research. As Eckert explains, locality is so important because the use of local identity claims help define what it means to be from "here" as opposed to being from "there"—this process of claiming includes language choices (Eckert 2008, 462). In this research project, the locality I examine consists of belonging to a 4-H group focused on horses in a mid-size inland Western American city that is undergoing a transformation in its urban, suburban, and rural relationships. Certain elements of linguistic style distinctly characterize individuals within their location as well as reveal their location to those outside of it. Different ways of saying things are also intended to signal different ways of being, and for young women their way of being defines who they are socially. For example, the way that 4-H participants refer to certain gaits of movement among their horses, such as "canter" or "lope", signal being an "English" or "Western" rider as each word is specifically tied to a specific way of being (and riding) inside each of these disciplines.

Another important concept related to style is seen in the differing styles of interaction related to gender identification. These styles are typically strongly tied to the traditional roles that each gender is perceived to have within a given community, which is tied directly to local markets of value. Because women are often relegated to the domestic realm, and men are active participants in the economic marketplace, the way in which they are viewed, and therefore gain personal power and autonomy unfolds very

differently for each (Eckert 1990, 92-95). The domestic role that women, and even young girls still remain tied to within North American society (despite many advances in the public sphere) means that they must use language in a way that grants them symbolic capital and standing within the community, creating linguistic capital. Unlike the more tangible capital that men are seen to acquire, much of women's capital still comes through the intangible forms of developing personal influence over others (Eckert 1990, 93). Arguably, one of the most direct ways a woman can develop personal influence is to create strong social ties with other women, which is often done through the use of language.

For women language use represents the vehicle through which social bonds and support networks are formed. It is not that women are simply talking and gossiping about every little thing with anyone who will listen, rather they are strategically using language to align themselves with other women in a way that will create symbolic power (Eckert 1990, 91-122). This process of deriving symbolic power is something that is learned very early on and is easily seen in the way that the preadolescent and adolescent girl participates in lengthy "girl talk" sessions. Eckert closely examines the idea that the way girls and later women participate in speech events are based largely on gender roles within society (Eckert 1990, 91-122). Because speech is gender role specific, and gender is deeply rooted within the local market value system we see that the relationship between language and local values is inextricably linked. This is most easily seen through the misinterpretation of how boys and men view the way girls and women use language. As Eckert shows, many boys "think girls talk too much...they talk constantly between themselves and about every little thing" (1990, 91). In contrast, young men often assert



that they do not talk nearly as much as girls. Whether or not this assertion is factual has little meaning in the ideological interpretation of speech practices because meaning making is formed through personal interpretation rather than through fact finding. In this way it is often viewed that women are gossips, talking about anything and everything at will. This interpretation carries with it the implication that women are not necessarily to be trusted with their words because they are likely to tell anyone anything. However, for the participants these verbal exchanges are vital because they allow girls to learn how to position themselves within their larger social surroundings. Cooperative competition is an excellent example of this type of girl talk (Eckert 1990, 91-122). Through cooperative competition girls are able to verbally volley back and forth with the goal of positioning themselves in stances that “negotiate and measure their symbolic capital” (Eckert 1990, 91). Girl talk is essentially the ground upon which young girls begin to learn how to verbally negotiate for social power and status (Eckert 1990). Social power and status are of course directly linked to local ideologies and local markets of value. Because of this, a direct link exists in how women use language to navigate their local social settings.

Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992; see also 2003) stress the need to focus on gender in its full complexity: how gender is constructed in social practice, and difference, and of language. This is because in practice, social meaning, social identity, community membership, and the symbolic value of linguistic form are constantly mutually constructed (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, 464-474). Probably the most important conclusion that this work came to in relation to my research goals is that power in language wears two faces. First it is situated in and fed by individual agency; situated power resides primarily in face-to-face interactions but also in other concrete activities

like horseback riding. Second it is historically constituted and responsive to the community's coordinated endeavors; sociohistorical power resides in relation of situated interaction to other situations, social activities, and institutionalized social and linguistic practices. The real power of language—its social and intellectual value—is found in the interplay between these two aspects of meaning and in the room for development afforded by the adaptability of conventions.

In terms of this research project Eckert's work on style and belonging are paramount. In this instance, both linguistic style and the subsequent senses of belonging they create for these young women are heavily influenced by both the 4-H environment and the West coast/inland West equestrian environment. The 4-H environment is unique in this case because it is centered around horses, which bring with them highly specialized speech, clothing, and equipment which declare both style and belonging by their mere presence and are then supported by language use. When you also take into consideration that the participants in this program are children who are learning how to navigate their social terrain, vying for power and status, style and belongingness become central components to the 4-H experience itself.

*Marjorie Harness Goodwin*

Goodwin's (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011) work has been central in pioneering new ways of thinking about and approaching the study of gender and language among children. Specifically, Goodwin focuses on the ways that power relationships are entwined within children's speech communities, a central topic to the research presented here. Much like Eckert, Goodwin emphasizes the importance of rooting research within the world that

children are actively living in rather than the antiquated tradition of studying children in adult downward (to-down) model. Goodwin's work, as discussed below, had a strong influence on how the fieldwork for this thesis was conducted and data analyzed.

Goodwin's research specifically addresses how talk is used to build social organization within face-to-face interactions among children. As Goodwin and Kyratzis (2007) bring to our attention, children are agents of their own socialization, as such they construct their own ideas of valued behaviors and identities within their peer groups. During play children "construct dialogues in which characters take contrastive positions and stances to one another, permitting the playing out of an event in full dramatic regalia through a multiplicity of voices" (Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007, 282). They discuss how this type of play allows children to constantly define and redefine their social situations while holding one another accountable. By negotiating their alignments to moral issues through talk, children are also able to negotiate their alignments to one another; they use talk as a way to define who they are in relation to their peers. This process shows us how language is used to form both the social experience of the child and the personal identity within the child, which is then reflected through social stances which project the inner beliefs of the speaker. This process is never fixed, rather it is in constant motion changing as the perception of one's self also changes. As such, we see that language use always represents more than just words. Language is the tool with which speakers position themselves socially by expressing their deeper inner beliefs through language use.

By examining behaviors such as these we see that a rich and in-depth sociality is developed during early childhood. Most importantly we see that through talk interactions

young children are constantly defining what is appropriate behavior within a given peer group. Children are effectively using talk to shape the way they view themselves within their social setting and to orient themselves within that group. Through the “give and take” of talk interactions (see Schieffelin 1990), children are constructing their social identity and vying for social status and recognition from their peers. This phenomenon indicates that even at early ages children are becoming aware of how to navigate their social settings in a way that creates social power and status for themselves.

These early interactions set the stage for future development, shaping the way that the child sees themselves in association to their peers and to the world around them. Successful talk exchanges positively reinforce a child to use particular words or phrases to gain or keep social status, which in turn perpetuates the use of particular words and phrases – logically those learned through their interactions with care-givers. As a child develops over time, the way that they appropriate language in their peer setting begins to have growing consequences on their social status, making word use a critical component of peer to peer interaction and social status. The impact of word use does not dissipate as a child grows, in fact the impacts of word choice magnify considerably as a child enters preadolescence.

Another key factor in language use is social organization. Goodwin’s (1990) research brings to surface the ways that peer-to-peer activities among children align participants toward each other in ways that specifically build social organization (1-2). As Goodwin points out, “it is not the case that talk and social organization are two separate types of phenomena that merely happen in isolation from each other. Instead

[...] talk is itself a form of social action” (1990, 2). The production of talk itself is doubly contextual in that an utterance invokes for its interpretation the social field from which it emerges while simultaneously a new arena for subsequent action. Goodwin (1990, 4-8) shows that participants in conversation have the job of providing next moves to ongoing talk which demonstrate what sense they make of the talk. Through a kind of speech event that Goodwin calls a “he-said-she-said accusatory interaction,” opportunities for constituting social organization readily present themselves to the participants involved in the verbal exchange (Goodwin 1990, 10). By providing a range of resources that both explicitly depict participant’s social standing and that situate those present in relation to one another, he-said-she-said interactions actively provide participants with status creating situations that are achieved directly through talk. These activities effectively align participants towards each other in specific ways, and that process itself is central to the way that activities provide resources for creating social organization through face-to-face interaction. Not only do these interactions show us how children successfully negotiate themselves through complex social status creating situations, they also show us that children are creating their own experiences that are independent from the adult world.

Directives also play a critical role in the creation of social meaning and status. In *The Hidden Life of Girls*, Goodwin (2006) closely examines the role of social directives. Goodwin defines directives as “an utterance intended to indicate the speakers desire to regulate the behavior of the listener, that is to get the listener to do something” (2006, 107). Children’s social organizations are made up largely of directive and response sequences, making this phenomenon a critical component of how preadolescent and

adolescent girls develop and maintain power relations through their language use. As Goodwin (2006, 107) asserts:

The turns of those who position themselves above others are not built through mitigated action. Instead turns are constructed making use of bald imperatives, pejorative address terms, insults, accounts that index arbitrary needs and desires of the speakers rather than requirements of the group, and explanations that allude to the speaker's ultimate control.

Through these directive actions we see that children are able to create for themselves power relationships within their peer groups; this process surfaces extensively in the research discussed in later chapters of this thesis. Although Goodwin focuses primarily on how young girls use directives to form stances of power within their own speech communities, as any parent likely knows, children also actively use these linguistic tactics as a way to negotiate power within their broader speech communities.

Labov (1972) provided important precursory insights that support Goodwin's points when he talked about how children pick up and use the language practices of their care-givers. In this situation children are often being directed to behave in certain ways, or to participate in certain activities that the care-giver deems appropriate. For many children this exposure to and use of directives teaches them how to exert power over others, and to achieve social acceptance by complying with what is being requested of them by their authority figures. Because children are exposed to the use of directives from the earliest of ages, they quickly learn how to use them to navigate the world around them. We can see the use of directives in action within the broader speech community in

a variety of ways. There is the child who orders their siblings around through directives, the child who thwarts authority figures by refusing to comply with directives, and of course children are adept and efficient at learning how to achieve desired results by giving both overt and subtle directives to their parents and care-givers. This makes directives an important theme across both peer-to-peer speech communities, and the broader speech communities that children interact with.

The 4-H environment in particular provides an ideal backdrop for examining successful talk exchanges and how these interactions may grant social status. The equestrian world contains a great deal of specialized language, even with the subcategories of disciplines such as English and Western styles of riding. As mentioned previously, key terms such as “lope” verses “canter” or “gather” verses “collect” immediately identify which discipline a rider aligns themselves with. The rider’s successful use of the disciplines specialized language creates social status while the inaccurate use of the same language reveals the speaker to be an outsider, lowering their standing. While corrections are often phrased gently, they come quickly and with no uncertainty as each discipline views the correct use of their specialized language as vital rite of passage to participation within their discipline.

*Mary Bucholtz*

Mary Bucholtz’s (1999, 2000) major contributions to the broader understanding of gender and language revolve around identity development through linguistic interactions, which are tied directly to preadolescent and adolescent life phases. Through her research, Bucholtz shows us the importance of viewing linguistic practices as holding a valuable

place within the social development of personal identity. While the use of language alone does not constitute one's identity, it does directly impact identity development through its larger social meaning. This understanding is critical to properly executing and analyzing any sociolinguistic undertaking.

As mentioned above, Bucholtz (1999, 220) points out that while language is not the only phenomenon shaping identity development, it does work in conjunction with other social practices to produce social meanings. For example, the group of "nerd girls" presented strategically employed a variety of linguistic and physical characteristics to create a unique identity within their larger social setting (Bucholtz, 1999). Specifically, this group of high-school aged girls utilized a unique combination of language, clothing, and activities which uniquely identified them as nerds. By forming these kinds of unique group characteristics through language use and physical markers each group is able to distinguish themselves as a distinct group with belonging being shown through public displays of the groups' unique characteristics.

It is important to note that the unique characteristics of a group are not chosen by happenstance, rather they are representations of the ideologies at play within the group dynamic. For instance, in the "nerd" girl group, the process of iconization (Irvine and Gal 2000) clearly shows that this particular group holds ideologies that downplay femininity, place importance on individuality, and encourage displays of intelligence (Bucholtz 1999, 213-215). This is seen specifically through the way they dress, the strategic use of language, and the activities they choose to participate in, such as chess. This iconization process plays out in the formation of any group as it is this unique set of characteristics



that allows the formation of any group which can be distinguished from another, and at the core of each of these groups is an agreement on shared ideologies.

For the participants in the horse 4-H chapter language is playing a key role in the development of identity as a 4-H member. Aside from the extensive use of specialized language at all participation levels, members are using this language and interactions with their peers as a way to develop their identity as horseman. For example, a Cloverbud member, the youngest membership level, is learning how to use horse-specific language in the appropriate context and experiments with this language, reflecting their status. An advanced level member uses this language more confidently, displaying a mastery of context which allows the speaker to appear knowledgeable and worthy of higher status. In this way language is actively shaping identity in terms of expertise.

As noted in the previous section detailing Eckert's work, Bucholtz also brings to our attention the benefits of using the community of practice approach over a speech community approach within sociolinguistic studies. As she notes "the community of practice offers an integrated approach to linguistic analysis" (Bucholtz 1999, 221). Whereas the speech community simply represents those sharing a common language, or dialect, which is much broader than the CofP. This is important because examining the CofP allows the researcher to understand all socially meaningful language use as practices that are linked to various communities. As a result, researchers are able to provide more complete descriptions of language use along with their social explanations. Additionally, the community of practice approach provides researchers a way to bring both their qualitative and quantitative research variables closer together, meaning that

both aspects can now be included in a single analysis. As we see, all of these advantageous qualities make the community of practice model and ideal fit for studying language in context.

The 4-H Horse Club environment provides an ideal backdrop for analyzing identity development through language use within a specific community of practice. The mere fact that each participant belongs to a 4-H club creates a platform for identity development. Unique clothing, specific ways of speaking, and certain daily activities, such as feeding one's horse, come together to create the foundation of the 4-H equestrian participant identity. When this is further combined with the intricacies of 4-H horsemanship as an activity, the identity is further developed through languages cues associated with being an "English" rider verses a "Western" rider, a "Cloverbud" participant verses an "Intermediate" participant, and so on. As this research will highlight, each facet of participation and belonging coalesce to create an ever-changing representation of individual identity.

*Lanita Jacobs-Huey*

Lanita Jacobs-Huey's (2006, 2007) research provides significant insights into the relationships at play between language and gender identity roles. Focusing primarily on African American female gendered hair stylists and their customers, a close examination of how language is used to negotiate and assert identity claims is made. Additionally, Jacobs-Huey (2006, 2007) offers an in-depth investigation into the role of embodied social practices through which she provides insightful discourse analysis. Specifically, Jacobs-Huey's work highlights the importance of expertise language use, indirectness,

and to a lesser extent, the strategic use of silence (2006, 2007). All of these speech practices are frequently seen in the 4-H research setting, making Jacobs-Huey's findings key to my research analysis.

Furthermore, Jacobs-Huey's (2006) ethnographic approach is specifically relevant as it is situated in multi-sited ethnography, as is this research. Through the examination of multiple salon settings, Jacobs-Huey brings to light the fact that these settings act as "sites of regularized interaction" where cultural exchanges about life play out (2006, 17). Multiple sites allow for a broader understanding of how "verbal and non-verbal strategies" are employed by participants "to mediate their respective identities" (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 12). By examining these strategies across a spectrum of locations, a greater understanding of community specific continuities and differences can be gained. While my research unfolds within the confines of Washoe County and focuses upon a specific group of participants, it does take place at multiple sites, and incorporates accounts of out-of-state events. By including multiple research sites, greater insight is made into understanding the process of identity creation across the full spectrum of a 4-H participants experience.

Jacobs-Huey (2007, 171-175) describes the role of expertise language use in identity creation by paying close attention to how language is strategically used to mark expertise, in turn granting the speaker with enhanced social status. Routine conversations come to represent "highly symbolic collaborations" which tease out and create "expert" and "novice" roles (2006, 17). Specifically, the use of expertise language in the form of "specialized hairstyle knowledge" creates stances of expert and novice identities (2007,

180). As Jacobs-Huey points out, the role of “expert” and “novice” can be a slippery one, and neither role exists in a fixed status, rather they shift in direct relationship to the context of the conversation at hand (2007, 19-20). As Jacobs-Huey points out, traditionally “clients are presumed to be hair-care novices, and licensed hair-stylists are recognized as certified hair experts” (2007, 19). However, the real-world experience of this hierarchy deviates dramatically from these prescribed conventions. Often times, the “African American female clients” seeking hair-care assistance already possess a large degree of advanced knowledge pertaining to hair-care and styling, and, as result, both parties strategically weave “in and out of expert and novice stances” (2007, 20). These shifting stances are employed through a variety of strategies with some strategies producing successful results, and some falling short. Common strategies for displaying expertise knowledge include hedging, which mitigates one’s agency or authority for strategic ends, as well as indirectness, and silence, which are also relevant to the research in this thesis.

Hedging, as mentioned previously, is the use of mitigating language designed to lessen, or soften the impact of an utterance (Jacobs- Huey, 2007; see also Ariel 2008, 2010). This approach is often employed strategically and is frequently imbued with indirectness. The use of this strategy differs according to context and the speaker’s ethnic or socioeconomic background. What Jacobs-Huey describes as “pointed” indirectness language may take the form of “vague” language that is meant to be interpreted in a specific way by certain listeners. (Morgan 2002, 47). The strategic use of indirect language allows for ‘veiled’ remarks which “obscure the surface content of an utterance” (Jacobs-Huey, 2007, 179). By employing indirect and pointedly indirect language,

comments and critiques can be made in a covert manner that allow the speaker not to appear impolite or aggressive despite the fact that they are taking stances of power such as those associated with expertise knowledge. Those part of the community (both the hearers and targets of the indirectness) will have the background knowledge necessary to interpret the covert meanings (Morgan 2002). Furthermore, silence, when used as a presence of meaning, can be just as powerful as hedging and indirectness (Lorde 1978; Jacobs-Huey 2006). When strategically employed, silence can grant or deny claims of expertise, positioning the silent party into a power stance of their own. It can also show compliance, protect an involved party, redirect a conversation, or end the exchange all together (Jacobs-Huey 2006). In this research, silence is most frequently seen as a form of compliance, or as a power stance. As we will see in the following chapters, all of these speech strategies are actively employed within the 4-H club community.

Jacobs-Huey also examines the challenges of being a “native” researcher which is particularly useful as I, too, am a “native” researcher (2006, 144-145) due to my long-time participation in the 4-H community. In her work, she specifically highlights how important the relationship is between the researcher and the research participants. By performing research in one’s own “home” territory, the researcher’s ability to “enter a community and develop a rapport” can be less fraught as the “insider” researcher will avoid many of the challenges an “outsider” researcher would face (cf. Bernard 1994; Paredes, 1984). For example, the native researcher and the research participants likely already share community specific identities such as familiarity with “home speech”, and insider knowledge of expertise language use and its implied meaning (Jacobs-Huey, 2006, 135).

Specifically, the ease of entry into the research participant community is where the largest benefit of “native” research lies within this project. Because a foundation of shared identity already exists, a degree of trust and “cultural authenticity” already exists (Jacobs-Huey, 2006, 135). This inherent level of “insider” status is particularly useful as “research participants are not passive entities awaiting discovery or description; rather, they are individuals with specific motivations who control access to informative people, significant places, and cultural “secrets” (Jacobs-Huey, 2006, 8). Through the role of being a “native”, access to important “insider” information, people, and cultural “secrets” is much more tangible, although this also carries with it a great degree of responsibility in properly “translating” the material gained (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 140-144).

While there are certainly a lot of benefits to this type of “native” research, Jacobs-Huey also points out that this approach is not without its risks. The largest risk to the researcher in this type of endeavor is “failure”. This view of failure can be in the eyes of the academic community, the “home” community, or even within the eyes of the researcher themselves (Jacobs-Huey 2006). Failure in the eyes of one’s “home” community can amount to the loss of “insider” status, resulting in exclusion from what was once one’s own community, while failure within the eyes of the academic community can amount to the delegitimization of the researcher’s work all together (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 130-147). No matter how you look at it, “native” research comes with its own unique set of rules, and definitely impacts how research is done and how it is presented.

In summary, Jacobs-Huey's theoretical and methodological approaches (2006, 2007) are very relevant to this research for several reasons. Similar to the salon setting, the equestrian world inherently carries with it a large degree of expert knowledge and language use, which is readily used to negotiate and communicate complex identity claims. Participation in clubs, such as the 4-H equestrian club, create embodied social practices which act to form complex social hierarchies and identities. Through 4-H participation, symbolic collaborations form to represent ever shifting "expert" and "novice" identity claims, similar to those found in Jacobs-Huey's salon settings (2006, 2007). Lastly, my role as a "native researcher" is well informed by Jacobs-Huey's work (2006). By having a clear understanding of the benefits and risks inherent in this type of ethnography, I have adjusted my approach to try and accurately "translate" my research findings in a way that presents useful insights to the academic world while simultaneously accurately representing my "home" community (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 144-145).

*Judith Irvine and Susan Gal*

The contributions of Judith Irvine and Susan Gal (2000) also have an important role in this research. Their work on processes of language differentiation emphasizes phenomena such as iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure; all are central concepts because they represent how a group identifies itself within its larger social setting, how the group is seen by others within that social setting, and how these types of pressures affect word choice and utilization. The 4-H group being examined here fits nicely into this context as it is an identified formal group which clearly exists within a larger community of practice

(other 4-H groups regionally and nationally) and of course overlaps with broader speech communities in the region.

Irvine and Gal (2000) extensively discuss each of these important concepts in more detail. Iconization is seen as the indexical markers that act as an iconic representation of a specific group. In this way specific linguistic and physical features are used to display a groups' unique nature or essence (Irvine and Gal 2000, 37). The idea of iconization is easily seen in the physical adornment and specific language use of preadolescent girls. This is likely due to the fact that preadolescent girls are entering a phase of life where belonging to a specific group not only represents personal identity but also unique group identity in comparison to others.

Linked to iconization is fractal recursivity. This idea asserts that languages themselves exist in a hierarchy designed to give speakers "cultural resources to claim and thus attempt to create shifting communities, identities, selves, and roles at different levels of contrast, within a cultural field" (Irvine and Gal 2000, 38). The idea of language existing in a hierarchy can be seen in the way that different preadolescent groups use language strategically to position themselves within their communities of practice, such as schools and clubs. This hierarchy is commonly referred to as a clique system and is typically comprised of groups that can be identified as "popular," "cool," "jocks," "nerds," "outcasts," etc. (see, for example, Bucholtz 1999). Each of these groups coexist together within the same location, but there are clear boundaries in place to show who identifies with each group, in turn forming a complex social system of status and hierarchy. A great example of this hierarchy system in action can be seen in the way



“popular” girls speak differently than “nerd” girls or “home girls.” These differences inherently attribute the language use of each group to a specific hierarchy, and are not dissimilar to the way that English speakers are seen as possessing higher prestige Spanish speakers—or speakers of Standard American English versus Southern dialects—within American society. In this way we see that language use is socially viewed as identifying belonging to a particular group which in turn binds a speaker to a specific level within the linguistic hierarchy system. This hierarchy system varies from location to location because it is deeply rooted within the local ideological value system, but it is important to realize that intricate and complex linguistic hierarchies exist throughout all societies.

The last idea that Irvine and Gal address is erasure (2000). According to Irvine and Gal erasure “is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities invisible” (2000, 38). This use of the erasure process can be seen through the use of non-standard English words such as “ain’t”. For example, during my preadolescent youth the word “ain’t” was popularly used among my elders, especially those identified as being rural, uneducated and poor. Living rurally myself and coming from a lower middle-class family I identified strongly with the use of the word “ain’t” as a proper and accepted way of speaking. However, as I grew older and moved through the educational system I found that the word “ain’t” was not tolerated at all among my educators. As a result of this top-down pressure I soon found that the use of this word was frowned upon by my peers and those who wanted to be identified as being educated and upper to middle class. Because of the external pressure from the school system not to use the word “ain’t” accompanied by reinforced from my peers, “ain’t” was effectively erased from my vocabulary.

In this research project each of these concepts are seen in multiple ways. Iconization is seen through the indexical markers associated with horses in general, and through the specific values instilled through the 4-H groups itself. Fractal recursivity is seen through the hierarchy of membership levels, and through the sub-disciplines within each level. Erasure is seen through the ways that specific language and ideas are actively suppressed while other forms of language is encouraged. All of these actions combine to create a reflection of how this group identifies itself within its larger social setting, and how this group is seen by others within that social setting, and how these types of pressures affect word choice and utilization within the community of practice.

### **Methodologies**

As mentioned in the introduction, this research employs ethnographic methodologies for collecting data on a given speech community of children. In this case, a specific 4-H equestrian club is focused upon. The transcripts here reflect speech gathered from youth participants ranging in age from five-years-old to sixteen-years-old. However, much of the focus is given on the exchanges of eight-year-old to fourteen-year-old female participants as they have shown to be the most verbally expressive in this community of practice. The work of Penelope Eckert and Marjorie Harness Goodwin comes to the forefront in terms of methodologies employed here. These two women have worked extensively on researching the speech communities of young people, as well as having built unique and diverse approaches that offer guidance for data analysis. Lanita Jacobs-Huey's (2006, 2007) ethnographic approach is also highly relevant as her research is situated in multiple sites, and Jacobs-Huey is researching as a "native" insider. Both of

these points are relevant to this research as it takes places across multiple sites, and I have performed this research as a “native” community insider.

Eckert’s ethnographic approach focuses on the social meanings of variables. This method focuses on styles rather than variables as being directly associated with identity categories. By exploring the contributions of variation to styles the researcher is able to view the variables as located in layered communities. This is important because variation exists not only as a reflection of social meaning, but it also constructs social meaning, acting as a force within social change. What is particularly unique about Eckert’s approach is that she puts social meaning as the primary focus, which allows us to examine both the variables that are of interest to linguistics, such as change, as well as being able to focus on any linguistic material that serves a social or stylistic purpose (Eckert 2012, 8-98). This approach is especially useful for this research project.

Eckert has executed ethnographic undertakings throughout several American schools. Her main modus operandi is to work closely with, rather than on, the adolescents involved in her studies. By building trust one is able to “discover meaning in, rather than imposing meaning on, adolescent behavior” (Eckert 1997, 7) In order to do this Eckert goes about building this informative relationship by eliminating obvious reminders of the status differences which exist between the adolescent and the adult. This requires that the researcher never be put in situations or display behaviors that put them in the position of authority in relation to kids (Eckert 1997, 9). Additionally, the researcher must maintain confidentiality that includes never reporting anything the kids say or do to adults or to other kids, as well as maintaining the confidence of the teachers.

Marjorie Harness Goodwin's field methods are similar to Eckert's, although she also offers her own unique perspective on how to best execute ethnography. In her research of adolescent children, Goodwin describes how important it is to capture the complete picture of the exchanges that are taking place while remaining a neutral and removed observer of the children's interactions. She points out that as an ethnographer one does not want to adversely affect the interactions taking place (Goodwin 1990, 18-26). It is critical to gain an understanding of what naturally unfolds during peer-to-peer interactions amongst children so that we might gain a clearer understanding of the role that language use plays in social power acquisition.

To achieve her goals of capturing how children organize their social life through talk, Goodwin traveled around with groups of children as they went about their activities, recording their verbal exchanges with a cassette recorder (Goodwin 1990, 18-26). She was diligent about not eliciting any particular speech genre, instead she just tried to record as accurately as possible whatever talk the children produced, no matter how uninteresting it might have initially seemed. Goodwin was also very cognizant of the fact that speakers design their talk taking into account their particular recipient of the moment, so she asked very few questions. Lastly, in order to avoid disrupting the natural flow of the children's activities, Goodwin minimized her interactions with them, simply acting as an observer (1990).

This research focuses primarily on the natural flow of talk between the youth participants of a specific 4-H group. Because I am interested in the natural dialogue that occurs between the youth participants without outside influence or interference, I chose

to use a combination of participant observation and discourse analysis, specifically, conversation analysis. By employing this approach, I believe this research was able to capture the natural dialogue that occurred in conversation without the adverse influence of a looming adult presence. While the participants were aware that recordings were taking place, the conversation flow was not impacted by the formal structure of an interview; rather the natural discourse was allowed to unfold unimpeded so that a greater understanding of how children are using language to create personal and group identities along with how they are gaining social power and managing social hierarchies amongst themselves could be gained.

I took notes on my interactions with the other 4-H participants and other observations at the horse shows and meetings, and then transcribed the eight-nine hours of recordings that revealed the most significant peer-to-peer and child-adult interactions for my selected topics; as noted, I was most interested in looking at the use of directives, indirect speech, and acts of alignment (see Goffman 1981) as well as expertise. Following the early work on Conversation Analysis—focusing on talk-in-interaction—as first discussed by Sacks et al. (1974) and developed in many further studies (cf. Cameron 2001, Sacks 1995, Schegloff 2007, Sidnell 2010) I searched for patterns in turn-taking, interruptions, adjacency pairs, conversational repair and other forms of linguistic negotiation that revealed how the participants showed alignment or disjuncture, directives or indirectness, and other stances revealing expertise (Goffman 1981; see also Jacobs-Huey 2006, 2007).

## Conclusion

Taking inspiration from the methodological approaches established by Eckert (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), Goodwin (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011), and Jacobs-Huey (2006, 2007), this research was able to capture a comprehensive picture of several important linguistic exchanges that took place among the research participants. As a researcher, I attempted to remain a neutral and removed observer of the research participant's interactions even though my "native" researcher status certainly did help to influence my later interpretations. In order to achieve this goal, the speech samples were collected in the most neutral manner possible. Peer to peer conversations were collected by equipping a 4-H youth participant with a recorder, recording conversations around her as they naturally unfolded. Monthly 4-H meeting conversations were collected by simply placing a small recorder on a table in the center of the 4-H meeting. No attention was given to the recorder in an effort to put the focus on the conversation rather than the recording. As an ethnographer, it was very important to me not to adversely affect the interactions taking place. It was critical to gain an understanding of what naturally unfolded during the peer to peer interactions amongst the youth participants so that I could gain a clearer understanding of the role that language played in their identity creation and power acquisition processes.

The primary participants of this qualitative study were a group of young girls who were, at the time of the recording, active participants in the Washoe County 4-H Horse Club. I focused specifically on the interactions and conversations perpetuated by girls ranging in age from nine to fourteen years old. The only qualifying criteria for the

research participants was that they were involved in a peer to peer conversation that was instigated or dominated by a female youth participant involved in 4-H at the time of the recording. Because this research is interested in determining how girls acquire power through language use in peer to peer relationships it is necessary to examine all conversation possibilities. So, all conversations involving a 4-H participant are considered viable data. I selected groups to record based upon the qualifying factor that they were instigated by, or predominantly involved a 4-H female youth participant. I then transcribe my audio recordings and incorporated transcription conventions similar to those used by Jacobs-Huey (2006). It is important to note that all identities have been obscured to protect the research participants.

The main speech components that I looked for in this analysis were speech utterances designed to create power stances or form identity claims. In particular, directives were an important aspect of this research because they are positioned at the interface of language and social action. Directives are specifically built through speech, but they are designed to make things happen in the larger world of social action within which speech is embedded (Goodwin 2007). Because of their association with the production of a desired action, directives are one of the most powerful examples of how a speaker can create and enforce a position of power or status through their speech. Additionally, the roles of indirectness, hedging, and silence are also closely examined as all of these speech strategies actively contribute to identity creation and management (Jacobs-Huey 2006).

Analysis of my collected data took place in a few different ways. First, the children's conversations were transcribed into typed data that was then broken down further and examined. I broke the data down into rough "parent" categories such as peer to peer conversations, peer to adult conversations, and adult to peer conversations (adult downward). Once broken down, I looked for language cues or actions associated with power, such as directives, indirectness, hedging, and silence. Once a general understanding of how directives and power speech were being used, I further examined the context and purpose behind the exchange. This examination gives important insights into how stances of power acquisition, identity claims, and hierarchy management unfold within this specific community of practice.

The primary themes and research methods presented here set the stage for understanding new directions that can be taken in what we are researching about gender and language. Specifically, by enhancing our understanding of how language is used to create and manage identity claims, and form stances of social power among preadolescent girls, insights into the importance of the relationship between gender and language can be made.



## **Chapter Two: Community Building**

Community and belongingness are a universal experience that exist as an essential aspect to the human collective well-being. John Donne eloquently stated in his 1624 devotions that “no man is an island”; we are all intertwined in communities of one form or another and each aspect of community is an influencing component of our whole life experience. Family, school, work, clubs, and social ties all represent platforms of community, which help to build an individual’s life experience, reflecting back a knowing of ourselves and where we belong in our social fabric. Even at their most fundamental level, communities exist as more than simply a group of people living in the same place or participating in the same activities. Our involvement in community creates a sense of belonging and fellowship with other community members. It is a part of who we are, an extension of our identity, and it greatly enhances and informs our perceptions of meaning and self. It is the web upon which our life experiences unfold.

While any given community and our experiences in them vary greatly from one to the next, a common feature of them all is the linguistic exchange we participate in within the community. Language acts as a vehicle upon which we share and create joint experiences. Words allow us to share who we imagine ourselves to be, they inform, they allow us to jockey for social positions, and they can build up or tear down the people we exchange them with. Because language is such a fundamental and telling aspect of all communities, examining how language is used to create community identity seems the most logical place to start.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Penelope Eckert's (2005, 2008), Etienne Wenger's (2005), and Lave's (1991) research on the concept of community of practice and how local meanings are produced are central to the examination of how this particular 4-H group creates community and meaning through linguistic exchanges and displays. Of particular significance is Eckert's 2008 *Variation and the Indexical Field*, as this work focuses on the importance of locality (Eckert, 2008). Locality and situated meaning set the stage for understanding how the use of local identity claims help define what it means to be from "here" as opposed to being from "there," an important linguistic feature that is prominently seen and explored throughout this research (Eckert 2008: 462). Before diving into the particulars of the specific 4-H group under study, it is important to understand the over-arching guidelines that govern all 4-H organizations, regardless of their given locale; this understanding will aid in further identifying locality and identity claims through differentiation

#### **4-H as a Whole**

The social landscape of the 4-H organization is derived from a concrete set of ideas and values which are applicable to all communities participating in 4-H functions. The 4-H organization itself identifies as being born of "a community of more than 100 public universities across the nation" (4h.org). These communities are open to youth participants aged five-years-old to eighteen-years-old. One tangible result of this relationship is that all 4-H communities are imbued with values inherently found within an educational setting. These values include core concepts such as developing personal potential and leadership skills through research-based experiences led by mentors and learning through

the incorporation of hands-on projects (4h.org). Participation in any 4-H activity is also accompanied by a clear set of guidelines and expectations as set forth by the 4-H participation rule books. The result of these structured guidelines and expectations are a clear and universally applied set of principles that permeate throughout all participating clubs. While each club is governed by an overarching umbrella of guidelines, the execution of these guidelines within the community itself lead to a unique and individualized experience based on a localized interpretation of what these guidelines mean. It is in the real-world execution of these guidelines, and hands-on projects at the local level that this research will focus upon, as this is where local community experiences and identity claims are created and shared.

### *Horses are Actually Athletes*

A practical and tangible examination of how these overarching rules and guidelines play out at the local level can be seen through the attitudes and decisions associated with choosing a suitable 4-H horse with which to participate in the program. In the organization wide introductory guidebook entitled, *The 4-H Horse Project: An Introduction*, it states that “horses are actually athletes and must be selected and judged on qualities that enhance their athletic ability” (Schafer 2002, 2). While the statement is applied universally, what is seen at the local level is an individualized perception and meaning of what qualifies as an “athletic” horse “here”—that is, in the location under study. For example, an athletic horse in a ranching community may mean a compact yet robust Quarter Horse displaying large muscular hindquarters, an even neckline, and an easy going appeasable personality (<https://www.aqha.com>) while an endurance riding

community may desire a surefooted, light-bodied energetic Arabian with strong stamina capable of completing a 100 mile race in under 14 or 15 hours

(<http://cs.thehorse.com/blogs/winning-edge-performance-horse-health/archive/2014/07/23/top-5-endurance-horse-issues.aspx>). Each description is considered athletic and desirable within a given community, and thus it is up to the community to collectively interpret and express what “athletic” means to them.

The close examination of how this guideline is carried out and verbally expressed within the local research focus group provides insightful and telling bits of information about the attitudes and identity claims being made within this studied community. During the following retelling of a trip to an organization-wide competition which took place outside the local community and broader geographic region, we see strong claims being made about what constitutes an “athletic” horse for this given community (as opposed to other ones). Betty, the primary speaker here, is the youth 4-H club leader.

- Betty: *Sadly*, we didn't get horses from the National Quarter Horse, like they do every year because they cancelled the National Quarter Horse show. So, we had, -we got horses from people who had been from, >who were just in the area<, so they weren't *top quality* horses like we were expecting, which made it even harder to judge them because there were *so many faults*. But, I, -it was a great experience, like getting to see that, and getting to judge. We had, the other 3 halter classes were performance halter geldings, half Arab mares, and pure Arabian geldings, which ((smiling)) I didn't do so well on the Arabian's cause:: I'm not an Arabian person, but-
- Ethyl (Parent): -Cause she didn't study well enough for Arabian's--
- Betty: -I don't like Arabian's. >No offense to anyone who does.< ((smiling))

Several youth: *Approving warm laughter.* (1.35)

As we see from this dialogue, linguistic exchanges and practices in everyday narratives inherently reveal the values and preferences of the community that they are unfolding in. Through this exchange we see that Betty has a clear identity preference for Quarter Horses, which she casts upon her listening audience with reasonable confidence that they will support her identity claim. Her audience does in turn support her claim through warm, approving laughter immediately following her statement. Through this exchange, community identity claims about horse preference are made and agreed upon. The most telling aspects of Betty's identity claims are seen in her reference to the National Quarter Horse show being cancelled, which in turn caused her to have to judge horses that "weren't top quality" and displayed "so many faults."

Betty: *Sadly, we didn't get horses from the National Quarter Horse, like they do every year because they cancelled the National Quarter Horse show. So, we had, -we got horses from people who had been from, >who were just in the area<, so they weren't *top quality* horses like we were expecting, which made it even harder to judge them because there were *so many faults*.*

Specifically, the word "sadly" in association to not being able to judge Quarter Horses indicates that this youth leader views Quarter Horses to be superior in comparison to horses that just happened to be in the area, and Arabians in particular. This is further supported when Betty declares that the horses "weren't top quality." When put on the spot about her lack of knowledge pertaining to Arabians, Betty openly states that she doesn't like Arabians, which is met with approving and supportive laughter by her peers

and other participating community members. From this speech exchange we can infer that Betty, and most of the club participants, all share in the local region's preference for Quarter Horses. This identity preference reflects the geographic regions roots in ranching, where Quarter Horses are strongly preferred over Arabians. In this way, Betty is aligning herself with her broader geographic community, and her immediate club community.

This type of preference identification acts as a strong indicator of what it means to be from "here" rather than "there." Had this community held identity claims associated with breeds such as the Arabian, Betty would have been taking a huge social risk and her bold statement would likely not have been reinforced with the approving laughter. The fact that she took this risk at all is a strong indication that she feels a solid sense of belonging within the community and is well identified with the community's overall preferences and attitudes. She understands what it means to be from "here," and what values this local community holds. She has aligned herself with these values, and is expressing her alignment, and therefore part of her identity, through this verbal presentation. The community encourages and embraces this alignment through their verbal reaction of supporting laughter.

Another important note about this dialogue and its relationship to identity claims and creation is that the opinion being shared is coming from an elected club officer. Because Betty is already recognized as being in a position of power, there is a strong likelihood that her opinion will have an influencing factor upon up and coming 4-H members in a lower status position, which will act as a reinforcer to the identity claims of this community for favoring Quarter Horses over Arabians. The statements and their

collective support act as a direct reflection of the values held in this given community of practice. Again, this is seen in the way that the club as a whole supports the negative statement towards Arabians with approving laughter, despite the fact that there is a club member who rides an Arabian. This is certainly not to say that one community member is right and the other wrong—even though members of community may feel this way—but rather that the values and identity of a community are reflected and supported through even the most casual linguistic exchanges and social reinforcement taking place within the community.

### *Participation Requirements*

Another telling aspect of the local identity claims being made in this community of practice can be seen in the way that the over-arching 4-H participation requirements are incorporated and carried out at the local level. These guidelines dictate the level of participation for clinics and shows each member must actively participate in to be formally recognized by the 4-H organization as having an 80% or 100% participation level. While these guidelines are clear cut regarding the number of clinics or shows that must be attended, they also play out in various ways at the local level, which inherently means that each community will incorporate their collective values and identity claims into how these requirements are met. This can easily be seen in the following discussion about participation levels:

Clarissa: *(Reading from a club form)* So, attendance requirements for 2016 for 100% attendance--

Ethyl: --and they'll be discussing that at the upcoming clinic, which is on the back. You all have that. So one of the segments will talk about attendance. Let's go

over that, just *go ahead* and read it. This is what's required for 100% attendance.

Clarissa: You must attend three of the scheduled clinics, the judging contest, three 4-H sponsored horse shows. Participants must show in showmanship, and a rail class in each of the shows. Possible shows include the Strike It Rich series, and the Orange classes of the Sagebrush Community Horse Shows. Turn in a completed 4-H record book, at the end of the program year which is due the first Friday in October. Attend a min, min--

Ethyl: -Minimum

Clarissa: Minimum (*laughs shyly*) of 50% of club meetings. And 4-H members will be responsible for ensuring that they sign in at each event, *no exceptions*. Members are also encouraged to participate in as many events as possible. 4-H members signing in and then leaving events will be declared absent from that event. For 80 % members must attend 5 events.

Ethyl: >Okay, so, next.<

Through this linguistic exchange we see that Ethyl strategically and matter-of-factly mentions an upcoming clinic advertised on the back of the calendar during the attendance requirement conversation. The message here is two-fold; first Ethyl is conveying to her community that participation in this particular clinic is a good idea as it will cover the topic extensively; secondly, that little time and attention needs to be given to these guidelines during the club meeting as everyone should just attend the clinic. This strongly implies to the community that, while on the surface they can pick and choose which events to attend, in reality they should attend the events that Ethyl has identified as being significant. In this way Ethyl is striving to create a community that reflects the identity claims she wishes to assign to the group. Embodied in these directions is the subtle message that non- participation from the community in these locally identified



events may result in lack of support, or some form of exclusion from the community. Another way of saying this is that the “community” (Ethyl), has identified these events as being significant identity claims for the group, so group participation is strongly encouraged because this is how “we” do it “here.”

The main take-away here is that even though this small community of practice is being regulated and shaped by a much larger community of practice, the smaller community exercises a great deal of authority and autonomy regarding how the broad set of rules and regulations will be executed at a local level. The act of verbal execution is particularly telling as it directly reflects the over-riding values and identity claims of the community implementing the organizations requirements. Essentially, the local community of practice filters the outside influencing factors through their local identity claims and value systems, which produce a linguistic exchange that denotes these values and claims.

#### *From the Inside Out*

So far I have focused upon the downward relationship and influencing factors of the governing 4-H community and the local 4-H club community; however, as with all relationships, a give and take exists between the two communities. By examining the outward relationship the local club community has with its governing community, geographic community, and even sub-communities within the local community, a great deal of insight into how the local community views itself and builds individual identity claims within the context of the larger governing community can be gained. This is significant because identity claims act as a shaping force behind the community

experience and influence each individual's perception of what it means to be part of this community.

In the following dialogue, a useful glimpse of how the local club community views their social position within the overall 4-H community can be gained. By understanding how the local community views itself within its broader context, a direct line of communication towards community identities and values is drawn. This ultimately tells us where the local community sees itself within the social hierarchy of the entire club community and implies how much value it places on its community involvement as a whole.

Betty: -So, our[

Ethyl: [The one thing is that our 4-H club here is a very, very small organization[

Betty: [Yeah, 4-H is taken very seriously in, in Denver:::, Texas:::[

Ethyl: [A lot of years::

Betty: -No, Denver has won every year for the past 20 years. So, *there ya go!* Heh

*Laughter from several parents*

Parent: Awe:::, wow!

*Betty and Ethyl talking at the same time unintelligibly*

Ethyl: [...]-training year-round, they have coaching on the particulars of the horses year-round for the kids.

Several Parents: Oh? ((*Head nodding from a few parents.*))

Ethyl: >Yeah, and our team had a month to prepare.<

Betty: Yeah, so Denver:::, they suggested to us, >Denver and Texas both have this<, which I *don't* think we'll do this, but they bought this horse judging and hypology::: preparation kit which comes with everything you'll ever

need for knowledge^, but it's about \$350.00. Um::, but they use that and that's what gets them prepared.

Ethyl: -Well maybe we'll look into raising some funds and All the 4-H clubs can go in on that, something we can talk about.

Several Parents and youth: ((*Clapping in unison*))

In this passage, Ethyl explains that the local community is a “very small” club in comparison to other regions. This statement sends a clear message to the community members that their local club does not possess the same high status as the more “serious” clubs, and that there is little that can be done to change this. One of the things that makes this club small is that they do not win the national competition, but the justification for this seems to be that this is simply due to the lack of preparation on the club's part and is not due to any type of inherent inferiority due to size, or other qualities. This lack of preparation is acceptable, being as the club is “very small”, which simultaneously excuses Betty individually for her lack of preparation. In this way the community is actively creating identity claims that place them somewhere in the middle within the overall hierarchy system of the 4-H organization yet allowing for the possibility to advance if they were to use the same tools as the leading clubs. This identity claim is significant because it subtly, yet directly, impacts the overall participation expectation of each individual member, and identifies the level of personal effort that is expected from each community member.

During this discussion, the club as a whole ponders the idea of status enhancement through being more vigilant about participation and preparation with the main goal of performing better at a national level:

Ethyl: -Well maybe we'll look into raising some funds and all the 4-H clubs can go in on that, something we can talk about.

The universal clapping at this idea shows that there is a general acceptance and positive attitude towards the idea of committing more resources to the improvement of the club's national performance and overall social status (identity), with the caveat that "all" of the 4-H clubs would go in on this effort together. In this way, a loophole is effectively made allowing the club an "out of our hands" reason for continuing to perform at the level they are currently at, revealing an underlying acceptance of where they stand within the national 4-H community. There is certainly nothing wrong with where the local club stands within the community. What is interesting about this dialogue is that we see the community collectively internalize and verbally contemplate their current social standing within the organization overall, ultimately deciding if they are comfortable with this placement, or if they would like to commit more energy to improving their community standing. This process speaks to the underlying identity claims that are being formed through participation in the community, and where the community collectively intends to go, taking each participant with it in the process. By the conclusion of this exchange it becomes apparent that, collectively speaking, the club is at ease with where they reside on the social landscape, and while the possibility for improvement exists, it is something that requires further contemplation and communication with outside geographically and topically similar communities.

The insights gained through this dialogue are important because we see that while there is an active top-down relationship between the governing 4-H organization and our

local club community, our local club community also has a bottom-up relationship with the organization. This outward aspect of the relationship is where our local club community realizes and articulates who they are as an individual club. By examining and comparing themselves to both the organization as a whole and to other clubs, our club community is able to express autonomy and self-control within the boundaries laid out by the governing institutions. Through this expression, community self-realization and important identity claims are made about where this community exists within the overall social hierarchy of the 4-H organization as a whole. It is through internal community discussion and community involvement the group reflects and ponders their community status as a whole. By doing this, a local group identity begins to take shape.

### **Geographic Community of Practice**

Just as the governing 4-H community and the local club community create complex smaller communities within larger communities, so too does the local geographic community that our local club exists within. This is an important aspect of the overall club community because it carries with it geographic or regional identity claims and engages with outside community involvement within the immediate geographic area. In the following section, I will examine how the local geographic community and the 4-H club community interact and influence one another, creating and re-creating identity claims and communities of practice.

At the time of this research, several clubs comprise the Washoe County horse chapter. Each club exists as a way to serve the needs of a particular geographic area within Washoe County. The local club community focused upon in this research is

situated in a middle-class region of Washoe County (exact details have been obscured to protect identities of those involved). The purpose of having multiple branches of the club is to better serve the children of all surrounding geographic communities found within the area, although anyone wishing to join is welcome regardless of their address. The majority of our local club community members do reside in the geographic region mentioned above, attending local schools, and sharing common geographically-situated experiences and histories, such as shared teachers, homework, and extracurricular activities.

The local club community's geographic region is largely suburban. There are large spans of middle-class track type housing with smaller outlying areas of rural ranch type homes that allow for keeping horses on the premises. The result is that the vast majority, but not all, of the local club participants come from these middle-class type communities and inherently bring with them certain aspects of the community's values and ways of being and thinking, as expressed through language. This can be seen in the topics of discussion, such as concerns over the type of car one's parents drive, the type of horse one owns, clothing, hairstyles, and upcoming local events. Additionally, the middle-class status can be seen in the fact that our members all belong to a community that participates in a hobby well known for high ongoing costs and considerable demands on time.

The geographic community and local club community's commonalities heavily influence group identity claims and practices between club insiders and outsiders. The shared community of geography builds a bridge of commonality. This relationship can be

better explore by examining how our local club community interacts with potential incoming community members for the first time. These first-time meetings are telling because of the underlying identification claiming process that takes place. The information that is shared is done so in a strategic manner, allowing both the club community and the newcomer to represent who they are. If the two identities are compatible, the local club community will be expanded.

In the following scenario, we witness the initial meeting between our club community and a member of the geographic community who is interested in having her daughter join the club. This interaction takes place at a monthly club meeting that is happening in the evening at a local pizza parlor. As a community, 4-H strongly encourages this kind of interaction between its club communities and the local geographic community. Through initial encounters such as these, new members are born which further supports and strengthens the overall 4-H organization. It is important to note that these first meetings are often explorative in nature. Through the process of interaction both sides are determining if the other party is a good fit, and if there will be future involvement.

Lacie:	Is this the <u>4-H</u> ?
Amy:	Yeah.
Lacie:	Oh! Okay. And is Ethy::l here^?
Amy:	She's not here yet.
Lacie:	Not yet. Okay^. I'm La::cie. Um:::..
Amy:	I'm A::my. (pronounced A::my, matching Lacie's rising intonation and elongated vowels)
Lacie:	Hi A::my, nice to meet you. This is Dai::sey.

Daisey: Hello.

Amy: >Hi.<

*Joint awkward laughter from girls*

Lacie: So:::^, um:::, We:::^ are just looking into this.  
So:::^, do We:::^ just sit in her:::e^? Or:::^?

Florence: Yeah, this is our room I *think*, so –

Lacie: --This is. Okay::^.

Florence: So like, just pick a table. The kids sit, like in here.

Lacie: So the kids kinda sit together or something, and then

Florence: Yeah, and then parents sit[

Lacie: [Okay::^

Angie: \*Sissy::\*

Lacie: Hi::: Are all of you parents:::?

Several Parents: Yes.

Lacie: Okay::^, I'm La::cie^.

Parent 1: Nice to meet you, Lacie.

*Background laughter*

Lacie: This is Dai::sey^, my daughter.

Several Parents: Hi.

This interaction is very telling both about the geographic community and the local club community. First, we see an exaggerated almost “Valley Girl”, or Valleyspeak speech pattern from Lacie as she interacts with the club members for the first time (Ritchart and Arvaniti 2013). In this case, Lacie uses a high rising terminal (up-talk, or rising intonation) in her speech pattern, especially when she appears uncertain about what to do. For example, when Lacie asks “So:::^, um:::, We:::^ are just looking into this, So:::^, do We:::^ just sit in her:::e^?”, we see that almost half of her speech incorporates



up-talk that she might be using to reflect uncertainty towards the situation. In this case, her use of high rising terminal is used as a way to actively seek direction which is emphasized through her questioning tone. It is important to note though, that up talk does not always imply a question on the speaker's behalf. The specific role and use of uptalk has grown into a point of debate. As Lakoff (1973) points out, speaking in a questioning tone, or expressing uncertainty, are favored over showing expression of strong feeling (1973, 45). In this way up-talk becomes a linguistic tool rather than simply indicating a question. It could be the case that Lacie is attempting to talk in a way that will show alignment with the other adult female participants at the meeting. This could be a tactic she previously used in her former CofP which successfully aligned her with those members, and she is now falling back onto that strategy to build social alignment. In either case, Lacie's speech pattern hints at her socioeconomic and geographic background as Valleyspeak is well known for coming from a predominantly upper-class region of Southern California, which has since been adapted widely throughout California (Ritchart and Arvaniti 2013). Effectively, Lacie's speech pattern helps to identify her as an outsider, but most likely one who comes from a geographically nearby region, California. Due to her interest in equestrian activities and residing in close proximity to the club community, we can infer that Lacie likely originates from at least a middle-class community. Due to the close proximity of California, and Lacie's likely middle-class background, she will probably easily identify with the members of this club.

These are key elements of speech that identify the speaker as an outsider occur right away in this exchange and continue to index her outsider status over the course of the conversation. The initial linguistic utterance from our outsider is:

Lacie: Is this the 4-H?

The way that the club is referred to as “the 4-H” immediately signals Lacie as an outsider. Members of the 4-H community simply refer to the organization as “4-H”. For example, “we are having a 4-H meeting”, or “this is 4-H.” The use of the article “the” reveals there is a lack of insider familiarity with the club, establishing the woman as an outsider. There is no correction from the community members, rather they politely engage in conversation as a way of inviting Lacie in to the club. Another indication that Lacie is unfamiliar with the club community is seen in the way that she is unsure of where to sit.

Lacie: So:::^^, um:::^^, We:::^^ are just looking into this. So:::^^, do We:::^^ just sit in her:::^^e^^? Or:::^^?

Both the tone and the words themselves betray uncertainty. The exaggeration of the “e” in “we” and the elongation of certain vowels and tonal inflection combine to create a questioning intonation in the woman’s hedging statement, emphasizing the speaker’s quest for guidance from the community members. She is taking on a novice stance here (Jacobs-Huey, 2006). Our local club community is inviting and patient towards the new comer, with the youth participants being especially helpful. Interestingly, once enough guidance from the youth participant is received, Lacie quickly seeks interaction with the other parents of the group as this is who she will most likely identify with and where she will most easily fit in. This can be seen in the following exchange:

Florence: Yeah, and then parents sit[

Lacie: [Okay:::^

The speaker then immediately turns her conversation towards the parents:

Angie: \*Sissy::\*

Lacie: Hi::: Are all of you parents::?

Several Parents: Yes.

Lacie: Okay::^, I'm La::cie^.

This linguistic exchange shows us that Lacie is prioritizing identifying with and connecting to the other parents over carrying on a conversation with Amy and Florence, the youth participants that she first encountered. In this way, she is identifying with the parental aspect of the community and disengaging with the youth portion of the community. The parents are responsive to her question, indicating a willingness to embrace outside community members.

During this interaction, we also see certain social cues from the club community that are intended to invite Lacie and Daisey into the club experience. For example:

Parent 1: Nice to meet you, Lacie.

This social exchange indicates that meeting Lacie is pleasurable and she is welcomed into the community. Overall, the linguistic exchange between our “outsider” and the club community reflects the club’s welcoming acceptance of the outside community, as well as indicating that the outside community has a degree of curiosity and uncertainty towards the club community. Through language exchanges such as these the club effectively invites members of the geographic community into the club community in a welcoming manner. This attitude may stem somewhat from the

overarching 4-H guidelines that describe the 4-H community as being open to all, but it is also clear that the club recognizes itself as a leading organization within its geographic region and it prioritizes welcoming outside members in as a way to build positive community interactions and partnerships.

### **Internal Community Building**

The last area of community identification and practice this chapter will examine is how our community members go about sharing personal identities and backgrounds amongst themselves which act to form bridges of commonality. Through sharing backgrounds and experiences, a sense of group identity and familiarity is formed. This is an important mechanism that allows the group community to become more cohesive. Through community unification, the individual members become part of the larger whole which form the collective group identity claims presented to the world. Introductions are an ideal representation of this type of internal community building. Introductions give each individual member a chance to pick and choose the aspects of their identities they are willing to contribute to the overall community identity. Through the introduction process, individual information becomes a part of the collective experience. When combined, the collective identity claims of the overall club community are created.

During the following introductions, each youth member has been directed to share their name, age, their horse/s name/s, and their favorite pizza. The way that each member introduces their name, the basis of their identity, indicates their alignment with one another through similar word patterning. By understanding who each member's horse or horses are, each club member may also gain an understanding of that participant's

involvement level. For instance, if a member is riding a horse known to be in its prime, and competitive in nature, they are seen as an advanced member and become a formidable status asset that can represent the face of the 4-H club well. If a rider has an unknown horse, or a known “retired” horse, the club knows that this individual is potentially in a beginning learning phase, and they will be incorporated into the program accordingly. Lastly, by sharing what kind of pizza a person likes, shared interests and alignment with specific members can be formed.

- Marissa: My name's Marissa. >I'm 13^<, My horse's name is Mazie, and My favorite pizza is:: Probably Hawaiian.
- Betty: -My name's Betty. I'm 15. My horses' names are::: Buck and Ben, and um::: my favorite pizza is Probably a combination pizza.
- Amy: Hi, I'm Amy. I'm 11. My horse's name is Elkie, and my favorite pizza is Hawaiian.
- Amy: Angie.
- Angie: Hi, my name is An::gie. My horse's name is Stewart, an::d um::: my age::, I'm 8, and my favorite pizza is >pineapple<.
- Stephanie: I'm Stephanie, I'm 12, my horse's name is [...].
- Jennifer: My name is Jennifer::. I'm 10 years old. My horse's name:: is Duke, he's 7.
- Taylor: My name is [...]. My horse's name is Ty:: [...].
- Bobby: My name is Bobby::. I'm 10 years old. My horse's name is^ (1.15) Cane. I like pizza.
- Florence: My name's Florence. >I'm 10 years old.< My horse's name is:: [...].
- Edith: Hi, my name is Edith. I'm 12 years old, and my:: horse's name is Blaze::, and my:: favorite pizza is pepperoni.
- unknown: -Go ahead and introduce yourself. You're Jane's brother, right?~
- Ethyl: Only if he's like, >what's your name<?

Rick:            \*Rick.\*

Ethyl:           Thank you.

Daisey:         Hi, my name's Daisey:: I'm 14 years old, and my horse's name is Vince, and my favorite pizza [...].

Beth:            I'm Beth::, I'm (here with Edith). I'm in the process of looking for a horse, and I like Hawaiian.

Marissa:         And she's riding Elkie.

Betty:           And she's riding Thunder!

Right away we see that the majority of participants follow a similar sentence structure in their introductions, and thus align with each other. Of the 13 participants introducing themselves 9 introduce themselves through the sentence pattern “my name is”, 3 choose “I’m” followed by their name, and one new participant experiences a forced introduction by Ethyl, where all he says is his name. The first two participants to introduce themselves are two of the most prominent youth participants in this community. They have belonged to this particular 4-H club for a number of years, and they sit upon the elected panel of club leaders. They both chose to use the introduction “my name is,” which is then quickly picked up and repeated by the majority of the other club members. This echoing of linguistic structure is important because, as Goffman (1981) points out, it creates alignment with the youth leaders, simultaneously creating an unspoken hierarchy system. Tellingly, the only members who deviate from this introduction pattern are members who exist on the margins of this community and do not possess a solid position within the social hierarchy such as a “newbie” or a “leader.”

Amy has been in the program for one and half seasons, and she rides an Arabian; as mentioned earlier, Arabians are not the horses of choice in this specific club.

Interestingly, another Washoe county community club does favor Arabians, which speaks to the underlying attitude and intrinsic competitive nature of these clubs. Stephanie has been in this club a bit longer than Amy, but she is well-known for focusing most of her efforts on an outside barrel racing community and only does 4-H to keep active during the off-season. Lastly, Beth is a brand-new member and she lacks a horse, placing her in a precarious situation. Members who do not have a horse are often tasked with the activities none of the kids really want to do, such as working the concessions stand, or acting as a “runner” for judges at the horse shows. Not having a horse carries with it the underlying attitude that you are not an “active” member of the club, because the horse is a necessary component for full participation.

The second major area that participants have the opportunity to align themselves with one another are in their pizza preferences. Out of all participants only 7 offer an audible response. The first participant to speak, a youth club leader, indicates that she prefers Hawaiian pizza. Three other members also indicate this as their favored pizza as well. Interestingly, two of the three are those who chose to introduce themselves with “I’m” rather than “my name is” (the third could not be understood). This could be a coincidence, or an alternate way of aligning themselves with the youth club leader after having chosen a differing introduction structure in an attempt to gain status. The remaining 3 members all indicate that they prefer completely different pizzas with combination, pepperoni, and pizza in general being listed. By the closing of introductions, all members appear to have aligned themselves with their peer community leaders by either choosing the same introduction pattern for their name, or the same type of pizza topping. This type of alignment acts to verbally reinforce the youth leaders’

positions while also creating common identity claims throughout the differing levels of club participants. Overall the club members come together to form a cohesive community that generally supports one another through their alignment of identity claims and support of common interests and goals. It is important to note though, that the male participant, Rick, hardly speaks at all. In fact, the female participants collectively step in and speak for Rick. This happens frequently with the male participants and speaks to the way that the club is generally led by the female participants.

One more area that this type of alignment can be seen in is during the choosing of introduction topics. While deciding as a group what to talk about for introductions Betty says “Okay, we’d like to go on to introductions. Let’s::: do our name, our age, our horses name, and::: our favorite::: Pizza!” Florence then supports Betty by chiming in the word “Pizza” immediately after Betty has said it, and Marissa further supports this claim by stating “since we are at a Pizza place!” In this way, the girls are coming together to show alignment and solidarity towards their club leader’s decision for an introduction topic. This type of verbal alignment actively creates unity and cohesive community identities among the participants.

## **Conclusion**

From the analysis of this material, we can interpret that while 4-H is governed at a national community level, these governing guidelines are interpreted and executed at the local community level. This results in an infusion of the organization’s overall values and goals and the local community’s values and goals as witnessed in these everyday linguistic exchanges. We can observe these tendencies in the way that guiding principles,



such as the selection of an athletic horse, are adapted to meet the needs of the community of practice in which they are unfolding. It is through this local level of interpretation and execution that local identity claims are formed.

By examining the way that club communities localize information we get a sense of what it means to be from “here” rather than from “there.” Through localizing the governing organizations guidelines, the local club community is expressing its bottom-up relationship toward the community at large. How the local club chooses to incorporate the top-down guidelines, and which activities they choose to emphasize speak to their identity claims. By placing emphasis on “this” and not “that” we can garner what it means to be from “here” and not from “there.”

We also see that the local club community is also extremely aware of their social standing within the overall 4-H community. Through candid and open internal dialogue, the club expresses and contemplates its mid-level standing status amongst themselves. As a whole, they express an openness towards self-improvement, however they are collectively accepting of and comfortable with their overall involvement level and status standing. This reflects the club community’s overall identity claims in regard to their outward relationship with the organization and what their identity represents to the organization and all of the other club communities.

Interactions between the club community and outside members of the geographic community indicate a welcoming openness towards one another. Our club members are aware that they represent the face of 4-H to the outside world. This club exists because of a coming-together of the local community, and they welcome in outsiders, or at least

those who share similar backgrounds and interests. In this way, the club community and the outside community are entangled through proximity and shared identity claims. It would be interesting to see how this club community responded to an outsider with a dramatically different background, socioeconomic standing or geographic history, such as someone who recently moved to the region from a geographically distant place. This would give us insight into the importance of shared geographic histories.

Through the process of shared backgrounds, this club community is able to build and strengthen its internal bonds and identity claims. Examined through introductions, we see that our club members recognize and strengthen subtle social cues from one another, which act to build community identity and cohesiveness. We also see that subtle shifts in linguistic behavior can indicate the social standing and status of individual club members. This is significant because it actively builds and reinforces the social hierarchy of the club community. All of these aspects of identity come together to form the whole community experience.

### **Chapter Three: Identity Creation**

This chapter discusses the ways that language, and its associated ideologies, are used by members of our 4-H group to create individual group identities within their broader social setting. In particular, I will be focusing on how the ideological processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure are used to index and create identity within the local 4-H club community (Irvine and Gal 2000, 37). Iconization, in particular, is central to this research as it represents how a group employs the use and understanding of specific language as a unique identifying factor, setting themselves apart from non-group members by creating insider conversation and meaning (Irvine and Gal 2000). The 4-H equestrian environment serves as an excellent platform for studying this type of scenario because both horses and the 4-H club carry with them unique and identifiable language characteristics. These features, along with the fact that the majority of our speakers are in a discovery and learning phase when it comes to using horse related language, makes teasing out the iconic features of their language exchanges easily tangible.

A fitting example of how tangible iconic language is in our 4-H setting can be seen in this brief, simple three-word sentence exchanged between two of the members participating in a 4-H sponsored horse show:

“Zoe rides Both!”

Both what? Both horses? Both shows? In this seemingly innocuous instance the required insider knowledge is that there are two types of riding disciplines available to the participants at this particular show, English and Western. This individual rider happens to be riding in both disciplines, which is unique, as indicated by the way “Both!” is said

with emphasis. The key to understanding this conversation is knowing the iconic, or insider meaning imbued in the word “Both!” As I have shown, in this context it indicates a riding style or discipline rather than riding more than one horse, or riding in more than one show. So thus, the use of “Both!” and its understanding becomes iconic of expertise within this setting and in this speech community. Had this same sentence been uttered at another type of event, say a trail riding competition, the word “both” would imply something entirely different as riding in more than one discipline is not an available option.

This type of language is quite common not only in the 4-H environment and among the youth participants involved in this study, but among horse owners involved in the horse show world as well. As a researcher, I have relied heavily upon my own equestrian background and insider knowledge of the 4-H environment to gain my own conversational footing (Goffman 1981) and thus for understanding what is unfolding in the girls’ speech. Without this insider knowledge, I would struggle a bit more to make certain connections or identify the subtle meanings that are being exchanged. So, in this instance, my insider role as a 4-H parent and avid equestrian owner is directly beneficial to my role as a researcher.

Another important area of focus in the use of language as an identity creation process is fractal recursivity (Irvine and Gal 2000). This term addresses the way that the differences which are made to be iconic are specifically used in the creation of an “other”, in turn also creating the “self” (Andronis 2004, 264). Additionally, fractal recursivity implies hierarchy (Irvine and Gal 2000, 38). Hierarchy through fractal

recursivity asserts that languages themselves exist within a hierarchical system designed to give speakers “cultural resources to claim and thus attempt to create shifting communities, identities, selves, and roles at different levels of contrast, within a cultural field” (Irvine and Gal 2000, 38). Expert language use illustrates this hierarchy well; in a similar way to how Jacobs-Huey (2006) documented it among cosmetologists, it is also frequently seen in the equestrian world examined here.

Looking back to the previous example of the word “both” we see that our speakers are using this word in an iconic way, imbuing it with very specific meaning that would not necessarily carry the same meaning outside of this given community of practice. This type of language use ultimately creates the community “self” versus an outsider “other”. Through the specific use of the word “both” clear lines are drawn between “self” and “other” which aides greatly in the identity creation process as it generates a specific group interpretation, or “knowing”; through this recursivity, it places those who comprehend the contextualized meaning of “both” in the community and also in a higher social position than those who do not.

Erasure is the third and final component on which I will draw from to examine identity creation in this chapter (Irvine and Gal 2000). According to Irvine and Gal, erasure “is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities invisible” (2000, 38). Mary Antonia Andronis further supports this idea by explaining erasure as being “integrally intertwined with both iconization and recursivity, as it is the erasure of any differentiation which is, according to the given ideology, inconsequential” (2004, 264). Erasure “determines what can become iconized

and also what then becomes recursive within a given group” (Andronis 2004, 264).

Looking back to the utterance containing “both”, erasure would be seen through the way that no other word could be substituted with the same meaning being produced in this given environment. In effect, all other possible terms that could be used have been squeezed out through the erasure process leaving the word “both” as the ideal descriptor to show iconic group identity. In effect, this simple verbal exchange represents far more than a simple statement of fact; it creates shared identity bonds between the speakers, and to the larger group that the conversation is unfolding in. It also serves to create a sense of identity and belonging to which the individual self can identify. I now delve into an in-depth exploration of the specific linguistic features unique to our study group as represented through these three ideological processes.

### *Hi, my Name is...*

Introductions, as a kind of speech act (Searle 1969), are a way of establishing both group and individual identity. For researchers, introductions are important because they provide valuable insight towards personal and group identity practices. They act as the foundation for displaying and constructing group iconization. On the individual level, an introduction may present identifying elements that let us see how a person is unique, through mentions of their name, their age, or their personal preferences towards something. On the group level, we see all of the similarities each group member holds in common, which serve to create a unique group identity and bond the group members together through their commonality. Lastly, introductions as a speech act serve as a way of performing belonging within the group and may symbolize joining or being accepted

into the group. The performance of the introduction is the entry point into the group. It is here that each participant chooses what to express about themselves in order to build their group identity. If an expression is well received, it becomes part of the collective through group iconization. If an expression is instead ill received, it may be pushed out, often through a process of erasure.

Likely because the process of going through introductions are so useful in building community and identity, the club chooses to have each participant formally introduce themselves at the start of every meeting. While nerve-wracking for many of the participants due to the public speaking requirement, introductions serve as a bonding component which allow each member to share certain aspects of their individual identity with the entire club. Through identity sharing, the club as a whole is able to know the individual members better, in turn creating a more cohesive community. In this introduction, each speaker shares their name, their age, their horse's name, and their favorite pizza.

- Marissa: My name's Marissa. >I'm 13^<, My horse's name is Mazie, and My favorite pizza is:: Probably Hawaiian.
- Betty: -My name's Betty. I'm 15. My horses' names are::: Buck and Ben, and um::: my favorite pizza is Probably a combination pizza.
- Amy: Hi, I'm Amy. I'm 11. My horse's name is Elkie, and my favorite pizza is Hawaiian.
- Amy: Angie.
- Angie: Hi, my name is An::gie. My horse's name is Stewart, an::d um::: my age::, I'm 8, and my favorite pizza is >pineapple<.
- Stephanie: I'm Stephanie, I'm 12, my horse's name is [...].

- Jennifer: My name is Jennifer:: I'm 10 years old. My horse's name:: is Duke, he's 7.
- Taylor: My name is [...]. My horse's name is Ty:: [...].
- Bobby: My name is Bobby:: I'm 10 years old. My horse's name is^ (1.15) Cane. I like pizza.
- Florence: My name's Florence. >I'm 10 years old.< My horse's name is:: [...].
- Edith: Hi, my name is Edith. I'm 12 years old, and my:: horse's name is Blaze::, and my:: favorite pizza is pepperoni.
- unknown: -Go ahead and introduce yourself. You're Jane's brother, right?~
- Ethyl: Only if he's like, >what's your name<?
- Rick: \*Rick.\*
- Ethyl: Thank you.
- Daisey: Hi, my name's Daisey:: I'm 14 years old, and my horse's name is Vince, and my favorite pizza [...].
- Beth: I'm Beth::, I'm (here with Edith). I'm in the process of looking for a horse, and I like Hawaiian.
- Marissa: And she's riding Elkie.
- Betty: And she's riding Thunder!

By examining the collective introduction process, we see that insider group meaning, or iconization, is being created in a couple of ways. First, the topics of the introduction itself are relevant only to this particular club meeting, which is taking place in a pizza parlor. The pizza topping component of the introductions creates an opportunity for an insider experience as the club meetings do not always take place in this physical location. By including the type of pizza that a participant likes in their introduction the speakers are actively participating with the physical context or environment of this specific meeting. Insider meaning is created for the participants who



are present and who share their favorite type of pizza toppings as they are witness to and part of the context of the meaning behind the pizza toppings introduction. (Members from other 4-H clubs, or even this club who are not present at this meeting thus fall into an “outsider” group).

Secondly, by sharing the names of each individual’s horse, or horses, insider meaning is created through the act of shared background knowledge. The circle of horses in the area suitable for the activities associated with 4-H are well known by its members. As a result, participants are keenly aware of which horses reside in the community and their performance abilities. Through sharing who is riding which horse at a given moment, intimacy through background knowledge and familiarity is created. In some instances, participants can be more familiar with a horse’s history than their peers. Displays of insider or background knowledge like this can be seen through the way that the youth members are aware of who is riding who. For example, when Marissa says “And she’s riding Elkie”, Betty promptly corrects the statement by saying “And she’s riding Thunder!”. This type of insider knowledge creates power dynamics and insider relationships among those “in the know” about a specific horse’s history, as seen in the above example. This is important because in the 4-H environment horses serve as an extension of self, and therefore as an extension of the group community as well.

Through the examination of introductions, we have seen that they serve as much more than a forced public speaking endeavor designed to develop leadership skills. They offer a platform upon which each member shares unique individual identity claims, which help to build the overall community identity. Introductions also create meaning

and insider experiences through the act of participation in the introduction process itself. They help to dissolve the barriers of anonymity and bond participants through action. Lastly, because each participant must go through this rite of passage, they all belong to the experience, through which shared meaning and insider knowledge is created.

*Us and Them.*

One of the easiest ways to examine the iconization process in action is through excerpts of interactions that are intended to exemplify “us” and “them” scenarios, which also create insider meaning and experiences (Irvine and Gal 2000). As shown in the following analysis, the verbal practice of pointing out the differences of “them” also goes a long way in simultaneously bringing to the forefront the ways that a given group sets themselves apart from non-group members. Insider conversation and meaning are the foundation upon which the “outsider” experience is explained.

In the following excerpt from a monthly club meeting, the club president, Betty, speaks extensively about her trip to the National 4-H Round-Up Competition. This competition is an esteemed annual event which is attended by club members from all across the United States and Canada. Being chosen to attend this event is an indication that a certain degree of advanced status has been achieved through regular participation in club activities and excellent demonstration of the 4-H core concepts at the local or regional level. The retelling of the competition experience provides an excellent foundation for the exploration of iconization because this event naturally creates an “us” and “them” scenario due to the competition environment, differing geographic proximity, and differing group values.

The retelling of this experience also represents something important for the speaker, and the group she is speaking to. By verbally sharing this experience the speaker is creating a vicarious group experience that all members can share in. In this way, the prestige of the event becomes a tangible experience at some level for all of the group members. The speaker is also publicly identifying herself as a representative of the group at an important outside function, which carries with it a degree of prestige and honor.

Betty: So, on:: -the 7<sup>th</sup> of January, we:: -left for the airport and (0.65) with our horse judging team, to go to Denver for the National Round-Up 4-H Competition, and (0.86) when:: (1.12) we were all very nervous. We were studying the Entire:: plane ride. But, when we got there, like all our nerves turned into excitement. Like, we got to meet people from (0.78) Texas::, to Montana::, to Nebraska::, it like (1.26) [...] yeah Canada, the Canadian people were Re:::ally nice. They taught us to >there were two dances and a banquet<, um:::, the Canadians taught us a lot of different line dances.

One of the first things that stands out to me as a researcher is the way that the speaker's nervousness comes through in her speech as she retells the portion of the story where the group was nervous. Her tone comes across as slightly nervous as she stammers, and her sentence structure is broken as though she is overcoming emotion. In this way, she is recalling the group emotion and sharing the experience not only verbally, but emotionally as well, producing another layer of affective meaning (Kagan 1978; Besnier 1990). That is, her speech allows listeners to ascribe certain subjective states onto her, and through affect's social aspect, feel it as well. For example, during Betty's story, the listening audience responded with attentive listening, smiling and head nodding, which indicated their alignment with Betty's story. At the conclusion of the story, strong social support was shown by comments such as "wow", and probing questions about event

details were asked. This affect ties the group together, creating a shared experience and giving the listeners an active avenue in which to share the experience.

The next telling aspect of this dialogue is the way that the speaker keeps using the word “we” to create a distinct “us” experience at the National Round-Up 4-H Competition, even though of course not all of the members were present. Through the strategic use of the word “we” in phrases such as “we left”; “we were all”; “we were studying”; “we got there”; “we got to,” etc. an exclusive scenario is being created whereby “we” only applies to the small number of club members in attendance at the competition. Simultaneously, the speaker is also creating an inclusive second-hand “we” scenario whereby the entire local club is able to vicariously share in the experience through witnessing its retelling. By separating this story into an “us” or “we” experience, insider meaning is reinforced. “We” establishes lines between those who are insiders, members who attended the competition, or members inside of this local club, versus those who are outsiders.

Next, we can see that group iconization is being formed through the club’s interactions with the “Canadian” group. Our speaker identifies the “Canadian” group as being not just “nice”, but “Really nice”. Specifically, they are “really nice” because they go out of their way to help our group fit into an unfamiliar situation. This denotes that the Canadian team is more involved in and knowledgeable about the National 4-H Round-Up Competition than our group, an identifying factor gained through recursivity, or the production of “otherness”. Lastly, the final portion of this story represents participation in an experience that is unique to the National 4-H Round Up Competition,

which draws definite lines between local group behavior and identity and “other” group behaviors and identities. In this instance the “other” is seen through the practice of line dancing.

Betty: They taught us to >there were two dances and a banquet<, um:::, the Canadians taught us a lot of different line dances.

From this passage we can ascertain that our group does not possess inherent social knowledge about the activities generally held at this event, or line dancing in particular. The absence of this knowledge acts as an indicator towards our group’s ideologies and historical activities. Line dancing in particular stands out as something that our group is completely unfamiliar with as they were taught not one, but a “lot” of line dances. The action of learning these line dances denotes a willingness and desire on our group’s behalf to fit into the social setting of this event, as well as a willingness to identify themselves as an “outsider” to this type of activity.

Through the use of “us” and “them” scenarios, such as those mentioned above, insider meaning, or iconization is readily created. By drawing definitive lines around “our” experience and who “we” are, insiders and outsiders are naturally formed. In this way exclusive insider meaning is brought into being through the re-telling of an experience. By sharing “we” experiences in an inclusive way with members of a shared community, the re-teller of an experience recreates the definitive lines of exclusion to include the shared community. This creates a situation where the community can vicariously share in the “we” experience. Effectively, the community gains a second-hand “insider” status through the act of witnessing the retelling. Even though the second-

hand group, who has only heard the re-telling of the event, will always lack first-hand experience of the event, they are not entirely excluded from it which creates second-hand insider meaning.

Lastly, through the experience of learning something new, like line-dancing, “otherness” becomes apparent as there is an “insider” group who imparts knowledge unto the “outsider” group. As we have seen in the scenario above, the willingness to align oneself with the “other” simultaneously identifies themselves as an “outsider”, and a willing “insider” to the shared experience.

### *Their Breakfast*

As anyone who has fond memories of comfort foods, or Sunday brunches, can attest, food represents much more than something we simply nourish our bodies with. Food is an experience unto itself, transcending time and often representing experiences that we carry with us through-out life. Due to the role food plays in culture, it is a very useful marker that we can actively engage with to help identify a given group and time period. Food choices represent important factors such as heritage identification, geographic associations, economic status, and group preference (Crowther 2013). Food choices equate a physical construct of a group’s identity, which is actively engaged with through food consumption. Keeping this in mind, when one is presented with food that falls outside of their accustomed sphere of food preferences, it can be both memorable and unsettling, as we will see.

Betty: I just want to talk about the awards banquet.

Ethyl: >Okay, go ahead.<

Betty: The, so:: the last morning, Sunday morning, we got -we were supposed to get up at 5:30, and:: we ended up all turning off our alarms and:: we slept in till 7:00, which is when we were supposed to catch the shuttle. So, we had five minutes to get up, get dressed, and go to the (0.82) awards banquet. And:: heh, ((smiling)) so >when we got to the awards banquet< they served us breakfast, which their breakfasts in Denver aren't like our breakfasts here:: They, our breakfast was a beef taco with eggs in it and a *spicy* sauce over the top. >It was good<, but it just wasn't breakfast, and like *garlic* potatoes^ ((restless background)) but, they started [...] ((audience has become restless)).

Lacie (Parent): *Okay.*

In this passage, our speaker is expressly making a point about the different style of food served at the National 4-H Conference. This situation left such an impression on the speaker that she halted the meeting so that she could share this experience with the group. In order to show how unique this food experience was, one of the first things the speaker does is to tie food preference in directly to the geographical region of “Denver.” By emphasizing the geographic region, the speaker immediately creates a “there” and “here” or “us” and “them” scenario. The speaker then goes on to describe in detail how the experience was different. The way the speaker approaches this situation gives the listener the clear impression that the meal was dramatically different than anything “we” might experience “here”.

When talking about the breakfast, we see that she refers to the meal as “their breakfast”. The use of the word “their” immediately characterizes this meal as somehow being different than “our” breakfast. The speaker goes on to specifically describe the differences, which she is using to create and “us” and “them” scenario through food choice. Through the dramatic emphasis on the differences experience, the speaker is

explicitly creating iconization through difference, or recursivity. So, in this scenario the “other” eats spicy beef and egg tacos for breakfast while “we” do not.

As a side note, my family, who is not from the Denver region and has never visited that area, has eaten this very meal for breakfast on several occasions. I did not have the heart to tell the speaker that her experience was not so out of the ordinary! For her this was a dramatic shift from her normal food experience and she will likely carry this meal experience with her for years to come. In this way, “their breakfast” will likely always correlate to her experience in Denver, which will help her shape her group identity as someone from the Washoe County area, in turn reinforcing her self-image as someone not “from there.”

Another point of importance in this passage is the emphasis on the day that this meal was served. The day of this important meal was the speaker’s last day at the competition, a Sunday. This is important to note for two reasons: first, the reference to this being the last day is important because it marks a shift in the experience, highlighting the fact that the experience will soon come to an end. Secondly, the emphasis that this unusual meal took place on Sunday is important because some groups, such as Church goers, view Sunday as an exceptional weekly meal where individuals come together to share their experiences and build community ties. This could be breakfast, brunch, lunch or dinner—the important part is that it takes place on a Sunday.

Interestingly, the listening audience does not find the speaker’s experience to be note-worthy; their silence in response to her discussion creates a sense of erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000). Rather than acknowledge what our listener clearly finds peculiar, the



group, as a whole, predominantly ignores what is being said as a way of keeping group identity and cohesiveness intact. This clearly conveys to the speaker that the listener's do not share in the speaker's opinion, nor do they find the point as important as the speaker does. Rather than giving recognition to the cultural cuisine differences, it is simply ignored, or dismissed. These actions are expressly communicated in two ways towards the conclusion of the speaker's story:

Betty: >It was good<, but it just wasn't breakfast, and like *garlic potatoes*^ ((restless background)) but, they started [...] ((audience has become restless)).

Lacie (Parent): *Okay*.

First the audience shows that it is not in alignment with what is being said by lack of attention to what is being said. This is expressed by background noise which is created by separate conversation and physical movement away from the speaker's story. Secondly, a parent steps in and closes the story by saying the word "okay." In this case the word is not said so much as to identify with the speaker and show assent with her perspective, rather it is used to dismiss the speaker and move on from the story. These actions denote that the listening audience does not share the speaker's perspective. They are not engaging the conversation, and no questions are being asked. In general, the listening audience is not identifying with, or iconizing the details of the story, they are in fact negating them through dismissiveness. In this way they are actively erasing the experience from the group collective (Irvine and Gal 2000).

The erasure experience presented here does not imply that there is anything wrong with what the speaker is presenting, rather it just implies that the group is not identifying

with what is being said, and they do not wish to iconize what is being presented as a key element of their group value or identity. Many of the children in the audience are younger than the speaker and are not yet at the age where they are experiencing events such as the competition in a way that build identity. Another large portion of the audience are adults who have already navigated their way through a variety of food oddities, meaning that they just do not find the story that remarkable. Even though the group did not identify with the story, it does not make it any less remarkable for the speaker. It simply remains part of her individual identity rather than being verbally reinforced as an identity shared or adopted by the group.

*A Very Small Organization.*

Immediately following the “their breakfast” dialogue, the conversation takes a decided turn towards the emphasis on “Denver” and “us”. Perhaps due in part to the lack of response from the group about the retelling of the breakfast experience, the adult club leader, Ethyl (also the speaker’s mother) steps in to further identify the uniqueness of “our” club and the “otherness” of the Denver club. By supporting what the speaker is saying in the face of dismissiveness, Ethyl is aligning herself with her daughter through affirmation of a “them” and “us” scenario. That is, the speaker’s mother is affirming to the audience the significance of what is being said (a very appropriate and understandable stance). In an attempt to help the audience understand the significance of the differences that exist between “Denver” and “us”, Ethyl interjects in the conversation.

Betty:            -So, our[

Ethyl:            [The one thing is that our 4-H club here is a very, very small organization[

- Betty: [Yeah, 4-H is taken very seriously in, in Denver:::,  
Texas:::]
- Ethyl: [A lot of years::
- Betty: -No, Denver has won every year for the past 20 years. So,  
*there ya go!* Heh

At the start of this exchange we see that Betty, the club president, is struggling to convey the differences between “Denver” and “us” in a way that the group identifies with. Rather than letting Betty continue with her story, Ethyl abruptly interrupts (mother is interrupting her daughter) so that she can explain the differences in a way that the audience, or at least the adult portion of the audience, can identify with.

- Ethyl: [The one thing is that our 4-H club here is a very, very  
small organization]

In the way that Ethyl takes control of the conversation, there is an immediate shift in the target audience. The conversation has gone from a 4-H peer leading the discussion and addressing the youth participants in the audience, to the adult club leader, the most authoritative person present, leading the conversation and addressing the adults in the audience. This situation creates a power dynamic intended to help more clearly express the groups’ differences, and in turn make the audience understand just how different “we” are from “them.”

By identifying our club as being “very small” the listener grasps the sense that our club somehow exists differently within the broader scheme of the organization. The emphasis on our club being “very small” serves to support the initial speaker’s claims of “otherness.” Denver is again specifically mentioned as being the “other”, and in this

situation, they are described as being somehow more “serious” than our group identifies itself as being. This passage carries with it an unspoken message that our group identifies itself as not being that serious, existing on a smaller scale, and somehow not being as good as Denver.

Despite Betty and Ethyl’s attempts at displaying our group’s differences, the audience as a whole remains silent. No one is willing to engage in the conversation. At first the two speakers continue trying to emphasize the differences at play between Denver and our group. The main intent of their interaction appears to be to help the group understand their role within the larger 4-H dynamic. But, the group as a whole remains silent to the idea that they are somehow “smaller” and therefore less serious than the Denver group. It is not until the speakers present a way for our group to improve their standings that everyone resumes active engagement in the conversation at hand. The silent period during this conversation indicates that, while there is no overt support and agreement for what is being said, the group does assent to the club’s role through the passivity of silence.

Betty and Ethyl competing to talk at the same time. Ethyl succeeds.

Ethyl:           [...][training year-round, they have coaching on the particulars of the horses year-round for the kids.

Several Parents:    Oh? ((Head nodding from a few parents.))

It is at this moment that the audience is once again engaged in the conversation and willing to identify with what is being presented. The response is immediate, and positive, encouraging further conversation on the subject.

- Ethyl: >Yeah, and our team had a month to prepare.<
- Betty: Yeah, so Denver:::, they suggested to us, >Denver and Texas both have this<, which I *don't* think we'll do this, but they bought this horse judging and hypology::: preparation kit which comes with everything you'll ever need for knowledge^, but it's about \$350.00. Um:::, but they use that and that's what gets them prepared.
- Ethyl: -Well maybe we'll look into raising some funds and All the 4-H clubs can go in on that, something we can talk about.
- Several Parents: ((Clapping in unison))

These actions unmistakably communicate the shared belief that the members of the club have the potential to be a formidable competitor, just like Denver. They are not going to overtly accept being less than another group. The immediate engagement in the conversation once it shifted to preparation for the competition, and supportive clapping at the close of the conversation display the group's acceptance of the idea that they are on the same level as Denver, they just need to use the same tools as Denver to prepare. Clearly our group views itself as capable, despite its small community. These attitudes convey core values such as self-assurance, determination, and leadership, which are all at the heart of the 4-H organization. Now that we have an understanding of how the club views itself within the larger context of the 4-H organization, we can explore their interactions with other local club members at a 4-H show. This is where each club member gets to represent their club branch and display all of their hard work.

*She Rides Both!*

Discussions of physical adornment are a very telling characteristic of how our 4-H group identifies themselves as a unique and separate group in comparison to the organization as

a whole. In the following exchange, we see that tack (riding gear such as bridles and saddles) technicalities are used as a way to create a group identity through peer-to-peer conversation and resistance towards the “other”.

- Marissa: It's very English.
- Jennifer: Zoe rides both! But she [...] her sister rides [...]
- Marissa: [She just found out that her bridle is *illegal*^.
- Amy: What, what was *illegal*^?
- Marissa: Her bridle is apparently *illegal*^.
- Amy: What!^
- Marissa: That girl right there, ((pointing)). On the >palomino.<  
Right there, ((pointing)) in the blue.
- Amy: How is it *illegal*^?
- Jennifer: -I don't know They just[
- Marissa: [>Okay, so her last show they said her *English* saddle, that her dressage saddle was *illegal*. But she was just using an *English* saddle.<
- Amy: What^?
- Jennifer: That, that's not right!
- Stephanie: \*No.

This passage identifies our group in several different ways. First, there is clear use of specialized expertise language, which is specifically related to an English style of horseback riding. The appearance of expert language is important here because its use indicates that a degree of authority or agency exists from the expert speaker, which simultaneously places the listeners in the position of being “novice” (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 20). This naturally creates social stances of “expert” and “novice” speakers (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 20). Through using expert language such as this, the speakers are actualizing their

own levels of expertise to one another as well as supporting their peer's expertise level. In my experience, English riding styles and tack carry with them a reputation of rigid guidelines and technical expectations, which do require an extensive knowledge base. Simple violations, such as wearing the wrong color of breeches (pants), or plaiting (a specialized style of braiding a horses' mane) in a specific class can disqualify a participant. Knowing these guidelines and adhering to them is viewed as part of the competition process. To the novice English competitor, or the casual observer, these rigid expectations may seem unnecessarily harsh. The opening sentence of this conversation lays the ground work for how the situation is being perceived. We have two speakers explaining to a third participant what is taking place.

Marissa:        It's very English.

Right from the start the situation is being tied to English rules and expectations. This identifies the English style of riding as something our participants know about due to proximity rather than through deep individual group alignment. The tone of this sentence could be read as it's very 'other'. The next sentence, spoken by the second participant, further identifies English as existing outside of the group identity, yet within the identity of the 4H community of practice as a whole.

Jennifer:        Zoe rides both!

As discussed previously, "both" in this context means the rider participates in both English and Western riding styles. Western is clearly the preferred style of these speakers, which is inferred by how English riding exists as the "other" style. What is

inherent to the group, in this case Western riding, is identified by using that as the unspoken comparison foundation of how English is different.

As the conversation unfolds it becomes apparent that the speakers disagree with the formal opinion of their peer's English tack, her saddle in particular. There is a lack of understanding as to why the tack is "illegal" and the general consensus is that the flaw exists within the governing authority, not their peer rider who they hold in esteem. In this way the speakers further create an "other" identity which separates them from the judging authorities.

- Marissa:       [>Okay, so her last show they said her *English* saddle, that her dressage saddle was *illegal*. But, she was just using an *English* saddle.<
- Amy:            What?^
- Jennifer:       That, that's not right!
- Stephanie:     \*No.

Through this conversation we see that our speakers show alignment towards their 4-H peer participant and "otherness" towards the adult judges of the 4-H show. In this situation, the judges represent the 4-H organization as a whole. They are the governing body, they set and implement the rules that must be followed, and they ultimately determine what will and will not be accepted.

This conversation clearly functions as an in-group identifier. Through this speech exchange we see that English is viewed as an "other" riding style that some peers participate in, and the governing authority, the judges in this case, represent the ultimate "other" as there is no identifying with their viewpoint of why their peer's tack is illegal.



This conversation shows clear alignment and identification with the speakers' 4-H peer, even if they do not fully identify with her riding style. This reveals the multiple layers of belonging present here; they exist on a spectrum from closeness to otherness. The more that the conversation unfolds, the more each participant knows that their fellow speakers are in alignment with one another and that they oppose the judges' actions against their peer rider. This builds a strong group identity with multiple layers of belonging among the peer participants while also placing both judging adults and their authority outside of the group. It is also important to note that Zoe is held in high esteem within this speaking group. That fact that she rides "both" is a declaration to her skilled riding abilities, and this positions her in advanced status within the overall social hierarchy. Marissa further reinforces this idea in a side dialogue of the above conversation with Stephanie. Here Marissa declares that Zoe is "like, Really good. She's like, better than Me...She's *amazing!*" By aligning themselves with Zoe over the judges, our youth speakers are placing Zoe in a raised social position which they in turn align with.

### *My Dog*

In this passage, I will examine how cooperative storytelling serves as a way to create and reinforce shared community bonds and identities. Shared storytelling is an important component of iconization because it allows the speakers to share personal stories of similar experiences amongst each other as a way to create inside meaning and identify with one another. Through this identification process similar backgrounds come together to build bonds through alignment of similar experiences, which create a strong

sense of familiarity and belongingness. The topic of this cooperative storytelling session revolves around family dogs.

- Stephanie: It's like my dog, Non-Stop, wants lovins.
- Marissa: >My dog< if you pet it for a while and then you stop she'll like jump on you and She'll like paw at you and be like no you must pet me!
- Betty: That's kinda how he is he'll keep [...] So cute Like grabbing your hand Keep pettin me!
- Marissa: [like <No!>
- Betty: [Keep pettin me!
- Stephanie: I love dogs.
- All: Heh
- Stephanie: >My dog< she like keeps on leaning on me. She's like [...] she puts up your hand so she can be like here while you're walking. I'm like get off me (I almost fell down).

From the context of this story, several important identity claims are being made.

First, we see that each participant shares in the common experience of owning a dog.

This very specifically identifies each as a dog owner, providing them a commonality over which they can show conversational alignment (Goffman 1981). This is important because it indicates that each participant is on a level playing field regarding the topic of conversation. This implies that an inherent knowledge of what it means to be a dog owner is shared by all, that is they have shared insider meaning in that broader speech community.

Secondly, the participants are supporting the storytelling process through turn taking. Each member makes a statement that identifies with the topic at hand and supports the overall shared attitude towards dogs. Through this style of exchange

community bonds are made and reinforced through shared identity claims. For example, when Marissa explains how her dog will “like paw at you and be like no you must pet me!”. Betty immediately shows support and shared understanding by reinforcing Marissa’s statement with “So cute Like grabbing your hand Keep pettin me”. Marissa engages with Betty, taking over the conversation and completing the thought with “[like <No>” (as in, don’t stop petting me). Betty supports Marissa’s obscure statement by clarifying “[keep pettin me!”. Stephanie, who has been silent during Marissa and Betty’s turn taking, interjects with “I love dogs”. This sudden announcement produces laughter from all, which indicates mutual support and agreement for Stephanie’s declarative statement.

The identity claims being made here act to unify each participant through shared experience. As a group they now share the bond of all being dog owners who love their dogs. Additionally, they now possess shared knowledge of what each member’s dog owning experience represents. For example, Stephanie’s experience represents a dog who “Non-Stop wants lovins”, and Marissa’s dog will “paw at you and be like no you must pet me!”. Through the storytelling exchange that focuses on aligning with each other, each member is walking away from the experience with a shared and mutually supported sense of group identity. But what happens when an attempt at creating shared identity claims fails? The next section will examine this scenario in detail.

*Look, look!*

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, erasure “is the process in which ideology, in simplifying the sociolinguistic field, renders some persons or activities invisible”

(2000:38). At the conversational level of execution, erasure is seen through the lack of support for verbal initiation of a group identity claim. Erasure is critically important to group identity claims because it “determines what can become iconized and also what then becomes recursive within a given group” (Andronis 2004:264).

Looking back to the “both” scenario discussed earlier in the chapter, erasure can be seen through the way that no other word could be substituted with the same meaning being produced in this given environment. In effect, all other possible terms that could be used have been squeezed out through the erasure process leaving the word “both” as the ideal descriptor to show iconization and group identity. In effect, this simple verbal exchange represents far more than a simple statement of fact; it creates shared identity bonds between the speakers, and to the larger group that the conversation is unfolding in. It also serves to create a sense of identity and belonging through which the individual self can identify.

In the language exchange process, erasure can be a difficult process to pin-point, not because it rarely happens, but because it happens in a way that is often covert and highly specific to a particular interaction. The following exchange is an illustrative example of what erasure looks like in action. In this dialogue, we have one speaker trying very hard to iconize how wonderful miniature horses are, or at least engage her peers in conversation about a miniature horse that is attending this 4-H event. Despite the speakers’ best efforts her peers are hesitant to engage in the conversation resulting in the erasure of one girl’s appreciation of miniature horses from the group’s shared ideology.

- Stephanie: -Cute little miniature. (3.01) >Look look at the cute little miniature horse.< Yeah, hi PONY! (4.53) Hi Lexin, Hi little PONY! \*Look at the miniature!\* I'm gonna ask her how much for the miniature pony. Just jokin, Because we don't have our trailer. We could put her in the back of the truck though
- All: Heh
- Stephanie: >Well, *at least* we brought the truck< and we didn't bring my mom's <Subaru.>
- Florence: \*I brought my Subaru.\*
- Stephanie: Heh
- Stephanie: You can't fit a miniature pony in *there* [...] Move it. (2.3) *I* would much rather get one of these than a first place.
- ((indicating an award on the ribbon table))
- Stephanie and Amy: Heh
- Silence: (30.23)
- Stephanie: I'm gonna go pet the miniature horse again.
- Amy: What?
- Stephanie: I'm gonna go pet the miniature horse. You can give out the ribbons.~
- Amy: (h)Huh?^

In this exchange, we see that Stephanie is insistently trying to get the group to recognize the miniature horse she has spotted at the show. There are three speakers present and none will respond to or engage with what Stephanie is saying. Stephanie is persistent though, and makes six separate attempts to get the group to engage in conversation on the miniature horse:

Stephanie: -Cute little miniature.

There is a 3 second silent pause while the group continues walking.

Stephanie: >Look look at the cute little miniature horse.< Yeah, hi PONY!

The silent pause continues for 4.53 seconds.

Stephanie: Hi Lexin, *Hi* little PONY!

There is still no response from the group.

Stephanie: \*Look at the miniature!\* I'm gonna ask her how much for the miniature pony

The group continues to remain silent.

Stephanie: Just jokin, Because we don't have our trailer. We could put her in the back of the truck though.

All: Heh

Finally, the group has engaged with Stephanie through joint laughter. Unfortunately, laughter is not what she was hoping for in her multiple attempts to connect over shared enjoyment of the miniature horse in attendance. In this scenario the joint laughter acts as a dismissive response, indicating the group is unwilling to verbally engage in this topic. Stephanie reacts to this erasure process with a jabbing comment intended to diminish those who refused to engage in her topic of conversation.

Stephanie: >Well, *at least* we brought the truck< and we didn't bring my mom's <Subaru.>

It is here, at the mention of a specific vehicle type that a member of the group finally engages Stephanie in conversation.

Florence: \*I brought my Subaru.\*

Stephanie: Heh

Stephanie: You can't fit a miniature pony in *there* [...] Move it. (2.3) *I* would much rather get one of these than a first place.

Throughout the entire attempt to get the group to engage in conversation about the miniature horse, the only topic that the speaker is able to engage group response from is in regard to a shared vehicle type. The vehicle is regarded in a less than positive manner as it will not house the miniature horse that the speaker is so desperately trying to engage the group in conversation over. In this way, the original speaker is able to force conversation, but the second speaker still will not engage the topic of the miniature horse; all she will say is that she brought her Subaru.

The negative tone towards the Subaru is likely a direct response to Stephanie's failed efforts to elicit conversation from her peers about a topic that she clearly holds in high regard. By making a comment about the limits of a vehicle she knows another group member arrived in, Stephanie is pressuring Florence into conversation. While Stephanie does finally get another member of the group to converse, it is not about the desired topic, in this case the miniature horse.

The refusal of the group to recognize and speak about the miniature horse acts as an effective erasure of the topic. The rest of the group simply does not hold the same values and feelings over the miniature horse that Stephanie does. It is important to note that Stephanie is not a leading member of the club. Her status level appears to be somewhere in the middle, and she is an average participant in the club in terms of how much effort and time she puts into activities. Despite her attempts to gain group

iconization, the group will just not engage or identify with the topic at hand. The final result is that Stephanie leaves the group in favor of the miniature horse.

Stephanie: I'm gonna go pet the miniature horse again.

Amy: What?

Stephanie: I'm gonna go pet the miniature horse. You can give out the ribbons.~

Amy: (h)Huh?^

In this situation, not only is Stephanie leaving in favor of the miniature horse, but she is leaving Amy alone to perform a complicated task associated with the show. Stephanie is clearly disengaging with the group in a less than friendly way, leaving a member of the group alone to tackle a large task. This reaction may be in response to the group's unwillingness to bring the miniature horse into shared iconization in their community, or it may simply be that the speaker values the miniature horse more than she does her group members' opinions. In the next chapter, I will explore Stephanie's disengagement through directives, and how this effects status after conversation attempts have failed.

The way that this situation unfolds clearly identifies that the group does not iconize the miniature horse the way that Stephanie does. Stephanie clearly tries to identify her values with the group, but the group effectively erases this from their shared community's acknowledged preferences by refusing to engage in conversation about the miniature horse. In response to the erasure process, Stephanie disengages with the group in a fairly abrupt manner. When her peers will not show alignment with her and



incorporate her preferences into the group, Stephanie shows overt dis-alignment with the group. In this way Stephanie favors her individual identity and ideology over the group's.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, we can see that the creation of group identity is a continuous construct that takes place through a complex and ever evolving process of group iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure (Irvine and Gal 2000). The community of practice (CofP) framework is ideal for examining group identities such as these because, as Bucholtz notes "the community of practice offers an integrated approach to linguistic analysis" (Bucholtz, 1999, pp.221). CofP effectively allows the researcher to understand all socially meaningful language use as practices that are tied to various communities. As a result, researchers are able to provide more complete descriptions of language use along with their social explanations (Bucholtz, 1999, pp.221). As we have seen in this research, language use is expressly tied to its social setting.

The process of alignment, and therefore boundaries, also plays a critical role in the creation of identity claims. Through the process of alignment, shared group meanings and identity claims are made which signify what it means to be part of "this" group rather than "that". Through specialized language use the "self" is created which simultaneously reflects the "other". Hierarchies of meaning and social roles are created and recreated through linguistic expressions of alignment. As we have seen in this research, language is a key component in creating personal and group identities. It acts as a gateway of understanding into the complexity of identity creation and management. In particular we have seen that the creation of boundary systems through language use are very important.

By creating definable identity boundaries, such as aligning oneself as a “cloverbud”, or an “English rider”, participants come together to create the many sub-groups that coexist together within the same location, or in this case, club. The creation of these groups identifies each member as holding a unique place within the overall hierarchy of the group. In this way, both group and individual identity claims are actively made through collective alignment and boundary processes reflected through the group hierarchy.

#### **Chapter Four: Directives, Indirectness and the Creation of Social Power**

Directives play an important role in our day to day verbal exchanges (Searle 1969; 1975). Typically used to evoke or prevent specific overt action from a listener, or listeners, directives are a mode of communication that carry with them components of social meaning, power and recognition. Defined by Goodwin as “an utterance intended to indicate the speakers desire to regulate the behavior of the listener” directives are often easily issued and can take on multiple forms, such as explicit directives, indirect directives, complex directives, simple directives, or a combination thereof (Goodwin 2006, 107). The complexity and depth of meaning imbued in the directive depend heavily upon a variety of fluctuating factors such as the speaker issuing the directive, the listener receiving the directive, the relationship between the two, the dynamics of the speech community housing the directives, the environment the directives are unfolding in, and the desired outcomes of the parties involved. Examining the directive exchange provides an insightful window into understanding how social meaning, status and power are developed through language use.

Used regularly, directives are a powerful social tool which aid in the creation of complex social hierarchies and power dynamics within a given community of practice. These power dynamics are steeped in social meaning which influence individual and group perceptions of a speaker’s social status and are a useful component in the creation of social power. This chapter will explore power acquisition through directive use in the Washoe County 4-H club environment. By better understanding how this community of

practice is using directives, a more thorough understanding of power development and acquisition through language use among preadolescent girls will be gained.

An important component of directives is the manner in which they are executed. When they are overt and explicit teasing out the power dynamic at play is fairly straight forward, however directives are often issued in a much subtler manner. Indirectness plays an important role in both the directive process and the creation of social power, especially for the female participants in this Washoe County 4-H club. Indirectness often takes the form of ‘veiled’ remarks which “obscure the surface content of an utterance” (Jacobs-Huey, 2007, p.179). By making power moves through indirect language use, comments about perceived inappropriate behavior, or critiques over a peer’s performance, personal choices, or “being” in general can be made in a covert manner that does not appear impolite or initiate overt negative consequences. Through indirectness, the door of comradery and sportsmanship remains open as the veiled comment is obscured with ambiguity and uncertainty. If one were to deliver a direct critique or an overt directive, there is no social grey area in which to obscure meaning. As I will show later in this chapter, indirectness plays a considerable role in the language exchanges of the club participants.

Prior to examining how social stances of power are created through the use of directive style conversations, it is important to note the context within which these conversations are unfolding. Roughly half of the conversations take place at a local 4-H club horse show. Many of the county club members are present at this show, and it is only open to 4-H club members, meaning the general-public cannot compete. This is an

environment where friendly competition is not only encouraged but is the purpose for the gathering. Thus, there are both explicit, and implied expectations for behavior towards one another in competitive environments such as these. Additionally, the peer-to-peer dialogues in this environment are not closely governed by adult or parent supervision, which leaves much more room for verbal play and exploration among the youth participants.

Sportsmanship, courtesy, and good horsemanship play a large role in the 4-H environment. Show settings, such as the one being examined here, allow for the practical application of these rules. Specifically emphasized in the *4-H Horse Rule Book* (2009), sportsmanship is of central focus. It states that any “display of poor sportsmanship” is immediate “cause for disqualification” (Schafer 2009, 21). This means that all participating members are expected to treat one another, their horses, the judges, and officials with a certain level of respect. This gives the explicit expectation of polite or courteous behavior towards all in attendance and emphasizes handling one’s horse in a professional and humane manner at all times. More subtly, these expectations imply that each participant is expected to treat one another with respect in and out of the show ring, such as during peer-to-peer conversation. Additionally, participants should outwardly accept show placements, and the application of the official rules and regulations with respect and courtesy, even if they disagree with a decision. The underlying reason for such emphasis on sportsmanship is that one of the main goals of 4-H is to develop and enhance sportsmanship skills (Schafer 2009, 4). The only way that these skills are fully developed is through the real-life application of them.

The second environment in which I will explore directive style speech is at a monthly club meeting. Led by an adult club leader, and with parents in close physical proximity, the youth participants are under the direct supervision of adult authority figures. This dynamic differs from the show environment because the adult leaders are guiding and intervening in the topics of conversation. Rather than allowing for a natural flow of peer-to-peer conversation, each speaker voices their opinion not only among their peers, but under the watchful eye of the club leader and a room full of parents. Competition is not so much a factor here as is parental and authoritative opinion and control. As we will see, the type of environment in which a directive is used has a great deal of influence over how the directive is received and responded to by listeners.

*“You can give out the ribbons.”*

Explicit directives carry with them an overt call to action (Goodwin 2006). Leaving little room for misinterpretation, they act as a socially accepted way of explicitly directing other people’s behavior in a way that suits the issuer’s needs or desires. They are clear-cut and can be used when the speaker wants to make an overt statement of their authority over the listener. An example of this type of directive is seen in the following verbal exchange among our 4-H participants at a 4-H sponsored horse show, which was also analyzed in the previous chapter:

Stephanie: I’m gonna go pet the miniature horse again.  
 Amy: What?  
 Stephanie: I’m gonna go pet the miniature horse. You can give out the ribbons.~  
 Amy: (h)Huh?^

As we can see, the directive issued by Stephanie, “you can give out the ribbons” leaves little room for question as to what the speaker is asking the listener to do. It is bold and calls the listener to clear action. As a way of further imbuing power in the directive, the speaker issued the command in a friendly, yet authoritative tone as reflected by her falling intonation, which was immediately followed by the speaker physically leaving the immediate area. This leaves the listener without the opportunity to rebuttal or thwart the directive with their own response. This conversation was effectively ended by the speaker walking off, leaving the listener standing alone at the ribbon counter with the choice of either complying with the directive, or walking away from the ribbon counter which would have conveyed a separate message to the 4-H leaders running the counter.

The power in this scenario was gained not only in the overt and authoritative directive, but also through the way that the speaker abruptly ended the verbal exchange by leaving the conversation. This type of directive did not occur suddenly, rather there was a long build-up to the use of authoritative power that arose after a lengthy attempt by the speaker to direct an over-all conversation in a particular direction.

Stephanie:     -Cute little miniature. (3.01) >Look look at the cute little miniature horse.< Yeah, hi PONY! (4.53) Hi Lexin, *Hi little PONY!* \*Look at the miniature!\* I’m gonna ask her how much for the miniature pony. Just jokin, Because we don’t have our trailer. We could put her in the back of the truck though

All:            Heh

Stephanie:     >Well, *at least* we brought the truck< and we didn’t bring my mom’s <Subaru.>

Florence:      \*I brought my Subaru.\*

Stephanie:     Heh

Stephanie: You can't fit a miniature pony in *there* [...] Move it. (2.3) *I* would much rather get one of these than a first place.

((indicating an award on the ribbon table))

Stephanie and Amy: Heh

Silence: (30.23)

Stephanie: I'm gonna go pet the miniature horse again.

Amy: What?

Stephanie: I'm gonna go pet the miniature horse. You can give out the ribbons.~

Amy: (h)Huh?^

After several failed attempts at regulating the conversation Stephanie gave a clear directive to Amy, the only listener left, that effectively terminated the conversation, directed the listener into a particular mode of action, and solidified the speaker's position of social power. Amy, who was one of several conversation participants that did not comply with Stephanie's desired topic of speech, was left to complete a social responsibility by herself.

The aforementioned directive is an excellent example of how directives are not only used to regulate behavior, motivating the listener to perform some action guided by the speaker, but also how they create a power dynamic which ultimately places the directive issuer in a position of power. As previously mentioned, this directive was issued after a long and tedious attempt on the issuer's behalf to direct a conversation on a particular topic. This is an important component to the construction of this particular directive because it was through the disempowerment of not being allowed to lead the conversation that the speaker finally made the power move to issue this directive and regain her stance. By directing Amy's actions, Stephanie has effectively shown herself to



be more socially powerful than Amy. It is also important to note that this directive was issued to only one listener, who was of lower social status in this particular speech community due to her relatively new status to the club, and horse shows in general. This speaks further to Stephanie's attempt to manage her social status, as she may be nervous about losing her social standing to a newer club member. Another example of this type of speech is seen at a brief dialogue during a 4-H club monthly meeting. Here, Jennifer inquires to Bobby "did you bring *my* bible?", to which Bobby quickly asserts "I'll br, I'll bring it soon. I *swear*!" While this directive is framed as a question, we see that it is an overt directive to bring Jennifer's bible back. In this way, Jennifer is overtly directing Bobby's behavior, which also creates a power dynamic which ultimately places the directive issuer in a position of power.

Another example of how powerful directives can be is seen in an exchange taking place at the monthly 4-H meeting. During the start of the meeting the pledge of allegiance is routinely led by a youth participant. The adult leader, Ethyl, prompts the reading by issuing the general directive "we need somebody to lead the pledge of allegiance". This is an indirect directive which supports Ethyl's role as leader but does not place anyone in a less powerful position. Betty, Ethyl's daughter, then takes on an authoritative stance by declaring "Okay, Jennifer", which effectively assigns Jennifer the responsibility of leading the pledge of allegiance. In this exchange, Betty has effectively situated herself in a stance of authority over Jennifer, and even over Ethyl as she is the one who has declared who will read the pledge of allegiance. This exchange reinforces the importance of directives and exemplifies how they grant authority to the issuer and place the complier in a lower social stance.

*“At least we brought the truck.”*

As shown in the previous section, explicit directives are a useful way to overtly gain social status and power. However, they are often not the first go to for grabs at power as they can be risky, and inherently contain potential for greater loss of power if the listener publicly fails to comply with the directive. The conversation that gave rise to the explicit directive here was composed of a series of collective denials of power over one speaker's desired topic of conversation. This power struggle was not overt, rather it was done through a series of indirect conversations, which ultimately led to the issuing of an explicit directive. By more thoroughly examining how indirectness is used throughout the conversation, a better feel for how the situation escalated into an overt directive can be gained.

Stephanie:     -Cute little miniature. (3.01) >*Look look* at the cute little miniature horse.< Yeah, hi PONY! (4.53) Hi Lexin, *Hi little* PONY! \**Look* at the miniature!\* I'm gonna ask her how much for the miniature pony. Just jokin, Because we don't have our trailer. We could put her in the back of the truck though.

All:            Heh

During this attempt at guiding the conversation, Stephanie essentially carries on this conversation by herself. The lack of participation from the other conversation participants indicates an unwillingness to let Stephanie hold the powerful position of conversation leader. It is an indirect response intended to dismiss the conversation topic, and therefore Stephanie's role as conversation leader. As a direct result of this collective denial, Stephanie starts a not-so-subtle passive aggressive stance towards the

conversation participants. In this way, the speaker is attempting to gain back the social status and power lost during her failed attempt to direct the conversation.

Stephanie: >Well, *at least* we brought the truck< and we didn't bring my mom's <Subaru.>

Florence: \*I brought my Subaru.\*

Stephanie: Heh

Stephanie: You can't fit a miniature pony in *there* [...] Move it. (2.3) *I would much rather get one of these than a first place.*  
((Indicating an award on the ribbon table.))

Stephanie and Amy: Heh

Silence: (30.23)

Through the negative connotation “*at least* we brought the truck” the speaker is using an indirect comment intended to imply that anything other than a truck is useless. She then further reinforces this statement by exclaiming “we didn't bring my mom's Subaru”. This statement was made with the full knowledge that Florence arrived in her Subaru. Through these backhanded yet pointedly indirect statements, Stephanie is verbally putting Florence down in an indirect way that does not allow Florence to thwart the attack without creating a socially awkward situation; only Florence knows—because her family has the Subaru—that the statement is “pointed” at her (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 2007). This is verbal indirectness at its best. If Florence were to overtly call Stephanie out on her commentary, Stephanie could easily backpedal and claim that her quips were innocent in nature. This would leave Florence in the position of being viewed as the impolite or critical party. Rather than risk confrontation, Florence makes an indirect move of her own and attempts to redirect the conversation, avoiding the topic of vehicles all together:

Florence: That horse is *so* cute, that little one.

Silence from Stephanie and Amy

In a continued stance of power, Stephanie does not respond to Florence's conversation redirection. Rather than let the conversation end, Florence makes another, more successful, attempt at redirecting the conversation as they pass by the awards table where the show ribbons and trophies are kept:

Florence: They're adorable! ((Pointing towards the ribbon table.)) >I like them because they're like bookmarks so<[

Stephanie: [Yeah.[

Florence: [And you know, kids need to read.

Stephanie: I have some of those from competitions, you know.

Florence: Yeah, when you win em and you don't get a place, you get an *outstanding* or *congratulations*.

Stephanie: Yeah(h).

Florence has successfully navigated the conversation away from the topic of miniature horses and Subaru's onto the topic of a particular kind of ribbon. Stephanie does not actively engage in the conversation at first, only responding "yeah." With further prompting from Florence, Stephanie engages more fully by confirming that she has some of the adorable book mark ribbons. Once Stephanie has fully engaged in the conversation, Florence makes her own pointedly indirect power move by pointing out that those ribbons are more of a consolation prize. Florence says "you don't get a place you get an outstanding or congratulations", which indirectly implies poor performance in a show class. Stephanie is now left in position of having been awarded a "congratulations" ribbon, knowing full well that these are issued to participants who did

not place in the top 6 or 8. This is a stinging indirect comment which is likely direct retaliation for the Stephanie's comments about arriving in a Subaru. It is important to note that this conversation unfolds in front of the relatively newer member, Amy. Amy is in the process of securing her own social status and is in a learning phase where she is negotiating the overall power dynamic of the club. This means that Stephanie and Florence's power performances carry the weight of solidifying their role within the overall club hierarchy.

Reflecting back to Goodwin's point that talk is a form of social action, or performance, which builds social organization, we can see that Stephanie and Florence are actively engaged in creating social organization and hierarchy (Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007, 279-289). Through competition for social status, talk becomes a way to compete for power and recognition within one's own community of practice. The strategic use of one-upmanship, such as that used by Florence, actively engages the speakers in a form of competition for social status. This engagement negotiates the alignment and social status that exists between Stephanie and Florence and informs Amy about the overall hierarchy (Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007, .279-289). In this way, Stephanie and Florence are actively defining who they are in relation to one another and Amy acts as the witness to this claim. While there is a real vie for social power unfolding here, it is important to note that it is being performed in an indirect manner.

Indirectness and pointedly indirect conversations are common among this 4-H club community. They are frequently used as a way of gaining and managing social power without instigating overt scenarios that could lead to risky escalations of power

claims. Interestingly, competition for social status among the youth participants does become more apparent when there is a lack of adult or parental presence. This is perhaps due to the lack of supervision which creates a level of freedom for self-expression without potential repercussions from authority figures. So, in peer-to-peer type settings, such as the 4-H show discussed here, pointed indirectness and even explicit directives are readily brought out as a way of securing and managing power stances within the club hierarchy. While these types of verbal exchanges don't often win friends, they are very useful in creating complex, ongoing stances of social power in an accepted manner.

As we will see in the next example, we have the same speaker, Stephanie, instigating a new power scenario with Amy that also exhibits pointed indirectness. Amy was one of the listeners who failed to engage in Stephanie's desired topic of conversation, the miniature horse. Amy is particularly vulnerable as she is still securing her place within the club.

- Stephanie: Did she ride that horse too^?
- Florence: She had like, a *big* Arabian.
- Stephanie: I would *never* put a girl that age on an Arabian.
- Amy: I have an Arabian!
- Florence: She was like, the *most calmest* horse ever!
- Stephanie: I've ridden Arabians, but I wouldn't like, do her age^.
- Amy: Well yeah, like an eight year old, >but my sister<, she's like six, no::, she's turning 8 (heh), she rode an Arabian.

This conversation is geared at placing the Arabian owner in a lower social power stance through the statement that "a girl that age" should not ride Arabians, as there must

be something inherently wrong with Arabians. As a side note - Arabians are well-known among riders for being “hot”, or “high-strung” horses who require a strong, skilled rider. This group is well aware that Amy owns an Arabian, and that her younger sister has ridden her. Amy’s social status is further reinforced, or denied, through the way that all conversation participants ignore what Amy is saying. In this way the group is collectively placing Arabians, and therefore Amy in a lower-class category than all other horse breeds and participants. This rider happens to be a newer participant and has not secured her social status yet. Some of their desire to attempt to decrease her status may be due to envy; Amy is a naturally talented rider, and often out-performs the speakers, as seen through her placement in show classes.

As a direct result of their failure to grant the speaker power over the conversation direction, Florence and Amy find themselves caught in a verbal sparring match with Stephanie. This results in an indirect grab for social status at the expense of factors that Florence and Amy cannot help, i.e. the family driving a Subaru, or owning an Arabian. By attacking these types of factors, Stephanie is strategically honing in on something that her counterparts are powerless over, making the topic source vulnerable and easily targeted. Amy and Florence are in a disadvantage with these topics as there is nothing they can do at this given moment to increase the perceived standing of Arabians and Subaru’s.

Through the guise of indirectness, none of these power stance claims escalate into a direct confrontation, or an unfriendly situation. While many of these indirect statements could be viewed as veiled attempts at hurtful commentary, they are actually made as an

attempt to show higher social status and power over the other participant. Through the use of indirectness, the participants engage in a form of friendly verbal competition designed to create and manage power in a socially acceptable manner. Rather than becoming outwardly offended or saying anything direct, the original listener simply springs a pointedly indirect verbal trap of her own, effectively staking out her social power stance (Jacobs-Huey 2006, 2007).

Through the back and forth style of pointedly indirect conversation, social power is effectively teased out. The successful execution of power scenarios, where the speakers are vying for social status through veiled put-downs or one-upmanship, result in one of the speakers gaining the upper hand over the other. Used as a tool of power escalation, pointed indirectness is a very useful power stance to employ in situations such as these. Through veiled commentary a speaker is able to subtly make displays of power. Through the issuance of indirect critiques, the speaker builds their social status through depleting another's.

#### *Adult Displays of Directives*

Generation after generation, directives are handed down through social behavior and verbal interactions as a societal tool, useful for garnering social status and power. Directives are a learned behavior, often modelled by care-takers, parents, authority figures, and peers (Labov 1990, 205-254). They are an ingrained aspect of our society, with children learning how to execute and perfect directives from the start of their social acclimation. In the following scenario, we get a first-hand glimpse at how the adult directive process unfolds in front of our youth participants.



Sunny: Jennifer, why don't you show Ethyl those sweatshirts,  
>because, we never got stuff ordered.<

In this scenario Jennifer's parent, Sunny, is directly incorporating her daughter in the directive exchange. Although Sunny is framing the directive in a hedging manner, she does give her daughter a clear directive - "Jennifer why don't you show Ethyl those sweatshirts?". By framing this directive as a question (e.g. using hedging) Sunny is effectively softening the impact of the directive towards her daughter, and indirectly incorporating Ethyl. Sunny then brings up the topic that "we never got stuff ordered" which is directed at Ethyl, the club leader. Through the use of the word "we" Sunny is softening the accusation of failure and sharing in the responsibility for not having ordered the sweatshirts. The statement "got ordered," is framed passively and also takes away some of the blame.

In terms of power dynamics, two things are going on here: Sunny is bringing to Ethyl's attention the fact that some sort of action needs to take place, which simultaneously implies a lack of action up to this point. She incorporates her daughter into the directive scenario as a way of buffering the exchange or, hedging the directive. Sunny is very careful to execute the directive in a manner that is indirect and creates shared responsibility for not having ordered club sweatshirts. By framing her directive in this manner, Sunny is avoiding direct confrontation with Ethyl, and creates shared blame and responsibility. Ethyl replies with an equally indirect and hedged comment:

Ethyl: Isn't that *cute*. We'll have to do a fundraiser.

Here Ethyl uses an indirect response as a way of assigning responsibility to “we” rather than to herself. This effectively deflects personal responsibility for Ethyl and makes it a shared group responsibility. Ethyl then goes on to say “We’ll have to do a fundraiser”. This response implies that the sweatshirts have not been ordered due to a lack of funding rather than a lack of leader responsibility, which again places responsibility upon the club rather than the leader. By managing responsibility and blame in this way, Ethyl has effectively left her leadership status untouched and unquestioned while redirecting responsibility to the club as a whole. Jennifer, Sunny’s daughter, then steps in with a suggestion for a potential fundraiser which offers a solution for the problem at hand:

Jennifer:     Carwash!

Ethyl:         I’ll let *you* handle that. (Directed to Sunny)

Laughter from a few parents

Sunny:         Hey:., I did it last time!

Imbued with both indirect and overt directives, this dialogue has set stage for a power exchange. While unfolding in a friendly manner between adults, the exchange is taking place in front of the entire 4-H club and entangles a youth participant, Jennifer. Ethyl’s immediate response is to pass the responsibility of the fundraiser on to Sunny, who mentioned that the sweatshirts had not been ordered. This move leaves Ethyl with the upper hand and conveys a direct message to all the parents about what the leader is willing to do if someone challenges her recently acquired authority. This power struggle primarily takes place in an indirect fashion through “we” directives, and no one involved ever addresses it overtly, but it is apparent that the exchange is taking place.

Once Ethyl has the upper hand in the conversation, she employs the direct statement, “I’ll let you handle that”, which unmistakably publicly assigns responsibility to Sunny. As a way of effectively ending the conversation, Sunny publicly concedes to Ethyl’s authority through acceptance of responsibility. While Sunny’s statement “Hey, I did it last time!” acquiesces to the leaders’ authority, it also indicates that the responsibility is being taken on begrudgingly as Sunny has already performed this task in the past. Ethyl is left as the clear power holder in this conversation. As a result, Sunny has not only lost social status, but is now assigned with a new task of responsibility.

Immediately following the fundraiser conversation, and in what could be considered a calculated power move, Ethyl directs the conversation to the topic of where the upcoming horse show should be held. Unbeknownst to the group as a whole, Sunny had previously brought up concerns over the arena footing (the ground of the arena) at Ethyl’s preferred arena.

Ethyl: So::, we’ve had some complaints about the footing. *I* didn’t think it was so bad.> I mean< it, it isn’t great but it’s not the worst either, and we don’t have the warm up arena, but it *is* free, *so*::, you know, from a, from a cost effective, I think it’s a good, and it’s a good central location, so it has a lot of pluses.

Parent: What’s wrong with the footing? >I rode in the derby competition< and it seemed fine.

Ethyl: Some people are complaining that it’s too:: hard. (3.02)  
So::, I think that it will be just fine for what we are going to be using it for. And, I think the cost is good, So:::. (kids whispering) We just have to realize that it’s going to be the same as our show was last year.

In this subtle directive exchange, Ethyl effectively guides the parental audience towards a collective decision that supports her preference for the show location and negates Sunny's concerns over the hard footing (ground) at this particular arena. The other parents are unaware of the underlying power dynamic unfolding between Ethyl and Sunny, but Ethyl is still making an effective power statement to Sunny. To further reinforce her position, Ethyl strategically uses the statement "it's going to be the same as our show last year", indicating that they will be using this arena despite Sunny's concerns. By the conclusion of this exchange Ethyl has gained the support of the entire group and publicly affirmed that the location of the upcoming show will be at her chosen arena. This action effectively disempowers Sunny and grants Ethyl social power and authority. Though somewhat indirect (and couched in the use of "we", the directives used in this exchange are very effective at affirming Ethyl's stance as club leader and quashing Sunny's attempts at executing authority over Ethyl.

As a side-note, it is interesting to see how these power exchanges unfolded between Sunny and Ethyl. As the 4-H season continued, Sunny and Ethyl experienced ongoing power struggles to the point where (according to my knowledge) Sunny was leaning heavily towards withdrawing her children from the program. This type of power dynamic speaks to the importance of balanced power roles, how directives and pointed indirectness influence these roles, and what happens when a person or group is socially disempowered through use of public directives within their community.

For the youth participants who are witnessing this directive exchange several things are happening. First, they are witnessing their club leader gain authority and social

status over the parent who has challenged the leader. As the club leader, this power and authority is appropriate. Because Ethyl is acting as the guiding authority for this particular club it is important for the club to assign power to her and have confidence in her as a club leader as she is their official representative. In terms of power roles, this dynamic implies to the youth participants that leadership equates to social power and authority. The kids are effectively learning that leaders have the final say and therefore, the ultimate power. Second, the youth participants are learning through modeling how to effectively use directives to achieve social status and power through language use. Whether they are aware of it or not, the verbal exchange taking place is being absorbed as an effective way to execute verbal directives as Ethyl was very successful in her endeavor to retain and/or attain power in this circumstance. Third, the youth participants are building an understanding of what it means to become entangled in directive exchanges with Ethyl, which, as we will see, influences their interactions with her.

When comparing this verbal exchange with the verbal exchange outlined in “You can give out the ribbons”, an important correlation surfaces. In both situations, the speakers’ social status and power position are challenged, resulting in calculated verbal exchanges that remove power from the challenger while simultaneously granting power to the speaker. Direct lines of similarity can be drawn through these two scenarios, which speak to the influencing factors of directive displays and directive acquisition and execution in developing repertoires.

Lastly, it is important to note the differing ways in which the youth participants interact with each of the settings examined. In the monthly club meeting setting, the

majority of the youth participants are fairly reserved. They do not actively engage with the adult participants unless overtly directed to do so, and even then, they are hesitant to engage. The introduction period shown in the previous chapters is the largest interaction display seen in this setting, but even this interaction is indirect towards the adults, as the participants are introducing themselves primarily to their peers. When in a less directly supervised environment, such as the horse show, the youth participants really open-up and display complex social interactions and identity building processes amongst themselves. In the show setting, hesitation disappears, and active engagement in directives, pointed indirectness, and community building as forms of identity creation are readily seen. This gives a strong indication that the setting in which child-talk is examined has a direct correlation with the behavior seen. In supervised settings, such as the monthly meetings, or the classroom, full displays of identity are not made, in fact they can be actively avoided, as I will examine in the next section. In less structured settings with little direct adult observation, such as horse shows, children open-up and actively engage in their setting. As a researcher, this gives me a strong indication that child-talk is best examined in settings that lack direct supervision from adults. By focusing on these types of environments, a greater understanding of power acquisition and social hierarchy management among children can be gained.

### **Resistance**

An interesting, and often over-looked facet of directives are that they are only as powerful as the listener allows them to be. If a listening audience does not comply with a directive, it can leave the speaker at a social loss. This loss will force them to either re-

attempt the original directive, create a new directive the listener is willing to engage in or withdraw from the exchange all together. This form of passive resistance is an effective way of resisting power in a socially accepted manner. This type of resistance is particularly useful when the listening audience is being directed by an authority figure, such as in adult-to-child conversations. The youth participants of this particular club find this passive mode of resistance to be particularly useful. In the following example Ethyl directly calls upon the participants to share their opinions, which they are not willing to share.

Ethyl:           What do you kids think? (1.08) - For those who have ridden there?  
 Silence:       (6.32)  
 Ethyl:           We need some help. We need some \*decisions::\*.  
 Parent:        \*What do you guys think?\*

Silence:       (5.73)

Adult conversation resumes (kids talking on the side, but can't be understood).

In this fantastic display of subtle, yet definable resistance, the youth participants collectively and completely refuse to participate in the question and answer directive scenario laid out by Ethyl. Rather than take a social risk, and in a show of solidarity towards their peers, the group collectively sits in silence, despite encouragement from the Ethyl and a parent attendee. It is also important to note that the parent speaker attempts to mediate the conversation by transition from “you kids” to “you guys”. This effectively minimizes some of the authoritative pressure shown by Ethyl. As soon as the pressure for an answer is off, the youth participants immediately resume their conversation, which further indicates it is not their peers they are resisting, but pressure from the club authority figures. Not easily swayed, Ethyl makes a second, and equally unsuccessful

attempt at getting the youth participants to share their opinions. It is important to note that Ethyl adjusts her attempt to include more hedging, seen in “we” statements, which softens her directives, and is intended to encourage interaction from the youth participants.

Ethyl: *Well*, we can talk about that later. -Just keep your thoughts open about what you want to see at the show because this is your show, alright^? We want you guys to have a good time. So, if there are things that you’d like to see at a show, we’re the ones who are gonna make it happen. >So, voice your opinions and let us know what you’d like to see<, okay^? What do you like about the shows?

Silence (7.49)

Ethyl: You don’t like em at all? You’re *so* silent.

Some parents: Heh

Betty: -I think most of them are thinking about, -I get nervous when I’m at the show.

Here, again, the youth participants refuse to engage with Ethyl. As a way of softening the social refusal, some parents offer laughter as a way of lightening the mood. Lastly, an older youth participant (Ethyl’s daughter) steps in and offers a socially accepted reason for why the participants are so quiet. Betty is careful in her approach, and opens her statement in a personal, hedging manner (“I think”) that both softens the responsibility of the youth participants, and aids her mother’s attempts at eliciting a response. In this way the leader’s daughter has mediated the situation unfolding between the children and Ethyl. Through her mediation attempt, Betty essentially excuses the lack of response from her peers while also allowing her mother, Ethyl, to save face, keeping



her social status as leader in place. This leaves all conversation participants with the same level of social status and power that they entered into the conversation with.

It is important to note that the youth participants seem to only actively engage this form of passive resistance when the directives are being issued from non-peers, that is adults or other people in authoritative roles. During peer-to-peer conversations our participants are much more likely to openly engage in and respond to directives and requests. This willingness to engage in directive exchanges among peers indicates the underlying stance towards their authoritative leaders, and hints at the underlying power dynamic that is unfolding. Another example of this can be seen when Betty, the youth club leader, asks Jennifer if she wants to talk about her experience at a community parade. Jennifer immediately responds “\*no\*” to Betty’s question, to which the audience laughs. In turn, Betty simply says “all right”. In this case, Betty is an authority figure, despite the fact that she is a youth participant. Jennifer, in a soft tone, refuses Betty’s directive. Through these exchanges, we see that collectively, the youth participants of our club have not yet accepted the authority and leadership of their adult club leader, Ethyl, and in some instances the authority of the youth club leader, Betty.

### **Empowerment Through Directives**

Directives need not always be issued in an authoritative manner, they can also be issued as a form of community building through shared knowledge and encouragement. In this circumstance the directive is issued as a way of both informing the listener through knowledge sharing and defining the speaker’s position as being knowledgeable or “expert” (Jacobs-Huey, 2006). Rather than the verbal exchange leaving one speaker in a

more powerful stance than another, both participants walk away with enhanced social power as one passes knowledge on to the other without the overt expectation of recognition. Recognition, however, is implied through tacit compliance with the speaker's expertise. By simply accepting the knowledge that is exchanged as fact, recognition is given to the speaker. In this way, the one who shares the knowledge naturally takes on the position of being in a more powerful stance through the claim of knowledge and expertise (Jacobs-Huey, 2006). Simultaneously, the one who the knowledge is being passed to is also left in a more powerful social position as they have inherited the knowledge that has acted as a tool of social status and influence. As we can see in the following exchange, a subtle directive is issued in a way that will allow the listener to overcome a self-perceived short coming, gaining social status and ability in the show ring.

- Edith:           Just listen for the numbers. That will help you on everything.
- Beth:           (...numbers) \*I'm terrible at the number things\*
- Edith:           It's hard. (0.76) I like, I like those people because they told you what number they were and what they got[
- Beth:           [<yeah::>

The initial directive is given in a soft manner which will allow Beth to overcome her number related shortcomings in the show ring, if she so decides. Edith then further aligns with Beth, showing social acceptance and support towards her through the way that she validates Beth's stance. The statement "it's hard" shows empathy and understanding which builds identification and understanding between Edith and Beth. Edith then further supports Beth with her verbal account of a more pleasing scenario

where “they told you what number they were”. Beth then reinforces the identity alignment offered by Edith in her agreement that it is better.

Essentially, this entire conversation turns into an empowerment scenario where Edith both validates Beth’s stance, and offers her a path to self-empowerment and growth so that she might be on equal footing when it comes to remembering rider numbers and placement in the show ring. Additionally, this directive acts to create “cooperative competition” between Edith and Beth (Goodwin 1991, Eckert 2007). Through cooperative competition, Edith’s displays of knowledge act to publicly reify her expertise levels, which simultaneously increases her social status in Beth’s eyes. This directive, and its attached conversation also exemplify the sportsmanship nature of cooperative competition which is strongly encouraged by the 4-H organization. In this way, Edith is also showing her alignment with the 4-H organizations’ goals and supporting them through a public display of action. Another example of this kind of empowerment through shared knowledge can be seen in an earlier dialogue between Beth and Marissa. In this instance, Beth inquires about the color of a horse being “flea bit” (a grey coloring). Marissa gently declares “no: *that’s* not flea bit, flea bit’s like with specks”. Here again, we see an empowerment scenario that enhances both speaker’s standing, and exemplifies the nature of sportsmanship.

Another notable consideration of the use of empowering directives is that they are mutually beneficial to both conversation participants. Once the conversation has unfolded, all participants are left on socially enhanced ground. In the previous scenario, Beth has taken on new knowledge, and Edith has shown herself to be knowledgeable

without expectation of social recognition or reward, although admiration could be gained. Had there been other listeners, Edith's display may have been more performative, geared towards gaining enhanced status through displays of expertise. Because the conversation unfolded only between these two speakers, the exchange may hint at some sort of underlying relationship. There could be a pre-existing friendship which takes precedence over a socially competitive environment, or Edith is simply not interested in creating a power stance through this conversation, instead proceeding with the desire to help her club member. In either situation, both speakers are creating a socially supportive and empowering environment through which both will walk away with enhanced bonds and a strengthened relationship.

### **Conclusions**

Through the examination of these verbal directives we are able to develop several important theories about how verbal directives are learned and executed; their social roles and how they build or remove social standing and power within a given community of practice which ultimately impacts an individual participant's relationships with group members; and lastly, how directives can be used to help create social bonds, which increase common social power and status for both the speaker and the listener. As shown, directives can be overt, or indirect. While overt directives are easily identifiable, and make bold stances of power claims, indirectness can be equally powerful and can help reify unique identity and status claims of its own.

In "*You can give out the ribbons*" we see an excellent example of a youth participant practicing various forms of learned directives. This scenario begins with our

youth participant attempting to subtly direct the conversation to her desired topic. After several attempts, the directive is unsuccessful, which results in our participant employing a slightly more overt tactic of “friendly” pointed indirectness, which also fails to guide the conversation to the youth’s desire topic. Finally, in an overt display of authority, the youth speaker escalates her directive to an overt command issued to a lower standing 4-H participant.

The unfolding of this scenario gives us great insight into how indirectness can create or deny social power. Through the collective denial of conversation authority, our speaker’s attempt at gaining social power is thwarted. Through “friendly” pointed indirectness, the speaker attempts to subtly place the individual participants who denied the conversation directive in a lower social status. This act indicates the speaker’s inner desire to regain the social power she perceives as lost. It is important to note that the speaker does not take on the conversation participants as a whole, rather she addresses each on an individual level with commentary or action that is very specifically targeted at that individual’s personal situation or background. When these attempts also fail to bring about the desired conversation topic and its intertwined social power, the speaker makes a bold directive move through the issuance of a command, and then physically removes herself from the scenario. This act leaves the speaker in a perceived stance of power as she has successfully directed the physical action of a conversation participant towards a social responsibility avoided by club members while the speaker is now enjoying the topic of her original conversation directives, the miniature horse.

While the speaker's actions are calculated and intentional, that are also unfolding in a subconscious matter, so to speak. While the desire to gain social power and status is real, the way in which the speaker goes about attaining it, and how she perceives her successes or losses are very much related to the environment in which the directive is unfolding, and the speaker's learned experiences behind directives. Learned directive experiences are particularly important because they are the way in which our speaker knows how to create and gain social power and status. Without these learned examples of behavior and associated speech, the speaker would not have a basis upon which to compare her success or failure. A main source of learned directive talk and action comes from parents and authority figures. The scenarios laid out in the "Adult Displays of Directives" section, gives us great insight into how directives are learned.

In "*Adult Displays of Directives*" we have a scenario that sets the stage for both learning how social directives work, and for seeing how directives can be thwarted in uneven power relations, such as child to adult relationships. At the start of this scenario we see a fantastic display of verbal exchanges between the club leader, Ethyl and a parent who are volleying for authority through pointed indirectness. Ethyl is ultimately successful in gaining the upper hand over Sunny by issuing indirect and direct verbal directives that control Sunny's physical activity, i.e. being responsible for the carwash. This scenario is strikingly similar to how Stephanie, our youth speaker, left Amy alone to take on the responsibility of giving out ribbons at the show. In both of these scenarios power is gained through directing the behavior of the power challenger. The exchange between the parent and the club leader takes place in front of the entire 4-H group, which amounts to a learning opportunity for those witnessing the exchange. Simultaneously,

this situation is also telling those who are witnessing it what they can expect of they challenge the club leader's authority.

Not surprisingly, when the club leader turns her directives towards the youth participants, they passively refuse to verbally engage with her. While this is not an overt display of authority, it does leave the social power of the immediate verbal exchange in the hands of the youth participants. Rather than giving the directive issuer (Ethyl) a chance to direct their physical activity at the show, or in some other way control their behavior, our participants are left free through the use of silence. It is important to note that it is specifically Ethyl's directives that the youth participants are refusing to engage with. As soon as Ethyl redirects her conversation towards the adults present, the youth participants immediately resume their conversation.

The exchange between the youth participants and Ethyl gives us great insight into the way that children negotiate and create their own experiences independent from the adult world (Goodwin 1990, 2006). In a situation where there is clear and overt pressure from an adult in a leadership role (Ethyl), the children collectively resist the pressure in a passive, yet effective, way. Yet, at the moment that Ethyl has changed her focus away from the children and back to the adults, the children immediately resume the conversations they were orchestrating prior to the intrusion from Ethyl. This situation clearly reflects the way that children successfully negotiate themselves through complex social status creating situations. Here, they have successfully resisted the directives they were receiving from an adult (Ethyl), placing themselves in a stance of power and self-authority. The immediate resuming of their conversation also indicates that they have

their own, more important, conversation unfolding at the same time that the adult conversations are taking place. In this way, the youth participants of this club are clearly creating their own experiences that are independent from the adult world (Goodwin 1990, 2006).

Not all directives are intended to garner social status and power. As we saw with the empowerment directive, they are sometimes issued as a way of helping one another which is seen in the way the directive allows the listener to advance both socially and personally through the acquisition of shared knowledge. For the person sharing knowledge in the form of a directive, a risk is being taken as it may allow the receiver to grow beyond the issuer's social status. This indicates that the issuer is either confident that the listener is far below the speaker's social status, and no real threat exists, the issuer is not concerned about their social status when it comes to the person they are issuing the knowledge directive to, or the speaker is comfortable with the listener being on equal ground in terms of social status and power. In the scenario presented here, it is evident that the speaker is trying to aide the listener. The directive has been issued as a helping hand that is intended only to empower and strengthen the listener. Interestingly the listener reveals a weakness about herself, which the speaker uses to as a means to further identify with the listener. Through this verbal exchange a social bond of empowerment and understanding is created leaving both participants empowered through their shared support.

As we have seen, directives in all forms are a very important part of how social structure is reified and recreated. Created through the use of verbal encounters, they



effectively build social power and status. Allowing the speaker to control the experience of others, directives help create a web of social reality through status and perceived power stances. Effective in the creation of hierarchies of authority, directives also offer an avenue to the physical expression of one's own power over those who share a common community of practice.

## **Chapter 5: Insights and Future Research**

Through this research, I have provided several insights into how preadolescent and adolescent girls use language to shape their identities and position themselves in stances of social power within their given communities of practice (Bucholtz, 1999). Specifically, I have examined how female children participating in 4-H club activities are using language to build individual and group identities; how individual and group identity creation and recreation is managed through language use; how stances of power and hierarchies are created and managed through language use; how directives and indirectness are used to create and maintain social power; and how female children are modeling and employing language tactics based on knowledge acquired from adult displays of language use and exchange. The insights gained here are important because they inform us about how young girls in extracurricular situations are using language to build their identities and position themselves socially.

### *Important Insights*

As chapter 2 demonstrated, community identity is actively developed and shaped within a speaker's given community of practice (Eckert 2005, 2008). Locality and situated meaning have proven to be essential aspects to understanding what it means to be from "here" rather than "there" (Eckert 2008). As we saw with the 4-H participants in this research project, distinct boundaries are linguistically drawn that define what it means to be from "here", which create the collective group identity and preferences. For example, we saw that the seemingly simple decision of choosing a project horse is actually deeply rooted in locality and situated meaning. A reflection of the region's ranching roots,

Quarter Horses were consistently shown to be a strong favorite of this 4-H group, especially when compared to Arabians. This linguistic display strengthens the idea that identity and meaning are deeply intertwined with locality (Eckert 2008) and not necessarily static; they are constantly being produced through a group's communicative interactions.

The importance of situated meaning and identity creation (Eckert 2008) are also reflected in Betty's retelling of her experience at the National 4-H conference in Chapter 3. Here, Betty verbally recounts her experience at the conference to the 4-H participants in attendance. What stands out in this verbal account are the different experiences Betty had, and how she uses these experiences to exemplify and solidify what it means to be from "here." This point is made particularly well when Betty describes how disappointed she was not to be able to judge Quarter Horses. Her sadness is supported by her peers, which creates alignment (Goffman 1981) and speaks to the "here" identity claim that Quarter Horses are somehow superior to other breeds. These claims are specifically created and reinforced through the reactions and shared support of her local community of practice, in this case her peer 4-H participants. This alignment effectively creates a group identity of preferring "this" and not "that", which is exemplified through situated meaning and locality (Eckert 2008).

Iconization, fractal recursivity and erasure have also proven to play a critical role in individual and group identity, as reflected through verbal exchanges and declarations (Irvine and Gal 2000). As we saw in Chapter 3, iconization is particularly important as it represents how a group employs the use and understanding of specific language as a

unique identifying factor. The 4-H club community proved to be an ideal backdrop for examining this kind of unique identifying language. Demonstrating frequent use of environment and activity specific language, we saw that our 4-H club frequently employed iconic language to both demonstrate knowledge and set themselves apart from the crowd. Specific examples were seen in chapter 3, which included the declaration that “Zoe rides both,” and that this 4-H club is “a very small organization.” In the “Zoe rides both” declaration we saw that iconization was formed through shared insider knowledge of the context behind the word “both” as it referred to English and Western riding styles. The inherent understanding of this word unified the speakers, creating a unique group identity related to horses, and the 4-H club in particular. Ethyl’s detailed explanation of the fact that our 4-H club is “a very small organization” creates iconization through the collective agreement that our club actually is “small,” and that the members are collectively okay with identifying themselves as such. Through casual exchanges such as these, very specific unique group identities are formed (Irvine and Gal 2000).

Power stances and power management were the last major areas examined in this research. As we saw, the primary modes for the creation and management of power were done through the strategic utilization of directives and pointed indirectness (Jacobs-Huey 2006). Specifically, in chapter 4 we saw examples of both youth participants and adult members who faced situations of publicly having their authority or power challenged. In the case of Ethyl and Sunny, adult leaders of the club, we saw that both repeatedly used pointed indirectness as a way of subtly vying for social power (Jacobs-Huey 2006). As the scenario escalated, Ethyl incorporated overt directives and public support into her repertoire as a way of securing her authority as club leader and quashing Sunny’s claims

at her authority. Similarly, when Stephanie was faced with a similar challenge to her authority, she made several attempts at indirectly staking her claim. When all of these attempts failed she escalated to overt directives as a way of reclaiming lost power. These scenarios combined nicely to exemplify the important roles that directives and pointed indirectness play in the creation and management of social power.

All of these points and insights came together to show that identity creation and power management are complex, fluid aspects of the linguistic repertoire. While blanket strategies can be used to examine language, such as directives, or iconization, the way that these processes create identity and power are heavily reliant upon the community of practice they are unfolding. What works in one community may not work in another, and it is the unfolding of these strategies in their real-world context that give us the greatest insight into how language is being used. On the individual level, identity is experienced through participation in the group, and the group whole is comprised of each individual's contribution to the whole. In this way, there is a symbiotic and intrinsic relationship that exists between individual and group identity claims and their resulting hierarchies of power. The examination of the important relationship at play between individual and group identity in this research has set the stage for possible future research projects that will allow for greater insights into how our youth are using language.

### **Future Research**

This research has laid the ground-work for several possible directions of future study. Specifically focused on gender and identity development through language use in children, there is a great deal of research that still needs to be done in topics such as

identifying the role between adult modeled language use and its impact upon young girls; how modeled language use develops and morphs throughout preadolescent into adulthood; how girls use language to position themselves socially and how this language use can manifest itself as verbal bullying/cyber bullying; how bullying affects language use among girls, and how this impacts identity development; how we can identify verbal bullying in its beginning stages in order to prevent it; and the long term effects of bullying on the linguistic repertoire.

Each of these areas represent important research topics for several reasons. By better understanding how modeled adult language use is transferred to and used by young girls, we will have a clearer understand of how our youth are shaping their identities and creating their own linguistic realities. As Labov pointed out “differentiation logically begins in the acquisition of the first forms of language by the language learner from the primary caregiver. In all the societies studied so far, the caregiver is most often a female” (Labov 1990, 205). This indicates that there is a clear relationship between the primary adult speaker, and the children witnessing their speech. As Labov asserts, this exchange most often takes place between women, and the children they care for (1990). As shown in this research, it is not necessary for the speaker to verbally engage directly with children in order for them to pick up and simulate the speech tactics they have witnessed. For example, in chapter 4 we saw that the youth participant Stephanie used strikingly similar verbal stances as Ethyl when she was presented with a challenge to her claims of authority. Identifying this inherent acquisition of language use is important because it helps us understand how language is subtly transferred from one generation to next. Variation then becomes the marker of unique identity claims, allowing us to examine

how language is adapted from adult speakers to youth listeners (Labov 1972, 1990, 2001).

Looking back to the example of this kind of adult/child speech scenario given in chapter 4, we see that in the initial adult led scenario Ethyl's authority as club leader was subtly challenged by Sunny. In order to quash the threat to her authority, Ethyl used calculated power moves in the form of speech in front of the entire 4-H group, which included its youth participants. Specifically, Ethyl is faced with subtle claims that she has not performed certain expected duties, such as ordering club sweatshirts. Rather than acquiescing to this claim, Ethyl reassigns the responsibility of the mentioned task to Sunny, who made the initial assertion. Ethyl then goes on to address a complaint that Sunny had privately made to Ethyl about arena footing. Here Ethyl publicly gains the support of the adult participants in favor of her view. While Ethyl never overtly brings to light the fact that Sunny was the person complaining about the arena footing, Sunny and Ethyl are both aware of the situation, and this effectively quashes Sunny's complaint and places Ethyl in a stance of authority. In this way Ethyl has effectively used pointed indirectness and overt directives to solidify her claims of authority and power (Jacobs-Huey 2006).

When faced with a similar scenario of challenge and potential power loss, the youth participant, Stephanie, employs very similar tactics to those she witnessed Ethyl perform at the monthly club meeting. Specifically, after several failed attempts at directing a peer-to-peer conversation, Stephanie finds herself on the losing end of a power scenario. Rather than accepting this loss, she makes attempts to undermine her

peer's social status through quipping remarks about the cars they arrived in, and the horse breeds that they own. This is very similar to the way that Ethyl denied Sunny's claims by publicly down-playing her concerns. In both of these scenarios, the key to power acquisition is found within the public execution of the scenario. Lastly, Stephanie makes an overt directive when she assigns Amy to take task of handing out ribbons while she pets the miniature horse. This tactic is in alignment with Ethyl's assignment of fundraiser activities to Sunny. The directive process, when publicly displayed, grants the issuer an air of authority that is acquired through public witness of compliance with the directive. In this way both Ethyl and Stephanie are using the same tactics to secure their social positions.

The way that these situations played out in striking similarity strongly suggest that there is a real and fluid relationship between adult modeled behavior and youth acquisition of witnessed behavior and language use. Understanding the long-term effects of the relationship between adult led language use and the youth witnessing the performance is important because it will allow us to have a greater understanding of how children are shaping their worlds, and how adult behavior influences this. This is most easily seen in the way that leadership skills are passed from adult to child through modeled behavior. That is, the adults lead by example, and the youth participants are constantly observing and then adapting the behavior they witness to their own personal situations. This is significant because it shows us how language and behavior are being passed from one leading generation to the next. Additionally, greater insights into phenomena such as linguistic variation and change could be made as we will more readily be able to witness how language is acquired and adapted (Labov 1990).



As we have seen from this research, as well as in Goodwin's (1991, 2006, 2008, 2011), Eckert's (1990, 1996, 1997, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2012), and Labov's (1972, 1990, 2001) research, children take on the responsibility of creating their own realities alongside the adult world. While the two exist in parallel, there is a distinct relationship between adult language use and behavior, and the tactics children are socially employing to create their worlds. By better understanding the relationship at play greater insights into children's worlds can be gained. With dangerous social situations such as bullying on the rise, it is vital that we gain a clearer understanding of how our children are constructing their social identities—and what aspects of these behaviors they are learned directly from the adults in their lives.

#### *Linguistic Precursors to Bullying*

It is also important to determine at what point a linguistic exchange goes from being a socially acceptable attempt at creating power to a bullying situation. Bullying has become an unprecedented problem for our youth. From an increased suicide rate, which is directly linked to bullying scenarios (cite), to rampages of retaliation in the form of school shootings, often times brought about by long term bullying, bullying has become a life-threatening issue for our young people. Because bullying often first emerges in the form of language use, such as verbal taunting, put-downs, and chat room or text assaults, it is critical that we gain a clearer understanding of how these phenomena are playing out in the worlds of our children, specifically at the elementary school level. With research I believe we will undoubtedly find precursory language use that could help us identify and stop bullying before it escalates to a life-threatening situation.

While there has been a great deal of research done on the bullying affect in schools, the majority of this research focuses on middle-school and high-school students. For example, in Dewey, Huang, and Fan's 2013 article *Perceived prevalence of teasing and bullying predicts high school dropout rates* the primary focus is on high school students and how bullying is affecting graduation rates; and in Gerry, Johnson and Cartwright's 2010 article *Bullying in 25 secondary schools: incidence, impact and intervention*, the focus is again on secondary schools. While this data is undoubtedly useful in understanding bullying, I believe by focusing on the first immergences of bullying behavior, a greater understanding of how bullying is emerging, and how to correct this problem in its infancy can be gained. With this in mind, research on bullying that specifically looks at language at the elementary school level would be particularly useful in creating greater understanding of this social phenomena.

As a researcher, I would aim to discover the underlying linguistic precursors to full blown bullying situations. I strongly suspect that prior to blatant verbal taunting, and full-blown bullying scenarios, precursory verbal and non-verbal cues take place. By identifying these precursory cues, we would be more able to identify situations that could potentially escalate into full blown bullying during their infancy stages. By identifying bullying at its earliest stages, school administrators, teachers, and parents alike would be able to step in and prevent situations from escalating into something that will adversely affect the people involved on a long-term basis. Because language is such an essential part of who we are, and it is frequently used as a mechanism for exerting bullying behavior, it is essential that we gain a greater understanding of its role in bullying situations.

It is important to note that in the 4-H environment examined here, overt bullying is not seen. Rather, status negotiations have an inherent restraint where participants gravitate towards tactics such as pointed indirectness, or directives in order to create stances of social power. This is important because it indicates that this type of environment does not support bullying. Rather, it supports empowerment of the community participants through learning and executing the skills and behaviors promoted by the 4-H organization. Effectively, the 4-H foundation of positive leadership and community support lead to healthier ways of negotiating status among participants. This indicates that extra-curricular activities such as 4-H offer an important environment of study. By better understanding the policies and environmental influences that lead to a lack of bullying and enhanced personal empowerment we can then better understand what is allowing bullying in environments such as schools.

#### *Why Methodologies Matter*

Lastly, this research also shows that the methodologies employed to collect speech greatly impact the speech collected. When speech is collected through peer-to-peer situations, that is scenarios without the looming presence of an adult, a much cleaner glimpse into the world of children is made. As Goodwin (1991) pointed out, children create their own world, as such, it is critical that we incorporate an approach that captures this into our research methodologies.

Chapter 4 exemplified how the interference of adult conversation, or even the simple presence of adults, can alter the linguistic exchange of children. In particular, we see the most dramatic change takes effect when there is direct adult to child interaction.

In chapter 4 we saw our youth participants go from an active peer-to-peer conversation to complete, and then back to a peer-to-peer conversation when they were confronted by Ethyl. This scenario indicates that strong influencing relationship that exists between adults and children, and exemplifies how dramatically children change their behavior when in the presence of adults. This is especially important because it highlights the way that adult presence and interaction skews our view and understanding of how our children are talking to one another. In effect, this alters our understanding of the lives our children are living. This is paramount when it comes to understanding situation such as bullying.

Armed with this insight, it becomes overtly apparent that the methodologies employed by anthropologists matter greatly. If our goal is to attain a “perfect” as possible glimpse into the natural flow and exchange of language between children in order to better understand their environment and perspective, then we must limit outside influencing factors when collecting speech data. This was easily achieved in this particular research project by equipping a youth participant with a recording device. The result of this simple adjustment was the valuable contribution of “clean” data, or speech that proved to give clear insights into the dialogues of children without adult supervision. This type of data is important because it allows us to see how children are talking to each other, the verbal tactics they are using to create and manage social hierarchies and how they are making power claims amongst their peers.

Data collected in the presence of adults proved to be useful as well as it offered significant insights into how dramatically children shift their speech strategies when there is an adult ear listening. Additionally, we also the vast degree to which children are

observing and incorporating adult linguistic tactics in their social situations. When combined both of these methodologies work together to create a more complete picture of how our children are creating their identities, managing social power, and incorporating language use from the world around them. With this in mind my future research will certainly employ both adult/child language interactions and peer-to-peer interactions that offer child speak in its unfettered form. Through these dual processes I believe a more complete set of data can be gained which will grant new insights into language use and gender development.

### *Concluding Thoughts*

In closing, this research project has offered important insights into the relationship between gender and language, and set the stage for future research possibilities. It has integrated the works of several prominent anthropologists in a way that has culminated in a clearer understanding of how individual and group identity claims are being made among the female youth in this given community of practice. It has also highlighted the important influencing factors that adult speech has on children. Specifically, this research hints at the underlying relationship between adult displays of speech and child utilization in identity development and strategies of power acquisition. This research has highlighted the way that young girls are using language to create social hierarchies and manage their social status among peers. Specifically, we saw that indirectness and directives (Jacobs-Huey 2006) play a critical role in hierarchy and power development. These insights coalesce to create an ideal starting point for two primary directions of future study: the

relationship between adult-modeled language use and child utilization of this modeled language to create identity and power stances; and bullying language behavior.

Understanding the relationship that exists between adult modeled language use and child acquisition is important because it will highlight how language is being incorporated and adapted by our youth. Further research in this area could lead to important insights on identity development, the management and acquisition of power, and negative behaviors such as verbal aggressiveness. Secondly, future research into bullying scenarios, and verbal abuse among female youth could be a socially beneficial direction to take this research as bullying has become an alarming problem in our current society. Both directions are important because they offer the opportunity to gain greater insights and understanding into how our children are using language to shape their realities and guide future language trends.

The 4-H environment showed itself to be an ideal community of practice for examining how our children are learning and incorporating linguistic tactics that lead to identity creation and the acquisition of social power and status. The way that all participants have elected to participate in this environment creates an air of active engagement and full participation. The relationship between the youth participants and the adult leaders is fluid with a constant exchange of adult modeled behavior and youth observation and incorporation of this behavior. All of these components come together to offer an engaging and revealing community of practice. Overall the 4-H environment has offered an ideal platform for examining how its youth participants are using and adapting

language in a way that both informs and creates individual and community identity and power.

In conclusion, this research has shown that by better understanding the ways that pre-adolescent and adolescent girls are using language to create complex individual and group identities beyond the scholastic environment, and build hierarchy systems of social status and power, we are better able to trace the way their language practices actively shape language use within their broader speech communities. This has effectively highlighted the important relationship that exists between gender, language, and identity creation. Additionally, by examining an extra-curricular environment such as 4-H, this research has shown the importance of, and influencing factors behind the community of practice that social exchanges are taking place within. This effectively highlights the importance of community, identity, and personal empowerment.

## Transcript Conventions

Adapted from Lanita Jacobs-Huey (2006:149-150)

[	A left-hand bracket indicates the onset of overlapping, simultaneous utterances.
(0.0)	This indicates the length of a pause within or between utterances, timed in tenths of a second
(( ))	Double parentheses enclose nonverbal and other descriptive information.
( )	Single parentheses enclose words that are not clearly audible (i.e., best guesses).
<u>Underline</u>	Underlining indicates stress on a syllable or word(s).
<i>Italics</i> sarcasm).	Italics indicate talk that is in some way animated or performed (i.e. sarcasm).
Cap First Letter	Words or phrases with capitalized first letter(s) indicate talk that is carefully articulated or talk that is punctuated by a brief pause.
CAPS	Upper case indicates louder or shouted talk.
:	A colon indicates a lengthening of a sound; the more colons, the longer the sound.
*	This symbol is placed before and after words or phrases that are delivered in a soft volume.
~	Indicates words or phrases delivered with a downward intonational contour.
> <	“Greater than” and “less than” symbols enclose words (and/or talk) that are compressed or rushed.
< >	“Less than” and “greater than” symbols enclose words (and/or talk) that are markedly slowed or drawn out.
<	The “less than” symbol by itself indicates that the immediately following talk is “jump-started” (i.e., sounds like it starts with a rush).
-, --	A single or double hyphens also indicate talk that is either “jump-started” (i.e., sounds like it starts with a rush) or talk that ends abruptly.
Hh(hh)	The letter <i>h</i> marks hearable aspiration; the more <i>h</i> 's, the more aspiration. Aspiration may represent breathing, laughter, and so on.



If it occurs inside the boundaries of a word, it may be enclosed in parentheses in order to set it apart from the sounds of the word.

Heh

This marks laughter.

(try 1)/(try 2)

This arrangement of words/phrases encircled by parentheses and separated by a single oblique or slash represents two alternate hearings.

...

Completely incomprehensible words or utterances.

^

Indicates a word or phrase ending in rising intonation or “up-talk”.

!

Sentence or word said in exclamation or with emphasis.

## Exemption Letter



University of Nevada, Reno  
775.327.2368 / 775.327.2369 fax [www.unr.edu/research-integrity](http://www.unr.edu/research-integrity)

**Research Integrity Office**  
218 Ross Hall / 331,  
Reno, Nevada 89557

DATE: July 17, 2015

TO: Jenanne Ferguson, Ph.D  
FROM: University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavior and Education IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [770776-1] Language and Power Among Preadolescent Girls  
REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS  
DECISION DATE: July 17, 2015

REVIEW CATEGORY: Flex Exemption

Expiration date: July 17, 2018      Next status report date: July 17, 2016

The UNR Institutional Review Board has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations. Please note, the federal government has identified certain categories of research involving human subjects that qualify for exemption from federal regulations. The IRB is authorized by the federal government to determine whether studies thought by the principal investigator (PI) to be exempt from federal regulations actually qualify for exemption criteria. Only the IRB has authority to make a determination that a study is exempt from federal regulations and from IRB review and approval. The above-referenced protocol was reviewed and the research deemed eligible to proceed in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Federal Regulations on the Protection of Human Subjects (45 CFR 46.101 paragraph [b]).

- Advertisement - research flyer.docx (UPDATED: 07/10/2015)
- Application Form - Population Children 122214.docx (UPDATED: 07/10/2015)
- Application Form - Exempt IRBFlex Min Risk No Federal Support SOC 051115.docx (UPDATED: 07/10/2015)
- Other - Information Sheet (UPDATED: 07/10/2015)
- University of Nevada, Reno - Part I, Cover Sheet - University of Nevada, Reno - Part I, Cover Sheet (UPDATED: 07/10/2015)

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records.

If you have any questions, please contact Valerie Smith at 775.327.2370 or valeries@unr.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee. Sincerely,

▪ Generated on IRBNet

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nancy J. Moody". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nancy Moody JD MA  
Director, Research Integrity Office  
University of Nevada Reno

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Nevada, Reno Social Behavior and Education IRB's records.

Generated on IRBNet

Research Flyer (07/2015)

# Attention!

Research is taking place in your 4-H community!

Please be a part of it!



Linguistic research on how preadolescent and adolescent girls use language to create and manage their social identities and hierarchies of power is being conducted within this 4-H group. What this means for you is that I will be openly recording conversations within the club community in order to obtain the natural flow of conversation between participants.

All identities/names will be changed to grant anonymity. No sensitive or controversial information will be included. I am simply researching normal, every-day dialogues through recorded conversations of club meetings and 4-H horse shows. If you have concerns, please contact me!

This research is being conducted with club leader and UNR approval as a requirement for my Master's degree. If you have any questions, please contact me at (email removed for privacy) or speak with me directly at a club meeting or event. Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely, Anne M

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