

RECASTING LANGUAGE AND MASCULINITIES IN THE AGE OF DESIRE

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Abstract: In this paper I reconsider a piece of data originally analyzed in Kiesling (2001), in light of a number of theoretical developments in language and gender, language and sexuality, and gender/masculinities studies more widely. Specifically, I explore how we can break down and be more specific about the cultural conception of hegemonic masculinity (as discussed by Connell, 1995) by subdividing it into a set of separate, interacting cultural discourses. These discourses set up the essentialized and naturalized oppositions characteristic of gender, and thus hegemonic masculinity. Another new development in the field of language and gender is the discussion of desire as a theoretical construct by Cameron and Kulick (2003). I suggest that another kind of desire that we should think about (in addition to sexual desire) is ontological desire—the desire to have or emulate qualities of a particular identity to create an identity. This kind of desire helps us understand language and masculinities because it tells us more about the processes of identification and the motivations for them.

1. Introduction

During the 1980s and 1990s, one of the most important currents in studies of masculinities and gender was the idea that there could be no single masculinity. Up to that time, men had generally been studied as an amorphous group (although this is not categorically true). In the eighties and nineties we began to see that men were quite diverse, with many researchers, and many men, challenging the dominant view of what it meant to be a man.

Arising from the ferment of studies of masculinities in the nineties was the dominance of the idea of *hegemonic masculinity*, first proposed by R. W. Connell in a 1983 paper (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985), and expanded and elaborated in two later books (Connell, 1987, 1995). The hegemonic masculinity view assumes multiple masculinities and argues that in any culture there will be one hegemonic (most valorized) ideal. Masculinities researchers found the concept appealing partly because it can reconcile that gender is not fixed and essential (something I will discuss in a moment), while at the same time noticing that there are dominant ways of being a man (in no small part because being a man has a lot to do with dominance and power).

In addition to this current, ideas about gender were challenging the view that this aspect of identity was an essentialized part of our being. Kessler and McKenna (1978) had made the case for this view decades earlier, but it seems that in the nineties the field was ready to listen in a way it wasn't in the 1970s. Judith Butler's (1990, 1993) work had an enormous impact on gender studies, and it seemed that the idea of performance was everywhere. A performance view of gender was particularly challenging for masculinity, because

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of course at the time masculinity (especially in language and gender studies) was so often the default or residual category that women’s linguistic behavior was compared to. By taking a performance view, we had to begin thinking that even men (and in the US, even white middle-class heterosexual men) had to work hard to perform their gender identities. This view made powerful intuitive sense to me, as I’ve always felt that I had to work at being masculine (less so now, more so when I was six).

It was in this intellectual climate that I began working on my dissertation. I went about trying to find a way to explore how multiple masculinities were performed linguistically in a climate of hegemonic masculinity—in the interactions I observed and recorded in a college fraternity in the US.

2. The “Pete only” paper

One of my methods was to compare masculinities in different ways. Given the view of multiple masculinities and a sociolinguist’s understanding of differences in speech activities, it seemed logical to compare different men in the same speech activity, and the same man across different speech activities. The first approach resulted in a paper comparing different men in one of the fraternity meetings, focusing especially on how they created different masculinities—masculinities that were powerful, but each powerful in a different way.

Here, I will reconsider the other dimension I mentioned above: comparing a single man in different speech activities. In Kiesling (2001), I traced “Pete,” a stout Italian-American from coastal Virginia, across three very different speech activities. I analyzed his performances of masculinity: 1) in a fraternity election meeting; 2) “hangin out” in one of the fraternity members’ houses on a Sunday afternoon playing the game Monopoly with two other fraternity members; and 3) in a bar at happy hour with male friends and one woman (which arguably consists of two speech activities, as there is a shift after the woman sits down). Space and copyright considerations prevent a complete reanalysis of all of the excerpts I analyzed in that article, so I will summarize. In the election meeting, I analyzed a speech by Pete in which he argued that the membership should vote for a particular candidate for vice president. Even in this single meeting speech, he shifts his stance such that he uses confrontational and boastful stances but then shifts to that of an older, wiser fraternity member, who has a knowledge of both the candidates, the job, and the fraternity. Throughout the speech, he creates authority for himself, but in different ways. Excerpt (1) is the end of his speech.¹ The crucial point is that he is creating a particular kind of power for this kind of speech event, in which he is trying to persuade, and has multiple addressees.

¹ The following transcription conventions are used in excerpts (1)–(4):

	Bounds simultaneous speech.
=	Utterances produced with noticeably less transition time between them than usual.
(number)	Silences timed in seconds.
#	Bounds passage said very quickly.
TEXT	Upper-case letters indicate noticeably loud volume.
*	Indicates low volume, placed around the soft words.
-	Indicates that the preceding sound is cut off, stopped suddenly and sharply.
:	Indicates that the preceding sound is prolonged.
,	Indicates a slight intonational rise.
?	Indicates a sharp intonational rise.
(text)	Uncertain transcription.
((comment))	Transcriber’s comments.

(1) Election meeting

25 PETE: I'm tellin you dude
26 I'm telling you right now OK
27 Saul, the only reason he wants this,
28 Is 'cause he wants a fuckin' titlehead (.)
29 *or figurehead whatever* he wants a title.
30 Doesn't deserve it.
31 Can't do the work.
32 There's no way in hell.
33 Speed, (1.8.) h- he's not a fuckin'-
34 Rush he did great a great job,
35 it's a week long.
36 And he was fuckin' stressed to hell over rush,
37 Last fall he had his chick do it.
38 And he didn't do anything to change rush, I mean
39 He spoke about how much he was gonna change #this do this do this#
40 We've done the sa:me fuckin' thi:ng every semester.
41 No one's changed rush.
42 OK?
43 That |leaves|-
44 ?: |Except for| the stripper.
45 ?: Shh chu chu chu chu
46 PETE: That leaves Paul Sutton and Brad Waterson.
47 And out of those two,
48 I think Paul Sutton is the only person qualified for the job,
49 'cause Waterson is just a little too young.
50 and needs to hold a position,
51 and prove himself,
52 before he does anything else.
53 Paul Sutton is fuckin'-
54 He's done his job.
55 I mean he- he has done his job
56 and he's done it well.
57 I mean yeah he fucked up on times here and there.
58 But he fuckin' got us some fuckin #Patriot Centers when he got the
opportunity.#
59 Y'know.
60 And he fuckin' tried to organize philanthropies that (we) didn't go to.
61 So, y'know, if he didn't do his job it's my fault.
62 Y'know.
63 And I think he did a good job.
64 *He's #the only person I see qualified to do this job.#

The second speech activity I analyzed was a Monopoly game. This speech activity is quite different from the meeting, with an explicitly competitive goal, and one in which persu-

asion is less important. In general, this conversation is striking because of Pete's taunts and boasting, and his opponents' various reactions to them. While the game is inherently competitive, we could easily imagine different, less confrontational sorts of talk surrounding it. It is surprising for many (especially, in my experience, women) that the men playing this game actually find it fun, because they seem to be so confrontational, and so focused on gaining the upper hand and boasting about it. Excerpt (2) shows part of this interaction, when Pete is insulting another player by metaphorically interacting within the game world.

(2) Monopoly game

- 1 ((Pete rolls, moves))
 2 DAVE: Nice. pay me. (2.3)
 3 PETE: I can't. Aren't you in jail or something? Don't I not have to
 4 pay you this time?
 5 |Free pass.|\br/>
 6 BOSS: You |got a| free pass. He's got one more.
 7 DAVE: No that's your last one.
 8 PETE: I have one more.
 9 I've got one left.
 10 DAVE: No that's it
 11 PETE: I have one left. I've only used two.
 12 DAVE: That's right. And these over here. OK.
 13 PETE: The deal was for fi:ve.
 14 DAVE: God damn I needed that money too you son of a bitch.
 15 ((Dave rolls)) The deal was for TWO.
 16 (4.3)
 17 PETE: Hi: hi: hi: honey I'm home.
 18 BOSS: I'm gonna blow by Dave right here.
 19 ((Boss rolls))
 20 DAVE: Fuckin' so awful.
 21 PETE: I know its fuckin' t- turnin wheels and shit in your parking lot.
 22 (2.5)
 23 ((Pete makes car squealing noises as he moves the car marker))
 24 BOSS: Go Pete.
 25 PETE: And my horse has left a big shit right on your property.
 26 Big tur:d right there.
 27 DAVE: Alo:ng with the money.
 28 ((Pete moves))
 29 (9.0)

Finally, I find another face of Pete one evening in a bar during happy hour (3), which Pete has stopped into before going to class (thus affirming all of our worst stereotypes about "frat boys"!). Here his affect is much less enthusiastic, and he is presenting his "calm, cool, got-his-shit-together" persona, as another fraternity member characterized it. Part of this interaction was just among Pete, me, and another male non-fraternity member, but the differ-

ence is most audible in Pete's interaction with Jen, a woman who comes into the bar and makes a point of sitting next to Pete.

(3) In the bar

- 93 JEN: God I haven't been here in a long time.
94 Um, what time do have to leave?
95 Do you really have to go to class?
96 PETE: |Yes.
97 DAN: |Can we have another glass? ((to waiter))
98 JEN: You do?
99 DAN: No rush. ((as if to waiter, who had been slow))
100 PETE: What time is it?
101 JEN: I'm parked over there is that OK?
102 (?)
103 Six twenty-five
104 PETE: Forty five?
105 JEN: Twenty-five.
106 JEN: What time do you have to leave?
107 PETE: I have to leave by seven.
108 JEN: No. Seven fifteen. (.)
109 Do you have a test in your class?
110 PETE: Yes.
111 JEN: Oh well then OK (?)
112 PETE: I'll leave at (.) ten after.
113 JEN: Greta's coming here too.
114 PETE: Greg?
115 JEN: No.
116 Y'know what-?
117 PETE: Greg was s'posed to come.
118 JEN: Alex called, was like
119 Can you tell Greg to um
120 he owes us a hundred an twenty dollars for his bills.
121 I was like he doesn't live here now.
122 (3.1)
123 PETE: (Guess that's Greg's problem.)
124 DAN: You want another one?
125 Pete: Yeah I want another one. Huh.
126 (3.7)
127 DAN: I told him to get you a glass.
128 JEN: (I got kicked outta here one time)
129 PETE: Why? Were you being obnoxious and rowdy?
130 JEN: Oh: my God. I can't tell you how drunk I was.
131 Don't even remember anything.
132 PETE: Shouldn't drink so much.
133 JEN: Are they gonna card me? (.)

- 134 PETE: Huh?
 135 JEN: Are they gonna card me?
 136 PETE: Pro|bably.
 137 JEN: |I'm| nervous. he ha
 138 PETE: I wouldn't worry about it too much.

Pete is now performing a masculinity at once very different from the other two but in some ways entirely consistent. It is different in its lack of affect and emotion, but similar in its authority, in this case an almost paternalistic authority (co-constructed by Jen, I hasten to add). For example, in the end of (3) in line 132 Pete is ironically suggesting that Jen should not drink so much (after calmly asserting that he will be taking an exam upon leaving the bar), and reassures her in a fatherly manner in line 138.

The point of the paper was therefore to show how hegemonic masculinity could be constructed in different ways by the same man in different interactions. All of his interactional strategies create powerful or authoritative stances in some way, but those ways differ. Moreover, they rely on interlocutors to co-construct these positions (or, in some cases, challenge them).

So that is the original work I wish to reconsider here. My understanding of language and masculinity since then has been influenced in part by first thinking about how we can decompose the notion of hegemonic masculinity, and second by thinking about how desire of several kinds is related to the construction and performance of identity in interaction. I'll briefly review these ideas before discussing how they might be applied to Pete's conversations.

Part of what I was trying to do with the data above was to show that multiple masculinities are multiple not just across men, but across speech situations as well. The analyses also point out the importance of interlocutors in the construction of masculinity (and identity in general) a point I will return to.

3. Cultural discourses of hegemonic masculinity

As noted above, one of the most important developments in the study of masculinities in the nineties was the introduction of the idea of *hegemonic masculinity* by R. W. Connell (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985; Connell, 1987, 1995; Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). There was much that was (and is) innovative about Connell's work, but to my mind the most important insights captured by him² were three:

1. Masculinities are multiple;
2. There is an ordering among them; and
3. Hegemonic masculinity often represents an unattained (or unattainable) ideal. Men who do not attain this ideal nevertheless still see it as the ideal to strive for.

Connell has recently revised this concept somewhat (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), but these core ideas remain in place. The definition of hegemonic masculinity remains relatively unchanged: "Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over

² Connell has since become a woman, but I will use the pronoun specific to her gender at the time of writing.

women to continue,” write Connell and Messerschmidt (p. 832), and the earlier (Connell, 1995, p. 77) definition was “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women.” So hegemonic masculinity is not just one type of masculinity, but a system of practices and cultural models that prototypically makes men dominant. While not a single prototype of masculinity itself, hegemonic masculinity entails such a prototype, such that one form of masculinity will be dominant over others and that that particular form will be the one that allows men to remain dominant over women. So in effect the ordering of men leads to a dominance of men over women. Note that the particular model or conception of hegemonic masculinity need not overtly dominate women—it only needs to have the effect of legitimating men’s dominance over women. Connell (1995, p. 77) argues, “It is the successful claim to authority, more than direct violence, that is the mark of hegemony.” The logical outcome of this argument is that men’s practices in a particular *all-male* situation, to the extent that these practices represent hegemonic forms of masculinity, are implicated in men’s dominance of women.

However, the cultural models and practices that make up hegemonic masculinity are not unitary either. Kiesling (1997), and in a similar way an analysis I performed on the use of the (ING) variable in the fraternity (Kiesling, 1998), was meant to explore how men exploited the idea of *multiple* hegemonic masculinities, each connected to dominance with different kinds of power: structural, physical, economic, etc.

The term “hegemonic masculinity” has become widely used, which to some extent has been to its detriment. When terms like this become popular, they become buzzwords and are often used not as originally defined, but instead replace old concepts unreflectively. This has happened often with the term “community of practice” (introduced to language and gender by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992), which is sometimes used when “speech community” would be more precise. For its part, “hegemonic masculinity” seems to have become shorthand in many cases either for “patriarchy” (a related but different term) or simply really, really bad, violent, and mean (“toxic”) forms of masculinity. Although not necessarily referring to a particular model of masculinity, it is common to refer to the most valorized forms of masculinity leading to hegemonic masculinity simply as “hegemonic masculinity.” Connell (1995, p. 77) does this himself, and in fact juxtaposes hegemonic masculinities with other kinds of masculinities such as subordinate and complicit masculinities.

So while I will use the notion of hegemonic masculinity, I will be explicit about what that hegemonic masculinity is composed of: hegemonic masculinity represents a range of masculinities and practices that are most valorized, so we should be able to articulate it, even if only in general terms. For the components of this hegemonic form I use the term “cultural discourses of masculinity” or “cultural discourses of hegemonic masculinity.” I will use “cultural discourses” for short. The term “discourse” is meant in the Foucauldian sense and is elaborated in Kiesling (2005).

Finally, I believe it is important to have a specific definition of the term “masculinity”: *social performances semiotically linking the performing subject to men, and not to women, through cultural discourses and models*. By “social performances,” I mean anything that is done with an audience (real or imagined), which is arguably every action we undertake. By “semiotically linking the performing subject to men” I mean that there is some way that a community understands the performance to be related to men. Most often, this will be indexical, but links can also be symbolic and iconic. Moreover, indexical links can be quite com-

plex, as pointed out by Ochs (1992). Notice that in this definition masculinity can be performed by women, as long as they are understood as doing something linked to men. Finally, in actual use I assume that this linking occurs in a specific way—through cultural models and discourses. Cultural models (cf. Holland and Quinn, 1987) are more specific, usually narrative-like, models of ideal cultural practices and types of people.

The following, then, are the general cultural discourses of hegemonic masculinity I claim for the fraternity men:

1. *Gender difference* is a discourse that sees men and women as naturally and categorically different in biology and behavior. This discourse is present in most cultures around the world; see Connell (1987, 2002) among many others for a discussion.
2. *Heterosexism* is the definition of masculinity as heterosexual; to be masculine in this discourse is to sexually desire women and not men. For a particularly strong articulation of the role of this discourse in masculinity, see Kimmel (2001), and for studies that show how it is constructed in talk see Cameron (1997), Kiesling (2002), and Korobov (2006).
3. *Dominance* is the identification of masculinity with dominance, authority, or power; to be a man is to be strong, authoritative, and in control, especially when compared to women, and also when compared to other men. That men are oriented to dominance, whether or not they achieve it, is probably one of the oldest claims in gender research. However, dominance comes in many forms. See Connell (1987), Bourdieu (2001), and Whitehead (2002), among many others, for discussions of how this discourse manifests in different societies. For an articulation of the value of performing dominance in language, see Kiesling (1997).
4. *Male solidarity* is a discourse, not often discussed in masculinities literature, that takes as given a bond among men. Men are understood to normatively want (and need) to do things with groups of other men, exclusive of women. The best-known discussion of homosociality is probably Sedgwick's (1985) *Between Men*, in which she argues that men's heterosexual rivalries produce a homosociality among men that marginalizes women. For more discussion see especially Kiesling (2005, pp. 702–703).

Some of these discourses can easily clash, such as heterosexism and male solidarity. I argue that they are all always potentially in play, and it is the desire of men to follow these cultural discourses and the specific cultural *models* of hegemonic masculinity that drive them to interact in the ways that they do. We should keep in mind that these discourses are the hegemonic ones; remember that one other attraction of the term hegemonic masculinity is that it implies that there are non-hegemonic masculinities, so that there are also competing, non-hegemonic cultural discourses. In the analysis below I test whether we gain anything by viewing masculinity as the semiotic pursuit of these cultural discourses. Before we do that, however, we should investigate briefly how desire might help us understand that pursuit.

4. Ontological desire

Desire is a central construct in the way I propose to understand masculinities and language (and identity more generally). When I talk to non-specialists about what I study, they often

see men's behavior as something that they are *constrained* to do—that, for example, men are constrained to not act like women through the social censure they receive if they do (see cultural discourse number 1). However, I am of the view that it is not so much that a majority of men feel constrained to not act like women, but that they *want* to act like men and not women. Their desires have been shaped so that the choices they desire to make are in line with the cultural discourses of masculinity. Many men who don't pursue the hegemonic forms still desire them, but others simply don't desire them. Although we are here discussing desire that is somewhat different from sexual desire, in a general way it is the same—we want something for ourselves that we don't have. I also maintain that sexual desire is desire for an identity, and so the two are again linked (but I do not have space for that argument here).

Stephen Whitehead (2002) discusses desire extensively in his discussion of *masculine ontology*. "Masculine ontology" for Whitehead is "the pursuit of being and becoming masculine by the masculine subject" (p. 210), where the masculine subject can be translated for our purposes as the "speaker." (Here again, women could just as easily be the masculine subject pursuing masculinity—if she so desires.) In this pursuit of being and becoming masculine, the masculine subject searches for an authentic self (sometimes referred to as "ontological security," following Giddens, 1991). But since the self is contingent and unstable, *the masculine subject must achieve masculine ontology only through a "constant engagement in those discursive practices of signification that suggest masculinity"* (Whitehead, 2002, p. 210). In other words, the psychological sense of identity is gained from performing acts recognized in cultural discourses as being associated with the self. The desire discussed by Whitehead is then the desire to have a self, and especially the desire to construct this self relationally and in full view of other subjects, who will validate the self and contribute to its ontological security. This conception of self and identity assumes that the psychological is at root a social phenomenon: The sense of identity is not simply something passively believed by the subject but must be enacted by the subject. We can thus view subjects' desires by viewing their social practices. In understanding language and gender identity, then, it is essential to understand how acts are recognized as masculine. Because this understanding is done in the context of dominant discourses, the desire of the masculine subject for a masculine self thus becomes the desire to perform successfully the discourses of masculinity.

As I have previously shown (Kiesling, 2002), we can also understand one goal of interaction as the construction of a desirable identity, thus creating desire in the interlocutors. In that article, I investigated some of the discursive strategies men use to create homosocial desire, especially the creation of desire to join the fraternity and the desire for the fraternity to want someone as a member. I rely on the cultural discourses to explain these strategies, as the men performed dominant, heterosexual identities and modeled male solidarity as well.

There are thus three ways I will investigate desire in these interactions:

1. How can we characterize Pete's linguistic "pursuit of being and becoming masculine?"
2. How might his performances create desire, or create a desired identity, for his interlocutors, and how does that desire differ depending on the speaking situation?
3. How might Pete shape his talk because of his desire for his interlocutor's identities?

In addition, in answering these questions, we might ask whether we gain anything by using desire over simply asking the question I asked originally: What strategies does Pete use to perform masculinity, and how and why do they change?

5. Desire and discourses in Pete's interaction

I will reconsider the three interactions in light of the view I have outlined. I argue that Pete needs to create different kinds of desire that focus on different cultural discourses in each situation. More interestingly, there is a co-creation of this desire in the interactions, such that when desire happens, participants reach a kind of involvement or alignment with each other that resonates with the cultural discourses and more specific cultural models. Rather than repeating the analyses of the three excerpts, I discuss them comparatively for each of the questions I have posed above.

5.1 Cultural discourses

How can the division of hegemonic masculinity help us in understanding the variation and stability we see in Pete's linguistic presentation of self in these three excerpts? Most straightforwardly, we can simply argue that he is "emphasizing" different cultural discourses in each interaction. In excerpt (1), we see Pete emphasizing a kind of dominance based on his knowledge and experience in the fraternity. He is an old man of the fraternity, as he claims the right to make unadulterated (i.e., unmodified epistemically) assertions of other members' character (e.g., "can't do the work"; "he has done his job and he's done it well") and the history of the fraternity (e.g., "no one's changed rush"). In excerpt (2), there is again a focus on dominance, but in two other ways. First, Pete is argumentative, resisting rent payment in Monopoly, and second, he taunts Dave by metaphorically defiling Dave's property while Pete stays for free. This competitiveness, however, is an aspect of creating homosocial desire, and it balances the potentially conflicting discourses of heterosexism and male solidarity. Finally, gender difference, heterosexism, and dominance are mixed in "hi honey I'm home" (line 17), in which Pete positions Dave as a subservient housewife and himself as the "man of the house." (Importantly, he can do this without putting his heterosexuality in question, because he is using another "voice" from the game world that is laminated onto his "authentic" voice.) In addition, in this story world the relationship is clearly heterosexual. In excerpt (3), Pete has a different kind of dominance: expressionless, confident, and protective. Here of course gender difference is important, as Pete is performing an identity for Jen, someone he was (and perhaps desires to be) romantically involved with. In each of these situations, dominance is clearly very important, but it is tempered by other discourses; gender difference especially is always hanging over the interactions.

In order to really understand these interactions, we must appeal to cultural models—more specific realizations of the cultural discourses. For example, in all excerpts Pete projects a confidence about his position, whether that be his knowledge in the meeting or his standing in the Monopoly game. But in the meeting, he affects a more professorial or "old hand" knowledge, for which there are many available masculine cultural models. Pete also relies on a vivid cultural model of heterosexual masculinity in the characterizations in "hi honey I'm home". The division of hegemonic masculinity into specific discourses of hegemonic masculinity for this community has therefore helped us to be more precise about how

Pete is performing masculinity. Note that this is only a difference in the explanatory model—the original linguistic forms and discursive strategies I argued Pete was using are still present. I hope this is more than a rearrangement of deck chairs, however, such that the model we arrive at for the kinds of abstract social objects we use in our explanations for linguistic choices is more precise.

5.2 “The pursuit of being and becoming masculine”

Just how is gender difference “hanging over” the interactions? Here I want to focus on the difference between seeing Pete’s interaction as being *constrained* by hegemonic masculinity as opposed to his *desiring* it—his “pursuit of being and becoming masculine,” as Whitehead (2002, p. 210) puts it. One way to understand this is to realize that Pete makes choices in these interactions that move him closer to—or are consistent with—cultural models that instantiate the cultural discourses. For example, in the meeting (1), he makes a choice to use very little epistemic marking and to begin his speech with the phrase “I’m tellin’ you” (line 25), which echoes a father lecturing his kids on how the world works. Pete does not choose to explain why he thinks these things—that is, he does not give evidence of his claims, in which case they would represent his opinion rather than unchanging fact. In the Monopoly game (2), he produces taunts that create even more dominance than is created through the competition of the game. Finally, in the bar (3) Pete is dominant in a stern and fatherly manner, giving advice and making statements about what he has to do without justification (such statements echo the power of the father to dominate his progeny through the sometimes-effective phrase “because I’m your father, that’s why”). There are many other ways he could have chosen to act in these situations, and for most of them there is no reason to believe he does not have the capacity to make them. These choices therefore represent pursuits and desires, and to the extent that they connect with the cultural model and discourses of hegemonic masculinity (which I have shown they do), Pete is “pursuing the masculine.”

Pete of course does not sit and plan these linguistic strategies out. I suspect—although I’m not sure how one would prove it—that he reacts to the situation by calling on stances from his repertoire, and that these stances are not felt by him as “performing,” but as reactions of his “authentic” self. It is possible that in these excerpts (and almost certainly at an earlier stage of his sociolinguistic development) Pete may have put quite a lot of work into devising and designing these stances, and he probably did so by adopting bits and pieces from other men’s interactions. This self has thus been developed by the repeated taking of similar stances as Pete works on his personality project (to echo Bourdieu’s (1977) notion of *habitus*). Note that this view provides us with a way of integrating desire into identity: identities are one of the things we desire, and they consist of stances, or repertoires of stances that we habitually take, and become connected with identity categories. In this way identity can be both fluidly performed over situations and consistent in individuals.

5.3 How Pete creates desire

Another way to use desire in analyzing language and gender identity is to think about the desire we wish to create in others in order to gain approval of our identities (which could be said more colloquially as “we care what other people think”). This question is literally ancient, as it brings to mind the *ethos* of Aristotelian rhetoric. Even so, it seems an issue that

has not been much considered in sociolinguistics. Even the other-focused positive face of Brown and Levinson (1987) is focused not so much on creating desire in H as on protecting S and H's respective positive faces. While language and gender studies seem to have embraced the idea of identity as performance, the field has focused almost entirely on the performer and not the audience. In classical rhetoric, however, it is the audience that "controls" ethos: it is the authority or credibility the audience gives to the speaker, although it is the speaker that tries to build it in the audience. The desire I am professing here is not exactly the same as *ethos*, since it does not refer exclusively to the authority and credibility of the speaker. I am not talking exclusively about persuasive speech, and in fact the notion I am considering includes aspects of *pathos* as well. Nevertheless, the appeal to the audience is important: I am testing out the argument that we perform our identities so as to create various kinds of desire for our identity in the audience of our performances.

In Pete's interactions, the various desires are quite different, importantly so. This difference is most clear when we compare the bar excerpt (3) with the others. In the bar, Pete is attempting to create heterosexual desire for his identity in his primary audience: Jen. This is not mere speculation, but is ratified by Pete's comment that Jen's presence would change how he talked (he told me, "Now I gotta watch what I say") and by later information from other members on the romantic involvement Pete and Jen had previously had. Another member, Mack, also commented that this is Pete's "calm, cool, got-his-shit-together guy" stance, as noted above, which he puts on when he is around women. So this stance is one that Pete regularly creates in similar situations. This stance thus seems to recur consistently and is triggered by a female presence (actually, Mack and Pete might say it is important that "chicks are around," which identifies the presence not simply as female but as a young and potentially sexually available female presence; presumably Pete's sister doesn't have the same effect). So it would be logical that Pete is here creating what he feels will be a stance that will produce heterosexual desire in Jen for that identity. In other words, Pete is flirting, a speech activity about which very little has been written in language and gender.

Note that Pete does not accomplish his stance alone; he relies crucially on Jen's creation of an asymmetrical but complementary stance as insecure and flighty (arguably connecting her with hegemonic femininity, or *emphasized femininity*, as Connell (1987) calls it—a term that doesn't get as much play as the masculine counterpart; indeed there has been much less work on differentiation in femininities than in masculinities, but see Eckert (1989, 2000)). The important point is that this performance on Pete's part is not only focused on creating desire in his interlocutor, but relies on her to co-create it with a complementary stance. This observation is a point often not made in performance views of language and gender, but is essential in a speech activity like flirting, which cannot be done by a single party. One can attempt to flirt by oneself, but it can only be successfully done in a back and forth in which both parties are participating.

In the Monopoly game (2), we could similarly argue that what Pete is doing is creating a desirable identity, albeit one that is homosocially and not romantically focused. (Although some men have argued with me that there is always some sort of homosexual subtext to men's friendships, I find the evidence lacking; this may be true for some men, but the wider generalization has not been adequately supported.) While his stance in this excerpt is still one of confidence and authority, it has a very different feel than that in the bar (3). First, it is not the fatherly and knowing kind of confidence, but rather the confidence of someone in a fight he knows (or wants others to think he believes) he will win. Moreover, there are more

overt displays of dominance in the interaction in the Monopoly game. The question is how these displays of dominance are somehow creating a stance that is desirable. I argue that men who desire the hegemonic ideal also desire to associate with other men who embody to a large extent that ideal, and that is what Pete is doing here: embodying that strong, competitive *dominant* persona, which the men associating with him—even the one being insulted—desire. This desire is for the cultural discourse of male solidarity. Note again that there are asymmetries and complementarities that allow this to happen, as Dave plays the “door mat” (as one member identified his frequent role), and Boss the calm, silent, rational player. So again we have complementary desirable masculinities within a larger social structure of dominance. Finally, in the meeting excerpt (1), Pete is creating a desirable identity—that of the fraternity elder and judge of character—that gives him credibility to persuade the other members how to vote. Here he is most closely attempting to create a desire that is *ethos* in the rhetorical sense. The identity of the knowledgeable older member is surely one that other members desire, and in fact helps him make his argument for voting in the vice-president position.

5.4 Desire for other identities

The questions I posed above regarding desire focused not only on how Pete creates desire in others for his identity, but also on how his desire for other identities might shape his talk. Thus, in creating his stances, Pete is also in a sense expressing a desire for these other identities, whether they align in the homosocial or heterosexual domain. This understanding points to the relationality of identities that Connell argues is the basis of gender identity; there are a number of ways to form these relations; for these (and many other) men, I argue that the cultural discourses I have identified are important ways these relations are structured. I argue that this is true even if men do not desire identities that embody these cultural discourses, because the hegemonic versions are still present (and hegemonic), and non-hegemonic identities are performed in relation to those hegemonic forms. In other words, it may be that a man desires for himself (or a friend or lover) a non-hegemonic identity, but that identity—and even its attraction—is understood only in relation to hegemonic forms. In short, “I like you because you aren’t the typical guy.” In addition, these cultural discourses are central even if they are embodied by women, because for women to be seen as masculine there must be a masculine cultural discourse or model for her to semiotically connect to.

However, this domain of desire is the most difficult to apply. For example, in the meeting, the only evidence we have of Pete’s desire for another member or identity comes in his positive evaluation of Paul Sutton, whom he evaluates as hard-working and efficient (line 55 “he has done his job.”). However, more generally we can find evidence that what members are doing in meetings are expressing desire for the fraternity in general. Consider the following excerpt from a speech in a different meeting by Jean, a recent graduate:

(4) Jean’s speech

- 35 like when we did greek sing
- 36 now I would never say to myself
- 37 yeah I’ll get up in front of the whole fuckin’ greek community and and sing and
look like a fuckin’ idiot

- 38 but the fact that all the brothers were doin' it
 39 I was wearin' my letters
 40 I felt safe
 41 I felt comfortable yknow
 42 and th- hey I'm in-
 43 I'm Gamma Chi Phi here I'm surrounded by all these people
 44 I feel OK
 45 those were the best feelings ever

This is a clear statement of the connection between male solidarity and the desire for the other members. Those “best feelings ever” (line 45) are presumably ones that he (and Pete) still desire and attempt to create when there are many members present. In this sense, the desire for others in the meetings is not so much a desire for a specific other but for the feeling of masculine solidarity, desire for the comfort and confidence that “brothers” give you.

In the Monopoly game (2) this focus on male solidarity is arguably what is being desired. In this case, it is not so much the desire for the specific other that Pete is focusing on (in fact, he seems to be expressing contempt as he defiles Dave's property). Rather, this “banter” composed of insults and challenge creates, through a kind of indirection, that same feeling Jean talks about in his speech. The evidence for this good feeling are the laughter that Pete exhibits while engaging in the acts of defilement, and the fact that Dave continues playing despite it—it in no way drives him away from the game or the house on that Sunday afternoon.

It is only in the bar excerpt (3) where we suspect that Pete is showing some desire for another specific person. What is significant here however is that he doesn't seem to be expressing this desire. After Jen sits down he becomes less expressive and enthusiastic in his speech, using very short sentences with little affect. We only know about Pete's desire for Jen from his comment about changing his speech before she sits down (“now I gotta watch what I say”), and from information gathered from other members. Informal native-speaker intuition has confirmed this interpretation: I have played this excerpt to many classes in language and gender, and always ask what is going on. The consensus is always that they are flirting, a speech activity that is by definition about expressing desire for another and creating it for oneself. So there is something in this interaction that American English speakers recognize as creating desire. Perhaps it is the complementarity of identities—the fact that both Pete and Jen play their parts as dominant and subordinate, and this very engagement on Pete's part signals desire. Silence is always an option, and perhaps taking the trouble to speak shows desire.

6. Evaluation

I wish to conclude by reviewing what we have gained through the view I have presented here, as well as the problems it presents. I believe the splitting of hegemonic masculinity into separate cultural discourses is fruitful, but there are several dangers. First among these dangers is how we know what the hegemonic discourses are; this identification process should not be an unreflective restating of other views of masculinity, but a distilling from the ethnographic exploration of a particular community. We may find that large communities—such as the United States, India, or even Europe—share many of these cultural discourses (and per-

haps that the basic fact of gender difference is universal), but this should be discovered by generalizing over many particular communities, not assumed *a priori*. More important is the danger of circularity, in which we use language to provide evidence for the cultural discourses, and then use the cultural discourses to explain language. I think we get around this problem by rejecting the simplistic dichotomy between language and cultural discourses of any kind, and understand language to be a social practice itself. I argue this because while cultural discourses include many different kinds of social practices, language seems to be an essential, dominant part of these. This position entails that we must view language as simultaneously reflective and constitutive of cultural discourses, as I have tried to do above.

I am still uncomfortable with the use of desire. Do we really know anything about Pete's desires? How do we know it? Circularity is a problem here again: we use language as our evidence for desires, which are then the way we explain linguistic behavior. I think ethnography comes to the rescue once more. One way to find out about desires is to ask about them, and there are various ways of doing that. One way is to observe regularities based on similar interlocutors, and ask how speakers feel about those interlocutors. Another would be to experimentally talk to speakers about specific individuals and what they like and dislike about them. I pursued this in the fraternity, and found that certain kinds of masculinity were often cited as traits of men the fraternity men admired. "Hard-working," although difficult for the men to define, was very important, and it told me something about the kinds of identity that might be desired in the fraternity and ultimately surfaced in the talk. These kinds of techniques allow us to find out more about our speakers, and thus explain their linguistic choices.

It may not be possible to show a specific desire in a conversation. Rather, we may need to simply assume that this is one of the motivations that speakers have to engage in conversation at all. Linguists are not psychologists, so we may need to simply let this be a likely motivation and see how the interaction plays out without assuming specific desires, while making the assumption that desire for identities is a motivation. Sociolinguists rarely take our explanations into this realm. But we do assume that interactants make linguistic choices, and recent views of language and identity argue that speaker agency should be included in our explanations of those choices. We therefore have to suggest that speakers are not just responding to situations (and being constrained in those responses), but that they are actively making choices that they want to make. In this view then, it becomes axiomatic that there is desire for identity of both the self and the other. In some way, we need to find a place for this kind of desire.

Explanations in language and gender (and identity) that take desire into account provide a way to take into account the important role of other interactants ("the audience") in identity performance. These are performances not with a quiet audience trying to hold back its coughs, but with one that helps set the stage and co-creates the performances; they are co-actors more than audiences. In this way the relationality of identity comes to the fore when we consider that speakers are simultaneously desiring identities, helping to shape others' identities, and trying to create a desirable identity themselves.

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