LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Office of Undergraduate Research is proud to sponsor the second volume of *Conjure*, USF’s Journal of Undergraduate Research. Undergraduate Research is thriving at USF, with students collaborating with mentors in each of the university’s colleges, presenting at national conferences, and publishing their work in respected volumes.

We expect to publish two issues of *Conjure* each year. One will feature prize-winning articles and abstracts from USF’s annual Undergraduate Research Symposium, to be held this year on April 29, 2006. The other will be, like the present volume, focused around a specific theme or interdisciplinary topic.

Dr. Messing’s students were all enrolled in the same course, but the essays included in this volume of *Conjure* demonstrate the breadth of approaches to the question of Language in its socio-cultural context. They also serve as examples of the depth and sophistication undergraduates can bring to scholarly research and inquiry, particularly under the guidance of a gifted mentor.

Thanks to the intellectual strengths, industry and enthusiasm of our faculty research mentors and students, and the generous and unstinting support of President Judy Genshaft, Provost Renu Khator, and Dean Stuart Silverman of the Honors College, USF has made undergraduate research an institutional priority. Please enjoy and learn from *Conjure*. If you are a USF undergraduate or faculty researcher, I invite you to visit the Office of Undergraduate Research and become a part of our programs. And if you are not a member of the USF community, I trust you will be impressed by the calibre of our students, as well as our mentors, and feel confident in our nation’s next generations of researchers.

- Naomi Yavneh, Ph.D.
  Associate Professor, Humanities
  Director, Office of Undergraduate Research
  The Honors College
  University of South Florida
THIS JOURNAL SEeks TO DISCUSS MAJOR ISSUES IN LANGUAGE, AS RELATED TO:

IDENTITY
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By: Bridgette Martin

The Role of Language in Constructing Identity:
An Analysis of Neo-Aramaic in Assyrian Folksong
By: Ahmad Al-Jallad

The Secret Speech of Record Geeks
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NATIVE AMERICANS
Cherokee Language Revitalization and Preservation: A Personal Ethnography
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How Education Plays a Relevant Role in the Efforts of Language Revitalization
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TECHNOLOGY
Live Journals: The Starbucks of the Next Generation
By: Autumn Slate

ASL AND DEAF CULTURE
Did I Say Something Wrong? Miscommunication Across Deaf and Hearing Cultural Lines
By: Aurora Hadsock
The papers in the volume are written by students from my Anthropology 4620: Language & Culture course, taught in Spring 2005. They have been edited for inclusion in this volume. The assignment was for a research paper of fifteen-twenty pages based on ethnographic observation and readings:

The paper is on a topic of the student’s choice, as long as it is related to Linguistic Anthropology and Methods covered in class; The paper much be anthropological in nature, and the topic must be approved by the professor.

The course had forty-six undergraduate and two graduate students, and was designated a “Gordon Rule,” writing-intensive course, requiring students to write weekly two-page, critical commentaries on the readings, which were later discussed in class. The experimental nature of the class included a seminar-style discussion of assigned readings, representing a panorama of perspectives on cutting-edge research in Linguistic Anthropology and Sociolinguistics, and the final paper, based on an ethnographic project of the student’s choice. Multiple viewpoints were encouraged, and resulted in the wide range of topics of the papers in this volume.

The description of the course was as follows:

This course focuses on key issues in the comparative study of language in a sociocultural context. We will study contemporary theoretical and ethnographic approaches to Linguistic Anthropology by considering the phenomenon of bilingualism and multilingualism, focusing on linguistic diversity in the U.S. and internationally, through the study of the use and structure of such codes as African American speech, Spanish in the U.S., Native American Languages, American Sign Language, and Pidgins and Creoles. We will consider the social and institutional implications of linguistic diversity, and the effects of language change over time, sometimes culminating in the language endangerment and death of minority (heritage and native) languages. The approach of this class will be to pay equal attention to both macro socio-cultural issues and micro-linguistic analyses, and for that reason we will focus on different types of micro-analyses including descriptive sociolinguistic approaches, discourse analysis, and semiotics. The importance of genre in Linguistic Anthropology will be discussed, focusing on verbal art, particularly in indigenous societies. We will consider communication that is verbal and non-verbal, oral and written, and that varies according to gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, and other factors.

The prerequisite for this course is that students have taken ANT 3610: Introduction of Anthropological Linguistics, or its equivalent.
- **Marianne Gillogly**

Marianne is currently a second-year junior majoring in Cultural Anthropology, with a focus of Linguistic Anthropology, and minoring in Linguistics and World Languages. She has presented on topics such as post-colonial Aztec culture and Sardo Language (of Sardegna), and has research interests in Endangered Languages, Language Revitalization and Policy Advocacy in the Central America, Northwest Canada and the Mediterranean regions.

- **Ahmad Al-Jallad**

Ahmad is currently a senior majoring in Anthropology and the Honors Research Major with a focus on Linguistics. He has received several fellowships to support his research efforts both at USF and at Harvard University. Ahmad has presented his research at professional conferences and has important publications in preparation and in review. His main research interests are in theoretical linguistics and artificial intelligence.

- **Amy Lawrence**

Amy is currently a Junior majoring in Anthropology. Her post-degree plans are to continue studying for her M.A., focusing her interests on Medical and Linguistic Anthropology.

- **Bridgette Martin**

Bridgette is currently a sophomore majoring in Anthropology with a focus on Language and Culture. She is also pursuing a minor in Spanish.

- **Ann-Eliza Musoke**

Ann-Eliza is currently a senior majoring in Anthropology with an interest in cultural studies. After graduation she hopes continue on to law school where she can study law with with a focus on public advocacy.
Introduction

This research project is about the social construct of “Whiteness.” Since the concept of race is a social concept, the identities attached to the classifications are also made through society’s ideas. In this paper, I hope to answer the following questions: How does someone act or sound White? Is it what they say or how they say it? What other characteristics does a person who acts White have? Where do people derive their ideas about what “Whiteness” is? Through interviews, readings, and observations of my own, I have found some answers to these questions, many of which I had not even thought about previous to my research. “Whiteness” does not only pertain to how someone talks, but how they dress, and what kind of hobbies and lifestyles they have. Also, the concept of “Whiteness” is not new to our society, as I had previously thought.

Your mission: Define “Whiteness”

While conducting my interviews, I found that many people have trouble talking about this concept of “Whiteness.” They seemed a little nervous about their answers; it almost seemed that they were trying to make themselves out to be a “better person”, meaning they don’t see differences between the races. Upon coming to this conclusion, I related it to the matter of language ideologies. In an article by Rosina Lippi-Green, she states:

“The process of language subordination is so deeply rooted, so well established, that we do not see it for what it is. We make no excuses for preferences which exclude on the basis of immutable language traits (Lippi-Green 1997:241).”

I think that it works the same way with concepts of race. The identities that we as a society have assigned to certain races are so deeply rooted, to put it the best way, that when confronted about it, we avoid it. In fact, we try to say that it doesn’t even exist when it is obvious that it does. A majority of the people in my interviews said that there are no differences between the races. However, if this was the thought of the majority, then why does our society have these stereotypes? If everyone thought this way, then there would not even be the concept of “Whiteness,” or any preconceived notions about any one race.
the White spectrum, there are the “rednecks,” who are considered to be uneducated and who also are said to speak slowly. It is interesting to note that even between White people, there are certain whites, such as rednecks, that are, in a sense, looked down upon.

When questioned about the pitch and tone of a White person’s speech, Diva*, a 43 year old White female, claims that it depends on where the person is from. “People up North talk fast, (and have) a low-pitched voice. People from the South talk slower, (and have a) higher-pitched voice.”

In all of my interviews, it is interesting to note that everyone noted that “White talk” uses less slang. In fact some even went as far to say that White people talk properly, like Chad*, a 35 year old White male. “They (White people) pronounce words more clearly and communicate better; (their) language is more understandable.” I found it even more interesting that while discussing this, Chad, a self-identified White person, referred to White people as “they” instead of “we.”

Through my interviews, I have found that, typically, people associate the lack of slang with “White talk.” Mike, a 32-year old Native American Male, said that there is less use of slang in “White talk” and that, “for the most part,” White people use proper English. This idea is also discussed in an article about superstandard English by Mary Bucholtz:

“By avoiding particular linguistic forms, speakers can separate themselves from the social category indexically associated with such forms… (Bucholtz 2001:89).”

Chad, the 35 -year old White male, also voiced that there is less use of profanity and that the speech is more “refined” and “sophisticated.” In fact, while studying “White talk,” I found that even when Whites use words that would be considered slang, or not Standard English, it is automatically attributed to the speech patterns of another race.

“New tokens of White “hippness,” often retrievable as Black in origin only by the most dogged scholarship (although often visible to Blacks), are constantly created out of African American English materials (Hill 1998:685).”

This can be related to words or phrases that are mixed into English, or borrowed from another language variety. Examples include phrases like “Word to your mother,” which would be considered a part of AAE, or more popularly known as AA VE, or words like “sayonara” from Japanese, and “adios” from Spanish (Hill 1998:685).

“They” look different too

“Whiteness” is not only contained to speech. Characteristics of “Whiteness” are also linked to non-verbal communication, personality and lifestyles. According to the stereotypes, certain races perform in certain ways in particular social settings. White people are constantly stereotyped as wanting to do well in school, and getting good grades is considered acting White (Fordham 1999:280). They also perform differently in the classroom in relation to students who are of, say, the Native American race (Philips 1992). In fact, some believe that in order to be successful in any situation, acting White may be necessary:

“For most Black American adolescents, acting White is quintessential evidence of symbolically becoming a dominant Other: a powerful rather than an oppressed person (Fordham 1999:280).”

Compared to Indian children of Warm Springs, White children tend to have more non-verbal communication with the teacher (Philips 1992:101). Compared to the Indian children, the White children tend to acknowledge the teacher speaking with nods of the head (Philips 1992:101). In my opinion, this could be related to wanting to do well in school. Relating and paying attention to the teacher is one way to ensure academic success in the classroom. One way of doing this that is associated with White students, according to Susan Philips’ article, is to strain to raise one’s hand in order to be recognized in class (Philips 1992:101). White students also tend to be in competition for leadership roles in projects and prefer to play games in which there is a leader, such as Follow the Leader, instead of team oriented games (Philips 1992:120). While these differences were pointed out to show the difference in learning strategies for Indian and White children, I think that it also shows how White children act in the classroom setting. I think that when children in school observe these particular types of behaviors, they associate it with acting White. In Signithia Fordham’s article, there are many inferences to how the pursuit of academic success is considered to be a personality trait for White people. White people also tend to be linked to certain types of activities and lifestyles.

“Capital High students have a long list of ways by which it is possible to act White, including playing golf, going to the country club, going to a museum, hiking, dancing to the lyrics rather than the music of a song, and speaking Standard English … (Fordham 1999:280).”

In my interviews, this list continues to grow longer. This list contains activities that would be applicable to either the “high-society” Whites or rednecks. Some of the activities given are as follows: Yachting, water polo, equestrian sports, bicycling, camping, rock climbing, hunting, monster trucks, line dancing, and NASCAR. White people also tend to have a certain style of dress. Mike, the 32-year old Native American male, says:

“(White people are) more conservative. (There is) less flair; less color.”
Diva, the 43-year old White female, and Chad, the 35-year old White male, echoed saying that White people dress conservatively and properly. They wear suits and don’t dress inappropriately. There were also remarks that White people wear clothes that fit correctly and are not baggy. Music is also a defining characteristic in “Whiteness”. Diva said that White people listen to rock music. Others said that they listen to country music. At the comedy club that I work at, our house emcee is a big fan of David Bowie. The emcee is a black male. Many of the employees have said that because of this choice in his music, he acts White. Music itself has become a way of defining a person’s personality. Stereotypically, certain races listen to certain types of music. Stereotypically, a black person wouldn’t listen to country music, or, according to the employees at the club, David Bowie. So when a person of another race steps outside these pre-conceived boundaries, they are considered to be acting White, like the emcee at the club.

Who defines “Whiteness”?  

When asked about where they get their ideas from about “Whiteness”, all interviewees said they got it from being around White people or the fact that they are White themselves. However, I feel that the media plays a big role in defining society’s concept of “Whiteness”. When I watch TV, there is always a show on that shows someone acting as if they were a member of another race. In fact, currently, there are even commercials for a cellular phone company with a group of people called the “Poser Mobile”, accurately named, because they are “posing” as another race. One of my favorite examples of “Whiteness” in the media is on the Chappelle’s Show. Dave Chappelle exploits many of society’s conceptions of different race identities. On his show, he portrays White people as super White people, meaning the characters are over playing their “Whiteness.” For example, they are overly excited and energetic, even when doing mundane things like cleaning. When using hip hop or slang terminology, the White people characterized on his show often sound unnatural in how they say these types of words. They also demonstrate the inability to participate in stereotypical Black non-verbal communication, like hand shakes. Typically, Whites are shown as very serious people with structured lifestyles and commonly try to take the leadership position in situations. They are also over emotional and not up to date with the current trends and styles. Older White males are stiff and rigid when they talk. They usually speak with a monotone style of speech. They also tend to have “White” hairstyles, with hair parted at the sides and are described as being “pasty” and “sickly” in complexion.

“Whiteness” throughout history  

One thing that really surprised me during my research for this project was how long the concept of “acting White” has been around. When I first started this project, I assumed that “Whiteness” was a relatively new concept in society; a concept started by this generation. However, I came across information about “passing”. This was in relation to the “One-drop Rule”, which stated that if someone had any “colored” people in their ancestry, that they were automatically considered “colored”. This was not only in regards to Black ancestry, but also Native American ancestry. However, if the people had lighter skin, they had the ability to “pass” in society as a White person. “Passing” involved not only cutting yourself off from anyone in your family who was not “passing”, but also adopting a White lifestyle (Gaudin). In these times, this meant having a White job and living in White neighborhoods. Through this, people could earn greater incomes than if they had not “passed”. With a greater income, they could live in “nice” neighborhoods and send their children to school. Since this was a time when things were segregated, there were many services that were only available to Whites. “Passing” allowed people to take advantage of what would normally be kept from them:

“Some not only passed for White to earn a better living, they also used their appearances to enjoy facilities available only to ‘whites.’ Thus, persons of mixed race not only sat comfortably on streetcars or listened to operas and symphonies, they also resisted those local laws and customs that labeled them black, hence undeserving of these diversions (Gaudin).”

While this is a much more extreme case of “Whiteness” than what we have in today’s society, it is still a noteworthy example of how the idea of “Whiteness” is viewed. Through the times, the meaning of acting or sounding White has changed quite a bit. As our society continues to classify people based on their race, there will always be common notions of what certain races act like.

“Whiteness” can be demonstrated not only in speech patterns, but also in personality and lifestyles. The ideas of “Whiteness” can be derived from being around White people all the time, as some of the interviewees put it, or through mainstream media, which I believe has bigger effects on people’s ideas about race. Because of how deeply engrained these concepts are into our society, I have found that people have a hard time talking about them. While it was difficult to get this data, I was still able to get a little insight into “Whiteness.” I have also found that acting White is considered helpful when searching for success and power in today’s world. This presents an interesting question of whether or not we as a society still have a notion of a superior race. However, because culture is constantly undergoing changes, these ideas will change and develop as well. Such studies need not be neglected because
they hold valuable information about how we as a society view ourselves.

Notes
[1] All names with asterisks are fake names chosen by the interviewee.
[2] Concepts presented by Chappelle’s Show can be seen in his Season 1 Disc set. It was produced in 2004.

References
Bucholtz, Mary

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THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN CONSTRUCTING IDENTITY:
AN ANALYSIS OF NEO-ARAMAIC IN ASSYRIAN FOLKSONG

Ahmad Al-Jallad
Department of Anthropology and the Honors College
USF Undergraduate Senior
Major: Cultural Anthropology

Introduction
Although the relationship between language and identity full us littered with subtleties; it is clear that the two are inseparable and are both required for the existence of the individual. Artificial identities are those which are brought about to serve an exploitive or adaptive purpose. The examination of artificial (constructed) identities allows us to understand the origins of this relationship and its evolution as the identity spreads and matures. This paper will focus on the constructed Assyrian identity and the role language plays to reinforce its legitimacy. The first section will outline the origins of those who call themselves Assyrians today and their community’s historical position in the Middle East. We will then explore the identity’s genesis and how language is used to reinforce it. Data for this comparison will be drawn mainly from folksong. The conclusions will shed light on the position that language occupies during the formative stages of this constructed identity.

Historical Context
It is difficult to discuss the position of indigenous languages in the context of Middle East as often languages are supplanted by their close relatives and even mutually intelligible dialects. Historically speaking, the dominant language was not necessarily derived from that of the dominant culture or political entity. In fact, the Assyrians, after conquering the Aramaeans in the 8th century BCE, adopted the language of their subjects due to the economic advantages associated with it. Aramaic was not restricted to the economic sphere; instead, it was incorporated into various cultures, as well. This is clearly illustrated by the Jewish use of Aramaic as a liturgical language. As Aramaic became the lingua franca of the region, its position as a defining component of identity must have been reduced.

In the 7th century CE, the Arabs emerged from the Arabian Peninsula to dominate the Middle East. Unlike their Assyrian predecessors, the Arabs retained Arabic as the language of their empire. By the 9th century CE, Arabic supplanted Aramaic in most urban areas and a few centuries later in the rural areas as well. In many remote, mostly mountainous regions, however, Aramaic survived until modern times. Also, due to their relative isolation, the inhabitants of these regions felt less pressure to adopt Islam and therefore retained varying forms of Christianity as their faith. These communities remained mostly rural until the later periods of the Ottoman Empire. During the 19th and early 20th centuries, European influence in the region became more pronounced and many Aramaic-speaking Christians were given the opportunity to travel to the west and receive an education. These excursions perhaps foreshadow the future development of the Assyrian identity.

High, Anthropology & Education Quarterly of the American Anthropological Association, Pages 272-293.

Gaudin, Wendy Ann

Hill, Jane H.

Philips, Susan U.
Construction of Identity

Earlier, we mentioned that a constructed identity was one that served an exploitive or adaptive purpose. Consequently, the identity would materialize at the top of the societal hierarchy and filter downwards. For a constructed identity to come into being there must be a foundation upon which it may erect itself; this foundation should include components which distinguish it from the primary regional identity. Also, there must be a social catalyst to ease the target community’s acceptance of the constructed identity.

In the case of the Assyrians, all of these components are present. The European presence in the Middle East treated the inhabitants with a certain degree of contempt as displayed in the writings of various orientalists authors from that period; countless negative stereotypes were formed on this basis. Unfortunately, an anatomical discussion concerning these views is beyond the scope of this paper. It is obvious that the regional identity would shoulder the bulk of such prejudices, however. Therefore, as an adaptive strategy, those possessing regional variants of the larger, regional identity may construct a separate identity on that basis to disassociate themselves from the negatively stereotyped identity. Due to the adaptive nature of the Assyrian identity, its goal is to give itself an objective distance from the stereotypes and prejudices of the dominant identity. The method chosen by the Aramaic-speaking Christian community to create this distance was referencing the past. No one today has interacted with an ancient Assyrian; therefore, by associating oneself with an identity from the remote past, prejudices can be more easily avoided.

The Assyrian identity holds that, based on geography, language, and religion, the Aramaic-speaking Christians of the Middle East are the direct descendents of the ancient Assyrians, and therefore are the indigenous inhabitants of the region. Although mainly adaptive, the identity was used as an exploitive tool for recruitment in the allied struggle against Germany and Ottoman Turkey. Consequently, Assyrian nationalism became very exaggerated; British Lt. Col. R. S. Stafford, noted with dissatisfaction (Tadmor 1975):

“It was interesting to observe how rapidly the Assyrians picked up the new ideas which just after the war deluded so many people in an exhausted world. Their hopes of reviving the ancient Assyrian Empire rose high. And as the days passed their claims grew more and more expansive.”

Foundations

We have so far discussed the historical climate which gave rise to the construct Assyrian identity and outlined its anatomical components, geography, language, and religion. In the following section, I will examine how the identity is reinforced by referencing those components in folksong. Folksong plays an interesting role in defining the Assyrian identity; it exclusively ties its major components to the modern Assyrian despite the fact that they are shared with other communities and lack a historical basis.

Types of Folksong under Examination

The types of folksong under analysis in this paper are preformed by two Assyrian musicians, Juliana Jendo and Evin Aghassi, from northern Iraq and Iran, respectively. Information concerning the background of Jendo, like most Assyrian artists, remains hard to come by therefore I am forced to focus mostly on Aghassi. If anyone’s songs can be considered a representation of Assyrian nationalist aspiration they are those of Evin Aghassi. Aghassi hails originally from northern Iran around the region of lake Urmia. Although his songs are inspired by traditional folk music, Evin, in his music, largely abandons the themes of romance for politics and ethnicity. In the following sections, I shall attempt to show how the incorporation of Assyrian nationalist themes in folksong outlines the formation of the constructed Assyrian identity.

Language

The first component of Assyrian identity is language. Aramaic survived in many isolated pockets and therefore became an integral part of the new constructed identity. Unlike the regional identity, Aramaic was not connected to any living ethnic group, namely, Arabs, Turks, or Iranians and therefore it became another legitimizing factor for the Assyrian separation and legitimacy. Historically speaking, Aramaic was not solely the language of the Assyrians; rather, as mentioned earlier, it was the lingua franca of the region. The language itself is not a marker of “assyrianness”, but though folksong, a picture is drawn relating the happiness of ancient Assyria with the use of Aramaic.

1 salmin muhibī
2 imagine my dear
3 plītah ju ninweh bəhdâra
4 we are out traveling in Nineveh
5 bəzmâra o bərķâda
6 singing and dancing
7 bəhâķa o bəbkâya
8 laughing and crying
9 bəķrâya o ktaba
10 reading and writing
11 bəlεšana də atūrâya
12 in the tongue of Assyria

- Juliana Jenda, Ya Juenq
This particular song focuses on creating a memory of Assyria for the modern Assyrian. Because the identity is constructed, there exist no communal memories or oral traditions dealing with the loss of Assyria. Folksong, therefore, acts to create such memories based on the pillars of the identity’s establishment, despite the historical accuracy. The Aramaic language is, in the above song, depicted to be a medium of expression for the Assyrian. Aramaic is the emotional component of the Assyrian identity; it binds Assyrians together though an exclusive form of communication. This is important as the other two pillars of Assyrian identity are not synchronically exclusive to the Assyrian or the ancient identity.

**Geography**

It is clear that many Assyrians today occupy the same geographical area controlled by Assyrian empire generations ago. However, this land is also occupied by other communities, namely, Arabs, Kurds, Iranians, and Turks, who greatly outnumber the Assyrians. Though Aramaic, the Assyrian identity is given an exclusive connection to the land it shares with other communities.

13 ju ašur
14 in Ashur (Assyria)
15 ju ninweh o arbel, bābīl
16 in Nineveh and Arbil, Babylon
17 ha Ḃkalā
18 one voice/sound
19 šmīli čōlan bəķrāya
20 I heard calling us all
21 mirra ḫızīlān
22 it said show them
23 mahzīlōn bəķrō o brata
24 show them, the son and the daughter
25 e ōrka
26 that way
27 'al atra də babān
28 to the country of our fathers
- Juliana Jendo, Ya Juenq

The geographical component of the identity is reinforced as exclusively Assyrian by referencing regions by their historical names in Aramaic, lines 13-16. The use of Aramaic is again important because, although referring to cities whose inhabitants are primary non-Assyrian, the use of the Aramaic name constructs a possessive link to the land despite the demographic reality. The implied possessive link between Aramaic and geography is further emphasized in the following verse:

29 'alma chule mespume
30 the people enjoying themselves

31 ḥa lešana hemzume
32 speaking one language
33 midre dīrtā lomāro
34 once again, returned (the country) to her owner
35 ḥa Ấn, bīhzayowin bīhzayowin
36 justice/it’s right has prevailed, i see it, i see it.
- Ėvin Agassi, bīhzayowin

**Religion**

The last component of Assyrian identity is Christianity. This is perhaps the most unstable pillar of its foundation due to the division of the Assyrian community between Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Christianity is also perhaps the most obscure component of the identity due to its complete dissociation from ancient Assyria; the Assyrian empire fell centuries before Christianity spread throughout the orient. Nonetheless, folksong connects Christianity to Assyrianess by using biblical symbolism.

37 Ju nāra ḫulwa u duša
38 in the river, milk and honey
39 šopa dōnura min hawā
40 in place of the fire in the sky
41 manā min šmāyā bīrāya
42 mana rains from the heavens
...
43 te‘ e chule lo’ ēttuta
44 it’s church
45 navayāte doōretā
46 the prophecy of the bible
47 ju atra deator midre
48 in the country of Assyria, once again
49 melchuta, bīhzayowin, bīhzayowin
50 the kingdom, I see it, I see it.
- Ėvin Agassi, bīhzayowin

Because nearly all Assyrian practice Christianity, references to it are particularly powerful. However, like other components, it has nothing to do with the ancient identity and only serves the purpose of easing the acceptability of the construct identity for the target community.

**Closing Discussion**

The formative stages of a constructed identity are certainly interesting as they reveal how the individual components of an identity validate each other and consequently the identity itself. In the case of Assyrian identity, we have seen what motivated its genesis and the sources of its foundations. As it to be expected
Introduction

Subcultures tend to create their own speech identities. It becomes not just a way to communicate, but a way to further immerse oneself in a culture or group. Using the speech of a group is a way to fully indoctrinate oneself into the lifestyle. The use of jargon or specialized speech also serves as a way to pick out other members of a community. This paper aims to analyze the jargon, speech and phraseology of a specific subculture known as “record geeks”. Discourse analysis is used to determine if a system of jargon exists among record fanatics as well as any speech patterns or recurring speech themes. By studying the speech of this subculture in-depth, it is likely that cohesion and “secret speech” will be discovered.

Record Geeks

Before delving into the speech of a group, one must attempt to define the subculture. Self-described record geeks are individuals who hold the medium of vinyl in the highest audio regard. They are people who collect records to an almost fanatical extreme. A true record geek, regardless of their personal genre(s) of interest, will adhere to a certain standard when it comes to vinyl. Such record enthusiasts consider myriad factors in purchasing, rating, and collecting records; such as year, record label, vinyl quality and outward appearance of the packaging. Record geeks are extremely knowledgeable about the record industry. They have a base knowledge about many record labels, record producers, recording artists and recording studios. These collectors of vinyl also become collectors of stories and anecdotes about the musical world. It is through the exchange of stories that record geeks acquire information and develop relationships.

Some people are considered virtual collectors. These individuals do not actually collect physical records for one reason or another. Perhaps for example, they have affection for records they cannot afford, or their significant other does not share in or appreciate their hobby so they cannot bring records home. Whatever the reason, virtual collectors may hunt down their favorite records, but they never go in for the kill. These individuals are contented in leaving their most sought after records once they have been located. What virtual collectors lack in actual records, they make up for in knowledge. These pseudo-collectors know as much if not more about music as the collector with an impressive record collection. Some actual and virtual collectors argue that in the modern age of compact disc recording and music sharing online, it is the act of finding records and not the physical purchasing of records that really counts. Anyone can find the music, but few can find the vinyl.

Record geeks tend to have a particular genre, label or artist that they specialize in. One may strictly collect British pop circa 1960 through 1967, while another collects anything on the Verve label or anything written, produced or performed by Burt Bacharach. The specific collector possibilities are infinite, but if one’s collection is examined a pattern will eventually immerge. Whether two record geeks collect the same kind of music or not, there exists a cultural connection in the act of collecting itself. Although there is a special bond between record geeks who share an overlapping passion, there is usually a rapport between true record geeks regardless of their personal interests. Records geeks of all personal preferences seem to identify one another through sub-cultural norms and activities such as spending time in records shops, reading about the music industry and engaging in on-line discussions about records on
various websites. During all of these activities a true record geek can be easily identified by the jargon they use.

**Jargon**

Jargon finds its roots in medieval times. It can be found “in Provencal and French in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and in English a little later” (Burke & Porter 1995:2). The term was used to describe unintelligible speech or guttural sounds. The words 'gargle' and 'jargon' derive from the same root (1995:2). The word jargon spread through the world in the twelfth through sixteenth centuries. In Italian it is gergo or zergon, Spanish it is jerga and Portuguese gerigonca. As the word expanded to each region, its meaning changed from “garbled speech” to mean “the language of the underworld.” Jargon began to refer to “a kind of slang, which helped to keep activities of beggars, thieves, confidence tricksters and so in secret from ordinary citizens” (1995:2). This is the meaning jargon connotes today, as it now refers to the speech of a group that people outside the group may not understand.

Wherever a specialized group, profession or subculture exists, so does jargon. People often associate jargon with professional communities such as medical jargon or “legalese”. The jargon found in these groups is standardized because it is learned through its use during one’s time in medical or law school. Along with generalized slang terms used by a young resident at a hospital for example, you will find documented medical jargon that derived from Latin root words. Professional jargon is learned through use and through classroom interaction and therefore becomes standardized.

Social jargon however, is quite different from the standardized jargon of the professional world. Although jargon in a social setting serves the same purpose, it is acquired casually through the social interactions of the groups and not through the strict learning environment of the classroom. Social jargon incorporates words, terms and phrases that have made their way into the speech of a subculture first through necessity then through repeated use. If the terms that are created work, they catch on and spread throughout the community and a new phrase is born. Because the terms develop in this way their meaning is not easily gleaned by the casual observer. “Outsiders will not understand, but then again this kind of talk does not concern them” (Burke & Porter 1995:14).

The speech developed for the purpose of social and professional jargon serves as a secret language for those who speak it. Jargon amongst records geeks is also “show speech”. Linguist Walter Nash describes jargon as not only shop talk, but also show talk. Upon being exposed to record geek jargon, the casual music fan feels intimidated, while a fellow record geek knows there is a like mind in their midst. In instances like these, the jargon of a subculture acts simultaneously as a repellent and an attractor. “The shared use of jargon is often the basis for a feeling of group solidarity” (Akmajian, Demers & Harnish 1986:323). The act of using jargon is a key element in forming the record geek identity.

**Record Geek Speech**

In order to understand the speech and jargon of record geeks, it is necessary to use discourse analysis. Ideally, one would analyze speech from several different record geeks in several different social situations, such as in a record store, at a record trade convention and at a record listening session. For this paper the only opportunity to analyze speech occurred at a record listening party. These parties are common among record geeks. They are informal gatherings where people who share musical or social commonalities get together to listen to and discuss music. In addition to exposing friends to new music in your collection, record listening parties are an opportunity to talk about records, music industry goings-on, upcoming concerts and general gossip. Record listening parties act as cultural and social bonding between members of this sub-cultural. Analysis of the discourse during this ritual provides insight into the jargon of this group.

**Discourse**

The following discourse took place at my home on April 24, 2005. The speech participants are my sister-in-law Laura (L), her husband Drew (D), my husband Brian (B) and myself (A). In order to create an environment that was as relaxed as possible, I obtained consent from the participants several weeks in advance, then invited them over for dinner without making specific reference to recording their speech. While I prepared dinner in the kitchen I asked the speech participants to relax in the record room, a room in our home devoted entirely to the storage and play of our over 3,500 records. The following is an excerpt of the conversation that occurred.

“...*For the purpose of this linguistic paper, profanity is not edited out because of the descriptive approach taken by the author.*

**Transcription Key**

| >> | overlapping speech |
| () | action taking place |
| // | interrupted speech |
| A | words in bold are jargon and can be found in the glossary at the end of this article |

* For the purpose of this linguistic paper, profanity is not edited out because of the descriptive approach taken by the author.
Music Playing: Chico Hamilton

1. B: I thought of an invention to repair seam splits on records, like these little strips of archival linen tape
2. A: A-ha so...
3. B: >>So you wouldn’t have to fuck up the outside of the record by... by putting tape on it. You would like, it would like pull back so you could like you could tape it to the inside. It’s like a big deal. People don’t...
4. L: I’d imagine there’d be limited market for something like that.
5. D: <laughter>
6. B: I don’t like ummm. Uhh. I’ve got archival book tape for book jacket that I’ve got from the school library, that I’ve put on some records///
7. D: >>right
8. B: and stuff, but ummm when selling record
9. B: people don’t like when they’ve already been
10. D: >> well
12. D: you know what I think is interesting is like there are grades you apply to cover like there are records, but I don’t take them seriously at all.
13. L: Why’s that?
14. D: Because I think the records are a little more (3 beat pause) cut and dry. But what’s goin’ be important about the cover is gonna vary and I mean I would rather a cover with like a clean image and split seams then with intact seams and like you know somebody like magic marker or bad ring wear or something.
15. A: >> or WMNF in red on it
16. D: I think with covers its way more subjective than
17. L: >> or, or, or Rob Lorit written big across the back of the record
18. D: than it is with the vinyl. Don’t you think so?
20. B: Dusty Groove for instance, they grade mostly on the vinyl///
21. D: And they describe the cover
22. B: And they describe
23. D: >>Which is exactly what makes sense!
24. B: >> Yeah
25. D: Is Chico Hamilton dead? I’m assuming he is.
26. B: I don’t know?
27. L: I think everybody’s dead.
28. B: (laughing) Yeah I think everybody’s dead then I’m
29. D: >> ... then Gerald Wilson is playing in Florida!
30. B: surprised when I find out they’re not.
31. D: (looking at a record cover) Is that Mannix sitting there?
32. B: (laughing) Mannix???
33. D: Oh it’s Bob Thiele. Actually I though it was Creed Taylor, that would have been my next guess.
34. B: That’s a cool look the Kangol, the pipe and the little black sunglasses.
35. D: I like one of the Coltrane albums I’ve got, you know it’s individual pictures of them, its got a picture of Jimmy Garrison on bass. He’s like got a cigarette hanging out of his mouth
36. B: Yeah, yeah
37. D: (laughing) and he’s just like (makes facial expression)
38. B: Yeah
39. D: ... it’s such a cool picture.
40. B: yeah I think I know that picture. (2 beat pause) and look at young Larry Correal with the Velvet Underground Look.
41. L: He looks a little stoned
42. B: oh yeah! He’s probably high as a shit!
43. L: He does look like he’s in the Velvet Underground.
44. B: He looks very hip on that cover
45. D: >> That’s probably the hippet he every looked
46. B: >> yeah
47. D: ’cause he became a fusion ///
48. B: >>yeah! pre-fusion! This is like pre-fusion mod days.
49. D: Is that Gerald Wilson ‘Everywhere’? That blue and white spine?
50. B: It might be. Good eye! (laughter)
51. D: That’s a record geek thing, name the record by the spine from across the room.
52. B: Yeah it might be. It would be in the right spot alphabetically.
53. L: Tell them about the story you told me about the other day. The Japanese collectors at ...
54. D: >>Ohhh. This is a very High Fidelity moment. During one of my weekly trips to Stereo Jack’s, there were these Japanese collectors that were just leaving
55. B: >> Uh-huh
56. D: And it was like the total cliché like one of them is standing there with a camera wanting to get a picture of like all the staff. So the staff were like pulling me over because I was there and I was kind of a regular shopper and they’re like “Drew, get in the picture” and Matt was there, Bottecelli’s friend that talks like this (New York accent). And he’s like “Drew get in the picture, grab a record to bring in the picture”.

So I’m right at the beginning of the jazz section in the A’s and right there is Dorothy Ashby’s Afroharping,
57. B: Uh-huh
58. D: So I grab it and I get in the picture and they’re like “Oh Drew, that a reissue. You should have gotten an original of something.”
59. A,L,B: (laughing)
60. D: I mean like the Japanese guy in Japan is going to be like “Oh a reissue! Please don’t look at this picture, it has a reissue!”
61. L: (laughing) “Don’t look at the picture!”
62. B: photo shop it with original cover!

Discourse Analysis

Record listening parties are important social experiences for record geeks. Before I began recording the session, it was decided by the speech participants who would choose the first record. Casual speech did not begin until there was music playing and this was true for the rest of the evening. Line #1 demonstrates discussion using technical jargon. Brian begins discussing a way to repair seam splits, a term that all present understood. The speech participants could all relate to Brian’s dilemma of repairing record spines with the diminishing of a record’s value. As the conversation moved to
further discussion of record spines, more jargon was employed.

In Line #2, Drew refers to grades which he feels should not be applied equally to the covers as they are to the vinyl. As Drew debates the merits of such a system, he is also getting reinforcement of his idea from the members of his sub-culture. When Brian says in Line #20 that Dusty Groove, a major online seller of rare vintage vinyl, grades on the vinyl itself and not the cover, Drew is getting validation of his feelings on the subject. This kind of discourse of friendly debate and validation speech is how informal standards are set amongst a sub-culture. In the same way jargon develops out of necessity and repeated use, standards are also developed. As groups of record geeks move in and out of their overlapping social circles, they take with them the knowledge of what is accepted. If one person attempts of deviate from the established norms, they risk the disapproval of the community.

In Line #25, Drew asks if jazz musician Chico Hamilton is dead (he is actually alive and well and still touring at the time of publication). This “alive or dead” discourse is quite common amongst record geeks who listen to older records, many which were produced before they were even born. There is a tendency to either assume the visual image you are seeing on the record cover is how the person still looks, even if that picture was taken 50 years ago, or to assume anyone you’d be interesting in seeing perform is already dead. The alive or dead discourse is a way to solicit current information about an artist from the record geek community.

In line #54, Drew makes reference to a “High Fidelity” moment. This term can trace its roots back to the 2000 film based on a novel by Nick Hornby. Although the novel came out in 1995, it was the movie that reached the widest audience and created the popular phrase amongst record geeks. Many geeks hail the protagonist as the quintessential lovelorn record geek. The employees at the vintage record store he owns personify the obsessive nature of record geeks, especially those that work in record stores. Their “vinyl only”, purest attitudes do not always mix well with the c.d. listening general population of the world. Drew’s instance of absentmindedly grabbing a reissue to be in a photo with vintage record tourist and the disappointed response he received from the anal record staff is the perfect example of how detail oriented true collectors can be. As an article of record collectors in The Village Voice points out, “there are two types of vinyl shoppers: listeners and collectors” (Welch, April 2005).

Conclusion

Wherever you find subculture, you will find jargon. Because language so strongly relates to our culture, the two are inseparable. Edward Sapir once said that human beings are “very much at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society” (Bonvillian, 2003 pg 49). In the case of sub-cultural, I believe it is culture that becomes the driving force and the language develops as an expression of that sub-cultural. It is through the interaction of the participants of a developing sub-culture that jargon is born. For records geeks, jargon is an identifier; it can successfully help you determine the casual record shopper from the fellow fanatic. Jargon also acts as a social binder. By sharing their secret speech they are establishing legitimacy for their sub-cultural. Their shared lexicon separates them from a random group of similarly interested people and instead creates structure for their community. For the record geek, the sound of their shared secret speech is a warm sound.

Glossary

**Belt Drive**: Turntable driven by a belt powered pulley system as opposed to a direct drive system.

**Boot**: Slang for bootlegged material. Boot records are unauthorized records that were produced by a source other than the official record label.

**Cover**: The cardboard packaging that a record in contained it. The cover has the record’s artwork.

**Direct Drive**: Turntable driven by gears as opposed to a belt drive system.

**Dusty Groove**: An online buyer and seller of vinyl. Dusty Groove sells new reissues of records as well as selling original vintage copies of rare vinyl.

**Edition**: Each pressing run of a record is an edition. First editions are more valuable than a record’s subsequent editions.

**Grades**: The standard acceptable system by which record quality is judged.

**Mint**: A record in perfect condition with no flaws to the vinyl or record cover. Mint records may appear as if they were never played

**VG+**: A record that plays perfectly, but may contain a visual flaw to the vinyl or record cover

**VG**: A record that plays through entirely, but shows the signs of wear to the vinyl

**Good**: A record that plays but may contain surface noise and major flaws to the record cover such as writing or rips

**Fair**: A record that contain scratches and visible wear. Records in this condition may or may not play without skips.

**Poor**: A records whose audio and visual quality or lacking.

**Fusion**: Jazz with electric rock influences.

**Heavy Wax**: High quality vinyl which produces greater sound fidelity.

**High Fidelity (Hi-Fi)**: (1) The electronic reproduction of sound, especially from broadcast or recorded sources, with minimal distortion. (2) A novel by Nick Hornby turned motion picture in 2000 about the love life a 30-something year old musically obsessed vintage record store owner.

**Label**: The company that represents and distributes a recording artist.

**Mono**: A recording where the sound comes out of one or two speakers equally. There is no sound differential between the left or right speaker.
**Needle Drop:** The process of skimming the songs on a record by randomly dropping the needle at any point on the song. This gives the listener a general impression of a record without listening to it in its entirety.

**Quadraphonic (Quad):** A recording where the sound is broken up for a system that uses four speakers.

**rpm:** Rotation per minute. The standard speeds are 33rpm for a full album and 45rpm a single. Records before the 1950s were 78rpm.

**Seam splits:** The tears that can develop along the seams of a record cover.

**Sleeve:** The paper insert that protects the record when in its record cover.

**Spine:** Like a book, it is the thin back edge of a record cover. Spines usually have the name of the artist and album printed on it.

**Starter Copy:** An inexpensive record that you purchase regardless of its quality because you are unsure of the musician. If you discover that the record sounds good, a high quality replacement version can be purchased and the starter copy can be traded or passed along to a friend.

**Stereo:** Invented in the 1950s, its a recording where the sound is broken up for the left and right speaker.

**Stereo Jack’s:** A used and new record store in Boston, Massachusetts.

**Stylus:** The needle that picks up the vibrations that plays a record.

**Surface Noise:** A sound that a dirty record produces. Some records can be cleaned to reduce or eliminate surface noise, while other are plagued with surface noise because of wear and tear.

**Tone Arm:** The device that carried the vibrations for the stylus to the amplifier, thus creating sound.

**Virgin Vinyl:** The highest quality vinyl which produces the greatest sound fidelity. Special editions are pressed on virgin vinyl.

**Warm Sound:** The sound quality that music recorded on vinyl possesses. Record fanatics contend it is this warm sound that makes vinyl recordings superior.

**Wax:** slang for a record

**Wow and Flutter:** Wow refers to slow shifts in pitch (i.e. speed) and flutter to faster, vibrato like fluctuations.

**Wrecked:** A record that is so worn and scratched that it is unsalvageable.

**References**


Hornsby, Nick 1996 High Fidelity Riverhead Books


Welch, Will 2005 Unholy Trinity: Used Record Stores 3-Tier displays Village Voice, NYC April 28th
**Introduction**

Perhaps as a close friend to many New Yorkers, I feel the need to justify their speech patterns to all those out there who say they are the ones with the bad accents. This was a great opportunity to find out where it all came from: the dialects of my family, friends, neighbors and ancestors. Regardless of why I set out on this journey, what I came across was the intriguing evolution of New York City speech patterns from the colonization of North America to today. The terms “New York English” and “New York Dialect” are most certainly misnomers, but this is not obvious to many people. Through the years, Hollywood and the rest of the film industry have helped to create and maintain the stereotype of the New York Dialect for many people who may not have otherwise known what a native New Yorker sounds like. For instance, most American Mafia films (set in the 20th Century) show all of their characters speaking with these “classic” New York patterns. There is much more of a disparity between the New York City culture and the dialectal patterning within New York than one might think. African American New Yorkers tend to speak AAVE, while most Latinos speak their own ethnolect, and East or West Asian or Eastern European New Yorkers have their own recognizable speech patterns. Thus within the context of the city, the classic New York dialect marks a particular European American identity, one typically associated with people of working or middle class origins. This then, is an examination of the classic New York dialect that most people think of when the topic is breached.

**The beginnings**

Many people like to boast of their family lineage descending from the British, as their families were some of the original settlers of the New World. It is unlikely that these people have heard the way their relatives really spoke though, and when they do find out, it is common that they are not so proud of their heritage. This is all based on language ideologies that are created through time and only partially due to the dialectal patterns that were, and are still today, spoken by members of their family. For someone to assume that the original settlers were a group of only the stately upper crust of Britain who spoke the Queen’s English, they would also be mistaken, because this could not be further from the truth.

Prosperous English families stayed in England when the settlers migrated to the Americas, and the few families and individuals of English nobility who came to America stayed only a short time or returned to the British Isles during the Revolutionary period with the other Tories. This begs the question then, “Who were the people that really founded and built-up this nation? According to Brandes and Brewer, the majority of the English immigrants from whom Americans descended were “the dispossessed, the ignorant, the persecuted, and the discouraged” (1977). Though this does not speak so highly of our grandparents’ and their grandparents’ generations, that is not to say that all of the “ignorant and discouraged” came to America. Some of them absolutely must have stayed behind in good ol’ England – or Italy, or the myriad other places from which some might have traveled. Regardless, these new arrivals from England settled together and spoke the regional or class dialects of East Anglia, Essex, Sussex, Northumberland, and Yorkshire (Labov 1966).

The British elite did not hold the speech patterns of these areas in very high regard. Speakers of what were considered “lower class dialects” – as were the above mentioned – were typically an unwanted and underachieving group. Yet they had a noticeable and very large presence in Great Britain. Though life was different across the ocean, many standards for success remained in the cultural transmissions from Great Britain to the United States. On one hand, land and opportunity were plentiful, making it possible for anyone to quite literally go “from rags to riches.” However, in order to succeed or to move up the social class ladder in America, the British immigrant lower classes found it necessary to form speech patterns similar to those which were more widely accepted. Bonvillain notes it is common that less financially stable persons will imitate those more prosperous than themselves (2003:143-44). John Hancock, a perfect example, was the grandson of a poor preacher who, through worthy enterprising and efforts to mold his speech to match that of the upper class, became a millionaire. Those who wished to prosper took on the accent of people like Hancock rather than, what many believed to be the emerging British dialect of their abandoned homelands.
in Southern England to which they were not exposed (Brandes and Brewer 1977).

Although the original drift to a language or dialect that was similar to, but separate from RP in England was very gradual, it was noticeable as early as 1750. So, although Americans could import British clothing, furniture, and literature it was much more difficult to import members of the upper classes – much less to import the upper class British dialect. When new waves of immigrants swarmed to New York City from elsewhere in Europe, the original colonists with upper class or Queen's English dialects left the Big Apple and settled in the Boston region, where the dialect is spoken today by only a few elderly members of the community. The Queen's English, more properly termed Received Pronunciation (RP), is a form of English language pronunciation that is often defined as the “educated spoken English of southeastern England,” and is typically what is represented in the pronunciation schemes of most British Dictionaries. For many years RP was considered a mark of education and until only recently (the 1950s), it was expected of students attending University in England to modify their speech patterns to be closer to RP. Considering the small percentage of individuals who attended University and the expectations set upon them, one can see how this would bring about many elitist notions – most of which are still apparent today. Even now when traveling abroad, many Britons tend to modify their accents to make their pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar closer to RP or Standard English. To explain further, a basic outline of common vowel phonemes of RP is provided here (Pullum and Ladusaw 1986:260).

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Table 1.1

The spoken language of sophisticated England varied greatly from the spoken language of sophisticated America. Seen even in the way vowels are pronounced (if one were to compare Table 1.1 with Table 1.2 – American vowel phonemes). Compared to British English, American English is not conservative in its phonology, which is also due to the mixture of dialects that invaded America.

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Table 1.2

A contributor to this divergence was the snobbery that existed in and among groups of RP speakers, as well as the mocking made at the American dialect. As history exhibits however, it was the “unrefined,” nonstandard British dialects that were brought to America by the settlers, and which had a much greater contribution to standard American English. Several trends are evidenced by this.

First, fashionable British speech (not RP) began to adopt the phoneme [ɔ] in such words as caught, coffee, not, fought, awful, and caution; whereas fashionable English in America began to feature [a] in these same words (Brandes and Brewer 1977:55). Less fashionable sounds in England became fashionable sounds in the New World because of the upward mobility of England’s lower class in America. Dialects within the U.S. that have not conformed to this type of variance are sometimes considered less sophisticated than those that have. This brings us back to New York City.

Dialects in the United States are most distinctive along the East Coast since this area was in contact most with England and most citizens chose to imitate the elitist or prestigious variation of RP at the same time RP was undergoing changes. New Yorkers who say /bɔl/ (ball) and /kɔfi/ (coffee) may be generally considered unrefined or crude. This is remarkable since these are the very sounds in England that would increase one’s chances of being considered sophisticated or well-educated. Therefore, a child native to a New York neighborhood like the Bronx or Long Island would pronounce the name of the object she is found playing with in the street in a manner very similar to the way by which the royal family in England would – /bɔl/. Disregarding the aristocratic overtones of this child’s speech, a teacher of the inner-city will favor the American brand of [a] over the British [ɔ]. These two sounds are differentiated in a number of other situations and exacerbated in today’s pop-culture. For example, Hollywood has compelled Americans to expect all butlers to speak with an RP British accent and an audience would expect a British comedian to carry an American accent if he were to enter with a clothespin on his nose.

Regarding this subject of nasality though, it may be possible that this less fashionable American occurrence has a relation to the twang of much of rural England. Labov attributed this in particular to immigrants from the East Anglia region (1966). Colonists from areas where nasality was a firmly established part of their regional dialect carried this linguistic aspect with them as they entered the American coastal plain and spread throughout the country. It is possible that the prevalence of nasality in other locals of the United States, Chicago for example, is attributed to these same factors. The exact reason for widespread nasality in American speech is not fully known, but one can speculate that it began as the normal and usual speech patterns of immigrants from the above mentioned
Another popular facet of the New York Dialect is the tendency to drop the final /⁻g/ in words ending with consonant clusters like /⁻ing/. Though this is heard across the country today, especially among those belonging to generations under the age of thirty, it has long existed within many New York City dialects. When a New Yorker is overheard saying that she is /goĩn fopʰin/ (“going shopping”) the listener may assume laziness or carelessness – a common criticism of speech in many areas of the country and of many generations. Older generations already have many derogative things to say about “youngsters” who cannot pronounce their words correctly, but they could very well be misguided in their judgments here. New Yorkers and other Americans who pronounce singing as /sǐŋın/ do not purposely drop the final /⁻g/, but rather they may have never known any different because they inherited the loss from the English colonists (Labov, 1996). Shopkeepers, tradesmen, and civil servants in many of the country towns of England all use the same pronunciation. When these individuals came to America, they brought with them a pronunciation that is not only standard in New York City, but in at least two other major American dialects – Chicago and the southeastern United States (Brandes and Brewer, 1977).

Waves of immigration

The British upper and lower classes were not the only foreign populations to comprise what is now New York City. Starting in the early 19th Century, entire communities flocked to America escaping the pressures of over-population, religious zeal and persecution, and economic distress. Over time, New York City found that Italians, Irish, South Asian and African alike shared a desire to succeed, a love of adventure, and political ambition (Sontag, 1993). Any New Yorker can be proud of their heritage from these brave people who each contributed so greatly to the rich dialect that exists today.

Over four million Italians came to the United States between 1820 and 1930. Unbelievably, during these decades there were more Italians in New York than in Rome (Brandes and Brewer 1977:437)! Escaping the population explosion in Italy (27 million in 1871 to 34 million in 1905) immigrants came here evading feudalism, malaria and poor crop conditions. Italian families managed to stick together in the New World by recreating the strong family structure that they had used as security in Italy. They held secure but menial jobs as day laborers in the streets, on railroads and in the stockyards. Living conditions of Italians were poor and many people grew to be ashamed of their roots, which was only encouraged by American sentiments. Americans, who had immigrated to the country only fifty to one hundred years before the Italians, despised the newcomers. Therefore, to distance themselves from their Italian heritage, they chose to sacrifice their language. Many children of new Italian immigrants refused to learn Italian, sing Italian songs, or dress in traditional Italian fashion. This is interesting because, contrary to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis that language determines or influences thought and culture, even without the common use of their mother tongue, Italian traditions survived. Though they have become less and less traditional in America over time, even today one can see this in many Italian households. Close family ties play a large part retaining some of these Italian traditions and some dialectal features.

As Italian immigrants in America began to speak English, not all aspects of their native language were lost. Patterns of inflection, non-verbal characteristics (such as hand and body movements) and some vocabulary (mostly smaller words) remained. Among the Italian words brought to America by the immigrants were food names. Many of these are very familiar to all Americans: fettuccini, vermicelli, cappuccino and ravioli, among others. Any New Yorker will tell you that you have not had pizza until you have had /nu jɔk piˈʃA/ (Sealy 2005). Some might beg to differ of course, as many know that a much tastier breed of pizza exists in Chicago than in the Big Apple – this being a longstanding disagreement between the two cities. Aside from the limited vocabulary that was contributed to the English language, the Italians mostly influenced New York City with their pronunciation and inflection standards, as we find was the case with a number of immigrant groups (Brandes and Brewer 1977).

Another major contributor, for instance, was the Jewish immigrant population from Eastern and Central Europe. Upon their arrival, speakers of Yiddish spread throughout the city, setting up homesteads wherever they were able. Rebecca Zamrycki, a native of Long Island, notes that the common New York dialect also draws a lot from Yiddish. Not only has Yiddish influenced common dialect, but it has contributed hundreds of words and phrases like chutzpah (impudence), schlep (to carry), pastrami, nosh (snack), mavin (know-it-all), schnoz (nose), kibitz (to complain or to give unwanted advice), and meshugena (crazy person) (Zamrycki 2005). Phrases such as “All right already”, “Who needs it” and “Get lost” all owe their presence within New Yiddish coloring by what Leo Rosten calls ‘unusual word order’ /ʃʌk piʼt/ (Sealy 2005). Some also credits Yiddish with “blithe dismissal via repetition” – “Fatshmat, so long” (1993). Rosten also credits Yiddish with “hypothesis that language determines or influences thought and fashion. This is interesting because, contrary to the Sapir-Whorf
characteristic of New York speech today.

**Phonological hardships of /nu yɔk tɔk/ for immigrants**

The “th” phonemes, both voiced [θ] and unvoiced [ð], are classic examples of how immigrant speech has affected the New York dialect due to the lack of experience most foreigners had with the quirks of the English language. Immigrants came to the United States speaking languages that did not feature these sounds. They listened closely to the American pronunciation and tried their best to approximate the sounds they heard (Brandes and Brewer 1977:458). Frequently [t] or [d], and sometimes [r] was used to replace the [θ] and [ð] sounds as shown in Table 2.1.

![Table 2.1](image)

Other phonemes that were difficult for foreigners to learn were the clusters around [r] phonemes. There are at least three distinct [r] phonemes in New York City. The post-vocalic [r] as in “alarm,” “sharp,” and “mustard” is regularly omitted. The vowel that precedes [r] is often lengthened. For example, “that harp” is /fa:p/ (sharp) on /da/ last note” (Sealy 2005). In some areas of New York City, “the added length of the vowel may be the sole factor that distinguishes part from pot, dark from dock, and harp from hop” (Thomas 1958:88). The pronunciation, or lack thereof, of the post-vocalic [r], plays a vital role in mutual comprehension of New York City speak.

The pronunciation of the terminal [r], following a vowel is also omitted and is often replaced with the semivowel [j] causing air to be /ɛə/ and here to be /hɛə/. The terminal [r] will, however, be present if followed by a word beginning with a vowel, for example, “the /kæə/ is old” (Thomas 1958:88).

New York City English, as well as the English of many other big cities in America, features what has been called the intrusive [r], as it is inserted where most American dialects would not include it. It is also called the linking or liaison [r] because it breaks the hiatus between consecutive vowels (Thomas 1958:88). The intrusive [r] appears in such words as /dəaiʌ/, /a:dɪʌ/, /wʌtaʌ/, /soʔaʌ/ and even place names like /Afrikʌ/. Most frequently the intrusive [r] occurs when a word ending in a vowel is followed by a word beginning with a vowel – “The /soʔaʌ/ is pretty flat” (Brandes and Brewer 1977:459). A possible origin and a definite correlation for this unusual speech characteristic may have been pointed out by Thomas, who says, “The intrusive [r] of law and idea is common in the south of England…and in the New York City area” (1958:89).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-Vocalic</th>
<th>Terminal</th>
<th>Intrusive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/æla:m/ for alarm</td>
<td>/ɛə/ for air</td>
<td>/dəaiʌ/ for drawing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/mʌstəd/ for mustard</td>
<td>/hiʌ/ for here</td>
<td>/wʌtaʌ/ for water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/ʃa:p/ for sharp</td>
<td>/niʌ/ for near</td>
<td>/soʔaʌ/ for soda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2.2**

In November 1962, William Labov completed a study on employee dialects in the heart of New York City. He noted that “if any two sub-groups of (NYC) speakers are ranked on a scale of social stratification, then they will be ranked in the same order by their differential use of [r]” (1966:64). As his sample for the population, Labov selected three large department stores from the top, middle and bottom of the price and fashion scales. These three stores were Saks Fifth Avenue, Macy’s and S. Klein, which represented the upper class, middle class and working or lower class employees and customers. In what seemed like a very thorough and scientific approach, Labov had interviewers ask sales clerks at each store where women’s shoes were located, knowing very well that each of them would answer, “Fourth Floor.” Hearing this reply would allow him to record both the post-vocalic and terminal [r] in non-empthatic, naturally occurring speech (Bonvillain 2003:144). The results of the study showed clear and consistent stratification of [r] in the three stores, wherein thirty percent of Saks employees; twenty percent of Macy’s employees; and only four percent of S. Klein employees retained the post-vocalic and terminal [r] (see chart below). This is a clear example of how dialectal differences can exist within a single city.

There are four more phonemes in American English which are difficult for foreigners, since most languages lack one or more
A dialect in despair?

Of course, as stated previously, New Yorkers do not all speak alike; there are often great variations in the New York metropolitan area, as well as between those of different educational and cultural backgrounds. African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinos with high educational backgrounds speak without the discussed features of the New York dialect. Bonvillain (2003) mentions how social class differences play a major role in the way people speak and also influence their judgments of the speech of others (44). Revisiting the occurrence of the post-vocalic [r] for example, in careful contexts and when speakers are keenly aware of their own pronunciations, members of the lower middle class (LMC) use more [r] than upper middle class (UMC) members. Lower middle class and upper middle class refer to two social and economic class markers that classify a person higher than working class, but lower than the upper most social and economic classes within a given region. According to Labov, this “crossover” patterning shows that LMC speakers give more value to the pronunciation of [r] and are most sensitive to negative evaluations of their own speech, desiring only to achieve similar prestigious norms as that of the UMC (1966). This implies that social stigmas like dialect that might be attached to LMC speakers, very seriously impact the way LMC members view their world. Thus, language influences culture or identity. And unfortunately, because languages and dialects are in constant states of flux, no survey of them or complete picture of how they are viewed by members of society will ever be complete.

Due to generations of teachers banging rulers on desks at the sounds of /diz/, /dzm/ and /doz/, Sontag believes that the classic New York accent is beginning to fade (1993). William Labov noted that some New Yorkers will use [d] for [ð] in events where they are emotionally charged or excited, but when talking to teachers or reading aloud the [ð] returns (refer back to figure 1.1). “On the playgrounds and in the offices of daily New York life, the pungent dialect that brands New Yorkers in the popular American imagination seems to be fading into history (Hendrickson 1998:ix).

Because of the stigmas attached to the heavy New York dialect of the days of old, those looking to move up in the professional world are attempting to abandon their accent (Sontag 1993:1). Sontag also claims that once a New Yorker becomes upwardly mobile, his accent “tends to fade with time, self-consciousness and outside influences” (1993:2).

Just as immigrants tried to detach themselves from their native tongue when coming to this country, many New Yorkers today who consider themselves to be upwardly mobile are trying to erase features of dialect that are brought to their attention as being negative. Many children of immigrant families learn their English off of Television programs like Sesame Street (Sontag 3). It is still unclear as to whether a new citywide dialect will emerge or whether these young ones will gravitate towards the homogenized sounds of television. Brooklyn itself is now over seventy percent non-white and many researchers of the past have predicted correctly, as there is now a large influence of Spanish and African American Vernacular English on the City dialects.

While many New Yorkers climbing the social ladder have been known to hire voice coaches to help them get rid of the vulgar accent they have grown up with (as depicted in the film American Tongues), others admit that they like the flavor of the New York accent. These individuals are not willing to deny their origins by rejecting their native speech, but remain proud of their heritage and their dialects. Every time I hear someone with a New York accent, it reminds me that it is possible for sub-cultures to survive through time and through change. I may not be from New York City, but understanding the dialectal histories of Big Apple dwellers enables me to remind my friends and family of the rich background their speech has. Contrary to popular opinion, the New York dialect has grown and blossomed into a musical echo of the struggles of the original colonists and the contributions of immigration to the American English language.

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According to the United States Bureau of Census, the population of the country is close to three-hundred-million individuals (http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/popclock). With such a high number of individuals inhabiting the United States is it really a surprise that we have people from all walks of life?

No one is completely the same as far as personality and identity go; however, many individuals often attempt to homogenize themselves and try to fit into a specific category. This can be done linguistically, by taking on a jargon of a group, or by performing the identity the group associates with. “Identity may be claimed or distanced in particular contexts, at particular times, and for particular reasons” (Nichter, 140). During this process different groups are formed, made up of individuals with some major traits that are similar and from there assumptions are made about people who fit into these different groups. Many different stigmas are attached based on different aspects of a person’s identity.

Stereotypes have been formed over time. Some common stereotypes within linguistics can be discovered simply by asking individuals from different regions about their accents versus the accents of people from different regions. An example of this is that the accent of an individual from the southern United States makes him or her sound less intelligent. Another example is the accent of an individual from New York, whose accent makes him or her sound arrogant and snappy. A New Yorker and an individual from Boston can often sound very similar to someone who is not accustom to hearing either accent. It is subtle clues within the discourse that someone must be listening for in order to distinguish between the two. People will often emphasize certain linguistic characteristics around other individuals in order to emphasize a particular part of his or her identity that the listener can associate with in order to show solidarity with the listener. “A speaker may use the indexical value of language (cf. Ochs 1992) to ‘position’ (Davies and Harre 1990) the self within a particular identity at a particular interactional moment” (Barrett, 318).

Identity can be defined in many ways. People cannot define personal identity simply using one word; there are many different aspects that contribute to a person’s being. For example; I identify myself first and foremost as a woman, a daughter, student, and veterinary assistant. I more than likely would not initially describe myself to individuals, who I am not familiar with, as a smoker; however, I am. To a non-smoker the simply stated identity of being a smoker would say one thing: I participate in an activity that consumes large amounts of money and is detrimental to my health. To a smoker, there might be a lot more to it.

Smoking is a subculture. It is a group of people with different ideologies who share a common practice and bond. To take a microscopic view into a group of smokers you will find an eclectic group of individuals who identify with many different areas of life. To listen to and observe these individuals you can pick up on cues to their personal, more detailed lives. An example of one of these details is a person’s region of habitation and origin.

Just like any collective group of individuals there are certain aspects that are defined by regional boundaries. Within the English
language we hear differences in vocabulary and accent. This same idea can be observed within the smoking culture. There is a diverse difference in vocabulary and often a preference toward a particular brand of cigarette depending on where you are from. However, there are also similarities where ever you go, as within the English language. These similarities allow us to all understand one another, yet when observed closely we consciously and unconsciously make generalizations and categorize other individuals based on small linguistic and performed cues.

“Cigarettes serve as symbols as well as props that allow people to imagine as well as act out constantly varying roles on the stage of everyday life… while it is true that smokers may send messages through their tobacco use, most do not consciously or explicitly set out to send particular messages… [it is the] stage context in which smoking occurs, cultural meanings associated with tobacco, and processes of self expression which involve performance (Nichter, 143)

I have often gone outside for a cigarette break on campus and found someone else outside indulging in the same habit. If the individual is smoking Parliaments I will often not hesitate to strike up a conversation:

NL: Oh, I see you are smoking Parliaments, same as me…
F1: Yeah, this is my regular brand, but you don’t see many people smoking them around here.
NL: I hardly ever do… are you from the Northeast by any chance?
F1: Yup, Massachusetts, and you?

I am originally from New England and have found that there are certain brands of cigarettes preferred in the North that most individuals do not smoke down here in the South. When I speak to an individual smoking the same brand of cigarettes that I am, especially since it is a rare brand in this region, I often do not get any uncertain looks when I ask where the other individual smoking is from. Parliaments happen to be a cigarette smoked most heavily in the northeastern region of the United States while Marlboro cigarettes are smoked throughout the United States but generally have a higher prevalence in the southern/southwestern states, based on my own experience utilizing friends and students on campus for research. If I were to ask an individual smoking a Marlboro cigarette where he or she is from the person would probably be more curious as to why I am asking than if I ask someone smoking Parliaments.

In New England there is actually a hierarchy within the smoking subculture based on the brand of cigarette you smoke. Class is a very important aspect of identity in New England. Parliaments and Winston’s tend to be the preferred brands of cigarette. The name Parliament suggests power and status with European and “old world” ties; where as, there is a negative connotation placed on cigarettes such as Marlboro’s. They are referred to as “cowboy killers”. In the northeast the idea of southerners and southern traits is looked down upon. Many individuals feel that northerners are somewhat arrogant; they do have a very strong tie with the region that they are from, which can present itself in an arrogant way to outside individuals when listening to the discourse they take part in about their home region versus other regions. It is due to this stigma that the term “cowboy killer” would make Marlboro cigarettes a less valued brand. I had my own experience with this stigma a few years back before understanding how seriously the smoking hierarchy was taken in New England. No one ever warns you that certain brands are considered classier than others, you can only inference that certain cigarettes, say Dorals, are worse than others based on taste and the smooth nature (or lack thereof) of the drag. When I got up to New England I was smoking Marlboro Menthol Light cigarettes. I had been smoking this particular brand on and off for over a year and thought nothing of it, having lived in Florida for the previous five years. When a friend from Long Island pulled me aside one day to politely let me know that Marlboro Menthol Lights are “southern, white trash cigs” I was absolutely shocked, and slightly appalled, that someone could be so judgmental about something as trivial as a brand of cigarette. I started casually asking around about people’s ideologies towards cigarette brands. Sure enough the common mentality was that of the social hierarchy. Everyone had his or her own impression of what the particular brands signifies, some saying “trashy,” others specifying “white-trash,” and then the common “oh, cowboy killers, nah, I won’t smoke those.” The hierarchy is so strong that certain brands often are not even acknowledged. The following is a recent conversation with a third year Boston University student who has been smoking approximately a pack a day for over four years.

NL: So what do you think of Dorals?
N1: Oh my God, I’ve never even heard of them before!

After thinking this may have been just an accident, I decided I needed further investigation. I spoke to a friend from southern New Hampshire who is a social smoker, but has multiple regularly smoking friends:

NL: What do you think of the cigarette brand Dorals?
N2: I’ve never heard of a brand Doral… that doesn’t even sound like anything English people would say.
NL: And why do you say that?
N2: *unintelligible* because I can’t pronounce it! [voice gets lower]
God, Naomi, you sound so southern when you say that… please don’t talk like that…

NL: Why do you think I sound southern…?
N2: It’s the way you say Doraaaallll… you draw it out at the end, long and slow… You should say it DOral. [voice gets higher] You need to come back up here to New England so we can fix you!

Final conversation with another southern New Hampshire native who has been a regular smoker for five years:

N3: Dorals? Oh, yeah, it’s a brand of cigarettes… they are disgusting though, wicked cheap.

When speaking with a Floridian the hierarchy is much less noticeable. Even a nonsmoker is aware of the brands sold:

NL: Have you heard of the brand of cigs: Dorals?
F2: Yeah… it’s a teal and white box.

Florida is made up of people from all over the United States and other countries. Due to such a mixture of individuals who have been born and/or raised in other areas there is no particular pattern or preference within the state.

Nonsmokers are often familiar with many of the more common terms used within the smoking culture; however, there are those few that only smokers use. Often, if a smoker does not come from a particular region, he or she may not even be familiar with the particular terms used in the region. Some terminology does overlap; as there are a few nationwide terms that are commonly used that translate all over. Some of these terms are cigarette, cig, and smoke. Other terms can trace an individual back to a certain region, like someone saying “wicked” might be pinpointed as being from Boston. An example of this is in Florida you are more likely to hear: cancer-stick or grit; where as, in the North you might hear: butt or ciggy. A popular term for cigarettes in England is “fag”. The English term being used in the United States might be found offensive and problematic with the negative connotation and derogatory meaning attached to the particular word.

A very important aspect of an individual’s identity is gender. “It can be assumed that female and male identities develop and change throughout life and that individuals at different stages have different ways of expressing and negotiating both personal and social gender identity” (Rugkasa et al, 308). Smoking can take on a significant role in the establishment of gender. Smoking is often considered a masculine hobby and a “dirty” habit. Females who engage in this habit must; therefore, assert their femininity when surrounded by males. “There is an inherent gender dimension to smoking and that boys and girls may think, feel and act differently in relation to smoking” (Rugkasa et al, 307). When there is a coed group of smokers present some of the common aspects of male and female linguistic discourse are present, such as women using hedges or tag questions. “Tags may most often function as a device to engage in another conversation… women are more concerned with social interaction and work harder to keep it going” (Philips, 534). Women “use more ‘hypercorrect’ grammar, so that they [are] less likely than men to say ain’t and to drop off the ends of words” (Philips, 532). Men are more likely to interrupt in a male female interaction.

F3 (male): How ya doin’ darlin’?
NL (female): Oh, wait; you need a lighter, don’t you? [Hands the lighter over, with no thank you or acknowledgement from the male party]
NL (female): Maybe I am hungry-
F3 (male): [interrupting loudly] SO, the concert was amazing!

A conversation with all female smokers is much different. All the females are on the same level and readily interrupt each other. The tag questions are almost nonexistent. When females are out together on a smoke break the conversation is rapid and continuous. The tone is very informal and the topics vary from boyfriends and clothes to politics and religion. The atmosphere is very relaxed as long as the females are all familiar with each other. Since the females are together without the influence of the males there is no reason for an overt display of femininity on their behalf. However, if a female is smoking by herself and another female approaches her that she does not know and begins a conversation, the female smoking will take on a formal conversational tone. If the newly introduced female lights up a cigarette the tone will drop to a slightly less formal mode. An initial bond has been formed and the female smoking knows she will not be judged. Males generally do not have this type of attitude. They often use an informal tone with everyone, even strangers. However, it is more likely that females will approach one another, even as strangers, and begin a conversation. Females are more willing to attempt social contact than males are. Since smoking is often a social activity women are constantly seeking social partners while smoking. When at my apartment I bring my cell phone outside while I smoke so that I may talk on the phone. Very often my female friends who live far away will call me and ask if I would like to take a cigarette break with them via the phone. We are not in physical contact, but we still must have some form of social contact while smoking. Men do not feel this need and it is very rare that any of my male friends that smoke will call anyone while smoking a cigarette. Often if they are already on the phone they will light up a cigarette, but unlike women, they do not go out to smoke a cigarette with the intention of talking on the phone while they do so. Women, including myself,
will often talk on the phone just for the length of time it takes to smoke the cigarette. This occurs in person too, outside of class a conversation between individuals might last only the length of time of the cigarette and then in an unspoken agreement the cigarettes are put out and the individuals will carry on their separate ways.

When trying to acquire a cigarette the approaches taken differ between men and women. Most men will say “can I bum a smoke?” which is very informal and unapologetic for what equates with burning your money. A woman; however, will approach with a guilty look upon her face, slightly hesitant, and ask quietly and in a high pitched tone something to this degree:

“I’m so sorry, but could I possibly get a cigarette…[individual giving out the cigarette begins to pull out his or her pack] I ran out of cigarettes this morning and I just never got a chance to run to the store because I was already running late and I had an exam… I’m just so stressed [cigarette is being lighted]. Oh, you don’t know how much I really appreciate this. Thanks so much, I feel so much better.”

The female individual is much more apologetic about her request. She launches into a long explanation about why should could not obtain cigarettes earlier at the store. She also indicates that cigarettes are her way of relieving stress. This is a commonality in female smoking. “Women frequently explain that they use cigarettes as a coping mechanism when facing difficult life events…stress” (Rugkasa et al, 309). Men often do not feel the need to justify their smoking habits. Women may feel that:

“Putting one’s health (and family budget) at risk may be seen as inconsistent with [domestic responsibilities as a woman] and therefore [is] in need of justification… if talking about smoking and explaining why one smokes is seen as ‘feminine’… boys may be reluctant to avail themselves of this rhetoric device… this may explain why…male adult smoking… was not explained in such depth” (Rugkasa et al, 314).

Due to the fact that female smokers are seen as somewhat deviant, participating in a masculine habit that may cause them to stray from their domestic responsibilities, we often find that female smokers are identified as “fun loving and more likely to be rule breakers” (Johnson et al, 387). Female smokers are more liberal than female nonsmokers; however, they are still susceptible to the same insecurities as other women in the United States. “There are more teenage girls smoking in America than teenage boys… they also smoke because they want to watch their weight. Tobacco is an appetite suppressant and also increases a person’s metabolism” (El-Bayoumi, 187-188).

Smoking is so ingrained in an individual’s lifestyle that when a person is trying to quit, he or she often has to distance him or herself from certain friends. If a particular friend smokes it is difficult to spend time with that person, because he or she may be a heavy influence to begin smoking again. One friend in Tallahassee attempts to quit every time she goes back up to Florida State because she has less friends up there that smoke; when she is in Tampa so much of her social life revolves around smoking individuals that it is inevitable that she will smoke too. The social identity of an individual shifts when trying to release oneself from the smoking identity, and a new group must be found to associate with.

All humans have an identity. What makes up that identity takes on multiple different forms. Within the smoking culture it is possible to see the different aspects of identity through language and symbolism. Femininity when in the presence of males is emphasized due to the stigma attached to smoking. With males present in a group of smokers it is possible to see the true contrast between what our society denotes as feminine and masculine behavior. We also can see the difference between same sex interactions when an individual is previously unknown. Though many smokers feel that they are easier to approach because they participate in a highly social activity, we can still see the initial hesitation of strangers. Once the initial common bond, smoking, is established the verbal and non-verbal language is much more friendly and relaxed. Although people may not necessarily be proud of their identity as a smoker, it is an important aspect of who one is, whether he or she knows it or not. It is difficult to see all the attributions smoking has to building a person’s identity until you look closely at the actions of a smoker, once you do the image is clear. Part of the identity of a smoker involves gender and ethnic or regional ties, which present themselves through the language used in conversations between smokers and subtle clues in performance. Each characteristic of a person’s identity is in itself an important attribute to what makes up a particular individual.

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El-Bayoumi, Jehan

Johnson Joy L, Lovato Chris Y, Maggi Stefania, Ratner Pamela, Shoveller
I have been a cigarette smoker for four of my twenty-two years of life. Much like other smokers, I started because my friends smoked. However, I didn’t start because of peer pressure; I started because my friends enjoyed smoking. I managed to quit for three years, surprisingly easily. Quitting was easy the first time because I started hanging out with a new group of friends, and none of them smoked. Without anyone to enjoy a cigarette with me, smoking seemed less appealing. I started smoking again because I moved in with two smokers, both of whom would take smoke breaks outside together. I felt left out. I thought to myself, “What are they talking about and I want to be part of it.” Even today, three years later, I smoke less when I’m by myself or around non-smokers and more when I’m with other smokers. For me, smoking is a very social practice.

For the paper, I will use ‘smoker’ as defined by Princeton’s online Wordnet 2.0 Search, “(a) tobacco user -- (a person who smokes tobacco)” (2005). I will also use Karl G. Heider’s definition of a subculture: “(a) convenient and nonderogatory way to refer to various cultural patterns shared by smaller numbers of people within a broader culture (2004:46).” I believe that smokers do in fact make up a subculture within the United States. I will discuss my methodology and conflicts encountered during data collection, reasons why I believe that smokers are a subculture, and give ethnographic examples. I believe that there are many influences, other than those of chemical addiction, that influence a smoker’s behavior; some of them being the non-smoking laws that have been passed and the use of cigarettes as a social tool.

For my data collection I used observation at the University of South Florida, Four Green Fields (a small bar frequented by locals of the neighborhood) in Hyde Park, Florida, and the Plaza in Santa Fe, New Mexico. I used participant observation and a voice recorder to tape conversations at the University of South Florida, Four Green Fields in Hyde Park, Florida, Gray’s College Bookstore™ in Tampa, Florida, the Sleeping Dog (a bar) in the Plaza of Santa Fe, New Mexico, and the Albuquerque airport. I have carried my tape recorder with me for the last two months with the intention of recording conversations of smokers. However, much to my surprise about 25% of my recordings were serendipitous in that I was talking with smokers not intending to collect data and got some of my best discourse.

After choosing the topic of smokers as a subculture, I was surprised to find out that there is not a lot of published literature about the topic. This was my first obstacle with the research. While recording, I was met with much enthusiasm from other smokers. I would briefly explain my hypothesis for my research paper, and the smokers would volunteer their ideas and opinions about the subject. It was very easy to collect data, because smokers tend to gather in defined areas and tend to be very social, both of which will be discussed further in the paper.

The second problem I encountered while doing my research was during the data collection process: the amount of smoking I did. As I previously mentioned, I tend to smoke more when I’m around other smokers, and for this reason, I became less enthused...
about data collection about two weeks into it and did less.

The laws that have been passed restricting smokers from smoking inside office buildings, schools, restaurants and various other public places made the air inside the buildings cleaner and safer for everyone to breathe. However, the laws did more than provide a healthier environment, the laws led to the creation of defined spaces for smokers to smoke in public. The defined spaces are signified by ashtrays. Most public buildings now accommodate smokers by providing ashtrays outside for people to put out their cigarettes. While it is not illegal to smoke outside and away from the ashtrays, most smokers tend to congregate in the near vicinity of the ashtrays. I've witnessed this all over the University of South Florida campus, at Gray’s College Bookstore™ and a park in the Plaza in Santa Fe.

While it does appear common for Americans that are defined by spaces to strike up casual conversations with strangers, I have observed that smokers tend to congregate in larger groups, thus leading to casual conversations amongst more strangers. The strangers that one smokes with may become friends after a few smoke breaks, if the strangers continue to take smoke breaks at the same time. Take the example of myself and a few other anthropology undergraduates at the University of South Florida. I started this semester without very many friends in the department. I would go outside of the Social Science building to smoke, either between classes or during breaks from class. I continually saw the same students outside and continually engaged in idle chat for weeks. Now, I must point out, some (but not all) of the students were in my classes as well, so we had more than smoking in common. The weeks of idle chat turned into friendly conversation and 16 weeks later, I consider my smoking buddies to be friends.

The laws passed banning smoking from inside buildings have done more than lead smokers to smoke outside in defined spaces. Another result of the laws has been for smokers to provide a healthier environment, the laws led to the creation of defined spaces for smokers to smoke in public. The defined spaces are signified by ashtrays. Most public buildings now accommodate smokers by providing ashtrays outside for people to put out their cigarettes. While it is not illegal to smoke outside and away from the ashtrays, most smokers tend to congregate in the near vicinity of the ashtrays. I've witnessed this all over the University of South Florida campus, at Gray’s College Bookstore™ and a park in the Plaza in Santa Fe.

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The excuse to go outside and smoke makes private conversations easier to have. Non-smokers do not appear to have a discreet way to remove themselves from the group to converse privately.

Another interesting point to smokers taking a smoke break together, friends or strangers, is the length of the conversation. Smokers that are breaking, be it to get away from whatever they are doing or to converse, appear to regulate the length of their conversations by the time it takes to smoke a cigarette. From what I have observed, it takes most smokers five to six minutes to smoke. When the last smoker of the group is finished with their cigarettes, the group seems to take it as a cue to get back to whatever they were doing prior to smoking. If the smokers want to break longer or converse more, then one or more will hold their pack of cigarettes in their hands or sometimes ask if anyone wants to smoke another. It appears that the end of a cigarette signifies the end of the break or conversation. The length of conversation and the signal of the conversation being over, with the putting out of a cigarette, is a cue that most non-smokers do not appear to understand. While I was collecting data, I experienced as well as witnessed conversations with non-smokers where the last cigarette was put out and the non-smoker appeared slightly confused when everyone walked away without announcing they were walking away.

Another aspect that appears to be common to most smokers is that smokers do not like to smoke alone. This is perhaps why strangers that smoke in defined areas strike up a conversation, although I think that the conversations between strangers in defined spaces are not unique to smokers. Smoking gives smokers an opportunity to meet other people easily because they are constantly moving to defined spaces. In every place that I observed the activities of smokers, someone that wanted to smoke would ask another smoker if they wanted to go outside with them. A lot of smokers admit that they do not like to smoke alone. I believe this is the case for a few reasons. The first reason is that smokers know that a smoke break has potential for good conversation. The second reason is that if more than one smoker is going out on a smoke break the other smokers know they miss out on something being discussed. It appears that non-smokers do not realize what smokers talk about on breaks and they do not know that they are missing out on anything. The third reason is that smoking in groups gives the smokers power. Smokers are a stigmatized group in America because second hand smoke is a very dangerous and pollutant. It is very common for a non-smoker to discriminate openly against someone that is smoking. However, if there is a group of smokers, there is less of a chance for discrimination.

Smoking also gives smokers a way to pass time. While walking around the University of South Florida’s Tampa campus, I noticed a lot of people sitting by themselves. People who were not smoking were preoccupied doing something to pass the time. Most students were reading, listening to music, writing, or most popularly talking on their cell phone. Sitting and waiting is usually an awkward situation, what do you do with yourself? Smokers have the option of smoking to occupy themselves while waiting 1.
The identity of a smoker is very interesting. Smokers tend to only identify as a smoker while around other smokers. Being a smoker certainly gives the smoker an association with the larger population of smokers, but this identification only appears to be important when the smoker is around other smokers, or potentially when a smoker is around non-smokers and wants to smoke. Most smokers appear to be both social and generous. The generosity is demonstrated in part by an important part of smoking culture, “cigarette karma”. Cigarette karma is giving (or as a smoker would say, “bumming”) a cigarette to a smoker that does not have any cigarettes, and thereby justifying asking someone else for a cigarette when you are out of smokes (cigarettes). Another aspect of cigarette karma that is interesting, yet usually not talked about, is that the receiver of the free cigarette usually hangs out with the giver of the cigarette for the time span of smoking. If someone asks for a cigarette, gets one, and walks away, the giver usually is confused. The receiver owes the giver five to six minutes of conversation in exchange for a cigarette. This exchange is also seen when someone asks for the use of a lighter, but to a lesser extent.

Smoking gives smokers a chance to converse with other smokers which, if the smoker is a social person, also gives them a chance to participate in an activity they would enjoy. Also, by smoking, a smoker can keep up with the gossip of what’s going on in school or work or get the inside information at work. If a smoker stops smoking, they will face the difficulties of overcoming nicotine addiction. However, there are many potential social factors to face as well. A smoker trying to quit smoking will have to find another place to take a break at, another way to get the gossip or confidential information shared at school or work, and another way to pass the time.

In conclusion, I believe that smokers create a subculture in America because they are a small, somewhat stigmatized group of people that can identify with other smokers. The bond that smokers have with each other is reiterated through bumming cigarettes to another smoker that is out of smokes, conversing with strangers and passing time together. Moreover, smoking can be viewed as a social tool in that it gives smokers a way to meet other smokers, have an excuse to take a break, converse privately, or to pass the time. All of the aforementioned topics can be combined to explain the culture of smokers. Smoking clearly has a chemical dependency to smoking. However, after doing my research, I have found that smokers may have an equal dependency to the social aspects of smoking.

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1 See Appendix A, Conversation A for discourse example.
2 See Appendix A, Conversation B for discourse example.
3 See Appendix A, Conversation C for discourse example.
Jen: Do you think it is easier... when you’re uncomfortable, to talk to other people who are smoking? Or does it really not matter?
Dave: Doesn’t matter #.

Conversation B
This is a conversation that took place at Four Green Fields on March 30, 2005 between me and Michael around 8:30 p.m. I approached Michael because he was sitting outside on a picnic table smoking with a friend. The conversation was about smoking, this is one small segment.

Michael: ... What I was saying was I smoked for uh years. And than I quit for ten years, but the first six months when I quit, .. before.. we used to always go out on the balcony and smoke. And I’ve always been in management, so what I learned more about the people who were working with me, was the inside track, what was going on.. cause you know, when you’re out there smoking a cigarette, the conversation is like meaningless. <And> when I say meaningless.. it’s it’s not like anyone is trying to hit you up for information because you’re a manager or whatever the case may be... they’re just talking at random. You really start to understand the grass roots of what’s going on in the business # <Secondly>, it’s <nice> to have <that> conversation. But when I quit it was like... <I have all this time on my hands, .. I’m not out there doing this uh..conversation of <grassroots> what’s going on> It’s different. ... It’s very different.

Jen: So you got to know the people that were uh, .. not management more on a <personal level>?
Michael: - Absolutely.. <Absolutely>
Michael: Because they’ll say more on a smoke break than they’ll ever say .. you know.. inside the building.
Jen: Because you’re more of an equal on a smoke break #
Michael: Right.

Conversation C
This is a later segment of the same conversation as seen in conversation B.

Michael: Right now, .. I have a peer in management.. .. and the both of us, the only time we get to talk about strategy is when we go out and have a cigarette. #### Because in the building we’re constantly slammed with projects and issues going on.. it’s like... I do one of these (holds two fingers to lips to signify a cigarette break) and she says okay! And in that 15-20 minutes we get more accomplished that we do in four hours in the building.

POWER AND SANITY IN PSYCHIATIC DISCOURSE

Amy Lawrence
Department of Anthropology
USF Undergraduate Junior
Major: Anthropology

“‘If there’s no meaning in it,’ said the King, ‘that saves a world of trouble, you know, as we needn’t try to find any. And yet I don’t know,’ he went on, spreading out the verses on his knee, and looking at them with one eye; ‘I seem to see some meaning in them, after all.’”
--Lewis Carroll, in Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland (p. 94)

It is tacitly understood that language use is more often than not crucial to diagnosing schizophrenia, but many of the studies have failed to bring to light the exact nature of if and/or how language can be used to understand schizophrenia. My interest is in expanding this concept to include cultural meaning: how can psychiatric discourse analysis be used to understand the socio-cultural phenomenon of schizophrenia, and by extension, all mental illnesses?

The overall purpose of this paper is to examine meaning in two ways: power through symbolic dominance and sanity through differences, as presented in Susan Gal’s article “Language, gender and power: An anthropological view”. In researching this paper, I had difficulty in finding the approach that could facilitate the issues I wanted to present. Although Gal’s article is about examining gender relations through the contrasting means of symbolic power and differences, I find that there are correlations between feminist discourse and psychiatric discourse. Gal asserts:

“First, in all feminist scholarship an initial and often remedial focus on women – their roles and stereotypes – has been replaced by a more sophisticated notion of gender as a system of relationships between women and men... A second source of coherence within feminist discourse has been the continuing argument about the relative importance, in our understanding of gender relations, of difference – between women and men, and among women – as opposed to dominance and power.” (158)

The parallels, as I see them, are primarily that the perception of mental illness has been shifting from a role within the larger framework of disability, to a system of relationships between the powerful and the powerless, as emphasized in the structure of
doctor/patient interviews; and that concurrent to this, a linguistic focus has been on the variations or differences between the speech of mental illnesses, and among the mentally ill. I believe that the discourse of the mentally ill has been viewed similarly as the discourse of women—as a complement or reaction to the speech of authority, which in gendered terms is male, and in psychiatric terms, the sanity found in the psychiatric institution.

Psychiatric interviews offer a unique way to explore both of these issues, as power is inherent in the structure of the interview, and a dialectic basis for studying the relationship between the powerful and the powerless appear in the same discourse. On the other hand, differences between the speech acts of the doctor and the speech acts of the patient can easily be explored as well. Gal’s assertion that “indeed sometimes a speaker’s utterances create her or his identity” (154) provokes a different meaning within the context of mental illness. In an interview between a doctor and a patient for physical illnesses, the patient is able to speak or communicate what the problems are—what hurts, how often, etc. Opposed to this, are the psychiatric interviews where often the patient cannot clearly define what ails them, and the doctor must make a diagnosis on the basis of the appearance of the speech itself. In this way, patients are not actively evolving an identity as in the case with a physical illness, but are instead, having an identity of a diagnosis ascribed to them, often without the dynamic cooperation of the patient.

Examining this latter aspect, larger and more fundamental issues come to the foreground. What exactly are the differences between the speech of the psychiatrist and the speech of a person with a diagnosable mental illness? Several studies have taken to explore the speech of the mentally ill to see what makes the speech different. I propose to look at ‘difference’ in another way. Rather than to just look at cohesive, or lexical differences in the structure of their language, I think alternate significance can be found if we look at the differences in how the doctor defines meaning in the patient’s speech, and how might culture define it. It is useful to look at meaning within a structuralist framework, but it is also useful to abolish that framework, and look at meaning in a way that excludes the larger, overarching institutions. If one wants to look at the meaning and influence of institutions within culture, taking the speech out of the institution that perhaps formed it would be irresponsible and neglectful to say the least. My aim, however, is to look at the meaning in speech through a semiotic, cultural analysis, and to examine what differences emerge.

Reflecting this bivalent approach, the paper is in two parts, each seeking to interpret cultural meaning through a different framework focusing on topic. The goal of the first part is to look at how power is represented in the discourse by the structural means of the doctor/patient interview, and topic control. The goal of the second part is to look at the cultural meanings that appear through semiotic analysis of the presented topics, and to examine how this relates to understanding the language of schizophrenia and sanity.

Overview of Schizophrenia

In a booklet produced by the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI), and published on their self-named website, schizophrenia is explained as being “a serious medical illness that affects about two million Americans today. Although it is often feared and misunderstood, schizophrenia is actually a highly treatable disorder of the brain.” (1) The shift from a mysterious and baffling mental illness to a medical illness is important to understanding the illness itself, its connection to language, and how it is viewed in society.

The genesis of schizophrenia as a medical illness began in the early 1900’s, with Emil Kraeplin. As Harrow and Quinlan explain in their introduction to Disordered Thinking and Schizophrenic Psychopathology, “early classification of psychiatric illnesses completed a century-long movement to take disordered ‘mental’ behavior out of the spiritual realm into the medical.” He distinguished between two sets of symptomatology or psychoses: one set presented a progressively downward pattern, while the other set presented a circular pattern of relapses and recoveries. The first set, which he termed dementia praecox, was considered to be of genetic origin and therefore incurable by means of medications. (7)

In the mid 1950’s, Eugen Bleuler expounded on the symptomatology noted by Kraeplin and coined the term ‘schizophrenia,’ meaning “splitting of the mind” to replace dementia praecox (Ribiero 28), indicating a split from reason to non-reason, or sanity to insanity. He organized the prominent symptoms into four categories: affect [mood or emotion], association, autism, and ambivalence, and believed that the “weakening of associative links” conjoined with “affective deterioration” was the cause of the other symptomatologies of delusions and hallucinations. The weakening and interrelationship of these psychological elements of mental functions became the backdrop for formulating the nature of thought disorders, particularly in schizophrenia. (Harrow and Quinlan 8)

The connection between schizophrenia and language (see Kasanin 1964 for further reading), other than noticing nonsensical utterances, seemed to first become explicit after attention turned from ‘thought’ to the process of ‘thinking’. As Harrow and Quinlan explain: “another thrust in the early work on thinking disorder was to view schizophrenic thinking as the outcome of a different
use of language…this position and a number of other positions based on the study of the meaning of schizophrenics’ speech and behavior can lead to the view that the disordered productions have meaning…which, if understood, would make schizophrenic thinking intelligible.” (8)

This hypothesis, albeit in a slightly altered form, is the primary motivation for this paper. More hypotheses and theories have since been developed for thought disorders (see Harrow and Quinlan 1985), and several studies have been conducted, spanning from psychiatry to psycholinguistics (see Darby 1981, and Rochester and Martin 1979), but it is the focus of meaning through language in the above hypothesis that is central to the position of this paper.

Methodology

In Missouri, approximately 1993, an interview between a young male psychiatrist and an elderly woman diagnosed with both schizophrenia and thought disorder was videotaped. The purpose of the videotape was to show the presentations of various classic symptoms of schizophrenia, and to instruct viewers (primarily students) proper interviewing techniques. I acquired this videotape from a local community mental health facility where I have worked for the past two years, which uses it to train screeners who help interview potential clients for admission into the facility. The videotape consists of two parts, the first being the actual interview, which lasts approximately 10 minutes. The second part, which lasts approximately 15 minutes, is a group discussion of the patient and schizophrenia. The methodology centers on discourse analysis of the videotape, which has been fully transcribed*.

Part One: Power and Symbolic Domination

Explaining symbolic dominance, Gal says:

“In familiar, classic cases of symbolic domination, some linguistic strategies, variant, or genres are more highly valued and carry more authority than others (e.g. Bourdieu 1977; Lears 1985). But respected, authoritative linguistic practices are not simply forms: they also deliver or enact characteristic cultural definitions of social life. When these definitions are embodied in divisions of labor and in social institutions such as schools, they serve the interests of some groups better than others. It is through dominant linguistic practices…that speakers within institutions such as schools impose on others their group’s definition of events, people, actions. This ability to make others accept and enact one’s representation of the world is another powerful aspect of symbolic domination.” (157)

Interviews, dominant linguistic forms, are clearly a means for examining how social dominance constructs and maintains meaning. As a doctor within a broader institution, he is able to impose his definitions of reality upon the patient, and enact social judgment. The primary evidence of this symbolic domination is topic control through the question/answer structure of the doctor/patient interview.

What is interesting to note is that although most of the Doctor’s requests for information appear in question format, his tone was difficult to capture in the transcript because more often than not, his questions sounded like statements. This difficulty in reflecting this ambiguity is reflected in the difficulty of conceptualizing ‘questions’ and ‘answers’. Candace West, in her essay “Ask me no more questions…” tackles this by pointing out on page 79 that “in doctor-patient exchanges, for example, queries may be intoned as assertions…And answers may display question-intonational contours…Hence, there seem to be no ironclad intonational rules for differentiating questions from other types of utterances” and that “As if these conceptual problems with ‘questions’ were not sufficient to discourage potential analysis, Schlegoff and Sacks (1973) contend that the case for ‘answers’ is still more obscure. They note, for example, that purely linguistic criteria (semantics, syntax, phonology, etc) offer no equivocal way to establish an utterance as an ‘answer’ to a question.”

Despite these ambiguities, there really is no ambiguity with the structure of a face-to-face interview in which one person seeks information from another. In Marianne A. Paget’s essay “On the Work of Talk: Studies in Misunderstandings,” she asserts that “talk, when it is serious rather than causal, is as much as it is anything at all a labor of understanding, or listening and interpreting, or clarifying and acknowledging what has been said, and responding.” (72). Taking this into account, I interpreted the structure of Q & A upon this seriousness of talk, and where I found ambiguity, aligned the request for information (whether it sounded as a statement or otherwise) as a question. This type of force into a form is more apparent with the answers that the patient gives. In many cases, her answers do not appear to definitively satisfy the question, but to maintain the integrity of the form of interview, and I took any information she gave to be an answer to the question. Indeed, a similar social type of forcing into a rational form may account for the discrepancies of meaning in psychotic speech in the broader, social sense.

Paget reveals the “pattern” of the interview as being under the control of the doctor “for he continuously directs their talk. Through questions and other ‘requests’ for action, and sometimes through commands, he introduces, develops, and dissolves discourse topics. (Questions are, in fact ‘requests’ for action. They are used to carry on interactional activities, such as clarifying, assessing, complaining, and explaining.)” (57).
Paget is speaking of interviews by which information for physical illnesses is sought, but the interviews between a psychiatrist and patient parallel this. Instead of looking for information to supply a physical diagnosis, the psychiatrist is seeking out information that would support a psychiatric diagnosis. In the schizophrenia video, the doctor is hunting for specific information that can be interpreted in the framework of the criteria for schizophrenia, and undoubtedly controls the flow of topics through means of questions and commands:

(03) Dr: What went on..that you ended up coming to the hospital?
(14) Dr: Can you say a little something about the eagle?
(21) Dr: …Say something more about…the relationship between GM and the eagle.

The framework for topics can be broken down to this: opening of the interview—how she came into the hospital, the relationship between GM and the eagle (delusion), her relationship to Jesus (delusion), whether or not there were messages, or signals that came to her from the radio or television (hallucinations), her mood—whether or not she’s been sad (to rule out bipolar), if her mood was ever euphoric (to rule out bipolar), what she did after high school (background, fits with structure of doctor/patient interview), what year she had her first hospitalization (background), whether or not she has had fun since her first hospitalization (function), what happened to the things she used to do (to show decline in function), and dissolves the interview by thanking her for it.

The patient’s ability to relate answers to the doctor’s questions come in two forms: answers that do not appear to have any semantic content that relates to the question, and unwillingness to supply whatever information he seems to be seeking. The following excerpts from the discourse illustrate this.

(28) Dr: Okay. And is the eagle s-something that…is looking out after you, or is there the chance the eagle could hurt you?
(30) Pt: Well there there’ll be four (<before?>) on the clock…that’s the uh six seven eight nine ten eleven twelve one two and three = they go by those numbers of the clock
[mhm] and when you do the twenty-five after that’s the after sign of the clock.

In this first excerpt, the doctor asks a specific topical question, trying to establish or clarify the nature of the eagle—is it protective, or is it harmful? The patient appears to answer in that her utterances are consequential to the speech of the doctor, yet the meaning of her speech is unclear. The ambiguity in her speech is not merely semantic, but phonetic. Five words into her answer is a word that could potentially be either ‘be four’ or ‘before’ (30), and examining the rest of the context provides no clue as to which she intends. Judging by her preoccupation with the numbers on the clock, and her conflation of identity with these numbers, ‘be four’ makes more semantic sense than ‘before’, despite the disparity of the semantic content of her answer and the information the Doctor was seeking. Ambiguity is also evident by her use of ‘they,’ whose plural form does not match the singular form of ‘eagle’ that was formed in the doctor’s question. It is unclear, then, if she is referring to the eagle, multiple eagles, or something different altogether.

This second excerpt illustrates her unwillingness to answer some questions at all:

(43) Dr: I’m wondering though whether…these kinds of experiences that you have are really unique to you. Whether there is something about your relationship with Jesus [‘hhh] or whether this is the kind of relationship that other people may be having too.
(47) Pt: Well u::h=
(48) Dr: =What’s your personal feeling about that?
(49) Pt: Well..uh-I-I-I’m not don’t like to judge anybody=

In this excerpt it is clear that the patient understands that the doctor is requesting information from her. This is notable, though I am unsure if she understands the request because she understands the structure of the interview (the system of turn-taking) that she most certainly has ample experience with, or because she semantically is on the same page as the doctor. Further in this discourse she does appear to provide an answer to his question:

(53) Pt: I knew know know that us to have that uh money that Jesus helps you with it [mhm] so uh I just trusted in Jesus to to help me..with that twenty-five I [‘hhh] answered all of his messages.

In this answer, the patient has herself introduced the topic of money, and repeats the emphasis of the ‘twenty-five’. She goes on further to tell the doctor how she had “bought notebook paper and I uh..wrote down the time..and what I heard..in a sentence.” (lines 55-57) This response to the doctor affords him an opportunity to change the topic to one he has more understanding of:

(59) Dr: Pt are any of your thoughts or actions controlled by Jesus..or General Motors..or any of these forces?

Examining his topic shift reveals why he is asking this question, and why he does not seek clarification for her unrelated
answer. Her response about writing down the messages from Jesus contained no information on which he could base his diagnosis for schizophrenia. Bringing in the issue of ‘control’ clearly is related to Criterion A specified in the DSM-IV: “Delusions that express a loss of control over mind or body are generally considered to be bizarre; these include a person’s belief that...his or her body or actions are being acted on or manipulated by some outside force (“delusions of control”)” (299). With this maneuvering, it is apparent that the doctor is shifting the topic to one that has meaning for him, even though it may or may not be something the patient wants to express. In this case, symbolic domination is apparent in that he is imposing psychiatric, institutional meaning upon her speech that she plainly doesn’t understand. She responds:

(61) Pt: I was ge-getting uh messages around the clock=

The doctor attempts a request for clarification by interrupting her with “from” to keep the focus on the possibility that Jesus might be controlling her through these messages. The patient remains focused on the issue that she deems relevant:

(63) Pt: =from Jesus, even twelve o’clock at night. If I heard something in the alley [mhm] if I heard dogs barking I would get up and I would look at the clock [’hhh] and I would write that down what time I heard the dog [mhm] just so I’d let Jesus know that I’m answering him.

From this response, and her slight acceleration of speech, it can be interpreted that she has to either justify that even though she isn’t being controlled (in reference to his question), that she is still doing something important, or that she simply wants to relate something that she finds important to herself. The first possibility seems likely, but it is contingent on whether she can somehow sense there is an importance or urgency to the doctor’s question, or some meaning wherein judgment might be the result. Potential judgment by the viewers is implicit with her awareness of the camera that is recording their speech, and is evidenced by her statement at the end: “I hope I did all right.” (line 158). This is unclear, but it is arguable that she does sense that there is a different intent behind this question than the one that opened the interview.

The symbolic dominance is also evident in pauses. The majority of his “mhm’s” interrupt the patient’s speech, yet each time it occurs she pauses just long enough for the whole utterance to be heard, and then continues her sentence. There are also numerous times that he interrupts her with questions for clarification, which she allows in the same manner. The moment he speaks, she acknowledges his dominance by ceasing her own speech and waiting for him to complete it. I tried to reflect this in the transcription by including his insertions where it appears in her sentences. It is indicative of her understanding of her own subordinate role in the institutional framework.

Part Two: Difference

Keeping the structure of serious talk in which there is an exchange of information, and a “labor of understanding,” (Paget 57), but dissolving the structure of the interview, allows the possibility for a semiotic, cultural analysis of meaning that differs from the meaning imposed by the mental health institution. This type of analysis, however, has numerous setbacks. Primarily, it is subjective and cannot be tested, and the framework is wholly at the discretion of the author, which may or may not be accurate, while certainly not objective. Despite these failings, however, I believe it is important to look at other complementary possibilities of meaning in psychotic discourse. It is my opinion that there is a fundamental need to occasionally question the tenets of any institution. In this case, the power that is associated with psychiatry and the broader institution of mental health is increasing. Concurrently, the relationship between the general population and the mentally ill appears to be worsening. This dates back to the dissolution of the asylums and state hospitals of the past thirty years, and the integration of the mentally ill into the community of the general population. For this reason, examining the power involved, and the means by which power is given, accepted, and reflected in the language, is paramount to understanding a burgeoning crisis that is affecting millions of people.

However, behind the idea of power and symbolic domination is an even more basic issue: how does society define sanity? What is the causal relationship between the institution that defines sanity, the power the institution wields over the mentally ill, and the meaning of ‘craziness’ that allows for the power of the institution? How can we examine these issues?

In my opinion, these reasons justify a subjective, semiotic analysis. Concrete evidence in language that supports the existence of power can be supplied through sociolinguistic studies in an objective manner, but it fails to acknowledge the more dynamic role that culture plays on effecting meaning. Although I am not
purely objective, I am undeniably a part of that culture.

Looking at topic control, away from the interview structure, reveals an interesting inversion. Whereas before, the doctor clearly had control over the agenda, the doctor in this case is clearly dependent upon the patient, who I will refer to now as Edna. Her speech revolves primarily around four subjects: Jesus, the eagle, General Motors, and the clock. All other speech is contingent upon this, whether it is the relationship or an action by one of them. There are a few occasions when the doctor asks her about her background and mood, and her response to these subjects are notable. The questions about her background are easily and relevantly answered. For example:

(100) Dr: What did you do right after high school?
(101) Pt: ...I went to business school and I uh took a course in typing.
(102) Dr: mhm.
(103) Pt: [\textquoteleft;h\textquoteright;h] And uh...I went to Missouri state employment.. and I took a typing test there and I passed it [mhm] and they

And:

(127) Dr: Okay. Can you tell me us what was the first time you that you had uh a psychiatric hospitalization=what year was that?
(130) Pt: That was in 1975.

The questions about her mood appear to confuse her, as examined above, and shown in this excerpt:

(149) Dr: Did you did you feel depressed at that time? [Pt: we: ll uh]=Have you been able to enjoy yourself at all since 1990=have fun?
(151) Pt: Well, I-I-I think I spent all my time writing messages with Jesus so he kept so he would keep giving me messages.

In both situations, her speech is marked by longer pauses, more hesitation, more syntactical confusion and repair. She also requires more prompting or encouragement from the doctor since she also volunteers less information on her own. Contrasting to this is her speech when it is about any of the four primary subjects. In those cases, her speech is fairly lengthy, there are not as many pauses except to allow the doctor to interrupt, and there are more occurrences of very audible inhalations. There is also more semantic confusion, which prompts the doctor to ask questions that could clarify her meaning, but overall her speech is quicker, and prompt.

What this seems to indicate is when a topic is relevant or meaningful to her. When the doctor requests information that doesn’t appear relevant to what she is saying, she grows more cautious and hesitant, often drawing her words out (“I h:eard...” line 78) as though she were trying to find meaning in his question. When it comes to Jesus, the eagle, the clock, or GM, she appears to be comfortable speaking about them, and it is here that she evinces some sort of control of the conversation. The doctor supports the development of these subjects by asking questions, but his role is limited to the timing of when she introduces the subjects. In the beginning he states that they have had numerous conversation (lines 1-2), and it can be safely assumed that he was already familiar with her symptoms, however he himself does not bring up any of these four topics until she does—and then it is only for clarification.

Looking at their conversation from this perspective, it is ironic that his persistent questions about her mood and background provoke confusion, and her speech about the four topics seems to reflect more personal meaning for her. This is a clear inverse of the prior framework in which any speech about the four topics provoked confusion in him, leading him to a diagnosis of schizophrenia.

The appearance of personal, relevant meaning concerning Jesus, the eagle, General Motors, and the clock could be reflective of her schizophrenia, as the psychiatrist no doubt thought. Could there be a larger meaning to them? It is notable that all four subjects are also potent images or symbols in a cultural sense. The importance of Jesus in our society is a well known cultural fact, and I need not expound on that too much. The concept or image of Jesus or God in any form has been inculcated into the very foundation of our society. Churches abound in every neighborhood; there are numerous religious television shows, well known films have been made (The Last Temptation of Christ, Passion of the Christ to name a few), crosses and crucifixion in the form of jewelry, quotes about faith are on bumper stickers—there are no areas of our lives that have not been affected by religion or the image of God. The interesting aspect of Edna’s speech, however, is her connection of Jesus with money:

(53) Pt: I knew know know that uh to have that uh money that Jesus helps you with it [mhm] so uh I just trusted in Jesus to help me..with that

The apparent incoherence of this segment has been discussed earlier when it was used to illustrate the meaningless quality it held for the doctor. In this semiotic context, however, these lines reveal extreme cultural significance. Every piece of currency, paper or metal, issued by the United States has a very similar line inscribed somewhere on it: “In God We Trust”. Edna’s connection of money, trust, and Jesus, held no significance or meaning in the psychiatric framework, but in the semiotic has high import. It reveals a keen economical, historical, and social awareness, albeit somewhat literal. Our culture is deeply influenced by the capitalist economy, and the protestant ethic the nation was founded upon. This has
resulted in an implicit connection between money and the trust in God to provide it, a connection that is more often than not forgotten or taken for granted.

The topics of the eagle and GM are related. The eagle is a strong image, and a curious one in that it is symbolic of the United States. The eagle is represented everywhere in connection to this, and also appears on money. Edna makes a perceptive correlation between the eagle and General Motors:

(15) Pt: Well the the ea-eagle works through General Motors—they have something to do...['hhh] with my General Motors check I get every month.

Her belief that the eagle works through General Motors and has something to do with her check is, again, astute. Here she is acknowledging a link that many sane Americans acknowledge: the influence of the government on the corporations. Edna expresses the ability of the eagle to know certain things (lines 25-27) and this could be an inference to the branches of government that were developed to do exactly that: the FBI, the CIA, the police, etc. It is extremely interesting that in most of the paranoid, non-bizarre delusions that these ‘forces’ are the dominant factor of control or persecution. To generalize, it is essentially authority, or power that people have a fear of. This relationship, while culturally apparent, confounds the psychiatrist who cannot understand the meaning of it and must ask for clarification.

Last, is the topic of the clock. We find clocks everywhere, and culturally, our lives are rigidly regimented by time. What time television programs are on, what time children have to go to bed, what time people have to be at work, when did something happen, how long ago, what time to meet, etc—time is even more prevalent than Jesus, or God. In a sense, despite being an amorphous concept, it is the major controlling factor in our lives. It dictates when people carry out business, when we can drink—the list is endless. Edna’s dependence on time may be nothing more than a reflection of society’s dependence on time.

In this framework, Edna’s speech appears meaningful and sane, and the doctor’s irrelevant. What is the meaning of this? Why is there this difference? Culturally, words such as “crazy”, “mad[ness]”, and “insane” have taken on idiomatic meaning. In any social situation, within random speech these words will appear to connote anything that either does not make sense (how could that happen? That’s crazy!), or seemingly impossible to believe (I can’t believe she did that—that’s insane!). These words have become so ingrained in our society that they appear, conveying the same meaning, within television shows, talk shows, and films. The definitions that society has attributed to craziness directly reflect the definitions of the mental health institution, just translated in colloquial form. Things that don’t make sense, or seem impossible are labeled in institutional jargon as being incoherent, disorganized, a delusion or hallucination. Is this because there really are no differences in perception, or is it because the effects of symbolic domination are much greater than we think: “This ability to make others accept and exact one’s representation of the world is another powerful aspect of symbolic domination” (Gal 157).

Conclusion

I believe that there is much more work to be done in this area. The incongruity of meaning in the two frameworks, one institutional and the other semiotic, is blatant and shouldn’t be ignored. It could be argued that I have reduced down the patients’ speech too far in order to find the smallest elements over which I could stretch cultural meaning. In linguistic terms, every word can be reduced down to the smallest elements that carry meaning, called morphemes. Is this semiotic process of uncovering basic elements of meaning in discourse so different from that? Should any meaning at all in psychotic speech be ignored because it doesn’t fit within the institutional guidelines for what makes sense?

These two frameworks are complementary and interactive. The meaning of power and sanity are inextricably linked. They each show elements that the other doesn’t, and should be integrated to find the overarching meaning—both within the discourse and within the culture that produced it. There are greater philosophical implications that often get overlooked in the running of daily lives, and there aren’t many psychiatrists or otherwise that think about the social consequences of insanity, despite their contributions in enforcing them. Ultimately, the mental health institution is buttressed by the authority of the court system that legally owns the power to take away civil rights. In this way the mental health institution differs little from the correctional institution: both seek to isolate others for the greater good of society, and act to confine them within the more insidious and boundless institution of “proper” or “appropriate” behavior and thought. What underlines this power is the given authority of the institutions to define what is improper and what is inappropriate. What underlines that power is ultimately the fear and contempt the greater part of society holds for anyone ‘different’ from them—whether they are “criminals” or “insane”. What is seen more often that not is a conflation of these two terms in which the criminals are insane and the insane are criminals. (see lines 204-205 to for an acknowledgement of this in the transcript.)

It was not the scope of this paper to criticize or say
that either framework is correct or wrong at the exclusion of
the other, but rather to enforce that just looking at one side is
insufficient to understand these systems of meaning. How useful
this kind of framework integration proves remains to be seen.

Appendix A

Transcription Convention (based on conventions by Branca Telles
Ribeiro, 1994 who had based her conventions on Tannen, 1984)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>symbol</th>
<th>meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>..</td>
<td>noticeable pause or break in rhythm (one count)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>approximate pause or break (two counts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>approximate pause or break of more than two counts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>glottal sound, or abrupt cutting off of sound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>:</td>
<td>lengthened sound (extra colons indicate greater length)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>=</td>
<td>two utterances linked by = indicate no break in speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/soft/</td>
<td>words spoken softly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(?)</td>
<td>words unintelligible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>['hhh]</td>
<td>audible inhalations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[acc]</td>
<td>spoken with increased speed, shown over the line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[dec]</td>
<td>spoken with decreased speed, shown over the line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[nonverbal]</td>
<td>gestures, expressions, movements, etc</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[mhm]</td>
<td>inserted within speech shows overlapping or slight break at that point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key To Speakers:
Dr: Doctor
Pt: Patient (replaces the name of the patient, for the most part)

Transcript

Training Video: Schizophrenia

Dr: Good morning ['hhh] and uh...you and I have had plenty of
chance to have conversations before, but this is our first one
['hhh] uh on video. What went on...that you ended up coming
into the hospital?

Pt: ['hhh] Well uh...Jesus was giving me all these crack=window4
cracking uh..uh screen..crack sounds...['hhh] telling me that
they they was going to break into the house ['hhh] so I put the
<camerastereo?> in the room where they <tiddle?> the window
lock to come through the window. [mhm] and the <cam-
camsterio?> uh the security guards picked that up [mhm] the
message. By putting that camera in that room.

Dr: Mhm. Were you in danger?

Pt: Well uh if anyone gets into the house they said I’d I’d get shot

Dr: Who said?

Pt: That—that’s the eagle.

Dr: Can you say a little something about the eagle?

Pt: Well the the ea-eagle works through General Motors=they have
something to do...['hhh] uh with my General Motors check I get
every month.

Dr: Mhm. And you get that check..because it’s part of uh your
husband’s work with GM?

Pt: Yes.

Dr: ...Say something more about..the relationship between GM
and the eagle.

Pt: Well uh they—when you do the twenty-five of the clock ['hhh] it
means that you leave the house ['hhh] twenty-five after one to mail
letters so that ['hhh] they can check on you what what how you’re
mailing...the mail ['hhh] and they know where you’re at...that time.
[Dr: and who is that?] That’s the eagle.

Dr: Okay. And is the eagle s-something that...is looking out after
you, or is there the chance the eagle could hurt you?

Pt: Well there there’ll be four (<before?>) on the clock...that’s the uh
six seven eight nine eleven twelve one two and three=they go
by those numbers of the clock [mhm] and when you do the twenty-
five after that’s the after sign of the clock. We go by the one two
three four five [mhm] of the clock [mhm]. And the five you go
right left to seven number on the clock is is the fire number=you
go right left to that number. That’s what the twenty-five is. If you
don’t do something they tell you to do then uh...['hhh]Jesus makes
the shotgun sound and then the phone-phone rang not to answer the
phone or the doorbell

Dr: Why not?

Pt: Because you’d get shot.

Dr: Who would do the shooting?

Pt: The eagle.

Dr: I’m wondering though whether...these kinds of experiences
that you have are really unique to you. Whether there is something
special about your relationship with Jesus ['hhh] or whether this is
the kind of relationship that other people may be having too.

Pt: Well uh...h

Dr: =What’s your personal feeling about that?

Pt: =I know. I know I’m asking you a tough question. And and I don’t
want to put you in the position of feeling that you have to brag or or
put anybody else down=do you think Jesus answers just anybody’s
request?

Pt: I knew know know that uh to have that uh money that Jesus helps
you with it [mhm] so uh I just trusted in Jesus to to help me...with
that twenty-five I ['hhh] answered all of his messages. I we-went and
uh...bought notebook paper and I uh..wrote down the
time..and what I heard..in a sentence. [mhm] That that so that Jesus
keeps-kept answering my messages.

Pt: Dr are any of your thoughts or actions controlled by Jesus...or
General Motors...or any of these forces?

Pt: I was ge-getting uh messages around the clock=

Dr: =from=

Pt: From Jesus, even twelve o’clock at night. If I heard something in
the alley [mhm] if I heard dogs barking I would get up and I woul
d look at the clock ['hhh] and I would write that down what time
I heard the dog [mhm] just so I’d let Jesus know that’t I’m answering
him.

Dr: Now, have you ever had the experience where you heard
['hhh] beside the noises around the house=have you ever
had the experience where you heard the radio or the television..
talking and you..realize that there was a message on there meant
for you?...Kind of another signal for you.

Pt: Yes. Uh I had mentioned mentioned uh...to a nurse I was t a l k i n g
to...that I need ought to get a guard dog.../when I go home./

Dr: Mhm.

Pt: And uh=

Dr: =now say why that is.

Pt: Well and then on the news uh...I heard that a guard dog killed a
child [mhm]just the other day [mhm] and they put the
Dr: Okay. Pt, in 1975 when you got hospitalized, in your
I was busy helping them with their work.
Pt: No because my children were going to school and
messages or these signals and you involving with Jesus
Dr: Okay. But at that time were you getting these
Pt: That was in 1975.
Dr: Okay. Can you tell me what was the first time
Pt: [‘hhh] Go left.
I’ll try to help you out.
Mom I don’t want to go there and I said well, [‘hhh] I’ll
going on, [‘hhh] were you feeling particularly (pumped?)
you know euphoric...or high?
Pt: Uh… I was so busy answering Jesus message around the clock.
Dr: What did you do right after high school?
Pt: …I went to Business school and I uh took a course in typing.
Dr: Mhm. Did you go back to work after this ki-uh after the
children were older?
Pt: No uh… then my uh… husband died in 1985.
Dr: Mhm mmhm
Pt: And my son was being graduated from 8th grade when he died.
Dr: How did you uh do shopping for groceries for example?
Pt: Well um …they said said uh...my son does the
grocery shopping [mmhm] and uh... if he doesn’t do the
grocery shopping the house goes to uh me and my granddaughter.
Dr: Mhm. So that’s really a requirement for him=
Pt: =yes=
Dr: =that he does that=
Pt: =due on the twenty-five of the clock.
Dr: Okay. Well he has to stick to that timing, too?
Pt: Well he’s the before (be four?), [mmhm] but he he uh believes in Jesus also [mmhm] and he he told me he said uh [‘hhh]
Mom I don’t want to go there and I said well, [‘hhh] I’ll
I’ll try to help you out.
Dr: Go where?
Pt: [‘hhh] Go left.
Dr: Okay. Can you tell me uh what was the first time
you that you had uh a psychiatric hospitalization=what
year was that?
Pt: That was in 1975.
Dr: Okay. But at that time were you getting these
messages or these signals and you involving with Jesus
Pt: No because my uh...children were going to school and
I was I was busy helping them with their work.
Dr: Okay. Pt, in 1975 when you got hospitalized, in your
[acc]
Pt: I hope I did all right.
Dr: =Yeah, okay. Pt I want to thank you very much.
Have you been able to enjoy yourself at all since 1990=have
fun?
Pt: Yeah.
Dr: Did you did you feel depressed at that time? [Pt: we’ll uh]
Have you been able to enjoy yourself at all since 1990=have
fun?
Pt: Well, I-I-I think I spent all my time writing messages with
Jesus so he kept so he would keep giving me messages.
Dr: Mhm. Did you go back to work after this ki-uh after the
children were older?
Pt: No uh… then my uh… husband died in 1985.
Dr: Mhm mmhm
Pt: And my son was being graduated from 8th grade when he died.
Dr: How did you uh do shopping for groceries for example?
Pt: Well um …they said said uh...my son does the
grocery shopping [mmhm] and uh... if he doesn’t do the
grocery shopping the house goes to uh me and my granddaughter.
Dr: Mhm. So that’s really a requirement for him=
Pt: =yes=
Dr: =that he does that=
Pt: =due on the twenty-five of the clock.
[acc]
Pt: I think Jesus was sending a message to me.
Dr: =Yeah=what did you think about that?
Pt: Yeah.
Dr: Did you did you feel depressed at that time? [Pt: we’ll uh]
How do you feel now, in terms of your mood? Are
you sad now?
Pt: No no because I don’t hear the crack sounds no more.
Dr: Mhm. How do you feel now, in terms of your mood? Are
you sad now?
Pt: Yeah.
Dr: =Okay=
Pt: =due on the twenty-five of the clock.
[smiling]
Dr: Mhm. Right. [‘hhh] I think you also mentioned your in-laws
had-had moved in [Pt: yeah] and uh that was also stress.
Pt: Yeah.
Dr: Did you did you feel depressed at that time? [Pt: we’ll uh]
PT: Well uh…you really don’t have no fun when you
have Thorazine [mmhm] because my son was two years old and uh
a child can get on your nerves when they climb and want to get
into everything. [mmhm] And then I had uh... cope cope with the
teachers at uh school for=they wanted me to help my child with
homework [mmhm] and then my son was two years old he
was getting into everything you know. [‘hhh] That kept me busy
[acc]
Pt: =due on the twenty-five of the clock.
[smiling]
Pt: I want to thank you very much.
[silence]
Dr: Mhm. Did you go back to work after this ki-uh after the
children were older?
Pt: No uh… then my uh… husband died in 1985.
Dr: Mhm mmhm
Pt: And my son was being graduated from 8th grade when he died.
Dr: How did you uh do shopping for groceries for example?
Pt: Well um …they said said uh...my son does the
grocery shopping [mmhm] and uh... if he doesn’t do the
grocery shopping the house goes to uh me and my granddaughter.
Dr: Mhm. So that’s really a requirement for him=
Pt: =yes=
Dr: =that he does that=
Pt: =due on the twenty-five of the clock.
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When I began writing this, I began very seriously with the intention of producing a strictly academic work. Unfortunately, I feel that that would be a falsity because this is a subject close to my heart. This is part of my search to understand more of my own heritage and I cannot pretend detachment. I will discuss the reasons for this later on, but I could not write on this subject as though I were some how disembodied from it. The subject of this paper is a review and analysis of the various methods that the Cherokee have used toward language preservation and revitalization. I also hope to be able to say something of the efficacy of these various methods. I believe that preservation and revitalization are terms that go hand in hand when discussing a group whose language loss is an intended result of a dominate group’s acculturative machinations. My personal reasons aside, I think that the Cherokee present a poignant example this situation. Due to time and contact constrains, I based much of this article on printed and official Cherokee Nation electronic sources and I feel fortunate to have such a wealth of information available to me.

A Woman and a Reason

Now is a good time to retell my family story that serves as the greatest impetus for this article. My great-grandmother, Mayre Perkins Oliver, is a Cherokee woman or was until she passed on. I am lucky to have known her for the first seven years of my life for she was one of the best people that I have had the great fortune to know. When she was quite young, her new husband brought her back to Louisiana from the reservation in Oklahoma. He forbade her all expression of her native heritage so she never had a chance to pass it on to her own children. He passed away some time before I was born and afterward she felt that now she might have a chance to express herself. However, her family then served as a limiting factor for reasons I have never fully understood. Still, sometimes she would tell the great-grandchildren stories that she would preface by saying that they were from when she was little. At one point, she even gave me a set of records and books on the Cherokee language, which I was quite interested in. My grandmother, her eldest daughter, apparently saw no purpose in my learning the language. She tells me that she saw no use in it and I would likely lose or ruin them anyway. These materials disappeared. At the time, she may have thought it was no good or pointless for me but I am lucky. She has changed her mind, given my field of study, and now fully supports my desire to reacquaint myself with the culture. She is even searching for the records that she hid away from me. She has enlisted an aunt’s help in finding them and promises to persist even though I will not have them to reference in this article. I am proud that she is coming around in her old age. The family is even meeting with lost family members and registering family members who wish to. What a wonderful turn of events!

What is in a name?

Now, I would like to point out something about the Cherokee. The name Cherokee is the just the English name for these people. Several theories of where the name came from say that it was what another tribe called the Cherokee, which may have meant “people of a different tongue” (The Cherokee Nation 2005). It is believed that the original name was either “anigaduwagi, or Kituwha people”
or anitsalagi, meaning Cherokee people (The Cherokee Nation 2005). Today, Tsalagi (Cherokee) is still in use but they also call themselves “aniywiya, meaning the Real People” (The Cherokee Nation 2005). Different groups have called the Cherokee a variety of names. The Spanish name is Chalaque, the French name is Nation du Chien and the Muskogee name for the Cherokee is Gatohuáby. I am reporting all of this just for background and because I think that it is interesting to note. It is not unusual that a Native Nation is known to the world by a name other than the one that they gave themselves. All of this information is from the official Cherokee Nation website, which has proven to be an invaluable source. It contains a variety of information and since it is officially sanctioned by the tribe, it has become my favorite and primary source.

“Talking Leaves”

In talking about the actual language, I will begin with a bit of history. The Cherokee Language, of course, predates European contact but the written language does not. That they did have one is a fable almost as popular as the ‘Cherokee Princess’ stories. The truth of the matter is that Sequoyah, also known as George Guess or Gist, was impressed with white man’s way of recording information on “talking leaves” (Broekhuizen 2000: 15) and wanted provide his people with all of the benefits that he saw in written language (The Cherokee Nation 2005). He completed the syllabary of 86 letters in 1821 after many difficult years of work (Yamamoto 2002: Appendix A2). The difficulty existed not just in single-handedly creating a written language, but also with other Cherokee. They saw writing as evil and his work as that of the devil (The Cherokee Nations 2005). This is a time before the Trail of Tears, when the Cherokee were still in their eastern homeland. They were considered one of the Five Civilized Tribes because they adjusted to many aspects of ‘white’ culture in an effort to preserve and prosper their people. I do not feel amiss in suggesting that Sequoyah’s efforts may also have been to help preserve the culture. He piloted the syllabary with his own daughter and by all accounts, she learned it swiftly as did many after her (Walker 1993: 71). Later the syllabary was adjusted, if not greatly distorted by mission worker Worcester, for the purposes of creating typeset for the missionary’s printing press (Walker 1993). This development allowed the New Testament to be translated to Cherokee and allowed for the creation of the Cherokee Phoenix, which is their newspaper (The Cherokee Nation 2005). This newspaper was and still is written in Cherokee and English. There is now and online version of this paper which I have availed myself to many time during my research.

The educational effects of the development of the syllabary are many. To be sure, many Cherokee had learned to speak English and other surrounding languages but most did not understand what was written. Within a decade or so, many knew the language because the people had only to learn the syllabary symbols to know what was written (Yamamoto 2002). I was not able to learn anything about a grammar to go with the syllabary so I must assume that aspect depended on previous knowledge and home teaching. With this timeless tool, they would have been able to record innumerable pieces of cultural importance but I had a hard time finding concrete evidence of this from this time period other than references to 1800’s information and traditional stories. One detail that I think is particularly amazing is that by the late 1800s, 90% of the Cherokee population were literate in their own language and many were fluent orally and literally in both English and Cherokee (Yamamoto 2002). This is more than could be said for most white Americans of the time.

Moving on

In the early part of the 1800s, some Cherokee began to move West on their own like Sequoyah who went to Arkansas. In 1838 to 1839, the Trail of Tears occurred and many thousands of Cherokee were forced to move to Oklahoma Indian Territory (Yamamoto 2002). Some stayed behind thanks to many sacrifices and there are now three divisions of the Cherokee Nation. However, for the Oklahoma contingent, this hardship was followed by flourishing. For about 17 years, the Cherokee were left alone in their new country. (Yamamoto 2002). They built many schools and a co-ed seminary (Yamamoto 2002). The Christian influence remained but as some of my past teachers have noted, you will find Christian evangelists in even the most remote regions. The Oklahoma Cherokee built a variety of other institutions and seemed to do well. The American Civil War was the beginning of the end. Land control and allotment acts were only the first renewed attempts to conform the Cherokee population. In 1880, the Quakers began a boarding school for Cherokee children. Little is said about this period of the boarding schools but in 1892 the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) took over (Beck 2003). Much like the boarding schools discussed in respect to other native groups, this period of BIA control, from the 1892 until 1933, was a time of intense acculturative initiatives on the part of the American government (Beck 2003). The schools were ‘English only’ and taught little male and female Cherokee children how to properly live and perform appropriate tasks such as farming and construction for the boys and sewing and housework for the girls (Beck 2003). Much like the school that Bonnie Heavy Runner discussed, the schools were self-sufficient with the students’ day divided between indoctrination and manual labor (Greymorning 2004). The girls even worked in the homes of nearby townsfolk as vocational preparation (Beck 2003). One non-scholarly source
placed the boarding schools at fault for an 80% decline in Cherokee language proficiency, but the official Cherokee Web site notes only the fact without any specific decline statistic. It is sufficient to say that the current state of the language is about two generations from extinction without help.

Learning Toys
I have already discussed two forms of language preservation, creation of the syllabary and the record/book set. Of course, the people themselves are the greatest source of language preservation and all that I have read discusses how the people have worked to keep the language in practice. However, as Greymorning and Basso show us, native cultures have not been totally resistant to the various assimilation influences that surround them (2004; 1996). Basso talked about how not all parents are teaching their children the Apache Native Language and most of the children would rather play video games than learn place-names (1996). I am sure that this is a common development but tribes are also using the media to preserve and revitalize the language. WorldLanguages.com, Barnes and Noble and the language section of Cherokee.org all show a host of ways that computer software, tapes, books, CDs and online-based courses are being used to promote and revitalize the Cherokee language. There are also reading toys that use Cherokee language to help the children learn (Bennett 2001). All of these products are similar to those available to learn almost any other language. The online and software programs generally have a self-assessment portion but unfortunately, I cannot quantify the efficacy of these programs. Most of the information that I found was concerned with current methods being utilized by the Cherokee Nation today.

Start Talking
What I have seen of the efforts of the Cherokee Nation to preserve and revitalize their language is immensely encouraging and a little awe-inspiring. The current focus seems to be the Immersion Schools, called “Tsa-la-gi A-ge-yu-I”, which are currently in place for pre-kindergarten three and four year olds and kindergarten-aged children (Cherokee Nation 2005, Yamamoto 2002). They intend to continue developing immersion classes for the successive grades , and since the report I am referencing is about three years old, it is possible that further implementation has occurred. I know that the classes that Yamamoto reports on are based in Lost City, Oklahoma but they are trying to establish a network with schools in outlying, rural regions (The Cherokee Nation 2005). These immersion classes are based on the Hawaiian system and were directly assisted by its creators (Cherokee Phoenix 2004: 7). As in the Hawaiian Language immersion program, the program is taught in Cherokee only, the parents are active in the program and a variety of activities are conducted to fully stimulate the children to learn in their own language (Hotz 2000; Yamamoto 2002; Peter, et al 2003). Activities include singing in Cherokee, crafts, field trips to special community events and summer camp (The Cherokee Nation 2005). Their primary goal is to nurture the Cherokee tongue in the minds of these children (Peter, et al 2003). Not that literacy is unimportant but literacy is second to the ability to speak the language in this case. However, by kindergarten, the children are capable of reading the syllabary and reading in Cherokee to each other (Cherokee Phoenix 2004: 19).

There are other programs available past kindergarten. Most of these are not in-school programs, except for high school and college. In high school, there are two classes of Cherokee as a second language and a Cherokee history class (Sequoyah High School 2005). At Western Carolina University there is a Cherokee studies program, but the program at Northeastern State University focuses on training teachers to be future Cherokee language teachers (Cherokee Studies 2004; Conner 2005). They have teacher certification programs in the community, but their NSU program is just one more step in ensuring the future of the language for their people (The Cherokee Nation 2005). By providing scholarships to NSU, they are sowing the seeds of prosperity for their own future (The Cherokee Nation 2005). Finally, they have curriculum that assists in teaching the language that has been developed for schools and home schooling that are available, or at least partly available, on the Cherokee Nation website (2005). There is also a plethora of other documents on the site that could assist in this effort covering learning of the syllabary, words, such as name of birds, and sentence structure (Cherokee Nation 2005).

Extracurricular Learning Opportunities
The non-school programs are pretty diverse. One of these is the community language classes which have existed since the 1960s and there are about 20 classes today (Yamamoto 2002). It is unknown how many students have learned Cherokee in these classes in the past or how effective they were. We do know that they have continued to serve several hundred community members and Cherokee Nation employees (Yamamoto 2002). There are also online classes for learning Cherokee. One of these is much like any other beginners’ language course available at college. It has two sections that meet two days a week for eight weeks and consist of 40 students per class (Cherokee Nation 2005). The other online course is much like the books, tapes and software that I have already discussed. They consist of syllabary lessons, word lists, sentence structure examples, song and prayer translations, and a myriad
of other helpful documents with sound bites to accompany some parts (Cherokee Nation 2005). This material would probably work well with the other self-education materials that I have discussed. Finally, there are the various camps. One is an immersion summer camp, which costs $20, lasts six weeks and includes children from kindergarten to high school seniors (Yamamoto 2002). It is not limited to just language learning, but include a variety of culture related activities (Yamamoto 2002). There are also free “fitness day camps” for Cherokee [incoming] fourth graders that promotes and teaches aspects of a healthy lifestyle though workshops and activities (Cherokee Nation 2004). There are also free “youth and elder camps” which allow elders to pass their ways and knowledge on to the younger generation (Cherokee Nation 2003). Given the idea that language and culture mutually inform each other, it is wonderful to see that such activities are in practice.

Testing

Efficacy is another concern surrounding these activities. This is not just an outsider concern but is also valued in the Cherokee Nation. Their desire is real language and culture preservation and revitalization so finding a way to know that these programs are effecting change is also a priority. Some of these programs have built in testing, some require developing means to evaluate them and some do not. The ones that do not would be the camps and self-teaching methods. I found no evidence that efficacy analysis has been attempted in connection to the camps but rather observation by those involved has been used to determine their worth (Cherokee 2005). The same can be said for self-teaching methods. Quality varies from product to product, learning is an independent process and there generally is no central method for testing these individuals. School systems usually have their own testing methods. Having taken foreign language classes myself, I can say that a person’s test scores are not necessarily equal to their practical abilities, but they are often not far off. It is good and almost necessary to be able to put language skills into practice for the book knowledge to become firmly rooted, but this is a variable that I cannot address. I do have a great deal of information about the evaluation method for the immersion schools but no results.

Qualitative Evaluation

I do not know the reason for the lack of ‘results’. They likely do not want to release them to the public or the program may be too young to have the evaluation program in place. However, several articles report a different kind of proof for its efficacy. Four year olds who are able to talk in Cherokee to their elders, three year olds spelling their name in Cherokee, five year olds reading in Cherokee to their friends; these are all practical instances that bear witness to the fruits of this program (The Cherokee Nation Cherokee 2002 and 2004; Phoenix 2004). However, there is an evaluation method available or at least, in development as of 2003 (Peter, et al 2003). Through the development of this evaluation method, they attempt to balance cultural standards with a need to judge the quality of the total-immersion program. The Initiative for Culturally Responsive Evaluation, or ICRE, is a model that is respectful of the needs of the people, elicits their participation in the process and puts them in control of it (Peter, et al 2003:7). Unlike common quantitative models, such as the Florida Comprehensive Achievement Test and LEAP tests, this method attempts be all encompassing where other methods are reductionist (Peter, et al 2003). Standardized tests are long multiple choice tests with one assigned essay question that supposedly tests everything a child should know. The problem is that not all children test the same. A third party makes assumptions about what is important to know and it ignores any variables that occur outside of the test time. The ICRE begins and ends when the school year does and uses a variety of tools such as “interviews, discussions, observations, surveys, self-reflections in daily journals, and progress assessments” (Peter, et al 2003:10). It works with the people and their values in determining quality and changes (Peter, et al 2003). The team that developed the method has continually worked with the Cherokee people in a holistic and thorough manner to determine standards and goals (Peter, et al 2003). I think that it is a beautiful thing to see a qualitative, as well as quantitative, approach to educational evaluation that is tailored and responsive to the values of the specific culture that is involved. I would expect nothing less of a team that included ethnolinguists, anthropologists, teachers, community members and education professionals (Peter, et al 2003:8).

To Say More Than Words

I would like to quote Deputy Chief Hastings Shade, “To get the true healing process from a plant, you have to speak the language it understands. Animals understand the language; even the weather understands our language. But if we don’t use Cherokee, the wind doesn’t understand what we’re saying.”(Yamamoto 2002). This goes far in explaining the Cherokee’s desire and persistence where language preservation and revitalization are concerned. The language is part of who they are and their entire worldview so how could they let it go without great pains? This takes me back to my original reason for deciding to do this paper, my great-grandmother Mayre. It must have pained her to give up so much of herself and what she valued to be with a man who seemed to dislike so much of what she was. It must have pained her to not be able to share her wealth of knowledge and cultural heritage with her children, grandchildren and even great-grandchildren.
I appreciate and am indebted to her sacrifice. It is probably thanks to her that I am becoming an anthropologist today and that I can see the world in a way that is conducive to this field of work. I am excited and relieved to see the Cherokee people taking charge of and maintaining their own destiny in a world that seeks to subsume peoples such as them. I am glad to have learned something of the Cherokee people and their language. I have gotten to appreciate several nuances of the power of language. It has the power to unite a people in ways that few other aspects of culture are capable. Language can be enduring, adaptive, strong and flexible, but it can also be wiped out. This is not a unique or rare occurrence, however for some groups, there is still a chance as the Hawaiian and Cherokee examples show. I am proud to see my great-grandmother’s people still flourishing and speaking out with their own voice. Perhaps, one day, I will finally learn their tongue and be able to feel that they are my people too.

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HOW EDUCATION PLAYS A RELEVANT ROLE IN THE EFFORTS OF LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Deborah Hertenstein
Department of Anthropology
USF Undergraduate Senior
Major: Anthropology
Minor: History

Languages are being lost at an astonishing rate in our world today. The loss of a language is the loss of the history, culture, and identity of a specific speech community. This paper intends to show how the field of Education, along with the fields of Anthropology and Linguistics, play a relevant part in the efforts of the revitalization of languages among Native American communities that are considered to be moribund.

There are many factors to consider before starting any type of language revitalization program. The first and most important factor is the desire of the community to want their language to be revived and preserved. Educational efforts cannot be forced on people, as was done in the past history of our country with forced assimilation attempts such as boarding schools. Other factors include the lack of resources, elders of tribes who don’t believe it is necessary to revitalize their language for reasons to be discussed later, and the effects of the “English Only” movement.

As we look at each of these factors we must keep in mind that as Anthropologists, it is our ambition to help as needed in any desired project, and must accept and respect decisions made by communities; as Linguists, studying a language without caring about the individuals involved would be like a doctor practicing medicine without caring about the patient (Crystal 2000:145). In other words, whatever the final decision of the Native American speech community about the future of their language, we must accept it.

Before continuing with the topic of this paper, some statistics must be provided to show the impact of language loss and where some of these languages currently stand. In my research, I found that there are many different estimates on the number of languages that may have existed in the past, or that exist now, so I have chosen to use the following information directly from Akira Y. Yamamoto and Ofelia Zepeda’s (2004: 173-174) article about Native American Languages. According to the Grimes 2000 Ethnologue, there are 6818 languages in the world. Three hundred and thirty (4.8 percent of the total) have one million or more speakers. There are 3,248 (48 percent of the total) that have fewer than 10,000 speakers. Approximately 30 to 50 percent of the languages spoken in the world today may be lost during the twenty-first century. One estimate says that 90 percent of the languages spoken now will be lost.

At the time of European contact there were anywhere from 300 to 600 Native American languages in the USA and Canada. In 1997, there were about 211 languages with 175 of these in the USA. Michael Krauss’s (Yamamoto & Zepeda 2004:174) groupings are used to show the breakdown of these 175 languages into four classes according to their vitality:

Class A: languages spoken by all generation including young children; 20 languages (11%)
Class B: spoken only by parental generation and up; 30 languages (17%)
Class C: spoken only by the grandparental generation and up; 70 languages (40%)
Class D: spoken only by the very oldest, over 70 years of age, usually fewer than ten persons and almost extinct; 55 languages (31%)

These statistics show that children are acquiring only twenty languages (thirty-two when including Canada). These languages are considered safe. Over 70 percent (Classes C and D) of Native American languages in the USA are in extreme danger of extinction.

With the realization of the danger that many Native American languages were in and also in response to the English Only movement, a grassroots movement started at the International conference of Native Language Issues Institute. This movement produced a resolution that became the Native American Language Act in 1990. This act addresses the fundamental rights of Native Americans. In 1992, the act was revised to include funds for community language programs (Yamamoto 2004:176). The Native American Language Act recognizes that the traditional languages of Native Americans in the United States are an integral part of their culture and identity and in Section 104, it is stated, “It is the policy of the United States to preserve, protect, and promote the rights and freedom of Native Americans to use, practice, and develop Native American languages (Native American Languages Act 1990).”
Causes for Language Loss and Concerns for Language Revitalization Programs

Among the most noted reasons for language loss are warfare, disease, and the boarding schools where Native American children were sent to lose their Indian ways and be assimilated in the “white world”. Stephen Greymornings (2004) “To Keep Trickster at Bay”, is an excellent article about the treatment of Native Americans through the use of a Trickster tale, which enables the reader to recognize history from an indigenous perspective. In these schools the children were forced to learn the English way and if they didn’t follow the rules and spoke their native language, they were punished. Yet, there are other factors that may have had stronger influences such as a cash economy, government services, industrial employment, and the English-language media (television and VCR’s). These factors have created new pressures and enticements for Native Americans to enter the wider society and abandon their former ways of life (Crawford 1995:28).

There are many concerns about language revitalization programs. Many parents see advantages to raising their children either partially or entirely in English, the language of social and economic mobility (Crawford 1995:28). A lack of resources is another reason for hesitation for language revitalization projects. Language projects compete with other priorities in a community such as health care, housing, schooling, and economic development (Crawford 1995:30). Throughout history tribes have relied on federal funding to help with these needs, but the government continues to cut back in this area. Budget cutting is occurring again in 2006, with Bush’s budget plan reducing funds allotted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs down 108.2 million from the 2.2 billion allotted this year. This reduction will be a 33 percent cut for school construction (Bivins 2005). Another important issue concerning the hindrance of language revitalization is the attitude of older generations who have attended boarding schools and often have been assimilated into the “English way” or do not want to be reminded of the past (Hinton 1994:234).

There are also reasons why Native American communities wish to preserve their languages. Language provides to a group their history, knowledge of culture, a source of identity, the ability to continue sacred rituals and ceremonies. The Lakota are still very devoted to their spiritual beliefs and performance of sacred rituals, and the ability to tell stories. Keith Basso (2000) provides an excellent ethnography on the Apache people in his book Wisdom Sits in Places, that shows the importance of language and culture by explaining the origins of place-names as well as their use in the present day. The Apache use place names to identify with their land, to recall events that have taken place at a particular location, to remember their ancestors who named the site and to remind them where they have come from, and to use these place names in stories to teach younger generations about morals, social values and to solve problems in life.

For the speech communities that wish to revitalize and preserve their language the first decision that must be made is what kind of program will be used to achieve their goal. There are several different programs that can be instituted. These include the master-apprentice program currently being used to revitalize indigenous Native American languages in California (Hinton 1994:236-242). Darrell Robes Kipp is involved with the Total Physical Response, or immersion program, and has implemented this program in the revitalization and preservation of the Blackfeet speech community (Greymorning 2004). There are also summer camps, in-school programs, after school programs, evening language classes, audio and video taping of elders, and the researching of tapes and field notes.

When deciding what program to implement, other factors must be looked at. These include sufficient funding, sufficient time needed for the program to work, getting parents involved so that the language will be used at home as well as in the program. In some cases it is necessary that the parents also learn the language so that the entire family is involved. Another big problem is the availability of teachers. Some programs do not have enough fluent speakers to be teachers and others have enough speakers but then have to deal with certification issues that would allow elders to teach (Hinton 1994: 223). Teachers must be chosen with consideration to avoid the occurrence of a mis-match situation. This happens when a teacher doesn’t have sufficient knowledge of the culture or values of the speech community that is being taught. An example of this is described in Susan Philip’s (1992) chapter “A Comparison of Indian and Anglo Communicative Behavior in Classroom Interaction”. The children of the Warm Springs community are perceived as not paying attention and not comprehending the curriculum. Philips explains that the cultural environment of a particular community has an effect on students in a classroom environment. The expected behavior in school differs greatly from what is socially acceptable in the Warm Springs community. Some of the examples described in this article are the reluctance of the students to respond in class (the students do not want to be in a position of control), the “teasing” that occurs between children which is physical interaction such as pushing in line or pulling chairs out from under another student before they sit down, and the reluctance to look face-to-face at the teachers when they are talking. Although these actions are unacceptable in the classroom environment, these same actions are socially acceptable
in the Warm Springs community because of the meaning behind the action. Philip's shows the importance of understanding the cultural background of students before judging their academic abilities.

Teachers in a language revitalization program must also have some skills in classroom management and teaching methods. This issue was another frustration to deal with when choosing native speakers to teach in a program. The following is a description of a model that was developed by the staff and consultants with Richard E. Littlebear as director at Interface Alaska Multifunctional Resource Center (MRC) 16 to provide Native American language teachers with the necessary classroom knowledge to effectively teach their language (Littlebear 2003 website). The model was developed for the following four reasons: first, many Native American language programs fail because they are usually staffed with paraprofessionals who lack training in how to teach their languages. Second, state certification processes may not include skills such as fluency in a Native American language or knowledge of the culture. Third, some of the older teachers have had less education, and fourth, the model provides Native American language teachers with additional information to add to their language fluency to make them effective teachers of their language (Littlebear 2003 website).

This model has been used at four different locations: Ketchikan and Galena in Alaska and at Lame Deer and Busby in Montana. The basic format for this model entails a 7.5 hour day for a period of five days to give the Native American language teacher some knowledge of classroom teaching (Littlebear 2003 website).

**Language Revitalization Efforts of the Arapaho and the Oglala Sioux**

Since I have an interest in the Native Americans of the Plains Culture Area in the Northwest United States, I am devoting the rest of this paper to language revitalization efforts being made in the Arapaho language on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming and the Lakota language among the Oglala Sioux on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

**Arapaho Language Wind River Reservation**

The following is taken from an article, Going Beyond Words: The Arapaho Immersion Program, by Stephen Greymorning (1997 website) about his work and involvement with the revitalization of the Arapaho language. Greymorning was asked to help when the elders of the Arapaho language realized the lack of success being achieved in schools teaching children their native language. The Northern Plains Educational Foundation, a community group, asked for a language and culture program to be directed within the public schools on the Wind River reservation. Work began in 1993 and the first observation made was that even though Arapaho had been taught in the school system since 1978, students only received an average of 45 hours of language instruction per academic year. Also noticed was how large this project would be with the realization of such attitudes as, “deeply rooted colonialistic attitudes that still maintain with the best of intentions, assimilation is the best course for Indians” (Greymorning 1997 website). When looking at the school systems of many reservations from kindergarten to grade twelve, 98 percent of the teaching staff, including district superintendents, principals, and administrators are neither natives of the culture nor native to the reservations where they work and teach. Greymorning said, “these observations led me to realize that I would have to maneuver carefully” (Greymorning website). The following is an account of some of the trials and tribulations that have occurred in the attempts to set up a successful Arapaho language revitalization program.

An interesting point brought up is that six fluent Arapaho speakers provided the instruction of the Arapaho language in the Wyoming School District. These instructors were hired on the basis of passing a review of Elder fluent speakers who made up the Arapaho language commission. None of the instructors had any teacher training except for in-service training the school system had provided them with on teaching methods. These methods were not sufficient for the task of teaching the language. This problem points out the importance of the MRC16 model mentioned earlier and the need for an appropriate methodology to be implemented.

The first suggestion made by Greymorning was to set up a kindergarten class to test the impact of an hour-long language class five days a week, over an eighteen-week period. The principal of the school gave approval for the class. Eighteen months later the results were dramatic.

The structure of the class was set up as follows: five children were taken from three kindergarten classes to receive an hour of language instruction each day. The progress of this class was then compared to that of the other kindergarten classes that received fifteen minutes per day throughout the school year. The class was structured to accommodate fifteen children of different interests and attention spans divided into three groups of five, with each group assigned to a learning station with an instructor. After fifteen minutes at one station, the children would rotate to another station. After forty-five minutes of this rotating the children would all meet together for the last fifteen minutes of the hour class with another instructor who asked the children to respond to various commands and execute different tasks. Each station covered a different aspect of language use: one focused on word drills, a second focused on phrase drills, and the third focused on interactive conversations between the children and
instructor. After twelve weeks had passed, 80 percent of the test class had mastered 162 words and phrases. By the end of the school year the three control classes had mastered a vocabulary of between fifteen to eighteen words.

Greymorning attended a language conference in May 1993 that explained the immersion efforts of the Hawaiians and knew that an immersion program was necessary for the revitalization of the Arapaho language. Hawaiian children achieved an age appropriate level of fluency in Hawaiian after being exposed to the language for 600 to 700 hours.

Since the principal was pleased with the results of the test class, permission was granted to set up a half-day immersion kindergarten class in September 1993. Along with this program, assessments of students between kindergarten and fourth grade were done to chart what the students knew in Arapaho at the beginning of the school year and then again between the seventh and eighth week of each nine week quarter.

Greymorning realized by the end of October that between the weaknesses in methods being used and time allotted for language instructions, significant changes in what could be taught and learned would not be feasible. This led to the pilot immersion program started in 1994 within the Ethete community for preschool aged children. The thought was if children could reach some stage of fluency before elementary school, then the language instructors could focus on maintaining fluency rather than creating fluency. The pilot immersion project ran for two hours a day, four days a week, from January to May 1994. During this four month period children were exposed to 136 hours of Arapaho compared to the children in the elementary school who would have to take three years of schooling to attain the same amount of hours. In both cases there was still a shortage of the 600 to 700 hours needed for the onset of fluency to occur. A summer immersion program was then instituted but needed funds to run. A private source agreed to help with partial funding and parents paid a twenty-dollar tuition fee. The rate of unemployment on the reservation during the summer months can exceed 80 percent, so this definitely showed family support. The Wyoming Council for the Humanities agreed to fund the project from September 1994 to May 1995. The project ran three hours a day, five days a week only providing approximately 456 hours. Greymorning knew six days a week were needed but was satisfied with what was being accomplished at this point. The program was eventually expanded to six hours a day. In December 1995, the children were able to converse with the language instructors for fifteen minutes in Arapaho without using any English. Instructors had previously been caught trying to explain things in English, so it was a battle to get them out of

By May 1997 the immersion program still had not produced a child with any level of fluency. At the time this article was written Greymorning was in New Zealand observing the Maori and their immersion efforts. One of the outcomes of his observation was to bring back to the Arapaho a week long intensive immersion program at the end of each month for adults that teach the language as a second language. There is hope that if adults learn and use the language, children will develop fluency in the language faster (Greymorning 1997 website).

Oglala Sioux Pine Ridge Reservation

The Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation live on the poorest reservation but the people still have a desire to preserve their language and culture. The Lakota’s speak an “L” dialect of the Siouan language. The Lakota language like many other Native American indigenous languages is endangered. The reasons are the same; the native speakers are getting older and dying and not being replaced by younger generations that speak Lakota. The Lakota Language Consortium (2004) is making efforts to change this trend through revitalization programs and has the opinion that Lakota has a strong chance of being revitalized due to the following reasons:

1. Lakota populations are growing three times faster than the rest of South Dakota, about 2.5% per annum. At this rate the figures suggest there will be a large enough population for a large speaker base and a sustainable community.

2. The language is well documented with a diverse set of lexicons and literature.

3. Lakota is widely recognized and is used not only within the tribe, but also nationally and internationally for ceremony, ritual, and public speaking. The language also has a high stature among non-Lakotas which helps to expand its speaker base.

4. Lakota people want to preserve their language. They actively practice their religion and culture and in order to do this knowledge of the language is important.
The Lakota Language Consortium strategy is to teach children from a very young age the Lakota language as a second language and to achieve proficiency among students somewhere within the fifth and eighth grades. Some of the different methods being used to teach the Lakota language are elementary textbooks, audio CDs, CDROM lessons, picture books, visual aids, and training the teachers. There is much effort put into creating solidarity among those teaching the language to promote immersion teaching environments and revitalization of the language (LLC 2004).

As has been shown through this research, the fields of Education, Anthropology, and Linguistics do play a relevant part in the efforts of language revitalization. It is also necessary to recognize all the people who have unselfishly devoted themselves to the timeless efforts involved with language revitalization attempts. Hopefully all of these efforts will pay off in the end and some of the languages that are now considered endangered will be preserved for future generations to have as a part of their identity.

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Yamamoto, Akira Y. and Ofelia Zepeda
Linguaculture, a concept developed by Michael Agar, is intended to point out the necessary connection between language and culture. This concept is revolutionary in the study of linguistic anthropology as it establishes a connection that signifies identity. I will be using this concept as groundwork for looking at Native American Language as a means of illustrating identity for the tribes. I will be arguing that language provides individual identity as belonging to a group, thus creating group cohesion. I will offer supporting examples by looking at the linguistic history of the North American continent and the importance of oral traditions in transmitting culture. After looking on a large level at language history throughout the North American continent I will narrow the scope to two specific tribes for a cross-cultural comparison. The cross cultural comparison will provide a glimpse of what the indigenous language means to the people, how assimilation affected the life of their language, and what steps they have taken to revitalize their language. Looking at language revitalization will demonstrate how the people feel their language is needed to uphold their identity. The two tribes I will be looking at are the Oglala Sioux from the Pine Ridge Reservation and the Mohawk of the Akwesasne Reservation.

Language Background and History

Before the arrival of Europeans on the North American continent there was a wide variety of language being spoken. There were several language families that were individually comprised of different languages. Even the different languages had different dialects. The linguistic variety reflects the cultural complexity of North America. It was from these cultures that people created and formed their tribal identity.

It is important to understand the way the groups were interacting. The tribes were fluid. People were migrating to new regions for many reasons such as: following food source, being driven out by enemies, or because of growth of population. Movement, no matter what the reason, led people into contact with new tribes who became friends or enemies. Language, a key cultural identifier, allowed people to recognize the cultural background to which a new acquaintance might belong. Despite the relationship, positive or negative, their lives and language impacted each other as new concepts and practices were adopted keeping the exchange of culture alive. Therefore, a vine of interaction and impact was formed which led to constant changes in structures of social identity.

The Oglala speak a dialect of the Lakota language that belongs to the Siouan-Yuchi language family. This language family is one of the largest on the North American continent with its northern border in the Montana and Dakota region spreading south east down to Arkansas with small pockets in present day Tennessee and Virginia. The Mohawks of Akwesasne speak Mohawk or Kanienkeha (akwesane.ca). Kanienkeha belongs to the Iroquoian language family which is another one of the larger language families on the continent. The Iroquoian language family spans mostly along the St. Lawrence River but there are pockets as far south as Virginia, Tennessee, and Kentucky. The reason for this southern branch is that the Cherokee language is a stem of the Iroquoian language family.

History and Relations with Europeans

When Europeans arrived they took the continent by storm. Driven by Manifest Destiny, their mission was to convert all of the Natives to their way of life. When I refer to Europeans it is important to point out I am calling them Europeans because they were not coming from one specific area within Europe but from different cultural backgrounds on the continent. The Spanish and French came to the new world with the main intent of conversion to Catholicism while the British brought Protestantism. Though the reasons and methods of conversion differed slightly the intent was the same, mass assimilation of the native people. This goal was particularly devastating because a main target area of assimilation was language. Language was a key identifier among people and between tribes, thus the loss of language demolished social structure and interaction. People were loosing their identity without having a way of interacting with each other. Their entire life was being sent into chaos.

The region inhabited by Mohawks and other Iroquoian groups was massively disrupted with the arrival of the French who brought many diseases that left the natives weakened. People were shuffled around the land and began to rely on alliances with other Iroquoian groups to survive. One interesting story is the relationship between
the Mohawks and the Hochelagens. The Mohawks had been hunting and fishing in the land of the Hochelagens for many years and the two Iroquoian tribes had developed a friendship. With the arrival of Jacques Cartier the Hochelagens were diffused and many went to stay with the Mohawks. For this reason Mohawk oral traditions are rich with land references to the Montreal area. This story demonstrates the importance of oral traditions in understanding tribal identity. With the loss of language, the linguistic nuances that relate people to their land and ancestral identity are lost. Though the Hochelagens sought refuge with the Mohawks for a while, peace did not stay in the Mohawk region. Soon even the Mohawks felt the pressures of European assimilation as missions were set up for the purpose of conversion in their villages (http://www.wampumchronicles.com/history.html).

The Oglala also felt pressures from European expansion and later from the United States over land claims. Spanish mission traditions were spread up into the region from present day Mexico and Texas. The impact of Catholicism, however, was relatively minimal over the distance. What the Oglala experienced once the United States of America was established was far more devastating. The United States attempted to assimilate the children by sending them to BIA schools. Their land was constantly impeded on by acts such as the Dawes Severalty Act, which broke up the communal ties and continued to steal more and more native land (Grobsmith and Ritter, 224).

**Oral Traditions**

American society is obsessed with writing. Pop culture is full of emailing, im’ing, text messaging, and many other things that all revolve around written language. Culture is passed through text, and according to this frame of thinking that is where the credible information comes from; something is true if it has been written and recognized. This mindset is very different from an alternative perspective that places value in Oral traditions. In such a society, traditional stories are documentations that are just as accurate as legal bindings in American society. Many Native American societies think and live in this kind of framework, and thus demonstrate the impact in language on shaping identity.

“A native model of how stories work to shape Apaches’ conceptions of the landscape, it is also a model of how stories work to shape Apaches’ conceptions of themselves.” (Basso, 40) Keith Basso’s work in mapping Apache place names demonstrates the value of oral traditions in creating identity. The Indigenous people knew who they were because of the stories of their ancestors on the same land many years before them. It was the story of the ancestors that gave place names to particular locations. Each location carried the essence of a story and the lesson that was learned there. To be enculturated, a person had to understand the stories and eternalize them. To be wise in Apache culture is to know the lessons of the places and always have them in mind to recall at a moments notice. This framework is entirely set up around the language of the oral traditions. To doubt the credibility of one of their oral traditions would be seen as ludicrous as doubting the laws of the constitution of the United States. “To this engrossing end…the place-maker often speaks as a witness on the scene, describing ancestral events ‘as they are occurring’ and creating in the process a vivid sense that what happened long ago—right here, on this very spot—could be happening now” (Basso, 32).

Basso’s book points out the significance of oral traditions in shaping identity and culture among the Apache, but this is a cultural characteristic that is shared by many other Native American groups. Both the Oglala Sioux, and the Mohawks share this belief in the value of oral traditions. By looking at the programs established in the community and the schools demonstrates the value placed on language.

**What Is Being Done?**

As seen previously, Language is very important to Native American culture for creating identity, but the ability to hold onto language, and ultimately culture, has proven a difficult task in the face of European assimilation. Native Languages are dying out at a rapid rate. Michael Krauss, as stated in “Flutes of Fire” by Leanne Hinton, estimates that there are 187 Native Languages in the United States, 149 of which children are no longer learning. Doing the math, these numbers mean that 80 % are moribund (in a state of dying; approaching death) (Hinton, 221). These statistics have triggered alarms throughout native communities that something must be done to save language before it is to late. Once language is lost there is no replacement of cultural knowledge, and ultimately identity is lost.

So what can be done to reverse the loss of native languages and comprehension? Several different approaches have been introduced, such as learning to sing, coloring books to give children exposure, while others have developed writing systems for strictly oral languages (Hinton, 225). Hinton goes into details on many methods that are being tried. The variety of the methods demonstrates the determination of the people as they attempt to salvage their dying languages. An overriding message in Hinton’s work is that children need enough time to become proficient, and one approach alone usually does not allow the time that is needed. The tribes most successful in revitalizing their indigenous languages have been those who have had community involvement. Because the language is symbolic of the community, an individual attempting to learn
the language, without community involvement, is really only fighting against time. I say this because one person being able to speak a language does not revitalize it. Revitalization comes from having the community within which the language operates. It is the language community that gives identity. Both the Oglala and the Mohawks have had very successful language revitalization programs due to strong community involvement. The community cares about the advancement of the language so there is a group effort to make sure it survives.

**Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation**

“You’ve got a long, long future ahead of you, but you’ve got to have education, and you’ve got to keep the culture with it. Don’t leave the culture behind. Try to keep it. Try to talk Indian” (Gooden, 132). This quote by Chief Oliver Red Cloud, of the Pine Ridge Reservation, encapsulates the mentality of many of the Oglala. To ensure cultural survival in the future, an understanding of the past must not be lost along the way. Identity comes from the ability to “talk Indian” if you can’t talk Indian the culture will be left behind. So what exactly does it mean to “talk Indian”? It certainly implies the need of understanding and using the native language for communication, but I think to “talk Indian” means more than just knowing the language. It means carrying on the identity and culture, ensuring life to paths that have almost slipped into the abyss.

The programs of many schools on the Pine Ridge Reservation incorporate language and culture into the curriculum, because it is understood that language is pivotal to their Oglala identity. To be Oglala and live the culture they must know the language. The reservation has several schools from different funding backgrounds, such as public schools, Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and parochial schools. What is good to see is that all schools, no matter their funding, have in place some kind of language and culture program. This demonstrates the belief the American Indians have in the relation of Language and culture, Linguaculture, in shaping identity. The main method that seems to be used in all Pine Ridge schools is to integrate language and culture classes into the curriculum of already existing schools (http://www.lakotamall.com/oglalasiouxtribe).

The Batesland School is a public school whose students, like most other schools on the reservation, are primarily of Lakota Sioux ancestry. This school has teachers who are trained in Lakota studies, another trait that is shared by the majority of the schools on the reservation. These teachers set up activities and help other teachers integrate Lakota language and culture into the classroom. The mission statement claims the ultimate goal of the school and staff is to “achieve the goal of academic and cultural integration.” This demonstrates a desire from the community to revitalize and continue the language, culture, and identity that they take time to come into the schools (http://www.scpschlks12.sd.us/~bateslnd).

Another excellent example of language programs on the Pine Ridge Reservation is Our Lady of Lourdes Elementary. “The elementary school utilizes a balance literacy approach to focus on reading and writing and word recognition in the early grades and builds to fluency and comprehension in the upper grades.” This is a parochial school and religion classes are offered, “Religion courses allow for the development and growth of each student’s spirituality.” Paired with the other parochial school on the reservation, Red Cloud, “the goal of Red Cloud is to infuse Native American Culture into every aspect of the school. A full time cultural instructor teaches courses in the elementary school and serves as a consultant to teachers in all grades and subject areas. Students have the opportunity to learn some of the more traditional cultural foundation (http://redcloudschool.org/schools/oll/index.html).

**Mohawk of Akwesasne**

A culture will be lost if younger generations lack a strong cultural knowledge, to replace the older generations. This is one reason why many groups have found that language and culture programs in the school pass on traditional identity to the new generation on a large scale. This system utilizes the knowledge of older members of the tribes as teaching tools for children. These programs were in the Pine Ridge Reservation schools because the community saw schools as the most productive place to revitalize culture. The community of the Akwesasne Reservation shares this view. On the Akwesasne Reservation there are schools with programs that mirror those on Pine Ridge; however, there is one very interesting thing Akwesasne has that Pine Ridge does not. Akwesasne has a language immersion school.

“Schools can never teach a language as well as a child could learn it as the primary language at home, so one problem of great interest is how to make a language important enough at home to allow the children to learn it” (Hinton, 229). The first form of the language immersion school was set up in the 1970’s, called the Freedom School, by parents concerned that their children were loosing their language and culture. They have realized that language is key for culture to survive. The entire school was set up around the Mohawk way of life to ensure the continuation of culture. I am going to take some time explaining the way the school was set up because it demonstrates the mindset of the people in their realization of the importance of language and its role in continuing cultural identity (www.turtle-tracks-for-kids.org/messages%20fro
The Akwesasne Freedom School is a Kindergarten through 5th grade school. At school the children are required to speak in Mohawk, and parents who do not speak Mohawk at home are encouraged to learn the language so that the children can speak it at home. Speaking at home allows a language to become real in a way only speaking at school does not. All teachers must of course be fluent in the language, but they must also be knowledgeable about the culture. The students have many activities and the teachers must be able to tie the activities and the culture together. The school has a very cultural set up. Rather than all classes being held in doors, many are held in “outdoor classrooms”. These classrooms allow students to learn about their surrounding environments, which was very important to their cultural tradition.

The Mohawk community has supported the growth of education and learning in more ways than only setting up an immersion school. Shortly after the school was set up it began to evolve and grow allowing for even more educational opportunities. In 1985 the Akwesasne Mohawk Board of Education (AMBE) was established. Today this board overlooks the direction of the schools and ensures linguistic and cultural education and survival. From the AMBE many other systems were established. In 1988 the AMBE established the Akwesasne Mohawk Language Curriculum Program AMLCP. The purpose of this program was to establish a standardized method of instructing Mohawk. As the first program set up by the AMBE, this is obviously a direct reflection of the values of the Mohawk’s and their understanding of the importance of their language. In 1990 the Akwesasne Math and Science Pilot Project (ASMPP) was established. The goal of this program was to develop a culturally integrated curriculum based on the teaching of culture. This program demonstrates the values of seeing the world through a cultural mindset. Because the cultural mindset is valued in the society, to loose the language would also lose all the culture. Without a program such as the Freedom School the identity of the next generation as Mohawks might have been lost (www.akwesasne.ca).

What it all Means

This paper has demonstrated the value of language to Native American’s though three avenues. The first avenue I explored was the historical; this was done by exploring two different historical components. The first component was the linguistic heritage and diversity of North America. The second component was the impact European attempts at assimilation on the two specific tribes used for the cross-cultural comparison. The second avenue explored was the value of language to native cultures as displayed in the pivotal role of oral traditions in creating social bonds and setting social norms. With the loss of language, the ability for cultural transmission is also lost. The final component of this paper conducted a cross-cultural comparison of two tribes, the Oglala Sioux of the Pine Ridge Reservation and the Mohawks of the Akwesasne Reservation. These comparisons demonstrated the value contemporary people, who are in jeopardy of losing their ancestral language, place on the importance of language in shaping identity.

I looked at three aspects of Native American life, but their daily lives are permeated with the struggle and survival of language and culture, and ultimately their identity.

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In the jungles of Mesoamerica, whispers can again be heard of things written long ago. Words once written by ancient Maya scribes again stir the air as archaeologists and linguists decode inscriptions after centuries of silence, mystery, and wonder. The story of the ancient Maya written language is dramatic. It was once avidly used by the ancient Maya, only to fall out of use and memory as a result of brutal conquest and subsequent oppression. But the story does not end there. Once again the voices of the ancients can be heard. Thanks to the efforts of brilliant minds and, in some cases, sheer luck, the language is being deciphered. Perhaps the power of written word is that it can indeed outlive memory.

In this paper, I will look at the relationship between language and identity, as it is applicable to the ancient Maya. This will be examined on a variety of levels and from different perspectives. I will consider the link between language and identity, as it relates to the ancient Maya, from the perspectives of both pre and post conquest periods. I will also show, from a modern perspective, how deciphering the ancient Maya written language is leading to a better understanding of the identity of a once enigmatic and mysterious ancient people.

In The Beginning …

To begin, I will provide some background information as a setting for my discussion of such a complex and sophisticated people. Maya civilization was at its peak from about 200 A.D. to 900 A.D., during what is referred to as the Classic Period. During this time the Maya flourished, and it is arguable that they built one of the most impressive civilizations in the ancient world. They created magnificent temples, pyramids, and other buildings with astounding architectural and mathematical precision, using only stone-age tool technology (Schele and Miller 1986:11).

Their artistic prowess was manifested in various forms including paintings, pottery, jewelry, sculpture, and stelae. Their art reveals an enigmatic, mystical ancient people that regularly interacted with the spiritual realm. They were advanced in astronomy and utilized this knowledge to keep time by way of elaborate calendars (Sabloff 1989:82). The ancient Maya also created a written language, a feat that has occurred independently only a mere handful of times throughout human history the world over.

A Crowning Achievement

Perhaps the independent creation of a written language was the crowning achievement of the ancient Maya. After all, it was this that allowed them to record their thoughts, ideas, beliefs, and history. Having a written language also enabled them to transmit these ideas to future generations. Thus, a collective identity was established, reinforced, and even built upon. I would argue that this, at least in part, is what allowed the Maya to build a culture and a collective identity that they maintained and developed for centuries.

Ancient Mayan spoken language is of great antiquity. It is important, however, to understand that there is not one, constant spoken form of Mayan language throughout time and space. Scholars believe that a single, proto-Mayan language was the original, dating to before 2000 B.C.E, from which a number of geographic varieties splintered and varied over the following centuries (Foster 2002:274). At the micro level, it is probable that individual Maya communities experienced localized unity and identity related to their regional language variation. At the same time, on the macro level, they also would have experienced a larger unity and collective identity as a whole through their language, due to the overarching similarities found among them all.

These spoken forms of Mayan language eventually came to be expressed in written form. Scholars believe that Maya written language was formally developed around 300 B.C.E. – 400 B.C.E. as the result of political centralization in the Maya lowlands (Foster 2002:277). The Maya writing system is referred to as a hieroglyphic system with “a mixed phonetic and logographic script” (Foster 2002:278). This simply means that some signs can represent individual syllables, consisting of consonants and vowels, while other signs can represent whole words. Maya script is artistically complex with signs and symbols that are typically pictographic in nature, whether realistic or stylized (Foster 2002:278-279).

There is considerable debate in the scholarly community concerning literacy among the ancient Maya. It is known that the act of writing was primarily, if not exclusively, performed by elite individuals and official scribes. But what is not so clear is who could actually read the text, and to what extent. Overall, it is largely
felt that reading was primarily an exclusive ability of the elite class, and was likely to have extended only to merchants and artisans out of necessity. However, with the pictographic and highly symbolic nature of this particular written language, it is likely that ordinary citizens were able to recognize the general meanings of individual signs and simple texts, particularly those affiliated with the identity of important individuals or rulers (Schele and Miller 1986:327).

The Power of Words

Ever since written language was invented, which is believed to have occurred some five thousand years ago in Mesopotamia, ancient rulers have employed its power the world over (Hooker 1998:7). The Maya were no exception. Maya kings used written language to record their exploits, boast of their superiority, and even to document their divinity. In these ways, written language served to unite the Maya under their king and provided them with a collective pride and identity.

Maya kings primarily used written language to elevate their own status and validate their merit and divine right to the throne. In this way, Maya kings utilized written language to invent, establish, and reinforce their own identities (Foster 2002:277). Whether their claims were true or not did not matter so much, since their tactic worked. As a result, political power grew and written language played an important part in creating and sustaining one of the most powerful and sophisticated empires in ancient history. Language had demonstrated its link with identity.

The link between language and identity also becomes quite apparent within the context of the so-called conquest of the ancient Maya by Europeans. Conquistadors and Catholic priests went to great lengths to eradicate any and all possible connections between the Maya, their indigenous identity, and their cultural practices. As part of the ethnocide carried out by Catholic priests during the European conquest and colonization of the America’s, Maya codices (books) were destroyed and, subsequently, the knowledge of their written language was lost to time.

Here again it is possible to see the importance of the connection between language and identity. This link is so important that Spanish priests saw it as absolutely essential to eradicate Maya writings in order to abolish their “pagan” practices. This aided in severing nearly all of their primary connections with their indigenous identity. As a result, the outward appearance of conversion quickly followed. This is evidence that Maya written language functioned as a means of transmitting culture and identity, so much so that the absence of it only hastened assimilation into the ways of the West.

Winds of Change

The Maya had reached the peak of their political influence within their region during the Classic Period, from about 200 A.D. – 900 A.D. This is the period when Maya art and written language was perhaps at its best and was most influential (Vera 1999:31). Following this period is what is referred to as the Postclassic period, which lasted from about 900 A.D. until the arrival of and conquest by the Spanish (Schele 1990:57).

During the Postclassic period, Maya civilization went into steady decline due to a multiplicity of reasons, ranging from politics to the depletion of environmental resources (Sabloff 1989:92). By the time the Spanish conquistadors had arrived, the great Maya civilization was already a pale shadow of its former self. Nonetheless, they still maintained their cultural practices and held on to their unique identity. They were still populous and distinct at the time the Spanish arrived, but this was about to change. As far as the Spanish were concerned, all ties to their traditional Maya identity and cultural practices must go.

The Glyph Is Mightier Than the Sword … Almost

After a bloody and ruthless political conquest by the Spanish, the Maya still held fast to who they were. Even into the time when Catholic missionaries were entrenched in their lands, going about their work of conversion, the Maya still maintained an impressive degree of their indigenous culture, practices, and language, and even kept their books. Sadly, this was not to last for long.

In fear of the oppressing Spanish, the Maya practiced many of their indigenous beliefs in private, silently keeping their identity alive. Because their written language was primarily recorded on a type of paper in portable books, similar to ours, called codices, the ancient Maya were able to keep many of their indigenous beliefs alive through their texts and through those who could read and write. They were successful at this for a time, until a certain Spanish friar named Diego de Landa discovered their efforts.

By chance, Landa discovered that the Maya clandestinely continued to practice their indigenous beliefs, including, much to Landa’s horror, blood sacrifice. An enraged Landa lashed out. Because he viewed Maya codices as propagating their so-called pagan beliefs, Landa personally ordered that all their books were to be burned. And so they were. Landa, and the environmental conditions of the region conducive to rot, were so effective at destroying Maya codices that only four are known to survive today (Foster 2002:296).

Landa’s action produced the desired effect until, later, he employed a young Maya scribe to make a sort of primer of Maya written language by correlating it to the Spanish alphabet. The book was sent to Europe for study. However, due to the complexity of Maya written language, European scholars could make no sense of it, dismissed the work as nonsense, and gave it
little further thought. As a part of the ethnocide inflicted upon the Maya by the Spanish, all post-conquest documents were to be written only in Spanish. Thus, knowledge of reading and writing ancient Maya script was completely lost, even to the indigenous Maya themselves, over the course of a few generations (Foster 2002:297-300).

Here again, the link between language and identity is clear. The Spanish, whether consciously or not, recognized the connections between the indigenous peoples’ language, culture, and identity. As a result, they sought diligently to sever these connections. In doing so, assimilation of the Maya into “western” ways was an easier task. As the Maya became unable to read and write their indigenous language, they could not as effectively reinforce and transmit their true indigenous identity.

Out of the Ashes …

Fortunately, this is not where the story ends. I have just summarized how the knowledge of Maya written language was lost, but how it was re-discovered is intriguing. Here again, it will be possible to see the inter-relatedness of language and identity.

From a modern perspective, re-discovering how to read ancient Maya script is allowing archaeologists, linguists, and scholars to gain understanding and insight into the true identity of the ancient Maya. As we learn to read their own words, the necessity to make assumptions decreases. Thus, a truer understanding of their ancient way of life becomes more accessible than ever, as long as we are careful to factor, as with all written history, that their accounts can and do have biases of their own.

The following will be a summary of certain amazing key events that led, in part, to the deciphering of ancient Maya script. Many centuries after the ability to read and write Maya script fell out of common knowledge, a copy of Landa’s codex had made its way into the German, Nazi library archives in Berlin. In May of 1945, a Russian soldier by the name of Yuri Valentinovich Knorosov found himself fighting in Germany during WWII as the Russians took Berlin. In a twist of irony, Knorosov was no ordinary soldier, but a former student of Moscow University who studied ancient languages and texts (Coe 1992:145-146).

In the taking of Berlin, Knorosov found himself near a burning building. He recognized the building as Berlin’s National Library and ran inside amidst the flames. Amazingly, he emerged with a later copy of Landa’s Maya codex (Coe 1992:146). It seems that time had chosen the right man for the job. Over time, Knorosov agonized over the strange glyphs, until he finally did what no one else had been completely able to do. He broke the code and recognized the phonetic nature of Maya writing. After the war, as an investigator at the Leningrad Institute of Ethnology, Knorosov published Ancient Writing of Central America, which once again opened the door for the ancient Maya to speak and, eventually, share their secrets (Coe 1992:145-146).

From the Work of Many

It is important to note that many others had been working on breaking the Maya code before Knorosov’s accomplishments. Nonetheless, he is credited as being one of a handful of key individuals responsible for opening the door to what modern scholars have been able to do in the way of progress in more recent years. As a result of Knorosov’s discovery, and the work of many prior and subsequent scholars, the recent decipherment of Maya written language has enabled archaeologists and linguists the opportunity to re-discover the true identity of a once enigmatic and mysterious ancient people.

We now are able to read the names, accomplishments, and events associated with Maya elite, rulers, and cities. To provide an actual example where the decipherment of Maya script has provided specific data that would not otherwise have been possible through ordinary archaeological methods, I will feature a portion of an inscription from what is known as the Temple of the Cross, located at Palenque. In this inscription, specific dates are given concerning the births of named mythological Maya deities, thereby providing us with astonishing detail concerning traditional Maya religious beliefs.

A portion of the inscription reads: “On December 7, 3121 B.C., Lady Beastie, the First Mother, was born. On June 16, 3122 B.C., GI, the First Father was born. On August 13, 3114 B.C., the 13th baktun ended and the new creation began” (Schele 1990:246). Here, though not the most verbally exciting of accounts, we have just been able to read about specific events important in Maya origin myths and religious beliefs. Such knowledge would have been importantly related to the collective identity and culture of the Maya themselves. Likewise, such knowledge is equally important to us, in that it provides priceless insight into the most scared of Maya ideas and beliefs.

There are numerous such inscriptions that are providing a wealth of historical and mythological information related to the ancient Maya. Specific dates related to important events, accessions of rulers, deaths, births, etc., are also valuable aids in the dating of archaeological sites and the placing of Maya events and individuals in chronological order. For these reasons, and more, the ability to read ancient Maya written language is proving to be priceless.

The connection between language, culture, and identity is clear. As we learn to read their words, we simultaneously learn
about who they were. This is yet further evidence for the fact that written language is a means for preserving and transmitting culture and identity.

To date, there is still much work to be done. We do not yet have a complete understanding of the ancient Maya script. But progress is being made, almost daily. As a result, we are increasingly able to see into the world of the ancient Maya and get into their minds as never before. By considering connections between language and identity, as being visible from a variety of perspectives, we can confirm that the two are indeed linked. Here we have seen these connections realized in different contexts through ancient Maya written language.

There are whispers of ancient Mayan utterances hissing through the forests and jungles of Measoamerica once again. Only, instead of flowing from the mouths of the ancients, the sounds are being made by modern archaeologists, linguists, and scholars as they become able to read once-lost, ancient words. Through efforts to decipher ancient Maya written language, we are, in likeness, able to hear the voices of the dead.

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RITUAL, VALUES AND UNITY: A STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY RELIGION

Tim Schoonover
Department of Anthropology
USF Undergraduate Senior
Major: Anthropology
Minor: History

Preface

There are many different forms of religious expression that can be found in the United States. This is a reflection of cultural diversity and immigration, and more recently, “New Age” religions. The emergence of new religious movements is the product of changing social needs and the social mechanisms that express these changes. Thus, there are many religions that have been created or modified to meet more contemporary cultural attitudes and values. This paper will examine the contemporary religious movement called “Unity”. The thrust of this paper will focus on ritual behavior, and what I term “Unity language” as performed at First Unity Church. This paper is not meant to be a comparative analysis of traditional and contemporary religion, but a focused analysis of a local (and popular) First Unity church, with the intent of elucidating the elements of social action expressed through ritual and social identity.

Methodology

Over the span of a month I attended Sunday services at First Unity. I attempted to practice the tried and true participant observation, while establishing a friendship with a member of the Board of Trustees. I was also able to purchase several cassette tapes of the services I attended which aided greatly in my analysis of the language used at First Unity. I conducted many small informal interviews as I informally interacted with various members throughout the month. I also attended one meeting during the week meant for individuals new to Unity, and was able to speak with Reverend Temple on an informal basis.

I was only able to see one “traditional” service held at 9AM; therefore, my data and conclusions on the differences between “traditional” and “contemporary” services may be skewed due to this limitation. Also, I regret the lack of formal interviewing present within this study. Although I have large
corpus of written and audio data, formal interviews would have brought that data together in a more coherent fashion and this study may reflect this inadequacy of the “emic” perspective. All in all, this analysis represents more of an “etic” perspective, dominated and saturated with the researcher’s voice and the voices of the ministers of Unity. There are a few hints of the other voices the researcher heard every Sunday.

Introduction

Before moving into an analysis of the ritual and language performed at First Unity, it is necessary to give some background information and basic ideology of the movement itself, as this information will later aid in the discussion on what the services accomplish for members at First Unity. Unity is a religious movement that began in the 1880’s by Myrtle Fillmore, and her husband, Charles Fillmore. As the story goes, the Fillmore’s were both suffering from physical ailments, one life threatening, when they began practicing a form of positive thinking, prayer, and pursuit of personal peace and strength. They were able to cure themselves of these ailments and soon gained attention in their community. They shared these ideas with others and, in 1889, the Unity religious movement found substance through the first publication of Modern Thought, by Charles Fillmore, which was later named Unity (Freeman).

The development of Unity is closely tied to the written word. Literature serves the same function that missionaries serve in other religions by traveling and expressing the values and message of Unity. In addition to Unity, another important publication, The Daily Word, was established a year after Modern Thought. The Daily Word was inspired by Charles Fillmore’s desire to hold “a silent soul communion” with others. All one had to do to “commune” was “…to sit in a quiet, retired place, if possible, at the hour of 10 o’clock every night, and hold in silent thought, for not less than fifteen minutes, the words that shall be given each month by the editor (Freeman).” Unity and The Daily Word both promoted the religious ideology of Unity while establishing and refining it, and continue to set the standard by which Unity identifies with most ideologically.

First Unity was established officially in St. Petersburg in 1930, 41 years after the official movement began. The history of First Unity shows a relatively steady growth followed by a sudden split, in 1972, in which a significant portion of it’s membership (approximately 600 people) left First Unity and established Unity Christ Church. The current ministers are the Reverends Alan Rowbotham, senior minister for 10 plus years, and the Reverend Temple Hayes, co-minister since March 20th of 2005. First Unity has been instrumental within the greater

First Unity Ideology

The concepts of personal healing and search for truth through silent prayer or group meditation are critical to understanding First Unity. These two principles were established early by the Fillmore’s and can be observed in the ritual behavior and language of First Unity. The dichotomy between the personal quest for truth sustained partly through group ritual and communion is not uncommon in organized religion. Through further examination of the meta-discourse at First Unity, the relationship between the individual versus the group in terms of ritual and language will elucidate the concepts of community and identity.

First Unity represents a speech community. Most of First Unity’s vernacular comes by way of Unity Headquarters where The Daily Word and Unity are published, as well as smaller ideologically specific pamphlets, and books of the movement that contain and maintain the established Unity ideology. These ideologies must be maintained because, interestingly, Unity relies on the Bible for basic truths, but espouses a liberal conception of God, and is open to the notion that other religious doctrines and beliefs contain “paths to truth.” Thus Unity is often lumped into the broader religious category of “New Age” religion, when it really represents a synchronization of eastern religious influence, Biblical doctrine of Christ, and religious science. It is worth making the distinction between Unity and “New Age” religions because, although Unity is a composite of great ideas from many different places, there is a heavy reliance on the bible and the teachings of Christ and therefore, a Christian understructure of identity. There are five basic principles that the literature of Unity all possess in relatively explicit terms:

1. God is absolute good, everywhere present.
2. Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ Spirit within. Their very essence is of God, and therefore they are inherently good also.
3. Human beings create their experiences by the activity of their thinking. Everything in the manifest realm has its beginning in thought.
4. Prayer is creative thinking that heightens the connection with God Mind and therefore brings forth wisdom, healing, prosperity, and everything good.
5. Knowing and understanding the laws of life — also called Truth— are not enough. A person must also live the Truth that he or she knows (Unity Movement Advisory Council 2005).
These ideas get reproduced time and again in Church services, in The Daily Word, Unity, and messages from ministers and visiting guest speakers. Phrases like “absolute good” and “creative thinking” and “spark of divinity within” are rehashed and recontextualized. So, although Unity is a synchronization of many things, it is constrained in a flowery, positive, and individual centered language. This language translates the teachings of Jesus and creates a new form of Christianity; “Practical Christianity.” Members identify with Christ on a personal level, and refer to him as an elder brother. By this, Jesus Christ is not viewed as a savior, but his teachings and life serve as the example of how one should live one’s life. Unity, therefore, recontextualizes the concept of Jesus while embracing his teachings. There is no traditional ritual, such as the sacrament, that surrounds the idea of a divine Jesus; rather, members embrace the second principle of a “Christ spirit within.”

Finally, members of First Unity and of the movement as a whole, refer to themselves as a “metaphysical community.” Metaphysics literally means, “Beyond the physical” and aspects of ritual during Sunday services reflect this ideology. This metaphysical approach to religion is also reinforced through the prevalent individual centered language that focuses on individual spirituality and the journey towards greater truth. Essentially, this metaphysical aspect of First Unity is a semiotic approach to spirituality in that the search for meaning in life flows through a “spiritual journey” and the power of positive thinking. “…metaphysics cast(s) light on the mental universe and release[ed] undreamed-of powers of mind. Unity has taught that there is a spiritual science, a science of mind with its own laws as limiting and as liberating as the laws of the physical sciences (Unity Movement Advisory Council 2005).”

Ritual, Language, and First Unity

Greeting - “Welcome to Unity Church, I greet you in the name of the Christ Love, and behold the Christ love in each one of you this morning.”- Reverend Rowbotham

Invocation - “I am now in the presence of pure Being, and immersed in the Holy Spirit of life, love, and wisdom. I acknowledge Thy presence and Thy power, O blessed Spirit. In Thy divine wisdom now erase my mortal limitations, and from Thy pure substance of love, bring into manifestation my world, according to Thy perfect law.”- Group Linguistic Ritual

Max Gluckman, in his article, “The License in Ritual,” posits that simpler societies have a greater abundance of ritual activity than industrial societies (McGee and Warms 2004). Why is this? What factors about modern industrial societies lend credence to less ritualized behavior? To answer, one must have an idea of what ritual is. I like Victor Turner’s definition of ritual as: “Prescribed formal behavior for occasions not given over to technological routine having reference to beliefs in mystical beings or powers (McGee and Warms 2004).” Is religion one of the last vestiges of ritual prevalent in American society? How does Turner’s definition hold up to First Unity’s behavior?

The ritual at First Unity follows closely with their ideology and language, and functions as a temporal structure by which the congregation performs the service and is a part of the service, and not a mere presence. By temporal structure, I mean within each service, each ritual is performed at a certain time with relatively little deviance to the basic order. Thus, services are segmented by these ritual activities, many of them group oriented, that allow members to participate and affirm their belief’s as part of something larger. The significance of this group “affirmation” at the Church level is a reflection of Unity’s mode of holding “communion” in spirit at the national level with The Daily Word.

Most, if not all, of the rituals performed at First Unity are wholly linguistic in nature. They do not require much physically out of the congregants, other than standing at times, but do require recitation at certain moments. These recitations can be called “routinized speech.” Nancy Bonvillan describes linguistic routines as, “highly predictable and stereotyped…They combine verbal material and social messages in patterns expressive of cultural values and sensitive to interactional context (2003:102).” This is apropos to the linguistic routines of First Unity. They are highly predictable and combine repetitive ideology at “sensitive” and interactive moments within the service.

Because these linguistic routines are group participatory, and not on smaller interactional levels, they represent a form of “meta-routinized” speech that is a bit different from the smaller, interactional greetings and apologies to which Bonvillan was referencing; therefore, they can be better classified as group linguistic rituals. There are two types of group linguistic rituals, songs, and prayers that are always performed at First Unity while standing. The songs are included as ritual because of the congregant’s memorization of the songs, (quite a surprise to me at first), their constant presence within the services, and the action of standing that breaks the flow of the service. The prayers include, in order, the “Invocation,” “Offertory,” and “Prayer of Protection.” The songs include “The Lord’s Prayer” (itself a prayer, but sung instead of recited), at times “Surely Thy Presence” and always, “Let There Be Peace on Earth.”

The last song, “Let There Be Peace on Earth,” is the only example of the additional action that is, should I say, unifying. In addition to standing and singing, the congregation also joins hands while rocking slightly, back and forth, raising their joined hands in unison, high into the air at the close of the song. Interestingly, the
congregation is left by themselves half way through the song as the Reverend makes his exit down the center aisle. At the close of this song, the Reverend’s disconnected voice can be heard over the sound system, as he leads the congregation in a final prayer, the “Prayer of Protection.” This prayer symbolizes their central belief in God as light, love, power, and presence, and their belief that God surrounds, enfolds, protects, and watches them. It is performed together, every Sunday, reaffirming the basic ideology of First Unity.

Prayer of Protection - “The Light of God surrounds us, the Love of God enfolds us. The Power of God protects us, the Presence of God watches over us. Wherever we are, God is, and all is well!”

Another ritual of the service deals with the monetary funding of the Church. The Church is financed from the offerings of its members, and an entire ritual has developed around the weekly offering. These “Love Offerings,” as they are called, have two linguistic rituals attached, one is a group “Offertory” prayer that blesses the individual giving money, and the other is an acceptance of the offerings by the Reverend. In the following excerpt, the Reverend is setting up the context in which the “Love Offering” will be given after the “Offertory” prayer is said. The language he uses compares money to creative ideas which reinforces the topic that the guest speaker spoke on that day.

“But right now we’re preparing to bless our offering and our ushers are coming forward. So as we do, as we prepare to give our gift let’s think of that gift that we’re about to give as a creative idea, that gift of substance, financial substance, think of it as an idea, creative idea that you are holding now in your mind and in your heart, and your putting it out there. You’re giving it out, to the world, and, know that as you give, so you’ll receive, receive ten fold, hundred fold, five hundred fold of what you give. So we bless these gifts with this realization…”

From this moment, the whole congregation chimes in together, performing the “Offertory” prayer.

Offertory Prayer - “Divine Love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give and all that I receive.”

This prayer is followed by music, usually done by the talented music director, sometimes done by a visiting musical guest, and at other times the words to the song are projected onto a screen at the front so the congregation can participate in the song. It is during the music that the ushers go throughout the Sanctuary with tan bags and pick up the “love offerings.”

The “Offertory” prayer, and indeed many of the prayers given at First Unity, is a “performative utterance.” It performs an important social transaction, involving social commitments, in this case, funding the church so they can still attend. It affirms their basic belief that humans are divine and spiritual, as principle 3 states, that “Human beings have a spark of divinity within them, the Christ Spirit within. Their very essence is of God, and therefore they are inherently good also.” The “divinity within” is manifested through offering money to the church while the actual function of the ritual is to positively reinforce the act of imparting one’s money, while insuring the longevity of the church, and those it employs. The other portion of the “love offering” ritual is the acceptance of the offerings. They are blessed by the Reverend, and received, but not for the church, but for the community and world.

“We bless this rich outpouring of love. We bless it as it goes forth to bless our community and our world, with a new idea, a new idea, that you can make up your life differently.” – Reverend Rowbotham

Thus, the offertory ritual serves to establish First Unity as community, and perpetuate this community monetarily.

There is also an ambiguous ritual in which silence is honored by the whole group during a group meditation segment of the service. This component of the service is not really a ritual, but it is participated in as a group and, given the context of the whole service, could be remotely linked with the concept of ritual. It should be noted that there is a relative lack of children in the Sanctuary during services. Most of the congregation is in middle-aged or older, and this absence of children could be a direct result of this value placed on silence during this portion of the service. To move into the spiritual portion of the service, the Reverend usually references the same instruction - to turn off cell phones. The language used is indicative of what I call “Unity Language.” In the following excerpt, the Reverend is leading this group meditation in a soothing, even-keel voice, as if it were in the background, yet it comes to one’s ear in a whisper. There is a soft, soothing music playing in the background. The congregation is very quiet and many close their eyes and begin to breathe very deeply.

“…Open ourselves to God’s peace right now. I am one with God’s holy presence of peace. All is in Divine order. Release any concern to God now. Feel your one-ness with God. Be assured that all is well. As you rest again, In the silence, in the silence…”

(1 minute pause)

This silence is penetrating as the music stops, no one moves, there is barely a cough, and the voice of the Reverend softly begins as
the music begins,

As we feel the peace of God filling us, radiating out in us, through us, and from us.
We open ourselves to the Guiding Light of God.
We are awakened to new insights as we trust the light of God to guide us.
Let the light shine in your mind and heart.
As the music wells up, let the music of your heart well up.
Let it awaken you to the insights that help you see your world in a new way, in a new light.

God is the source of this light and it shines on your pathway
Within your own being you’re able to see more clearly
What you need to do to make wise decisions that lead to right solutions.
So with Gratitude in our hearts let’s rest again in that wonderful knowledge of the wisdom of God.
With which we are one.
The light of God shines in our hearts and in our minds right now, in the silence, in the silence...
(1 minute pause)

The honoring of the silence is unique, but not enough for consideration as ritual activity. However, the language used in these group meditations is very positive and displays the general ideology of First Unity. The idea that members are “one” with God translates into making the correct decisions, being aware of new insights, and opening oneself to that guiding light within one’s life. Thus, this “one-ness” is the “light” of knowledge that “guides” one on the “pathway” to enlightenment. Additionally, there is no reference to sin, repentance, or guilt. All the language reinforces the positive aspects of God. The absence of the traditional mechanisms of fear related to God reflects First Unity’s belief that humans are divine and inherently good, and can be “one” with God if they “open” themselves to it. This group meditation is an ambiguous form of a ritual in that the language performs the function of “opening” the group as a whole to the “guiding light of God.”

Discussion and Conclusions
The services at First Unity are performed by both the Reverend and the congregation. They reaffirm an ideology and establish an identity as a divine person who is one with God. This identity is symbolized by the rainbow on the church sign. The rainbow symbolizes group Unity; it is all the colors of the light spectrum and is the “light” they talk so much about. It also indirectly symbolizes an “open-ness” to all, and through my observations, I found that many disenfranchised Christian homosexuals had found a home in the embracing commUNITY. The focus on the individuals relationship with God and the absence of fear based notions of God, lead to an ideology of being “one” with God. The rituals performed at First Unity also unify the group as a coherent whole. The circular shape of the Sanctuary symbolizes this unity and allows the congregation to look in each other’s eyes as they perform the service. The “Labyrinth” that is outside the church is a path that winds in circles eventually ending in the middle. Its overall shape is of a heart, and symbolizes the individual “journey” to enlightenment accomplished through self-love. The rituals at Unity are fashioned to reflect the ideology and values that are deemed important; they reflect an identity and create a community.
Sometime in 1994, when I was 17, I crashed an online party for the first time. I entered a chatroom called “Thirty-Something” and proceeded to ask the other inhabitants snide, but what I thought to be funny, questions about what it is like to be “old”. I was quickly encouraged to exit that space. A few items of background knowledge should be known. First, it took great effort on my part to figure out how to get the sputtering AOL (the only ISP available at the time) going, as well as a lot of difficulty in accessing the chatroom. Secondly, in joining the chat, I was mocking the interlocutors I deemed pathetic losers, that is living, breathing people who thought that pounding out words on their keyboards, bound for an ethereal nothingness, constituted real human interaction. I considered online chatters to be so socially inept that they could not communicate face to face with other human beings if given the chance. Computers were, for me and my high school comrades were for writing term papers and playing the occasional revamped version of “Donkey Kong”.

Now that thirty is something I am much more comfortable in achieving, and 17 is hazy, far-away thing that once occurred in my life, the Internet has taken on an entirely different meaning. My, how things have changed. Who could count the number of Internet Service Providers, DSL, cable or otherwise, available today? As I sit and type, I do so with wireless Internet access coursing through my laptop (which I could not live without). The very fact that the acronym, ISP, is a nearly universally recognized entry in the American English language lexicon is evidence of the importance and relevancy of the Internet to our existence. Cities around the nation, St. Petersburg, for example have gone wireless, virtually transforming the Internet a socialized institution. Perhaps more important than its implications for science and economics, the Internet has revolutionized the way human beings communicate with each other. Now, it is not an intangible atmosphere in which one technophile gabs cryptically with another, but a nearly concrete social space, where communities are formed, allegiances hardened and emotions spilled, in order to be lapped up by friend or foe on the multiple other ends of the twenty-first century telegraph.

One such way a person collects a sense of community(ies) and exposes her/himself to other anthro-netters is through Live Journals. In fact, “community” is a buzzword on Live Journal sites. It denotes a set of “friends” who share an interest in a particular subject. For instance, the “Postal Service Community”, which is mentioned later in this paper, consists of those users who are fans of the indie pop band, “The Postal Service”. Being a part of this community implies much more than simply enjoying the music of “The Postal Service”. Even if one can not physically be seen, a member of this community dresses a certain way, reads a certain selection of literature, frequents other indie band performances, referred to as “shows”, not concerts, and, as it turns out, is very critical of the words and writing style that other community members use in their personal journals. Little black-rimmed glasses and all, “Postal Service Community” members from Seattle to Miami share a co-culture.

Live Journals are quite like “blogs” (weblogs), in that they are an on-going, online list of comments made on particular topics. However, Live Journals and Blogs differ in a few key ways. First, I categorize a blog as utilitarian, interactive discussion, while I define a Live Journal as instrument of personal use by individuals. As was widely reported during the Democratic primary of 2004, candidate Howard Dean used a blog to interact and gain support from the youth constituency as well as to raise funds. In this way, the Dean campaign used an organized blog to reach a politics, not individually philosophical end. A blog can be like a debate on politics, or any other issue, with the minor difference that interlocutors do not physically interact. Like blog users, Live Journal users enjoy a certain level of anonymity, but Live Journal users are more like to share intimate and identifiable information, like place of origin, first names and photographs. Additionally, blogs are not necessarily open for comment and can be used as type of one-sided propaganda tool, such as that of Senate majority leader, Tom Delay.

Many Live Journal users keep records of their daily happenings, their hopes and their tribulations in this format. In this way, Live Journals function as diaries. Yet, the difference between a hard copy diary, the kind that often comes with a miniature lock and key, and a Live Journal is that the Live Journal is left open, in part, for others to read and comment on. While reading another
person’s private musings in a hard copy diary would incur severe social sanction, doing so in the electronic Live Journal version is encouraged. However, there are three levels of Live Journal interaction. The first level and the easiest to access is open on the journal website for anyone to view and comment on. This is not to say, however that the postings on the first level are not highly personal in nature. The second level of interaction can be accessed by users listed on individuals “friends” list. The third level can be read only by the user who writes it. It is on the third level that a Live Journal functions most like a hard copy diary, although security can be circumvented.

The circumstances surrounding Live Journals leads to an observation and several questions. If Live Journals act as records of human profiles from which individuals can learn about and form relationships with others that they are not necessarily physically connected to, then they serve to create a virtual social space where people reveal themselves in ways comparable to regular face to face interaction. Sometimes this quasi-reality can have very real consequences. But, is it only possible to reveal oneself like this under the cover of non-physicality? In other words, it is much easier to get up and walk away from a computer if angered by another’s comment and then to return later, after one has had time to consider one’s words, to make the appropriate reciprocal comment. And, what separates Live Journal users from non-users?

From the last question, I draw a hypothesis based on my introductory remarks. When this almost “Thirty-Something” researcher was a teen, the Internet was a novelty, and not a channel which to express tender emotions. But, with the rapid evolution of IT (internet technology) has come the next generation, whose teen years were developed in an Internet ready world, the only world they have known. As Finish researcher Virpi Oskman writes, “Internet based communication channels are part of the new written communication culture of young people” (2004: 321) and at the University of Kansas, it was found that college students maintained 35% of their local, that geographically close, relationships through the Internet. (Baym at al. 2004:310) It is possible then, that because the Internet was established system of communication in the teen years of the 18-22 year-olds of today, they would be more likely to view the Internet as an acceptable forum to air one’s entire personality. Just as it is unlikely that 18-22 year olds wrote their high school book reports out on a piece of paper, with a pen, it is likely that a Live Journals would be an appealing alternative to one of those little hard copy diaries, with a lock and a key.

Method

A single live journal entry can be studied as a linguistic unit of analysis. Live Journal users communicate primarily via written language, although many post photographs and drawings and some pages are elaborately decorated. One journal I visited had a long, narrow in center for text and beautiful recreations of the play, Les Miserables, bordering either side. Artful pages like this one illustrate the personalized nature of Live Journals.

To begin this project, I recruited an informant, who I will call K. K is twenty-two year-old White female college student from a Middle class family. She is highly Internet savvy and does the majority of her communicating online. K explained the live journal process to me, gave me access to all three of her interaction levels and gave me an “in” to friends lists. For the purposes of this tiny study, I choose only to look at postings on the first interaction level of free accounts (which are visually less elaborate). I was interested in only the first level postings simply because anyone, anywhere in the world with IT access can read these postings and therefore first level postings can set parameters to how intimate a Live Journal created social space can be. To satisfy this interest, I choose to analyze 8 Live Journals I picked at random, without preview.

Results

Live Journal #1: “My Sister has been more communicative (is that a word?)”

The first Live Journal belongs to a twenty-two-year old mother of a three-month-old baby. The journal selection spans from February 15th, 2005 to April 25th, 2005 for a total of seventeen entries. The entries begin just after the baby’s, Gabriel’s, birth. From the content, we know that “Mommy” was largely pregnant when she was married, that her husband, Pablo, works often, that a good friend, who she will miss, has just moved away and that she is madly in love with her child. She writes, “I love my son so much that I sometimes think my heart will burst. I can watch him sleeping for hours (never more than two...because then he wakes up)...” We also learn that Mommy has a rocky relationship with her parents, who are divorced and that at least her mother is remarried. She also has a set of foster parents. Mommy is in college, but she is not happy with her studies. Nor is mommy happy with the current state of her body. Among other things she writes, My boobs are no longer symetric or even close to being the same size.

*example: ( o ) ( o ) <~~ mirror image” and later, “It sucks to have small breasts when you NEED a bra that fits for function”.

I am a complete stranger, but know that Mommy breastfeeds instead of bottle-feeds, that the movie Gladiator makes her cry and that she likes to blame bouts of sentimentality on her...
hormones.

Live Journal #2: “My Saying of Da Day”

Kay is new to the Live Journal community. She has only two entries. She writes in dialect that could be described as creole of SE, California Valley and AAE. She is young, possibly in Junior High school, but that is indefinite. The observer’s clue is, “We are also having a prom but … The real prom is in high school.” The reader does know that she is having a sleepover soon, that she is very excited that school is over on June 18th, and that she is highly opposed to letting others, “borrow your stuff cuz they wont return it or they will be carless with it”. On that she remarks,

“Trust me on this one… let this bitch borrow my cd player and she still didn’t return it. Me thinkz she lost it. Well didn’t let another bitch borrow my earrings and she lost the part that blockz the earings from following of my ear. The same bitch borrowed by book and didn’t return it. The same bitch borrows 2 dollars from me months ago and didn’t payed back. The same bitch borrowed three dollarz from my friend and didn’t pay back. Do not trust this bitch!”

Live Journal #3: “Bloodlent’s not dead!!”

Bloodlent has nine Live Journal entries from April 22, 2005 to April 30th, 2005. A self proclaimed “sad, sad teen”, Bloodlent most often links porn sites to his journal, except when linking socially conscious anti-poverty sites. Conversely though, and perhaps for shock value, he says, “I’ve decided society is entirely too kind to idiots… You can’t make them smart with any number of diatribes and statements and programs and terms about the “learning disabled” and the “slow”… That’s what the factory is for! Pick up my trash, peon!” In addition to giving the reader a lesson in Dadaism, he teaches his audience about teen angst “Everything in life is fuckin’ miserable. You constantly look over your shoulder and wonder who is judging you...” He posts several pictures of himself, one in Goth costume, others in plain clothes.

Live Journal #4: “The Mystic Pig”

Mj da funk ya’s journal defies my hypothesis that journals are used for diaries. Featuring two photos of one battery operated, oinking pig, the entirety of the entries reads, “I asked the mystic pig: What is jeremy going to be when he grows up?? and the mystic pig said: I haven’t the faintest idea. ... I asked the mystic pig: What is jeremy going to be when he grows up?? and the mystic pig said: I haven’t the faintest idea.”

Live Journal #5: “I’ve been so busy lately that I haven’t had any time to update my journal and comment on yours.”

Amanda is either an upper classman in high school, or she is enrolled in college. Either way, she is so tired that her head feel’s like “mashed potatoes”. The space on her journal is taken up more by photographs of herself than text. She has a photo of her friend Lina, who she says is, “so fucked up ( in a good way )”. She remarks that when she is less busy, she will get right back to the task of browsing Live Journals.

Live Journal #6: “ My dad said all I need is 120 more dollars and then I’ll be rich.”

Jim Wright, aka “Fairy ass Faggot” espouses homophobia in his twenty journal entries spanning from January 22nd 2005 to April 29th 2005. For instance, “I cancelled my sprint service cuz it was gayer than ben miley.” And, just incase anyone around the world would like to give Jim a call, “I got on my moms plan and got a new phone and heres my new number 330-715-3169.” He enjoys all kinds of gaming from Dungeons and Dragons to halo2 to more traditional xbox games. He lives with his parents in newly built house and tells detailed stories of drunken carousing with three male friends. It is unclear how old Jim is, but there is a good chance that his consumption of Molson beer is illegal. He is in college and made uncomfortable by a thirty-five year old man who rooms with one of Jim’s buddies. His only mention of a female party in his journal says, “I watched six episodes of arrested development season 1 last night and I plan on watching six more tonight. Its a nicely done situational comedy, ron howard narrates and there is

Live Journal #7: “People with shit taste in music should die”

Ravin’ and Rantin’ Mark is eighteen, a newly registered voter. It also happens that Mark lives in Ireland. Mark’s lengthy journal can be summed up by this typical entry, “My sister downloaded A Cinderella Story (Starring Hilary Duff) and was downloading New York Minute (Starring the Olsen Twins) What the FUCK is wrong with that fucking retard. I need to fucking set that bitch straight” In eighteen journal entries, the reader learns that Mark is interviewing to be a secondary school teacher, that he was contacted by a an adoption council about finding his birth parents, which he was disturbed by, and that on a recent trip to Amsterdam he grew fond of the city for its beautiful architecture and because, “YOU CAN SMOKE WEED OMG!”.

Live Journal #8: “ I am sooo bored, so I’m gonna go play with my karaoke machine. If anybody wants to come over, call me. Like come over NOW because I’m losing it.”

Christie uses her 23 journal entries dating from December
20th, 2005 to April 24rd 2005 to function a venue of personal expression, a direct line of communication to her High School friends and as a diary of the day’s events. For instance, she speaks to individual friends that she physically interacts with outside of the Live Journal world, “Katie! We have some things to talk about. I just want to know how you’re doing and what happened! Call me or something if you get a chance, cuz you’re not online. I love you, and I’m here if you need me.” Although, the reader cannot guess what has happened to Katie, this posting is particularly interesting. Not only is Christie using her journal, which can be viewed by anyone, to speak of and to her friend’s distress, she asks the friend to call her because she is not online. Christie implies that telephone voice communication, oral communication is a secondary means of communication only to be resorted to if online communication fails. Of course, the small problem with this is that if Christie’s friend is not online at all, it unlikely that she will see Christie’s post. This might seem obvious, and funny, but there may be other forces at work here too. We don’t know if, in posting this entry, Christie is speaking not only to Katie but to others in her peer group, nor do we know what end that might serve.

She defines her social status within her High School. She writes, “Smooth Friday was AWESOME. Even if I didn’t have enough green stuff to keep me from looking like I was gothic (which I’m not, I swear) it was still really fun” and “I just saw Tim Ansley and his friends eat lunch with a freshman that doesn’t have many friends. It was really sweet. End of update.” Here, Christie is telling the world what she is not. She is not friendless and she is not a freshman.

**Conclusion**

From the eight Live Journals sampled, several themes emerge. We see that Live Journals are a way to record the events of one’s life for others to view. These entries can be highly intimate and revealing in nature, such as Mommy’s discussion of her breasts, or Jim Wright’s reference towards drinking and homosexuality. Interestingly, Live Journals are in which the personal lives others are discussed, seemingly without their consultation. Mark calls his sister a “bitch” and a “retard” on an international stage. Christie lets her High School know that she saw an apparently popular boy, Tim Ansley eating lunch with an unpopular freshman. Jim says a person called Ben Miley is “gay”. However, it is clear that not all Live Journals are used in this fashion. Journal #4 is not.

The age range of the users in this sample does fit within the scope of my hypothesis. Yet, I have become aware that users over the age of 22 do exist. How they use their Live Journals is unknown to this researcher, but would be a fascinating item of further investigation.

That said, Live Journals do create a social space for youth to inhabit. Much like coffee house social space that gained recognition in the 1990’s, Live Journals provide youth and young adults a somewhat commoditized social space for interaction with peers. It just so happens that those peers can be anywhere in the world and the interaction does not take place face-to-face.

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* Contributor’s note: Since writing this paper, I have had the opportunity to explore other electronic Journals and have found that the average age of users is between 16 and 35 years old. For more information on this, please visit my Myspace site or feel free to chat with me live via Yahoo!IM at autumnwrite@yahoo.com.
My research focuses on the challenges to cross cultural communications between Deaf and hearing cultures in America specifically as this relates to nonverbal cues and identity performance. I propose, based on this research that, while ASL and English are independent languages, the primary source of miscommunication between hearing and Deaf populations stems not from the languages or from the audiological differences between these groups but from the culturally determined practices and norms which typically accompany membership in one group or another. Interlocutors who can perform identities which play by the rules of the culture of the target audience are understood more often than those who perform only identities which obey their own cultural norms. It is therefore not any fundamental difference between hearing and deaf people but rather difference between their culturally constructed identities which results in miscommunication.

Background

It is important to understand the terms Deaf, deaf, hearing, and hard of hearing and the differences between them. Deaf and hearing cultures are often likened to ethnicities in that they have their own cultural tools, practices, and ways of viewing and dealing with the world. Capitalization of the “D” in Deaf indicates association with Deaf culture and language. A lower case “d” in deaf refers to people who have severe or total hearing loss. However, not all members of the Deaf community are deaf in an audiological sense just as not all clinically deaf people are members of the Deaf community. Many individuals with relatively little hearing loss choose to identify themselves as Deaf because that is the culture with which they identify. They may have the ability to speak or hear but their primary language is most likely Sign. They may participate in Deaf events, use Deaf technologies like a tele-type writer or a video phone. On the other hand, other individuals with severe or sometimes even total hearing loss choose to identify themselves as hard of hearing. They may speak, hear (with the help of a hearing aid) or read lips and generally take part in the practices of hearing culture. These individuals may be deaf but they do not necessarily participate in Deaf culture (Humphries, et. al, 1980).

For the purposes of this paper, “hearing” will refer generally to English speaking Americans and hard of hearing or deaf persons who participate primarily in oral American culture. The term Deaf will refer to Deaf individuals who count themselves as members of the Deaf community and use American Sign Language as their primary language.

I conducted most of my research regarding the Deaf community at events called Silent Dinners. These are common in areas with a large number of Deaf residents and are a way for Deaf people to interact with and meet new Deaf people in their area. Most of the particular dinners I attended were held at the Citrus Park Mall in Tampa, Florida. Gatherings consisted typically of twelve to twenty straight and gay Deaf men and women ranging in age from late teens to early sixties, and ten to fifteen college students from nearby USF and HCC. As I became one of the regulars here and developed relationships with some of the members of the community I began observing the patterns of nonverbal communication and conducting informal interviews to gain specific information about signer’s lives and their past experiences with communicating with Deaf and hearing people.

Because of the difficulties of recording signed language, the transcripts which appear here are reconstructions based on notes taken during the informal interviews. All interpretation of the ASL into English was done by me under the supervision of a more fluent hearing signer. In only one instance was an interpreter used traditionally during an interview, but that transcript does not appear in this text. Because of the limited size of my sample population, all generalizations about nonverbal cues of the Deaf culture were checked against more founded references before being published here. Instead it is the personal stories and non-generalized accounts of behavior which the small community in which I conducted my research brings to this ethnography.

Residential Schools

A large part of Deaf culture and Deaf history have to do with deaf residential schools or institutes. Today these schools are one of the main avenues through which Deaf culture is passed from generation to generation. In the past most residential schools taught the oral method, encouraging deaf children to perform and
function as hearing people. Recently, however, they have become more Deaf oriented, embracing signed education methods, and encouraging development of Deaf cultural practices. These schools play a big role in the acculturation of d/Deaf children who attend them (Humphries et. all.(1980).

**ASL as a Language**

American Sign Language is a natural language which has its own rules of grammar, phonology and syntax, separate from those of English*. Compared to hearing culture, among the Deaf communities body language is featured more prominently and is comparatively standardized. Because the main avenue of communication is non-verbal, it is not surprising that we find more standardization and specificity in the meaning of nonverbal cues than we do in verbal languages. The culturally accepted range of facial expressions and the rules for their use among hearing and Deaf cultures differ drastically. Generally speaking, ASL calls for the use of more facial expressions overall and has more specific rules for determining meaning than does English.

Scholars and teachers draw parallels between facial expressions for ASL users and voice intonation for English speakers. It is the facial expressions worn and other nonverbal cues like head position and gaze which show the tone, meaning and even function of a phrase. For example, information like whether the sentence being signed is a question and if so what kind of question it is, is all transmitted through facial expression.

There are two question forms in ASL: yes/no questions and questions about who, what, why, when, where, which, and how (called WH questions). There are also different cues used for each of these forms. If a yes/no question is being asked, then the questioner will look directly at the person being questioned, move the head slightly forward and raise their eyebrows while signing. If the question is a WH question, the questioner again will move the head slightly forward and look directly at the person being asked but the eyebrows instead are squeezed together and slightly down. These cues alert listeners that they are expected to respond (and even tell what kind of response is requested).

Facial expressions can also modify the sign they accompany. For example if you sign the word UNDERSTAND (first finger extended repeatedly in a flicking motion toward the head) with a flat or deadpan facial expression it is difficult to interpret what is meant. Without the context of a facial expression this sign cannot communicate meaning. Yet, signing UNDERSTAND with a positive facial expression means “Yes, I(she, he, we, they) understand(s).” However, if the same sign is made with a negative facial expression it means “No, I (she, he, we, they) do(es) not understand.” Also, if the same sign is made again with a yes/no question facial expression it means “Do(es) you (she, he, they) understand?” Meaning and question status are all carried in the facial expression in this case.

A common practice of ASL is tongue showing. While in English this is rare and there are specific rules about how and in what contexts the tongue may be shown, in ASL the tongue is used frequently to modify the meaning of signs or turn them into different signs completely*.

In ASL the tongue is used to change the meaning of signs or turn them into new signs completely. For example take the sign FAR. If the sign for FAR (index finger pointed in an arcing motion away from the body) is performed with the pursed frown (the facial indicator for usually or in a normal fashion) then the meaning conveyed is relatively or reasonably far. However, if the same sign is performed while shaking a pointed tongue side to side inside an open mouth then the sign means really or very far. It is important to note that this same use of the tongue (shaking side to side in an open mouth) in English would be considered highly inappropriate in most settings and even in the most informal of contexts would most likely be interpreted as a crude or sexually explicit gesture.

Other signs like CHEAP, INTERESTING, AWFUL and other adjectives can also be modified by facial expression. If an adjective is signed with an intense facial expression it modifies it as would the adjective “very”. Other facial expressions such as furrowed eyebrows can be used by a listener to show that they are paying attention to what the signer is saying. These expressions are not back channel communications but explicit, defined transmissions of information. They have specific meanings which are crucial to the discourse and without which the language is nearly undecipherable and certainly less communicative.

Hearing and hard of hearing speakers of English use relatively limited facial expressions during normal speech, according to cultural guidelines. Cues about meaning, question markers and emotion are transmitted primarily through tone and pitch of the voice. Hearing people do, of course, use nonverbal cues to communicate a range of messages. Volumes have been written describing and analyzing the nonverbal systems of the hearing and indeed the messages sent nonverbally are important and communicative. However, compared to the cultural and linguistic rules governing nonverbal cues in ASL these systems are less specifically defined.

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*For more information about the linguistic basis of sign language see Valli and Lucas.

*For more information about tongue showing in English see Kendon 1981.
Communication Breakdown

As part of my informal interviews I asked several members of the Deaf community if they had trouble when talking with hearing people because the people they were talking with would misunderstand their facial expressions or body language. One young man, Eric, went to a residential school which used signed methods of instruction and is currently enrolled in Gallaudet University, the first College for the Deaf. He told me about some of the problems he has while communicating with hearing people.

E: That is a hard question. It happens a lot so I don’t notice as much anymore. Let me think.
AH: That’s fine.

{long pause}

E: I know, sometimes I will be paying attention to what someone is saying and have my face like this, eyebrows pulled in, brow furrowed, eyes focused, and they will be talking to me and then think I am mad. They ask “What’s wrong?”

“Me?” I ask (mimes looking around to see if they could mean someone else) Nothing. I’m fine. What?

“Oh you looked mad.”

“No. No, I’m fine. I’m just interested.” (laughing)
AH: That’s funny.
E: Yeah Oh I’ll tell you a story, true story. One time it happened that a man from the newspaper came and took a picture of my friend and I while we’re signing. He asked “Is it ok if I take a picture of you two for the paper?”

“Welcome,” Whatever. We keep signing, don’t think of it. The next day in the paper my friends all look and call me, hearing friends, say,

“I thought you got in a fight! I saw your picture in the paper and it looks like he was going to punch you!” (laughing)
You know, because STRONG is like this* and they think this alters the pose STRONG to imitate getting ready to throw a punch [like in cartoon style boxing])
AH: (Laughing) Had they gotten the caption wrong?
E: No, no. It didn’t say we were fighting but, all my hearing friends thought that before they read so…

While Eric communicates with many hearing people by writing back and forth, he still reports frequent miscommunications due to his use of Deaf facial expressions.

Another man I interviewed gave a few examples of facial expressions that can confusing hearing people.

AH: Sometimes if someone is signing like this, with their cheeks puffed out or blowing through their lips like this hearing people see it and (making a shocked and slightly disgusted face) ask “What is that? What are you doing?!?”

Two older women I interviewed had grown up orally. One, Amy, lost her hearing later in life and so had already learned to speak English. ASL is her second language but is now her primary avenue of communication. Pat went to a residential school but during a time when most schools, including hers, were using oral methods and encouraging deaf people to perform as hearing. Both women at first reported that they did not have trouble with hearing people misunderstanding them:

AH: When you are talking with hearing people does it ever happen that they are watching your facial expressions and misunderstand them?
A: No they don’t misunderstand me. I grew up in the hearing world. I know what hearing people think and how to talk to them so they don’t misunderstand.
AH: So when you talk to hearing people you don’t use Deaf facial expressions?
A: Right, no I talk like I am hearing. I actually have an accent, sometimes they ask me where I’m from. I say “Oh, I’m Deaf.” They didn’t know.
AH: What about you?
P: Misunderstand? No. Never. They understand me because I know how to talk.
AH: So hearing people never think you are angry or sad or anything because they misunderstand your facial expressions?
P: No.
A: Oh sometimes when they see me talk to someone Deaf, like if I’m talking to her, (Pat) they may misunderstand what I’m saying then.
AH: Because you’re using Deaf facial expressions?
P: [Oh, yeah.]

Both women claim proficiency in a hearing identity and use this identity when interacting with hearing people.

“Oh, sorry. We thought you were fighting.”

The increased importance of body language and intense use of facial expression in ASL often can be confused by hearing people for an argument or (non)verbal fight since these are some of the rare times that hearing people use facial expression to that degree.

In my interviews several members of the Deaf community reported having a conversation with another ASL speaker (usually Deaf) at work or another public place during which hearing people watching them would misinterpret their conversation as a fight. These occurrences were reported to have happened not only in

*strong is signed by making two fists with arms bent forward and elbows at the sides. The fists are moved down slightly but forcefully as in a reverse curl. The face is made to look strong/confident as well by furrowing the brow and frowning slightly.
settings where the onlookers did not know the signers but also places where everyone present knew the signers personally and was familiar with their use of sign language. Sometimes the onlookers would go as far as to interrupt the signers to ask if they were alright and suggest that they take a break and discuss the seemingly troublesome issue later. Pat and Amy co-tell such a story in our interview.

A: I know at work sometimes Pat and I will be talk, talk, talking, signing back and forth about plans or something, whatever. We'll be signing and someone will come up to us, “Are you two okay?”
We'll look at each other “Yeah we’re ok”
“Oh we thought you two were fighting”
We laugh, “No, no, we’re not fighting; we’re just excited; we’re talking…
A: Oh sorry, we thought you were fighting.”
[“It’s ok. It’s ok,” we tell them and we laugh about it.]
P: [Right, that’s true.] What do these brackets mean?
I: Does that happen a lot?
A: [Oh yes.]
P: [Yes, they think we fight all the time.]

As seen in the last section, both of these women reported being able to communicate effectively with hearing people directly without misunderstanding of facial expression and body language. However they report these results when they are performing hearing identities. While engaging in conversations with another Deaf signer (both of whom are now performing Deaf identities) their nonverbal cues are misinterpreted by hearing on-lookers.

It is relevant to note that I have actually experienced this phenomenon twice myself. I am a hearing speaker of English with conversational ASL but I often use sign both among Deaf signers and hearing speakers and students of ASL. On two separate occasions I have been signing with friends and have had our conversation misconstrued for a fight. On one such occasion a friend and I were waiting in line at a smoothie bar and were signing on the topic of a Frisbee game and some of the people we had been playing with. We were interrupted by a complete stranger, a male our age, who had been watching us. He advised the male with whom I was signing that he should “give me a break” and told him that he ought not to talk to me that way. We explained that we weren’t fighting, that everything was alright, and that in fact neither of us were Deaf. He apologized, explaining that he thought that I was Deaf and my hearing boyfriend was mocking and belittling me in sign and he felt that he should step in (Note 1). It was not until later, after talking with the women in the conversation above, that I realized the significance of this event. If a simple conversation between two hearing friends about a game of Frisbee can be misconstrued for a case of (non)verbal domestic abuse then there is certainly a break in communication not necessarily between hearing and Deaf people but between hearing and Deaf ways of communicating.

Conclusions
As we can see, the challenges to communication between d/Deaf and hearing individuals and groups do not always fall neatly along deaf/hearing lines. That is because these miscommunications stem from differences in cultural norms and systems which the interlocutors put to use through performed identities and signed and spoken languages, not from differences in the ability to hear. Take, for example, the two women Amy and Pat. Both claim to be able to communicate with hearing people without misunderstanding and both, while claiming membership in the Deaf community can perform a hearing identity with reasonable proficiency. When they interact with hearing people, both use hearing modes of communication or adopt Deaf modes to conform to hearing cultural norms. Growing up orally and in the hearing world, both women cultivated successful hearing identities which they maintained command of even after entry into the Deaf community. They employ these identities when they wish to communicate with hearing people and report successful results. Eric, on the other hand, who grew up with a primarily Deaf identity uses his Deaf identity even when interacting with hearing people. He reports being misunderstood often.

Similarly, hearing individuals when conforming to Deaf cultural norms and using Deaf modes of communication, (to an extent, performing Deaf identities), can be misunderstood by other non-Deaf-proficient hearing individuals. Proficient performance of a hearing identity seems to be a better indicator of successful communication of hearing people than does actual hearing ability. It is not then that the break in communication is audiologically based, but rather cultural.

Notes
1. This phenomenon of non-signing onlookers stepping in to break up perceived signed fights is very interesting and makes me curious about general tendencies and cultural norms regarding breaking up fights and arguments. I wonder if the same patterns would be found among all hearing discourses in instances where people actually were fighting either in a language everyone present could understand or in other unintelligible spoken languages. Discrepancies between the reaction to these different situations may indicate some larger patterns about how hearing people perceive deaf people and deafness and how they choose to interact. I would like to see this researched further.
2. Interview participants are labeled as follows:
AH- Aurora Hadsock
E- Eric
P- Pat
A- Amy
D- Dave

Key
[ ] indicates overlapping speech
( ) indicates actions mimes and gestures (non-ASL)
{} indicates pauses

References


