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Elaine Wonhee Chun

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The Dissertation Committee for Elaine Wonhee Chun Certifies that this is the approved version of the following dissertation:

**The Meaning of Mocking:
Stylizations of Asians and Preps at a U.S. High School**

Committee:

Keith Walters, Co-Supervisor

Qing Zhang, Co-Supervisor

Megan Crowhurst

Lisa Green

Elizabeth Keating

Anthony Woodbury

**The Meaning of Mocking:
Stylizations of Asians and Preps at a U.S. High School**

by

Elaine Wonhee Chun, A.B.

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Dedication

For my parents and my brothers

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This dissertation investigates two kinds of mocking practices performed by Asian American students and their non-Asian American peers at a multiethnic high school near a Texas military base. The first, *stylized Asian mocking*, recalls a stereotype of Asians as deviant because of their perceived incompetence, foreignness, and aggressiveness. The second, *stylized prep mocking*, evokes images of a category of girls who were locally regarded as feminine, white, and wealthy. Based on fifteen months of daily participant-observation in non-classroom activities in addition to discourse analyses of everyday interactions and ethnographic interviews, this study explores the complex links between language and social meaning as well as the significance of stylized mocking as a local cultural practice.

Specifically, stylized Asian mocking was found to articulate with widely circulating images of Asians as linguistically incompetent and comically incomprehensible as well as a local image of Asians as rudely aggressive. The social meanings of style features used when mocking Asians were found to be related to the

code represented (English or an Asian language), past contexts of circulation, and putative resemblance to Asian immigrant speech. On the other hand, stylized prep mocking lay at the ideological intersection of whiteness, class privilege, and femininity and recalled characteristics that non-prep girls constructed as simultaneously desirable and undesirable. Neither of these styles depended on a set of 'essential features'. Rather, stylers drew on a flexible variety of linguistic resources, suggesting that the social meanings of styles emerged in moments of practice.

The analysis of the cultural significance of these practices demonstrates that students sometimes explicitly contested ideologies of language, ethnicity, and national belonging upon which stylized Asian mocking practices were based, yet certain ideological assumptions lay unquestioned. Additionally, stylized prep mocking served important social functions for girls who used it to construct their identities, display their cultural competence, and socialize one another into local cultural norms. Despite the oppositional alignment that stylized mocking involved, the particular ambiguities associated with this styling practice allowed girls to mock preps in order to construct their own femininities. Finally, a model of styling, placing mocking in relation to other styling practices, is proposed.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	xv
List of Figures.....	xvi
List of Illustrations.....	xix
List of Examples	xx
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
1.1 Theoretical approach.....	2
1.2 Overview of the dissertation	4
Chapter 2: Theoretical Background.....	7
2.1 Mocking.....	7
2.2 Multivocality: Stylization, quotation, and play	8
2.3 Crossing	12
2.4 Approaches to the study of style.....	15
2.4.1 Context.....	15
2.4.2 Indexicality	17
2.4.3 Practice.....	18
2.4.4 Interaction	21
2.5 Relevance of mocking to style research.....	22
2.5.1 Authenticity and value.....	22
2.5.2 Transformation.....	23
2.5.3 Conventionalization	24
Chapter 3: Background of the Study: Site and Methods.....	27
3.1 Introduction to the site	27
3.1.1 Entering Diversity High.....	29
3.1.2 A high school in Fortville	30
3.1.3 Ethnicity.....	33
3.1.4 Notes on labeling	41
3.1.5 Social class.....	46

3.2 Methods of data collection.....	49
3.2.1 Ethnographic positioning and paradoxes.....	49
3.2.2 Recording local activities.....	55
3.2.3 Participants.....	57
3.3 Methods of discourse analysis.....	61
3.3.1 Transcription.....	61
3.3.2 Linguistic features in conversation.....	63
3.3.3 Ethnographic interpretation of local meaning.....	64
3.3.4 Quantitative analysis of social meaning.....	65
Chapter 4: Ideologies of Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Language.....	67
4.1 Politics of ethnicity.....	68
4.1.1 Ethnicity talk.....	68
4.1.2 White privilege.....	70
4.1.3 Asian privilege.....	73
4.1.4 Asian pride.....	75
4.2 Ideologies of authenticity.....	79
4.2.1 Ideology of essence.....	81
4.2.2 Ethnic contestation among multiethnic students.....	85
4.2.3 Ideology of habitus.....	88
4.2.4 Ideology of realness.....	92
4.3 Ideologies of language.....	93
4.3.1 Prestige.....	94
4.3.2 Racialized varieties.....	97
4.3.3 Accented authenticities.....	100
4.3.4 Leakages between linguistic oppositions.....	104
4.3.5 Gendered meanings of ‘proper English’.....	107
4.4 Discussion.....	111
Chapter 5: Stylized Asian Mocking.....	114
5.1 Asian stereotypes: Deviances of language, race, and nation.....	115
5.1.1 Newcomers.....	121

5.1.2 Aliens	124
5.1.3 Grouches	126
5.2 Structural dimensions of stylized Asian mocking	131
5.2.1 Code	132
5.2.2 Circulation.....	136
5.2.3 Resemblance	147
5.3 Discussion	152
Chapter 6: Transformations of Social Meaning.....	155
6.1 Overt resistance.....	155
6.1.1 Correction	156
6.1.2 Retaliation.....	159
6.1.3 Prohibition.....	161
6.2 Stereotype reappropriation.....	163
6.3 Adoption	167
6.3.1 Emulation.....	168
6.3.2 Accommodation.....	171
6.4 Hybridity, humor, and play.....	179
6.5 Discussion	185
Chapter 7: Stylized Prep Mocking.....	187
7.1 Preps.....	188
7.1.1 Non-local meaning.....	190
7.1.2 Local ways of doing.....	199
7.1.3 A relevant other.....	203
7.1.4 Multiple indexicality: Intersections of ethnicity, class and gender.....	209
7.2 Features of stylized prep mocking.....	211
7.2.1 Conventionalized identity-based features	215
7.2.2 Emergent identity-based features.....	215
7.2.3 Emergent practice-based features	216
7.2.4 Conventionalized practice-based features.....	219
7.3 Discussion	225

Chapter 8: Stylized Prep Mocking as Social Practice.....	228
8.1 Identity construction	228
8.1.1 Oppositional identities	228
8.1.2 Locally competent identities	231
8.1.3 Authority to identify	235
8.2 Socialization through stylization in narrative	239
8.2.1 Regulating sexual morality	240
8.2.2 Policing authenticity	245
8.3 Ambiguities of desirability and embodiment.....	251
8.3.1 Derision and desire	252
8.3.1.1 Derision.....	252
8.3.1.2 Desirable femininity.....	254
8.3.2 Mocking as feminine embodiment.....	260
8.4 Discussion	266
Chapter 9: Dimensions of Multivocalic Styling	269
9.1 Context, authenticity, and value.....	270
9.2 Types of styling.....	274
9.3 Relationship between ideology and interaction	281
9.4 Relationship between authenticity and value.....	288
9.5 Problematizing authenticity and value.....	291
9.6 Discussion	293
Chapter 10: Conclusion.....	294
10.1 Opening questions: Implications for the study of style	294
10.1.1 What features were used to mock Asian immigrants and preps?	294
10.1.2 What do these features tell us about style?	296
10.1.3 What did speakers achieve through stylized mocking?	298
10.2 Closing issues: Current limitations and future directions for the study of language and social meaning.....	301

Bibliography304

Vita 319

List of Tables

Table 3.1:	Characteristics of Fortville’s population in relation to neighboring cities, Texas, and the U.S.	32
Table 3.2:	Racial/ethnic characteristics of Fortville’s population in relation to neighboring cities, Texas, and the U.S.	35
Table 3.3:	Racial/ethnic characteristics of Fortville’s Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander populations in relation to Texas and the U.S.	37
Table 3.4:	Racial/ethnic characteristics of high schools in the Fortville Independent School District in relation to Fortville	40
Table 3.5:	Fortville’s 2000/2005 median household incomes compared with other locations	48
Table 3.6:	Racial/ethnic identifications of participant population according to race, place/nation, and multi/monoethnicity	58
Table 3.7:	Participant population to appear in excerpts according to local social group	59
Table 4.1:	List of indexical associations of ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’ in (Example 4.16: “There is a time and place for proper English” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04))	97
Table 4.2:	Imagined types of Englishes and implied values	105
Table 5.1:	Characteristics associated with stylized Asian mocking	116
Table 5.2:	Nonreferential features of stylized Asian mocking	144
Table 7.1:	Characteristics implicitly associated with preps during instances of stylized prep mocking	190
Table 7.2:	Students’ characterizations of high schools in the district	193
Table 7.3:	Oppositions created between preps and non-preps (Outcast United, Example 7.15)	208
Table 7.4:	Indexical links between stylized prep mocking language features and stereotypically preppy practices in Examples 7.12 and 7.15 ...	221
Table 8.1:	Linguistic resources for indexing preppiness in Examples 8.1 and 8.3	233
Table 8.2:	Use of stylized prep mocking to negotiate identities in Examples 8.4 and 8.5	238
Table 9.1:	Twelve types of styling practices	276
Table 9.2:	Conventional categories of styling practices	277

List of Figures

Figure 3.1: Fortville’s distribution of household incomes in 2005	49
Figure 5.1: Pitch track of “You want no sideburn” (LJ, line 10-11, Example 5.5: “You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04), p. 129)	122
Figure 5.2: Pitch track of “Ching-chang-chong” (Big Dog, line 10, Example 5.3: “Ching-chang-chong” (Academic, 12/9/04)).....	125
Figure 5.3: Pitch track (lines 14-17, Example 5.4: “You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05))	127
Figure 5.4: Pitch track (lines 18-20, Example 5.4: “You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05))	128
Figure 5.5: Pitch track (lines 6 and 8, Example 5.7: “When they do that I kind of retaliate” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)).....	139
Figure 5.6: Pitch track of “Goibarararara” (Example 5.8: “You should hear her when she gets mad at her mom” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)).....	141
Figure 5.7: Pitch track of “Hagwarararararara mo:::m bidarararararara” (Example 5.8: “You should hear her when she gets mad at her mom” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04))	142
Figure 5.8: Pitch track of “Hono:::” (Example 5.6: “My mom has an accent too” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)).....	145
Figure 5.9: Pitch track of “Nununuorangye:::” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	145
Figure 5.10: Pitch track of “ Ah:ah::” (Example 5.5: “You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04))	146
Figure 5.11: Pitch track of “Arenana nanana gareharewu” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	146
Figure 5.12: Pitch track of “Xa:::” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04).....	147
Figure 6.1: Pitch track of “Gimme one lotto ticket” (Yoshi, line 5, Example 6.5: “Gimme one lotto ticket” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)).....	164
Figure 6.2: Two dimensions of difference between accommodation and stylized mocking	172
Figure 6.3: Stereotypical Asian immigrant language features linked with both accommodation and stylized mocking.....	173
Figure 7.1: Stereotypical meanings of preppiness across axes of ethnicity, class, and gender	211
Figure 7.2: Use of relatively high pitch in stylized prep mocking by Philip (line 15) when compared with non-stylized speech (line 21) (lines from Example 7.15: “They talk happy” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)).....	213
Figure 7.3: Pitch track of Yoshi’s mocking of Miss Thang’s “Really”	216
Figure 7.4: Stylized prep mocking features as the product of stereotypical practices associated with preps	222
Figure 7.5: Pitch track of “Oh my go:d” (Philip, line 11, Example 7.15) (includes exaggerated stress, long phrase-final syllable, high pitch, nasality, <i>oh my god</i>)	223

Figure 7.6:	Pitch track of “Like I just finished doing my yoga:” (Pinky, line 26, Example 7.15) (includes exaggerated stress, long phrase-final syllable, phrase-final rise, <i>like, yoga</i>)	224
Figure 7.7:	Pitch track of “Like, oh my god, did you just see her like ʔ ^h do that? ʔ ^h ” (Miss Thang, Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04) (includes nasality, final rise, <i>like, oh my god, ʔ^h</i>).....	224
Figure 8.1:	Pitch track comparison of ‘prep’ and ‘poor black girl’ stylizations in lines 12 and 17 (Valerie and Vivioni, Tutorial Group, 12/1/04).....	230
Figure 8.2:	Pitch track of “So anyways yesterday I was dress shopping” (Joanne, Academic/Soccer Girls, Example 8.2)	233
Figure 8.3:	Pitch track of “How do I know I have gonorrhea?” (Ro, Soccer Girls, Example 8.3).....	234
Figure 8.4:	Pitch track of “Hypothetically I was just like oh my god I just wanted to like strip naked and see him” (Miss Thang, Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05).....	241
Figure 8.5:	Pitch track of “Flirting is just in my nature” (Piggy, Sakaci Girls, Example 8.7, line 65).....	244
Figure 8.6:	Pitch track of “It gives me pleasure” (White Tiger, Sakaci Girls, Example 8.7, lines 72-75).....	244
Figure 8.7:	Pitch track of “I know the answer” (line 14, LJ, Tutorial, 12/1/04)	247
Figure 8.8:	Pitch track of “Like I know the answer” (line 16, Triple X, Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	247
Figure 8.9:	Pitch track of “I don’t understand this” (lines 19 and 21, Valerie, Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	248
Figure 8.10:	Pitch track of “You know at home she be like” (lines 25-26, Triple X, Tutorial, 12/1/04)	248
Figure 8.11:	Pitch track of “Blah blah’s getting on my nerves” (lines 48-49, Piggy, Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	250
Figure 8.12:	Pitch track of “Can we go now god” (Philip, Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	262
Figure 8.13:	Pitch track of “Duh” (line 5, Philip, Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	263
Figure 8.14:	Pitch track of “Chaw” (lines 11 and 13, Pinky and Philip, Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	264
Figure 9.1:	Dimensions of authenticity and value at the levels of interaction and ideology.....	273
Figure 9.2:	Cube figure illustrating three dimensions of styling.....	274
Figure 9.3:	Styling presented as authentic to the speaker	279
Figure 9.4:	Ideologically defined crossing and mocking	280
Figure 9.5:	Mocking defined at the level of interaction	281
Figure 9.6:	The effects of cumulative practices on ideological meanings	283
Figure 9.7:	The tendency for ideologically defined mocking to be interpreted as interactional mocking	286

Figure 9.8: The dynamic relationship between ideology and interaction	288
Figure 9.9: The tendency for stylized practices to be interpreted as mocking ..	289
Figure 9.10: The tendency for ideologically inauthentic styles to be to be interpreted as having low prestige	290

List of Illustrations

Illustration 4.1: A student displays a flag of the Philippines he sometimes wore.....	76
Illustration 4.2: A Korean student sports a letterman’s jacket	76
Illustration 4.3: A Korean student playfully displays an “A for Asian” hand sign.....	77
Illustration 4.4: A Filipina-Guamanian’s illustration in her notebook	77

List of Examples

Example 3.1:	“There’s a lot of diversity here” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04).....	33
Example 3.2:	“Fortville is not a real good place to come for a job” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04).....	46
Example 3.3:	“This is a crappy city” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04).....	47
Example 4.1:	“We call her Oriental” (Tutorial, 12/01/04).....	69
Example 4.2:	“She’s pretty for a white girl” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	72
Example 4.3:	“All Koreans are in the upper class” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04).....	73
Example 4.4:	“They could be real dumb” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04).....	74
Example 4.5:	“Korean pride” (Academic, 12/09/04).....	78
Example 4.6:	“She’s a double-stuffed Oreo” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	81
Example 4.7:	“Wannabe Mexican bitch” (Pacific, 3/31/04).....	83
Example 4.8:	“You should wear your flag” (Middle School, 11/23/04).....	84
Example 4.9:	“My ass ain’t black. It’s mixed” (Middle School, 11/15/04).....	86
Example 4.10:	“I’m not really a white boy” (Tutorial/Middle School, 5/20/04).....	87
Example 4.11:	“Yeah I know how but my grandma she doesn’t want me to know” (Middle School, 10/12/04).....	89
Example 4.12:	“You can tell when they’re fake and when they’re not” (Academic, 12/09/04).....	91
Example 4.13:	“All them white girls do, girl” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05).....	92
Example 4.14:	“I dunno what you’re talking about” (Sakaci Girls, 12/4/04).....	92
Example 4.15:	“I try to speak proper English” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04).....	94
Example 4.16:	“There is a time and place for proper English” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04).....	95
Example 4.17:	“I would consider that not proper English” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	98
Example 4.18:	“And he’s like black” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	98
Example 4.19:	“And he’s like black” (continued) (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	100
Example 4.20:	“British English is proper” (Academic, 12/09/04).....	101
Example 4.21:	“It sounds smart to me when they talk” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	102
Example 4.22:	“Better English than the actual English speaking people” (Outcast United, 1/12/05).....	102
Example 4.23:	“I wish I had a Canadian accent year-round” (Academic, 12/9/04).....	104
Example 4.24:	“Cotton pride” (Academic, 12/09/04).....	106
Example 4.25:	“I just like speak it the way I speak it” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04).....	107
Example 4.26:	“You have to talk like proper” (Damon, 11/30/04).....	107
Example 5.1:	“So you’re an immigrant?” (Pacific, 10/29/03).....	119
Example 5.2:	“I saw hot girl” (Academic, 12/9/04).....	123
Example 5.3:	“Ching-chang-chong” (Academic, 12/9/04).....	124

Example 5.4:	“You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05)	127
Example 5.5:	“You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	129
Example 5.6:	“My mom has an accent too” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)	137
Example 5.7:	“When they do that I kind of retaliate” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04).....	139
Example 5.8:	“You should hear her when she gets mad at her mom” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	140
Example 5.9:	“Milk” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	149
Example 5.10:	“My pronunciation is perfect” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	150
Example 6.1:	“Ching-chang-chong” (Academic, 12/9/04).....	156
Example 6.2:	“No, they speak perfect English” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)	157
Example 6.3:	“When they do that I kind of retaliate” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04).....	159
Example 6.4:	“My mom has an accent too” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	161
Example 6.5:	“Gimme one lotto ticket” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)	163
Example 6.6:	“Mister Q can I go ESL” (Junior Boys/Korean, 11/21/03).....	165
Example 6.7:	“Pass ketchup please” (Academic, 12/9/04)	173
Example 6.8:	“Pass ketchup please” (continued) (Academic, 12/9/04).....	176
Example 6.9:	“Relax” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	177
Example 6.10:	“I saw hot girl” (Academic, 12/9/04).....	180
Example 6.11:	“What’s whack” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)	180
Example 6.12:	“Yeah, they’re funny” (Academic, 12/9/04).....	184
Example 7.1:	“Hilltop is the prep school” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04).....	192
Example 7.2:	“He was astonished I’d even talk to him” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04).....	194
Example 7.3:	“Even the black girls are preps” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	195
Example 7.4:	“We’re white and we have money” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04) ...	196
Example 7.5:	“Our stuff is way more expensive than their stuff” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	197
Example 7.6:	“We don’t really have like a wide white culture at our school” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)	197
Example 7.7:	“I think Bob would describe us as preppy” (Academic, 12/09/04).....	199
Example 7.8:	“I got stuff stuck under my nails” (Academic, 12/09/04).....	202
Example 7.9:	“We sit in the front and they sit in the back” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04).....	204
Example 7.10:	“They control the school but we do all the work” (Outcast United, 1/19/05).....	205
Example 7.11:	“Really?” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)	215
Example 7.12:	“And then uh some people like like talk like like this” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	217
Example 7.13:	“Oh god, I feel like a prep” (Outcast United, 1/12/05).....	217
Example 7.14:	“Oh god, I feel like a prep” (Outcast United, 1/12/05) (continued).....	218
Example 7.15:	“They talk happy” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	219

Example 8.1:	“And then uh some people like like talk like like this” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	229
Example 8.2:	“Yesterday I was dress shopping” (Soccer Girls, 11/29/04).....	231
Example 8.3:	“How do I know I have gonorrhea?” (Soccer Girls, 12/7/04) ..	232
Example 8.4:	“Really?” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)	236
Example 8.5:	“Really?” (1/13/05) (continued)	236
Example 8.6:	“Read my shirt” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)	242
Example 8.7:	“Flirting is in my nature” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	243
Example 8.8:	“I know the answer” (Tutorial, 12/1/04).....	246
Example 8.9:	“She talks a lot of shit” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	249
Example 8.10:	“They’re zitless” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04).....	255
Example 8.11:	“Dang, Koreans got little eyes” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	256
Example 8.12:	“Piggy has a butt for a Korean” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05).....	257
Example 8.13:	“But her boobs annoy me I swear” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04).....	258
Example 8.14:	“I wanna act like that” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04).....	261
Example 8.15:	“Duh” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)	262
Example 8.16:	“I can speak fluent jive” (Tutorial, 12/2/04).....	265
Example 9.1:	“These are bitching” (Middle School, 11/30/04).....	283
Example 9.2:	“What’s <i>whack</i> ” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05).....	287

Chapter 1: Introduction

Linguistic mocking can be brutally cruel yet sometimes artfully humorous. As an act that necessarily flattens the social multidimensionality of speakers, it sometimes tests the boundaries of the culturally appropriate. The performance of mocking can thus become the subject of intense controversy, even while trickling into conversations as an unremarkable part of the everyday. In this dissertation, I examine how youth speakers in a particular high school setting used mocking as a strategy for engaging in social action, locating themselves and others within a complex social landscape by invoking stereotypical images and placing themselves in relation to them.

While common as linguistic practice, mocking remains peripheral as a topic in studies of language and identity. One reason for its marginality may be that this practice often involves rudimentary linguistic sketches that are hardly characterized by the structural complexity and systematicity that language scholars have typically devoted themselves to describing. The relative simplicity and irregularity of its forms may relate to what mockers seek to achieve: they draw lines of social *difference* using language that they hold at some *distance*; mocking practices may not be so much “acts of identity” (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) as they are acts of *dis-identity*.¹

However, mocking practices constitute ideal analytical sites for addressing some canonical concerns in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. Specifically, they involve the use of language to locate speakers in a social world, constructing identities in the context of ideologies of community membership and power. In many ways, acts of mocking are rich linguistic moments of *performance* (Bauman & Briggs, 1990), through

¹ My use of *dis* intentionally plays on the homophony of the ‘reversing’ prefix *dis*, the initial phonemes of the word *distance*, and the verb *dis* (‘to disparage or show disrespect to’).

which speakers display communicative competence and create complex juxtapositions of social meaning through contrasts of linguistic form. I hope to demonstrate that this apparently tangential practice can greatly inform our understanding of what speakers know about language and how they use this knowledge to ‘do things with mocking words’ (cf. Austin, 1975).

1.1 THEORETICAL APPROACH

This dissertation investigates two kinds of mocking practices performed by Asian American students and their non-Asian American peers at a multiethnic high school near a Texas military base. The first, which I refer to as *stylized Asian mocking*, recalls a stereotype of Asians as culturally and linguistically deviant because of their perceived incompetence, foreignness, and aggressiveness. The second, *stylized prep mocking*, evokes images of a category of girls at the school—*preps*—who were locally regarded as feminine, white, and wealthy. As I examine how students performed these racialized linguistic stereotypes, I explore the complex links between language and social meaning as well as the significance of mocking as a local cultural practice. The specific questions I address in this dissertation are: (1) *What features were used to mock Asian immigrants and preps?* (2) *What do these features tell us about style?* and (3) *What did speakers achieve through stylized mocking?*

In my efforts to answer these questions, I have depended on a variety of research methods. My familiarity with the local practices and ideologies at my research site emerged during the fifteen months I spent engaging in daily participant-observation in a variety of non-classroom activities, including lunch, tutorial sessions, hula dance lessons, and soccer practices. Many of these activities were recorded, and some of these recordings transcribed. The findings I present in this dissertation are based on the analyses of a large number of transcribed interactions. My interpretation of these data is

also supplemented by semi-structured ethnographic interviews involving small groups of friends.

My close attention to the links between linguistic form and social meaning is guided by recent sociolinguistic investigations of *style* that consider how speakers use combinations of linguistic resources to *construct* social meaning rather than merely *reflect* it. According to this approach to studying style, which Penelope Eckert calls the “third wave of variation studies” (2002: 4), language features are meaningful resources for performing particular social personae; style is “not a *thing* but a *practice*” (Eckert, 2004: 43).” Yet the practice I analyze lies at the margins of the kinds of styling practices that previous researchers have investigated. In acts of mocking, speakers do not embody styles as their own but create an implicit distance between themselves and *stylized* (Bakhtin, 1984; Coupland, 2001a) social others. I suggest that the theoretically peripheral status of stylized mocking provides important insights into how *style* ought to be conceptualized and studied.

In addition, my study takes seriously the call for the study of style *as practice*. Without discounting variationist approaches that locate the social meaning of language features in the distributional patterns of their use, I argue that the social meanings of styles are also products of moments of interaction—*instances of practice*—where form-meaning links emerge. I thus primarily depend on methods of discourse analysis to understand the potential of particular stylistic forms to gain nuanced social meanings. Drawing on linguistic anthropological perspectives on *indexicality* (Ochs, 1992; Silverstein, 1976) and *intertextuality/interdiscursivity* (Agha, 2005a, cf. Bakhtin, 1986), I examine how the social meanings of styles are dynamically constituted across time—across different interactions and during the course of a single interaction. This study

applies linguistic anthropological methods and concepts to traditionally sociolinguistic concerns.

Despite my close attention to linguistic form and discursive moments, I locate mocking practices within the larger ideological landscape of social identity at the site of my research, an ethnically diverse U.S. public high school where students placed a premium on locating themselves within ideologies of ethnicity, nation, class, and gender. In my analysis of stylized mocking, I suggest that this practice served an important social function for students as a strategy for constructing their identities, displaying their cultural competence, and socializing one another into local cultural norms. This dissertation thus describes a cultural practice that students used to meaningfully locate themselves in relation to other students as they recreated, and sometimes contested, the larger social order.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The next three chapters describe aspects of the theoretical, ethnographic, and ideological contexts of my analysis. Chapter 2 places my study alongside past studies in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology that frame the approach I take. Chapter 3 introduces the multiethnic site of Diversity High,² where my research was based, and the military city of Fortville, where the school was located. I also describe my relationship with students in this community and my methods of data collection. In Chapter 4, I discuss some of the complexly layered local ideologies of *ethnicity*, demonstrating how this concept was understood in relation to notions such as *class* and *authenticity* as well as its intersection with *language ideologies*, namely, about ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’.

² I use pseudonyms for location and personal names, but I have not replaced location names of relatively broad geographical reference, such as *Texas* and the *U.S.*

The following two chapters focus on practices of stylized Asian mocking, through which students evoked stereotypical images of Asian immigrants. In Chapter 5, I illustrate how these images were historically embedded in discourses of national belonging in the U.S. yet how the three Asian stereotypes that emerged in students' practices were also decidedly local images. The second half of this chapter addresses three structural dimensions of features used in stylized Asian mocking—*code*, *circulation*, and *resemblance*—and I show how the different statuses of style features along these dimensions allowed features to index different kinds of meanings. Chapter 6 focuses on the same practice but explores the extent to which the ideologies described in Chapter 5 were potentially contested through practices of *overt resistance*, *stereotype reappropriation*, *out-group adoption*, and *language play*. My analysis suggests that while stylizing Asian immigrants potentially critiqued mainstream U.S. ideologies of ethnicity and language, certain other ideologies lay unquestioned.

The two chapters that follow examine practices of stylized prep mocking. In Chapter 7, I discuss how the label *prep*, while referring to specific sets of individuals at the school, could traverse different levels of social organization, also referring to institutional units and transitory practices. My examination of stereotypical prep features suggests that they were somewhat unpredictable products of interactional moments, and I propose two dimensions of differentiation—the degree of a feature's *conventionalization/emergence* and the degree to which it was *identity-based/practice-based*—to explain such structural unpredictability. In Chapter 8, I discuss how students used stylized prep mocking for engaging in local cultural activities, including identity construction and socialization, and I suggest that the particular ambiguities of this styling practice (representing desirable yet undesirable qualities and lying between self- and other-styling) allowed girls to use it to construct their own femininities.

In the penultimate chapter of this dissertation, I propose a model that places mocking in relation to other styling practices. After introducing the three dimensions of this model (*context*, *authenticity*, and *value*), I examine the complex relationships among them, such as the dynamic links between interactional and ideological contexts of meaning, the potential slippage between speaker intent and interpretation, and the ambiguities between the dimensions of authenticity and value. Finally, I close this dissertation with a discussion of my findings, its limitations, and future directions for research.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

Linguists seek to describe and understand realities of language. Yet if mocking is defined precisely by its inauthenticity, *what relevance does mocking have for our understanding of language?* This chapter attempts to answer this question by reviewing the sociolinguistic research that guides my current study. After describing specifically how I am conceptualizing the notion of *mocking* in this dissertation, I outline relevant studies of *multivocality* and *crossing* that have been given increasing attention in recent sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological research. I then provide an overview of four approaches to the study of *style* that inform my analysis. Finally, I argue that the particular phenomenon of mock styling constitutes an important site for addressing key sociolinguistic issues.

2.1 MOCKING

Mocking is social action that attributes negative value to a mocked target, typically through some form of mimicry. It thus involves the temporary embodiment of a ridiculed figure, achieving a simultaneous and critical commentary on this figure. In mocking acts, the mocker's voice enters a dialogic relationship (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984) with the voice it mocks, structurally merged with it in the moment yet implicitly distinct and superior. Although mocking may involve any system of signification, this dissertation focuses specifically on its performance through the embodiment of linguistic styles.

This practice is equivalent to certain understandings of *mimicry*, or a “disruptive imitation” that symbolically and ironically represents an object (Huggan, 1997: 95). Yet my conception of this act diverges from discussions of colonial mimicry as an act of copying, or *mimesis*, with a strategic imperfection (Bhabha, 1984). For Bhabha, the

mimicry of the colonized subject is “almost the same, but not quite” (126), resembling the colonizer but remaining a threat through its difference. Colonial mimicry is a form of repetition, an act of *being* the copied object even if only partially. I focus instead on mocking as a symbolic portrayal of an object—the *representation* of an object rather than its *re-presentation*.

These portrayals constitute forms of *parody*, a text that stands in a contrastive relation to an evoked text and that has a “higher semantic authority” than it (Morson, 1989: 67 cited by Coupland, 2001a) or, as Bakhtin (1984) writes, a situation in which an author’s voice “collides in a hostile fashion with the original owner and forces him to serve purposes diametrically opposed to his own” (160). Yet whereas parody, as typically understood in studies of art, literature, and theater, often refers to works and genres characterized by complex sets of features, mocking, as examined in this dissertation, potentially involves the use of a single, salient linguistic feature to evoke a social image. In addition, while mockery may be modeled on a single utterance or individual (e.g., an eccentric neighbor’s grunt), I am less interested in its use in such acts of “specific parody” than I am in its function as “general parody,” which takes as its model “not one specific work but a whole manner, style or discourse” (Dentith, 2000: 193).

2.2 MULTIVOCALITY: STYLIZATION, QUOTATION, AND PLAY

The practices of mocking I examine in this study are acts of *stylization*, or the “knowing deployment of culturally familiar styles and identities that are marked as deviating from those predictably associated with the current speaking context” (Coupland, 2001a: 345). As described by Coupland, they are performances (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) in which audiences are presented with images that are “‘put on’, ‘for now’, and ‘for show’” (Coupland, 2001a: 347) yet in which the styler speaks “‘as if this is me’, or ‘as if I owned this voice’, or ‘as if I endorsed what this voice says’” (349). In other

words, although stylizers employ a style *as if* it were their own, they simultaneously “deauthenticate” (347) themselves through the implicit artificiality of the display. I thus use the phrase *stylized mocking* to refer to the practice I examine in this dissertation.

Bakhtin’s discussion of stylization concerns his more general observation of the “multivocalic” nature of language, as a single utterance is necessarily “filled with others’ words” (1986: 89). Although Bakhtin was primarily concerned with literary analysis, linguistic anthropologists have found useful his observation that language is inherently *intertextual*.³ (See a recent special issue of the *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, which includes articles on intertextuality by Agha, ; Bauman, ; Gal, ; Hall, ; Haviland, ; Hill, ; Irvine, ; Silverstein, ; Wilce, ; Wortham, (2005) as well as Bauman (2004)). Specifically, texts of different kinds—quotations, genres, and styles—are produced, distributed, and received in and across contexts. A single textual instance can thus “resonate” (Briggs & Bauman, 1992) and engage in dialogic interaction with prior textual instances. This process has been clearly delineated in Bauman and Briggs’ (1990) discussion of how texts are “entextualized,” or rendered into an extractable unit, then extracted, or “decontextualized,” and finally presented in a new context, or “recontextualized.” While such processes of contextualization were initially examined with respect to the performance of verbal art, which “puts the act of speaking on display—objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience” (Bauman & Briggs, 1990: 73), similar Bakhtinian perspectives have informed research in other kinds of settings, such as in discourses of official Maya documents (Hanks, 1987),

³ In his discussion of the term *intertextuality*, Bauman notes that Bakhtin (1986) initially defines *texts* as “any coherent complex of signs” (2005: 103). Bauman thus favors uses the term *interdiscursive* as potentially better suited to address linguistic anthropological issues that are concerned with variety of sign types, from simple to complex, noting that Bakhtin and those who have drawn on his ideas have primarily studied written texts. His discussion suggests, however, that Bakhtin does not appear to regard the distinction between sign types as particularly important, “for the most part assimilating text to utterance and dialogue” (146).

everyday conversation (Tannen, 1989) and classroom discourse (Wortham, 2003) in the U.S., and market calls in Mexico (Bauman, 2001).

It should be noted that Bakhtin (1984) treats *stylization* and *parody* as mutually exclusive practices, although I treat the second as a subset of the first, following recent sociolinguistic work on this topic (e.g., Coupland, 2001a, 2001b; Rampton, 1995).⁴ According to Bakhtin, stylization involves *uni-directional double-voicing*, in which the stylized voice reflects the speaker's "own aspirations" (Bakhtin, 1984: 163). Such 'positive' forms of stylization can be seen in Rampton's (1995) study of British adolescents who code-switched into a stereotypically "tough and cool" Creole style (45). On the other hand, Bakhtin describes *parody* as involving *vari-directional double-voicing*,⁵ when the parodist's oppositional positioning is apparent, such as in the ironic and comical uses of stylized Asian English by the same adolescents Rampton studied (see also Quist & Jørgensen, in press). I have found useful a broad definition of stylization that encompasses both uni- and vari- directional uses (that is, non-parody and parody/mocking). A formal illustration of both parodic and non-parodic types of stylization is presented in Chapter 9 (Section 9.2 Types of styling).

Although this dissertation is primarily concerned with the recontextualization of *styles*, many of the cases intersect with two practices that also involve multivocalic, de-authentication: *quotation*⁶ and *play*, although the latter has typically not been discussed in terms of multivocality. In the case of quotation, an utterance is constructed as animated

⁴ Interestingly, however, I have not encountered a discussion of recent divergences from Bakhtin's (1984) narrower understanding of *stylization*. The stylization instances that are at the center of Coupland's (2001a) analysis may properly fall under Bakhtin's definition given that they do not include cases of "outright parody" (347). Yet he also suggests that dialect stylization can sometimes be performed as parody (345).

⁵ This concept is sometimes translated as *hetero-directed double-voicing*.

⁶ I regard the term *quotation* to be synonymous with the more widely used phrase *reported speech* (e.g. Vološinov (1973) as well as its terminological alternative *constructed dialogue* (Tannen, 1989). I choose to use *quotation* in this dissertation, however, in order to focus on its function as a strategic practice. My interest is in how quotation is used and performed rather than the particular "speech" or "dialogue" that is quoted, reported, or constructed.

(Goffman, 1981) by a current quoting speaker yet representative of an animator in a *past* or *hypothetical* world (Buttny & Williams, 2000; Irvine, 1996). As noted by Tannen (1986; 1989), who draws on Goffman's (1974) dramaturgical metaphor of the "production format," all quotations are "constructed dialogues" that are "creatively constructed by a current speaker in a current situation" (Tannen, 1989: 105) in order to present a drama and to create listeners' involvement and understanding; quotations are not mere reports of events but "recounts of personal experience" played for an audience (Goffman, 1974: 503-504). They are also often part of "unfolding narratives [that define] selves in terms of others in present, past, and imagined universes" (Ochs & Capps, 1996: 28) as well as a form of critiquing the events that they reconstruct (Buttny, 1997). Research on the convergence of stylization and quotation in constructions of stereotypical social images has suggested that such practices may serve as derisive commentary on quoted speakers, such as in African American practices of "marking" (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972), tools for performing stereotypical social types, as seen in French-Portuguese bilingual narratives (Koven, 2001), and mitigating strategies for engaging in otherwise inappropriate discourse among Muslim French teens (Tetreault, 2005).

Frequently, stylization merges with a third de-authenticating strategy of *play* (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974), through which a speaker distances herself from the intention of the voice that she temporarily adopts as her own, moving from a primary (often seen as 'serious' or 'real') framework to a secondary one (Goffman, 1974) and, in so doing, temporarily engaging in some activity that suggests an inauthenticity that is presumably known to both herself and her co-participants.⁷ The playing speaker thus exhibits a stance of insincerity and "reduced personal responsibility" (512) in relation to

⁷ In cases of playful deception, the activity becomes definable as play only for those who recognize the playful intent. In other words, prior to the moment of revelation, the playful deceiver may understand the activity as play, while the target does not. However, after the target realizes the deceiver's playful intent, the activity is reinterpreted as play.

the stances or beliefs represented by the temporarily embodied role. At the same time, the meaning of play in this marked framework necessarily refers to its primary counterpart; play insults, for example, require an understanding of what ‘real’ insults are; as Bateson (1972) notes, while play bites denote a bite, they do not denote the aggression of a real bite. Play thus involves the implicit juxtaposition of frames, and sometimes their diametric opposition, as in cases of irony (Clift, 1999). Stylization may frequently be understood of as ‘humorous’ play because of the aggression implied (Feinberg, 1978) through stereotypical caricatures of speech, and the tension and pleasure created by taboo topics that “flirt with the boundaries of the socially, culturally, and linguistically possible and appropriate” (Sherzer, 2002: 1). In addition to having immediate interpersonal consequences, play often articulates with cultural meanings, as shown in Keith Basso’s (1979) description of how the cultural category of the ‘socially incompetent Whiteman’ was playfully embodied by Western Apache speakers to metaphorically manage interpersonal relations among Apache speakers even when ‘Whitemen’ were not present.

2.3 CROSSING

Within sociolinguistics, studies of mocking have emerged alongside the growing interest in the practice of *crossing*, or the use of language features ideologically linked to a social out-group (Eastman & Stein, 1993; Rampton, 1995). Both sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have recognized the importance of understanding the ways in which linguistic forms can ‘cross’ social boundaries, becoming symbolic resources for new groups, potentially creating new forms of racial or ethnic identification (Hewitt, 1986; Rampton, 1995) yet often reflecting and reproducing hierarchical forms of social difference. In U.S. contexts, crossing by white speakers, as acts of appropriation, often reinforces rather than subverts hierarchies between whites and non-whites, including African Americans (Bucholtz, 1999b; Cutler, 1999) and Latinos (Hill, 1999). Like

appropriations in colonial contexts (Said, 1978), crossing practices often serve the crosser's own purposes—constructing her own identity and representing her own values—rather than serving as true representations of an 'other'. At the same time, distinguishing 'in-group' from 'out-group' practices can be complicated by competing ideologies of authentic community membership (Chun, 2001, 2004; Johnstone, 1999; Lo, 1999; Quist & Jørgensen, in press; Sweetland, 2002).

Jane Hill (1993; 1995; 1999; 2005) has focused on a particular form of crossing that she calls *Mock Spanish* in her examination of how structurally distorted forms of Spanish are used by (usually white) English-speaking monolinguals in the U.S. She argues that this practice, often found in public discourses, covertly reproduces a stereotypical and racist caricature of Latinos as comical and lazy, despite its overt semiotic function of elevating the English speaker's persona as cosmopolitan and easy-going. Her work has inspired examinations across different communities in which mock forms reproduce social and linguistic hierarchies, including examinations of Mock Spanish in a restaurant in Texas (Barrett, 2006), Mock Ebonics on the Internet (Ronkin & Karn, 1999), 'Injun English' in Hollywood (Meek, 2006), and Mock Asian (stereotypical Asian immigrant speech) in the popular media (Chun, 2002a, 2004; Davé, 2005; J. E. Lee, 2007; Reyes, 2005b) and local settings (Labrador, 2004; Reyes, 2007; Talmy, 2004). Much of this work has focused on the reproduction of white hegemony in the U.S., though other forms of racial/ethnic stereotyping have been demonstrated elsewhere (in a South African radio show (Mesthrie, 2002), among British adolescents (Rampton, 1995), and between Taiwanese and Mandarin speakers (Su, 2004, 2005)). Likewise, Rampton (2006) has shown that youths in a London borough reproduced linguistic stereotypes of class through the use of "mock posh" and "mock Cockney." Some studies have additionally noted that parodies of white speakers in a U.S. context can sometimes serve

as subversive commentary on race relations, such as in portrayals of white characters by African American comedians (Rahman, 2004).

An important distinction might be drawn, however, between various practices often placed under the umbrella of ‘mocking’. As noted by Barrett (2006: 165-166), Mock Spanish practices are cases of *linguistic appropriation* that have semiotic parallels with “cross-racial African American Vernacular English” (Bucholtz, 1999b; Chun, 2001; Cutler, 1999) and “crossover” terms (Smitherman, 1994), whereby linguistic forms associated with African American stereotypes are incorporated into the speech of non-African American speakers as a form of slang (Bucholtz, 2004a). In contrast, most other studies of mocking have focused on overt racial caricatures used when voicing characters in a comedy performance (Chun, 2004; Labrador, 2004; Mesthrie, 2002; Rahman, 2004; Reyes, 2005b) or portraying characters in films (J. E. Lee, 2007; Meek, 2006). In Bakhtin’s terms, cases of crossover African American English (AAE) and Mock Spanish are uni-directionally double-voiced—with shared “aspirations” (Bakhtin, 1984)—as crossers benefit from qualities stereotypically attributed to the represented out-group. On the other hand, parodies of characters are vari-directionally double-voiced, as the represented voice is the object of derisive commentary, even if playfully so. Many of the cases of mocking that I examine in this dissertation fall under this second rubric of ‘character portrayal’, as opposed to ‘appropriation’, and the large majority of cases appear in quotations of characters in students’ narratives.

Yet drawing a clear qualitative distinction between these two types of voicing may not always be an easy task. Out-group forms may be appropriated as part of one’s own voice, keying a playful frame (Goffman, 1974) and allowing a role-playing speaker to metaphorically enact or comment on a current participant framework (Basso, 1979; Rampton, 1995); in such cases, the playfully stylized voice is neither a character

portrayal that attributes the embodied voice to another speaker nor an appropriator's claim that the voice is her own. These ambiguities will be further discussed in Chapter 9 (Section 9.5 Problematizing authenticity and value). My discussion in Chapter 9 (Section 9.2 Types of styling) also draws a distinction between what has traditionally been regarded as *crossing*, defined by the ideological location of a speaker, and *mocking*, defined by the speaker's interactional alignment with the style she embodies.

2.4 APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF STYLE

Having described the phenomenon that I investigate in this dissertation, I turn to four approaches to the study of style that guide my study. The first is largely influenced by earlier dialect studies that focused on idealizations of speech communities based on broad demographic variables. The goal of this approach was to understand how the variable use of 'standard' and 'vernacular' features was a product of particular social contexts. A second approach recognizes the flexibility of styles to traverse different layers of social meaning, while a third approach moves away from the deterministic assumptions of the first and highlights the potential for speakers to use styles strategically in performances of identity. I also address a fourth approach that analyzes stylistic meaning in moments of interaction. It should be noted that these latter three approaches are not presented as chronological developments but as overlapping facets of current research perspectives on language style.

2.4.1 Context

In an early attempt to understand how speakers shifted between stylistic variables, William Labov (1966; 1972b: 70-109) examined how speakers in New York City changed their speech patterns across different contexts, which he defined as varying in terms of speaker consciousness. Although speakers varied in their use of features

depending on social factors such as age and class, he found that all of the speakers shared a relative pattern of feature use, such as the greater use of “standard” postvocalic /r/ when reading word lists than when narrating a story with emotional involvement, an activity that he found to have more “vernacular” variants. He interpreted the patterning across speakers, situations, and variables to reflect the existence of a shared stylistic continuum of “careful” to “casual” speech. An important contribution of his work was his recognition that social variation based on group membership, such as gender, age, or ethnicity, related to patterns of stylistic variation for individual speakers. (See also Baugh’s (1983) discussion of style-shifting in an African American community.)

Labov’s work has since been explicitly and implicitly critiqued on several fronts, including the difficulty of separating careful and casual speech (Wolfram 1969: 58-59 cited in Rickford and Eckert (2001)), the neglect of the effects of addressees (Rickford & McNair-Knox, 1994), the assumption that casual speech is necessarily performed less consciously than careful speech (L. Milroy, 1985; Schilling-Estes, 1998), and the implication that language features are determined by context rather than potentially serving as “contextualization cues” (Gumperz, 1992) that signal an interpretive frame to interlocutors. A key problem as well was Labov’s characterization of style types as lying along a single continuum; styles may in fact be relevant to many dimensions of social identity. His view fell out from the assumption that the structural dimension of standard-to-vernacular variables evenly mapped onto a single stylistic axis. As more recent work has suggested, however, these features can be linked to various kinds of stylistic meanings beyond degrees of formality (e.g., Bucholtz, 1999b; Eckert, 2000; Zhang, 2005).

2.4.2 Indexicality

Based on her work on address terms, Susan Ervin-Tripp (1972) provides a more inclusive and theoretically abstract understanding of style in her discussion of “co-occurrence” and “alternation” rules, referring respectively to the syntagmatic bundling of features and the potential for these stylistic variants to paradigmatically replace one another. She notes that styles can be associated with not only varying degrees of formality but also particular occupations or certain kinds of listeners (239-240). Drawing on this Jakobsonian formulation of style, Dell Hymes (1972a) views styles in flexible terms as “ways of speaking” that are not bound to defined situations, given the potential for sets of ‘co-occurring’ features to not only ‘alternate’ with one another in a single context but move across different ones. His insight suggests that a particular stylistic bundle can be linked with social groups, situation types, and genres all at once. As Briggs and Bauman (1992) note, when elements of style at one level figure into other levels of discourse in this way, “indexical resonances” become established between these various style types (141).

Hymes’ (1974) recognition that styles can leak across contexts and levels of code type due to their paradigmatic ‘freedom’ relates to recent discussions of the indexical flexibility of language; *indexicality*, or the pointing of signs to particular social meanings, has been shown to be complex and potentially layered. Ochs’ (1992) insightful illustration of the “direct” and “indirect indexicality” of gendered linguistic resources highlights the establishment of indexical links across different social levels, namely through recurrent associations between particular stances, acts, activities, and identities. In related discussions, the semiotic concepts of “indexical order” (Silverstein, 1996, 2003) and “metasemiotic engines” (Agha, 1998) were introduced, respectively, to explain the metaphorical potential of signs to index meanings that may resemble but do not entail

their “normatively” indexed meanings and to show how social meanings (e.g. “respectfulness,” “purity,” and “refinement”) can ‘leak’ across linguistic and social levels (e.g., words, sentences, and speakers). It must be noted, however, that the idea that language features metaphorically traverse levels of code-types had been discussed long before in discussions of “metaphorical code-switching.” Although Blom and Gumperz (1972) did not draw specifically on the term *indexicality*, they demonstrated that switches between the local dialect and the standard in Norway were sometimes performed as a response to changes in topic, conveying “some of the flavor” (425) of the setting types typically associated with the codes. The general pattern of such recurrences of linguistic structures across different levels of social organization, specifically in terms of structural oppositions, has been discussed in terms of their “fractal recursivity” (Irvine & Gal, 2000). In all of these discussions, it has been assumed that indexical mappings are neither one-to-one nor stable across contexts.

2.4.3 Practice

Recent research on style has moved away from a focus on style features as predictable outcomes of context (e.g., careful or casual)—represented by the Labovian approach described earlier—toward a focus on how styles are used for the construction of particular kinds of personae. In other words, styles are understood as kind of *social practice*, or social act (Austin, 1975), through which speakers construct their identities. A qualitative distinction is thus drawn between *style* and concepts such as *language*, *dialect*, *register*, and *genre*, which have traditionally been defined in terms of the relationship between linguistic forms and a social entity, such as a group, situation, or event. That is, while early descriptions of style in terms of features tended to focus on features that co-occurred, an alternative approach to style takes speakers’ practices of *styling* as the starting point of analysis.

Drawing on the concept of *bricolage* (Hebdige, 1979; Lévi-Strauss, 1966) (e.g., California Style Collective, 1993; Zhang, 2005), these researchers of style who have embarked on the “third wave of variation studies”⁸ (Eckert, 2002) consider how speakers may “combine a range of existing resources to construct new meanings or new twists on old meanings” (Eckert, 2004: 43). In addition, the ‘bricoleur’ is not limited to linguistic features but can potentially draw on different kinds of semiotic resources from other temporal and spatial contexts, including “clothing, territory, musical taste, activities, and stances” (Eckert, 2004: 47). Thus styling does not depend on sets of language features but involves drawing on various symbolic resources at a speaker’s disposal for her particular social purposes at hand (Mendoza-Denton, 1999). The creative appropriation of past symbols for present purposes can involve the transformation of global resources for local meanings. As such, style features in a particular local *community of practice* (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Lave & Wenger, 1991) may have links with meanings that circulate more widely (e.g., Benor, 2004; Campbell-Kibler, 2006; Eckert, 2000; Podesva, 2006; Zhang, 2005).

Understanding style displays as *identity performances* (Schilling-Estes, 1998) parallels research influenced by a social psychological perspective, laying out a speaker’s motivations and constraints when choosing between not only different styles but also languages to project a desirable stereotype (Le Page, 1980; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985), to invoke a particular set of rights and obligations between interlocutors (Myers-Scotton, 1993), or to accommodate to an interlocutor (Giles & Powesland, 1975) or audience (Bell, 1984). Identity choices are often visible in moment-to-moment constructions, such as through the use of stereotypical styles in performances of a speaker’s varying personae (Barrett, 1998; Coupland, 1980, 1985).

⁸ The “second wave of variation studies” used ethnographic methods in order to attend to local categories of meaning rather than depending solely on large-scale demographic variables (Eckert, 2002).

The concepts of *bricolage* and *performance* bring useful theoretical angles to the discussion of style by acknowledging that styling is always an intertextual act (Bakhtin, 1981) and that the social meaning of intertextual features performed in situated contexts cannot be equated with their previous instantiations in other contexts. In addition, while it assumes that stylistic features are socially meaningful indexes, stylers construct identities through styles that have emergent, rather than predictable, meanings and forms. Consequently, understanding style as bricolage provides the analytical tools to explain how global forms and meanings, such as features linked to race, gender, sexuality, or class, come to be used for local ends.

Still, the bricolage metaphor potentially attributes excessive agency to individual speakers by implying that style is a choice rather than partly a consequence of a speaker's *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1977), or predispositions of the body that are a product of past practices and a guide for future ones. Although performances may be creative acts, they are also repetitions and “sedimentations” of previous performances; as Butler (1993) notes, “[p]erformativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate “act” but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names” (2). Speakers are thus not agents of free will but have a “socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001: 112), and such actions are constrained, to some extent, by social structures that are in turn recreated by these actions (Giddens, 1979). Rather than merely attribute agency to speakers by substituting the notion of *identity reflection* with that of *identity performance*, a deeper understanding of styling practices requires an understanding of how they are learned, negotiated, and circulated in specific moments of interaction.

2.4.4 Interaction

The previous section has suggested that the “third wave of variation studies” has moved the study of language and identity in an important direction, particularly through its recognition that language is not merely a reflection of social membership but a tool for social practices and processes. Yet variationist methods, while effective in identifying how language use patterns with social meanings, may be less useful for demonstrating *how* speakers specifically engage in practices such as language socialization, identity construction, and ideological reproduction. For example, while it may be easy to claim that cumulative moments of language use by ‘core’ speakers leads to the socialization of ‘peripheral’ others (e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991), demonstrating such socialization requires illuminating the *process* of “how individuals come to be particular kinds of culturally intelligible subjects” (Kulick & Schieffelin, 2004: 351). Analyses of unfolding interactions are prime sites for capturing the acquisition of such cultural competence. In addition, cases of stylized mocking are particularly useful for examining such processes given the inherent metapragmatic critique that mocking entails, allowing speakers to socialize one another into local norms through critiques of those who are constructed as flouting these norms.

Examining interactional moments also allows observation of the intertextual processes in which ‘bricoleurs’ are claimed to perform, as speakers recontextualize forms they have encountered in the past. Interactions also lay bare processes of “distinctiveness” as speakers place stylistic forms and their social meanings in contrastive relation to another (Irvine, 2001). As Bucholtz and Hall (2004) note, identities are maintained and constructed through techniques not only of social and linguistic “adequation,” by highlighting similarities, but also those of “differentiation.” Attention to such processes engages in a “linguistics of contact” (Pratt, 1987), shifting away from

assumptions that styles can be studied as isolatable units to one that captures “the relationality of social differentiation” (59). Importantly, such relational positioning is necessarily tied to hierarchical processes that authenticate, authorize (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004), and legitimate (Bourdieu, 1991) particular identities and linguistic forms over others.

Combining approaches in both sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, I adopt an interactional approach to analyzing the social meanings of styles. As noted by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identities are constructed not only through the use of particular countable linguistic forms but also through explicit and implicit identity references and interactional alignments to talk and participant roles. Identities are likewise often negotiated across interactional turns rather than reflected consistently across interactions; speakers construct social meaning in moments of interaction as well as potentially contest them in subtle interactional moves.

2.5 RELEVANCE OF MOCKING TO STYLE RESEARCH

2.5.1 Authenticity and value

Having provided an overview of the literature that frames my approach, I now discuss how my examination of the specific practice of mocking can illuminate important aspects of style and sociolinguistics more generally. Although the metaphor of ‘bricolage’ suggest that styling practices in general involve inherently multivocalic recontextualizations of past styles, studies of the “third wave” have typically assumed a particular authentic alignment between voices (Coupland, 2001a: 346-347); style researchers have largely assumed speakers to project personae as their own.

In the case of mocking, however, this alignment of *authenticity* is destabilized, given that mocking creates a visible divergence between voices—between those of

mocked and mocker. In addition, mocking highlights a hierarchical dimension of stylistic *value*; it is not merely a “dialogue” between voices but an ideological “struggle” (Vološinov, 1973) in which the mocking voice displays a momentary superiority in relation to the mocked voice. In other words, acts of mock styling may not have been regarded as canonical instances of style display in the previous literature, but their non-canonical status highlights the *authenticity* and *value* of styling that researchers have taken for granted. (See Chapter 9 for a formalization of these dimensions.) The authenticity and value of forms that may have been assumed in past studies are in fact social constructions that depend on how speakers position themselves in relation to their speech.

2.5.2 Transformation

A second issue that an analysis of mocking necessarily addresses is the *transformation* involved in recontextualization. As described earlier, mocking frequently involves the use of out-group language, resulting in distortions of form, whether due to the lack of sufficient access to the variety (Le Page, 1980) or the “linguistic disorder” (Hill, 1999) that out-group speakers sometimes permit themselves. The transformed status of Mock Spanish (Hill, 1999) and other mock varieties (e.g., Meek, 2006; Mesthrie, 2002; Ronkin & Karn, 1999), including my own work (Chun, 2004), has been the impetus for labeling such varieties as ‘mock’/‘unreal’ from the perspective of the purportedly represented variety; for example, Hill (1999) suggests that Mock Spanish is ‘not real’ Spanish through her use of scare quotes (i.e., “Spanish”), and Meek (2006) explicitly describes Hollywood Injun English as “fictional Native American speech” (96), which she contrasts with “‘real-life’ American Indian English” (95). In the case of mocking, such transformations of social meaning and structure are not merely products of linguistic interference, but they serve a social function. Mockery may involve

constructing the target's inauthenticity and inferiority in relation to the mocker through iconic acts of structural distortion: *simplification* that conveys a viewer's purposeful myopic disdain and *embellishment* that invites objectification and evaluation (Bauman & Briggs, 1990).

My study focuses on how such transformations are products of the *practice of representing* rather characteristics of the *code used to represent* a social other. I acknowledge that mocking often results in linguistic forms that diverge from what speakers may regard as 'real', but I contend that such structural distortions are a consequence of the representation *process*. Consequently, my discussion moves away from an a priori conception of what constitutes the 'real' versus 'mock' features of a code/language/style. As the subsequent chapters will illustrate, viewing mocking as *practice* rather than *code* explains why ostensibly 'real' features can sometimes be used to mock and why seemingly 'fake' features do not necessarily entail the same social meanings across different moments of practice. (I present an additional formalized discussion of a distinction between 'ideological' and 'interactional' forms of mocking in Chapter 9.)

2.5.3 Conventionalization

Although mocking practices are often clear divergences from a conventionalized norm (e.g., Mock Spanish is distinct from Spanish), an application of Ferguson's notion of *conventionalization* raises two interesting issues that past mock language research has not addressed. First, Hill's label *Mock Spanish* recognizes an imagined variety whose norms are widely recognized, including features such as hyperanglicized pronunciations of Spanish words and uses of "Spanish" morphemes on English words (e.g., *mucho trouble-o*) (Hill 1999: 682). In other words, for the monolingual English speakers whose practices Hill critiques, these strategies *are* conventionalized—that is, there exist shared

“sound-meaning pairings” (Ferguson, 1994: 15). In Le Page’s (1980; 1985) terms, although this practice may be largely “diffuse” given that it does not serve as a primary medium of communication, it has undergone some degree of “focusing” through the widespread circulation of these forms in the popular media. The potential for even stereotypical forms of out-group language to undergo conventionalization is a concern that I address in Chapters 5 and 7.

A second and related issue that has been overlooked in the mock language literature is the *process* by which particular forms become conventionalized. Although it has been long recognized that standardization of varieties leads to focusing (J. Milroy & Milroy, 1985), recent sociolinguistic work has addressed the focusing of regional dialects (Wolfram, 2003) in face-to-face interaction (Johnstone & Baumgardt, 2004; Walters, 2003) as well as through the media (Walters, 2003). Studies of conventionalization processes have typically given attention to varieties used as a primary medium of communication where opportunities for “norming” are greatest, but conventionalization may also occur for ‘functionally peripheral’ modes of speech. Discussions of conventionalization thus relate to a more general discussion of how particular linguistic forms historically undergo “enregisterment,” or “processes whereby distinct forms of speech come to be socially recognized (or enregistered) as indexical of speaker attributes by a population of language user” (Agha, 2005b: 38). Although Agha’s formulation refers more generally to the issue of how linguistic forms come to be linked to social meanings, rather than referential meanings, with which Ferguson was likely most concerned, these dual facets of ‘meaning’ are often part of the same process. As Walters (2003) has suggested, Tunisian Arabic speakers’ exposure to Arabic spoken in countries outside Tunisia has resulted in greater awareness of the social meaning of linguistic

differences between Arab dialects and the subsequent conventionalization (in Ferguson's sense) of Tunisian Arabic.

Clearly, the relatively inauthentic, devalued, transformed, and non-conventionalized status of mocking practices makes them qualitatively different from varieties that serve as the primary medium of everyday communication. Yet mocking practices deserve the attention of linguists. Not only is mocking an authentic part of how people communicate in the everyday, but it is also precisely its inauthentic, devalued, transformed, and non-conventionalized status that brings visibility to language issues that have remained otherwise invisible. Having suggested the import of mocking for sociolinguistic theory, I now turn to a description of the site of my research, where mocking served important functions for students.

Chapter 3: Background of the Study: Site and Methods

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE SITE

During the months I spent in Fortville from August 2003 to January 2005, I became quite familiar with two of its main streets. One of them, which I traveled during my daily ten-minute commutes between my apartment and Diversity High, was lined with local churches, schools, restaurants, apartment complexes, grocery stores, pawnshops, tattoo shops, barber shops and other local businesses nestled between large fast food signposts jutting far above its neighboring low-rise structures. Many of the businesses displayed signs that supported U.S. troops in Iraq; they also flew U.S. flags, as if to beckon passing vehicles. The other street, which I took when leaving and returning to Fortville, also had many local and non-local businesses, in particular those that made use of the expanses of available land, such as car and motorcycle dealerships, auto parts shops, and truck rental stores. Scattered along a particular stretch of this road were Korean nightclubs that remained mostly quiet in the daytime. Diversity High was located between these two streets that bore the historical markings of a military city.

This city of nearly 100,000 was not small, but driving down any of its streets makes clear its non-urban aesthetic. In contrast to walkable urban areas that might be found in the city where I was attending graduate school, the streets of Fortville were largely the domain of businesses and vehicles, rather than pedestrians. Buildings rising above a single story were rare, and the city's design seemed to be less a product of the city's long-term planning than the outcome of decisions by individual businesses over the years. The buildings lining the local landscape served clearly functional purposes.

Despite the humdrumness of Fortville's appearance, my fifteen months of my research there happened to coincide with a time that was hardly everyday for its

residents. In January 2003, just seven months before my research was to begin, President George W. Bush ordered the deployment of a military division at the neighboring base of Fort Doe in preparation for a U.S. invasion of Iraq that would eventually take place in March 2003, igniting a war that continues to this day. In early 2004, the U.S. deployed a second military division from the post, resulting in 161 government-reported deaths of soldiers from Fort Doe by the time I had left in January 2005 (CNN, 2007).⁹ Although a neighboring school in the same district called Southside High was attended by a far larger number of enlisted soldiers' children, I met many Diversity High students with family members who had either been deployed to the Middle East as soldiers or who had been sent there as employees of private military companies. Thus during my months in Fortville, I crossed paths with students for whom war and its consequences were literally close to home.

While some of the data I collected reflects this specific historical juncture, my analyses do not focus on how war may have affected these students' lives. My lack of attention to these issues is not meant to paper over the injustices of a government that has placed in harm's way members of U.S. military communities who generally come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. In fact, some of the conversations I heard or recorded were clearly relevant to the emotional pain that war brings, and some of the displays of anger and detachment I sometimes witnessed may have been directly or indirectly related to this reality. However, this particular study focuses on language practices that reflect youth life in ethnically diverse military communities and U.S. high schools more generally. The levity of some of the practices I represent in this dissertation may problematically overshadow the gravity of the lives of those directly affected by the

⁹ Because I am primarily concerned with the potential impact of Fort Doe deaths on Fortville's residents, this figure does not include the significantly larger number of soldiers and civilians of various nationalities killed, wounded, and otherwise subject to suffering during this conflict.

war. Yet it may likewise reflect how Diversity High as a public institution sometimes sought to insulate students from harsh realities beyond the school's walls, a function that may be understood as both a 'problematic denial' and a 'necessary mechanism' for maintaining peace at school in time of war. Additionally, the normalcy with which most students seemed to go about their daily lives—for example, speaking of war and death in matter-of-fact terms and participating in the Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC, see Footnote 101, p. 194) without apparent reservation—may have been in part a strategy students used in order to cope with realities that might have been otherwise far more difficult to bear.

3.1.1 Entering Diversity High

In contrast to Fortville's utilitarian landscape, the vibrancy within the walls of Diversity High presented a far different sensory experience. When I arrived on its campus in February of 2002 to attend my first meeting with administrators—a year and a half before I would actually begin my research—the energy of students was palpable as they surged through the hallways between classes, hooting, squealing, laughing, and displaying an enormous range of *styles*. I could not begin to parse the flurry of aesthetic and symbolic activity I came across that first day. I followed the signs directing “visitors” to check in at the main office, where I surrendered my personal identification card, received a visitor's identification card to be worn throughout my visit, and recorded the room number of my destination; the strict protocols maintained by administrators were clear. During class time, the halls were monitored by faculty and staff, including a police officer, and surveyed via video cameras encased in black bubbles that hung from the ceilings. Between classes, the eyes of adult hall monitors scanned the stream of students to make sure that school regulations were obeyed. As I would later learn, these monitors were assigned the task of watching and listening for such violations as vulgar language,

headbands and hats, skirts rising more than four inches above girls' knees, and identification cards that did not sufficiently display students' names and photos.

Despite these rigid regulations, the administrators I spoke with welcomed me, a graduate student researcher from a large university, to the inner spaces of this institution. While they prohibited data collected through video recordings on campus, they seemed particularly pleased by my focus on Asian Americans, whom they viewed as model students; one administrator proudly handed me the program for a recent academic awards ceremony, because it listed many students with Asian surnames. In addition, given my agreement to conduct research outside classroom settings and to serve as a tutor for one of the school's programs, my presence was likely seen as minimally intrusive and even a benefit to the community.

3.1.2 A high school in Fortville

In this section, I wish to present some of the general ethnic and social-class characteristics of Diversity High and the city in which it was located, as these details are necessary for understanding the language practices I investigate in this dissertation. While local stylization practices articulated with widely circulating ideologies of language and social identity extending far beyond Fortville, their specific meanings and forms were products of local characteristics of the city where—when compared with its immediately neighboring cities—whites were far smaller in number, Koreans and Filipinos were larger in number, and the residents were generally less well-off.

The campus of Diversity High, one of four high schools in the immediately surrounding area, was located in Fortville, Texas. With a rapidly increasing population of around 98,000 in 2005 (up from about 87,000 in 2000) (US Census Bureau, 2000,

2005),¹⁰ this city shared a border with Fort Doe, a large U.S Army base that significantly influenced many aspects of the city's economy, demography, and culture. In addition to the fact that 22.6 percent of its residents were in the armed forces and 33.3 percent were civilian veterans, Fortville's residents were relatively young, with a median age of 26.4 years, a figure that was 7-10 years younger than the Texas and U.S. median ages, respectively. It also had a relatively mobile population because military life typically required families to relocate to bases inside and outside the U.S. In 2005, 16.1 percent of Fortville's residents¹¹ had not been living in Texas five years earlier in 2000, compared to only 3.1 percent of the U.S. population that had moved from another state. On the other hand, Fortville also had an established community of residents that was relatively more stable than those of its adjacent cities of Fort Doe, Close City, and Hilltop City, where larger numbers (74.6 percent, 35.6 percent, and 27.6 percent, respectively) had been living outside of Texas five years earlier. Fortville thus reflected a moderately high level of mobility that may in some ways have paralleled large urban areas such as Big City, a large city in Texas where 4.4 percent of its residents, had previously been living in another state.

¹⁰ The increase in population is possibly due to the active recruitment of soldiers during the war in Iraq, bringing new families to the city. However, it may also reflect a population growth trend for the city that began before the war; in 1990, the city's population was around 64,000.

¹¹ This figure is calculated by adding those who had lived in a different state with those who had lived in a different country during the past five years.

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Fortville’s population in relation to neighboring cities, Texas, and the U.S.

	CITIES NEAR FORT DOE ARMY BASE				BIG CITY	TEXAS	U.S.
	FORTVILLE ¹²	FORT DOE ¹³	CLOSE CITY	HILLTOP CITY			
Distance from Fort Doe	0 mi.	0 mi.	1 mi.	5 mi.	80 mi.	-	-
Armed forces ¹⁴	22.6%	67.8%	18.8%	13.6%	0.1%	0.4%	0.3%
Civilian veterans	33.3%	23.6%	34.3%	31.6%	7.9%	10.1%	10.9%
Different house in U.S. (5 yrs. prior)	28.2%	80.4%	55.1%	57.4%	27.1%	18.2%	15.5%
Different county (5 yrs. prior)	12.0%	76.4%	42.6%	33.1%	8.0%	6.3%	5.6%
Different state (5 yrs. prior)	8.7%	63.7%	27.6%	21.1%	3.1%	2.3%	2.5%
Abroad (5 yrs. prior)	7.4%	10.9%	8.0%	6.5%	1.3%	0.9%	0.6%
Population in thousands (rounded)	98	34	30	25 ¹⁵	678	22,270	288,378

¹² The figures for Fortville, Big City, Texas, and the U.S. are from 2005.

¹³ All figures for Fort Doe, Close City, and Hilltop City are from 2000 unless otherwise noted, because more recent statistics are unavailable.

¹⁴ This figure reflects those who were 16 years and older.

¹⁵ This recent yet unofficial figure from the Hilltop City website is far larger than the 2000 Census figure of 17,000.

In the following sections, I describe some of the ethnic and social class characteristics of Fortville in relation to its surrounding cities as well as Texas and the U.S. more generally. I do so in order to account for the particular nature of and reasons for the multiethnic population at Diversity High. I also discuss how students' perceptions of their school as 'diverse' in terms of ethnicity and class were largely based on how its demographic characteristics compared with its neighboring schools and cities.

3.1.3 Ethnicity

Students commonly described Fortville's ethnic population as both unique and diverse, mirroring vibrant urban centers where styles and ethnic identities are in dynamic flux. This perspective is reflected in the following excerpt from an interview with three cheerleaders.

Example 3.1: "There's a lot of diversity here" (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04)

1 Elaine: How about are you proud to be in Fortville?
2 From Fortville?
3 Princess: Yeah ((High non-committal style))
4 Sleepy: The reason I say that is because I feel like I was-
5 I think I fit in if I was somewhere else?
6 But there's so-
7 like there's a lot of Korean people here.
8 There's a lot of diversity here.
9 Princess: Yeah
10 Sleepy: That's what I like
11 Princess: Cause of the army and stuff
12 Sleepy: Yeah.
13 Princess: So you get your dosage of everything.
14 And if you live somewhere else you may not.
15 They don't understand it.
16 Barbie: We're definitely raced differently

As seen in Table 3.2 below, the uniqueness of Fortville's ethnic demography was reflected in the large number of individuals who identified as multiethnic (5.5 percent) compared to individuals in the U.S. more generally (1.9 percent). Relative to other locations as well, it had a smaller population of whites (40.6 percent) and a larger population of African Americans (38.3 percent). The Latino population (16 percent), on the other hand, was not much larger than the national figure (14.5 percent) but less than half of the Latino population in the rest of Texas (35.5 percent). The number of residents of Asian descent (5.8 percent) was similar to that in Big City (5.6 percent) but slightly larger than the Asian populations in Texas (3.5 percent) and U.S. (4.8 percent). The Pacific Islander population of 1.1 percent was small in comparison to other races but between 4 to 10 times larger than the Pacific Islander presence in Texas and the U.S. Native American residents made up 1.5 percent of the population, which was only slightly larger than their presence in other parts of Texas (1.0 percent) and the U.S. (1.4 percent).

Table 3.2: Racial/ethnic characteristics of Fortville’s population in relation to neighboring cities, Texas, and the U.S.

RACE ¹⁶	CITIES NEAR FORT DOE ARMY BASE				BIG CITY	TEXAS	U.S.	U.S. ARMY ¹⁷
	FORTVILLE	FORT DOE	CLOSE CITY	HILLTOP CITY				
White ¹⁸	40.6%	33.8%	60.6%	65.5%	51.1%	48.9%	66.8%	52.2%
Black	38.3%	45.3%	22.3%	16.2%	9.6%	11.5%	12.8%	25.1%
Latino/Hispanic	16.0%	16.7%	11.7%	12.4%	32.9%	35.5%	14.5%	11.3%
Asian	5.8%	3.4%	4.3%	4.7%	5.6%	3.5%	4.8%	3.0%
AIAN ¹⁹	1.5%	2.1%	1.8%	1.5%	0.8%	1.0%	1.4%	1.0%
Pacific Islander	1.1%	1.4%	1.0%	0.7%	0.1%	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%
Other race	6.0%	10.5%	6.8%	6.8%	15.1%	12.3%	6.5%	7.5%
Multiethnic	5.5%	4.8%	5.1%	3.6%	1.7%	1.7%	1.9%	0.0%

¹⁶ These racial categories, defined by the U.S. Census, may not coincide with individuals’ self-perceptions, but they provide a rough portrait of the racial demography of these locations. See King (2000) for a discussion of the problematic socio-political consequences of accounting for multiracial identification in the 2000 Census. Unless unavailable, these figures include individuals identifying as being ‘at least in part’ a particular race, thus including multiracial- and monoracial-identified individuals. Thus, these columns add up to more than 100 percent, except for the Army statistics.

¹⁷ These 2004 figures reflect the races of enlisted soldiers in the Army who identified monoracially; multiracial-identified individuals were placed in a separate category (Department of Defense, 2006). Soldiers in the Navy, Air Force, or Marines are not included.

¹⁸ This figure refers to those that the U.S. Census categorizes as whites who are “not Hispanic or Latino.”

¹⁹ American Indian and Alaska Native.

It is important to note that while the total proportion of Latinos, Asians, and Pacific Islanders may not have been far different from each of their percentages within the U.S. more generally, the ethno-national groups conventionally seen as falling under these racial/ethnic classifications were very different in Fortville when compared with the rest of the U.S. In contrast to populations elsewhere, a sizable 26.6 percent of the Latinos in Fortville were of Puerto Rican descent, compared to constituting only 1.1 percent and 9.0 percent of the Texas and U.S. Latino populations, respectively; 51.7 percent of Pacific Islanders in this city were of Guamanian or Chamorra descent, while this ethnic group made up only 19.2 percent of the U.S. Pacific Islander population; and 49.7 percent of Fortville Asians were ethnically Korean and 24.6 percent were Filipino, figures that were far greater than 10.0 percent and 18.3 percent, respectively, in the U.S.

Table 3.3: Racial/ethnic characteristics of Fortville’s Latino, Asian, and Pacific Islander populations in relation to Texas and the U.S.

ETHNICITY	PERCENTAGE WITHIN LATINO POPULATION IN		
	FORTVILLE	TEXAS	U.S.
Mexican	64.2%	83.3%	64.0%
Puerto Rican	26.6%	1.1%	9.0%
Cuban	1.1%	0.4%	3.5%
Other Hispanic or Latino	22.7%	15.2%	23.5%
ETHNICITY ²⁰	PERCENTAGE WITHIN ASIAN POPULATION IN		
	FORTVILLE ²¹	TEXAS	U.S.
Asian Indian	3.3%	24.2%	18.6%
Chinese	3.6%	18.9%	23.1%
Filipino	24.6%	12.0%	18.3%
Japanese	5.6%	2.7%	6.7%
Korean	49.7%	7.6%	10.0%
Vietnamese	4.4%	21.9%	11.4%
Other Asian	8.9%	12.7%	11.9%
ETHNICITY	PERCENTAGE WITHIN PACIFIC ISLANDER POPULATION IN		
	FORTVILLE	TEXAS	U.S.
Native Hawaiian	13.9%	29.6%	38.3%
Guamanian/Chamorro	51.7%	31.3%	19.2%
Samoan	20.5%	4.9%	14.3%
Other Pacific Islander	14.0%	34.1%	28.3%

The relatively large percentages of Puerto Ricans, Pacific Islanders, Koreans, and Filipinos in Fortville were a consequence of the recent histories of Puerto Rico, Guam, South Korea, and the Philippines and the consequent presence of U.S. soldiers in these nations. Currently, Puerto Rico and Guam are U.S. territories whose residents, as U.S. citizens, can both enlist in the U.S. military and reside legally in the U.S. Although South Korea is not a U.S. territory, South Koreans have been in continued contact with U.S.

²⁰ Statistics of the ethnicities of multiracial Asians and Pacific Islanders are unavailable.

²¹ These figures are from the 2000 Census because more recent figures are unavailable.

armed forces since the Korean War (1950-1953), and currently 35 U.S. Army posts are located in this nation (Wikipedia, 2006a). In the Philippines, which was a U.S. colony from 1898 to 1946, the U.S. military was a familiar presence (1898-1992) (Espiritu, 2003: 28-29), leading to two types of Filipino immigration to the U.S. Many Filipino men arrived after enlisting in the U.S. Navy because of the lure of escaping poverty and promise of U.S. citizenship; six thousand Filipinos were in the Navy during World War I, and fourteen thousand by 1970. In addition, U.S. servicemen brought their “war brides” to the U.S., the first wave of Asian immigrants to arrive after World War II (Espiritu, 2003: 76). Such marital ties between U.S. soldiers²² and Asian women in these countries have resulted in many interethnic military families. Finally, among the emigrant women from Korea who married U.S. soldiers, many have sponsored the immigration of their Korean relatives, and it has been estimated that 40 to 50 percent of all Korean immigrants since 1965 are ultimately linked to family unification involving Korean wives of servicemen who reside in cities such as Fortville (D. B. Lee, 1997 cited in Yuh, 2002).

The relatively small number of whites (40.6 percent) and large number of African Americans in Fortville (38.3 percent) compared to the rest of the U.S. may seem odd given that enlisted soldiers in the U.S. Army appears to generally reflect the ethnic demographics of the U.S., (Department of Defense, 2003) (see rightmost column in Table 3.2 above). However, Table 3.2 also shows that Close City and Hilltop City, which both neighbor Fortville, had relatively large numbers of whites (60.6 percent and 65.5 percent, respectively) and small numbers of African Americans (22.3 percent and 16.2 percent), while a relatively smaller number of whites (33.8 percent) and larger number of African Americans (45.3 percent) live on the base itself. These figures suggest that Fortville’s

²² In 2003, 80.9 percent of enlisted soldiers in the U.S. Army were male; the numbers were probably greater in previous decades (Department of Defense, 2003).

relatively large African American population was related to the fact that cities and neighborhoods were racialized spaces.²³

The ethnic distribution across the high schools in the Fortville Independent School District (FISD), which included schools in Fortville and Hilltop City, also displayed differences with respect to one another. In particular, the student populations at Diversity High and Southside High were about half African American (48.3 percent and 49.3 percent, respectively), while the populations at Hilltop High and Eastside High were roughly only a third African American (30.7 percent and 38.8 percent, respectively). Also notable was the fact that Hilltop was nearly half white (47.9 percent), while Diversity and Southside were about a quarter white (27.5 percent and 26.7 percent, respectively) and Eastside was about a third white (35.9 percent). The Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Native American populations were largely similar across the four schools. The teachers in the school district were predominantly white (77.0 percent) and female (78.8 percent).

²³ While the specific nature of this relationship will not be explored here, the possible links between ethnicity, class, and place of residence are discussed in the next section.

Table 3.4: Racial/ethnic characteristics of high schools in the Fortville Independent School District in relation to Fortville

STUDENT RACE (2003-2004) ²⁴	DIVERSITY HIGH	HILLTOP HIGH	SOUTHSIDE HIGH	EASTSIDE HIGH	FISD	FORTVILLE
African American	48.3%	30.7%	49.3%	38.8%	40.4%	38.3%
White	27.5%	47.9%	26.7%	35.9%	35.7%	40.6%
Latino/Hispanic	18.6%	16.0%	19.0%	18.6%	18.9%	16.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5.2%	4.8%	4.4%	6.6%	4.4%	6.9%
Native American	0.4%	0.6%	0.6%	0.2%	0.7%	1.5%
TEACHER RACE					FISD	TEXAS
African American	11.5%	8.3%	15.8%	8.7%	13.2%	8.8%
White	79.8%	83.5%	70.8%	82.0%	77.0%	71.1%
Hispanic	7.2%	6.8%	9.0%	6.2%	6.9%	18.8%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.6%	0.7%	3.7%	1.6%	1.8%	1.0%
Native American	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	1.6%	1.1%	0.3%
TEACHER GENDER					FISD	TEXAS
Female	57.5%	58.0%	58.6%	55.5%	78.8%	77.3%
Male	42.5%	42.0%	41.4%	44.5%	21.2%	22.7%

²⁴ These statistics from the Texas Education Agency problematically do not allow for multiracial identification. According to students I spoke to, teachers instructed students to choose their father’s racial identification as their own, which likely skewed racial representations. Specifically, given that multiracial students of Asian descent were far more likely to have a non-Asian father, they are underrepresented in these statistics.

3.1.4 Notes on labeling²⁵

My use of labels relating to race, ethnicity, and nationality in this dissertation negotiates the frequent slippages among various ideologies, including the variety of ways in which these categories of identity were understood at Diversity High and in other institutional contexts, such as within academic and government discourses in the U.S. For my present purposes, I typically use *ethnicity* as a cover term for forms of identification that researchers and non-researchers sometimes consider as falling under the separate rubrics of both *ethnicity* and *race*. My use of this general term underscores the difficulty of clearly separating socially constructed conceptualizations of racial and ethnic identifications that often overlap. For example, in this community, both race and ethnicity were often viewed in essentialist terms and were linked with ‘traits’ deriving from a primordial past (Espiritu, 1992). At the same time, following conventions of mainstream U.S. discourses, I sometimes choose to use the term *race* as well as its derivative forms *racial*, *racialize*, *racialized*, and *racialization*, to refer to categories and processes that orient to socially constructed notions of *phenotype*, *biology*, and *color*, such as *black*, *brown*, *white*, and *yellow*.

According to some researchers who draw a distinction between *race* and *ethnicity*, race is often understood in phenotypical or biological terms (e.g., skin color, DNA, blood lineage), and ethnicity in terms of culture (e.g., food, traditions). The distinction drawn between these cultural constructs may parallel discussions focusing on the ‘biological’ nature of *sex* and the ‘cultural’ aspects of *gender* (Butler, 1993). Alternatively, in popular U.S. discourses, *ethnic* categories are understood as subtypes of *racial* ones, such that

²⁵ In this dissertation, I use italics to represent a word or a concept (e.g., the term *Korean*, the concept of *stylization*), single quotation marks to highlight a concept as assuming an ideological perspective I may not adopt (e.g., the notion that ‘American’ means white) and double quotation marks to quote the actual words used by a previous speaker or writer.

Korean, Filipino, and Japanese ‘ethnicities’ are categorized as falling under the umbrella of an Asian ‘race’.²⁶

At Diversity High, however, clear-cut definitions of *race* and *ethnicity* did not exist, and terms traditionally viewed as referring to racial categories were equated with those referring to ethnic categories. For example, placing such terms in paradigmatic juxtaposition, students referred to certain individuals as “Korean and white” and made jokes about “blacks and Mexicans.” In addition, individuals could be characterized as “looking Mexican” and thus categorized according to racial meanings through labels that may appear to name an ethnic category. On the other hand, terms such as *black* and *white*, which refer explicitly to dichotomized contrasts of skin color, could sometimes be used to refer to cultural and linguistic practices that may be considered ‘cultural’. In other words, ethnicities were racialized concepts, just as racial identities were ethnicized. Given local understandings at Diversity High of race and ethnicity as overlapping, in this dissertation, I do not draw clear lines between labels referring to these constructs, even while recognizing that social distinctions based on characteristics seen as biological, and thus largely immutable, were sometimes distinguished from those seen as cultural, and thus relatively mutable (cf. M. A. Kang & Lo, 2004).

My representation of national identity, or an individual’s identification with a particular nation-state (or potentially more than one nation-state) based on citizenship, residency, or some other facet of nation-based association, also requires clarification. Following mainstream conventions in the U.S., when two lexemes are collocated, as in *Vietnamese American*, I use the first of these lexemes to represent ethnicity while the second refers to nationality (Radhakrishnan, 1994). The ordering of these axes of identity

²⁶ These two views are not necessarily incompatible, as ethnicities are sometimes conceptualized in U.S. mainstream discourses as cultural groupings that fall within broader categories defined by biological or phenotypical difference.

may be argued as reflecting an implicit ideology that prioritizes nationality over ethnicity, as the rightmost lexeme can be understood as the head of the compound noun.²⁷ On the other hand, when representing two ethnicities, such as in the case of multiethnic individuals, I separate the lexemes orthographically with a hyphen. For example, *black-Korean* describes someone who has both African American and Korean ethnic ancestry.

Yet for the purposes of this dissertation, I generally do not represent the national identities of individuals unless this aspect seems salient or relevant, such as when highlighting the American identity of particular Asians. I acknowledge, however, that labeling Korean Americans using the descriptor *Korean* alone risks reproducing discourses that marginalize Asian Americans, such as those that assume Asians to be “forever foreigners” (Tuan, 1999). One reason I have chosen not to consistently name national identity is that U.S.-raised students at this high school rarely referred to themselves as *American*. While it is possible that the exclusion of national identity in self-labeling practices among non-whites may be interpreted as reflecting self-exclusion from an imagined American community, I believe that the omission rather reflects the assumption that most of the students at Diversity High, except for those who had immigrated in recent years, were assumed to be American. Calling Pakistani Americans *Pakistani* in this dissertation thus follows local practice.

A second reason I have chosen not to explicitly mention national identities is that I regard the naming of ethnicity (e.g., *Korean*) to constitute a separate act from naming an individual’s nationality (e.g., *American*). In many U.S. contexts, confusion between and

²⁷ Whether *Vietnamese American* constitutes a compound noun or head noun (*American*) modified by an adjective is not clear. The prosodic shape of this word/phrase suggests that it may be a modified noun, given that the second lexeme receives primary stress (*Vietnamese American*); compound nouns typically place primary stress on the first lexeme (*linguistics professor*). However, labels of this sort may also comprise a special class that does not follow the typical prosodic patterning of compound nouns. Such prosodic exceptions for compound nouns appear to occur either when two lexemes that have an equal relationship are juxtaposed (e.g., *singer-songwriter*) or when a label historically derives from the modification of a place name (e.g., *South American*, *North Korean*).

equations of ethnicity and nationality sometimes arise from the use of place-based terms to refer to both of these identity types and the frequently imagined congruence between ethnicity and nationality—for example, ethnic Koreans are often identified as being closely linked to the Korean nation-state. Such merging of ethnicity and nationality sometimes existed at Diversity High, such as the case of a U.S.-raised Korean student who, in response to my question, initially denied that he was American, because he considered himself to be Korean. Yet in most cases, such as in discourses of multiculturalism at Diversity High, students typically acknowledged that students of diverse ethnicities could be American, thus recognizing the possible separation of these two axes of identity. Beyond the walls of this community as well, as transnational cultural flows have become increasingly common through forms of colonization and migration, conceptualizations that neatly tie phenotypes and cultures to geographical spaces have become necessarily problematized (Kearney, 1995).

In terms of my specific use of ethnic labels, I use the panethnic label *Asian* to refer to at least two concentric sets of referents. First, its most exclusive set consists of East and Southeast Asians as according to U.S. discourses that racialize Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese bodies as belonging to a single ‘Asian’ group, sometimes sweepingly referred to as ‘Chinese’ or ‘Oriental’. While my adoption of this usage reflects, and risks reproducing, popular discourses that both homogenize East and Southeast Asians who ‘look/sound alike’ and marginalize South Asians, my use of this term in this sense is intended to ultimately critique problematic processes of ethnic homogenization and exclusion. For the classification of my participants in Table 3.7 (p. 59), I also use *Asian* in a second, more inclusive sense and as typically understood in mainstream academic settings in the U.S., referring to Asians of not only East Asian and Southeast Asian descent but also South Asian descent (Espiritu, 1992); such a

classification was not compatible with typical local views of South Asian students as ‘not Asian’, but it did coincide with at least one South Asian student’s (i.e., Bob’s) self-categorization as ‘Asian’ as well as local recognition of India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka as being located in Asia.

Additionally, I typically distinguish *Asians* from *Pacific Islanders* given that students of Guamanian, Hawaiian, and Samoan descent were not locally regarded as Asian. At the same time, Asians and Pacific Islanders may not have been clearly bounded sets; specifically, Filipino students were often regarded as straddling these two panethnic categories. As reflected in a boy’s articulated confusion about whether a Filipino girl that struck his interest was Asian (“She’s Filipino. She looks Asian though. Isn’t Filipino Asian? Hey, Damon, isn’t Filipino Asian? Hey, Damon, is Filipino Asian?” Ralph, October 14, 2004), local ideologies of which specific ethnicities belonged to the Asian category were not always clear. Political alliances between those of Asian and Pacific Islander descent have been highlighted in recent Asian/Pacific American (APA) discourses that build on a overlapping histories of oppression in the U.S., yet such alliances were not apparent in the local community of my research, except to the extent that Filipino students were interstitially positioned.

The ethnic labels *black* and *white* are also used in this dissertation, primarily because these terms were used in the local setting. I use the term *black* in addition to *African American*, a term that is often preferred in academic and other institutional contexts. I use *white* as an alternative to *European American*, a label commonly used by scholars to decenter whiteness—through structural parallelism with other place-based ethnicities in the U.S.—although it may fail to capture how whites are imagined in many U.S. contexts (i.e., as having salient links to Europe).

3.1.5 Social class

While students may have regarded Fortville as showcasing an ethnic diversity similar to that found in urban areas of the U.S., its status as a lower-middle-class community distinguished it from larger cities nearby. In this section, I report both how students described the city in class-based terms as well as how its income level compared to that of other cities. Specifically, students characterized Fortville as having a relatively small population and lacking in economic opportunities as well as aesthetic appeal. This view of Fortville as decidedly non-urban was reflected in Big J's struggle to articulate why he did not plan to live there in the future.

Example 3.2: "Fortville is not a real good place to come for a job" (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)

1 Big J: Yeah it's kind of small though.
2 So like maybe-
3 and like if it gets a little bigger.
4 I see it as like not a place to be at
5 to get a good job.
6 You know what I mean.
7 It's just not really-
8 say I graduate from college or something.
9 I won't say there's like a really-
10 ((click))
11 I would say
12 Fortville is not a real good place
13 to come for a job
14 so I'm getting out after college-
15 high school.
16 I'm going.
17 Well. Yeah.

Fortville's lack of economic activity is also implicitly critiqued in the following excerpt through evaluations of the city's non-urban aesthetics as "crappy" (line 3) because it does not have the kinds of "two-story malls" (line 10) and "nice buildings" (line 15) found in cities like Big City.

Example 3.3: “This is a crappy city” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)

1 Elaine: Okay. How about Fortville the city.
2 How does it compare to other cities like Big City or
3 Grace: This is a crappy city
4 Heather: Yeah
5 Grace: It's boring.
6 It is.
7 Elaine: What makes it crappy.
8 Heather: There's not a lot of things.
9 Our mall is like smaller than Big City
10 and we don't have two story malls
11 and we don't have like other little mini malls.
12 Grace: Yeah the buildings don't really look that nice
13 in the cities
14 when you see the pictures of the big cities
15 they always have like those nice buildings.
16 Office buildings
17 Heather: Yeah
18 Grace: Really tall
19 Elaine: So it's not really pretty
20 Grace: Yeah
21 Heather: Yeah. It wouldn't look like a tourist.
22 Where a tourist would come you know
23 Elaine: Why is it like that here
24 Grace: Cause it's hot h
25 Heather: Yeah. Or cause the people that lives in the city
26 Grace: Yeah
27 Elaine: What are they like
28 Grace: A lot of them are on drugs and stuff

Even in a more charitable evaluation of Fortville by a white student named Barbie, the value of larger cities was also reflected was evident: “Besides the lack of entertainment, you know, it's a decent town. It's growing. It'll be great here in about fifteen years” (December 5, 2004).

The relative social class status of Fortville may also be measured by its household income. Although class status can be variously defined and related to additional factors such as education level and occupation type as well as less directly measurable forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1991), I consider here data easily accessible in the U.S.

Census. In 2000, the median household income in Fortville was only \$34,500,²⁸ a figure that fell well below the state and national medians of \$39,900 and \$42,000 as well as falling below neighboring cities such as Hilltop City (\$43,000) and Close City (\$38,000). However, by 2005 the median household income of Fortville had increased to \$41,900, reflecting incomes near the state and national medians at the time (\$42,100 and \$46,200). This noticeable rise in income was likely related to the U.S. war in Iraq that had begun in 2003. Soldiers and employees of private military companies who had been sent overseas were compensated at a significantly higher rates than before the war had begun.

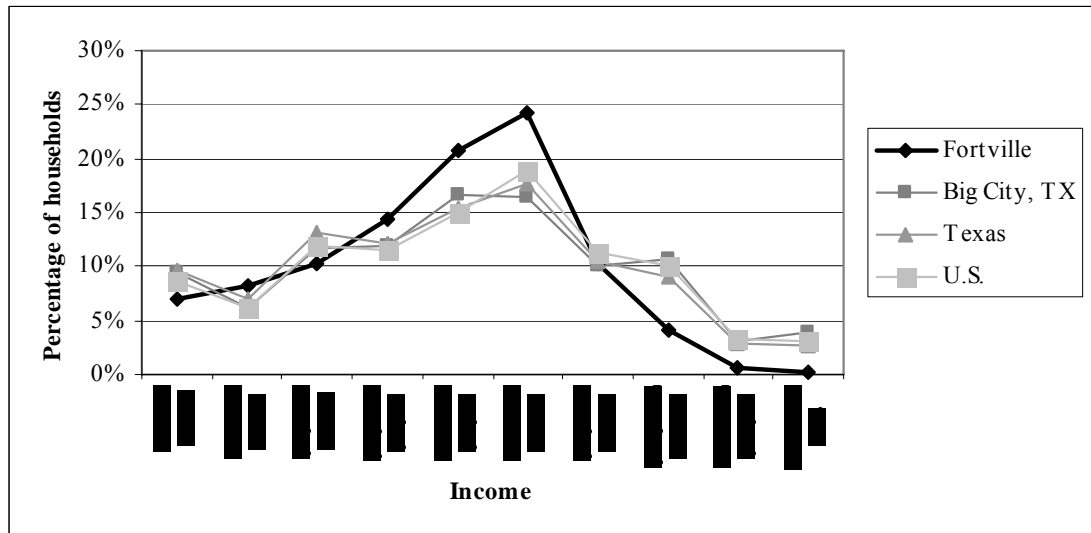
Table 3.5: Fortville’s 2000/2005 median household incomes compared with other locations

		CITIES NEAR FORT DOE ARMY BASE					TEXAS	U.S.
		FORTVILLE	FORT DOE	CLOSE CITY	HILLTOP CITY	BIG CITY		
Median household income in thousands	2000	\$34.5	\$32.6	\$37.9	\$43.0	\$42.7	\$40.0	\$42.0
	2005	\$41.9	NA	NA	NA	\$43.7	\$42.1	\$46.2

In addition, it may be important to note that the distribution of income in Fortville tended to be relatively centralized. As evident in the graph below, in 2005, there was a relatively large number of household incomes between \$25,000 to \$75,000 and relatively few households earning over \$100,000.

²⁸ Income figures are rounded to the nearest one hundred dollars.

Figure 3.1: Fortville’s distribution of household incomes in 2005



3.2 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

3.2.1 Ethnographic positioning and paradoxes

While initiating research necessitated jumping bureaucratic hurdles allowing the research to take place as I described at the outset of this chapter, collecting reliable ethnographic data required negotiating a variety of social relationships with participants. In this section, I discuss the kind of membership status I was able to achieve during my time at Diversity High, though noting the complexities of my positioning that precluded full membership.

At the end of my first nine months at this site, I met the members of the hula dance club and their required faculty sponsor Miss Riggs at a Fuddruckers for their banquet dinner. This group of seven girls and two boys who called themselves the Island Pandas²⁹ was one of several I had spent time with during my fieldwork.³⁰ As we had

²⁹ The specific mascot has been changed for anonymity.

³⁰ Only a couple members of this group, however, are included in the data analyzed in this dissertation.

finished our burgers, Miss Riggs, an English teacher in her early twenties, proposed that we move to our next banquet activity and passed out envelopes with our names containing colorful slips of paper. She then instructed us to take out the slips and pass the empty envelope to the person to our left as we received an envelope from the person to our right. Our task was to write a message to the person whose name was on the envelope we had just received and to place the message inside it, passing it on to our left. This procedure was repeated until our envelopes had circulated around the whole table, returning to us filled with colorful slips.

As we removed the slips and read our messages, some playfully feigned being touched, and several laughed as they shared them aloud with others. Eventually, I heard someone read a message that I had written; I felt a rush of embarrassment. It had become apparent that the others, including Miss Riggs, had chosen to use a non-standard ‘eye-dialect’ youth style, which included distinct orthography, lexical items, and affect (e.g., *Sup, How you doin? gonna miss u, and mayun Imma miss you*).³¹ I, on the other hand, had inadvertently marked my outsider status by relying on a standard style of writing (e.g., *You have such a wonderful sense of humor, You have such a bright future ahead of you!*). I had worked hard to gain membership over the past few months by attending practices and eating lunch with the girls in the group, yet these efforts suddenly threatened to unfurl. “You sound like a professor!” laughed Felicia, a Filipina-Guamanian student.

At lunch the next day, Felicia teasingly addressed me as “Pro-FEH-sorrr,” using a mocking tone: the distinct, explosive stressed syllables playfully suggesting that, while I may have demonstrated a high social status according to mainstream ideologies by using a ‘professor style’, my status was but of an outsider in the local community. My style of

³¹ These were parts of messages written to me, but based on the message I heard being read, I believe that messages written among the students were even more playful, drawing on a greater number of non-standard forms.

writing had made salient my social difference. Although I had been somewhat embarrassed at the banquet, I came to recognize that Felicia likely found my writing style to be humorous precisely because it was not what she had expected. Although she had known since we first met nine months earlier that I was a researcher and closer to her mother's age than her own, she teased me because we were close and not because she wished to suggest an actual distance between us.

My social position in relation to students at Diversity High was in constant negotiation. It was shifting, multiple, and complex, as I moved between groups with a conscious effort to minimize potential perceptions of disloyalty and as I wore several hats in the local community with the goal of getting to know many students. Specifically, I spent two full school days out of the week as a tutor for a program that prepared mid-level students for college. I tutored small groups of students in subjects ranging from algebra, physics, and calculus to history, English literature, and French, and after sessions were completed, I observed and participated in students' discussions. Although I was about 12-15 years older than the students I assisted, I tended to build closer relationships with them than did most of the college-student tutors who had graduated from Diversity High just a few years before. My research goals not only provided a motivation for me to get to know students well, but I did not feel the need to actively enforce a hierarchical role distinction through authoritative displays, as such a distinction was clear, at least in my own eyes.

The salience of my status as an adult varied across the different groups I came to know, whether at lunch, in club activities, or through after-school sports. One of the groups I ate lunch with during my first year at the school was a table of Korean immigrants who marked my outsider status by addressing me as *Teacher* or *Miss*, using polite forms of language when addressing me, and generally keeping our interactions to a

minimum. Despite my initial hopes, I was more ‘observer’ than ‘participant’ in relation to this group. Indeed, sharing an ethnic identity with these students may have permitted me to sit at their table without their visible protest—for example, they did not end up relocating to another table—yet I perceived a barrier to membership within this social group in part because of my limited abilities in Korean, the dominant language at the lunch table. Although I had intermediate proficiency in the language having been raised by Korean immigrants and having studied it formally for a few years, I hardly had the kind of fluency—either cultural or linguistic—demonstrated by these youths, most of whom had immigrated within the past several years. Perhaps more significantly, students upheld the Korean cultural assumption of age as a central determinant of relative social positioning. I thus faced the double-edged dilemma of, on the one hand, displaying shared cultural assumptions by playing the role of an older female figure—a *nwuna/enni* (‘sister’) or *ajwumma* (‘aunt’)—thus highlighting differences of age status or, on the other hand, downplaying age differences, thus betraying a non-Korean set of cultural assumptions. My efforts to delicately navigate these options included sometimes sharing home-cooked *phacen*, or Korean green onion pancakes, while never demanding explicit forms of respect typically shown to Korean elders.

In contrast, students who were raised in the U.S., regardless of ethnicity, recognized my adult status but seemed to be comfortable calling me by my first name, treating me as someone close to them in age. Several claimed initially mistaking me for a student until noticing my identification card that hung vertically as faculty cards did, rather than horizontally like their own. A few students told me that I was “different” from other adults they knew, as I showed an active interest in learning about students’ lives, lifestyles, and language practices, rather than in policing them. My attire, which often included bootcut jeans and athletic shoes, also seemed to fit within the range of styles

worn by students. While students were generally unfamiliar with what it meant when I referred to myself as a “graduate student” or “researcher,” I perceived myself to fit within their schema of social roles as a kind of older sibling, though one who tended toward listening than advising. Among all of the groups I came to know, my age difference was least salient during practices with the girls’ soccer team. Having been trained on a competitive soccer team during my own high school years, I became an unofficial team member who suffered through practices, shared soccer tricks, and became privy to gossip that circulated among female youths.

As I came to know students who identified diversely in terms of ethnicity, gender, class, and sexual identity, my own identity as a U.S.-raised, college-educated, heterosexual Korean woman likely affected the kind of data I was able to collect. As I have suggested above, my identity as an ethnic Korean did not guarantee my membership within Korean friendship groups and in fact may have served as a barrier in some cases. Yet I sensed that students of color may have confided in me, a researcher of color, their thoughts about ethnicity-related issues more frankly than they may have with a white researcher; white students, on the other hand, may not have felt the same. In addition, some students who identified as Asian seemed to take an active interest in my research project as it related to personal issues they wished to explore, while a few appeared to maintain a suspicious distance. Likewise, my identity as a woman also seemed to present barriers to participation in certain groups, such as the boys’ soccer team and a friendship group of Asian boys that I interviewed but failed to spend much time with. On the other hand, both girls and boys generally seemed to enjoy talking to me in one-on-one conversations, as I was in some cases one of the few people—adult or youth—eager to lend an ear. In contrast to my visible ethnicity and gender, my sexual identity and class status were less readily available to be read though these were often assumed.

Specifically, I experienced the privilege of not needing to correct assumptions in students' questions about my heterosexual identity. The issue of my class status was never mentioned explicitly in my presence though alluded to in reference to my home institution, which was constructed as prestigious, or my "proper" or "professor"-like language practices, as seen in the narrative that opens this section.

Just as students' perceptions of me may have changed as I became an increasingly familiar face on campus, my time at Diversity High led to changes in how I began to understand local activities, even while I could never completely escape the ways in which my own life experiences shaped these interpretations. For example, at the football games I attended, the institutionalization of gender hierarchies was uncomfortably palpable while girls in short skirts and cowboy hats danced and cheered as peripheral forms of entertainment—during "halftime" and on the track outside the "turf," where the 'real' action took place. In part, I felt discomfort as someone, and particularly a woman, who has perceived the ways in which the female body is often an object of dehumanized consumption. Some of these girls were girls I knew well from tutorial sessions, and to see them participate in a gendered role of support for a boys' team was all but troubling. But, curiously, I found my own impulse to take pride in their skillful performances.

Some sociolinguists have pointed to the problem of the "observer's paradox" in research settings (W. Labov, 1972c), a notion pointing out that the researcher's outsider status, in addition to the presence of a recording device, necessarily prevents the collection of naturalistic data. While it is the case that some of my social differences in relation to my participants may have prevented me from ever achieving full membership status within the community, the many months I spent at the school allowed me to record and observe what I believe to be the kind of conversations that might have taken place in my absence.

At the same time, the flow of certain interactions were products of my presence. My long-term methods of participant-observation may likely be seen as ‘counteracting’ the possible outsider effects predicted by the observer’s paradox. However, as critiqued in recent sociolinguistics research (Bucholtz, 2003; Chun, 2006a; Schilling-Estes, 1998), the assumed goal of obtaining “authentic” data may be misguided. Rather than regarding as most relevant how I collected my data, I focus on the importance of its interpretation, namely by understanding the ways in which my researcher positioning constituted a factor—but certainly not the sole factor—both enabling and hindering the production and interpretation of particular kinds of talk.

3.2.2 Recording local activities

My understanding of language practices at Diversity High depended on my fifteen months of involvement in several aspects of student life on campus, fieldnotes I took after attending school activities, audio minidisc recordings of students’ interactions, and ethnographic interviews I conducted off campus during the final two months of my research. Most of my data collection and participant observation were performed outside classroom settings, except when I tutored small groups of students within classroom spaces but not during regular classes led by teachers. While much of my knowledge about the high school was culled from my conversations with and observations of students I tutored, these sessions were never recorded.

Of the interactions I did record, which totaled more than 100 hours, more than half occurred during the school’s two lunch periods, each of which lasted about 40 minutes. The division of students into “A lunch” and “B lunch” groups allowed me to sit with several different groups without sacrificing regular interactions with any of them. For example, I sat daily with a group of Korean immigrant students during A lunch of the first nine months of my fieldwork, while dividing my time between two tables during B

lunch—specifically, sitting with one group on Tuesdays and Thursdays and sitting with the other group for the remaining days. During the last few months of my research, because of the changes in students’ scheduling, shifts of friendship groups, and my desire to become acquainted with a wider segment of the student population, I ended up sitting with the same two groups from B lunch, in addition to moving primarily between four other groups that occupied spaces both inside and outside the cafeteria.

Data collection also took place during my observation of and participation in several after-school activities in my efforts to become familiar with both Asian and non-Asian students. Some of these groups met as frequently as five times a week to as infrequently as once every other week. One of the groups I came to know best was the girls’ soccer team as I not only attended games but also participated in their practices.³² Other activities I attended were boys’ soccer practices, hula dance practices, student council meetings, and an anime club that watched Japanese animation. The anime club, however, was officially disbanded after it screened a film containing images that administrators deemed too sexual. On less frequent occasions, I attended school-wide events such as football games, choral concerts, pep rallies, and awards ceremonies.

During the final two months of fieldwork, I conducted group interviews involving twelve friendship groups, ranging in size from two to ten, in addition to two one-on-one interviews. Each lasted about two hours and took place after school over a meal in the cafeteria, a local restaurant, or my apartment. The interviews largely consisted of conversations between the participants themselves, though the second hour of the session was framed around prepared questions that were aimed primarily at gathering participants’ demographic data and their thoughts about local social cliques and their language practices. A large number of the examples presented in this dissertation are

³² Among all of the groups, I believe I had access to the “backstage” forms of self-presentation among these girls (Coates, 1999).

from these interviews, because they not only provide rich data about local social and linguistic ideologies but also constitute a large portion of the nearly 40 hours of recording I managed to transcribe.

The recording of interactions began two months after I entered the fieldsite because written parental consent from participants was required by my university's Institutional Review Board before I could record. However, the delay did not pose a problem, as it allowed me to become acquainted with students, establish my legitimate positioning, and alleviate any suspicions of my motives, prior to turning on a minidisc recorder and placing a microphone in their presence.

3.2.3 Participants

During my time in Fortville, I came to know at least 200 students who participated in social networks linked to the local settings described in the previous section. This dissertation focuses on a narrower group of 97 students who were formally recruited for the study and gives particular attention to the 48 students who appear in the examples presented in this dissertation. Fifty-seven of the participants identified as female, and 40 as male; they also identified as being of diverse ethnicities. As Table 3.6 below indicates, 48 participants, or nearly half, identified as being of 'part' or 'full' Asian descent, a consequence of my goal when entering the fieldsite of focusing on Asian students and their language practices. Within this group, 65 percent and 21 percent, respectively, identified as being of Korean or Filipino descent, and 54 percent identified as multiethnic. About one-third of the participants identified as being of white ancestry, 44 percent of whom also identified as having non-white ancestry. Nearly a quarter identified as black, 45 percent of whom identified as multiethnic, while only 16 participants identified as being of Latino descent, and 6 as being of Pacific Islander

descent. In most cases, students' ethnic identifications were obtained through self-identifications; yet in a few cases, I depended on reports by their peers.

Table 3.6: Racial/ethnic identifications of participant population according to race, place/nation, and multi/monoethnicity

RACE-BASED	COUNT	PLACE/NATION-BASED	NUMBER	MULTI-ETHNIC	MONO-ETHNIC
Asian	48	Korean	31	12	19
		Filipino ³³	10	7	3
		Chinese	3	3	0
		Japanese	2	2	0
		Vietnamese	2	1	1
		Pakistani	1	0	1
		Sri Lankan	1	1	0
White	34	White (American) ³⁴	33	14	19
		German	1	1	0
Black	22	African (American)	22	10	12
Latino	16	Mexican	8	6	2
		Puerto Rican	7	2	5
		Panamanian	1	0	1
Pacific Islander	6	Guamanian	3	1	2
		Hawaiian	2	1	1
		Samoaan	1	0	1

Most of the excerpts analyzed in this dissertation are from conversations that took place among several specific groups of friends during lunch, group interviews, or school activities. The table below provides a list of these groups in addition to the pseudonyms of group members, their membership status as *core* or *peripheral*, their ethnic identification, gender, and year in school.

³³ As I noted earlier, Filipino students were often considered racially both Asian and Pacific Islander.

³⁴ I have included the term *American* parenthetically here because African Americans and white Americans were not likely to be linked to places outside the U.S.

Table 3.7: Participant population to appear in excerpts according to local social group

GROUP ³⁵	NAME	MEMBERSHIP ³⁶	ETHNICITY	GENDER	YEAR ³⁷
Tutorial	Ann	Core	Black	Female	2
	Laquisha	Core	Black	Female	2
	LJ	Core	Korean-Mexican	Male	2
	Triple X	Core	Black-German	Male	2
	Valerie	Core	Puerto Rican	Female	2
	Vivioni	Core	Black	Female	2
	Hector	Peripheral	White	Male	2
	Maggie	Peripheral	Mexican	Female	2
Outcast United	Carrie	Core	White	Female	1
	Claire	Core	White	Female	1
	Desiree	Core	Puerto Rican	Female	1
	Duchovny	Core	White	Male	1
	Marissa	Core	White	Female	1
	Romanaf	Core	Korean-White	Male	1
	Scott	Core	Korean-White	Male	1
	Dragon	Peripheral	Black	Male	2
	Mercedes	Peripheral	Black	Female	1
Middle School	Damon	Core	Black-Filipino-Puerto Rican	Male	2
	Jap	Core	Japanese-White	Female	2
	Momi	Core	Chinese-Korean	Female	2
	Ralph	Core	Black-Hawaiian-Japanese	Male	2
Academic	Big Dog	Core	Filipina	Female	4
	Bob	Core	Pakistani	Male	4
	Joanne	Core	White	Female	3
	Liam	Core	White	Male	3

³⁵ I assigned the names of these groups either based on self-descriptions or points of shared interest or identification among group members. The names largely serve as mnemonic devices for my analysis rather than representations of how they were identified by others at the school. Some of the labels I have created are transparent in their rationale (e.g., *Korean*), while others are less transparent—for example, the name of the ‘Middle School’ label is based on the fact that most of its members had attended the same middle school; many members of this group continued to eat lunch together during their freshman and sophomore years.

³⁶ For the purposes of this table, ‘coreness’ of membership is defined by the relative frequency with which members interacted rather than indicating the dynamics of power relations between experts and novices (Lave & Wenger, 1991) within the groups.

³⁷ Unless otherwise indicated, the ‘year in school’ status of students in the 2004-2005 school year is represented. In the case of the ‘Korean’ group (shown with asterisks), however, the 2003-2004 school year status is shown, because most of this friendship group graduated in the spring of 2004, after which this group did not regularly convene.

Pacific	Phil	Core	Filipino	Male	4
	Vincent	Core	Vietnamese	Male	4
	Felicia	Peripheral	Filipina-Guamanian	Female	3
	Guadalupe	Peripheral	Guamanian	Female	4
	Vanessa	Peripheral	Samoan	Female	3
Korean	Brian	Core	Korean	Male	4*
	Gu	Core	Korean	Male	4*
	Haejung	Core	Korean	Female	3*
	Hyungkee	Core	Korean	Male	2*
	Jin	Core	Korean	Male	4*
	Luke	Core	Korean	Male	4*
	Mora	Core	Korean	Female	4*
	Sung	Core	Korean	Male	4*
	Sungho	Core	Korean	Male	1*
	Taesik	Core	Korean	Male	4*
	Yuna	Core	Korean	Female	2*
Big D	Peripheral	Korean	Male	2*	
Big J	Peripheral	Korean	Male	2*	
Sakaci Girls	Miss Thang	Core	Korean	Female	1
	Piggy	Core	Korean	Female	2
	Yoshi	Core	Korean	Female	1
	White Tiger	Peripheral	Korean-White	Female	2
Junior Girls	John-John	Core	Black-Korean	Female	3
	Philip	Core	Filipina-Puerto Rican	Female	3
	Pinky	Core	Black	Female	3
Tutorial Girls	Grace	Core	Korean-White	Female	2
	Heather	Core	Black-Korean	Female	2
Soccer Girls	Bob III	Core	Korean	Female	3
	Celia	Core	Korean-White	Female	2
	Joanne	Core	White	Female	3
	Ro	Core	Panamanian	Female	2
Cheerleaders	Barbie	Core	White	Female	4
	Princess	Core	Vietnamese-White	Female	4
	Sleepy	Core	Korean	Female	4
JROTC Girls	Kelsey	Core	White	Female	3
	Lashay	Core	Black	Female	3
	Nicole	Core	Filipina-White	Female	3
	Pinky	Peripheral	Black	Female	3
Junior Boys	Big D	Core	Korean	Male	3
	Big J	Core	Korean	Male	3
	Jose	Core	Mexican-White	Male	3

Some of these groups were mutually exclusive, although the students' social networks often overlapped. For example, Big D and Big J were members of both the Korean and Junior Boys groups, Joanne was a member of both the Soccer Girls and Academic groups, and Pinky was a member of the Junior Girls and JROTC Girls groups. In addition, I have not provided here an exhaustive list of members of the Middle School and Soccer Girls groups, given that these groups were large, though such an exhaustive list would have shown overlap with other groups. For example, some of the members of the Middle School group were also part of the Tutorial group (LJ and Triple X), and members of the Sakaci group (Piggy, Miss Thang, and White Tiger) were members of the Soccer Girls group.

The analyses in this dissertation primarily focus on data from groups I knew to varying degrees (Tutorial, Outcast United, Sakaci Girls, Junior Girls, Tutorial Girls, and Soccer Girls, whom I knew well, and Academic, Cheerleaders, and Junior Boys, whom I knew less well). Data from several groups I knew well, such as the Middle School, Pacific and Korean groups, will be analyzed in future work.

3.3 METHODS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

3.3.1 Transcription

I use methods of transcription to represent interactions that I analyze, recognizing that this process of abstraction decontextualizes spoken discourse for research-specific goals that involve complex relations of power (Bucholtz, 2000). My choices to transcribe particular segments of discourse were based on several constraints: finding naturalistic instances in which mocking practices occurred, representing metalinguistic commentary where language ideologies were evident, and functioning within the limits of time available to a researcher. Working within these constraints for this dissertation, I largely

transcribed and analyzed recordings of everyday group gatherings at lunch and group interviews, particularly those that included large amounts of playful stylized mocking and commentary on language and social identity. In addition to my selectivity to capture moments of my analytical object, I balanced my transcription of data with a broad technique of transcribing recorded conversations from beginning to end in order to capture a sense of the frequency with which specific language practices occurred.

Many of the transcription conventions I use are purposefully chosen, as I have tried to include sufficient detail representing the interactional flow (e.g., overlap, ordering of turns) and prosody (e.g., emphasis, intonation, and amplitude) and linguistic details relevant to the social meanings being constructed, using greater formal linguistic description where necessary but without, I hope, sacrificing legibility. Consequently, uses of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), and pitch tracks are kept to a minimum except in cases where phonetic and phonological contrasts may be relevant or salient. Although I do not articulate a particular theory of intonation and style, my impression is that intonation may play a yet undertheorized role not only in style performance but also language practices more generally. The orthographic choices largely follow written conventions of English, but may sometimes include non-standard alternatives to academic writing that are either fairly conventionalized in writing, such as *kinda* and *gotta*, or relevant to syntactic constructions, such as the use of African American English (AAE) aspectual *be* or third-person *don't*. Other kinds of eye-dialect forms, however, are largely excluded, if they do not contribute to the point of the analysis. I have included the following conventions adapted from Goodwin (1990):

<u>bold underline</u>		Focus of analysis
<i>italics</i>		Emphasis (pitch, amplitude)
CAPITALS		Increased volume
:		Lengthening
-		Sudden cut-off
.		Falling contour
?		Rising contour
h		Breathiness, laughter
Overlapping	[speech	Overlapping speech
	[speech	
//		Overlapping speech
((details))		Additional transcription details
(xxx)		Problematic hearing

To ensure anonymity, participants are represented with pseudonyms that were chosen either by students themselves or by me. In the interest of saving space, rather than listing all of the participants, I simply identify the name of the participant social group (See Table 3.7: Participant population to appear in excerpts according to local social group).

3.3.2 Linguistic features in conversation

The bulk of this dissertation depends on methods of discourse analysis, specifically in order to understand how language features at the level of phonetics, phonology, syntax, and lexicon, are embedded in conversations (cf. Keating & Egbert, 2004; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974). Simultaneously examining traditionally linguistic and sociological units of analysis can reveal how the social meanings of specific linguistic forms are emergent products of collaborative and negotiated events between participants, rather than assuming such meaning to exist prior to these moments. A close analysis of this sort provides an understanding of how linguistic units, which may be indeterminate, ambiguous, and multiple in their social meanings, become resolved through indexical assignments established in interactions (Chun, 2006b).

3.3.3 Ethnographic interpretation of local meaning

In addition, I underscore the importance of understanding how the meanings of specific interactional moments are inherently tied to wider patterns of meaning across interactions in the local community. Consequently, I couple these methods of analyzing linguistic and conversational units with ethnographic interpretive methods (Geertz, 1973) that take into account complex local ideologies of language and social identity as I have come to understand them through conversations and interviews with community members. This ethnographic knowledge I have gained is supplemented—and limited—by my personal experiences of participating in U.S. mainstream culture well before my fieldwork at Diversity High began.

In particular, my object of investigation—stylized mocking—is based on students’ frequent mocking of locally salient, circulating social categories: Asian immigrants and preps. Among the many possible mock forms, however, my dissertation strategically juxtaposes styles that, on the one hand, racialize local social categories, but on the other hand, occupy quite divergent social spaces. Specifically, the racialization of Asian immigrants related to ideologies that placed individuals on a relative scale of national belonging, such as between ‘Americans’ and ‘Asians’, ‘immigrants’, or ‘FOBs/fobs’ (fresh-off-the-boat emigrants from Asia). The racialization of preps, on the other hand, was complexly intertwined with ideologies of gender and class. Stylized Asian mocking was also narrower in its social meanings, often used to create humor by evoking a relatively simple stereotype of Asians as comically incompetent speakers of English. Stylized prep mocking indexed a far more complex stereotype linked to a variety of social practices. This dissertation will address the implications of these similarities and differences between these two racialized styles.

3.3.4 Quantitative analysis of social meaning

Finally, the meanings of language practices requires evidence beyond the speculative claims a researcher may make based on a few moments of interaction. I thus employ methods to obtain larger patterns of use across various interactional moments. As mentioned in my description of my transcription technique, I broadly transcribed recorded interactions in order to obtain a sense of how often particular language practices occurred. Additionally, I used a quantitative method of coding and classifying a large number of moments of stylized Asian and prep mocking, according to the particular kinds of social practices and characteristics with which they were associated.

Classifying stylization practices required subjectively interpreting minute moments of discourse as namable events. For example, I classified moments of stylized Asian mocking involving the use of non-native English phonology (e.g., pronouncing *milk* as /mil.k^hə/) to be ‘incompetent English’ and those shouted as a loud directive as ‘aggressive’. Given that practices could construct personae with more than one characteristic—for example, a loud directive performed with a non-native accent—each mocking event was classified according to up to three different characteristics. Stylized prep mocking moments were similarly coded, resulting in a different set of characteristics, such being ‘emotional’, ‘snotty’, or ‘critical’.

The categorization admittedly depended on my impressionistic interpretation of interactional moments, such that they may not have fully reflected participants’ interpretations. This aspect of my analysis was likely limited not only by my motivation to see ‘patterns’, thus potentially erasing nuances of meaning, yet also by my use of ad hoc categories that treat moments as different despite their overlaps in meaning. Rather than comprising the main component of the analysis I present in this dissertation, this supplemental methodology was intended to obtain general patterns of different social

meanings by examining rough frequencies of their occurrence. These frequencies were tabulated using Microsoft Excel pivot tables and are presented in the relevant chapters that describe each of these styling practices.

Chapter 4: Ideologies of Ethnicity, Authenticity, and Language

At a place like Diversity High, talk about language was never solely about language. Metalinguistic discourses in this community necessarily implied a host of different kinds of *social* and *relational* notions. For example, a student's description of a friend as 'speaking proper' was not merely about her use of *sir* and *ma'am*, but, among other possibilities, how notions of 'proper English' were linked to local meanings of whiteness and class privilege; how these meanings were hierarchically positioned in relation to one another; how this friend was located in relation to these meanings; and how these friends were positioned in relation to one another. In other words, talk about language necessarily articulated with ideologies about the politics of social identity.

In this chapter, I describe such ideologies of language and social identity in order to provide the ideological backdrop for the language practices I analyze in the rest of this dissertation. Drawing primarily from metalinguistic discussions, I first describe local understandings of *ethnicity politics*—namely, how students used ethnic labels and how they understood whiteness and Asianness, both in relation to one another and in relation to institutional privilege. Next, I introduce three ways in which students constructed the notion of *authenticity* as having particular value in the community, specifically, as 'ethnic essence', 'ethnic habitus' and 'sincerity'. Finally, I address local *language ideologies* based on metalinguistic discussions from group interviews in which students juxtaposed a notion of 'proper English' with conceptions of 'slang' and 'regional accents'. This chapter does not specifically focus on mocking, but potential meanings of this practice relates to the ideologies of ethnicity, authenticity, and language that I address in the following sections.

4.1 POLITICS OF ETHNICITY

4.1.1 Ethnicity talk

In her analysis of “race talk” at a multiethnic high school in California, Mica Pollock (2004) notes that Americans frequently grapple with the issue of when they should talk as if race matters. Such anxiety, she argues, stems from the worry of being labeled a *racist*. Indeed, in many contexts in the U.S., merely evoking race-labels, or ethnonyms, may be perceived as “impolite” (Hall-Lew & Norcliffe, 2006) such that speakers may “suppress” certain kinds of talk about race. Yet explicit forms of racializing discourse were common at Diversity High. Not only did students discuss ethnic identifications matter-of-factly,³⁸ but they also playfully derogated one another by explicitly evoking ethnic stereotypes in ways largely proscribed in U.S. public spaces.

Certainly, most students seemed to recognize the potentially problematic nature of racializing discourse. For example, among members of the Pacific group, Vincent once mitigated his negative characterization of black students (“I don’t want to say that in a racial way, and I’m not trying to stereotype, but that’s what it seems like”); Isaac expressed his worries after telling an ethnic joke (“Whoa. I thought like people heard me ‘cause right when I said ‘black people’ it got quiet, and I was like ‘Oh shit’”); and a chuckling Miguel critiqued Isaac’s joke (“That’s mean. That’s bad. You racist mother fucker”).

Unlike the derogation of ethnic others that the Pacific group constructed as dangerous, playful face-to-face forms of racialization were typically left uncensored. In particular, ethnic address terms figured prominently in conversations between friends who engaged in form of play (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974), sometimes as simple

³⁸ Pollock (2004) reports that such matter-of-factness was typical in conversations about student-student, as opposed to student-adult, relations.

forms of ritual insult (Abrahams, 1962; W. Labov, 1972a)—usually between boys—but usually as markers of close cross-ethnic relations through teasing (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997; Schieffelin, 1986)—often between girls.³⁹ During soccer practices, members of the girls’ soccer team sometimes cheered for one another with calls such as “Go Mexican!” and black female members of the Tutorial group claimed that they used racializing address terms with a Korean friend named Piggy (a member of the Sakaci Girls) as potential terms of endearment.

Example 4.1: “We call her Oriental” (Tutorial, 12/01/04)

1 Denasha: They’re nice.
2 I love Asians.
3 Piggy.
4 I love Piggy.
5 Valerie: I love Kim.
6 I call her Kim
7 because “Piggy” seems weird to me.
8 Vivioni: Is that a cheerleader?
9 Valerie: No
10 Laquisha: I call her “Oriental.”
11 We call her “Oriental.”
12 Ann: She calls us “Black people.”

Likewise, students sometimes drew on stereotypical ethnic food items as cross-ethnic monikers. Alexandra, who participated in the school’s color guard,⁴⁰ explained to me that members of her team referred to a Korean-white teammate as *rice*. In another case, two girls, one Asian and the other Mexican, affectionately called one another *eggroll* and *burrito*, respectively, during the year that they also called one another *best friends*.

³⁹ I was the object of teasing once when a girl named Bob the Third called out to me on the soccer field, “Go Korean with the stubby legs!” This teasing act was complex: on the one hand, it subverted my adult status, yet on the other hand, its ‘bite’ was mitigated by our close relations, shared Korean ethnic identification, and similar physical stature.

⁴⁰ The color guard was a group of girls who danced with flags at school events, such as football games.

The sanctioning of racializing labels among friends seemed to relate in part to the ethnic landscape of the high school, where ethnic multiplicity was part of many students' lived experiences in friendship groups, classes, and families. At the same time, interethnic tensions sometimes arose, such as between 'Mexicans' and 'Puerto Ricans', according to some students. It seemed that the latent threat of ethnic tension provided the very symbolic power of cross-ethnic racialization practices, as these acts demonstrated to their peers that relations between 'racializer' and 'racialized' were so unquestionably close that serious insult lay outside the realm of possible interpretation.

4.1.2 White privilege

While some forms of racialized stylized mocking may be understood as part of a larger set of playful racializing discourses at Diversity High, not all mocking practices were intended to be playful, instead reflecting students' negative feelings toward their targets. Preps, in particular, were generally mocked as objects of relatively less playful derision. As I address in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3.1.1 Derision), students constructed preps as not only 'too feminine' but also unfairly privileged because of their ethnic and class membership.

White students were locally regarded as privileged for a number of reasons related to the dynamics of mainstream U.S. institutions generally and military cities specifically. Compared to other schools in Texas, Diversity High had a relatively small number of students identifying as monoethnically white,⁴¹ yet a large proportion of these students were children of military officers, who had incomes that were far higher and who were more likely to identify as monoethnically white, compared to their enlisted counterparts

⁴¹ An estimate of about 18 percent of the students were white, a figure based on yearbook photos and my classification of students' ethnicities. This imperfect method of classification was based on my knowledge of how students likely identified or were identified. See also Table 3.2: Racial/ethnic characteristics of Fortville's population in relation to neighboring cities, Texas, and the U.S.

(72.8 percent of officers in the U.S. compared to 52.2 percent of enlisted personnel were monoethnically white in 2004) (Department of Defense, 2006). The disproportionate number of officers' children, who were usually white, was further magnified by the fact that, among the four high schools in the district, Diversity High was where students were assigned to attend if they lived in Cotton Park, the on-base neighborhood for officers' families. The high school also drew students from relatively affluent families, such as children of doctors, because it housed a rigorous program for academic elites called International Baccalaureate (IB). According to students in this program, its members, who were permitted to enter after passing written and oral exams, were predominantly white and Asian (Academic, December 9, 2004).

Discourses of white institutional privilege at the school appeared to merge with widely circulating understandings of white socioeconomic privilege in U.S. mainstream institutions. And such wider discourses likely reflected the material realities of ethnicity and class. For example, U.S. Census data from 2002 shows that the U.S. median household income for non-Hispanic whites was \$47,000, compared to \$29,000 for blacks (DeNavas-Walt, Cleveland, & Webster Jr., 2003). Given that whites elites, or whites with economic capital, tend to be dominant in mainstream institutions, forms of symbolic capital that are ideologically associated with this social group tend to be more highly valued within these institutions, thus obtaining a "legitimated" status (Bourdieu, 1991). The mocking of preps, as I will discuss in Chapters 7 and 8, seemed to relate to links that white students had to institutional forms of prestige yet the absence of these students in local forms of status-endowing activities; for example, few white boys played football, the primary activity that defined popularity for boys. Additionally, even though white cheerleaders were sometimes characterized as "popular" (see Example 7.10: "They control the school but we do all the work" (Outcast United, 1/19/05)), non-white girls,

especially those who were older, seemed unwilling to label white girls as such. Members of the Junior Girls, for example, contested racialized images of popularity in the media when John-John, a black-Korean female student, explained to me, “Like you know how in movies there’s like a number one clique that everyone wants to be a part of? I don’t think they have that.” Her Filipina-Puerto Rican friend, Philip, confirmed, “We don’t have that at our school” (December 17, 2004). In another part of this conversation, they devalued white girls in more implicit ways, such as in suggestions of their general unattractiveness despite the existence of “pretty” exceptions.

Example 4.2: “She’s pretty for a white girl” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 John-John: She’s pretty.
2 She’s pretty.
3 Philip: She’s pretty for a white girl.
4 John-John: Yeah.
5 Philip: She could be a model.
6 She’s tall.
7 John-John: She could.
8 She should.

Whether Philip and John-John were engaging in a moment of ‘resistance’ to white hegemony or engaging in a multiculturalist discourse that devalues the ‘absence of color’ is unclear.⁴² However, it is evident that within this interactional moment they construct the non-normativity of whiteness. Such acts were potentially sanctioned by the fact that white students—who were not present when the interaction took place—occupied a institutionally recognized and potentially covetable position yet failed to engage in the kind of ‘covertly prestigious’ (Trudgill, 1972) symbolic displays valued in the local community.

⁴² See a discussion of this latter discourse in Chapter 5, Section 5.1 Asian stereotypes: Deviances of language, race, and nation.

4.1.3 Asian privilege

Unlike whiteness, *Asianness* was rarely discussed explicitly in terms of class. The closest such case that I can recall occurred when a black student named Vivioni noted the absence of Koreans in particular kinds of menial employment, such as working at a local fast food restaurant. Similar characterizations emerged as well when I explicitly asked Korean students about the social class status of Koreans in interviews.

Example 4.3: “All Koreans are in the upper class” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)

1 Big D: I think like people-
2 like Koreans are in the upper class.
3 Big J: Yeah I’ll say all Koreans are upper class man
4 Big D: A lot of people think like we’re rich
5 and stuff like that.

Constructions of Asian class privilege, though not common, paralleled census statistics showing the U.S. median Asian and Pacific Islander household income (\$52,000) to be higher than that of whites (\$47,000) (DeNavas-Walt et al., 2003). Such discourses may have also coincided with mainstream constructions of Asian Americans (e.g. Brand, 1987) as “model minorities” (S. J. Lee, 1996; Osajima, 1988) and “honorary whites” (Tuan, 1999), locally ‘evidenced’ by the presence of Asian students on the school’s honor roll and in the high-level classes (“It’s mostly Asians and white people in the upper classes,” Joanne, December 9, 2004). A girl identifying as Korean-black understood this local reality as resulting from the fact that Koreans were “smart [and] focused on their education” (Heather, December 2, 2004), and several teachers and administrators I spoke with not only emphasized how well Asian students performed academically but also identified Korean students they adored for their brilliance and good behavior.⁴³ Such discourses, both local and more general, while framed positively as

⁴³ I was keenly aware that I played my own part in reproducing local images of Asians, as an Asian ‘professional academic’ and a dependable tutor who often taught math given the lack of popularity of this subject among other tutors.

evidence of a strong ‘Asian work ethic’, may construct Asians and Asian Americans as threats to white dominance (R. G. Lee, 1999) as well as implicitly attributing the relatively low economic statuses of other non-white communities to their lack of a work ethic rather than to systematic, structural discrimination (Osajima, 1988).

Yet, as elaborated by a Korean student named Big J, the class status of Koreans was complicated by characteristics such as lacking a college education (line 9) and being “dumb” (line 6).

Example 4.4: “They could be real dumb” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)

1 Big J: I dunno.
2 Big D: I dunno.
3 Big J: It’s the way like Korean mom- Korean parents.
4 The way I see is?
5 They’re real determined to do something.
6 **Like they could be real dumb?**
7 Like I’ll say all Koreans?
8 All Korean moms?
9 **I don’t think none of them got (a) college degree.**
10 But you see none of them are poor here.
11 You know what I’m saying?

Big J alludes to the complexity of class membership that may not always be wholly income-based. Similarly, many scholars have noted that census statistics that appear to draw links between Asianness and class status can be misleading for several reasons (Cabezas & Kawaguchi, 1988; Hurh & Kim, 1989; Ong & Hee, 1994 cited by Kibria, 1998: 954). Among them, the measurement of income by household ignores the fact that many Asians often live in households with multiple wage earners, resulting in a large cumulative family income despite the small income of individual earners. In addition, there are great disparities within the Asian population due to the different socio-historical circumstances of their immigration; Indian and Japanese Americans both have median household incomes of \$71,000, compared to \$32,000 and \$36,000 among Hmong and Cambodian Americans, respectively (Reeves & Bennett, 2003). Finally, recent

emigrants from Asia and elsewhere tend to work longer hours than most American wage-earners, often performing physically challenging manual labor in the service industry; while their total income may be above most working-class Americans, their lifestyle and experiences may be regarded as more working-class than those of their non-immigrant counterparts in the same income bracket.⁴⁴ Census statistics—like other forms of ‘data’ presented in this dissertation—might thus be regarded as one among many ways of understanding and constructing the relationship between ethnicity and class.

4.1.4 Asian pride

The ‘honorary white’ status of Asian Americans resulted from assumption of ethnic binaries in mainstream U.S. discourses; in this school setting, Asian students were placed in relation to blacks and whites, as they often were in widely circulating discourses. Yet local discourses of ethnicity often aligned Asian students with other non-whites who experienced ethnic discrimination in a context of white institutional dominance. Those who identified as Asian thus took part in constructing themselves as ‘ethnic’ students—as ‘students of color’—through symbolic acts of ethnicity, such as wearing national flags of Asian nations, code-switching into Asian languages, and engaging in discourses of ‘ethnic pride’ that implicitly critiqued white cultural dominance.

⁴⁴ Their lifestyle may be similar to Milroy and Milroy’s (1992: 19-20) description of “life-mode I.”



Illustration 4.1: A student displays a flag of the Philippines he sometimes wore



Illustration 4.2: A Korean student sports a letterman's jacket



Illustration 4.3: A Korean student playfully displays an “A for Asian” hand sign



Illustration 4.4: A Filipina-Guamanian’s illustration in her notebook

Such ethnic displays were described as acts of *pride*, a stance that was generally positively valued. In a conversation in which a Korean cheerleader named Sleepy was discussing her pride in her Korean heritage, her Vietnamese-white friend Princess qualified as she chuckled, “She won’t wear the flag on her neck but—” to which Sleepy responded, “I mean once I get my car I’ll put it on there.” In the following example, members of the Academic group talk about the “cool[ness]” (line 18 and 20) of ‘Korean pride’ evidenced by dense Korean social networks and visual symbolic displays.

Example 4.5: “Korean pride” (Academic, 12/09/04)

1 Elaine: Are there any Asian American groups you can think of?
2 Bob: **Korean pride?** Yeah.
3 Elaine: Yeah?
4 Bob: Definitely.
5 Joanne: Oh yes.
6 Big Dog: I remember that.
7 Bob: There’s always always that.
8 Yeah.
9 And there are people from all different
10 Like we have a Korean guy on the tennis team?
11 And a Korean guy in IB
12 But they know each other.
13 They all know each other.
14 All sorts of connections.
15 Big Dog: Yeah it’s just always.
16 Bob: Every single Korean knows another Korean.
17 They’re really strong on it.
18 **It’s really cool.**
19 Big Dog: Yeah.
20 Joanne: **That is really cool.**
21 Bob: And they’re all nice to each other.
22 Elaine: **They talk about Korean pride?**
23 Bob: Oh yeah.
24 **It’s awesome.**
25 I like it.
26 Big Dog: Like they even get em on their lettermans and stuff.
27 Or um Rachel.
28 She used to have “little Korean chick”.
29 Rachel had um “Korean girl” on it.
30 Like who was it.
31 Sung?
32 He had **“Korean pride”** on his.

33 Bob: They're really.
34 Like I was talking
35 And I was like-
36 Big D.
37 He's on the tennis team.
38 He was talking to me.
39 He's like "How's soccer going."
40 I was like "Pretty good."
41 And I was like "You know we're suffering.
42 We lost Luke?
43 He's one of our best players?"
44 He's like "Yeah you need another Korean guy man?"
45 I was like "Oh"
46 "Yeah just get a Korean guy you'll be fine."
47 I was like "Okay." h

Such discourses about ethnic pride alluded to local notions of ethnic authenticity as displays of pride were understood as indexing 'true' ownership of an ethnic identity. In the next section, I discuss the local value of *authenticity* as it circulated in this community.

4.2 IDEOLOGIES OF AUTHENTICITY

The notion of *authenticity* has been studied by scholars for some time. In his published lectures *Sincerity and Authenticity*, literary critic Lionel Trilling (1972) describes it as reflecting the high value given to "the nature of. . . being" (86) and writes:

It is a word of ominous import. As we use it in reference to human existence, its provenance is the museum, where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be, and therefore worth the price that is asked for them—or, if this has already been paid, worth the admiration they re being given. That the word has become part of the moral slang of our day points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existences.

Outside the world of art and literature that Trilling describes, researchers of 'science' too have been preoccupied with authenticity, as noted in recent sociolinguistic discussions (Bucholtz, 2003; Coupland, 2001b, 2003; Eckert, 2003a). Bucholtz (2003), for example, has discussed how some researchers have striven to record data viewed as

authentic by collecting it among speakers seen as linguistically pure as a consequence of their limited contact with other communities, capturing it within everyday settings that are regarded as natural, and defining particular kinds of data as authentic according to the standards of the researcher, rather than those of the community researched. The problematization of an assumed authenticity has also been a concern for those beyond sociolinguistics, in fields such as anthropology that have addressed the difficulty of locating cultural patterns that are authentic to a community and the problematic ossification of cultures when authenticity is located (Jackson, 2005) as well as the exclusionary nature of ideologies of authenticity that serve to value certain members while marginalizing others (Maira, 1999/2000; Morgan, 1994; Myhill, 2003). Although scholars have destabilized this notion in their research, authenticity continues to play a significant role in how community members draw their cultural and linguistic boundaries, even in late-modernity (Coupland, 2003). Speakers continue to engage in processes of “authentication” (Bucholtz, 2003: 386), whereby “essentialist readings” of practices are enacted in constructions of identity.

Yet authenticity was not always considered a virtue among students at Diversity High. The ability to engage in acts that could be viewed as inauthentic was sometimes valued, such as humorously mimicking the speech of others in acts of stylization or expressing politeness despite impulses to the contrary, as suggested by Valerie at lunch (“Stop. That’s not nice. We say nice things at this table,” December 1, 2004). Occasionally, an aesthetic of inauthenticity was also sometimes valued; for example, a girl named Philip explained, “I’m feeling fake jewelry right now. Like the chandelier earrings. . . I like it. Fake jewelry” (December 17, 2004).

Still, students typically described practices regarded as inauthentic to be undesirable. Not only were ‘grills’⁴⁵ and ‘boobs’ subject to accusations of being fake (see Example 8.13: “But her boobs annoy me I swear” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)), but individuals were criticized if they were perceived as presenting an inauthentic self or as being concerned with inauthentic matters. Among students at Diversity High, three kinds of authenticity were relevant to their ideologies of identity. The first concerned the issue of who counted as ‘true’ members of a particular identity group, and such definition typically depended on a notion of an ethnic primordial *essence* (Geertz, 1973) based on ancestral ties. The second type of authenticity related to what constituted authentic, or essential, practices of an individual—in other words, what ‘ways of doing’ had become had become part of a speaker’s “habitus” (Bourdieu, 1977). Finally, a third type of authenticity addressed the degree to which individuals displayed ‘realness’, or a consistency between ‘inner feeling’ and ‘outer expression’ (cf. Trilling, 1972) as well as integrity of character.

4.2.1 Ideology of essence

Frequently, individuals were critiqued on the basis of displaying ethnic or gendered practices viewed as inconsistent with an assumed authentic ‘ethnic essence’. In the following example, four black students discuss with me a white girl who “think she black” (lines 1-3) and, the “opposite” scenario of a “white girl in a black girl’s body” (lines 13-14).

Example 4.6: “She’s a double-stuffed Oreo” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1	Vivioni:	If you see a white girl
2		hanging out with a bunch of black people
3		you say, <u>“Oh she think she black.”</u>
4	Ann:	But that’s how they be acting sometimes

⁴⁵ A removable cosmetic mouthpiece often made of an expensive metal and associated with rappers.

5 Laquisha: That's how they act
6 Vivioni: Girl I went to American eagle (xxx)
7 Ann: Can I say something?
8 You know Belinda
9 It be all black people in the room
10 and Belinda,
11 her (toosh) is gonna shine.
12 Ann: Belinda's the opposite
13 Vivioni: Belinda's like a black-a white girl
14 in a black girl's body
15 Ann: She's a double stuffed Oreo
16 Vivioni: She's like "Miss Love." ((high pitch))
17 Okay we were reading Romeo and Juliet.
18 Laquisha: I guess it's like a white girl
19 trapped inside her body
20 Triple X: White and black
21 so it's whack.
22 She's whack.

In this interaction, individuals who engaged in ethnic practices that were perceived as not aligning with their 'ethnic essence' were characterized in terms of a psychological pathology, "think[ing]" (line 3) they are what they are not, being "trapped" (line 19) in a body they cannot accept, or simply being "whack"⁴⁶ (lines 21 and 22). Those who displayed what was perceived as ethnic inconsistency were derogatorily referred to as *wiggers*⁴⁷ or *wannabes*.⁴⁸ When I asked Heather and Grace what they thought about a particular white boy who "acted black," they collaboratively described him in psychological terms of not having "confidence," "not proud," and "ashamed" (December 2, 2004).

⁴⁶ There are many uses of the term *whack*, which Triple X uses here as a pun that combines *white* and *black*. In this particular interaction, it appears to mean both 'strange' and 'psychologically unsound'.

⁴⁷ At one lunch, about five minutes after I had asked Damon about *wiggers*, he pointed out to me, "Elaine, that's one right there. That's a wigger—a white nigger" (March 30, 2004). Damon identified as black, Filipino, and Puerto Rican.

⁴⁸ Interestingly, in this particular high school context, I do not recall encountering labels that generally characterized Asian or Latino students as racially inauthentic, even if specific Asian or Latino individuals were characterized as such. Among college-age Asian Americans, however, terms denoting the racial inauthenticity of Asians include *banana*, *twinkie*, and *chigger*.

Practices viewed as not aligning with an individual's perceived ethnic essence provoked emotional responses that potentially led to a decline in an individual's sexual desirability, as a Vietnamese boy suggests in the next example.

Example 4.7: "Wannabe Mexican bitch" (Pacific, 3/31/04)

1 Vincent: I admit I used to think Mimi was hot
2 until I actually met her?
3 And then it just kind of went downhill from that.
4 She thinks she's like better than everybody else.
5 She's fucking wannabe Mexican bitch?
6 Isaac: What is she.
7 Vincent: She's Vietnamese.
8 She used to wannabe a Mexican.
9 She's like talking like a Mexican and shit?

Such affective responses to individuals who were perceived as crossing ethnic boundaries through their symbolic practices may have related to the threat that such acts posed to students' own identities. In both of the above examples, students critiqued individuals regarded as part of their own ethnic community ostensibly desiring to be a member of another, implicitly putting into question the desirability of one's own ethnicity. Yet threats may have been perceived as well when those perceived as part of an 'out-group' displayed symbols regarded as one's own. In the next example, Damon, who identifies as black, Filipino, and Puerto Rican, comments critically on a girl named Veronica who is locally identified as "Mexican" and who was seen wearing a Puerto Rican flag.⁴⁹ His strong assertions are contested, however by his friend Momi,⁵⁰ who is also a friend of the accused girl. Momi argues that a conception of 'ethnic essence'

⁴⁹ As illustrated above, flag-sporting was one of the ways in which students marked their 'ethnic essence'; national flags were worn on clothing, jewelry, and backpacks. I refer to this practice as 'flag-sporting', not only because Damon once referred to it as such ("You can be like full Puerto Rican but you don't wanna learn Spanish but you like sport the flag."), but also because it encapsulates an important characteristic of how flags could be worn. Just as students 'sported' fancy haircuts as short-lived fashion statements, flags were easily placed on the body and subsequently replaced. The irony of flag-sporting was its ephemeral quality despite the perceived timelessness of the ethnic essence students represented with this practice.

⁵⁰ Momi identified as a being of Korean, Hawaiian, and Chinese descent and playfully called herself *Kowaiianese*.

should not determine the girl's 'right' to sport a flag, appealing instead to a notion of 'individual preference' ("That's her. If she wants to wear a Puerto Rican flag-," lines 20-21)

Example 4.8: "You should wear your flag" (Middle School, 11/23/04)

1 Momi: Why do you have something against like Mexicans
2 so called trying to be Puerto Rican.
3 Damon: I don't but
4 Momi: **Everybody wants to be everybody.**
5 **Basically how it is.**
6 Damon: Not necessarily.
7 Momi: Not necessarily (for most people).
8 Damon: See. You're Mexican right?
9 **You should wear your flag.**
10 **You know your own heritage.**
11 **Why wear another flag**
12 **if you're not that thing?**
13 **You're basically fooling everyone else and yourself.**
14 Momi: Who him?
15 Damon: No his sister.
16 Momi: His sister?
17 His sister hangs out with Puerto Ricans.
18 Damon: She was wearing the Puerto Rican flag.
19 Momi: Okay that's her.
20 **That's her.**
21 **If she wants to wear a Puerto Rican flag-**
22 Damon: To me
23 **that's basically fooling yourself and everyone else.**
24 Momi: Okay that's you.
25 But I mean.
26 Ralph: That's you Damon.
27 Damon: Yep.
28 Momi: He's talking about Veronica
29 wearing a Puerto Rican flag
30 when she's Mexican.
31 Lorena: Ain't she half Puerto Rican half Mexican?
32 That's what she's telling everybody.
33 Damon: I don't think she is.
34 Lorena: (she was the one xxx brother xxx Mexican xxx)
35 Momi: She is Mexican.
36 Damon: I'm gonna leave that subject alone.
37 I don't wanna get on it
38 and then I'm gonna start cussing
39 like ((high pitch)) "adadada"

As seen here, Damon constructs flag-sporting in terms of moral ‘rights and obligations’, as he claims that “You should wear your flag. You know, your own heritage. Why wear another flag, if you’re not that thing?” (lines 9-12). Through his discourse, he claims that individuals are ‘obligated’ to wear flags defined as their ‘own’, and, conversely, only by being able to claim a particular ethnic essence do they have the ‘right’ to wear ‘their’ flag. He also frames flag-sporting as a moral issue of ‘truth’ and ‘deception’ (“You’re basically fooling everyone else and yourself,” lines 13 and 23), suggesting that ‘cross-flag-sporting’ constitutes a form of ‘passing’ (Bucholtz, 1995); he constructs it as intentionally misrepresenting an individual’s ethnic essence as well as laying bare the cross-sporter’s pathological condition of self-denial. In an interview that took place one week after this discussion, he also described it in moral terms as “disgracing your own heritage” (November 30, 2004).

While Damon’s perspective reflected an ideology of ‘ethnic essence’ and symbolic display that tended to be accepted in this local context, some students like Momi questioned the importance of ‘ethnic essence’ in ethnic displays, noting that symbols could cross ethnic boundaries, since “Everybody wants to be everybody. Basically how it is” (lines 4-5). Yet, importantly, she did not question the authenticity of identities and symbols, and she assumed, just as Damon did, that a Puerto Rican flag was unquestionably Puerto Rican and that Victoria was undeniably Mexican.

4.2.2 Ethnic contestation among multiethnic students

While an ideology of ‘ethnic essence’ may seem narrow in its view of ethnic possibility, I now describe how it was used by students in acts of contestation, thus engaging in a form of strategic essentialism (Spivak, 1987). Typically, such contestations were products of the life experiences of individuals who had been forced to confront slippages between how they were perceived in contradistinction to how they perceived

themselves. Such slippages were particularly stark for multiethnic students who sometimes encountered situations in which they felt obliged to choose one ethnicity over another, such as when taking standardized tests and being subject to others' questions about their ethnic 'preference'. They were also frequently ascribed monoethnic identifications based on their phenotypical characteristics. At lunch, in a playful confrontation with one of his friends, Damon contested the assumption that he was "black"—an assumption possibly based on his phenotypical appearance.⁵¹

Example 4.9: "My ass ain't black. It's mixed" (Middle School, 11/15/04)

1 Damon: Do something bitch.
2 Do something
3 Do something.
4 Montreal: Bring your black ass over here.
5 Damon: My ass ain't black.
6 It's mixed

Thus rather than choosing a single ethnicity, students sometimes used self-descriptors, including *mixed*, *part*, *mutt*, *half*, *a quarter*, *half-a-quarter*, and *twenty-five percent*, which are also used, and sometimes critiqued, in mainstream U.S. discourses. At other times, they playfully created their own labels, such as *Kowaiianese* (Korean-Hawaiian-Chinese) and *Japacracker* (Japanese-white), or cleverly represented multiethnicity orthographically (e.g., *Blackorean* was sewn onto one student's letterman jacket). In other words, appealing to and reproducing an ideology of 'ethnic essence' was a way for students to contest others' ethnic ascriptions.

In contrast to the serious discussions just described, members of this community sometimes playfully disagreed with respect to which ethnic categories individuals authentically belonged. The following example illustrates a case of 'ethnic debate' among three multiethnic classmates. Despite disagreements about the ethnic categorizations of

⁵¹ Damon told me in our interview, "They think I'm black and white," when I asked him what others typically assumed his ethnic identity to be.

two of the participants, all of these students appear to share the assumption that individuals belong to ethnic categories on the basis of lineage. The excerpt begins with Triple X, who identifies as “German and black” (line 5), as he characterizes himself as sounding “white” shortly after listening to his recorded voice.

Example 4.10: “I’m not really a white boy” (Tutorial/Middle School, 5/20/04)

1 Triple X: Elaine Elaine.
2 Hey UT. ((into mic))
3 Do I sound like a white boy.
4 Cause **I’m not really a white boy.**
5 **I’m German and black?**
6 And uh I want y’all opinion on
7 if I sound like a white boy?
8 Mark: He’s in **denial.** ((into mic))
9 Grace: He’s **half white**
10 Triple X: What are you talking about.
11 You’re a white boy. h h ((to Mark))
12 Grace: He’s **half Korean.**
13 Mark: No I’m **Asian** you dumbass.
14 Triple X: If you’re Asian
15 why your skin **white?** h h
16 Mark: Because I’m like Michael Jackson.

Based on locally defined phenotypical signs, such as skin color and hair texture, Triple X might have been characterized locally as a ‘light-skinned’ black student. After he claims that he is “not really a white boy” (line 4), Mark and Grace, who both identify as Korean-white, playfully challenge his attempt to distance himself from a white identity: Mark diagnoses Triple X’s identity claim as a case of “denial” (line 8), and Grace explicitly states that “he’s half white” (line 9). However, when Triple X rejects Mark’s ethnic ascription of whiteness by instead calling Mark a “white boy” (line 11), Grace and Mark disagree with Triple X, defining Mark as “half Korean” (line 12) and “Asian” (line 13), respectively, on the basis of his Korean-white lineage. Finally, Triple X contests this definition, noting the color of Mark’s “white” skin (line 15).⁵² Although

⁵² In other ways as well, Mark might not have been regarded as having phenotypical characteristics associated with Koreans, such as curly brown hair and freckles.

the participants playfully disagree with regard to the ethnic identities of specific individuals, they share certain assumptions of ethnic authenticity, such as regarding ethnic categories (white, black, German, Korean, and Asian) as largely mutually exclusive (as claims about an individual's whiteness are countered by claims of blackness, Koreanness, or Asianness), that ethnic membership is primarily defined by lineage, and that particular markers, such as language and skin color, can also index an individual's ethnicity.

It may be important to note that neither Triple X nor Mark would have been regarded as “white boys,” since multiethnic students at Diversity High were rarely characterized as such, except in contexts of play as illustrated here. Their assumed non-whiteness reflected widely circulating ideologies of an asymmetrical standard of ethnic identification linked to historical discourses of ‘ethnic purity’ in the U.S.—the “one drop rule,” for example—that ruled out the possibility that multiethnic individuals could be considered white. At the same time, while both Triple X and Mark, in their denials of their own whiteness, reproduced this ideology of purity, it seemed that their playful ascriptions of whiteness onto others also contested the local value of whiteness as the most desirable category for membership.

4.2.3 Ideology of habitus

Alongside an ideology of ethnic essence was one that was less explicitly mentioned yet no less important in this community. It depended on what I call ‘ethnic habitus’, drawing on Bourdieu’s (1977) notion, and related to the kinds of practices that individuals were believed *to be able* to perform as a result of cultural engagement over time—often years—as part of an ethnic community. Ethnic identity of this sort was believed to be acquired behavior, and thus not regarded as part of one’s essence.

However, these learned practices were understood as having become ‘secondhand reflexes’, or part of one’s ethno-cultural competence (cf. Hymes, 1972b).

One common practice of this kind included engagement in discourses about food, displaying their knowledge of not only the names of ethnic dishes but how to prepare them as well as what and how utensils were used to eat them. Such discourses, as ‘biographical indexes’ (Chun, 2007), indirectly alluded to the cultural circumstances of an individual’s upbringing or other experiences in her past. Damon, who identified as black, Filipino, and Puerto Rican, often took part in such displays through his frequent mentions at lunch of not only his love of *lumpia*, or Filipino spring rolls, but also his ability to prepare this dish. The following example shows one such display.

Example 4.11: “Yeah I know how but my grandma she doesn’t want me to know”
(Middle School, 10/12/04)

1 Damon: I only got one lumpia.
2 I’m pissed.
3 I’m gonna start selling them.
4 Are you gonna buy some?
5 If I sell them I’m gonna make some money.
6 Elaine: Do you know how to make lumpia?
7 Damon: Yeah I know how but my grandma.
8 She doesn’t want me to know
9 I don’t know why.
10 But she doesn’t want me know.
11 Cause it was like when I was rolling the lumpia
12 She was like
13 “Oh don’t do that
14 that’s ugly.”
15 She was yelling at me.
16 ((playful sad style)) She hurt my feelings.
17 ((normal style)) but I’m gonna start selling them.
18 lumpia is da bomb.
19 It is so fucking good.

As seen in the above narrative, he suggests that the harsh critiques and alleged secrecy of his Philippine-born grandmother may have posed an obstacle to his culinary competence, but he also attests to having had direct lumpia-making experiences. His

narrative is then punctuated with a strong evaluation of lumpia as “da bomb” and “so fucking good” (lines 18-19), ‘biographically’ indexing his personal “tastes” (Bourdieu, 1984) that might be assumed to have developed through his frequent opportunities to eat lumpia.

Like learning culinary practices, ethnic language abilities required recurring language-learning experiences with ethnic community members, such that speaking a language served as a biographical index, ostensibly telling the story of an individual’s assumable past experiences. Damon not only displayed his knowledge of Filipino food, but he also often showcased his knowledge of Tagalog. While his competence was far from that of a native speaker,⁵³ particularly notable was his construction of ‘fluency’ through his rapidly performed speech. At his lunch table, none of his friends could speak Tagalog, such that none would have been able to evaluate his language skills with any level of expertise. His use of ‘ethnic language’ seemed to be a *performance* that he presented for evaluation by an audience (Bauman, 1977). However, the interpretation of this performance was not based on the *grammatical correctness* of what he said but on the *pragmatics* of what it meant to speak Tagalog in this English-dominant context; that is, his language performance declared to his friends that he could speak Tagalog, while surely they could not.

Though ethnic essence and ethnic habitus often overlapped in this community, such that students who were seen as able to speak Korean were those who were also identified as authentically Korean based on lineage, students also accepted the possibility

⁵³ One near-native Tagalog-speaking consultant described Damon’s Tagalog, based on a few recordings of it, as being a 2.5 (phonologically) and 3 (syntactically) on a scale of 1 (‘Completely non-fluent’) to 5 (‘Native-like’). Most of his utterances consisted of basic terms, such as numbers, vulgar insults (*Putang ina mo* = ‘Your mom is a bitch’), and simple requests (*Lumapit dito!* = ‘Come here’) and often involved rapid-fire strings of grammatically incorrect sentences (*Kumusta kayo? Mahal kita. Ikaw maganda ang babae kaya. Ikaw maganda ang. Uh. Ikaw mabaho ang puit mo* = ‘How are you? I love you. You are a pretty girl. You are pretty. Your butt stinks’).

of the embodiment of an ethnic habitus that did not correspond to one's ethnic essence. In the case of two Korean boys, Hobin and Song, who were well-immersed in a popular black clique, students did not seem to find it unacceptable that they often "change[d] [their] language" to accommodate to their interlocutors (lines 3-10 below). In the excerpt below, Bob and Joanne, who are Pakistani and white, respectively, deny my suggestion that Hobin and Song might be perceived as ethnically inauthentic (line 16).

Example 4.12: "You can tell when they're fake and when they're not" (Academic, 12/09/04)

1 Big Dog: Yeah Hobin's just goofy.
2 Joanne: He looks black.
3 Bob: No if you see him with black people?
4 he changes his language.
5 Listen to him.
6 I've hung out with him with other black people.
7 Joanne: No no no I know.
8 Cause he and Song talk just like that
9 when they go with their black friends.
10 Bob: Yeah with their black friends. Yeah.
11 Joanne: They talk like that.
12 Bob: They talk like that.
13 Joanne: It's different.
14 Anyways.
15 It's different.
16 Elaine: So you don't think of it as fake or anything.
17 Joanne: No they're not fake.
18 Bob: They're not fake.
19 Joanne: You can tell when they're fake
20 and when they're not.

Bob and Joanne allude to the boys' language practices, which likely includes features of AAE as incongruent with their ethnic identities but "not fake" (lines 17 and 18). Joanne's claim, "You can tell when they're fake and when they're not" (lines 19-20), suggests that talking like their black friends had become unproblematically second-nature to these boys (Bourdieu, 1991).

4.2.4 Ideology of realness

A third ideology of authenticity circulated at Diversity High, according to which individuals were valued on the basis of their ‘realness’. One manifestation of ‘realness’ was through *sincerity*, or “a congruence between avowal and actual feeling” (Trilling, 1972: 2). Notably, preppy white girls at the school, stereotypically epitomized ‘insincerity’, because they were viewed as too often engaging in practices of ‘fakeness’ aligning with other girls in their presence yet “talking shit” about them in their absence.⁵⁴ During a conversation about one of these girls, Miss Thang explained to her Korean friends, “Sometimes she seems fake to me. I’m not sure if it’s really her or if she’s just acting like that to be nice.” About four minutes later, shown in the next example, they continue to discuss the same girl’s quality of fakeness as being characteristic of “white girls” more generally.

Example 4.13: “All them white girls do, girl” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)

- 1 White Tiger: Does Tiffany seem really fake to you guys?
- 2 Miss Thang: A little bit.
- 3 Piggy: She’s nice but.
- 4 White Tiger: Nice? She talks shit about people a lot.
- 5 Piggy: I know but.
- 6 Miss Thang: Really?
- 7 Piggy: Mhm?
- 8 White Tiger: A lot
- 9 Piggy: All them white girls do girl? h

In a group interview, Piggy further explains what she constructs as the ‘two-faced’ nature of white girls in contrast to their more ‘sincere’ black counterparts.

Example 4.14: “I dunno what you’re talking about” (Sakaci Girls, 12/4/04)

- 1 Piggy: This is sort of like my theory where like I say
- 2 Black people, they can say it to your face.
- 3 White people, they can’t.
- 4 Like they’ll talk about you,
- 5 and you ask them,

⁵⁴ Some degree of insincerity, of course, is almost always regarded as “polite.”

6 and they're like
7 "I dunno what you're talking about."
8 Or like they'll try to play it off
9 like trying to say
10 that they didn't say anything.
11 But black people,
12 like even if they are all talk,
13 at least they'll say it to you.
14 Like if you ask them,
15 it's like "Well, why did you say that?"
16 They're not gonna be like "Oh I didn't say that."

Local associations between the stereotypical fakeness of whiteness seemed to articulate with more widely circulating discourses of 'realness' often associated with African American culture (Jackson, 2005; Maira, 1998).

In addition to accusations of fakeness based on behavioral inconsistencies, preps were characterized as fake because they valued qualities—such as clothing brands, fingernails, and hair—that were constructed as denying more essential aspects of a person's character. White Tiger, who was part of the discussion above, claimed, "Tiffany's like really fake, and she'll come up to me and 'Oh yeah. I have American Eagle on.'" Likewise, Joanne, a member of the Academic group, described having her clothing critiqued by preps and claimed, "if you weren't like them. . . they would purposefully make you feel like shit" (December 9, 2004). Students' critiques suggested that the value that preps placed on external displays put in question the existence of an internal integrity. Through these discourses about preps, students linked acts of fakeness, whether by 'talking shit about others' or 'making others feel like shit', with those at the school who epitomized a privileged white femininity.

4.3 IDEOLOGIES OF LANGUAGE

The preceding discussion has concerned the relationship between individuals and their symbolic displays; students evaluated authenticities on the basis of the degree to

which individual essences, habituses, and feelings were perceived and constructed as aligning with performed symbolic practice. I turn now to a description of ideologies of *value* that defined certain ways of speaking English as ‘better’ than others. My analysis is based on how five groups of students (Academic, Cheerleaders, Junior Girls, Outcast United, and Tutorial Girls) constructed hierarchical relationships between social groups through their commentary about language varieties.

4.3.1 Prestige

In metalinguistic discussions during interviews, the two most salient varieties of English that students labeled and contrasted were ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’. The first variety was recognized as having what analysts term ‘overt prestige’, or value in formal institutional contexts, while the second variety carried ‘covert prestige’ (Trudgill, 1972), or value in informal contexts. Many of the students I spoke with seemed to accept the institutional value of ‘proper English’. For example, in the following response to my question about this variety, Heather and Grace both claim to avoid the use of ‘slang’, alluding to its undesirability.

Example 4.15: “I try to speak proper English” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)

1 Elaine: Okay.
2 How important do you think it is
3 to speak **proper English**
4 Heather: Very important.
5 I like to.
6 Grace: **I speak proper English.**
7 **I don't speak Slang.**
8 Heather: Yeah. I try to speak proper English
9 and if this person just-
10 you know how they speak
11 like every other word is a cuss word?
12 I like “Can you please speak English”
13 you know.

As Heather equates ‘slang’ with “cuss word[s],” she also constructs it as lying outside the bounds of legitimate English forms. In other words, she does not merely differentiate ‘slang’ from ‘proper English’, but encourages its “erasure” (Irvine & Gal, 2000).

Yet some students recognized the potential value of ‘slang’. In the next interaction, the Cheerleader group similarly juxtaposes ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’ but also explicitly highlights stances and activities for which each variety was appropriate.

Example 4.16: “There is a time and place for proper English” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04)

1 Elaine: Going back to like English.
2 Like how important is it
3 to speak proper English to you.
4 Barbie: Go ahead
5 Sleepy: Go ahead.
6 You’re probably gonna say
7 what I’m gonna say. h h
8 Barbie: And that happens a lot too.
9 Usually (xxx) can speak for one another
10 That’s probably why
11 that [camcorder] will help you differentiate us.
12 Specifically. Um.
13 ((High style)) hi mom. h h h ((to camcorder)).
14 Um let’s see here.
15 I have no problem with speaking slang
16 During common language and everything
17 but when it comes down to a paper?
18 (Be) say “I be doing this?”
19 Sleepy: Yes
20 Princess: Yeah
21 Barbie: That’s when it pisses me off.
22 And it takes it to that next level of anger.
23 And I believe there is a time and a place
24 for proper English
25 And there’s a time and a place
26 To just slack off with your friends.
27 Like talking on internet,
28 There’s no need to
29 Princess: Yeah. Home in front of the TV
30 Barbie: form structured sentences you know
31 for short little messages.
32 Sleepy: What she said?
33 Elaine: Same thing? Exactly?
34 Princess: Like if I’m writing like an essay

35 or some type of paper rough draft
36 and write in my words
37 And I'll have to translate.
38 I'll even take up a thesaurus.
39 I'll be a geek and read the thesaurus
40 And find other words to translate in
41 if I don't know it off the top of my head
42 Barbie: And also-
43 Sleepy: And also-
44 Barbie: A respect thing.
45 When talking to teachers and elders
46 always use "yes sir" "yes ma'am."
47 Princess: Yeah
48 Sleepy: I was also gonna say with interviews?
49 if when you get a job interview?
50 Barbie: Yes
51 Princess: Oh yeah.
52 Sleepy: Like I've seen people who get interviewed who.
53 Barbie: Take it all relaxed.
54 Sleepy: Yeah I'm not saying you should be uptight
55 when you take interviews but.
56 Princess: Respect your elders
57 Barbie: Yeah. It's a big respect issue.
58 And also taking responsibility. As captain?
59 if I'm speaking to another captain of another squad.
60 I'm gonna do it more professionally
61 cause it's just kind of.
62 Someone finish. h h
63 Princess: It's just something we've (been) grown up with.
64 Barbie: (Some way) we're taught.
65 Princess: Yeah. To know when to act funny and when to stop.
66 Sleepy: But I think the sad part about it is
67 that not that many people here?
68 Like there's- there's you know a few.
69 I believe but there's a lot of people also
70 who aren't well-mannered I guess?
71 Princess: Yeah

The oppositions of language, stances, and activities have been summarized in the table below.

Table 4.1: List of indexical associations of ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’ in (Example 4.16: “There is a time and place for proper English” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04))

LANGUAGE LABEL	proper	slang common language
LANGUAGE FEATURE	<i>yes, sir, yes, ma'am</i> structured sentences	<i>I be doing this</i> my words
STANCE	respectful responsible professional well-mannered (uptight)	relaxed funny
ACTIVITY	essay-writing job interview talking to teachers and elders	slacking off with friends writing short messages watching TV talking on the internet

This table illustrates that the girls’ acknowledge ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’ to have different kinds of prestige, yet they also construct stances associated with the former (respectful, responsible, professional, and well-mannered) as more important than those associated with the latter. While stances associated with ‘slang’ (relaxed, funny) may have positive valences, they appear in interactional turns that question their appropriateness in formal, institutional contexts; in contrast, these students never suggest “anger” (line 22) or “sadness” (line 66) over the inappropriate use of ‘proper English’ in informal contexts.⁵⁵

4.3.2 Racialized varieties

Interestingly, Barbie’s ‘slang’ example (“I be doing this,” line 18) indexes a stereotype of blackness, as she draws on a form of aspectual *be* often stereotypically associated with “sounding black” (Green, 2002: 200, 211-214). The construction of ‘slang’ as overlapping with stereotypical ‘black’ features may be part of broader

⁵⁵ Their particular valuation of ‘proper English’ may be unsurprising in the context of an interview with an academic researcher.

ideological process in which stereotypes of African Americans, for example, those of hip-hop artists prominent in the media, become resources for youth slang practices (Bucholtz, 2004a), a problematic practice that contributes to simplistic mainstream conceptions of AAE as less than a full linguistic system (Green, 2002). In a similar example with a different group of girls, ‘slang’ is linked with this same aspectual *be* feature when I explicitly inquire about its linguistic status.

Example 4.17: “I would consider that not proper English” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 Elaine: Just a quick interruption.
 2 When you said “It be ugly clothes”?
 3 You know
 4 Would you consider that Ebonics or not.
 5 Pinky: I would consider that not proper English.
 6 Elaine: Not Ebonics
 7 John-John: I would say that’s like slangish.
 8 Slang.
 9 Philip: Yeah. It be.

Unlike the subtle associations between ethnic categories and language varieties seen in these examples, the following example illustrates more explicit racializations of ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’ by the same group. In response to my question about whether these girls used ‘slang’, John-John and Pinky respond that they use ‘proper English’ rather than ‘slang’, connecting these varieties with ethnic categories while simultaneously problematizing such racialization given their self-identifications as black-Korean and black, respectively.

Example 4.18: “And he’s like black” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 Elaine: Do you use lots of slang?
 2 Pinky: h h h
 3 Philip: Sometimes
 4 John-John: Yeah sometimes.
 5 I speak actually pretty proper.
 6 Pinky: I can turn it off when I need to.
 7 Philip: Yeah
 8 Pinky: It’s just automatic cause like
 9 Philip: I mean when we’re talking with ourselves we use
 10 Pinky: Friends- and then when we’re around adults

11 Philip: You talk proper yeah.
 12 John-John: Yeah
 13 Pinky: I don't know how I do it.
 14 John-John: But I try to speak proper
 15 cause I don't like to-
 16 If you're talking to someone you don't know
 17 that you're talking like that?
 18 That's why I always try to speak proper
 19 for like later in life.
 20 So that you don't mix that with business.
 21 Elaine: Did your parents tell you to do that
 22 or you just wanted to do that.
 23 John-John: No.
 24 Pinky: I just do it.
 25 John-John: No cause my dad-
 26 I think (I speak) proper
 27 cause my dad speaks proper too.
 28 And he's like black.
 29 My whole family beside my aunt speaks you know s-
 30 Pinky: From your dad's side
 31 John-John: I wouldn't say s-
 32 But they speak-
 33 You could tell that they're black-
 34 How they talk?
 35 But my dad and my aunt they're like-
 36 They speak white.
 37 No proper.
 38 They speak proper.

John-John's awareness of the ethnic associations of 'proper English' is implicit in her description of her father's English as "proper" (line 27) and supplementing it with what she frames as an unexpected fact ("And he's like black," line 28), thus highlighting the assumed ideological contrast between 'proper English' and blackness. The ideological mapping of whiteness onto 'proper English' despite the reality of her father's black identity may be why she first describes her father's speech with an ethnic characterization and then with a non-ethnic one ("My dad and my aunt. . . they speak white—no, proper. They speak proper," lines 35-38).

After John-John's description of her father's 'proper' speech, Pinky immediately follows with a narrative in which she characterizes herself as using a variety of English associated with whites although she identifies as black.

Example 4.19: "And he's like black" (continued) (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

39 Pinky: That's what my aunts use.
40 Cause I called my grandma on my dad's side before?
41 I was like "Hi grandma"
42 She's like "Who is this?"
43 I was like "It's your granddaughter?
44 from your son?"
45 She's like "Oh Pinky ((click))
46 I didn't recognize your voice
47 You sound like a little white girl".
48 I was like "Okay that's what everybody says."
49 They're like
50 "Why are you talking like a white person"
51 I'm like "This is just how I talk".
52 Cause everybody else they sound.
53 They don't sound country?
54 but they have that accent?
55 And then if you go to Houston?
56 and listen to how they talk?
57 that's how they sound.
58 John-John: Yeah
59 Pinky: And then I sound different. h h

Like John-John's father, Pinky uses a speech style that counters expectations of ethnicity and language. Yet these two girls' discussion of such exceptions are framed in terms of ideological expectations of white and black speech practices, acknowledging and reproducing the ideological association between 'proper English' and whiteness, even while presenting evidence that challenges it.

4.3.3 Accented authenticities

Unlike the legitimated status of 'proper English' described in the previous two sections, I describe how students challenged the status of 'American English', such as through nostalgic narratives of national decline. One of the most common narratives

involved the idea that ‘British English’ was more proper than the English spoken in the U.S.

Example 4.20: “British English is proper” (Academic, 12/09/04)

1 Elaine: You had mentioned that you do speak proper English.
2 h h h. Compared.
3 Liam: Speak English.
4 Joanne: American English or British English.
5 Cause **British English is proper.**
6 Liam: Yeah proper.
7 Elaine: Is British English the most proper English?
8 Joanne: Yeah. When I say “proper English”
9 I think of British English.
10 Big Dog: Well I speak ((clear style)) good American English. H.
11 Speak American English well.
12 Bob: **My mom went to a British school**
13 **and my aunt was you know lived in Edinburgh Scotland**
14 and so my grandma she also-
15 that’s where they were born.
16 They lived in England.
17 So my mom she had a British accent.
18 **Really really strong British accent**
19 so they speak **proper English.**

Students sometimes identified ‘British English’ to be the most proper version of English because of its imagined historical and geographical authenticity. Locating ‘proper English’ within Great Britain, and specifically England,⁵⁶ depended on a historical narrative of geographical migration from England to the U.S. As illustrated in the next example, in addition to characterizing it as an authentic variety that is not spoken by Americans “anymore” (line 13), Philip, Pinky, and John-John collaboratively describe British English speakers as sounding “smart” (line 5), “educated” (line 16), “sophisticated” (line 17), and not “laz[y]” (line 12), compared to their American counterparts.

⁵⁶ In this excerpt, Bob elides the linguistic distinction between speakers in Scotland and England given their shared location in Great Britain; most British residents, however, would likely take issue with such a move given the social salience of dialectal distinctions between these countries.

Example 4.21: “It sounds smart to me when they talk” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 Philip: I like Britain English yeah.
2 Elaine: Why do you like the British accent
3 Pinky: It's so different
4 It seems more
5 John-John: It sounds smart to me when they talk. h h
6 Pinky: "You know.
7 I gotta get to the loo:"
8 Philip: They seem more
9 Pinky: "Get the telephone" ((fronted /o/))
10 Philip: They say
11 that American-
12 that Americans speak lazily?
13 That's why we don't talk in a British accent anymore?
14 Pinky: It's all Webster's fault
15 Philip: And so I think they speak more proper than us
16 and it makes them sound more educated
17 and more sophisticated.

The value that most students attributed to British English seemed to derive from not only its stereotypical associations of sophistication and education, which have implicit links to class privilege, but its symbolic representation of a bygone era. A similar nostalgic discourse can be seen more explicitly in the following example, in which members of Outcast United lament the current use of “lazy” ‘slang’ in the U.S. (lines 8 and 17). In addition to claiming that ‘English’ is no longer spoken in the U.S. (line 12), they locate ‘proper English’ in both “Britain” (line 19) and Iraq (line 2), among “other countries” (line 9).

Example 4.22: “Better English than the actual English speaking people” (Outcast United, 1/12/05)

1 Desiree: There was somebody in our class
2 who said their parents went to Iraq right?
3 Or their dad?
4 He went to a McDonald's there
5 and there was somebody
6 who spoke better English than we do.
7 Carrie: The way that we speak?
8 We speak really really really lazily.
9 That's why there are people in other countries

10 that can speak better English
 11 than the actual English speaking people
 12 Marissa: Actually we don't speak English.
 13 We speak slang English.
 14 Carrie: We speak slanged English.
 15 Even though we don't speak the exact slanged words?
 16 We speak slang English
 17 because it's a lazy form of regular English.
 18 Elaine: What does proper English sound like
 19 Carrie: Proper English is what they speak in Britain.
 20 That is really proper English.
 21 Female: In Britain it's proper English
 22 Dragon: Do you know what slang is?
 23 Scott: Shakespeare.
 24 That's proper English.
 25 Carrie: Shakespeare is philo-
 26 Desiree: It's poetic English
 27 Scott: It's still proper
 28 Carrie: Phil- philosophical. Philosophical
 29 Scott: No it's not
 30 Carrie: Yes it is
 31 Desiree: I think it's poetic
 32 Scott: ((pointing to in English textbook))⁵⁷
 33 That's proper English.
 34 Any one of those.

The devaluation of American English and its erasure from the scope of recognized Englishes (“We don’t speak English,” line 12) may have related to the local military culture, where overseas experiences were common, and spaces for de-centering the U.S. were possible. Yet self-critiques of this sort may also draw from discourses about the degradation of youth language, “manifesting itself in public panics about such things as ‘mallspeak,’” (Eckert, 2003b: 116). It is thus a nostalgic discourse that, like “Orientalism” (Said, 1978), strategically represents an ‘other’ as an inverted image of the ‘self’. In particular, the above excerpt seems to recall discourses that construct racialized others as inauthentic ‘copies’ whose near-perfection and ‘model minority’ status—as a

⁵⁷ By physically pointing to his English textbook, Scott suggests that the language of Shakespeare represents uncorrupted English. His action may be seen as ironic given the many words this playwright is credited as having coined.

kind of a mimicry (Bhabha, 1984)—looms as a threatening presence (R. G. Lee, 1999: 192-196).

In contrast to the temporal authenticity of British English, students sometimes constructed particular accents as regionally authentic. In the following, two white students express their desire for accents as markers of regional uniqueness.⁵⁸

Example 4.23: “I wish I had a Canadian accent year-round” (Academic, 12/9/04)

1 Elaine: So do you want to speak proper English?
2 Joanne: Not really.
3 Liam: I wish I had a Canadian accent year-round.
4 That'd be cool.
5 Joanne: Wish I had my parents' accent when they were young.
6 A Texan accent.
7 Something to define myself.
8 Liam: Pass the taters. ((stylized))
9 Joanne: Some taters?
10 Liam: My mom says taters

It is unclear whether Joanne and Liam honestly desire to speak what they construct as marked varieties of English, although their expression of such a desire was one of the ways in which social otherness and uniqueness were locally associated with ‘coolness’. Such a discourse may have coincided with local ideals of cultural ‘diversity’ that exoticized social others (Said, 1978), while leaving in tact one’s own unmarked—and unaccented—status.

4.3.4 Leakages between linguistic oppositions

The above discussion has shown how students at Diversity High acknowledged many ways of speaking English that were variously mapped onto hierarchies of value and axes of social difference, such as ethnicity, nation, and region. Although many of these discussions evolved from my questions about local notions of ‘proper English’, students highlighted different contrasts of social meaning that were relevant to the ongoing

⁵⁸ Both Joanne’s and Liam’s father were military officers; Liam’s father’s posting as a colonel had taken him to various parts of the U.S. and Canada.

conversations, demonstrating a variety of ways in which they imagined ‘ways of speaking’ a single language. The following table summarizes the contrasts in the examples discussed and identifies implied values, which are placed in parentheses.

Table 4.2: Imagined types of Englishes and implied values

Example 4.15 Example 4.16 Example 4.22	proper (+)	slang (-)
Example 4.17 Example 4.18	proper (white)	slang (black)
Example 4.20 Example 4.21	England (past, upper class, +)	U.S. (present)
Example 4.22	Iraq (+)	U.S. (present, -)
Example 4.23	Canada (+)	U.S.
Example 4.23	Texas (rural, +)	(urban)

As this list illustrates, students often framed ‘proper English’ in positive ways when contrasted with a notion of ‘slang’. Indeed, the local label of *proper English* entailed a particular value that may have guided, and possibly limited, its explicit metalinguistic evaluation. In addition, this contrast was sometimes racialized. Although students never explicitly labeled ‘white’ ways of speaking as better than ‘black’ ways, hierarchies of ‘proper English’ and ‘slang’ assumed a particular ethnic hierarchy. It is also interesting to note that the legitimacy of American English was not always accepted, particularly in narratives of its increasing deviation from ‘proper English’, which was identified as linked to other places, including England and Iraq. In particular, students seemed to explicitly devalue the mundaneness of their own ways of speaking, preferring more exotic accents linked to marked locales, such as Canada and rural parts of Texas.

While each of these contrasts can be understood as separate ideologies, their overlaps make possible leakage between them (Agha, 1998). For example, I have shown how a notion of ‘proper English’ was sometimes linked with whiteness when contrasted with ‘slang’, and how British English was associated with ‘sophistication’, alluding to

class prestige. In the following example, the two ideologies are playfully merged as the Academic group makes fun of preps residing in the affluent neighborhood of Cotton Park.⁵⁹

Example 4.24: “Cotton pride” (Academic, 12/09/04)

1 Big Dog: And Cotton Park kids?
2 Joanne: Cotton Park
3 Bob: Their all officer kids so they're-
4 Liam: Oh yeah (I'm a) Cotton Park kid.
5 Elaine: Are you?
6 Liam: Yeah.
7 Joanne: He's a Cotton Park kid.
8 Bob: ((Laughing)) we made fun of them.
9 Big Dog: Ctton pride ((aspirated /t/))
10 All: ((laughs))
11 Bob: Ctton pride ((glottalized /t/))
12 Big Dog: What's your little [gang] sign?
13 I don't know. h
14 Bob: There it is. h
15 Big Dog: Whatever. h h
16 Joanne: Is it really a sign.
17 For Cotton- h h.
18 All: ((laughs))

Bob and Big Dog, who identify as Pakistani and Filipina, respectively, use aspirated and glottalized intervocalic /t/ to index a British accent, which they link with Cotton Park speech. Preps from Cotton Park did not have British accents, yet such a link was possible because ‘proper English’, which was indexed by stereotypical ‘British English features’, was ideologically associated with whiteness and class privilege, both of which preps were locally viewed as embodying. The constructed use of stereotypical British English features to tease Cotton Park students is juxtaposed with local notions of coolness indexed by a gang “sign” (lines 12 and 16); the humor arises from the incongruence of racialized displays of properness and coolness, as ‘white’ preps are portrayed as attempting unsuccessfully to adopt ‘black’ signs of coolness.

⁵⁹ This pseudonym preserves the intervocalic /t/ phoneme in the actual name of the neighborhood.

4.3.5 Gendered meanings of ‘proper English’

Notably absent in students’ discussions of ‘proper English’ were explicit discussions of gender. Yet gender seemed relevant to its meanings, given that ideologies of coolness, associated with ‘slang’, were linked to local notions of masculinity. Such an ideology may be why girls, rather than boys, seemed to most readily claim their use of ‘proper English’.⁶⁰ The following examples illustrate the responses of two boys after I explicitly ask about their use of ‘proper English’.

Example 4.25: “I just like speak it the way I speak it” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)

1 Elaine Do you try to speak proper English?
2 Big D: No I just like speak it the way I speak it I guess.
3 Elaine You don’t try to change for certain situations?
4 Big D: Um. I speak more proper when I talk to adults.
5 Elaine Like teachers.
6 Big D: Yeah. I can never say “Yes, ma’am” or “Yes, sir”
7 Elaine You don’t say that
8 Big D: I can’t say that.

Similar to Big D, who was Korean, Damon, who was black-Filipino-Puerto Rican, explained to me his preference for ‘slang’ despite the necessity of using ‘proper English’ in institutional contexts.

Example 4.26: “You have to talk like proper” (Damon, 11/30/04)

1 Elaine: So you wanna learn the way people talk.
2 How about do you wanna speak **proper English**?
3 Damon: No?
4 Elaine: How do you wanna speak?
5 Damon: **I speak it good.**
6 Elaine: h h h and what is that?
7 Damon: **Slang.**
8 **Ebonics.**
9 Elaine: And would you speak that way everywhere?
10 Damon: What this way?
11 Elaine: No like use slang like everywhere you go?
12 Damon: Like if you go for a **job interview,**
13 you have to talk like **proper.**

⁶⁰ Impressionistically, it also seemed that many of the girls who identified as black, or part black, were most conscious of the ‘properness’ of their English than non-black girls.

14 Not proper proper
 15 but you know like sophisticated.
 16 You know sound a little intelligent.
 17 Elaine: Like how.
 18 What is that.
 19 What does it sound like.
 20 Damon: Like "Please to meet you sir."
 21 And "Ma'am."
 22 And "I'm delighted to see you."
 23 You know stuff like that.
 24 Elaine: Right.
 25 Damon: You have to have manners.
 26 You can't just walk up to people
 27 and be like
 28 "Hey fool?
 29 What the fuck you doing.
 30 Here gimme some damn--"
 31 You can't do that.
 32 They'll call security and kick your ass.

Damon acknowledges the utility of style-shifting when entering a formal institutional setting, suggesting that he would use a more “sophisticated” and “intelligent” register. However, he denies that his practices would attain a “proper proper” level (line 14), and suggests that his everyday self-presentation includes “slang” (line 7) and “Ebonics” (line 8).⁶¹

The perspectives of these boys seem to parallel observations by sociolinguists of the relationship between linguistic markers of class and gender; according to this “principle” (W. Labov, 1990), men tend to use more nonstandard forms than women do (Trudgill, 1972). While there have been many explanations for the links between prestige forms and women’s speech, as noted by Romaine, (2005), Chesire (2002) and others (Eckert, 1989; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; James, 1996), these gender differences have been frequently attributed to the different kinds of access to power that women and

⁶¹ Damon appears to engage in ironic play as he answers my question “I speak it good” (line 5).

men typically have. For example, women may lack the institutional status allowing them to use non-standard forms without repercussion.

Yet this picture is complicated by an apparently reverse pattern with respect to ethnicity. Specifically, racialized forms of language have come to have different class associations because of the ways in which ethnic groups have had different degrees of access to class-defining institutions in the U.S., such as higher education; prestige forms are thus often associated with whites because of the ways in which whites have tended to control prestige-defining institutions. Although anyone, regardless of ethnicity or economic-standing, might gain access to forms of legitimated forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1991), the necessity of acquiring racialized forms of symbolic capital in order to enter institutions of power reproduces the hierarchical ordering of racialized symbols. The reproduction of class hierarchies thus necessarily involves the reproduction of power relations between ethnic groups via language practices that are unevenly distributed and differently valued.

In other words, sociolinguists have explained the lack of access to mainstream institutional power among women and non-whites as explaining their use of prestige and non-prestige forms, respectively. This apparent conundrum is partly attributable to the differences between the nature of ethnic and gender communities; in the case of the former, class segregation by ethnicity is common, while in the case of the latter, class membership is complicated by mainstream ideals of a heterosexual and patriarchal household. In such households, the class status of women may often be defined in symbolic ways, as well as vicariously through their husbands, while their male counterparts are evaluated on the basis of their occupational status (Trudgill, 1972). The strategic use of symbolic forms, including hair, makeup, necklines, waistlines, vowels, and lexical choices, as a means of social definition may thus be a more significant part of

what it means to be a woman than it does a man, regardless of the specific social group membership being achieved (Eckert, 1989; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992).

The difference between ethnic and gender identities and their relation to class-linked linguistic variables may also derive the fact that issues of language and ethnicity concern how ethnic groups have different roles in defining mainstream prestige forms while issues of language and gender concern how women and men may take up different orientations to prestige forms as a consequence of their social positions. Indeed, there does seem to be evidence that, when looking beyond phonological variables, certain discourse styles associated with men are more highly valued in mainstream institutional settings than those associated with women (e.g. Lakoff, 1975; O'Barr & Atkins, 1980; Tannen, 1994) and that men may play a role in defining which forms are endowed with prestige.

Such discussions of the relationship among linguistic forms associated with gender, ethnicity and class has led to a greater understanding of the complex interplay of different axes of social organization. Yet despite their seductiveness, these explanations may risk a certain reductiveness, explaining linguistic differences along one axis of social identity (ethnicity or class) as a consequence of its relationship with another axis (gender). In social practice, both linguistic meanings and choices cannot be reduced to a simple logic that makes transparent links between ethnicity, gender, and class variables. In interaction, girls and whites may not necessarily use prestige forms, and the use of prestige forms may have nothing to do with femininity or whiteness. (See Romaine (2005) for a more extensive discussion of some of the problems of analyses attempting to explain the gender-class relationship.) Whether the relationship between gender- and class-based language practices will ever be easily explained is unclear, yet it was undeniable that ideologies linking gender and class at Diversity High paralleled those that

circulated more widely. In fact, it was likely because of the alignments of local notions of whiteness, class privilege, and femininity in mainstream ideologies that that the image of the prep was a salient figure.

4.4 DISCUSSION

This chapter has described some of the ideologies of ethnicity, authenticity, and language that circulated at Diversity High in order to give context to the stylization practices I describe in later chapters. In the first third of this chapter, I addressed several relevant aspects of how students understood the local ‘politics of ethnicity’, particularly with respect to white and Asian students. First, I showed how students readily engaged in ‘ethnicity talk’, or playful acts of explicit ethnic labeling across ethnic categories, in ways that might have been cause for anxiety in public U.S. contexts; I have suggested that the interpersonal value of such cross-ethnic labeling derived from the close bonds of friendship that such ‘risky’ acts presupposed. Second, I described how locally imagined intersections between whiteness and class privilege coincided with discourses that circulated beyond the school yet how such privilege was not necessarily equated with the high social status of white students within the school setting where they were often regarded as lacking local forms of cultural capital and, thus, ‘coolness’. Third, in my description of the social location of Asian students at the school, I noted that they were regarded as ‘honorary whites’ in terms of their institutional privilege, yet they also constructed themselves as ‘students of color’ through displays of their ethnic pride.

The second part of this chapter addressed several ideologies of authenticity that circulated at the school. I described how students assumed individuals to be endowed with an ‘ethnic essence’ based on ancestral lineage and sometimes critiqued those regarded as drawing on ethnic symbols that did not correspond with their ostensible ‘ethnic essence’. While such an ideology typically reproduced links between ethnic

categories and ethnic symbols, this ideology was sometimes strategically used by multiethnic students to contest other students' assumptions about their ethnic identity. A second ideology of 'ethnic habitus' circulated in the community, allowing cross-ethnic symbolic practices to be regarded as legitimate rather than inauthentic. I argued that displays of ethnic competence, such as language fluency, could index a student's 'biography' of ethnic membership that precluded others' critiques, even if the individual could not lay claim to a corresponding 'ethnic essence'. Finally, I described an ideology of 'realness' that students linked with the behavior of preps. According to some students, preps failed to display 'realness' in two ways: through their inconsistent stance displays (when speaking 'to someone's face' as opposed to 'behind her back') and their preoccupation with outer appearance.

The final third of this chapter introduced students' assumptions about the links between 'proper English' and alternative English forms, namely, 'slang' and 'regional accents'. Students assigned overt and covert prestige values to 'proper English' and 'slang', respectively, yet placed greater explicit value on 'proper English', apparently stemming from its institutional legitimization. I have suggested that the overt valuation of 'proper English' reproduced ethnic hierarchies, given implicit racializations of this opposition in terms of whiteness and blackness. Yet notions of American English were also sometimes contested as students appealed to nostalgic discourses in their praise of non-Americans—specifically, those in England and Iraq—who were described as speaking a more proper variety of English than their American counterparts. Regional accents associated within or near the U.S. were also sometimes valued as markers of regional authenticities, suggesting a potential exoticization of regional otherness. I also suggested that ideological links between 'proper English' and femininity seemed to reflect more widely circulating ideologies; such links may have served as part of the

ideological ‘breeding ground’ for the salience of preps as stereotypical embodiments of whiteness, class privilege, and femininity.

As I juxtapose the local ideological layers that I have described, it becomes apparent that discourses about ethnicity and language exhibited a certain slippage. Specifically, explicit discourses about ethnicity often contested the privileged status of whiteness and recognized various kinds of ethnic authenticities. Asian students, for example, displayed their ‘own’ ethnic symbols, and multiethnic students contested others’ ascriptions of monoethnicity. Yet language ideologies within this community seemed to espouse less critical perspectives on hierarchies of ethnicity and class, as students—especially girls—largely reproduced the local status of ‘proper English’ which they implicitly linked with whiteness and class privilege. In addition, notions of ‘proper English’, which was contrasted with ‘slang’ or ‘regional accents’, was never contrasted with the speech of Asian immigrants, erasing Asian speakers altogether from the imagined community (cf. Anderson, 1983) of legitimate English speakers. It seemed that ideologies of language mediating ideologies of ethnicity, class, and gender, had slipped ‘under the radar’, escaping students’ recognition of the ways in which their discourses *about language* reproduced hierarchies *of social identity*. While resistance to such reproduction was possible—and, as Raymond Williams (1977) has argued, always present—the pervasiveness of ideologies about the legitimacy of particular forms of language often induced the complicity of individuals standing on different rungs of the social hierarchy. In the next chapter, I discuss the ideological reproduction of ethnic hierarchies not only through discourse about language but through the engagement in a specific language practice.

Chapter 5: Stylized Asian Mocking

The practice I discuss in this chapter evoked a stereotype of Asians as linguistically and socially deviant. It was thus a form of ethnic stereotyping that located Asians—including those of Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Pakistani, and Vietnamese descent—within ideologies of race,⁶² assigning them with characteristics and values in radically simplified ways. Like other parodic acts that create a momentary relationship of distance and hierarchy between the mocking voice and the mocked voice, stylized Asian mocking at Diversity High depended on relatively myopic simplifications, sacrificing nuances of structure and meaning in order to create a recognizable image.

The analysis draws in part from Hill's (1999) critique of *Mock Spanish*, as these practices served similar ideological functions. In her analysis, she describes how English-monolinguals use “disorderly” Spanish in U.S. public spaces, ultimately reproducing a racist stereotype of Spanish speakers as comical and lazy. However, the phrase *stylized Asian mocking* does not name an actual language but rather denotes the process of ethnic and linguistic homogenization implicit in this practice.⁶³ The descriptor *Asian* may undoubtedly risk replicating this homogenizing act,⁶⁴ but I use it to represent and elucidate the ways in which students constructed meaning through racialized mocking.

⁶² I sometimes use the terms *racial* and *race* in this chapter, rather than *ethnic* and *ethnicity*, because the ideologies I refer to are largely based on homogenizing notions of ‘color’. See a discussion of these terms in Chapter 3, Section 3.1.4 Notes on labeling.

⁶³ As I will describe in Chapter 9 (Section 9.2 Types of styling), Hill's definition of mocking is narrower than my own; while Mock Spanish is primarily defined by the *ideological* status of Spanish in relation to monolingual English speakers in a U.S. context, I consider some forms of mocking to be defined by their *interactional* status. Additionally, I do not limit stylized Asian mocking practices to being performed by English-speaking monolinguals; some of the instances I examine were performed by Korean-English bilinguals and were thus not canonical cases of “crossing” (Rampton, 1995).

⁶⁴ The label *stylized Oriental mocking* might more accurately capture the ideologies relevant to this practice. My initial decision not to use the term *Oriental* stemmed from my discomfort with circulating it.

I begin my analysis with a description of the Asian immigrant stereotype that stylized Asian mocking evoked, illustrating how images of Asian linguistic and cultural deviance were historically embedded in discourses of national belonging in the U.S. I then introduce three stereotypical subtypes that students typically recalled when performing stylized Asian mocking: *Newcomers*, *Aliens*, and *Grouches*. Moving from social meaning to linguistic form, the second half of my analysis addresses three structural dimensions—*code*, *circulation*, and *resemblance*—that I argue were relevant to the kinds of meanings indexed by this practice.

My analysis finds that stylized Asian mocking did not depend on a fixed linguistic set but that it included numerous kinds of features, ranging in terms of their structural statuses—whether belonging to English or representing an Asian language, whether widely circulating across contexts or emergent in interactional moments, and whether resembling actual Asian immigrant speech or sounding nothing like it. Amidst the diversity of forms, what tied these features together as part of a cohesive stylized Asian mocking practice was the creation of recognizable links to a stereotype of Asians as linguistically and culturally deviant.

5.1 ASIAN STEREOTYPES: DEVIANCES OF LANGUAGE, RACE, AND NATION

This section describes the image of Asian ethnic and linguistic deviance that students evoked and assumed when styling Asian immigrants. As evidence of the perceived otherness of Asians at Diversity High, I first present my quantitative tabulation of the social characteristics associated with various instances I judged to be stylized Asian mocking. Across the 52 specific instances I examined, the overwhelmingly dominant trait associated with this styling practice (31 of the 52 instances, 60%)⁶⁵ was

⁶⁵ This analysis, as explained in Chapter 3 (Section 3.3.4 Quantitative analysis of social meaning), is based on my impressionist coding of traits to which specific stylized Asian mocking instances alluded. For example, when Bob quoted his Korean immigrant friend as saying “I went hotel. I got drunk. I saw hot

the ‘incompetent English’ of Asian targets. Other traits associated with stylized Asian mocking included being ‘aggressive’, ‘nonsensical’, ‘emotional’, or ‘masculine’ as well as ‘failing to be cool’ in spite of aspirations. The table below includes other associated characteristics.⁶⁶

Table 5.1: Characteristics associated with stylized Asian mocking⁶⁷

CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER OF TIMES ASSOCIATED
Incompetent English	31
Aggressive	7
Nonsensical	6
Trying to be cool	3
Emotional	2
Masculine	2
Arrogant	1
Cheery	1
Deceptive	1
Eager	1
Feigning incompetent English	1
Insane	1
Martial arts expert	1
Non-masculine	1
Polite	1
Speaking Tagalog	1
Strange style	1
Uncool	1
Vulgar	1

The predominant image of Asian immigrants as speaking English poorly suggests a stereotypical linguistic deviance directly linked to their perceived foreignness. Yet it

girl,” I coded this instances as being associated with ‘incompetent English’, ‘masculine’, and an ‘trying to be cool’. While this methodology is subjective and impressionistic, it provides a general sense of the kinds of meanings typically associated with mocking forms within and across specific interactional contexts.

⁶⁶ This large percentage of associations with a single trait contrasts the tabulated results of stylized prep mocking, for which the most common characteristics, ‘emotional’ and ‘snotty’, each occurred only 16.7% of the time. In other words, while stereotypes are always simplified images, stylized prep and stylized Asian mocking differed in terms of the complexity of the stereotypes that they evoked; the data seem to suggest that preps were imagined in more complex ways than Asian immigrants were. Images of preps were also often less comical than those of Asian immigrants.

⁶⁷ Some instances have not yet been tabulated in this table, but this provides a general picture of the distribution of associated characteristics.

should be noted that the stereotype of Asians as ‘foreign’ was dependent on circulating stereotypes about Asians, rather than resulting from perceptions of the typical practices of Asians who attended Diversity High. In fact, only a small segment of the ethnically Asian students at the school had limited English competence, and the vast majority, who had been raised in the U.S., spoke English in ways that might have been locally characterized as being as ‘native’ as their non-Asian U.S.-raised counterparts.

The image of Asian immigrants evoked by stylized Asian mocking related to widely circulating ideologies of language, race, and national belonging in the U.S., according to which Asians have been historically positioned on the peripheries of a national imagined community (Anderson, 1983). In response to the growing number of Asian laborers in the U.S. since the mid-1800s, the U.S. government controlled Asian populations through legislation such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 that suspended Chinese immigration, the Immigration Act of 1924 that ended emigration from a large number of Asian countries, and the Tydings-McDuffie Act of 1934 that placed a quota on Filipino immigration to 50 people per year (Lowe, 1991; Takaki, 1989). Before the Immigration and Naturalization Services Act of 1965, which allowed 170,000 immigrants from the Eastern Hemisphere into the U.S., many images of Asians were indirectly linked to U.S. wars in Asia. During World War II (1939-1945), some of these images appeared in popular magazines in the form of facial ‘maps’ ostensibly helping readers tell “Japs” apart from “our Chinese allies” (e.g., "How to tell Japs from the Chinese," 1941; "How to tell your friends from the Japs," 1941). The U.S. film industry also contributed to such imagery in depictions of U.S. soldiers’ encounters with Asian, and typically female, civilians during the Korean (1950-1953) and Vietnam Wars (1965-1973) (Gee, 1988; Hamamoto, 1994). Thus while Asians were certainly visible, they were also visibly foreign. Recent popular images of Asians as “model minorities” (Osajima, 1988),

especially when embodied by well-known Asian American figures such as Kristi Yamaguchi, Daniel Inouye, and Connie Chung, may contest earlier images (Chin, Feng, & Lee, 2000). However, even ‘assimilated’ images may problematically homogenize Asians (Lowe, 1991) and allude to the threat of an Asian presence in the U.S. (R. G. Lee, 1999). Furthermore, implicit links between Asianness and foreignness are still prominent in U.S. films, in which the ‘Asian accent’ remains a hallmark of Asian shopkeepers, laundry workers, gangsters, kung-fu masters, and prostitutes (J. E. Lee, 2007; Media Action Network for Asian Americans, 2006).⁶⁸

Such links of language, race, and national belonging permeate the everyday experiences of Asian Americans (Tuan, 1999). Most Asian Americans who are identified as phenotypically Asian, like many of the participants in my research, have encountered questions about their national origin, compliments on their English language skills, or greetings in an Asian language—real or imagined—by a non-Asian stranger. These practices reproduce the racial, national, or linguistic otherness of Asians, even while often constructed as and possibly believed to be an attempt for social connection—for example, demonstrating interest, awe, or accommodation. While Asian Americans may resist such marginalization by claiming their status as Americans or critiquing stylized Asian mocking practices as derogatory, they also sometimes take part in reproducing these ideologies (see Chapter 6, Section 6.1 Overt resistance).

At Diversity High, the perception of Asians as foreigners was part of a complex set of ideologies about racial and national belonging also found in mainstream U.S. discourses. On the one hand, students imagined the U.S. as a multicultural/ethnic nation, as suggested by a white cheerleader who explained to me in an interview that American

⁶⁸ Interestingly, instances of stylized Asian mocking in my data were not associated with gendered and sexual stereotypes of Asians (e.g., Eng, 2001; Espiritu, 1997; Fung, 1991; L. H.-Y. Kang, 1993; Ng, 2004). It is not clear why this was the case.

compassion for non-Americans stemmed from the fact that “We’re made up of immigrants.” She added, “Like. . . I call myself American and white. But inside of me I’m Polish, French, German. All of those” (Barbie, December 5, 2004). Students also envisioned their own experiences as upholding a multiculturalist ideal, such as when a white member of the multiethnic Outcast United group commented with an implicit sense of pride, “We’re like a mixed- mixed variety of people. I mean, oh my god, sit here and look at this. Look at this. Look at how many different like shades. Look at how many different shades of people there are here. Nobody here is the same shade, are they?” (Carrie, January 19, 2005). A black girl sitting with her multiethnic friends in the Tutorial group expressed in more succinct terms their embodiment of the same ideal: “You could put us in a Crayola box” (Ann, December 1, 2004).

However, alongside discourses of the U.S. as a multiethnic pastiche because of its immigrant history⁶⁹ lay discourses that assumed particular kinds of racialized bodies, such as Asians and Latinos, as less American than others, remaining in the imaginary as “forever foreigners” (Tuan, 1999). In these latter discourses, the term *immigrant* did not serve as a positive rallying call for national unity, but was associated instead with perceived burdens on American taxpayers, threats to scarce employment opportunities (Jaret, 1999), and, importantly, non-whiteness. A Vietnamese student named Vincent demonstrated his awareness of this negative discourse as he engaged in it at lunch to tease Phil, his Philippine-born friend.

Example 5.1: “So you’re an immigrant?” (Pacific, 10/29/03)

1 Phil: My graduation present from them
2 is going to be a plane ticket to the Philippines.
3 I’ve never been there.
4 I was born there

⁶⁹ Even while such discourses may include immigrants in its national narrative, it erases Native Americans, who became geographically, culturally, and physically displaced upon the arrival of immigrants.

5 but I never went back.
6 So I like really want to go there.
7 Vincent: So you're an immigrant?
8 Phil: No I got m-I'm a citizen now.
9 I got my naturalization
10 Vincent: Ooo you're using the U.S.'s money
11 you immigrant. Fucking (xxx)
12 get back on your damn boat
13 Phil: Shut up don't call me a-
14 were you born in the U.S.
15 Vincent: Yeah
16 Phil: You're still not white.
17 Your ancestors are like came from Vietnam.
18 They weren't born in America
19 Elaine: Were you born here?
20 Vincent: Yeah I was born here
21 Elaine: North Carolina
22 Vincent: I'm from the country ((stylized))

Vincent appropriates phrases often used to critique and insult racialized immigrants (lines 10-12),⁷⁰ using them to distinguish his non-immigrant status from Phil's immigrant status. Phil reclaims national membership status by asserting his naturalized citizenship status in lines 8-9, yet as he encounters further teasing by Vincent, he turns to a different strategy: he notes that Vincent is "still not white" (line 16) and that his ancestors were also immigrants (line 17). In other words, he appeals to discourses of race-based national exclusion in which they share a marginalized status, assuming a national history in which whites are not regarded as immigrants.

The discourses in this conversation, along with the multiculturalist discourses presented just prior to it, represent some of the assumptions about race and national belonging that served as the ideological backdrop of stylized Asian mocking practices. While typically framed in terms of a comical linguistic incompetence, this form of stylization articulated with discourses that related to serious social meanings, images, and

⁷⁰ In the context of Texas, such anti-immigrant discourses were typically about Latinos.

events. I turn now to the specific ways in which notions of Asian ethnic deviance was circulated in moments of interaction.

5.1.1 Newcomers

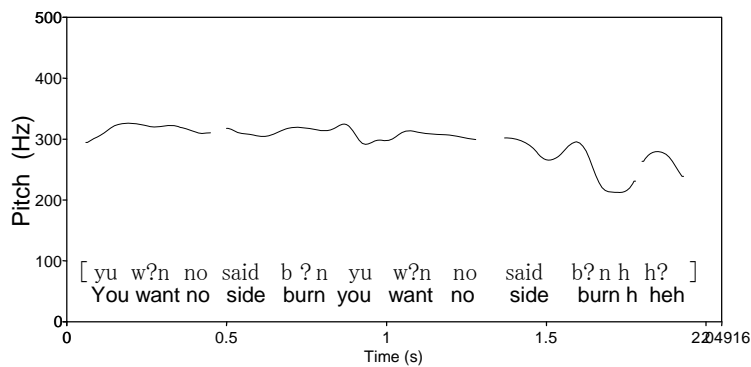
An analysis that looks across diverse instantiations of stylized Asian mocking suggests that students tended to recall at least one of three stereotypical Asian immigrant subtypes through their use of stylized Asian mocking, often mapping these stereotypical images to specific exemplars in narratives about their real experiences. One of the most common stereotypes evoked was that of the *Newcomer* (cf. Reyes, 2007), characterized by a comical inability to achieve normative linguistic and cultural practice despite an effort to do so. In a sense, all stylized Asian mocking performances based on ‘accented’ or ‘broken’ English potentially referred to this stereotype. Such ‘non-native’ linguistic features in otherwise English utterances implicitly recalled a presumed and unachieved target—the unaccented speech that a non-immigrant was assumed to have failed to produce. Paralleling the data I collected at Diversity High, such stereotypical non-native style features are common in mainstream media performances of stylized Asian mocking. Asian American standup comics, such as Margaret Cho, Dr. Ken, and Dat Phan as well as non-Asian actors who perform Asian caricatures in “yellowface,” also depend almost exclusively on such ‘accent’ features (Chun, 2004; Ito, 1997; J. E. Lee, 2007; Reyes, 2005b).

The metalinguistic awareness of stereotypical Asian immigrant English was apparent in explicit descriptions, such as when a white student named Joanne explained, “The Koreans. They leave that word out like ‘close door’ instead of ‘close the door’” (Academic, December 9, 2004). Such consciousness was also evidenced by ready performances when I brought up the topic of how Asian students spoke, including a playful “Orenji. Orenji” imitation of Korean immigrant speakers by Triple X, who

identified as “black and German” (‘Orange. Orange’ /ɔ.ɹændʒ/→/o.rɛn.dʒi/) (Tutorial, December 1, 2004).

Sometimes, the Newcomer image was evoked with a single feature, such as when a Korean student named Piggy substituted a single phone (/ɪ/) for another (/l/) in her quotation of a boy who performed a Chinese character in a school play, pronouncing *English* as /ɪŋg.ɪʃ/ (Example 5.10: “My pronunciation is perfect” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)). At other times, mockers drew on ‘clusters’ of co-occurring features (Ervin-Tripp, 1972). When a Korean-Mexican student named LJ uttered, “You want no sideburn! You want no sideburn!” to imitate a local Korean barber, he simultaneously used phonetic features (high pitch around 300 Hz compared to an unmarked pitch of 200 Hz or below), phonological features (monophthongal /o/ in *no*, /ɑ/-raising⁷¹ and final /t/-deletion in *want*, increased tempo, syllable-timed stress, reduced pitch variance), syntactic features (singular-plural neutralization, uninverted question, simple *no*-negation), and a discourse feature (sentential reduplication). The following pitch track illustrates the prosodic patterning of this utterance.

Figure 5.1: Pitch track of “You want no sideburn” (LJ, line 10-11, Example 5.5: “You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04), p. 129)



⁷¹ The f1 of LJ’s /ɑ/ was 651 Hz, thus approximating /ʌ/.

Among the three types of stylized Asian mocking I discuss in this section, portrayals of the Newcomer stereotype were typically the most “performed” (Bauman, 1975; Bauman & Briggs, 1990); speakers displayed their linguistic competence through their purposeful acts of incompetence, maximizing the poetic function (Jakobson, 1960) of their performance. Importantly, performances judged as successful were usually constructed as humorous. In the first example above, Piggy prefaced her quotation with an explicit reference to its humor (“Hey, at the [school play] wasn’t that funny,” lines 30-31, pg. 150) and LJ’s mock embodiment of a Korean barber was constructed as humorous through Laquisha’s immediate squeal of delight (“Aaaaaaaa,” line 28, pg. 129).

In addition, performances of Newcomer stylization were not only collaboratively constructed as humorous through commentary, squealing, and laughter, but often collaboratively performed by students who appeared to take pleasure in such a practice. In the example I present below, three students in the Academic group playfully mimic their friend Luke, a Korean immigrant who was not present in the interaction.

Example 5.2: “I saw hot girl” (Academic, 12/9/04)

- 1 Bob: Well Luke still kinda does that.
 2 “Yeah I went- I went hotel?”
 ((preposition deletion, article deletion, long phrase-final syllable))
 3 Ma::n?
 4 I got drunk. h h ((staccato))
 5 I saw hot girl.” h h h
 ([[a]→[ɔ] in hot, /r/-deletion in girl, staccato stress, unstressed head noun (girl), article deletion))
 6 Joanne: They leave out all those little words in between.
 7 Big Dog: “That girl o:ff chai::n” h h ((article deletion))
 8 Bob: “Off chai::n” ((article deletion))
 9 Joanne: “That represents me:: ay:::” h h

As seen here and in the many other examples in this chapter, the stylized Asian mocking of the Newcomer was locally recognized and aesthetically appreciated among many of the students at Diversity High.

5.1.2 Aliens

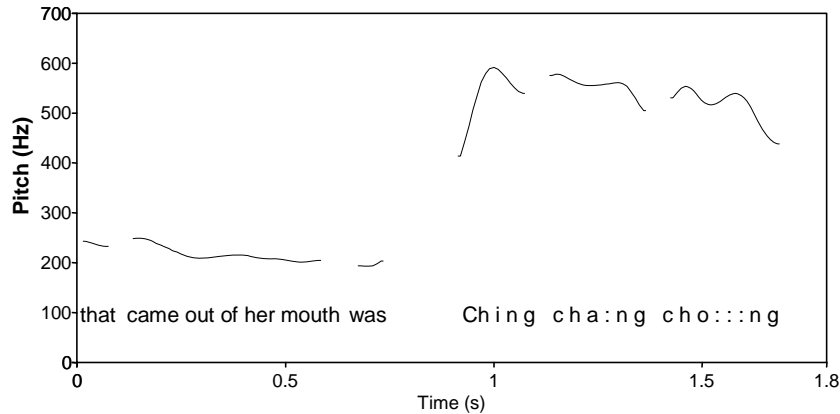
The second stereotypical image I analyze involved stylization that positioned Asian immigrants outside the realm of the comprehensible and, thus, as *Aliens* (cf. R. G. Lee, 1999). The most salient of these forms in popular discourses as well as childhood play is the *ching-chong* onomatopoetic string and its variants *ching-chang-chong* and *ching-chong-ching-chong*. In the following narrative told during a group interview among close friends, a Filipina student named Big Dog describes a *ching-chang-chong* encounter after accidentally bumping into another girl.

Example 5.3: “Ching-chang-chong” (Academic, 12/9/04)

1 Big Dog: Yeah they are kind of racist=
2 =Like if they get mad at somebody
3 the first thing that they’ll go after
4 is like (0.5) what they are?
5 Elaine: Right. Uh-huh
6 Big Dog: Like um (0.5) every time-
7 like once I bumped into this girl and
8 I remember
9 the first thing that came out of her mouth was
10 **“Ching-chang-chong”** h h ((shift to high pitch))
11 [Crap like that. ((shift to unmarked pitch))
12 Joanne: [h h h h h h
13 Bob: [h h
14 Big Dog: It’s like
15 [“Sorry. h.
16 All: [((laughter))
17 Big Dog: I speak perfect English. h
18 I don’t know what you’re saying.”
19 Bob: Well- uh- racism is a problem at our school
20 I think.

In addition to its segmental features, stylized Asian mocking of this sort often involved distinctive suprasegmental characteristics, such as high pitch, as seen in the pitch track of the Big Dog’s quotation of her mocker. Her shift to quoted mocking can be seen in the contrast of pitch as she moves from the 200-300 Hz range to the 500-600 Hz range.

Figure 5.2: Pitch track of “Ching-chang-chong” (Big Dog, line 10, Example 5.3: “Ching-chang-chong” (Academic, 12/9/04))



While often constructed by mockers as humorous because of the strangeness and semantic emptiness of the string, *ching-chang-chong* was often understood as a pragmatically rich and offensively racist act.⁷² It was likely because of such an interpretation that I rarely observed this form being uttered in everyday conversations during my fieldwork,⁷³ though readily mentioned metalinguistically in narratives told by Asian students about past stylized Asian mocking incidents. According to these narratives, variants of this string were typically used by non-Asians during their brief encounters with Asians they hardly knew or did not know. The social implications of *ching-chang-chong* and similar forms will be addressed in later parts of this chapter (see Section 5.2.2 Circulation).

⁷² As seen in recent criticisms of Rosie O’Donnell, a comedian and co-host of the daytime talk show *The View*, *ching-chong* performances are often understood as racist acts that purposefully distort, exaggerate, and homogenize features of ‘actual’ Asian languages. Nine days after O’Donnell’s six-second *ching-chong* mimicry of an imaginary Chinese newscaster, she apologized for her performance. Her intent, she noted, had not been to offend “Asian people” (Gentile, Decemer 5, 2006).

⁷³ In one case I can recall, however, an African American boy, passing by a table where I was sitting with a large group of Korean immigrant students, quite suddenly and apparently playfully uttered this phrase and then continued to walk in the direction he was headed.

5.1.3 Grouches

Stylized Asian mocking, which I have described in the previous section as primarily indexing meanings of race and national belonging, sometimes intersected with other social dimensions. The third Asian immigrant stereotype, which I call the *Grouch*, recalled the marked generational identity of Asian immigrant adults, in contrast to that of youth, in addition to a particular coarseness that such Grouches were constructed as embodying. This association between accents and generation among Asians was likely a product of, first, the difficulty for Asian immigrant adults who had arrived *after* adolescence to learn native-like English and, second, the tendency for those who had arrived before adolescence ultimately to move to larger cities outside Fortville. (Example 3.2: “Fortville is not a real good place to come for a job” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)).

The following examples illustrate how non-Asian students evoked this stereotype when portraying Korean immigrants with a linguistic harshness that ostensibly indicated their lack of grace and kindness. The first takes place during an after-school gathering among Outcast United members, a multiethnic friendship group based on a shared interest in Japanese cartoons. Asked by me to retell a narrative he has apparently told before, a white student named Duchovny maps the Grouch stereotype onto a specific exemplar, the Korean mother of his friend Romanaf. As he describes how she once aggressively forced the two boys to leave her home, he uses stylized Asian mocking to portray her as both non-native in her speech and volatile in character. The features of his stylization include strong amplitude, extreme pitch variance (note the steep slopes in the pitch tracks), reduplication, an explicit subject in a directive, and an aggressive stance.

Example 5.4: “You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05)

1 Duchovny: Romanaf is anti-social.
 2 Carrie: Exactly.
 3 Romanaf is anti-social.
 4 **Nobody can find anything to make fun of Romanaf**
 5 except that he’s quiet.
 6 Scott: **Your mom’s weird.**
 7 What now
 8 Romanaf: **Yeah she is.**
 9 Scott: Duchovny will talk about her all the time.
 10 Elaine: Duchovny, what did you say about Romanaf’s mom?
 11 All: ((Laughs))
 12 Duchovny: I just said she’s kind of strange.
 13 I was playing his x box one day.
 14 His mom comes in
 15 **“You go out now.**
 16 **You all go out.**
 17 **You go now.**
 18 **YOU GO NOW** ((strong amplitude, extreme pitch
 variation, reduplication, explicit subject,
 aggressive stance))
 19 She starts yelling at him
 20 trying to pull him off the couch.
 21 She can’t get him up?
 22 All: ((Laughs))

Figure 5.3: Pitch track (lines 14-17, Example 5.4: “You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05))

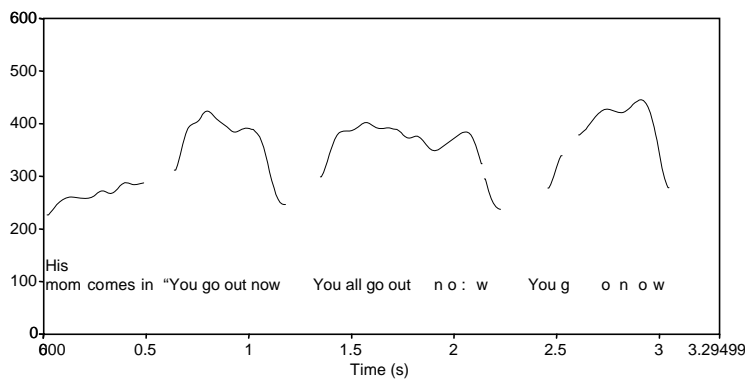
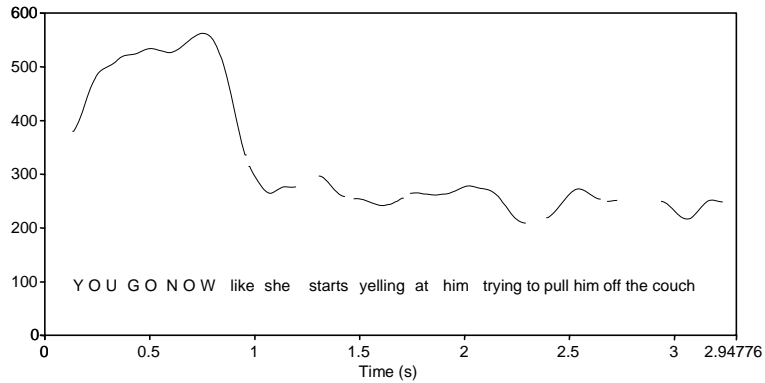


Figure 5.4: Pitch track (lines 18-20, Example 5.4: “You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05))



This narrative, and the conversation that precedes it, constructs several kinds of identities in relation to one another. First, Scott describes Romanaf’s mother as “weird” (line 6), which he presents as a critique of Romanaf just after Carrie states that “Nobody can find anything to make fun of Romanaf” (line 4). In other words, Scott implies that evaluations of Asian immigrant parents as “weird” constitute evaluations of their children. Interestingly, this assessment is then recontextualized by Scott as based on previous descriptions by Duchovny, who “will talk about her all the time” (line 9). Scott thus may not only gain authority to make such an assessment, as he locates multiple “authors” but also potentially escapes responsibility for it, no longer as its “principal” (Goffman, 1981).

Yet a generational distinction emerges as relevant in Romanaf’s response to Scott’s assessment; his agreement that “Yeah, she is” (line 8) distances him from his mother and aligns him with Scott, foregrounding the social division between parents and their children. Duchovny’s narrative that follows, responding to my request for clarification (line 10) and depicting a clash between a parent and two video game-playing youths, also assumes this generational distinction. And as Duchovny employs stylized

Asian mocking to quote Romanaf’s mother, he layers a racialized distinction onto this adult-youth divide. His phonological, syntactic, and discursive strategies differentiate between ‘accented’ Asian immigrants and those like himself who ostensibly speak without an accent.

In the next example, the Grouch stereotype emerges several times in a set of collaborative characterizations by members of a multiethnic friendship group whom I came to know through tutoring. In this playful setting at lunch, the students critique three Asian figures: “scar[y]” (lines 2-3) barbers who speak aggressively (lines 13-31) and flout politeness norms by speaking an incomprehensible language (lines 34-48); Korean girls who have a unique fashion sense (lines 50-59); and storeowners who are unwelcoming, materialistic, and racist (lines 60-69). Aside from the brief mention of the fashion sense of Korean girls, the contributions by these participants present an image of local Korean business owners as impolite.

Example 5.5: “You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1 Triple X: Elaine.
2 **Scariest** place that y- uh
3 the **scariest** you could go to in Fortville?
4 is the National Barber Shop.
5 [You go in there
6 Valerie: [h h h h
7 Vivioni: [Oh yeah. h
8 They pierce ears?
9 uh do eyebrows?
10 cut your hair?
11 [(xxx) DVDs?
12 Laquisha: [They (ta- xxx)
13 Triple X: [They be like
14 They be like
15 **“You want haircut?”** ([[ha:ʊkət]])
16 I be like “Yeah.”
17 They be like
18 **“C’mon”** ([[kəmʌn]])
19 ((pounds table/chair twice))
20 LJ: [(xxx)

21 Laquisha: [(xxx) get your nails done
 22 Your hair cut. h
 23 LJ: "You want-"
 24 They go
 25 "You want no side burn. ((fast, high-pitched))
 26 [You want no side burn." h
 27 Triple X: [And when they tal-
 28 Laquisha: A:: ((Expressing enjoyment))
 29 Triple X: When they talk?
 30 they be like
 31 like at the end they be like "ah:ah::"
 ((voiceless pharyngeal fricative))
 32 All: ((Laughs))
 33 Triple X: [Like "You got something in your throat?"(xxx)
 34 Ann: [Elaine.
 35 I don't know if it's me but
 36 it's annoying
 37 to have somebody talk a different language
 38 Elaine: Uh-huh
 39 Ann: Above your head.
 40 It's like they're talk(ing) about you.
 41 Triple X: I know they be like,
 42 Be like "How are you today sir"
 43 And they say something in Korean.
 44 Vivioni: [I don't understand Miss Elaine.
 45 Valerie: [No. No tell me why-
 46 Laquisha: You can't speak this language
 47 cause I don't understand it.
 48 Triple: I be like "You // talking about me huh."
 49 Vivioni: (xxx)
 50 Every Korean girl I see,
 51 they wear these i:tty bi:tty shoe:s.
 52 Ann: And they don't match.
 53 Denasha: Nope.
 54 Vivioni: And their feet be hanging off of em.
 55 [It's like (xxx) feet.
 56 All: [((Laughs))
 57 Denasha: They're pumps.
 58 They wear (xxx) Korean (socks)
 59 [Them big flip flops
 60 Vivioni: [That little Korean-
 61 I go to this Korean store?
 62 She be like "You got money?"
 ((high-pitched falsetto))
 63 "Yeah I got"
 64 Why do you always (come to me) about money?
 65 If a black person walk into a store?
 66 they follow you around
 67 And like "Hurry up and get out" ((directive))

68 "Get your stuff and get out" ((directive))
69 Valerie: It's really true.
70 Triple X: Hey their sandals be like this tall. h h
71 LJ: Cause they're so short
72 Denasha: They do. Pumps
73 Laquisha: They always in them high shoes
74 Them shoes be like this thick.
75 (That's) them heels.
76 Triple X: "Two fo dolla
77 Two fo dolla"
((loud, high-pitched, fast, nasal, postvocalic r-
deletion, sentence reduplication))
78 All: ((Laughs))

The convergence of stereotypical Asian immigrant speech and a particular stance of rudeness is similar to the previous example in which Duchovny portrayed Romanaf's mother in her frantic efforts to force the boys to leave her home. In the present example, racialized rudeness is described within the context of cross-cultural business encounters. The students suggest that, rather than providing ideal customer service, Korean barbers and storeowners bark orders in harsh tones, speak in a language that customers cannot understand, make explicit their interest in money, and discriminate on the basis of ethnicity. The Grouch stereotype is thus mapped onto specific exemplars within a particular context of business relations experienced by these students, although constructions of these experiences likely articulate with discourses of black-Korean interethnic conflict that circulate broadly in the U.S. (Bailey, 1997, 2000; Park, 1996).

5.2 STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS OF STYLIZED ASIAN MOCKING

I turn now to an analysis of the features used in stylized Asian mocking in order to understand how linguistic representations of Asian speakers indexed their stereotypical social deviance. Yet rather than presenting a list of features organized according to traditional levels of linguistic analysis (e.g., phonetic, phonological, morphological, etc.), I focus on three general structural distinctions that were relevant to the semiotics of

stylized Asian mocking. I first briefly discuss the significance of the *code*,⁷⁴ or language, that Asian mocking practices purportedly represented, whether ‘broken English’ or ‘an Asian language’, including the finer shades of linguistic differentiation that mockers sometimes made among each of these. I then consider the degree to which a linguistic element had been *circulated*, and thus treated as an extractable, reusable, and recognizable linguistic unit for intertextual circulation (Agha, 1998; Bauman & Briggs, 1990). Finally, I address the issue of the *resemblance* of stylized Asian mocking features to those locally regarded as ‘real’. I suggest that each of these three structural dimensions was central to the kinds of social meanings indexed by stylized Asian mocking practices.⁷⁵ Examining individual features in terms of their *code*, *circulation*, and *resemblance* thus brings some systematic clarity to why particular forms had the potential for carrying certain social meanings at Diversity High. Yet I also note that each of these notions was an ideological construction and thus potentially contested and negotiated within this community and beyond.

5.2.1 Code

The first structural dimension I consider is the *code* that Asian mocking practices represented. As discussed above, students at Diversity High sometimes represented an *Asian language*, even if not always recognizable as such by speakers in Asia (see Section 5.2.3 Resemblance). These forms ideologically homogenized diverse East and Southeast Asian ethnic groups and languages, and placed Asians in an ideological location of difference and distance. Mockers thus marked social difference not by suggesting linguistic incompetence but by indexing a competence in an Asian language framed as nonsensical, comical, and exotic—an ‘Alien’ language. And while indexing an ‘other’

⁷⁴ I thank Jung Eun Lee for suggesting the need for attending to this distinction.

⁷⁵ Identifying the overlaps between these notions is a project for future consideration.

language, ‘Asian’ stylized Asian mocking, such as *ching-chang-chong*, interestingly often involved phonological features (e.g., /tʃ/, /ŋ/) and strategies (e.g. reduplication), that were natively spoken in mainstream varieties of American English.⁷⁶

Yet such mocking as pseudo-code-switching was rare, comprising only 4 out of 52 (7.7%)⁷⁷ cases. Rather, students usually performed stylized Asian mocking by representing Asian speakers as using *non-native English*, indexing the stereotypical linguistic incompetence of Newcomers. The situation thus contrasted Mock Spanish situations encountered by Hill (1993; 1995; 1999; 2005), in which primarily non-English words were brought into an English phonological frame. Although she also discusses some examples of English words embedded in Spanish-derived morphological frames (e.g., the suffixation of *-o* on nouns), she describes “(hyper)Anglicization” as more common. Through emblematic phonology and syntax, the Asian mocking practices discussed here typically sought to make English words ‘sound Asian’, unlike Mock Spanish practices that seek to make Spanish words ‘sound American.’⁷⁸

The small number of forms that simulated Asian speech may have reflected the unfamiliarity that most American English speakers had with Asian languages compared to Spanish. Spanish was not only the most commonly taught non-English language in U.S. public high schools, learned by 30% of high school students in 2000 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005), but also the most common non-English language spoken in U.S. homes, spoken by 10.7 % of the U.S. population (US Census Bureau, 2000). In contrast, Japanese, the most commonly learned Asian language in U.S. public schools in 2000, was studied by only 0.4% of high school students,⁷⁹ and the U.S. Census

⁷⁶ For example, reduplication occurs in onomatopoeic forms baby talk.

⁷⁷ This figure does not include *ching-chang-chong* cases in which students quoted their mockers.

⁷⁸ Stylizations that transform the ‘sound’ of a word or language can depend on lexical, syntactic, and discursive features in addition to phonetic and phonological ones.

⁷⁹ The number of Asian language classes in U.S. schools has grown in recent years. A recent National Public Radio story reported on the growing number of Mandarin Chinese classes (Siler, 2005).

Bureau reports only 2.7% of the U.S. population as using an Asian or Pacific Island language in the home.⁸⁰

Hill argues that the phonological anglicization of Spanish words is evidence of the linguistic “disorder” that whites are permitted when speaking Spanish in U.S. public spaces, where whiteness is typically assumed to be normative. Drawing on Urciuoli’s (1996) work on Puerto Ricans in New York City, she contrasts such permissibility with the policing of linguistic disorder among Latinos, who are discouraged from code-switching and displaying an ‘accent’ in public spaces. ‘Accented’ Asian mocking at Diversity High functioned similarly. It signified a policing of Asian language practices, implicitly critiquing the English language competence of Asian immigrants,⁸¹ while permitting ‘accentless’ Americans to engage in such critique through their embodiment of stereotypically Asian language practices. Similar to Hill’s analysis, my analysis of stylized Asian mocking suggests that, at its most basic level, this practice reproduced ideologies of race, language, and power.

Such ideologies were further reflected and reproduced as mockers constructed a monolithic *Asian* caricature rather than recognizing that Asian immigrants speak diverse languages that have different phonological systems. As I have suggested elsewhere (Chun, 2004), standup comics such as Margaret Cho sometimes make certain structural distinctions between stereotypical ‘Chinese’, ‘Japanese’, and ‘Korean accents’ in English, although it is unclear to what degree audience members can perceive these distinctions.

⁸⁰ No Asian languages were taught at Diversity High, although administrators were considering a Korean language class as part of the curriculum.

⁸¹ My analysis raises the possibility that Mock Spanish is also a self-deprecatory critique of the Spanish language competence of monolingual English-speaking Americans. Indeed, such an interpretation is possible in specific contexts, particularly in ones in which multilingualism is valued, as reflected in the following joke I recently heard from another American: *What do you call a person who speaks two languages? A bilingual. What do you call a person who speaks one language? An American.* However, Hill likely does not consider white self-deprecation as a likely reading, given the unproblematic acceptance of English monolingualism in most U.S. public discourses.

The structural homogenization of various accents at Diversity High reflected a symbolic “erasure” of ethnic difference (Irvine & Gal, 2000), a process that ideologically transformed all East and Southeast Asians into ‘funny Oriental speakers’.

A discussion of Asian mocking accents would be remiss without mention of one of its most recognizable types, namely, the ‘Indian accent’, or “brown voice” (Davé, 2005), characterized by stereotypical prosodic and segmental phonological features that may overlap with some features of Indian English (e.g., unaspirated stops, non-velarized /l/, monophthongization, and retroflexion) (Sharma, 2005). This mocking practice has circulated at least since the 1960s when Peter Sellers portrayed a comical Indian character in *The Party* (1968), but its recent recirculation can be attributed to Hank Azaria’s voicing of Apu, an Indian immigrant character in the popular animated sitcom *The Simpsons*, which ran its first season in 1989.

The linguistic differences between accents used to mock East Asians and South Asians in popular discourses reflect mainstream ideologies in the U.S. that draw a racial distinction between these two groups. Such a distinction exists despite the many parallels between East and South Asian stereotypes in the U.S., including images linked to the immigrant work ethic, small business ownership, an exotic mysticism, hypo- and hypersexuality, and comical speech. However, this dissertation only peripherally deals with forms of stereotypical “brown voice” because of its relative rarity at Diversity High, where the South Asian population was small.⁸² In one case that will be discussed later in the next chapter (Example 6.2: “No, they speak perfect English” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)), a Korean girl was mistakenly understood as using this style when commenting on a Pakistani boy, and in other case, a Puerto Rican boy engaged in an extended Apu impersonation into the microphone during a rained-out soccer practice. While I will not

⁸² Bob, a Pakistani student, was the only South Asian participant in my research. During my fieldwork, I knew of only two other Pakistani student and two Indian students.

be analyzing this latter performance in this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that this lengthy play may have hinted at the greater public acceptability of widely circulating forms of “brown voice” compared to their “yellow” counterparts. I turn to this issue of circulation in the following section.

5.2.2 Circulation

A second important consideration in the examination of structural features was the type of *circulation* these features had undergone in mainstream discourses and local interactions. Identifying such patterns of circulation assumes mocking to be a heteroglossic and intertextual practice (Bakhtin, 1981; Hill, 2005), not only since mocking *represents* a mocked figure but also, oftentimes, *re-presents* past instances of mocking. Yet characterizing and determining a feature’s circulation is not a straightforward task, as patterns of circulation are dynamic—changing over time across each interactional instance of a feature’s use—and continuous—differing in scale rather than category.

Students appeared to draw on features they had encountered in different kinds of contexts. In some cases, they were based on commonly mentioned linguistic stereotypes of Asians in the popular media, including the internet, television, and film, and in more local contexts, such as circulating jokes about Asian language patterns. Such prototypical forms of stylized Asian mocking, such as *r/l* alternation and *ching-chang-chong*, have entered speech chains over time, or a “historical series of speech events” between senders and receivers who, in turn, become senders (Agha, 2003: 247); widely circulated forms thus have strong intertextual ties to their previous contexts of occurrence.

Other features demonstrated patterns of a more general immigrant speech stereotype and related “foreigner talk” characteristics (Ferguson, 1975). Such forms, including article deletion and syllable-timed rhythm, were not linked to stylized Asian

mocking practices exclusively, even if they were widely recognizable in the community as marked and ‘foreign’. Thus while such features were circulated in broad contexts, they did not index Asian stereotypes specifically.

Still other features seemed to demonstrate weak ties with past instances of mocking, either resulting as the direct mimicry of Asian immigrants with whom mockers had frequent interactions or creating indexical links to an Asian immigrant stereotype in interactions in emergent ways. Such structural emergence can be seen in the next example in which Hector represents the mother of his friend LJ as having mispronounced his last name as *Plank* rather than *Plunk*.

Example 5.6: “My mom has an accent too” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1 Hector: I called his mom?
 2 LJ: No he did for real
 3 Triple X: What happened.
 4 Laquisha: He called you mommy?
 5 Triple X: He called his mom
 6 Hector: I called
 7 I said “Hello can I speak to LJ?”
 8 Triple X: She like “Ho: no: : : ?”
 9 Hector: She’s all “Who’s? Who is this.”
 ((slightly high pitch, monophthongal, front, low, short /u/,⁸³ staccato prosody, uncontracted copula, sentential restart))
 10 LJ: She doesn’t talk like that
 11 Valerie: Stop making fun of people’s mom’s accents.
 12 My mom has a very strong accent too.
 13 Hector: I said “This is Hector Blunk.” ((/ʌ/))
 14 She said “Hector Blank?” ((/æ/))
 15 Triple X: [Blunk?
 16 Vivioni: [“Blank?” Aha
 17 Hector: And I said no “Hector Blunk”
 18 Anyways.
 19 Anyway I got on the phone and he- he- uh
 20 Triple X: “Phone” ((mocking Hector’s fronted /o/ in ‘phone’))
 21 Hector: I had to talk back to his mom and say
 22 “Hi ma’am may I please speak to // LJ?” ((slow accommodation))
 23 LJ: It was funny. h h

⁸³ The mean f1 and f2 values for /u/ in *who’s* are 493 Hz and 1488 Hz, suggesting that it is both relatively front and low and thus closer to a central vowel.

24 Vivioni: What happened?
 25 Say again?
 26 Ann: h h h
 27 Laquisha: [I didn't catch it either
 28 Valerie: [I- I didn't either
 29 LJ: Yeah me neither (but I was there)
 30 Triple X: Me neither.

As seen here, the use of /æ/ instead of /ʌ/ could emerge as part of stylized Asian mocking, although this feature might have not be recognizable as such without participants' knowledge of relevant meanings in the immediate interactional context.

I suggest that the intertextual richness of features as a result of their past contexts of circulation seemed to place limits on how students recontextualized them locally. Specifically, certain widely circulated forms, such as *ching-chang-chong*, carried with them explicitly racist meanings linked to their past contexts of use. Consequently, frequently entextualized and recontextualized features (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) in the popular media did not necessarily lead to their frequent circulation in the local community.

In an example presented earlier (Example 5.3: “Ching-chang-chong” (Academic, 12/9/04)), Big Dog presented *ching-chang-chong* in her narrative that she framed as demonstrating racism at the school, an assessment with which her Pakistani friend Bob agrees. This evaluation that was consistent with other students' framing of its structural variants. In the example below taken from an interview with the Junior Boys, a Korean student named Big D similarly cites *ching-chong-ching* as offensive because of its intent of ethnic derogation by “try[ing] to make fun of our language” (line 2). He and his Mexican-white friend Jose suggest a parallelism between such stylized Asian mocking and other racialized forms of mocking.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Not all of these forms of racialized mocking included incomprehensibility (e.g., “What's up, ese,” line 15).

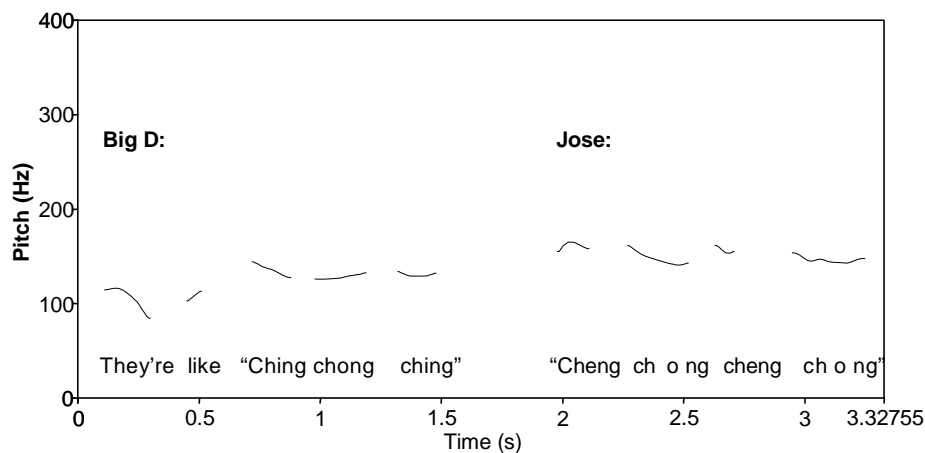
Example 5.7: “When they do that I kind of retaliate” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)

1 Elaine: Does anything make you really angry?
 2 Big D: When they try to make fun of our language.
 3 Elaine: Uh-huh?
 4 Big D: It bothers me.
 5 Elaine: How do they do that.
 6 Big D: (when~they’re~like) like “Ching chong ching” ((quiet))
 7 Elaine: [h: h h
 8 Jose: [“Cheng chong cheng chong” ((alveorized affricates))
 9 Elaine: Who does that usually. Who does that.
 10 Big D: Well wh- when they do that
 11 I like (0.5) kind of retaliate.

I additionally present a pitch track showing that the quotation of stylized mocking is performed with a relatively higher pitch (around 120-150 Hz) than in the speech before the stylization (around 90-110 Hz), yet the difference is not as large as other cases, suggesting that pitch appears to be used on a relative rather than absolute feature.

Figure 5.5: Pitch track (lines 6 and 8,

Example 5.7: “When they do that I kind of retaliate” (Junior Boys, 12/14/04))



Indeed, one of the reasons for the relative rarity of *ching-chong* variants, despite its local recognizability among students, may have been the risk of offending me, an Asian adult. Perhaps more significant were the connotations attached to widely

circulating forms such as *ching-chang-chong*.⁸⁵ In both examples, however, the recontextualization of *ching-chong* elements as a quotation allows students to escape being understood as holding racist views themselves. At the same time, the very utterance of these phrases evokes chuckling by speakers and their interlocutors, potentially suggesting a certain danger. Through the very embodiment of the phrase, even if clearly framed as quotation, quoters like Big Dog and Big D were not wholly safe from the potential of reproducing racist meanings (Hill & Irvine, 1993). Such leakage of meaning across contexts suggests that untying forms from their meanings in previous contexts of use is not always easily achieved.

The next interaction I present, however, illustrates how reference to an Alien stereotype was sometimes constructed as acceptable local practice and may even have served as a tool for reinforcing close relations among friends. This example takes place during my group interview with three girls: a Filipina-Puerto Rican named Philip and her female friends John-John and Pinky. The mocking by John-John and Pinky is spurred by my question about Philip's Tagalog abilities in line 14.

Example 5.8: "You should hear her when she gets mad at her mom" (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 Philip: Yeah. I'm more closer to my like Asian side?
 2 Than like my s-(0.5) // Puerto Rican side?
 3 Elaine: Mhm. Is that cause your mom? // mom is?
 4 Philip: Yeah and I know the language also.
 5 Elaine: Mm. mhm // mhm
 6 Philip: So I mean (0.5)
 7 And I've been to the Philippines for like (0.5)
 8 five times already. // And uh
 9 Elaine: Oh [really?
 10 Pinky: [You should see-
 11 Philip: Yeah. So I mean [I like

⁸⁵ Contrary to the use of explicitly racializing *ching-chong* between relative strangers, students who were familiar with me were most likely to engage in my presence in discourses and actions that had potentially racist readings. One incident that stands out in particular because of its boldness involved a white girl posing for my camera as she pulled her eyes out to simulate stereotypically Asian 'slanted' eyes.

12 Pinky: [You should hear her
13 when she gets mad at her mom.
14 Elaine: hh **You speak (0.5) // Tagalog?**
15 John-John: ((high pitched, fast, imprecise, uvular))
16 **go~i~ba~ra~ [ra~ra~ra [Xa:~::~::~:**
17 Elaine: [h h h h h
18 Pinky: ((high pitched, fast, imprecise))
19 **[a~ra~ra~ra~ra~ra**
20 Philip: [Yeah
21 Pinky: **[ha~gwa~ra~ra~ra~ra~ra~ra mo::~:m**
22 **bi~da~ra~ra~ra~ra~ra**
23 Philip: h:
24 Pinky: [((unmarked pitch)) **You catch like two words**
25 Elaine: [So you really cl-

In lines 16 and 19, John-John mimics Philip with a quickly articulated string of syllables: *goibarararara*. Her friend Pinky then elaborates on the mimicry with her own rendition of Philip’s Tagalog in lines 19-22. Pitch tracks of the performances illustrate the large pitch range used yet the general lack of pitch variance across syllables.

Figure 5.6: Pitch track of “Goibarararara” (Example 5.8: “You should hear her when she gets mad at her mom” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04))

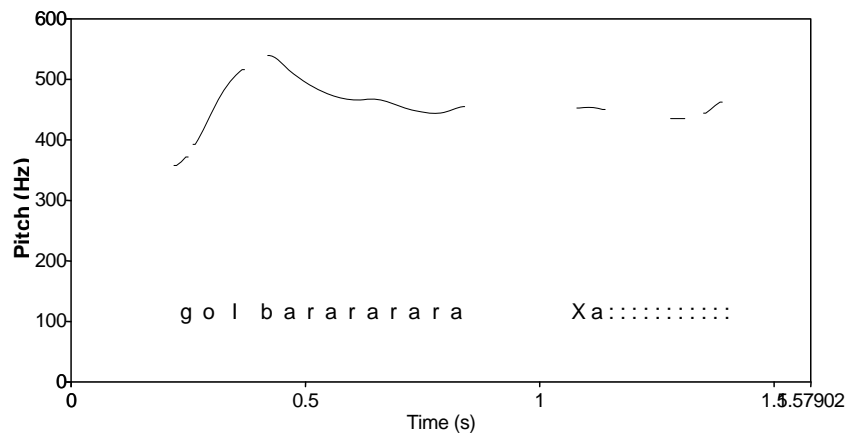
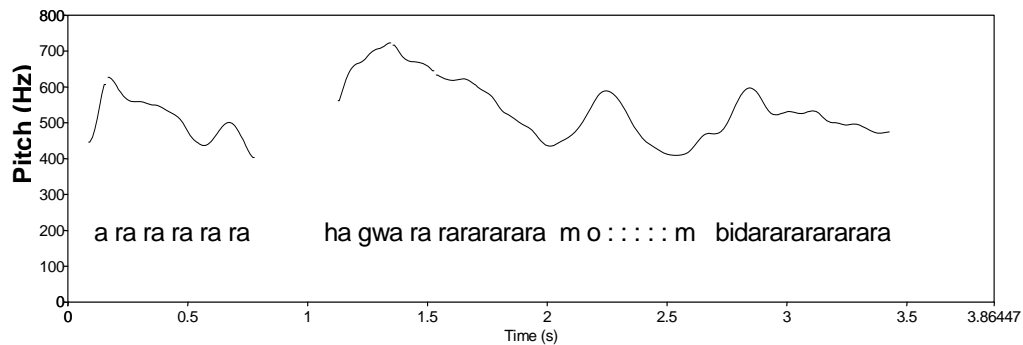


Figure 5.7: Pitch track of “Hagwarararararara mo:::m bidarararararara” (Example 5.8: “You should hear her when she gets mad at her mom” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04))



As in the case of *ching-chong* incidents, John-John and Pinky’s high pitched rendition of Philip’s Tagalog potentially portrays a speaker of an Asian language as comical based on her linguistic non-normativity and alien inscrutability. Pinky’s statement at the end of the excerpt, “You catch like two words” (line 24), suggests that Philip’s speech was largely incomprehensible. Yet the relatively unproblematic and playful nature of this stylized Asian representation can be seen by the positive response among the participants, including Pinky’s repetition (line 19) and poetic elaboration of John-John’s stylization (line 16).

One reason for the local acceptability of these acts, escaping an interpretation of racism or insult, is the membership of these three girls in a close-knit social network. More important, however, is the specific way in which what emerges as an instance of stylized Asian mocking evokes contexts beyond those in the immediate interactional moment. Their stylization is constructed as being modeled on Philip’s ‘actual Tagalog’ and thus framed as a linguistic replication of ‘actual’ Asian speech practices, lending itself a certain ‘flavor’ of authenticity despite its obvious distortion in terms of its sound structure. It thus contrasts *ching-chong* acts that model themselves not on actual Asian

speakers but on previous acts of intentional *ching-chong* transmogrification. The performance of disrespect for a social group through purposeful disregard for the group's language structure may be considered a metaphorical linguistic 'butchering' that Hill (1999) assumes in her description of Mock Spanish practices. The way in which a text is replicated—its degree of consistency with its original form—may reflect and signal relations of power between the "originator and copier" (Urban, 1996: 37). (This issue will be further discussed in the next section.)

Note as well how the particular meanings that emerge in this interaction, rather than entirely reproducing widely circulating discourses, carry local nuances that may challenge the image of alien inscrutability. Both John-John's and Pinky's performances of the Asian mocking style depict Philip as fluent in Tagalog, highlighting and praising her bilingual skill even through her mocking, an effect typically not achieved by *ching-chong*. "You should see- you should hear her," says an apparently impressed Pinky in lines 10 and 12. Additionally, it might be argued that Pinky's addition of a nasally, high pitched whine, as she inserts in English "Mo:::m" into her stylized Asian stream, renders the illocutionary force of the mocked speech comprehensible—that is, as a complaint. Such an effect is quite different from the complete incomprehensibility represented by *ching-chong*.⁸⁶ At least in this particular interaction, it is evident that the social meanings and functions of stylized Asian mocking diverge from those of highly stereotypical forms.

In other conversations as well, apparently imitative forms were typically constructed as less offensive than widely circulating ones that have strong intertextual links to racist uses.⁸⁷ The following table provides instances of stylized Asian mocking

⁸⁶ The pragmatic meaning of *ching-chong* is, of course, comprehensible for those who are mocked with it.

⁸⁷ Not all widely circulated forms of stylized Asian mocking are associated with racism. 'Stylized Indian mocking', which I discussed earlier, seems not to be associated with overt racism in current popular discourses, allowing its relatively free compared to *ching-chong*, though also heavily critiqued within some

depicting the alien stereotype primarily through rapid strings of CV syllables. With the exception of Triple X, who happens to be the only boy, all of the students use a high pitch. The intonation patterns are presented in the figures that follow in order to provide a sense of how they sounded.

Table 5.2: Nonreferential features of stylized Asian mocking

	EXAMPLE	SPEAKER (GENDER, ETHNICITY)	LANGUAGE REPRESENTED	EXAMPLE REFERENCE
1	<i>ho: no:::</i>	Triple X (male, black-German)	Korean	Example 5.6 (Tutorial, 12/1/04)
2	<i>nu nu nu nu norangye:::</i>	Vivioni (female, black)	Asian (unspecified)	(Tutorial, 12/1/04)
3	<i>ah: ah::</i> (pharyngeal fricative)	Triple X (male, black-German)	Korean	Example 5.5 (Tutorial, 12/1/04)
4	<i>arenana nanana gareharewu</i>	Pinky (female, black)	Korean	(Junior Girls, 12/17/04)
5	<i>goibarararara</i>	John-John (female, black-Korean)	Tagalog	Example 5.8 (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)
6	<i>hagwarararararara mo:::m bidarararararara</i>	Pinky (female, black)	Tagalog	Example 5.8 (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)
7	<i>ha:::~::~:</i> (strident, rhotic)	Heather (female, black-Korean)	Korean	(Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)

communities. Perceptions of stylized Indian mocking as less racist than *ching-chong* may be related to the ideological belief that it is structurally more consistent with how Indians actually speak English than stylized forms that purportedly represent East and Southeast Asian speakers.

Figure 5.8: Pitch track of “Hono:::”(Example 5.6: “My mom has an accent too” (Tutorial, 12/1/04))

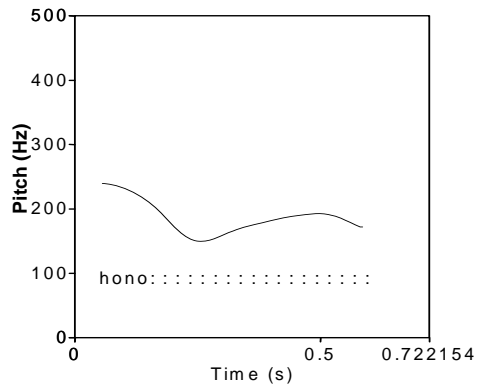
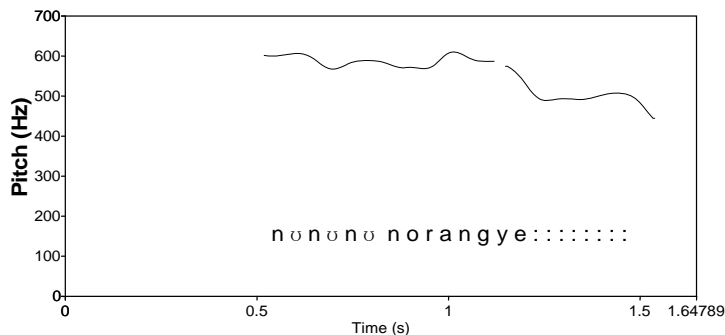


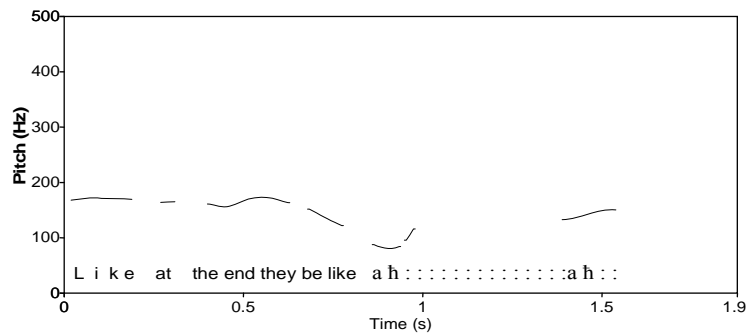
Figure 5.9: Pitch track of “Nununuorangye:::”(Tutorial, 12/1/04)



In contrast to *ching-chong* that was typically uttered by mockers in a pretense to engage in a conversation with Asians, the alternative stylizations of Asian speech shown in the above list were constructed as emergent quotative forms that were not construed as racist. In cases 1 and 2, participants were hypothetically quoting the speech of an Asian character in a narrative being told by another student. Case 3 involved students’ joint description of Korean barbers, which Triple X punctuated with a guttural imitation of their speech (see Example 5.5. “You want hair cut?”). In addition to the group’s response of laughter, Ann’s metalinguistic evaluation expressed her sense of marginalization and

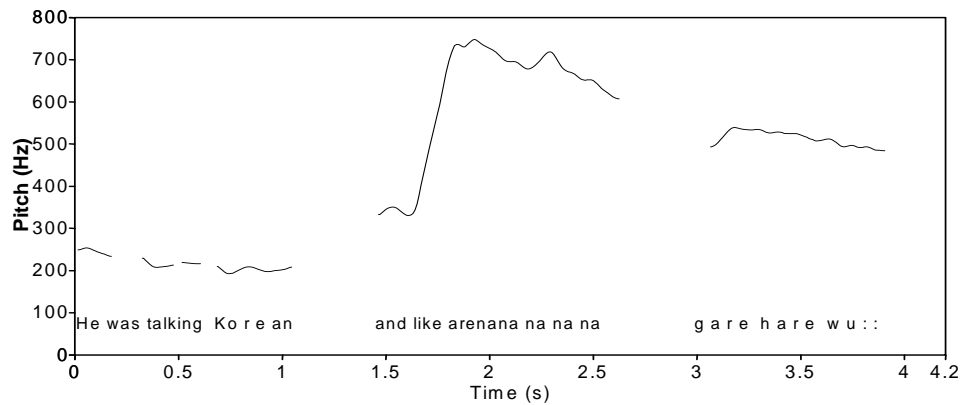
disempowerment in the presence of such incomprehensibility: “I don’t know if it’s me but it’s annoying to have somebody talk a different language above your head. It’s like they’re talking about you” (lines 34-40).

Figure 5.10: Pitch track of “Aḥ:ah::” (Example 5.5: “You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04))



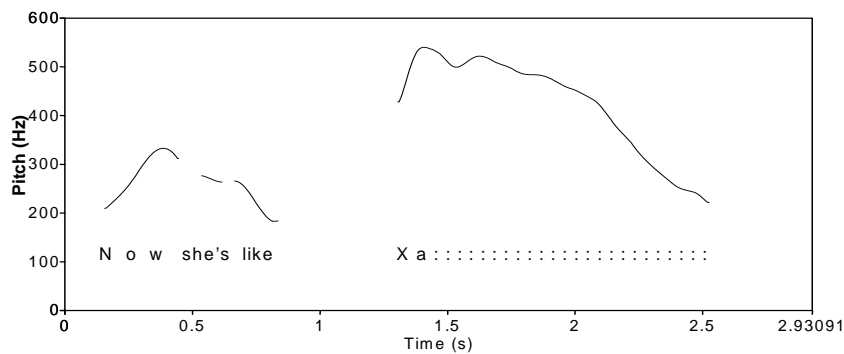
In case 4, Pinky explained how she mocked her Korean-white friend Tony after telling me that she “like[d] doing Korean accents.” Even while regarding Tony’s Korean as mockable, Pinky suggested a particular admiration of his language skills later emphatically added in response to my question about Tony’s Korean, “Yeah, he speaks that. Oh yeah.”

Figure 5.11: Pitch track of “Arenana nanana gareharewu” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)



The final example, Case 6, was not clearly an instantiation of stylized Asian mocking but it occurred in the context of an interview in which Heather, who identified as black-Korean, was explaining to me that her Korean mother’s voice had once been soft like her own, but that it had become less soft over the years. Rather than using words with referential content, she draws on features that convey her mother barking orders (cf. the Grouch stereotype), potentially in Korean.

Figure 5.12: Pitch track of “Xa:.....” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)



As in the other examples shown in the table above, this instance of stylization did not appear to be understood as offensive to the students in the interaction.

5.2.3 Resemblance

In this section, I discuss how the notion of *resemblance* also played a role in the interpretation of stylized Asian mocking. Many forms of mocking depended on a “linguistic disorder” (Hill, 1999) that often achieved comical effect through the hybridity of its form (Jaffe, 2000); it was neither wholly like native English nor wholly like an Asian language. Furthermore, the aesthetics of mocking performances often depended on structural acts of *simplification*, *exaggeration*, and *embellishment*.

However, such distortions of form were limited to the extent that performances required legibility by an audience (Campbell-Kibler, Eckert, Mendoza-Denton, Moore, & Half Moon Bay Style Collective, 2006); the Asian mocking style could be interpreted as such only through the recognition that the linguistic deviance of an Asian immigrant was being indexed through the performance of a speaker who spoke otherwise ‘normal’ English. And such recognizability depended on the resemblance of the mocking form to that of ‘authentic’ linguistic forms, if not to past instances of language mocking (e.g., *ching-chang-chong*). Often, the tightness of the resemblance not only showcased the mocker’s linguistic skill but led to interpretations of humor, likely arising from the incongruence of Asian foreignness being ‘accurately’ embodied by a non-immigrant mocker.

I suggest that resemblances of form also potentially indexed not only the mocker’s skill but also her ‘ethnic habitus’ (cf. Bourdieu, 1977) (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3 Ideology of habitus). Thus linguistic displays served as “biographical indexes,” ostensibly telling the story of an individual’s assumable past experiences (Chun, 2007). Sometimes, the indexical potential of linguistic resemblance lay in its licensing of in-group members to engage in a kind of self-deprecatory mocking (Chun, 2002b, 2004). For some students, it also served as a tool for constructing co-membership among participants in an ethnic community, in which they were assumed to have had shared linguistic experiences.

The next pair of excerpts juxtaposes two sequential cases of stylized Asian mocking that demonstrate how different kinds of co-membership were achieved through varying degrees of structural resemblance. In the first example, a U.S.-raised Korean girl’s initial mispronunciation of the word *milk* is eventually framed as an ‘Asian accent’ using what is likely regarded as ‘accurate’ Korean phonology and thus allow stylized

Asian mocking to be used in ‘ethnic-bonding’. The conversation evolves as I serve drinks to the Sakaci Girls before during a group interview at my apartment.

Example 5.9: “Milk” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

1 Elaine: Mountain Dew or iced tea?
2 [Anyone like Mountain
3 Piggy: [Mountain Dew
4 Elaine: [Or soy milk? [mɪtk]
5 Yoshi: [Mountain D-
6 [Appa? (('Dad')) ((Korean))
7 Piggy: [O:h.
8 Elaine: Or lactose int-
9 [lactose h: lactaid milk? [mɪtk]
10 Yoshi: [e yeki wasstako kunyang cenhwa ((Korean))
('Yeah I'm just calling to let you
know I came here.')

11 Elaine: [Soy milk. [mɪtk]
12 Piggy: [She needs that.
13 Miss Thang: What's that.
14 Elaine: Lactaid milk? [mɪtk]
15 Miss Thang: What?=
16 Piggy: =She can't drink milk.= [mɪtk]
17 Elaine: =Lactose free?
18 Miss Thang: Oh I don't drink milk. [mɪtk]
19 Elaine: °Oh you don't drink milk.° [mɪtk]
20 Piggy: That's lactose free.
21 Elaine: Soy milk? [mɪtk]
22 Piggy: [So you don't go (boo boo).
23 Miss Thang: [It t- it don't taste like milk? [mɪtk]
24 White Tiger: Iced tea::
25 Piggy: °I dunno.°
26 Elaine: °Iced tea.°
27 Miss Thang: I don't like milk period. (([t] → [ɹ])) [mɪɹk]
28 Piggy: Milk? h h [h h h (([t] → [l])) [mɪlk]
29 Miss Thang: [h h milk h h [mɪl.k^hu]
(([t] → [l], [ɹ] → [i], [k] → [k^h],
syllabification of final /k/))

Despite Miss Thang's ability to pronounce *milk* using Mainstream American English (MAE) phonology (lines 18 and 23), she becomes a target of mockery after what appears to be an unintended pronunciation of the word as [mɪɹk] (line 27), to which Piggy

brings attention through a playful imitation that paradigmatically replaces the pronunciation of the unmarked dark /ɹ/ and Miss Thang's /ɹ/ with a light /l/ (line 28), perhaps in a failed attempt to replicate Miss Thang's mispronunciation. At this point, it may not be clear that Piggy's mocking makes reference to an immigrant stereotype, but Miss Thang recontextualizes Piggy's repetition as specifically ethnic mocking in her subsequent use of a combination of Korean phonological features in her pronunciation of *milk* as [mil.k^hɯ] (line 29). This stylized performance includes several features, including a tense /i/, a light /l/, an aspirated /k^h/, and the division of the /tk/ complex cluster into two syllables. Miss Thang's move in line 29 can be said to constitute stylized Asian mocking, recontextualizing Piggy's imitation in line 28 as being like in kind, and linking all three instances of *milk* (lines 27, 28, and 29) with stereotypical Asian immigrant speech. Through these girls' joint play on sound structure, Miss Thang's original mistake in line 27 is playfully transformed into Asian immigrant speech by the end of several turns.

I wish to juxtapose the above excerpt with the interaction that immediately follows, which demonstrates that Miss Thang's playful pronunciation in line 29 has been understood as stylized Asian mocking but exemplifies a different kind of linguistic resemblance. Just after they have mocked Miss Thang's mispronunciation, Piggy segues to a narrative about Christopher, a second-generation Korean-white student, who had performed the role of a Chinese character in a school play.

Example 5.10: "My pronunciation is perfect" (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

30	Piggy:	Hey at the Victorian tea	
31		wasn't that funny	
32		how Christopher was like	
33		["My- my pronunciation is perfect.	
34	Elaine:	[Go ahead and pour your own.	
35	Piggy:	" <u>I will</u> - (([t] → [l]))	[wɪl]

36 I- I will carry you [if you" h h h
 ((Uncontracted speech))

37 Miss Thang: [Yeah

38 Yoshi: It's funny like

39 he has a lisp I think?

40 Piggy: No. [he was doing that on purpose
 to-

41 Yoshi: [Really?

42 Miss Thang ((loud cup sound))

43 Piggy: cause he was a Chinese guy?

44 Yoshi: Oh // yeah.

45 Piggy: He was like "My Engrish is perfect" [ɪŋɡɪʃ]

Piggy recalls two of Christopher's lines to note the humorous irony of his claim that his performed accent constituted perfect English. In her revoicing and representation of Christopher's speech in line 35, she uses a light /l/ in the word *will*, and, in line 45, replaces the /l/ in the word English with an /ɪ/, as she quotes him as boasting "My Engrish is perfect." In addition to such phonological play, she uses uncontracted speech—*I will carry you* instead of *I'll carry you*—that may portray a hyper-formality often popularly associated with non-native English speech. Thus by immediately moving from mocking Miss Thang's speech to talking about stylized Asian mocking in Christopher's performance, Piggy may present these two instances as parallel mockeries of an Asian Newcomer.

While Miss Thang's eventual self-mockery is constructed as being part of an Asian mocking style that recalls a stereotype of Asian immigrants as poor speakers of English, its particular form recalls a different set of contexts from its widely circulating counterparts. In Piggy's narrative about Christopher, she highlights the substitution of /ɪ/ for /l/, a feature more likely to be found in the context of a public performance, where humorous effect depends on the widespread recognizability of features through their intertextual ties to popular contexts of stylized Asian mocking. Unlike Christopher's

display for a more general audience, the Korean phonological features employed by Miss Thang may closely replicate rather than purposefully distort immigrant speech and thus suggest her close acquaintance with Korean immigrants, for example, her own parents. Such familiarity not only locates her in close relation to a Korean immigrant community but may invite her Korean peers who are present to acknowledge their shared ethnic positioning as second-generation Koreans. In other words, the particular shape of her stylized Asian mocking, structurally resembling actual Korean immigrant speech, permits an interpretation of the contexts of experience from which she likely learned to produce such forms.

5.3 DISCUSSION

This chapter has attempted to systematically investigate stylized Asian mocking at Diversity High, first focusing on the broad social meanings it reproduced and then identifying three dimensions of its form that I have argued were important to the kinds of meanings constructed in interactions. Specifically, I have argued that the linguistic deviance of Asians portrayed through stylized Asian mocking derived from widely circulating ideologies of Asian foreignness in U.S. popular discourses of race and national belonging. In the local context of the high school, students used this practice to index three specific stereotypes of deviance: the first involved the portrayal of Asians as culturally and linguistically incompetent *Newcomers*, the second, as inscrutable *Aliens*, and the third, as curmudgeonly *Grouches*.

Among the three formal dimensions I have described as important to consider in interpreting stylized Asian mocking, the first is the *code* that mockers represented. In many cases, students typically evoked the Newcomer stereotype through ‘accented’ English, while portraying the Alien stereotype using forms that were ostensible mimics of an Asian language. Yet I have also argued that both ‘codes’ constituted similar acts, as

they both reproduced stereotypical images of Asian racial, national, and linguistic deviance.

The second aspect I have focused on is the encoding of a stylistic resource's circulation in various kinds of contexts. Comparing stylizations referring to the Alien stereotype, I have suggested that widely circulating forms such as *ching-chang-chong* gained their indexical potential through the salience of their past contexts of use, namely, racist contexts of past mocking incidents. Consequently, I have shown how practices involving forms such as *goibarararara*, which also represented an Asian language but circulated within the bounds of the immediate conversation, were able to escape interpretations as racist.

The final formal dimension I considered was the degree to which an instance of stylization was interpreted or constructed as bearing *resemblance* to an existing 'authentic' form. Such resemblance was often necessarily sacrificed in acts of mocking that purposefully and poetically distorted linguistic form. However, structural similarity was never entirely abandoned as the form required recognizability, and humor sometimes depended on the likeness of a mimicking act to its mimicked object. I have also suggested that resemblance to an 'authentic' form potentially indexed the co-membership of interactional participants in a particular ethnic community, thus constituting a form of ethnic bonding.

Analyzing style features in terms of these dimensions provides a systematic means of understanding how linguistic form and social meaning relate. Yet as I have noted at the opening of this section, concepts such as *code*, *circulation*, and *resemblance* are context-specific constructions. First, the suggestion that *ching-chang-chong* and *goibarararara* can be analyzed as belonging to 'the same code', namely, an 'Asian language', does not mean that there exists a language in Asia in which these phonemic

strings constitute actual words but refers to the fact that mockers present these strings in interactional moments as if they were, however seriously or playfully such presentation is achieved. Local understandings of the ‘circulation’ of these phrases, too, are socially constituted, such that different members of the same community may perceive these phrases as differently endowed with the potential to offend depending on their past encounters with these phrases; likewise, a single speaker may recognize a phrase as having different social potentials over the course of an interaction. Finally, the notion of ‘resemblance’, while alluding to structural ‘facts’, is also a social construction. Tagalog speakers would like not recognize the phrase *goibarararara* as resembling ‘real’ Tagalog, but the acceptability of this utterance depended in part on its framing in the interaction as if it bore some degree of resemblance to Philip’s actual Tagalog speech.

I hope to have shown in this chapter that features of a single styling practice can have quite different kinds of statuses; put another way, rather different kinds of resources can be brought together to constitute a particular style (Hebdige, 1979). Such an understanding of style encourages, on the one hand, a detailed view that encourages the examining the differently endowed social potentials of individual features, but, at the same time, a holistic view that simultaneously considers the various kinds of features that may constitute elements of the same stylistic practice.

Chapter 6: Transformations of Social Meaning

In the previous chapter, I suggested that performances of stylized Asian mocking reproduced an image of Asian marginality in ideologies of race and national belonging in the U.S. I turn now to an investigation of some of the complex aspects of ideological reproduction as I explore the extent to which such ideological reproduction co-existed with local practices that may have contested these very ideologies. Specifically, I describe the potential and limits of four transformative aspects relevant to stylized Asian mocking: overt resistance, stereotype reappropriation, out-group adoption, and language play. As I examine specific interactional instances of these four different strategies, I introduce some of the complex issues surrounding the issue of the reproduction and transformation (cf. Bauman & Briggs, 1990; Sahlins, 1981) of social meaning. While I conclude this chapter with the apparently noncommittal finding that, often, meanings are neither wholly reproductive nor transformative, I hope my discussion lays bear some of the specific potentials and limits of social meaning in practices of stylized Asian mocking.

6.1 OVERT RESISTANCE

One of the ways in which students challenged stereotypical images of Asians was through overtly critical discourse. This section addresses four general strategies that students used to comment on others' assumptions of Asian stereotypes, explicitly challenging the legitimacy of stylized Asian mocking as a socially appropriate practice. I suggest that such resistance may have succeeded in critiquing instances of stylization that derided a specific Asian individual's speech, but I also illustrate how underlying racialized definitions of national belonging often lay unquestioned.

6.1.1 Correction

One of the most frequently critiqued Asian mocking forms was *ching-chang-chong*, which I introduced earlier in the context of Big Dog's narrative of her confrontation with another girl whom she quotes as using this feature. In her narrative, shown again below, Big Dog, who is Filipina, quotes herself as highlighting the inaccuracy of the other girl's ostensible assumption of Big Dog's linguistic deviance (lines 15-18), disrupting essentialist links between ethnicity and language. This story emerges in an interview discussion about ethnicity-based cliques and racism at the school.

Example 6.1: "Ching-chang-chong" (Academic, 12/9/04)

1 Big Dog: Yeah they are kind of racist=
2 =Like if they get mad at somebody
3 the first thing that they'll go after
4 is like (0.5) what they are?
5 Elaine: Right. Uh-huh
6 Big Dog: Like um (0.5) every time-
7 like once I bumped into this girl and
8 I remember
9 the first thing that came out of her mouth was
10 "Ching-chang-chong" h h ((shift to high pitch))
11 [Crap like that. ((shift to unmarked pitch))
12 Joanne: [h h h h h h
13 Bob: [h h
14 Big Dog: It's like
15 [Sorry. h.
16 All: [((laughter))
17 Big Dog: I speak perfect English. h
18 I don't know what you're saying."
19 Bob: Well- uh- racism is a problem at our school
20 I think.

In her narrative, Big Dog suggests that *ching-chang-chong* was problematic because it marked Asian ethnic deviance through an implied linguistic difference, and she links the utterance of this phrase to a larger set of racist practices based on the target's ethnic appearance (lines 1-4). Her reported response, "Sorry, I speak perfect English"

challenged the mocker's assumption of Big Dog's language practices, commenting on such ethnic othering as both factually inaccurate and socially inappropriate. However, it is notable that, during the original mocking event, Big Dog may have failed to challenge the grounds upon which the mocker attempted to define her otherness, namely, the inferiority of Asian languages and Asians who speak them. In other words, she managed to critique the insult as inaccurate because of her own English language competence, granting her immunity from such insult. Yet the general devaluation of Asian languages or speech perceived as non-native remained uncontested.

Before discussing this issue further, I turn to a similar example in which Piggy, a member of the Sakaci Girls group, also relies on the phrase "perfect English" (line 18) to describe the speech of two Pakistani brothers. Her description is an attempt to correct what she has initially perceived to be Miss Thang's incorrect attribution of an accent through her stylized Asian mocking. This exchange occurs while they are looking through the school yearbook and discussing the sexual appeal of one of the brothers.

Example 6.2: "No, they speak perfect English" (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)

1 Yoshi: He's hot. ((referring to Sam in a photo))
 2 That's like the hottest Pakistan guy I ever-
 3 Miss Thang: I know he's built.
 4 Oh.
 5 White Tiger: He played soccer.
 6 Miss Thang: Really?
 7 Piggy: Bob is really skinny?
 8 He has like no calf muscles?
 9 He has like Hobin's legs⁸⁸
 10 Yoshi: God his brother's like nothing compared to him.
 11 Miss Thang: I know oh.
 12 He must get compared a lot.
 13 Piggy: Heck yeah?
 14 I don't understand
 15 why Joanne went for Bob.
 16 I woulda went for Sam.
 17 Miss Thang: Oh hello hello ((/o: hal.lo hal.lo/

⁸⁸ Hobin was a Korean boy whose body might have been described as *lanky*.

((monophthongal /o/, /ɛ/→/a/, /l/-gemination))
 ((pointing to photo of Sam))

18 Piggy: **No they speak perfect English.**

19 Miss Thang: No **hello HELLO:** ((pointing to photo of Sam))
 ((/hɛl.lo hɛl.lo/
 ((laughs))

20 All: ((laughs))

21 Yoshi: He is hot.

22 WO::W ((epiglottal trill))

Miss Thang’s stylizations in lines 17 and 19, which likely accompanies her gesturing toward Sam’s yearbook photo, seems to function as a means of playfully emphasizing the word *hello*⁸⁹ in order to highlight his good looks, an assessment with which Yoshi agrees in line 21. Although it is possible that Miss Thang draws on “brown voice” (Davé, 2005) features because of Bob and Sam’s Pakistani identities, her stylization primarily cues a play frame rather than representing their actual speech patterns.

Yet Piggy’s response suggests that she understands Miss Thang’s stylization as a mimesis of Bob and Sam’s actual speech patterns and ‘corrects’ what she believes to be Miss Thang’s mistaken assumption of their non-native English. As in the case of Big Dog, her correction implies that such mocking, while inappropriate in the immediate setting, might be appropriate in cases in a speaker does have a non-native accent. In Bourdieu’s (1977) terms, both Piggy and Big Dog critiqued the orthodoxical assumption that ethnic Asians do not speak English competently; yet in presenting their heterodoxical claims that some Asians do speak “perfect English,” they leave intact the underlying doxa that creates a hierarchical valuing of native over non-native English speech practices.

⁸⁹ In many informal contexts, the term *hello*, in addition to its function as a greeting, can be used as an emphatic interjection serving other functions, such as presenting a counterpoint framed as obvious or expressing excitement, such as “when you see a hot chic” (Pinochle, August 6, 2003).

6.1.2 Retaliation

Another form of resistance to stylized Asian mocking is narrated in Big D's explanation of his strategy of "retaliat[ion]" (line 11). During an interview, he explains to me that he responds to mocking directed to him by engaging in a parallel derision of stereotypical linguistic forms associated with his mockers' respective ethnic identities.

Example 6.3: "When they do that I kind of retaliate" (Junior Boys, 12/14/04)

1 Elaine: Does anything make you really angry?
2 Big D: When they try to make fun of our language.
3 Elaine: Uh-huh?
4 Big D: It bothers me.
5 Elaine: How do they do that.
6 Big D: (when~they're~like) like "Ching chong ching"
7 Elaine: [h: h h
8 Jose: [Cheng chong cheng chong] ((alveorized affricate))
9 Elaine: Who does that usually. Who does that.
10 Big D: Well wh- when they do that
11 I like (0.5) kind of retaliate.
12 Elaine: H- what do you do.
13 Big D: Like if it like a Mexican?
14 Elaine: Uh-huh?
15 Big D: (I) be like "What's up ese. uh." ((creaky))
16 All: ((laughs))
17 Jose: ((throaty)) Orale h h
18 Big D: Or if it were like a- a black guy?
19 Elaine: Uh-huh?
20 Big D: I just (0.5) pretend
21 I'm talking African or something.
22 Elaine: Uh-huh. h.
23 Jose: h ((3 palatal-alveolar clicks))
24 Elaine: And then what if it's a white guy.
25 Jose: Country
26 Big D: Country I guess
27 "Howdy partner"
28 Elaine: Do white guys say that to you too?
29 Big D: No white guys don't say it
30 Elaine: Why not
31 Big D: I dunno.

As in the above examples, Big D's strategic response to stylized Asian mocking is constructed as a critique of a racializing practice that "bothers" him (line 4). Yet in contrast to Big Dog and Piggy, he does not dissociate himself from Asian language

practices by claiming to speak ‘perfect English’. Instead, by using a first-person pronominal possessive in the phrase “our language” (line 2), he claims ownership of an Asian language that he does not explicitly identify but that can be inferred to be Korean.

His affiliation with the Korean language may reflect his identification as an ethnic Korean in ways that potentially overshadowed his sense of Americanness despite having been born in the U.S. In a different part of the interview, he responded to my question about whether he was a “proud American,” by noting instead, “I’m Korean,” implying the mutual exclusivity of American and Korean identities (December 14, 2004). The shared terminology referring to ethnicity, race, and nationality parallels the ideological collapsing of these axes in widely circulating discourses. Consequently, his adoption of a Korean identity, and potential denial of an American identity, may serve to marginalize ethnic Asians within the national community, contrary to Big Dog’s and Piggy’s resistance to the marginalization of Asians who speak ‘perfect English’. Yet, interestingly, his acceptance of marginality allows him to critique the devaluation of linguistic forms used by some Asians in ways that the girls did not.

Big D’s response of resistance additionally differs from Big Dog’s and Piggy’s in his engagement in parallel forms that mock “Mexican” (lines 15 and 17), “African” (lines 21 and 23), and “country” (lines 25-27) varieties and that decenter the ethnic identities of his mockers.⁹⁰ Like other forms of ritual insult practices, his tactic points to the potentially marginalized status of his mockers, thus undermining their assumed ethnic

⁹⁰ Interestingly, Big D does not initially describe how he might respond to a white mocker. As he suggests at the end of this example, it may be that white students were less likely to mock non-whites, since such acts might have been more easily interpreted as ‘dangerously’ racist discourse in a context in which whites were perceived as a privileged racial group that had historically oppressed other groups. Non-whites, in contrast, may sometimes assume license to engage in racial mocking in public realms because of their own racial marginalization (Chun 2004). The initial absence of describing a response to white mockers might also be a consequence of the assumed racial and linguistic unmarkedness of white students. The identification of “country” finally emerged in response to my question about how he might respond to a white mocker.

privilege. His recontextualization and transformation of their stylized Asian mocking into other mock forms may also be understood as a derisive commentary on his mockers' practice—in other words, a critical and resistant mockery of the mocking practice they have initiated. Yet his engagement in ethnic mocking may additionally reinforce ethnic mocking as an acceptable practice, demonstrating how resistance and reinforcement can co-occur in a single mocking act.

6.1.3 Prohibition

Despite critiques of stylized Asian mocking practices in narratives, explicit critiques of these acts just after their occurrence were rare. One of these instances occurred in an example introduced in the previous chapter and involved a Puerto Rican girl's protest as a white student named Hector began telling a narrative. In his narrative Hector describes a phone conversation he had had with the Korean mother of his friend LJ.

Example 6.4: "My mom has an accent too" (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1 Hector: I called his mom?
 2 LJ: No he did for real
 3 Triple X: What happened.
 4 Laquisha: He called you mommy?
 5 Triple X: He called his mom
 6 Hector: I called
 7 I said "hello can I speak to LJ?"
 8 Triple X: She like "Ho: no: : : ?"
 9 Hector: She's all "Who's? Who is this."
 ((slightly high pitch, monophthongal, front, low, short /u/,⁹¹ staccato prosody, uncontracted copula, sentential restart))
 10 LJ: She doesn't talk like that
 11 Valerie: Stop making fun of people's mom's accentses.
 12 My mom has a very strong accent too.
 13 Hector: I said "This is Hector Blunk."
 14 She said "Hector Blank?"
 15 Triple X: [Blunk?

⁹¹ The mean f1 and f2 values for /u/ in *who's* are 493 Hz and 1488 Hz, suggesting that it is both relatively front and low and thus closer to a central vowel.

16 Vivioni: ["Blank?" Aha
 17 Hector: And I said no "Hector Blunk"
 18 Anyways.
 19 Anyway I got on the phone and he- he- uh
 20 Triple X: "Phone" ((mocking Hector's fronted /o/ in 'phone'))
 21 Hector: I had to talk back to his mom and say
 22 "Hi ma'am may I please speak to // LJ?" ((slow
 accommodation))
 23 LJ: It was funny. h h
 21 Vivioni: What happened?
 22 Say again?
 23 Ann: h h h
 24 Laquisha: [I didn't catch it either
 25 Valerie: [I- I didn't either
 26 LJ: Yeah me neither (but I was there)
 27 Triple X: Me neither.

Valerie's explicit reprimand is preceded by LJ's disagreement with Hector's portrayal of his mother ("She doesn't talk like that," line 10). LJ's initial contestation is similar to Big Dog's and Piggy's 'corrections' in the examples discussed earlier that contested Hector's mapping of stereotypes onto particular individuals without contesting the value of the stereotype itself. However, Valerie makes more explicit her stance against Hector's stylization as she urges him to "Stop making fun of people's mom's accents(es)" (line 11), noting that her own mother has an accent (line 12). Interestingly, her opposition is still framed not in terms of the problematic nature of ethnic marginalization but as the problematic irreverence of lowering the status of mothers. Hector does not appear to acknowledge Valerie's protest, continuing his narrative, which LJ eventually evaluates as "funny" (line 23) despite his initial contestation of the linguistic representation involved. Still, the value of the narrative may be discounted as Vivioni's, Laquisha's, Ann, Valerie, and LJ claim to fail comprehension of the narrative (lines 21-27).

6.2 STEREOTYPE REAPPROPRIATION

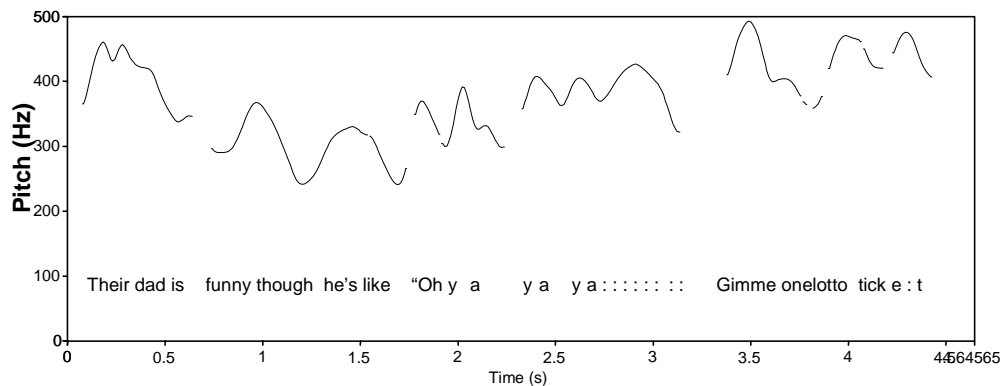
This section addresses a subtler form of potential ideological transformation in which mockers stylized Asian immigrants by drawing on widely circulating ethnic stereotypes yet appropriating them for their immediate interactional purposes (Reyes, 2007). Through quotations in narratives, recognizable stereotypes, such as those described here, were frequently mapped onto figures in narratives about students' real-life experiences. Asian stereotypes thus demonstrated flexibility in their shape, value, and purpose.

In the first example, a Korean student named Yoshi evokes the Grouch stereotype (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1.3 Grouches) but without appearing to reproduce the cultural deviance of the image. In her narrative about a Chinese immigrant restaurant owner who buys lottery tickets at her parents' store, she quotes and stylizes his speech with linguistic features potentially linked with linguistic deviance, such as an irregular intonation (see pitch track below). She also conveys a particular rudeness that is stereotypically linked with Grouches through the use of marked strident vowels to create a 'harsh' voice and an imperative form ("Gimme one lotto ticket," line 5) in place of a more conventionally polite mitigated interrogative, such as *Can I get a lotto ticket?*

Example 6.5: "Gimme one lotto ticket" (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

- 1 Yoshi: The restaurant behind my store?
- 2 Piggy: Yeah
- 3 Yoshi: Oh their dad is funny though
- 4 He's like "Oh ya ya ya:"
((strident vowels, /æ/-backing, interjection repetition))
- 5 Gimme one lotto ticke:t"
((strident, extreme pitch variance, syllable-timed rhythm, reverse stress, direct imperative))
- 6 We were in the car and ew.
- 7 This is how he was walking by.
- 8 With his eyes all big.

Figure 6.1: Pitch track of “Gimme one lotto ticket” (Yoshi, line 5, Example 6.5: “Gimme one lotto ticket” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04))



Imperatives in English are often associated with stances such as directness and impoliteness, as seen in examples in the previous chapter in which non-Asian students illustrated the rudeness of Asian immigrants through aggravated directives in an imperative form (“You go out now, ” Example 5.4: “You go out now” (Outcast United, 1/12/05); “Hurry up and get out!” Example 5.5: “You want hair cut?” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)). Yet Yoshi’s quotation of an Asian immigrant as providing a directive in its direct imperative form does not appear to suggest impoliteness, as she describes him instead as “funny” (line 3). The accompanying “ya ya ya” (line 4), though expressed with a harsh voice that may indicate anger (Gobl & Chasaide, 2003; Laver, 1980), also potentially conveys a rapport-building stance. As Goodwin (1990: 70) has observed, the syntactic shape of a directive cannot be the basis of judging the degree of its aggravation. This example illustrates how a form that is characteristic of aggressive Grouches can be interpreted within interactions in alternative ways that do not necessarily reflect the kind of gross social incompetence conveyed in the previous chapter.

In addition to the Grouch stereotype, the circulating stereotype of the Newcomer (see Chapter 5, Section 5.1.1 Newcomers) could potentially be embedded in narratives addressing local social values. Portrayals of the ‘accented’ Asian immigrant were thus

flexible “semiotic engines” (Agha, 1998) that could serve a variety of interactional purposes relevant to meanings in the local community. The next example addresses the relevance of ‘accented’ immigrant English within the context of academic performance. Given the difficulties of English language comprehension for many immigrant students, the school provided English as a Second Language (ESL) classes where they received help on assignments for their other classes. In the excerpt below, as Big D is sitting at a lunch table with a group of other Korean boys, he describes his immigrant friend Sungho as attempting unsuccessfully to take his exam to the ESL classroom for English language assistance. His use of stylized Asian mocking constructs Sungho as an immigrant, while also commenting on his transgression of a moral code of honesty by feigning English incompetence.

Example 6.6: “Mister Q can I go ESL” (Junior Boys/Korean, 11/21/03)

1 Big J: And he copy from me all the time. (xxx) man?
 2 Big D: **“Mister Q can I go ESL? ESL?”** ((missing preposition))
 3 Mister Q “What?”
 4 (He) says **“I don’t understand this”**
 5 Sungho: Still I got ninety three.
 6 Big D: I don’t care.
 7 Ninety one.
 8 Sungho: No I got missing test one?
 9 cemswu haphamyen ninety seven nawa.
 10 ((Korean ‘If you add my scores you get ninety seven’))
 11 Big D: Uh-uh.
 12 Sungho: Yes

Although a social distinction of a racialized national identity is perhaps the most salient social meaning indexed through Big D’s stylization, this ideological opposition is temporarily appropriated to comment on Sungho’s moral standards in his attempt to receive assistance he is constructed as not having needed. In addition to illustrating the flexible indexical potential of linguistic stereotypes, this narrative also illustrates Big D’s awareness of the potential for immigrant speakers to play to their advantage others’

perceptions of their linguistic incompetence. Although Sungho is portrayed as ultimately failing to convince his teacher to allow him to receive assistance, Big D constructs him as potentially resourceful, thus challenging the stereotypical image of Newcomer as wholly incompetent. His relatively complex understanding of Asian immigrant linguistic competence moves beyond simplistic views held by those who have had few encounters with members of Fortville's Asian immigrant community.

The two examples I have presented in this section demonstrate that the value of stereotypical characteristics was not fixed but, at least in part, constructed through interaction. In one case, the Grouch stereotype was evoked but not framed in a particularly negative light, constructing the image of a comical yet agreeable Grouch. In another case involving the Newcomer stereotype, a student's linguistic incompetence was framed as a tool for gaining an academic advantage in contrast to the more typical construction of such incompetence as a disadvantage. The Alien stereotype was also potentially transformed, as discussed in the previous chapter, as students sometimes constructed Asians who could speak a non-English language as non-normative but admirable, too, for their bilingual abilities.

My general comparison of Asian and non-Asian students suggests that, as it might be expected, different kinds of community membership and life experiences may allow varying manifestations of the same underlying stereotype; it is notable that each of these instances involved a mocker who either identified as Asian or was closely acquainted with the Asian target of mockery. The tendency for differently positioned subjects to associate different kinds of value with stereotypical characteristics of a social group may have a psychological basis: people tend to associate a less desirable and more homogeneous set of traits with an out-group than with an in-group (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996: 247). In addition, the ideological belief that individuals tend to attribute more

positive values to their own group's traits may be the basis of the common legitimization of in-group members' uses of explicitly racializing labels and ethnic mocking, permitting different kinds of practices and assigning different kinds of meaning to these practices, based on the speaker's social positioning. Given that a speaker's social location influences the value and meaning of recontextualized practices, alternative valuations of stereotypes having a transformative potential. Such revaluations may parallel how in-group uses of historically offensive ethnic labels such as *nigger/nigga* and *chink* by black and Asian speakers, respectively, can shift the connotations of these terms through in-group reclamation. Conversely, yet similarly, out-group appropriations of linguistic forms can generate new meanings,⁹² as I discuss in the next section.

6.3 ADOPTION

The transformative potential of stylized mocking was also a product of the slippage between ideology and interaction, allowing a style ideologically regarded as inauthentic to a speaker to be adopted in interaction as part of the speaker's authentic voice. Focusing on this practice of "crossing" (Rampton, 1995), this section examines the extent to which such interactional practices that play with linguistic and social boundaries potentially challenge ideologies of language ownership as well as the relative prestige of language styles. Examining cases of *emulation* and *accommodation*, my analysis suggests that 'positive' out-group adoptions of a style potentially invite their interpretation as mocking given the impossibility of completely divorcing meanings at the level of interaction from those at the level of ideology.

⁹² The consequences can sometimes be problematic, as discussed in a recent *New York Times* article about how images of "heavy black women as boisterous and sometimes aggressive," which appear in films by African American writers and directors, are currently being used in television commercials geared toward a non-African American audience (Peters, 2006).

6.3.1 Emulation

The first case I examine involves a student introduced earlier named Damon, who identified as black, Filipino, and Puerto Rican and who sometimes erupted into playful monologues in Tagalog, lasting several seconds, as apparent insults to friend who did not speak Tagalog. At other times, he hollered enthusiastic greetings to one of his bilingual, Tagalog-speaking Filipina friends when he saw her in the cafeteria. During the many instances that I observed this practice, his Filipina friend never reciprocated his Tagalog greetings, either appearing to ignore him or telling him to “shut up.” Knowing that his Tagalog abilities were minimal, she may have assumed that his greetings were less an opening to a Tagalog conversation than a symbolic claim about ethnic identity (Chun, 2007).

While he sometimes seemed flippant in his use of Tagalog, he often expressed to me a sincerity regarding his Filipino ethnic pride and eagerly aided me with my research project by explicitly discussing his Asian identity. For instance, he explained that although his mother, who was Filipino-Puerto Rican, had not taught him Tagalog, he had learned a few phrases from his grandmother who sometimes made his favorite *lumpia* dish, or Filipino spring rolls. He was also teaching himself Tagalog using a tattered dictionary he carried with him daily in his backpack. In addition to his interest in Filipino symbolic practices, including wearing a miniature cloth national flag of the Philippines as a necklace, he could identify most of the other Filipino students at the school. Thus understanding Damon’s jocular uses of Tagalog as mocking was complicated by his expressed respect for Filipino culture. His uses of what I perceived to be attempts to use actual Tagalog words were in many ways different from the Mock Spanish that Hill (1999) critiques as racist.

Damon's practices bring to the fore the difficulties of characterizing languages and styles as authentic or inauthentic to a speaker. On the one hand, Tagalog was a language with which he appears to claim an intrinsic connection based on his Filipino ancestry and his relationship with his Filipina grandmother (see Section 4.2 Ideologies of authenticity). Damon's prioritizing of a lineage-based definition of ethnic authenticity was apparent in an example presented earlier, in which he criticized a Mexican girl for wearing a Puerto Rican flag because she was "fooling [her]self and everyone else" (Example 4.8: "You should wear your flag" (Middle School, 11/23/04)). On the other hand, he presented markers that others may have interpreted as part of his ethnic blackness, such as his afro hairstyle and ability to use AAE features as part of his everyday repertoire. While his Filipino ethnic displays, such as speaking Tagalog, might have been regarded by Damon as a symbolic practice licensed by his Filipino community membership, these displays were necessarily juxtaposed with the local perception of his ethnic identity as more black than Asian; as he explained to me in an interview "They think I'm black and white" (November 30, 2004). His limited abilities in Tagalog may also have betrayed his limited access to Tagalog-speaking social networks in the past, potentially putting his claim to Filipino ethnic authenticity on uneasy footing for some.

Alongside the ideological ambiguity of Damon's membership status with respect to the Filipino community, the interactional framing of his style was also somewhat ambiguous. His uses of Tagalog seemed to tend toward 'spectacular' rather than the 'everyday' performances (Beeman, 1993), unlike some of the other Filipino students at the school who did not appear to purposefully draw attention to the flags on their backpacks or demonstrate their knowledge of Tagalog words. Damon seemed to engage in a kind of performance, which "puts the act of speaking on display—objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience"

(Bauman & Briggs, 1990: 73). In the sense that a stylized act is often regarded as a “quasi-theatrical” performance of style (e.g. Coupland, 2001a: 346), his performance of ethnic symbols may be regarded as a stylization.⁹³ The performance of a style necessitates a style’s “decontextualization” (Bauman and Briggs 1990), such that it is temporarily held at a distance from the speaker’s authentic voice. Perhaps more significantly, the incongruence between his ‘Filipino’ symbols and his ‘non-Filipinoness’, such as his phenotype and linguistic limitations, seemed to automatically assign these symbols an inauthentic and performed status; ideologies of ethnic membership thus may have placed limits on the kinds of symbols he could adopt as authentic.

Further complicating the authenticity of Damon’s styling is the fact that performing various inauthentic styles can be part of an individual’s authentic persona. Professional comedians, for example, often engage in various kinds of stylizations as a means of authenticating their persona as a competent comedian. In non-staged, everyday settings, speakers can similarly depend on stylizations that constitute an authentic persona, such as a youth who demonstrates competence through humor or ethnic pride. Such may have been the case for students like Damon, whose performance of ethnic symbols was simultaneously a de-authenticating practice as it was one of authentication. The coexistence of authenticity and inauthenticity is a product of the possible embedding of practices (e.g. acts) within an overarching practice (e.g., an activity). In Goffman’s (1974: 82) terms such layered, or laminated, activities can be understood in terms of the activity that is literally being performed—the outer rim—and that which is being performed within this activity—the inner rim. Similar to how a single code-switch can

⁹³ His Filipina friend’s non-reciprocation of his loud greetings seems to support a reading of his act as understood by her as constructing their racial difference rather than creating a social connection as typically achieved through phatic communication

signal a marked interactional function yet remain part of a larger pattern of unmarked code-switching (Myers-Scotton, 1993), single stylistic moves can be performed in an inauthentic voice that is part of a more general pattern of an authentic persona (Coupland, 2001a).

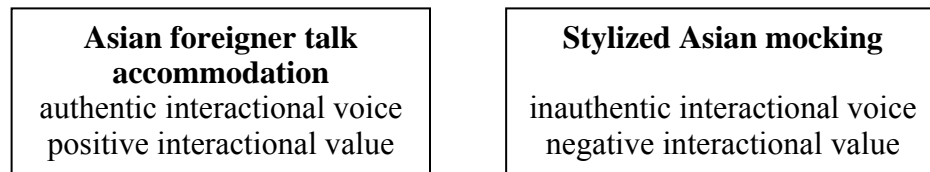
The adoption of a style ideologically regarded as inauthentic may make possible a change in the style's prestige, specifically if the style is commonly regarded as having lower prestige than the speaker's unmarked style. As suggest in Chapter 9 (Section 9.1 Context, authenticity, and value), stylistic adoption necessitates its positive value, even if only temporarily, in contrast to the assignment of negative value when mocking. However, given the possible simultaneous interpretation of Damon's practices as emulatory adoption and stylized mocking—as authentic and inauthentic—the prestige he assigns to Tagalog may be unclear. In addition, part of the positive value given to Damon's use of Tagalog may reflect the value of multicultural difference in the U.S., which is related to a more general pattern of symbolic ethnic practices (Alba, 1990; Gans, 1979). Within this local context, non-white ethnic emblems might have been used as part of displays of 'ethnic difference' that seemed important for some students to define. But as argued by critics of multiculturalist discourses (e.g., Aparicio, 1994; Lowe, 1991), glorifying cultural difference can erase the reality of social inequalities and depend on an assumption of ethnic hierarchies that locates whiteness at the pinnacle of normativity. Consequently, the purported interactional value of an adopted style can contrast its assumed negative ideological value, thus making ambiguous whether ethnic language adoption, such as Damon's use of Tagalog, constitutes emulation or mocking.

6.3.2 Accommodation

The next two cases focus on “convergent accommodation” (Giles, Coupland, & Coupland, 1991; Giles & Powesland, 1975), the adoption of a style as a means of

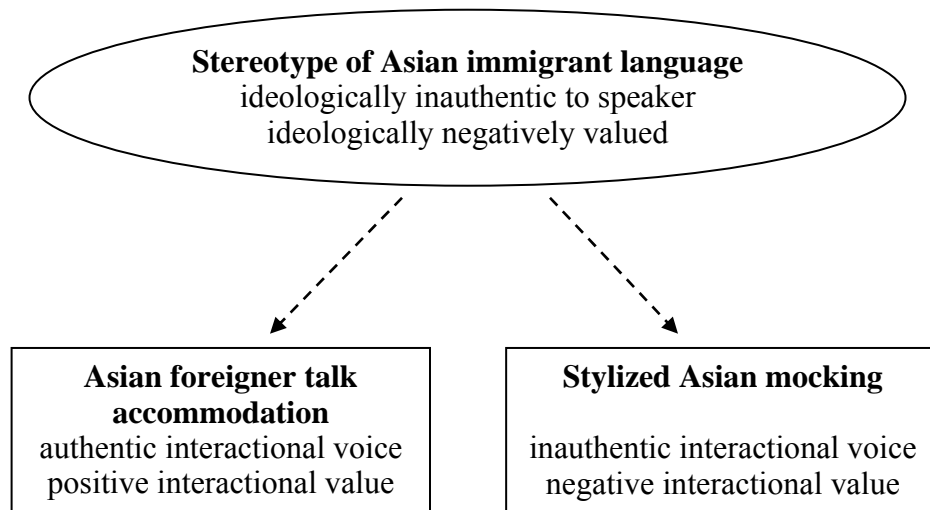
demonstrating willingness to engage in a shared speech activity. In the case of a recipient who does not speak a particular language natively, such accommodation involves speaking in ways assumed as more easily understood by her, often by the accommodators' use of a combination of features from a general "foreigner talk" style (Ferguson, 1975), possibly reflecting a more universal process of structural simplification, and those that mirror stereotypes of the recipient's speech patterns. Accommodation, like emulation, can be distinguished from stylized mocking in two ways: the style is adopted as part of the speaker's own voice and constructs its momentary positive value, and, in the case of stylization, it is presented as momentarily inauthentic and as having negative value (see Chapter 9 for a formalization of this distinction). Thus, in an English-dominant context, accommodation in the form of Asian foreigner talk may convey an English speaker's willingness to adopt features of her Asian immigrant interlocutor while stylized mocking conveys her interactional de-authentication and derogation of the Asian immigrant speech she employs.

Figure 6.2: Two dimensions of difference between accommodation and stylized mocking



As in my earlier discussion of Damon's practices of apparently emulating Tagalog speakers, such a neat distinction between accommodation and stylization becomes problematic in some cases. Specifically, these two kinds of styling potentially overlap because, first, they draw from a shared set of features stereotypically associated with Asians, and second, ideological meanings associated with this structural set always have the potential to be invoked even at the interactional level.

Figure 6.3: Stereotypical Asian immigrant language features linked with both accommodation and stylized mocking



The next two examples illustrate the ambiguity between these styling types. In the first, Big Dog, a Filipina student, describes to her friends and me how she engaged in a form of linguistic accommodation when she sometimes ate lunch at a table of Korean immigrants with one of her close Korean friends, a regular member of this table. According to Big Dog, the language barrier caused her discomfort, though she notes that her shift to an accommodating language style was largely unconscious—something she would “notice” herself doing (line 12).

Example 6.7: “Pass ketchup please” (Academic, 12/9/04)

- 1 Big Dog: Yeah. I felt so uncomfortable eating with them.
 2 But like then I’d start to speak **broken English**. H.
 3 So they could understand me.
 4 All: ((Laughs))
 5 Big Dog: “**Pass ketchup**. ((reduced tempo, article deletion, direct
 speech))
 6 (0.5) **Plea:se**.” ((sentential break, hyper-formality))
 7 “**Oh ya:h**. ((monophthongal /o/, [æ]→[a] in yeah))
 8 **Ketch(h)up**” h. ([[]→[] ((repetition))
 9 **I’m just kidding**.
 10 Like **Luke always used to joke around with me** so.

11 Like every time he'd talk to me
12 **I'd notice I'd break up my English a lot**
13 So he could understand me. H.
14 Joanne: So instead of "Open the door"
15 You say "**Open door?**" ((article deletion))
16 Big Dog: Yeah. "**Open door**" h ((article deletion, emphatic))
17 Bob: Yeah yeah yeah
18 Joanne: "**Open door**". ((emphatic, article deletion))
19 **Come in. Come in**". ((emphatic, sentence reduplication))

Big Dog's quotation of her accommodation involves a decontextualization of Asian foreigner talk and its recontextualization in the current speaking context to achieve new meanings. Specifically, for Big Dog, her quotation became a resource to display linguistic competence through her use of contrastive styles, to construct cultural competence as a humorous individual, and to position herself in relation to Asian immigrants at the school. For example, Big Dog's narrative, as potential self-mockery, alludes to an unconscious movement toward the "broken English" (line 2) of immigrants at the table and includes mention of being on friendly terms with Luke, who "always used to joke around with [her] a lot" (line 10)

Interestingly, Big Dog's reference to her own speech accommodation as "broken English" (line 2) and English that she would "break up" (line 12) blurs the distinction between accommodation and stereotypical immigrant speech, as she uses a label and a related descriptor commonly applied to non-native English speech. The structural overlap is apparent as well in Big Dog's initial quotation of her accommodation in lines 5 and 6 ("Pass ketchup. Plea:se"), which contains features common to both "foreigner talk" and stereotypical representations of non-native English speech. Most notably, her use of telegraphic speech is characterized by the deletion of articles, a feature that is reiterated several times in this example, first as accommodation (lines 5, 15, 16 and 18) and eventually as stylized Asian mocking in the remaining part of the example to be presented next (lines 21, 24, 26 and 27). The "bivalent" (Woolard, 1998) status of this

feature functions not only to simultaneously index two codes but also to blur the distinction between them.

As noted earlier, the structural assimilation of these two styles in this excerpt is partly a product of an ideological symmetry between speech comprehension and production, such that language produced for Asian immigrants is modeled on the language they are thought to produce. Big Dog describes the apparent symmetry of these two styles as when she provides her reason for using what she labels “broken English,” namely, “So they could understand me” (line 3) and “So he could understand me” (line 13). Both accommodation and mocking thus constitute native speakers’ representations of stereotypical Asian immigrant speech.

The structural merging of these two styles may also be facilitated by the current context of directly reported speech. Specifically, her quotation—“Pass ketchup. Ple:ase” in line 5—is constructed as a display of her accommodating speech style, “licens[ing] the audience to evaluate the skill and effectiveness” of Big Dog’s verbal performance (Bauman & Briggs, 1990: 73). As such, her reported speech invites an exaggerated simplification at the levels of prosody (the distribution of equal stress across all of the words), syntax (the absence of the article *the*), and pragmatics (*Pass ketchup please* rather than *Can you pass the ketchup, please?*). The structurally highlighted nature of this entextualized quotation mirrors that of mocking, which often similarly depends on processes of simplification and exaggeration.

Coinciding with forms of mocking as well, Big Dog’s quotation of her Asian foreigner talk makes salient an ideological contrast between her authenticated and denaturalized styles (Bucholtz, 2003). Thus the shift that occurs soon after this quoted accommodation in the rest of the excerpt below may not be surprising. An initial stylized mocking occurs in lines 7 when Big Dog quotes a hypothetical response to her request for

ketchup: “Oh yah, ketchup,” she says, incorporating /o/ monophthongization, /æ/-lowering to /a/, and the de-aspiration of /k/ in *ketchup*. She immediately follows this stylized mocking with an “I’m just kidding” in line 9 that not only makes explicit her play frame but suggests the potential danger of her ethnic mocking. However, the group’s shift to a collaborative mocking activity is ultimately spurred in line 20, when Bob states, “Well Luke still kinda does that.”

Example 6.8: “Pass ketchup please” (continued) (Academic, 12/9/04)

20 Bob: Well Luke still kinda does that.
 21 “Yeah I went- I went hotel? ((article deletion,
 preposition deletion))
 22 “Ma::n?”
 23 “I got drunk.” h h ((staccato))
 24 “I saw hot girl.” H h h (([a]→[ɔ] in hot, /r/-
 deletion in girl, staccato, unstressed head noun
 (girl), article deletion))
 25 Joanne: They leave out all those little words in between.
 26 Big Dog: “That girl o:ff chai::n” h h ((article deletion))
 27 Bob: “Off chai::n” ((article deletion))
 28 Joanne: “That represents me:: ay:::” h h

Bob’s deictic pronoun *that* in line 20 simultaneously refers to how these students accommodate to Asian immigrant listeners as well as how a particular Asian immigrant named Luke speaks (See Example 6.10: “I saw hot girl” (Academic, 12/9/04) for further discussion of Luke’s purported language features). His engagement in an Asian mocking style allows the conversation to shift with apparent naturalness to a series of mocking stylizations by Big Dog and Joanne. These three students, perhaps licensed by their friendships with Luke, allude to his cultural and linguistic incompetence as a Korean immigrant, ultimately making ambiguous the line between accommodation and mocking.

The next example, recorded among Korean girls, similarly illustrates the structural overlap between accommodating and mocking styles. In her narrative, Miss Thang describes struggling to teach her immigrant mother how to use a tampon because

of their mutual lack of competence in one another's primary languages. Her self-quotation of her accommodation, so that her mother can understand her better, draws on stereotypical speech patterns that she associates with Korean immigrants.

Example 6.9: "Relax" (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

1 Miss Thang: Some words my mom like-
 2 I dunno
 3 if I say it?
 4 I'm like "Okay mom."
 5 Cause I was teaching her
 6 how to put a tampon in right?
 7 Yoshi: Ha ha ha
 8 White Tiger: Ew
 9 Miss Thang: Cause when we bought it
 10 and the next day we came home.
 11 She was just like "You put a tampon in?"
 12 I was like "Yeah I'm learning to".
 13 She was like "uhhhh"
 14 Piggy: (Why would you) put in a tampon.
 15 Miss Thang: Yeah cause I'm trying to get used to
 16 putting it in?
 17 And then.
 18 Piggy: Oh Miss Thang. Oh
 19 Miss Thang: And my mom was like
 20 "Last time I did it it hurt."
 21 I was like "Emma. ((Korean emma 'mom'))
 22 You gotta relax" /ɹi.lɛk.su/
 23 Yoshi: ha ha ha
 24 Miss Thang: She was like "What?"
 25 I was like "What is 'relax'" /ɹi.lɛks/
 26 I was like "You gotta relax." /ɹi.lɛks/
 27 I was like "Body calm:: calm::".
 28 All: ((light laughing))
 29 Miss Thang: She was like "Whatever."
 30 I was like "Okay"
 31 I was just like "You just stick it in."
 32 She was like "Oh okay"

Miss Thang's quotation of her accommodation includes a Korean phonological structure for the English word relax (/ɹi.lɛks/ to /ɹi.lɛk.su/, line 22): Syllabification of final /s/, raising of /æ/ to /ɛ/. She also quotes herself as uttering a directive with a

simplified grammatical structure consisting of a noun and adjective (“body calm”, line 27) instead of a sentence structure that a native speaker might use with a verb phrase and possessive pronoun, as in *Keep your body calm* or *Calm your body*. Miss Thang’s quoted accommodation thus conveys an attempted approximation of Korean immigrant English for her Korean immigrant mother’s ease of comprehension. As in the previous example, the structure of Miss Thang’s quoted accommodating style displays structural overlap with stylized Asian mocking that constructs immigrants as incompetent English speakers.

In the two examples above, the presentation of accommodation within a quotation frame allows the quoters’ de-authentication of their accommodating style. As their reported and reporting voices become distinct (Vološinov, 1973), the interactional authenticity that accommodation often attempts to achieve becomes ‘undone’. The accommodating style is thus stylized and constructed as inauthentic to the quoting speaker, making prominent its entextualized status (Bauman & Briggs, 1990) yet one bound to its previous meanings. The intertextual links between stereotypical immigrants features and ideologies of Asian ethnic and linguistic peripherality and comicality thus evoke an interpretation of these instances as stylized Asian mocking.

By examining these cases of emulation and accommodation, I have suggested that certain factors within the local, interactional context can allow interpretations of positive, authentic styling acts as less positive, inauthentic stylized mocking. Specifically, the prominence of a style’s inauthenticity to a speaker, whether through apparently ethnic incongruity—as in the case of Damon—or a quotation frame—as in the cases of Big Dog and Miss Thang—can summon a style’s links to its ideological meanings, including its prestige and positioning within the local political economy of language. Even while a style’s inauthenticity may not be readily apparent within the immediate interactional

context, the potential for de-authentication and the recalling of ideological meanings may always exist.

6.4 HYBRIDITY, HUMOR, AND PLAY

I now examine the social implications of the embodiment of ‘hybrid’ forms of language used to construct a mocker’s cultural competence as a humorous individual. Although it was suggested in the previous chapter that such hybridity necessarily reproduced ideologies that marginalized Asians through constructions of linguistic incompetence and strangeness, I raise the possibility that stylized Asian mocking contested ideologies both as a form of play (Goffman, 1974) and as a recognition of the interstitial cultural position of Asian immigrants.

To address this issue, I focus on performances that juxtaposed Asian immigrant accents with local youth slang—in other words linguistic forms that may have been regarded as maximally contrastive in terms of the kinds of cultural competence they indexed. On the one hand, ‘accents’ represented a failure to achieved a particular cultural target, while the ability to use slang was locally associated with access to in-group youth knowledge (Eble, 1996; T. Labov, 1992; Reyes, 2005a) and thus the embodiment of ‘coolness’. The humor of these performances was likely a product of the contrastive meanings simultaneously invoked.

In an example introduced earlier (Example 5.2: “I saw hot girl” (Academic, 12/9/04), Example 6.8: “Pass ketchup please” (continued) (Academic, 12/9/04)), U.S.-raised students collaboratively describe a Korean immigrant student named Luke attempting to speak English like his U.S-raised counterparts. In their enactment, these Asian and non-Asian students draw on local slang features, a discourse of heterosexual masculinity, and phonological and syntactic features constructed as non-native (explosive

syllables, non-native stress patterns, /a/-backing, postvocalic /r/-deletion, article and preposition absence, copula absence, and the reanalysis of an interjection as a verb).

Example 6.10: “I saw hot girl” (Academic, 12/9/04)

1 Bob: Well Luke still kinda does that.
 2 **Yeah I went- I went hotel?**
 ((preposition deletion, article deletion))
 3 **Ma::n?**
 4 **I got drunk.** h h ((staccato))
 5 **I saw hot girl.** h h h
 ([[a]→[ɔ] in hot, /r/-deletion in girl, staccato stress, unstressed head noun (girl), article deletion))
 6 Joanne: They leave out all those little words in between.
 7 Big Dog: **That girl o:ff chai::n** h h ((article deletion))
 8 Bob: **Off chai::n** ((article deletion))
 9 Joanne: **That represents me:: ay:::** h h ((use of interjection as a verb))

The notion that some Asian immigrant speakers have not achieved their targeted linguistic behavior is suggested by Bob’s claim that “Luke still kinda does that” (line 1), as he locates Luke at an undeveloped stage of linguistic progress. In addition, these students tie linguistic competence with local social competence that involves a boy’s heterosexual masculine display by using slang terms (*man, hot, off the chain, represent*), and telling narratives about sexual desire (lines 5 and 7) and alcohol consumption (line 4). The laughter throughout this segment indicates a humorous interpretation that likely arises from the incongruence between Luke’s unseasoned linguistic and cultural status and his aspired target of masculine coolness.

Similarly, Piggy’s illustration of her Korean mother’s attempt to use slang generates raucous laughter among the other Sakaki Girls members.

Example 6.11: “What’s whack” (Sakaki Girls, 1/13/05)

1 White Tiger: My mom used to hit me every time I cursed
 2 but now she gives up.
 3 She curses back at me.
 4 I’m just like “okay”
 5 Miss Thang: My mom don’t care.

6 Sometimes she does
 7 Piggy: I'll be teaching my mom Slang.
 8 I'm like "That's whack."
 9 She's like "What's whack?"
 10 I'm like "Whack means messed up."
 11 She's like "Messed up?"
 12 I'm like "Messed up"
 13 She's like "What's that?"
 14 I dunno.
 15 And then one time
 16 she's like "Oh, whack, whack."
 17 All: ((laughs))
 18 Piggy: I never told you that?
 19 We were watching TV
 20 and there was this black guy.
 21 He started hitting on this white guy.
 22 She's like "Oh, whack, whack."
 23 All: ((laughs))
 24 Piggy: We started cracking up.

The humor of this narrative, indicated by laughter in lines 17 and 23, likely derives from at least four incongruent cultural frames (Raskin, 1987). First, it reverses the more common ideology of socialization in which children learn to speak from their parents and also addresses a more general reversal in immigrant families of canonical parent-child power relations (Zhou, 1997: 83-84). These participants, who each have immigrant parents, likely have similar experiences of serving as linguistic “brokers” (Tse, 1996) and cultural experts for their parents. Second, the mocking act itself may be humorous because it displays irreverence—a flouting of normative respect and politeness—particularly in the context of a child’s relationship to her mother that Americans and Koreans alike may often idealize as ‘respectful’. Third, Piggy describes her mother’s display of ‘culture shock’ in reaction to the content of the television show they were watching, thus betraying her status as a cultural novice with homophobic and racist values and minimal exposure to American popular culture.⁹⁴ Yet ironically, in order to disapprovingly comment on the show, her mother demonstrated her successful

⁹⁴ It should be noted that Piggy’s mother’s homophobic values in fact coincide with those in most mainstream U.S. television shows in which the expression of homoerotic desire is often framed as humorous based on its presumed non-normativity.

acquisition of the slang term widely circulated in popular culture. Finally, the humor of this narrative is a consequence of the hybridity of features (Jaffe, 2000) displaying competence—the ‘native’ semantic use of a lexical item—and those betraying incompetence—its ‘non-native’ phonological manifestation.

But what were the social implications of these students’ orientations toward these performances as humorous play? It is first important to note that despite an apparent awareness among students that racism was problematic and the potential understanding of stylized Asian mocking as racist because of its reference to stereotypes of Asian immigrants as rude, incompetent, and foreign, stylized Asian mocking seemed to occur with relatively little prohibition. In Chapter 4, I explained that the acceptable circulation of explicitly racializing discourses might in part be explained by the normativity of multiethnic individuals, families, and social networks in this community, such that talking about ethnicity was part of these students’ mundane realities. In addition, there might have been relatively little public policing of stylized Asian mocking because of the risks, such as physical violence or school suspension, that direct confrontation might incur. The circulation of racializing forms of mocking might also have reflected the taken-for-granted status of ethnic hierarchies that placed Asians in a marginal position in the community.

Perhaps most significantly, however, the permissibility of racialized stylized mocking related to understandings of mocking as *play*. Note that interpretations of the two examples presented above may have been quite different if Luke’s and Piggy’s mother’s language abilities had been framed as being seriously critiqued. Stylized Asian mocking, unlike its stylized prep counterpart which is discussed in the next chapter, nearly always carried meanings of playfulness, even when used as an insult regarded by recipients as racist. Playful language constructs the animator as not necessarily intending

the stances or beliefs associated with her actions (see Chapter 2, Section 2.2 Multivocality: Stylization, quotation, and play), such that playful mocking may have recalled ethnic hierarchies while also leaving ambiguous the animator's beliefs and stances with respect to these hierarchies. In other words, the framing of stylization as play seemed to license the reproduction of stereotypical images without risking accusations of serious racism (Billig, 2001; Chun, 2004).

The playfulness of stylized Asian mocking potentially created two kinds of social effects. As I have suggested, it permitted the circulation of a discourse that marginalized Asian immigrants and their descendents, creating the obvious centrifugal social distancing between mocker and mocked. Yet it also potentially generated a centripetal effect, drawing mocker and mocked closer together. Aggressive verbal play may sometimes have strengthened interpersonal relations based on the assumption that otherwise problematic talk is acceptable in the context of an interpersonal resilience. As described by Keith Basso (1979) in his writings about Western Apache culture, "individuals. . . who have known each other for long periods of time [and] who have established sound bonds of mutual confidence and affection. . .feel free to take certain liberties which, in the context of less mature relationships, would be presumptuous and discourteous." Big J, a Korean friend of Big D, likewise expressed, "If I know somebody real well- Cause I got a neighbor, and they're black. They always talk about me. They call me like *Korean* and stuff but I know they're just playing around so I don't care" (December 14, 2004).

Playful racialization thus potentially allowed mockers and targets to construct their shared community membership given the assumption that such acts, which might have been offensive in a non-play context, did not threaten the assumed closeness of their relationships. Importantly, the stylized mocking by members of the Academic Group

seemed to presuppose their good relations with Luke and other Korean students. For example, just moments before the Academic example above, Big Dog noted, “Like Luke always used to joke around with me” (Example 6.7: “Pass ketchup please” (Academic, 12/9/04)) and soon afterwards, Bob displayed his respect for Luke, describing him as “one of our best players” on their soccer team. In addition, both Bob and Joanne displayed positive feelings toward Korean students, as seen in the following exchange on the same day:

Example 6.12: “Yeah, they’re funny” (Academic, 12/9/04)

1 Joanne: From what I’ve noticed
2 all the Korean people in my class
3 are extremely funny.
4 Bob: Yeah they’re funny
5 Joanne: Extremely funny.
6 Big sense of humor.

Likewise, Piggy never expressed particular ill-will toward her mother; her mocking of her mother’s use of slang, though potentially understood as condescending, seemed to presuppose their good relations.

It may also be important to note that even playful mocking that may be understood as intended to marginalize Asians can contest—or at least make contestable—essentialist links between ethnicity and language. As a form of out-group stylization, stylized Asian mocking performed by non-Asian immigrants necessarily denaturalized assumptions that only Asian immigrants embodied an ‘Asian accent’ and ‘Asian languages.’ In addition, as a performance with a heightened entextualizing and decontextualizing function (Bauman & Briggs, 1990), stylized mocking made possible the future recirculation and recontextualization of past instances in order to engage in their critique as discussed in other parts of this chapter. In contrast to cases of overt resistance mentioned earlier in this chapter (Section 6.1 Overt resistance), playful

mocking potentially even constituted a form of covert resistance through engagement in the act being resisted, though it is possible that resistance of this sort was not always recognized as such (cf. Walters, 1999).

6.5 DISCUSSION

In the previous chapter, I suggested that stylized Asian mocking typically assumed and reproduced the marginal social and linguistic status of Asian Americans according to ideologies of race and nation, and in this chapter, I have discussed several strategies that students engaged in to potentially contest these ideologies. I opened with a description of three kinds of strategies of *overt resistance* in response to stylized mocking practices. The first involved a speaker's *correction* of the mocker's assumption of her language abilities, the second, a form of *retaliation* through parallel racializing mockery of the mocker, and the third, *prohibition* of the mocking act. My analysis of specific examples suggests that each of these practices may have 'interrupted' the mocking act, but they failed to contest particular ideologies underlying stylized Asian mocking.

The second general strategy I discussed involved the flexible reappropriation of stereotypes of Asian immigrants as they were introduced in narratives that constructed mocked targets in ways that diverged from circulating images, specifically, through the highlighting of less commonly reproduced characteristics. Specifically, particular aspects of stereotypes were highlighted and certain aspects muted. My analysis thus demonstrates the immense flexibility of linguistic stereotypes, which, as "semiotic engines" (Agha, 1998), were put to many kinds of uses and resulted in different kinds of meanings through the mapping of circulating stereotypes onto specific exemplars in mockers' narratives of their real experiences.

The third strategy I described also addressed the divergence of meaning in interactional moments from those that may circulate more broadly within a community.

In this section, I examined cases in which language forms ideologically defined as ‘out-group’ to the speaker was embodied as part of their own persona in forms of emulation and accommodation. While these forms may be defined as distinct from stylized mocking in terms of the perceived intent of the speaker, I discussed the inherent possibilities of their interpretation as forms of mocking. Finally, I addressed the implications of stylized Asian mocking as a form of play that derives from the humor that hybrid linguistic forms can create. On the one hand, I have suggested that a frame of play may have allowed this practice to be performed, and thus racist ideologies reproduced, with little protest in the local community. On the other hand, a play frame also sometimes cued the close personal bonds between mocker and mocked, precluding interpretations of racist ideological reproduction.

This chapter has thus suggested that stylized Asian mocking practices were not easily understood in the local context of Diversity High as wholly reproducing or subverting stereotypes of Asian immigrants. The multiplicity of its meanings—its inherent polysemy—derived from the non-equivalent social meanings at the levels of ideology and those at the level of interaction, the slippage between explicit claims and underlying assumptions (Bourdieu, 1977), the various positionings of mockers in relation to the mocked community, and the multiple interpretations inherent in any act of social signification. The meanings of stylized Asian mocking were thus never limited to reproducing mainstream U.S. ideologies of race and language, although their potential invocation remained ever-present. In this chapter and the previous, I have described the potential forms and meanings of stylized Asian mocking. I turn now to a mocking practice that articulated with ideologies of race and language in quite different ways.

Chapter 7: Stylized Prep Mocking

Many students at Diversity High delighted in deriding preps. And even though such acts often involved some degree of contempt, stylized prep mocking was rarely regarded as a socially inappropriate practice, as long as it was performed out of earshot of its targets or as a playful gesture toward them. It was in some ways far crueler in its force than stylized Asian mocking, yet it was never interpreted, or at least explicitly critiqued, as discriminatory in the way that students sometimes understood the mocking of Asian immigrants to be.

Preps, who epitomized what it meant to be feminine, white, and wealthy, at least by local standards, were generally regarded as legitimate targets of scorn because of local perceptions of their privilege, arrogance, and lack of emotional control. This chapter begins with a description of how preps were understood at Diversity High, examining how stereotypes of this local category lay at the intersection of ideologies of ethnicity, class, and gender that extended beyond the local community. I also discuss how the notion of *preps*, while referring to specific sets of individuals at the school, could traverse different levels of social organization such that *preppiness* could characterize not only an identity category but also large institutional units (schools) and transitory practices (dressing, talking, and behaving in particular ways). As a flexible concept of application, it was an important concept for many students, particularly given how it could be used to define students—both selves and others—within the local landscape of ethnicity, class, and gender.

I then provide examples of language features used in stylized prep mocking. As I have argued in the previous chapter, features of stylized mocking were the product of interactional moments, such they exhibited some degree of unpredictability. Building on

this analysis, I propose four categories of style features defined along two dimensions of differentiation: the degree of a feature's *conventionalization/emergence* and the degree to which it is *identity-based/practice-based*. By examining the specific shape of how students stylized preps, I argue that most stylized prep mocking features can be understood as based in *practice* and thus directly linked to the kinds of “stances, acts, and activities” (Ochs, 1992) with which preps were stereotypically associated. I contend that the often unpredictable nature of which features might be used to stylize preps is a consequence of both the emergence of social meaning in moments of practice as well as the centrality of *social practice* as the basis of how preps were locally defined.

7.1 PREPS

When Marissa declared to her friends, “Becky Thompson is the biggest prep I have ever seen,” it seemed as much an act of pleasurable slander as it was a statement of fact. Becky was indeed regarded at the school as a ‘big prep’, though petite in stature as cheerleaders usually were. With her tight blond ponytail tied high with a ribbon, tiny purse held snugly near her shoulder, and the posture and gait of a gymnast, she carried the air of a girl with a purpose.

But what was it that made Becky the prototypical prep figure? Most saliently, she was a cheerleader—in other words, a member of a category of students typically labeled *preps*. At Diversity High, the term *prep* most commonly referred to girls who epitomized femininity, whiteness, and wealth, at least as these notions were locally understood, and often specifically referred to either cheerleaders or pandarettas,⁹⁵ girls who respectively performed cheering and dance routines at athletic events, or Cotton Parkers, the children

⁹⁵ Many members of the pandarettas were regarded as preps, although this dance group may have been less likely to be regarded as preppy because of its predominantly black membership. This group was frequently juxtaposed with the cheerleaders because, besides a gay male cheerleader during the 2003-2004 season, they were both all-female groups that played an institutionally defined supportive role to male-dominated sports activities.

of officers who lived in Cotton Park, a relatively affluent and predominantly white neighborhood. In addition to her membership in a particular local community of practice of preps (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 1998), Becky was also regarded as embodying femininity: her build was slender and pink seemed her color of choice.⁹⁶ She also embodied a stereotypical whiteness with her blond hair and blue eyes. Importantly, she acted the part of a prep. While her speech style did not display features stereotypically associated with femininity, such as a particularly high pitch, her classmates might have described Becky as ‘plain snobby.’

Being a prep was in part defined by community membership, but it was also linked to the embodiment of preppy practices. Preps were most commonly characterized as regarding themselves to be better than others, which was described as being *stuck up*, *conceited*, and *snotty*, and engaging in verbal acts that demonstrated their sense of superiority, such as criticizing others’ appearances. They were also described as using, adorning, and presenting their bodies in specifically preppy ways, such as engaging in sexual practices liberally, wearing particular kinds of clothing and hair accessories, and occupying particular spaces in the school. In other words, being preppy was simultaneously about embodied attitudes and actions. The table below shows the range of social characteristics, or ways of being and doing, that students implicitly and explicitly associated with preps in the various cases of stylized prep mocking. (See Chapter 3, Section 3.3.4 Quantitative analysis of social meaning, for a description of how I tabulated these characteristics.)

⁹⁶ Pink was locally associated with femininity, as it is more generally in mainstream contexts, but also recognized as sometimes part of a black male style. The contrastive indexical meanings of this color were reflected in comments about African American boys wearing large pink t-shirts, who were playfully linked to stereotypes of a feminine identity (Triple X, 2/12/04), a gay identity (Vincent, 3/12/04), or a “pimp” identity (Damon, 2/12/04). For example, a Mexican American girl described the pink worn by a particular boy to be problematic: “That boy does not look right in pink. He does not look good in pink. It makes him look like a girl” (Maria, 11/23/04). Some students such as Joanne (12/9/04), however, constructed this dual indexical value of pink as “entertaining.”

Table 7.1: Characteristics implicitly associated with preps during instances of stylized prep mocking

CHARACTERISTIC	NUMBER OF INSTANCES ⁹⁷
Emotional	9
Snotty	9
Critical	7
Shallow	6
Stupid	4
Whiny	4
Cheery	3
Flirty	3
Inarticulate	2
Sex-obsessed	2
Arrogant	1
Articulate	1
Brown-nosing	1
Talkative	1
Self-indulgent	1

7.1.1 Non-local meaning

The *prep* label articulated with differentiations of social meaning that circulated more broadly than the school and depended on macro-level social characterizations. As researchers in other U.S. high school contexts have noted, local groups are often defined by macro-level categories of identity. For example, Penelope Eckert (1989; 2000) has noted that “jocks” and “burnouts” at a Detroit high school were distinguished based on their different orientations to class membership, while Mary Bucholtz (1996) has shown how “nerds” at a high school in Northern California were locally recognized as embodying a racialized hyperwhiteness. In research in the same area, Norma Mendoza-Denton (1997) found that students identified as “Norteñas/os” and “Sureñas/os” based on regional and political divisions between Latinas/os in California more generally.

⁹⁷ The “number of instances” represents a count of speaker turns rather than individual feature occurrence.

This conceptual category was not entirely local in another sense: the term *prep* was—and is—widely used in youth contexts outside the specific setting of this particular high school, as evident in internet glossaries of U.S. youth lexicon (e.g., urbandictionary.com). Local labels such as *athletes*, *band geeks*, *cheerleaders*, *goths*, *lesbians*, *nerds*, *skaters*, and *wannabes*⁹⁸ as well as ethnicity-based labels, including *Koreans*, *Mexicans*, and *Puerto Ricans*, referred to specific sets of individuals in the local community while drawing their meanings from terminological usage in mainstream discourses of social identity.

As mobile “semiotic engines” (Agha, 1998), preppy language features and metapragmatic descriptors could index social identities at various levels of social organization. Consequently, in addition to referring to local sets of individuals at the school, the term *prep* also described distinctions between entities at a higher level of social organization—namely, at the level of schools within the district. Diversity High students frequently described Hilltop High,⁹⁹ located in a relatively more affluent neighborhood, as a “prep school” because it was attended by students identified as preps; as seen in Chapter 2 (Table 3.4: Racial/ethnic characteristics of high schools in the Fortville Independent School District in relation to Fortville), Hilltop was also described as white because 47.9 percent of its population was white-identified as opposed to Diversity’s 27.5 percent. As exemplified below, students’ understandings of Hilltop as a prep school contrasted other kinds of social deviance that they associated with other schools.

⁹⁸ Not all local social group labels seemed to have broad circulation. For example, students sometimes referred to *gothics* as *tree people* because they had regularly gathered near a tree along the edge of the school’s campus before they were banned from doing so by school administrators. One student, however, believed that the label derived from rumors of their illicit activities, and chuckled as she pondered, “Gothics smoke trees. I know why they call it *trees* if it’s a plant” (Maggie, March 11, 2004).

⁹⁹ At the start of my fieldwork, I was confused by students’ use of the term *prep school* to refer to Hilltop High. I eventually learned that this term was not an abbreviation of *preparatory school* but a reference to the fact that Hilltop’s students were regarded as being preppy.

Example 7.1: “Hilltop is the prep school” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)

1 Elaine: Tell me a little about all the high schools
2 in Fortville.
3 Grace: I heard something on the bus about all of them.
4 **Diversity is the drug school.**
5 **Southside is the gang school.**
6 **Eastside is like the homo school h.**
7 **And um Hilltop is the prep school**
8 Elaine: Okay. You heard this on the bus who-
9 Grace: From Pat h

Grace’s pithy descriptions of the schools in this conversation overlapped with discourses that circulated at Diversity High. In my conversations with students, Hilltop High was often characterized as a ‘prep’ school, Eastside as a ‘lesbian’/‘gay’/‘homo’/‘dyke school’, and Southside as a ‘military’, ‘gang’, or ‘ghetto’ school, while Diversity was characterized in a variety of ways that alluded to not only its working-class population but also its ethnic diversity, its lesbians, and its institutional strengths and weaknesses. The table below lists some of the stereotypical characterizations of each of the schools that students brought up in recorded interactions. In most of these cases, these comparisons were responses to my explicit prompts to make such a comparison (e.g., *Tell me about the different high schools in this district*).

Table 7.2: Students' characterizations of high schools in the district

GROUP	SCHOOL			
	DIVERSITY	EASTSIDE	HILLTOP	SOUTHSIDE
Tutorial Girls	<i>drug</i>	<i>homo, lesbian, dikes</i>	<i>prep, white, preppy and rich</i>	<i>gang, gay, lesbians, dykes</i>
Junior Boys		<i>gay</i>	<i>white, prep</i>	<i>military kids</i>
Tutorial	<i>lesbians, ghetto, no money, better athletes, Mexicans, minorities, best education</i>	<i>lesbians, bisexuals</i>	<i>rich white people, people who died in car accidents, Jessica Simpson boots, scarves</i>	<i>gay, soldier's kids</i>
Academic		<i>Asians, homos, lesbos, lesbians</i>	<i>preps</i>	<i>ghetto, drugs, military kids, punkish, punks and skaters</i>
Cheerleaders	<i>diverse, old school, best school, good at football, best cheerleaders</i>	<i>sexuality people, bi(sexual)s, gay, STD, football players, old school</i>	<i>mixed race, stuck up (money-wise), good at football, preppy</i>	<i>army people, diverse</i>
Sakaci Girls	<i>ghetto</i>	<i>gay</i>	<i>arts, prep, hair bows, blue eye shadow</i>	<i>math and science, thugs</i>
Pacific	<i>poor educational system</i>		<i>rigorous educational system</i>	

In these comparisons, the ‘otherness’ of Hilltop, Eastside, and Southside were constructed through homogenizing characterizations that were associated with social markedness in terms of both class and sexuality, which were also sometimes linked with racialized and gendered meanings (e.g., *lesbians, Jessica Simpson boots*).¹⁰⁰ The use of succinct descriptors suggested students’ willingness to engage in processes of ideological

¹⁰⁰ “Jessica Simpson boots” refers to sheepskin ugg boots. They were briefly popular among mainstream U.S. women and girls between 2003 to 2005. In the popular media, cowboy boots later came to be associated with the pop singer Jessica Simpson, although only after I had left the fieldsite.

“erasure” (Irvine & Gal, 2000), particularly with regard to schools that were not their own.

While meanings of gender and ethnicity were part of how Hilltop in particular was described, its perceived status as an ‘rich’ school seemed to be its most salient characteristic. The centrality of socio-economic class in discourses about Hilltop may have led to the perception that its students were clearly demarcated according to class membership. In the following excerpt, Barbie describes her conversation with a male Hilltop student who described distinct social class divisions at his school, which Barbie and her friends construct as different from Diversity High’s friend-based social organization. They suggest that those who did not fit within the normative socio-economic demographics of Hilltop were unfairly excluded from high-prestige social networks consisting of cheerleaders and football players.

Example 7.2: “He was astonished I’d even talk to him” (Cheerleaders, 12/5/04)

1 Elaine: **What happens at Hilltop.**
2 Barbie: **They’re divided.**
3 Princess: Yeah so I hear
4 Elaine: **By race?**
5 Barbie: **By money.** The rich people are all stuck up?
6 They’re the quote unquote preppy cheerleaders?
7 And football players?
8 And they’re all a clique?
9 And then (out)
10 cause I was talking to this guy online. h.
11 And he was from ROTC¹⁰¹
12 and he was astonished I’d even talk to him
13 with me being a cheerleader

¹⁰¹ ROTC (also JROTC) is an acronym for the (*Junior*) Reserve Officers’ Training Corps, an elaborately organized school activity modeled on military ROTC programs at college around the U.S. Interestingly, officers’ children, who were regarded as preps because of their race or class status, were not ROTC members, preferring instead activities such as soccer, baseball, IB, and Key Club, a community service group. In addition, high school students’ participation in JROTC did not result in students’ entry into ROTC programs at the college-level, even among those who attended college, though potentially encouraging students to becoming enlisted personnel. Despite the ways in which class hierarchies appeared to be reproduced in the military, its members pointed to the benefits of discipline and leadership acquired through participation.

14 and him being ROTC.
 15 Barbie: He was like "Well Hilltop is very divided" ((animated))
 16 and (it's just real weird)
 17 Sleepy: Cause at Diversity I'm friends with anybody.
 18 As long as you're nice.
 19 But the way she was telling me.
 20 If you're a part of anything. That's
 21 Barbie: You're bound to friends within the organization
 22 and (xxx) Diversity we don't have as many cliques.
 23 We just have preferences of friends.

While the preppiness of Hilltop High was centrally about meanings of class, it was also necessarily a racialized notion of class. The following excerpt among two Korean girls illustrates how the embodiment of preppiness by black girls at Hilltop High was potentially contrary to assumptions of racialized practice.

Example 7.3: "Even the black girls are preps" (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

1 Yoshi: Hilltop is like the preps.
 2 White Tiger: H even the black girls h are preps.
 3 It's so weird.
 4 Yoshi: Yeah they all have like little bows in their hair?
 5 and like blue eye shadow

The "weird[ness]" (line 3) pointed out by White Tiger alludes to the expectation that only whites are preps. Yet she also acknowledges that ideologies of racialized styles and the material reality of how styles are adopted do not stand in a deterministic relationship; at least in one high school, "black girls are preps" (line 2). Preppiness, though racialized in its meaning, was thus a style embodied on the basis of school membership, and thus class affiliation, rather than ethnic identity.

The projection of meanings of ethnicity and class from the level of individuals and social types within the school onto the level of schools in the district was recognized as relational rather than absolute: preps at Diversity High might not have been characterized as such by Hilltop students, who were often constructed as epitomizing preppiness. In the following excerpt, John-John and her friends suggest that while

students at Diversity may regard cheerleaders such as Becky Thompson as preppy, the school is hardly describable as preppy when compared to students at Hilltop, where “everyone is preppy” (line 13).

Example 7.4: “We’re white and we have money” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 Elaine: Okay going back to the groups at the school.
2 Is there a preppy group too?
3 Pinky: m:::
4 John-John: People I think say that’s the cheerleaders.
5 Pinky: But they try to act hard core
6 but they really aren’t.
7 John-John: They do.
8 Becky Thompson?
9 Pinky: (xxx) she a little whore core but
10 Philip: No where I were-
11 if you’re asking the Hilltop people I mean
12 John-John: Everyone
13 Philip: **Everyone is preppy.**
14 Yeah. Cause they’re basically like-
15 I mean probably the reason
16 why Diversity high school is not really preppy is
17 because all of us are so diverse in like moneywise?
18 not everybody is just like Abercrombie and Fitch
19 and Aeropostale and American Eagle types you know?
20 And so- and of course those clothes are expensive
21 and you know
22 Pinky: **We**’ll get em every now and then
23 Philip: Of course **we**’ll get them every now and then
24 but like not to the point
25 where **we**’re like “We’re white and we have money”

As the conversation continues below, however, Pinky problematizes the perception of Diversity High students as not wearing expensive clothes, noting that certain brands that are popular among Diversity students, such as Southpole (line 29) (and later mentioned Ecco, Fubu, Nike, Reebok, and Adidas in lines 39 and 42), are “way more expensive than their stuff is” (line 34). Her insight reveals that patterns of consumption, which were coded in terms of class (and ethnicity), were sometimes

mistakenly rationalized as directly reflecting which brands individuals had the financial means to purchase rather than the aesthetics associated with such means.

Example 7.5: “Our stuff is way more expensive than their stuff” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

26 Pinky: But **our** clothes are more expensive than **their** clothes.
27 Philip: Like
28 John-John: **You just get em on sale.**
29 Pinky: **Like (Southpole).**
30 You don't get that stuff on sale.
31 It's expensive and.
32 John-John: **You do at JC Penney.**
33 Pinky: At the no- but like if you go to (express to wear?)
34 **Our stuff is way more expensive than their stuff is.**
35 Philip: And I guess that's the reason why

Pinky's claim that Diversity students' clothing is expensive, however, is challenged by John-John, who claims that 'expensive' clothing worn by Diversity students can be purchased "on sale" (line 28) at stores such as J.C. Penney (line 32). While both of these girls accept that Diversity High students wear expensive brands, John-John continues a discourse characterizing Diversity's students as limited in their spending habits as a consequence of their non-privileged class status. In the next part of this interaction, I attempt to keep track of the precise social distinction that is being made through the contrast of first-person (*our/we/us*) (lines 22, 23, 25, 26, and 34) and third-person pronouns (*their/they*) (lines 26 and 34). John-John clarifies for me that the former referent is associated with an African American style (line 38), and Pinky and Philip elaborate on clothing brands associated with this racialized style (lines 39, 40, and 42).

Example 7.6: “We don't really have like a wide white culture at our school” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

36 Elaine: When you say "**Our** stuff"
37 you mean Diversity's as opposed to Hilltop's?
38 John-John: **African American**
39 Pinky: You know **Ecko** and well not Fubu.
40 There's really no more **Fubu**. But like
41 John-John: There is a rich (xxx style)-

42 Philip: Or like Nike or Reebok or Adidas.
43 Pinky: I do get my Reeboks and stuff (on sale though) uh.
44 Philip: You know and so.
45 Pinky: Am I touching you?
46 I'm sorry.
47 Philip: And mostly we don't really have
48 like a wide white culture in our school
49 and Hilltop is mostly a white school.
50 John-John: Yeah we're big in minority
51 Pinky: It's IB (xxx)
52 Philip: And mostly the white people are preppyish
53 and dress preppy and are preppy.
54 Pinky: I'm gonna dress preppy (one day)
55 Philip: That's probably the reason
56 why we don't have a lot preppy people
57 because there's not a lot of white population
58 Pinky: (What do) the hair bow things though.
59 Little ribbons and things.
60 We try. ((snort))
61 Elaine: H h who you? You do?
62 Pinky: Oh no I do the
63 Philip: Balls h h
64 Pinky: Hee hee hee

Although the girls in this interaction allude to a distinction of racialized and racializing styles, they return to the contrast of Diversity and Hilltop. According to these girls, the ethnicity-based nature of styles associated with the schools is a consequence of the ethnic make-up of the respective student populations: “Hilltop is mostly a white school” (line 49), while “there’s not a lot of white population” at Diversity (line 57), suggests Philip. In other words, the girls claim in this particular excerpt that the distinction in clothing styles between the two schools was based on their contrastive ethnic demographics, even while recognizing that these demographics did not necessarily determine racialized embodiment (see Example 7.3: “Even the black girls are preps” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)); hair ornaments associated with preps, such as bows, ribbons, and balls, were also worn by Diversity High students.

These examples of local discourses suggest that the projection of notions of *preppiness* to characterize a neighboring school involved salient meanings of ethnicity

and class. Descriptions also typically referred to gendered embodiments by preppy girls at Hilltop High. However, gender was never explicitly mentioned as a relevant dimension of the school's preppiness, nor was sexuality—the latter only implied through descriptions of other schools as having gay and lesbian students. This incongruence between the different uses of *preppiness* suggests that the 'leakage' of oppositions of social meaning and symbols across different levels of social organization (Agha, 1998; Irvine & Gal, 2000) can exhibit some degree of ideological slippage.

7.1.2 Local ways of doing

In addition to the 'upward' projection of *preppiness* to describe schools in the district, this concept was relevant to units of social organization smaller than nameable groups at the school. Specifically, the ideological stereotype of the *prep* could sometimes be projected 'downward' when non-preps—that is, those who were not cheerleaders, pandarettes, or Cotton Parkers—were characterized as being preppy either during certain moments of practice or in relation to their friends; regardless of their social group membership, students were sometimes identified as preppy based on their engagement in practices associated with preps. Big Dog, Bob, and Joanne, for instance, were not members of the prep category by local definition, nor did they belong to a social network of preps, yet Bob claims "We're all preppy" (line 4 below) specifically alluding to Big Dog and Joanne's choices of clothing brands, such as L.E.I., Old Navy, American Eagle, Gap, and Banana Republic. In the playful debate below, Bob attempts to elicit admission from Joanne and Big Dog of their own preppiness despite their continued resistance.

Example 7.7: "I think Bob would describe us as preppy" (Academic, 12/09/04)

1 Big Dog: I think Bob would describe us as preppy? H
2 Joanne: Bob says preppy
3 but I don't think it's preppy.
4 Bob: We're all preppy.
5 Joanne: Liam's preppy.

6 Big Dog: Liam denies it that he is.
7 Bob: They always call me and you preppy?
8 And then they dress like L.E.I.?
9 Old Navy?
10 American Eagle
11 and they say they're not preppy.
12 Joanne: That's not true
13 Liam: It's. They do.
14 Bob: Hold on.
15 Big Dog.
16 What's the thing over your shirt right now.
17 Big Dog: I dunno. ((feigning lack of knowledge))
18 I dunno. h h
19 Bob: Hold on tell me (xxx)
20 Liam: This is gap.
21 Bob: Okay. What's the shirt?
22 Big Dog: I dunno.
23 Check the tag.
24 Joanne: It's a pink shirt.
25 It doesn't have any logo on the front.
26 Bob: Check the tag.
27 Big Dog: It's like printed.
28 Liam: American Eagle.
29 Bob: Okay.
30 Where did you wanna work.
31 Liam: American Eagle?
32 Big Dog: A clothes store where I could get a big discount.
33 Bob: ((Laughing)) What's the name of the store Big Dog?
34 Big Dog: I dunno.
35 Joanne: Oh hush hush.
36 You're the one
37 who's always talking about fashions all the time.
38 Bob: Joanne.
39 Do you not have a credit card
40 for Gap and Old Navy?
41 and Banana Republic?
42 Joanne: Well I have a credit-
43 I do. I love-
44 Bob: Is your name on it?
45 Joanne: It as my name on it.
46 Bob: Okay. So I'm pretty sure its-
47 Joanne: It's not all preppy though
48 Bob: Yes it is.
49 Joanne: Not it's not.
50 Bob: We're not ghetto.
51 We're not ghetto dressing (xxx)
52 Joanne: We don't dress ghetto. h h h
53 Bob: Pretty much there's like two.
54 Big Dog: I guess overall it's preppy.

Particularly notable in this example is the relational opposition between ‘preppier’ and ‘less preppy’ individuals. The disagreement is not merely about whether Bob is preppy, since he admits to it in line 4, but whether he is *preppier* than Big Dog and Joanne. After all, as he reveals, Joanne has credit cards to multiple preppy stores (line 38-41), and Big Dog desires to work at one (line 30-33). He constructs them as hypocritical in their characterization of him as preppy, as he remarks to Liam, “They always call me and you preppy? And then they dress like L.E.I.? Old Navy? American Eagle, and they say they’re not preppy” (lines 7-11). Joanne eventually counters Bob’s accusations: “Oh hush, hush. You’re the one who’s always talking about fashions all the time” (lines 35-37).

A conception of *preppiness* as based on an opposition of discrete social categories (*preps* vs. *non-preps*) yet imagined in terms of a continuum recalls Eckert’s (1989; 2000) discussion of jocks and burnouts at a Detroit high school. In her study, the two broad categories of *jocks* and *burnouts*, defined by their respective orientations toward and away from the institutional structuring of the school, had their own subgroup divisions. Among the burnouts were a group of girls sometimes referred to as *burned-out burnouts* and regarded as extreme in term of their anti-institutional behavior. Interestingly, this particular group of girls constructed other burnouts as *jocky burnouts*, drawing on an ideological jock-burnout opposition. As Eckert and McConnell-Ginet write, “[t]he opposition that locks jocks and burnouts into these quite divergent identity practices extends its terms into both communities of practice as well” (1995: 495).

Disagreements about who was preppy may have stemmed in part from the particular kind of preppiness a person embodied. As mentioned earlier, the notion of preppiness could have ethnicity, class, or gender connotations, but it could refer to symbolic and social practices that did not necessarily converge, such as clothing,

language, and stance. As I pressed Big Dog and her friends to explain why they resisted being characterized as preppy dressers (lines 77-79 below), they suggested that it was because preppiness was associated with negative stances, such as being “mean” and “snotty” (lines 85- 86 below). To convey such stances, Joanne engaged in stylized prep mocking that linked preps with hyperfemininity, vanity, and excessive emotion (lines 115-116)

Example 7.8: “I got stuff stuck under my nails” (Academic, 12/09/04)

((Lines 47-76 omitted))

77 Elaine: I have a question.
78 Why did you wanna deny that you dress preppy.
79 I'm just curious.

80 ((laughs))

81 Big Dog: Why do I deny it?

82 Elaine: I'm not saying you do dress preppy
83 but I'm just wondering.
84 I feel like you don't wanna

85 Liam: (It's always) the mean people.
86 The snotty people.

87 Big Dog: Yeah.
88 Like the rich people.

89 Joanne: The rich snotty people.

90 Big Dog: Yeah like that's usually who preps are
91 and I'm NOT rich
92 and I'm NOT snotty.
93 So like Bob always-
94 like he doesn't call the way I dress preppy-
95 well he does-
96 but he calls ME preppy.

97 Bob: No I don't.

98 Joanne: Yes you do.

99 Big Dog: You do too.

100 Bob: When I define preppy?
101 It's only clothing.
102 I don't define preppy attitudes.

103 Joanne: Yes you have to me.

104 Bob: Because I've never-

105 Big Dog: Yes you have.
106 You go
107 "Big Dog. Big Dog. ((low pitch))
108 Think about it.
109 You and Joanne are the most preppiest people

110 I've ever- h.
111 You guys dress so preppy. Eah."
112 Bob: Define me a preppy attitude
113 and I will tell you closely you fit to it.
114 First define it.
115 Joanne: ((high-pitched, nasal)) "Oh my god
116 I got stuff stuck under my nails."
117 Big Dog: Yeah that.
118 Bob: Next.
119 Big Dog: Like um always with the hair?
120 Bob: Oh definitely not Joanne.
121 All: ((laughs))
122 Joanne: She looks so confused. h ((referring to Elaine))
123 Big Dog: I dunno.
124 Bob: Well y'all don't act preppy.
125 Y'all aren't snotty so.
126 Joanne: We just dress with jeans and a shirt.
127 Big Dog: Yeah. I just dress whatever looks nice
128 so if it happens to be preppy.
129 Bob: So you dress preppy
130 but you don't act preppy.
131 Joanne: In your definition it's preppy.
132 Let's ask Liam.

This excerpt evidences the negative value of stances and acts associated with the prep stereotype, and such negativity may be the reason that Big Dog suggests that her preppy style is a consequence of coincidence rather than intention ("I just dress whatever looks nice so if it happens to be preppy," lines 127-128), and that Joanne continues to partly resist defining herself as preppy ("In your definition it's preppy," line 131). At the same time, they accept to that they might, to some extent, embody a preppy clothing style.

7.1.3 A relevant other

Like many other labels that circulate in high school settings in the U.S., the prep label was used by students to name others rather than name themselves; some of the cheerleaders I interviewed, for example, denied being preppy, preferring self-descriptors such as *happy*, *optimistic*, and *bubbly* (Cheerleaders, December 5, 2004). Yet despite the social distinction that students sometimes drew between themselves and those who were

identified as ‘real’ preps, the notion of *preppiness* was centrally important to self-definition; all of the students were well aware of who the preps were and how they located themselves in relation to them. In the following example, the fact that preps were perceived as having relative power in the local community is suggested by a quiet Korean-white girl named Grace. She bluntly describes her social and spatial position in relation to preps while riding the school bus, and in self-mockery, she describes herself as one of the “loser kids” (line 9), who sit in the front when she rides the bus with them.

Example 7.9: “We sit in the front and they sit in the back” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)

1 Grace: They ride our bus now.
 2 They took over our bus. h
 3 Elaine: Do you sit at different places on the bus?
 4 Grace: Mhm
 5 Elaine: Like how
 6 Grace: We sit in the front
 7 and they sit in the back
 8 Elaine: Who’s ‘we’
 9 Grace: The loser kids
 10 All: ((laughter))
 11 Elaine: Seriously.
 12 Are you serious?
 13 Why do you call yourself ‘loser kids’?
 14 Grace: Yeah the kids that don’t talk to them
 15 Elaine: Why are you the losers?
 16 Why can’t they be the losers
 17 Grace: Because they’re popular
 18 h h
 19 We’re not
 20 Elaine: Are they popular?
 21 Grace: There are some loser kids
 22 that try to sit in the back
 23 but they don’t belong up there.

Whether Grace’s self-description as a *loser* suggests acceptance of her low social status at the school or a tongue-in-cheek critique of social clique organization is unclear. What is evident, however, are the contrasts she creates between “we” and “they” as well as “back” and “front” (lines 6 and 7), constructing preps as having local privilege that ‘loser kids’ can only desire, as some “try to sit in the back” (line 22) with Cotton Parkers.

Her apparent slip in line 23, as she refers to the back of the bus as “up there,” may reflect the perception of the back of the bus as a symbolically higher space.¹⁰²

A similar perspective was reflected among the Outcast United group, who also described themselves as “weird people” and “a mixed variety of people” (January 19, 2005) and who ate lunch together because of a shared interest in Japanese cartoons called *anime*, Japanese comic books called *manga*, and videogames, activities locally associated with ‘geeks’. Their metapragmatic description of preps results when Marissa compares the preps’ sense of superiority to Adolf Hitler’s beliefs and actions during the Holocaust.

Example 7.10: “They control the school but we do all the work” (Outcast United, 1/19/05)

1 Carrie: I could never hate somebody that sat there?
2 I- okay I- I could not- I can-
3 I can probably not hate anybody.
4 Except for him. ((referring to a friend?))
5 It- it ju- [well maybe Hitler.
6 Elaine: [Why do you hate him so much?
7 Why do you hate him so much.
8 Claire: Because he killed a // lot of people.
9 Carrie: Because he sat there
10 and killed a bunch of people like
11 as if they were nothing.
12 Mercedes: Innocent peo//ple.
13 Claire: Sort of like // (xxx). Adolf Hitler.
14 Mercedes: They didn’t even do nothing.
15 Carrie: “It doesn’t matter.
16 They’re nothing.
17 They’re just a- little down here in the valley
18 and I’m all up here on // the mountain.”
19 Marissa: Like preps.
20 Like preps.
21 Dragon: [Pr- did you say preps?
22 Carrie: [Like this. “I’m the sun”
23 Marissa: “You are the [shadows.”
24 Carrie: [“They’re the crops.
25 They feed me.”

¹⁰² Those sitting at the back of the bus are less likely to be controlled by the authority of the adult bus driver. Yet Grace’s comments about the bus takeover by preps and the symbolic value of the back of the bus is ironic when examined from the historical perspective of the symbolic and legal struggles surrounding bus seating at the start of the Civil Rights Movement.

26 Or wait a minute.

27 [I don't know whatever then

28 Dragon: [(oh that bastard) I just remember who-

29 Marissa: Like **preps**.

30 Dragon: [I know who you're talking about.

31 Mercedes: [**I feed them.**

32 Scott: I'm the [crops?

33 Claire: [I feed-

34 Mercedes: [So if they don't // do-

35 Marissa: [Guys. Guys.

36 Claire: [**I feed you**

37 Scott: [There's [the sun?

38 Claire: [If you don't listen to me?

39 Carrie: You don't get // fed

40 Marissa: What about [**preps**.

41 Scott: [They feed me?

42 Marissa: What about **preps**.

43 [**Preps**.

44 Mercedes: [Or I just burn you up.

45 Marissa: They are like (1.0)

46 Carrie: Out there. h h h h // h (h)

47 Duchovny: Wa::y out there.

48 Marissa: They sit at **that table** every single day.

49 Duchovny: They what?

50 Marissa: **They sit at a table like**

51 **every single (day) like we do.**

52 [They sit- they-

53 Elaine: [In the corner?

54 Dragon: Jesus Christ right over there where the hoes at.

55 They sit right there=

56 =I pass by once.

57 "Hey u:: look at that little boy"= ((singing))

58 =I said

59 "Don't ever look at me // again"

60 Claire: Some guy at one of those tables like-

61 He said "Come here sit down."

62 I'm like "GO AWAY?" // h h h

63 Dragon: No some girl they pull me.

64 Some girl they pull me.

65 "Okay.

66 Now we have a black person // at our table."

67 Claire: Oh god. h

68 Dragon: I said "Bitch would you let go of me?" ((falsetto))

69 Duchovny: I would have been (in two). What the hell

70 Dragon: [That's the first time oh A:: h h

71 Marissa: [**Preps**.

72 They? They have like the talk.

73 Every one when-

74 [when I (think of) school like sweet valley high.

75 Mercedes: [Oh god (where did that xxx xxx)

76 Dragon: Right over there.
77 Marissa: They think of (them).
78 Automatically sweet valley high. Preps.
79 Mercedes: I gotta go see // if my mom's here yet.
80 Elaine: So are they the top of the school? // The preps?
81 Marissa: Yeah.
82 Scott: No.
83 Marissa: Well they control the school
84 but we do all the work.
85 We? we change their lives.
86 Scott: [They don't control school.
87 Claire: [(xxx)
88 Carrie: [We do the behind the // scenes stuff.
89 Desiree: We're the ones
90 That give them the answers // to their homework.
91 Marissa: They are the movie.
92 They are the // stars.
93 Carrie: They're like // the- no no no.
94 Duchovny: "We don't have to. No point.
95 // (xxx) Do you have the answer-"
96 "GO screw (xxx)"
97 Carrie: They're like the president.
98 And we're like the vice presidents?
99 and like all the staff members?
100 and cabinet members?
101 That help him make decisions?
102 We make the decisions for them
103 cause they are not capable.
104 Dragon: [h h h h h h h h
105 Claire: [They're just-
106 Scott: Yeah you know how it feels.
107 Dragon: h h h h h
108 Marissa: They're not smart enough.
109 They're just the // look.
110 Scott: That's a fraction of what you did to me.
111 Marissa: We're the brains.
112 Elaine: Are they the popular ones?
113 Marissa: Yeah the preps are the popular ones.
114 Everyone knows them.
115 Elaine: So what race are they.
116 Marissa: They're white.
117 Duchovny: They're white- they're white people.
118 They're the crackers.

As illustrated in the table below, they construct their own identities in contrast with those of preps through a series of oppositions.

Table 7.3: Oppositions created between preps and non-preps (Outcast United, Example 7.15)

NON-PREPS	PREPS	LINES
in the valley	on the mountain	17-18
shadows	sun	22, 23
people who need to be fed	people with crops	24-25, 32-33
(not popular)	popular, known to everyone	113, 114
US/OUTCAST UNITED	THEM/PREPS	
our table	prep table	48, 50
work behind the scenes	control the school	83-88
give answers	(take answers)	89-90
(not the movies, stars)	movies, stars	91-92
vice president, cabinet members who make the decisions	president who is incapable of making decisions ¹⁰³	97-103
smart (not good-looking)	good-looking, not smart	108-111

Using a playful chain of metaphors referring to geological formations (*mountains* and *valleys*), popular media (*movies* and *stars*), and politicians (*presidents*, *vice-presidents*, and *cabinet members*), these students reiterate both the differential of power between preps and themselves as well as the credit that preps take for work that non-preps perform as they “give answers” (line 90) and “make the decisions” (lines 101-102) “behind the scenes” (line 88). At one level, they admit to their collusion in reproducing a social hierarchy in which they are positioned below preps. Yet at another level, they suggest that they may obtain a particular social status through their “power sharing” practices (Keating, 1998), as they play the role of ‘puppeteers’ from “behind the scenes.” In doing so, they suggest that there may be a certain glitz to being preps, as “stars” (line 92) who have “the look” (line 109), but the legitimacy of their power is questionable, given that preps depend largely on their non-prep classmates who have the mental aptitude to make decisions for them. In addition to the fact that students had direct

¹⁰³ The construction of presidents as being incapable of making decisions may derive from circulating media discourses that portrayed George W. Bush, who was the U.S. president at the time, in such a light.

encounters with preps on school buses and in classes, preps were a well-recognized social category because of their salient location in local ideologies of ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality— notions that most students at the school regarded as significant to how they understood their own identities. The relevance of preppy practices to the everyday lives of many students at the school— girls in particular— is one of the reasons that the prep speech style was sometimes mocked.

7.1.4 Multiple indexicality: Intersections of ethnicity, class and gender

Paradoxically, while the *prep* label referred to cheerleaders/pandarettes, and Cotton Parkers, these two sets of students did not overlap at the school; no cheerleaders/pandarettes in fact resided in Cotton Park. In this local setting, the single signifier *prep* thus referred to two sets of individuals: those who epitomized an assumed *heterosexual femininity* and those who were strongly associated with *upper-class whiteness*. In other words, the *prep* label was sometimes an evaluation of a person's particular gender and sexual display while at other times a characterization of ethnicity and class membership.

The ambiguity of this dual usage was sometimes recognized. For example, it was reflected in Philip's response to my question about her clothing style, as she carefully explained, "I'm feeling preppy. I'm feeling a preppy style. Not preppy as in like skirts and stuff or like ribbons in your hair but preppy as in like American Eagle clothes" (December 17, 2004). Although Philip, a Filipina-Puerto Rican girl, had neither cheerleaders nor Cotton Parkers as close friends, she claimed that she valued a style aesthetic that she and others commonly associated with the specific set of preps locally regarded as white and wealthy rather than feminine. In other cases, students sometimes disambiguated the different uses *prep* and its variants by juxtaposing synonymous adjectives, such as "They're just plain preppy and rich" (Heather, Tutorial Girls,

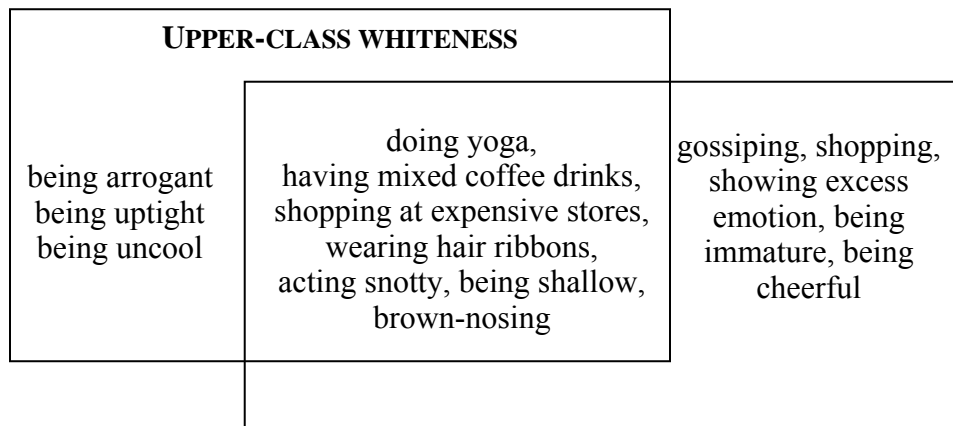
December 2, 2004), “They’re all preppy and conceited” (Grace, Tutorial Girls, December 2, 2004), and “All them preppy white girls” (Jose, Junior Boys, December 14, 2004).

Yet the typically unproblematic dual referential properties of the term *prep* may have been a consequence of the ideological links between characterizations of gender, ethnicity, and class despite the fact that femininity, upper-classness, and whiteness did not always converge for individuals within the local setting. At the same time and at least according to one student, ethnicity and class appeared to be equally relevant to whether specific pandarettes were considered preppy. As she claimed, “The white pandarettes are preppy. The black pandarettes are ghetto” (Joanne, Academic, 12/9/04), she defined preppiness not by either gender or ethnic membership but by membership in categories of both stereotypical femininity and whiteness. Most other students, however, seemed to believe that pandarettes and cheerleaders were preps regardless of their ethnic identity.

In addition to social group membership, preppiness concerned the engagement in stance and activities locally linked with *upper-class whiteness* or to *femininity*. For instance, preps were sometimes associated with arrogance, intelligence, snobbiness, criticalness, and ‘proper English’, which were more generally and stereotypically associated with whites elites. They were also associated with characteristics typically linked with a stereotypical femininity: being immature and cheerful as well as complaining, gossiping, shopping, attending to hair and nails, showing excessive emotion, and embodying hypersexuality. Stylized prep mocking features thus had multiple indexical values by their simultaneous association with stances linked to upper-class whiteness and femininity. In addition, many of these features simultaneously indexed stances that had ideological links to *both* upper-class whiteness and femininity. These included doing yoga, having mixed coffee drinks, shopping at expensive stores,

wearing hair ribbons, expressing an immature superiority (snottiness), exhibiting shallowness, and orienting to mainstream authority figures (brown-nosing).

Figure 7.1: Stereotypical meanings of preppiness across axes of ethnicity, class, and gender



The ideological associations between femininity and upper-class whiteness within both local and mainstream communities likely contributed to the salience of a stereotypical prep persona who was seen as simultaneously embodying the language, stances, acts, and activities associated with these identities. Thus, the location of preps at a particular intersection of identities was not so much a coincidence as a convergence that reflected more widely circulating ideologies about the relationship between ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality as reflected in stereotypical figures in the popular media such as *Valley Girls* and *Marina Chicks*. In circular fashion then, the ideological salience of the prep persona, portrayed as using preppy features and engaging in preppy acts, recirculated and reproduced ideological associations among femininity, class privilege, and whiteness.

7.2 FEATURES OF STYLIZED PREP MOCKING

Local linguistic practices of stylized prep mocking drew in part from media stereotypes of young, privileged, hyperfeminine white women, often from California,

such as Valley Girls.¹⁰⁴ Features deriving from these mainstream stereotypes were primarily phonological, lexical, and thematic: they sometimes included suprasegmental characteristics such as steep phrase-final rises and falls, phrase-final lengthening, extreme pitch variance, high pitch, falsetto tone, increased/decreased tempo, and nasality; sometimes such stylization was characterized by the use of certain lexical expressions, including *oh my gosh/god, god, I am so fucking + ADJ, like* (discourse marker), *whatever, totally, ew, ɹʰ*, and *duh* as well as the engagement in discourse relating to symbolic embodiments of femininity, such as clothing brands, fingernails, and hair. Being preppy was thus stereotypically understood as not only displaying symbols but self-consciously attending to them.

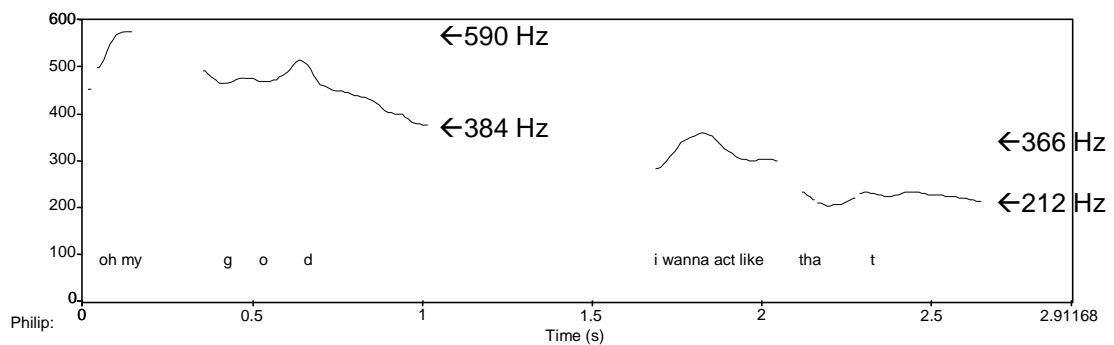
Yet stylized prep mocking, like stylized mocking more generally, was not characterized by a fixed set of structural features. Rather than depending on an entirely systematic phonology, syntax, or lexicon, the style was typically identifiable via its reference to a particular stereotypical persona imagined to be embodied primarily by socio-economically privileged, white female youth. Thus, while students commonly used the features listed above as part of their stylized prep mocking acts, engaging in this practice did not entail their occurrence.

Rather than understanding stylized prep mocking as based on a set of features, it is more accurate to conceptualize this practice as both *emergent within interaction* and as *ways of being and doing*, thus indexing a wide range of related stances, acts, and activities (Ochs, 1992). As an emergent product, the meaning of preppiness depended on how stylizers created “distinctiveness” (Irvine, 2001), or linguistic and social contrasts. Preppiness was indexed by using, for example, relatively higher pitch and nasality than in

¹⁰⁴ Most linguistic characterizations of the Valley Girl style, as well as related dialectal patterns among Californians, focus on vowel and prosody features (e.g., California Style Collective, 1993; Fought, 1999; Hinton et al., 1987). Although some provide lists of stereotypical lexical items (e.g., Wikipedia, 2006b), the pragmatic and semantic relevance of these terms has not been discussed.

surrounding utterances, rather than the use of absolute values of pitch or nasality. The following figure shows how Philip, a Filipina female student, uses contrastive pitches in two turns. By doing so, she constructs her first relatively high-pitched turn as an instance of stylized prep mocking.

Figure 7.2: Use of relatively high pitch in stylized prep mocking by Philip (line 15) when compared with non-stylized speech (line 21) (lines from Example 7.15: “They talk happy” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04))



Stylized prep mocking was also largely defined by the kinds of social practices preps, and those who acted like preps, were understood to stereotypically participate in. The resultant stereotypical conception of the local prep style as being defined by preppy practices distinguished the prep style from other styles that were relatively less practice-based and that, rather, consisted of features directly indexing a particular identity membership. For example, the stereotypical style used to mock Asian immigrants, as discussed in the two previous chapters, depended on a relatively greater number of markers of group membership rather than features linked to certain practices. Specifically, stylized Asian mocking sometimes involved the use of the syllable structure of Korean in contrast to that of English, thus indexing an ‘Asian identity’ rather than indexing particular ‘Asian practices’ ideologically linked to Asian immigrants.

I suggest here that styles lie along a continuum of being *identity-based* to *practice-based*—that is based on features of category membership versus features that

evoke practices associated with that category. Still, styles always have at least some features that are identity-based and others that are practice-based. In addition, I propose that style features can range in terms of how *conventionalized* they are in the local community. The conventionalization of stereotypical features may occur through their frequent treatment as extractable texts, or entextualization (Bauman & Briggs, 1990)—in this case, in performances of a stereotypical preppiness both in the local context of the school and in the mainstream media. In other words, such conventionalized lexical items demonstrate a particular indexical richness, evoking a stereotypical prep image even in relative isolation.

As I discuss in the following sections, the types of features used in stylized prep mocking can thus be classified as belonging to any of four types, along the two dimensions I have described:

- *Conventionalized identity-based features*
- *Emergent identity-based features*
- *Emergent practice-based features*
- *Conventionalized practice-based features*

This classification is not meant to suggest that features must fall exclusively into only one of these categories, but it provides a way of organizing the types of indexical features that appeared in my stylized prep mocking data. Other methods of categorizing indexes have been provided, such as in Silverstein's (1976) discussion of the degree to which language features may presuppose or create the speech context, as well as Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) discussion of four types of indexicality (See Chapter 3, p. 22, for a brief mention of these types).

7.2.1 Conventionalized identity-based features

The first class consisted of features that had accrued social meaning through their ostensibly patterned occurrence for speakers of a particular identity, in contrast to other identities. Discussions of styles and language varieties often address the conventionalized indexical loading of isolated features as shibboleths of social membership, particularly when they are recognized as salient markers of social differentiation. In communities in the U.S., a speaker may be identified as being a foreigner, if she uses a trilled /r/, being a Southerner, if she pronounces *pin* and *pen* as homophones, or being from the Midwest, if she drinks *pop* instead of *soda*. As I have noted, in the case of stylized prep mocking, few linguistic features could be said to function as stereotypical identity markers in this strict sense; the profuse use of the word *like* was one of the few, potentially in addition to phonetic features such as nasality and high pitch and prosodic features such as a long phrase-final syllable, exaggerated stress, and phrase-final rises.

7.2.2 Emergent identity-based features

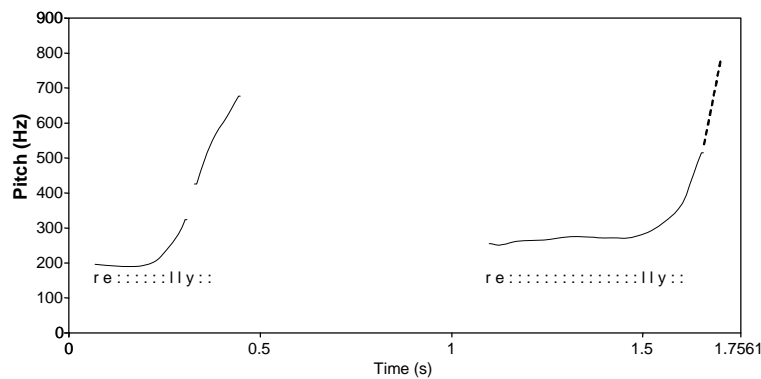
In particular but rare interactional moments, however, a feature was assigned its indexical link to the social meaning of preppiness through either implicit or explicit claims. In the following example, Yoshi's stylized mocking in line 7 of Miss Thang's speech in line 6 implicitly suggests that Miss Thang's intonational pattern indexes her preppiness.

Example 7.11: "Really?" (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)

1	Piggy:	You know when you run?
2		You need to put your knees up. H.
3		You and Miss Thang both do that=
4		I was so (xxx)-
5		Miss Thang got faster though.
6	Miss Thang:	<u>Really?</u>
7	Yoshi:	" <u>Rea:LLY?</u> "
8	Elaine	h h h

Although this brief excerpt on its own does not illustrate with clarity that preppiness is being indexed, this meaning is evident from the subsequent parts of this interaction, which will be described in the next chapter (p. 236). It suffices for now to observe how the meaning of Miss Thang’s intonation, which consists of a lengthened stress syllable and a dramatic phrase-final rise, emerges as an index of preppiness during Yoshi’s mocking of it, although this indexical value was not apparent prior to line 7. The intonations of the two occurrences of *really* can be seen in the following pitch track.

Figure 7.3: Pitch track of Yoshi’s mocking of Miss Thang’s “Really”¹⁰⁵



7.2.3 Emergent practice-based features

The third class consists of features that emerge as indexes of an identity via their association with social practices stereotypically associated with the identity category. Such features, however, may be used to index other kinds of identity categories that are also associated with the same social practice. For example, the phrase *I can’t believe it* in line 6 of the next example may not have been identifiably understood as indexing preppiness had it been uttered as part of Valerie’s own voice.

¹⁰⁵ The final pitch of Yoshi’s “really” is manually estimated and drawn (with a dotted line) because the sound analysis software I used (Praat 4.5.08) could not detect the actual pitch over my own overlapping laughter. My human hearing instrument impressionistically detected her pitch, however, as rising higher than Miss Thang’s.

Example 7.12: “And then uh some people like like talk like like this” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1 Triple X: And then uh some people
2 like like talk like like this?
3 [like like like h
4 Vivioni: [“Like Okay Becky [(xxx)”
5 Valerie: [“Oh my GO:D.
6 [I can’t belie::ve i:t.”
7 Triple X: [“Like like oh my GO:D. [like like”
8 Laquisha: [“Like. O::h my
god.
9 [I am so:: fucking (xxx)”
10 Valerie: [“Like did you hear about Becky yesterday?
11 Oh my god?
12 Her boyfriend told her to shut u::p.”
13 Laquisha: “ShutU:P”=
14 Triple X: =“TO:tally.”
15 Ann: “Get out.”
16 Vivioni: Then there’s girls like me.
17 “Gi:rl? we get our food stamps toni:ght.”
18 ((Laughter))

Had Valerie uttered this phrase in a different context, its indexical value as part of a stylized prep mocking may not have been clear. However, uttered in the context of a collaborative stylized mocking activity among her friends and through its clear reference to a particular kind of complaint activity often associated with preps, her utterance can be understood as indexing a stereotypical preppiness.

Similarly, in the following example, Desiree, one of the girls in Outcast United, engages in speech that emerges as an embodiment of a preppy style. Desiree turns her attention to her friend Carrie’s long blond hair as she asks and comments in lines 4-5, “What kind of shampoo do you use, Carrie? Smells really good.”

Example 7.13: “Oh god, I feel like a prep” (Outcast United, 1/12/05)

1 Carrie: And- and somebody mentioned uh the drugs and all that.
2 Dragon: I asked someone to pass me the chopstick.
3 Scott: Which one=
4 Desiree: =What kind of shampoo do you use Carrie?
5 Smells really good.
6 Is that // (xxx xxx)? ((Soft, fast))

In this case, however, the assignment of her utterance as part of a stereotypical prep style occurs several turns later (line 11) when she metalinguistically identifies herself as sounding preppy. As Claire and Marissa join in on her hair-smelling activity, Desiree shifts to a louder volume and lower pitch, employing a guttural growl as if to exclaim in disgust, “Oh god, I feel like a prep.”

Example 7.14: “Oh god, I feel like a prep” (Outcast United, 1/12/05) (continued)

7 Duchovny: Pf did you say which one? (xxx)?
8 [Did you just say which one (you sxx)].
9 Claire: [We’re all sniffing Desiree-
10 Marissa: We could get high off your hair.
11 Desiree: Oh GOD // I feel like a PREP.
12 ((Loud, guttural ‘god’, ‘prep’))
13 Marissa: h h h h h h
14 Dragon: h h

Desiree’s comment in line 11, “Oh god, I feel like a prep,” redefines the activity in which she finds herself participating with her female friends, which includes hair-sniffing and the speech acts she performs in lines 4-5. Her performance of these acts, specifically with a soft tone and high pitch as she expresses an enthusiastic interest in Carrie’s hair and hair products, does indeed parallel the local stereotypical image of preps as hyperfeminine and obsessed with outer appearance. Consequently, Desiree’s explicit metapragmatic labeling of her style seems befitting, and Marissa’s laughter and Dragon’s chuckle in lines 13 and 14 may suggest that they understand such an interpretation. However, during the moment of performance, in lines 4-5, it was not clear that Desiree performed these speech acts with the intent of engaging in a preppy style. In fact, her guttural exclamation “Oh GOD” in line 11 suggests a sudden shift in footing toward her current activity. In other words, over the course of a few seconds, the indexical status of a set of stylistic acts may have changed through its recontextualization.

7.2.4 Conventionalized practice-based features

Style features belonging to the final class were the most common in the data I analyzed and included relatively recognizable features that simultaneously indexed the identity category of preps as well as practices with which they were associated. Many of these features can be found in the first example of the previous section (Example 7.12: “And then uh some people like like talk like like this” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)) and the following excerpt in which students provide some of the most salient features associated with preps.

Example 7.15: “They talk happy” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

1 Elaine: Do the cheerleaders talk a certain way
2 Pinky: No?
3 Elaine: No
4 John-John: They talk (0.5) happy.
5 Elaine: Happy?
6 Pinky: [They are.
7 John-John: [It's like they-
8 Philip: “ʔ^h ʔ^h ʔ^h”
9 Elaine: [h h h h h h h h h
10 Pinky: [Either they're happy? [or-
11 Philip: [“Oh my go:d. ((click))
12 Ma (n) ʔ^h Ma (n)”
13 Elaine: h h h h h h
14 John-John: Yeah. [That's how they talk.
15 Pinky: [“Like oh my go:d” ((click))
16 [“You shoulda been in (0.5) (training)?”
17 Philip: [I wanna act like that.
18 I wanna try: to [act like that.
19 Elaine: [Really?
20 Pinky: We should [do that just one day? just
21 Elaine: [Are you gonna try that next year?
22 Pinky: [come to school.
23 Philip: [Ma:ybe? new year's resolution?
24 Pinky: “Like how are you like (0.5) do[ing:::”
25 John-John: [“Doing:::”
26 Pinky: “Like I just finished doing my yoga?
27 and I had a mochaccino:::?”
28 ((laughs))
29 Elaine: Do they talk like that?
30 the cheerleaders?=
31 Philip: =No.
32 Pinky: No not [really

33 John-John: [It's not that happy.=
34 =We're just exaggerating.=
35 Philip: =Yeah exaggerating?
36 cause you know most cheerleaders talk-
37 you know from other?- yeah
38 John-John: You know how when they were cheering? they're like
39 "Ready. O [kay" ((claps on stressed syllables))
40 Philip: ["DUH."
41 John-John: It's like (xxx)
42 Pinky: h h h h. It's like no:: h h h h

In this example, speakers seem to be orienting toward what they imagined to be preppy practices—stances, acts, and activities (Ochs, 1992). Drawing of features presented by students in Examples 7.12 and 7.15, I have listed in the table below the linguistic features that appear to contribute to the indexing of a stereotypical preppiness, the type of feature (conventionalized identity-based (C-I), emergent identity-based (E-I), emergent practice-based (E-P), and conventionalized practice-based (C-P)), and the type of practice that the feature directly indexed. The features have been ordered according to feature type, beginning with those most conventionalized and identity-based to those least so (e.g., C-I, C-P, E-P).¹⁰⁶ Judging a feature as “conventional” was based on its recurrence in stylized mocking instances, although this method necessarily depended on my subjective impressions. If the feature seemed only marginally conventionalized as a stereotypical prep feature (e.g. *ready okay*, a cheerleader call), I indicated this fact with “C/E” (conventional/emergent). If the feature seemed to saliently and simultaneously index a stereotypical prep identity as well as a practice, this fact was represented with “I/P”; such was the case for some of the phonetic and prosodic features (e.g. nasality and long phrase-final syllables). This list is not exhaustive of the features contributing to the indexing of a stereotypical preppiness, but it provides a sketch of the kinds of features that were used in two examples.

¹⁰⁶ There were no clear instances of emergent identity-based features in these examples, although the ambiguous nature of whether features were emergent or conventionalized allowed the possibility for some features, such as nasality, to be such a feature.

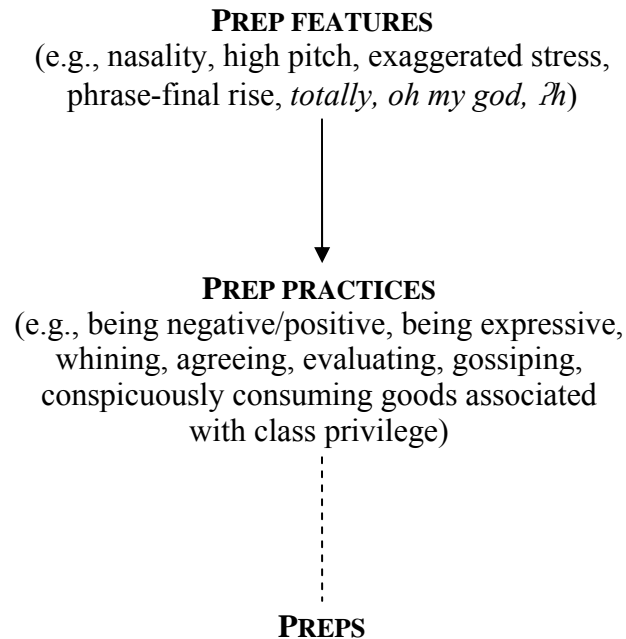
Table 7.4: Indexical links between stylized prep mocking language features and stereotypically preppy practices in Examples 7.12 and 7.15

LANGUAGE FEATURE	FEATURE TYPE	TYPE OF PRACTICE		
		STANCE	ACT	ACTIVITY
Frequent use of <i>like</i>	C-I			
Nasality	C-I/P	negative	whine	
Long phrase-final syllable	C-I/P	expressive	whine	
Exaggerated stress (extreme pitch, amplitude, length)	C-I/P	expressive		
High pitch	C-I/P	expressive		
Phrase-final rise (L*H)	C-I/P		informing	gossiping
<i>totally</i>	C-P	positive, expressive	agreement	gossiping
<i>oh my god</i> (surprise)	C-P	expressive	evaluation	gossiping
<i>duh</i>	C-P	negative, expressive	evaluation	
<i>oh my god</i> (whine)	C-P	negative, expressive	whine	
<i>tʰ</i>	C-P	negative, expressive	whine	
<i>ready okay</i>	C/E-P			cheerleading
<i>mochaccino</i>	C/E-P			drinking mochaccinos
<i>yoga</i>	C/E-P			yoga
<i>training</i>	E-P			cheerleading
Clap	E-P			cheerleading
<i>Did you hear about</i>	E-P		informing	gossiping
<i>get out</i>	E-P	surprised, expressive	evaluation	gossiping
<i>I can't believe it</i>	E-P	negative, expressive	evaluation	gossiping
<i>man</i>	E-P	negative, expressive	whine	
((alveolar click))	E-P	negative, expressive	whine	
<i>I am so fucking</i> + ADJ	E-P	negative, expressive	whine	

The large number of practice-based features in this table shows that the language features used to stylized prep speech were largely not directly linked to a stereotypical

prep identity but *mediated by social practices* stereotypically associated with preps. The figure below further illustrates this point.

Figure 7.4: Stylized prep mocking features as the product of stereotypical practices associated with preps



This configuration recalls Ochs' (1992) discussion of how gender is indirectly indexed by linguistic resources given the mediating role of stances, acts, and activities that constitute gender.¹⁰⁷ Yet perhaps diverging from her conception is my attention to how indexical relations can be motivated through *stereotypical* understandings of social types as engaging in certain practices. In other words, I am less interested in what preps really did than in what they were imagined as stereotypically doing.

Understanding stylized prep mocking features in terms of specific and stereotypical practices that preps were viewed as engaging in can also explain two characteristics of style more generally. First, it provides a reason for the 'cluster' effect

¹⁰⁷ Interestingly, some of these activities recall Lakoff's (1975) initial characterizations of "women's language."

that can be observed as features co-occur with other linguistic features (Ervin-Tripp, 1972; Ochs, 1992). Although a prep image was potentially created by one saliently stereotypical feature, style features often co-occurred and indexed social meaning in their complex interaction with one another (Podesva, 2007). I argue here that such co-occurrence is not simply a characteristic of how styles are structured but a product of how structural features, at different linguistic levels, necessarily cohere to index particular kinds of pragmatic events. Such clustering can be seen in the following pitch tracks: the first two are from Example 7.15 performed by the Junior Girls, and the second is performed by Miss Thang of the Sakaci Girls.

Figure 7.5: Pitch track of “Oh my go:d” (Philip, line 11, Example 7.15) (includes exaggerated stress, long phrase-final syllable, high pitch, nasality, *oh my god*)

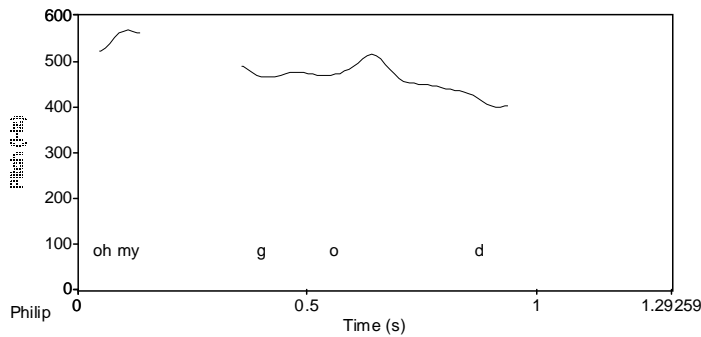


Figure 7.6: Pitch track of “Like I just finished doing my yoga:” (Pinky, line 26, Example 7.15) (includes exaggerated stress, long phrase-final syllable, phrase-final rise, *like, yoga*)

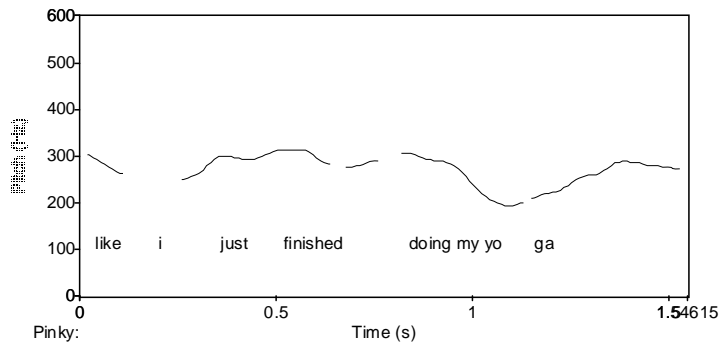
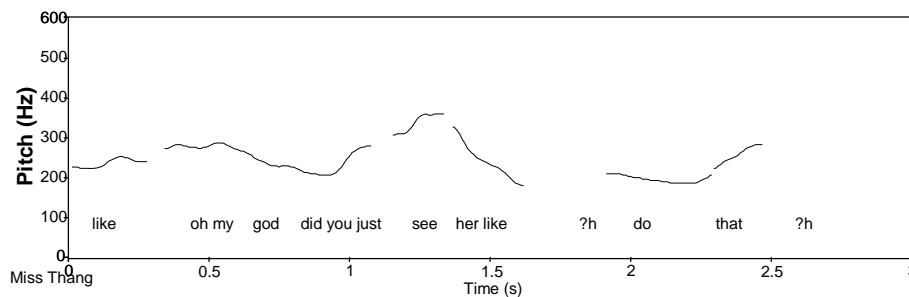


Figure 7.7: Pitch track of “Like, oh my god, did you just see her like ?^h do that? ?^h” (Miss Thang, Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04) (includes nasality, final rise, *like, oh my god, ?^h*)



In other words, the prep style, at least stereotypically conceived in the local community, was constituted partly by a collection of linguistic features with particular kinds of pragmatic relevance. For example, high-pitched speech as well as quick pitch rises and falls seemed to suggest emotional expressiveness that preps were stereotyped as exhibiting; the interjections *?^h* and *oh my god* seemed to index their stereotypical dissatisfaction and whininess; and words such as *mochaccino* alluded to the kind of activity in which they were imagined as partaking.

Thus when features such as exaggerated stress appeared alongside lexical items that had semantic content relating to particular pragmatic acts or social activities, a stereotypical image unfolded. In some cases, interpretations of speech as ‘prep styling’ emerged as mockers used words and other linguistic resources that may never have been formerly associated with prep speech, yet such a reading was possible because their combined occurrence indexed preppy stances, acts, or activities. These ‘emergent’ features can be seen as ‘inheriting’ their links to preppiness from other co-occurring features in the discourse. As such, stylized prep mocking was not defined by a bounded set of features but “the visible manifestation of social meaning” that emerges through practice (Eckert, 2004: 43). It was also an emergent and creative process that potentially drew on different levels of language—sounds, words, and their possible combinations—‘summoning’ stereotypical personae who embodied particular kinds of social practices.

7.3 DISCUSSION

In this dissertation, I have assumed style to be a practice rather than an abstract set of features, and my attention to interaction underscores the fact that social meanings, such as preppiness, emerge through communicative moments rather than preceding or existing outside these moments in a bounded set of style features. Yet I have also shown that that stylistic regularities in form do exist to some extent and hope to have described the shared ideologies of language, ethnicity, class, and gender that contributed to how students in the local community imagined what it meant to be preppy and thus how stereotypical preppiness was linguistically performed.

The first half of this chapter provided an overview of the local meanings of preppiness, which depended in part on non-local understandings of the *prep* label. I have also suggested that the local specificity of the label did not preclude its application to describe levels of social organization beyond the local community, such as when

characterizing one of the neighboring high schools that was perceived as being attended by a relatively large number of white students. Such projections of social meaning, however, could occur in the other direction, to the level of local practices, or local ways of doing. Thus even non-preps could be described as *being preppy*, with certain individuals embodying greater preppiness than others.

I have also shown that despite the fact that students almost never used the term *prep* to describe themselves, the concept of *preppiness* was centrally important to self-definition, and students often located themselves in relation to those they identified as preps. I have suggested that the relevance of this notion was due to not only the visibility of preps in local school activities but their positioning in relevant ideologies of ethnicity, class, and gender. Specifically, preps were understood to lie at the intersection of stereotypical understandings of *upper-class whiteness* and *femininity* within the local community.

In my discussion of the linguistic features used to engage in stylized prep mocking, I have shown that although this practice displayed some degree of structural regularity, it was hardly describable in terms of a set of features. In fact, many of the features, on their own, might have indexed a variety of social meanings: the use of exaggerated stress, for instance, indexed stereotypes of *preppiness* in some interactions but *Asianness* in others. A single linguistic form could index very different social meanings across interactions and communities (Eckert, 2004). This unpredictability was due in part to the fact that styles are products of interactional moments in which features are juxtaposed to create social distinctions (Irvine, 2001) and in which a variety of linguistic resources are available to index a particular social meaning. The lack of a clear relationship between form and meaning was also a consequence of the fact that the

styling of preppiness was often mediated by stereotypical practices associated with preps. It was, in other words, a practice that alluded to other kinds of social practices.

My analysis suggests that stylized prep mocking was different from stylized Asian mocking in that it was based largely on links between language features and social practices, rather than relatively more direct links between language and an identity category. Yet I do not wish to suggest that stylized prep mocking was unique in its practice-centeredness; all forms of styling are based in practice, as styles are never learned, performed, or understood outside moments of their use. As I discuss in the following chapter, the relevance of prep practices to students' lives allowed this form of stylization to be a useful cultural resource in the local community.

Chapter 8: Stylized Prep Mocking as Social Practice

In the previous chapter, I suggested that stylized prep mocking was characterized by its close ideological links with forms of social practice, namely, the kinds of stances, acts, and activities (Ochs, 1992) that preps were locally regarded as engaging in. I turn now to a discussion of how stylized prep mocking itself constituted a kind of social practice. First, I discuss how it could be used to construct speakers' identities in relation to preps and in relation to interlocutors as well as how this practice allowed speakers to demonstrate their local "communicative competence" (Hymes, 1972b). I also discuss the ways in which attributed links between language and identity were tied to relations of power within friendship groups. Second, I discuss how stylized prep mocking could be embedded in narratives about actual preps and how these narrative events served as socializing moments through which not only past actions were critiqued but future actions were regulated, specifically in relation to local values of sexual morality and authenticity. Finally, I discuss some of the reasons that students—girls in particular—tended to engage in mocking the prep style, and I argue that the value of stylized prep mocking derived from, first, the ambiguous status of preps as both desirable and undesirable, and second, the ambiguous boundary between self-styling and other-stylization. Such ambiguity allowed the mocking of femininity to be centrally a means for the mocker to construct a femininity of her own.

8.1 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

8.1.1 Oppositional identities

Like forms of stylized mocking more generally that depend on implied oppositions of voices, stylized prep mocking evoked social contrasts that allowed

mockers to construct themselves in opposition to preps. In the following example, reproduced from the previous chapter, several students in the multiethnic Tutorial Group construct a shared identity by collaboratively and playfully performing stylized prep mocking. The performance emerges in the context of a lunch discussion and in response to a question I posed about the different ways that students talked at the school. All of the students shown here identified as black and female, except for Valerie, who was Puerto Rican, and a boy named Triple X, who identified as “black and German.”

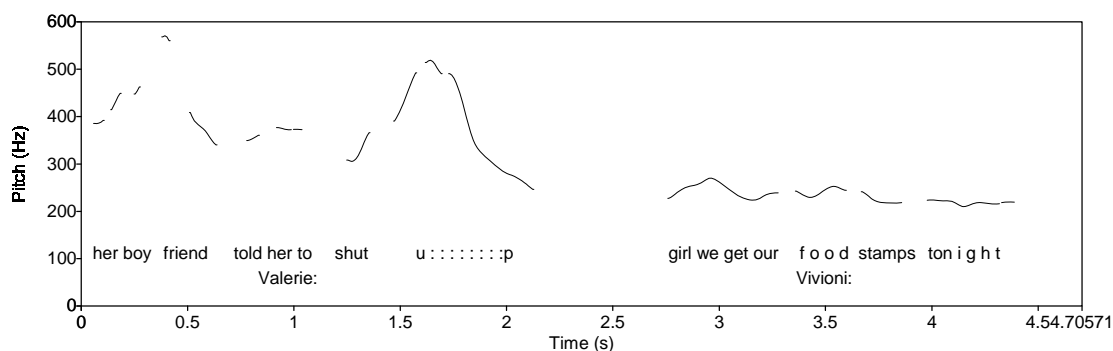
Example 8.1: “And then uh some people like like talk like like this” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1 Triple X: And then uh some people
2 like like talk like like this?
3 [like like like h
4 Vivioni: [Like Okay Becky [(xxx)“
5 Valerie: [Oh my GO:D.
6 [I can't belie::ve i:t.“
7 Triple X: [Like like oh my GO:D. [like like“
8 Laquisha: [Like. O::h my god.
9 [I am so:: fucking (xxx)“
10 Valerie: [Like did you hear about Becky yesterday?
11 Oh my god?
12 Her boyfriend told her to shut u::p.“
13 Laquisha: “ShutU:P”=
14 Triple X: =“TO:tally.”
15 Ann: “Get out.”
16 Vivioni: Then there's girls like me.
17 “Gi:rl? we get our food stamps toni:ght.”
18 ((Laughter))

These students’ collaborative performance implicitly suggests their shared positioning as *non-preps*; their stylized prep mocking not only creates a momentary interactional distance from prep speech but constructs these students’ identities as individuals who are not ‘wealthy white girls’. The ideological meaning of the prep style in terms of ethnicity, class, and gender is clear when Vivioni, a black female student, performs a contrastive style in lines 16-17 (“Then there’s girls like me. ‘Gi:rl? we get our food stamps toni:ght.”). Specifically, her use of relative low pitch (see Figure 8.1), reduced pitch variation, the AAE address term *girl* (Troutman, 1996), and reference to

food stamps, constructs suggests the complementary status of girls who are ‘white and wealthy’ and those who are ‘black and poor’.

Figure 8.1: Pitch track comparison of ‘prep’ and ‘poor black girl’ stylizations in lines 12 and 17 (Valerie and Vivioni, Tutorial Group, 12/1/04)



Interestingly, Vivioni’s self-stylization suggests that mocking does not entail ideological out-groupness. By prefacing her stylization with “Then there’s girls like me” (line 16), she indicates that she is performing the speech of a category to which she belongs—that she is an black girl who lives in poverty. At the same time, her stylization may not have been an ‘in-group’ representation given that it was likely not an accurate depiction of her actual economic status. Specifically, her family had the means for her to own a cellular phone that she used to regularly send playful text messages to her mother; in this local community, cell phones, which required subscribing to a phone service, were typically considered a symbol of at least a moderate level of wealth. Her claim to poverty was likely for humorous effect that depended on highlighting the ethnic distinction between herself and preps, and the response of laughter in line 18 suggests other students’ appreciation of this incongruence. Here, meanings of class were used to bolster a particular ethnic identity, given stereotypical local links typically made between whiteness and wealth and the salience of this link in cases of stylized prep mocking.

8.1.2 Locally competent identities

The skillful performance of recognizable styles also demonstrated these students' local cultural competence. Stylized mocking practices thus constructed students' identities not only in relation to imagined speakers—here, preps—but also as competent members of the local community. Such competence entailed having access to local styles and being able to perform them, at least to the extent that they were recognizable as stereotypical styles.

The local cultural value of being able to perform stylized prep mocking may be one of the reasons that members of the girls' soccer team sometimes playfully performed it directly into the microphone of my minidisc recorder. The following two examples from the Soccer Girls group took place as team members waited on the sidelines of two different soccer games. In the first example below, the lines preceding the stylized mocking indicate both students' intrigue with the recording device as they took turns speaking into the microphone (lines 1, 4, and 22) as well as the playfulness of a setting in which sexual topics were common (lines 20-21 and the deleted lines in 9-19). The stylization is performed in lines 22-27 by Joanne, a white student who was also a member of the Academic group.

Example 8.2: "Yesterday I was dress shopping" (Soccer Girls, 11/29/04)

1 Bob III: ((Into mic)) Do you hear me in there.
2 The man behind the glass.
3 A:::H
4 Julie: ((Into mic)) I'm so cold
5 it's like freezing hell over.
((Deleted lines 9-19))
20 Bob III: ((shouting)) JENNIFER LEAVE ME ALONE
21 I DON'T LIKE YOU LIKE THAT.
22 Joanne: ((Into mic)) "So anyways.
23 Yesterday I was dress shopping
24 And I found this totally ugly puke green dress.
25 And it was like

26 Oh my god I've gotta try it on
 27 Just in case I lose my bowels."
 28 All: ((Laughs))
 29 XF1: We have no life guys. h h h
 30 XF2: It's cold.
 31 XF1: He won't put you in.
 32 All: GO GO GO oh:::::

The next example of stylized prep mocking occurs as a Korean girl named Bob III pretends to host a radio call-in show. In her performance, she uses an 'expert style' that included 'proper' features (see a discussion of 'proper English' in Chapter 4, Section 4.3 Ideologies of language) that are uncharacteristic of her everyday speech, such as the syntactic construction 'would like to V' and a word-final released /t/ in *tonight*. The subsequent stylized prep mocking by Ro, a Panamanian girl, contrasts a playfully embodied preppy/ignorant persona with that of Bob III's expert persona.

Example 8.3: "How do I know I have gonorrhoea?" (Soccer Girls, 12/7/04)

1 Bob III: ((Into mic)) Our next caller is from Ro Smith.
 2 Ro do you have a quick question h
 3 that you'd like to ask me tonight? ((released /t/))
 4 You have to get closer
 5 Ro: ((Into mic)) How do I know I have gonorrhoea::?
 6 ((Laughs))

Although no reference to preps is made prior to these stylizations, I consider both to be stylized prep mocking instances because of the use of language features linked to stances, acts, and activities commonly associated with preps. The table below lists some of the linguistic resources in these examples that the speakers used to index preppiness. The table is followed by pitch tracks to more accurately illustrate specific features, such as extreme pitch variation and final rise intonation.

Table 8.1: Linguistic resources for indexing preppiness in Examples 8.1 and 8.3

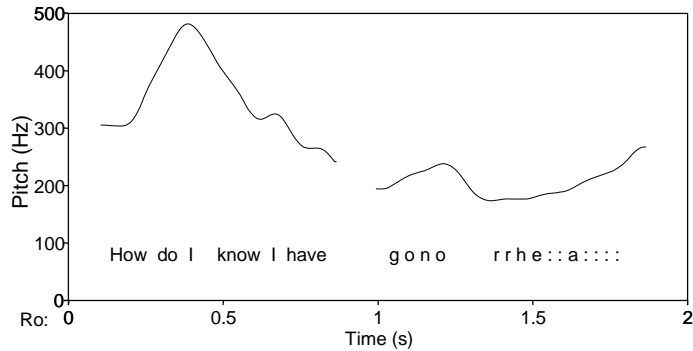
LINGUISTIC RESOURCES		ASSOCIATED STANCES, ACTS, ACTIVITIES (in turn associated with preps)
EXAMPLE 8.2	EXAMPLE 8.3	
Nasality	Nasality	Whining
Extreme pitch variation	Extreme pitch variation	Being expressive
	Final rise	Interrogative, doing ignorance
Fronted (back) vowels ¹⁰⁸		Whining
	/ə/→/ɑ/: Extreme low-back unstressed vowel in <i>gonorrhea</i> ::	Whining
<i>totally</i>		Being expressive
<i>oh my god</i>		Being expressive
<i>puke green</i>		Evaluating, critiquing
<i>shopping</i>		Shopping
	<i>gonorrhea</i>	Sex

Figure 8.2: Pitch track of “So anyways yesterday I was dress shopping” (Joanne, Academic/Soccer Girls, Example 8.2)



¹⁰⁸ The f2 of Joanne’s stressed /o/ vowels in this example were over 1900 Hz, while the f2 of her stressed /o/ vowels in the group interview were under 1500 Hz. Higher f2 values indicate greater fronting. All of Joanne’s vowels were fronted and relatively neutral in height, an effect that might be created through a facial expression that includes a ‘frown’ and protruding lower jaw.

Figure 8.3: Pitch track of “How do I know I have gonorrhea?” (Ro, Soccer Girls, Example 8.3)



As noted in the previous chapter, the features listed here are not part of a bounded set of prep style features but rather resources that speakers drew upon to index particular stances, acts, and activities (Ochs, 1992) stereotypically linked with preppiness.

The responses of laughter after each of these stereotypical prep stylizations suggests that these acts are evaluated by others present after each mocker “puts the act of speaking on display—objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience” (Bauman & Briggs, 1990: 73). The invitation to such evaluation is performed by not only using marked features that the speakers construct as ‘not their own’ but purposefully speaking into the microphone. Through the act of conveying a prep persona to the imagined audience reached through the recording device, the girls metaphorically amplify their voices in the immediate setting of their friends (Chun, 2006a).

Importantly, these performances are not mere demonstrations of linguistic virtuosity but *humorous* acts; speech play of this sort “explores and flirts with the boundaries of the socially, culturally, and linguistically possible and appropriate”

(Sherzer, 2002).¹⁰⁹ These performances require their linguistic and cultural recognizability as well as threatening to commit social offense without being constructed as doing so. Being able to walk this dangerous line appeared to be part of the local communicative competence of humorous individuals.

It should be noted, however, that whether such stylization practices were humorous did not lie wholly in the particular form of the stylization but in the collaborative construction of performances as pushing a cultural boundary without crossing it. In some cases, stylization acts could be constructed as ‘not humorous’ when silence followed, rather than laughter and collaboration, or when, in the rare case, an explicit comment of critique resulted. As noted in Chapter 6 (Section 6.1.3 Prohibition), students could highlight the inappropriateness of mocking acts, such as when Valerie critiqued Hector’s stylized Asian mocking by complaining, “Stop making fun of people’s mom’s accents. My mom has an accent too” (Example 6.4: “My mom has an accent too” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)).

8.1.3 Authority to identify

The construction of identities using stylized prep mocking seen in the above discussion involved the placement of individuals—both selves and others—in relation to language features associated with preps. Such acts of identity,¹¹⁰ however, were not one-time events by a single speaker, but potentially recontextualizable and contestable acts. Identities were thus products of interactions between multiple speakers that involved

¹⁰⁹ Numerous theories of humor have been provided over the years. For example, some have focused on the violation of taboos (Freud, 1989), the incompatibility of semantic scripts (Raskin, 1987), the simultaneous violation of moral norms within a normative situation (Veatch, 1998), and commentary on social structures (Sherzer, 2002). It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss these theories at length, but I draw generally from their analyses.

¹¹⁰ Although this phrase recalls Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) understanding of how speakers project their identities through their stereotype-based linguistic choices, their account does not examine the important ways in which such acts can be negotiated in interactions.

assigning and reassigning social meaning to a speaker's symbolic display. Importantly, such negotiations were simultaneously moments in which relations of power were reproduced or negotiated.

Such negotiability of identities is clear in the next example from a dinner discussion I had organized at my apartment among the Sakaci Girls, a friendship group of Korean girls, among whom Piggy often took up the leader role. As Piggy compliments Miss Thang on her speed on the soccer field, and Miss Thang, who appears pleased, responds, "Really?" Her utterance is immediately mimicked by Yoshi who exaggerates the rising pitch of the end of the word. (Part of this example was briefly introduced in Example 7.11.)

Example 8.4: "Really?" (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)

1 Piggy: You know when you run?
2 You need to put your knees up. H.
3 You and Miss Thang both do that=
4 I was so (xxx)-
5 Miss Thang got faster though.
6 Miss Thang: **Really?**
7 Yoshi: "**Rea:LLY?**"
8 Elaine h h h
9 Piggy: Cause you been kicking your knee-
10 if you got them a little bit higher.
11 You could be faster.

At this point in the interaction, it is not clear whether Yoshi's mimicry constructs Miss Thang as speaking with a prep style. Yet the rest of the conversation suggests that Yoshi was in fact mocking Miss Thang's preppiness and that this had not been the first time.

Example 8.5: "Really?" (1/13/05) (continued)

12 Yoshi: Ha.
13 Miss Thang: THEY BE MAKING FUN OF ME like crazy in class man.
14 Yoshi: H h. (she's) like- in class
15 she's like "do I talk like a prep. "

16 And then I started mocking (her).
 17 And everybody starts mocking her
 18 because she thinks she doesn't talk like a prep
 19 but she doe:s.
 20 She's like
 21 "Oh my god everybody" ((exaggerated stress, nasal))
 22 "blah~blah~bla:h."
 23 Rh ((uvular trill, expression of disgust))
 24 Miss Thang: I don't talk like that?=
 25 Piggy: =This tastes like soybeans.
 26 Yoshi: You do talk like a prep.
 27 Piggy: You [do too
 28 Miss Thang: [So do you. So [boo:ya: .
 29 Yoshi: [You're worse than me.
 30 White Tiger: Sometimes I talk like a [(black) person.
 31 Yoshi: [h
 32 Miss Thang: Your voice is highe:r.
 33 Piggy: h ha ha.

Yoshi's recontextualization of Miss Thang's speech as preppy speech illustrates the potential negotiability and ambiguity of what style features mean. As line 6 is being uttered, Miss Thang's "Really" does not necessarily index her preppiness, but by line 7, Yoshi reassigns its indexical value through her mocking of it.

Yet the indexical reassignment of Miss Thang's high rise as preppy is not merely a claim about the relationship between language and its social meaning. Importantly, it is a kind of *social action* that places Miss Thang and Yoshi in relation to preps and preppy practices, leading to an intense negotiation of their identities in terms of preppiness. Yoshi's mocking is an ascription of particular preppy characteristics onto Miss Thang and, by implication, non-preppy characteristics onto herself. Consequently, it may not be a coincidence that Miss Thang's response in line 13 ("They be making fun of my like crazy in class man.") involves the use of aspectual *be*, a feature ideologically linked with AAE in this local community. By using this feature, she may contest the whiteness Yoshi has attempted to ascribe.

The negotiation that ensues is illustrated in the following table, in which only relevant turns are represented. For example, Yoshi’s initial stylized prep mocking in line 7, which sparks the heated negotiation, is shown with ‘Yoshi’ as the *speaker*, ‘Yoshi’ as implicitly *not talking like a prep* (with the parentheses representing that this is an implicature), and ‘Miss Thang’ as *talking like a prep*. The rightmost column is left empty because, in this exchange, no reference is made to individuals actually considered to be preps.

Table 8.2: Use of stylized prep mocking to negotiate identities in Examples 8.4 and 8.5

LINE #	SPEAKER (attempts to define who is preppy)	REFERENT		PREPS
		DON’T TALK LIKE PREPS	TALK LIKE PREPS	
7	Yoshi	(Yoshi)	Miss Thang	
13	Miss Thang	(Miss Thang)		
19	Yoshi	(Yoshi)	Miss Thang	
21-22	Yoshi	(Yoshi)	Miss Thang	
24	Miss Thang	Miss Thang		
26	Yoshi	(Yoshi)	Miss Thang	
27	Piggy	(Piggy)	(Miss Thang) Yoshi	
28	Miss Thang		(Miss Thang) Yoshi	
29	Yoshi		Yoshi < Miss Thang	
32	Miss Thang		Miss Thang < Yoshi	

The highly negotiated nature of the claims is evident when Miss Thang’s name, which is bolded, is followed down the table, alternating between (and then within) the columns of *talking like a prep* to *not talking like a prep* several times.

It is important to note how a shift occurs in line 27, when Piggy enters the debate and asserts her authority as the group leader by stating, “You do too,” a claim that Yoshi and Miss Thang both speak like preps. Co-constructing Piggy’s relative power, Miss Thang’s and Yoshi’s subsequent turns assume Piggy’s claim as correct; they implicitly

admit their own preppiness through statements such as “So do you” (Miss Thang, line 28) and “You’re worse than me” (Yoshi, line 29). Still, the negotiation manages to continue as Yoshi’s use of the comparative form *worse* (line 29) and Miss Thang’s use of *higher* (line 32) both suggest that preppiness is a relative rather than categorical quality;¹¹¹ the gradient nature of preppiness is represented in the table above with a the ‘less than’ (<) symbol.

In this excerpt, it is clear that ideologies about preps are reproduced, such as the association of the prep style with features such as a phrase-final rise (lines 6 and 7), *oh my god*, exaggerated stress, nasality (lines 21 and 22), and a high pitch (line 32). The undesirability of embodying preppiness is also implicit in the accusatory tone made by each of the girls’ claims as well as the description of speaking ‘more’ like a prep as being “worse” (line 29). However, it is also evident that mocking preps was far greater than simply reproducing such ideological meanings. Stylized prep mocking practices, seen in lines 7, 21, and 22, were embedded in a playful negotiation of identity and power among these girls. By mocking and responding to such mocking, the girls placed themselves in relation preps and in relation to each other as well as establishing whose authority it was to define who sounded like a prep.

8.2 SOCIALIZATION THROUGH STYLIZATION IN NARRATIVE

I turn now to a discussion of how the stylized mocking of prep speech, particularly through their embedding in narratives about past prep behaviors, potentially served as a tool for socializing one another into local norms of behavior. As discussed in the previous chapter, preps were stereotypically viewed as representing local cultural values that students at the school, and girls in particular, regarded as highly relevant to

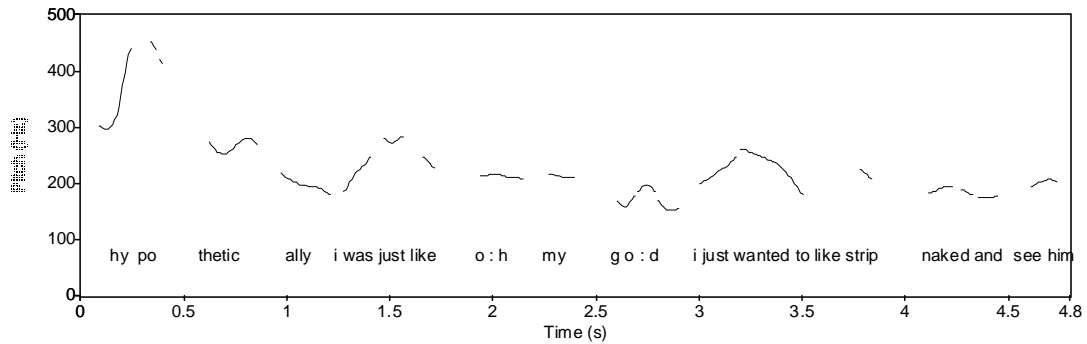
¹¹¹ This move is similar to what is found in the debate between Bob and his friends Big Dog and Leanne in Example 7.7 (“I think Bob would describe us as preppy,” December 9, 2004).

their own identities. Given the relevant meanings of preppiness, against which students measured themselves, stylized prep mocking functioned not only as performance-based embellishments displaying speakers' communicative competence but as a means of regulating normative social practice. Specifically, I show how the values of *sexual morality* and *authenticity* were taught through narratives depicting specific preps as violating local codes of behavior.

8.2.1 Regulating sexual morality

Preps were stereotyped as hypersexual beings, and their sexuality was both the object of desire and derision. (This ambivalence will be discussed in Section 8.3 Ambiguities of desirability and embodiment.) Sometimes, moments of stylized prep mocking created an instantaneous portrait of their sexuality, as seen in an earlier example (Example 8.3: “How do I know I have gonorrhoea?” (Soccer Girls, 12/7/04)), in which a Panamanian girl created stereotypical links between preps, their sexual activity leading to their possible contraction of a venereal disease, and their ignorance with regard to the disease's symptoms. In another example from the Sakaci Girls' group discussion of speech styles at the school, Miss Thang evoked a prep image by using linguistic resources such as nasality, extreme pitch variation, *like*, *oh my god*, *hypothetically*, and reference to a lack of sexual control.

Figure 8.4: Pitch track of “Hypothetically I was just like oh my god I just wanted to like strip naked and see him” (Miss Thang, Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)



In addition to these spontaneous images created using stylized prep mocking, this practice could be used to quote girls identified in the local community as actual preps in order to depict their sexual nature. I focus specifically on how a white prep named Tiffany¹¹² became the object of evaluation by the Korean Sakaci Girls and how narratives about Tiffany that sometimes included stylized prep mocking served as a platform for these girls to not only construct their own identities through narrative (Ochs & Capps, 1996) but to teach one another local cultural values.

In the first narrative, Piggy, the leader of the Sakaci Girls, provides a narrative about Tiffany after White Tiger’s invitation for Piggy to evaluate Tiffany (line 1). Piggy’s use of stylized prep mocking, as a form of “marking” (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972), when quoting Tiffany conveys her negative stance toward the practice of flaunting one’s sexuality (lines 17, 19, 22 and 23).

¹¹² Tiffany was not a resident of Cotton Park, although, according to Grace, an observant Korean-white girl, “Tiffany doesn’t live in Cotton Park. She lives in Linen Park. She likes to pretend she lives in Cotton Park” (December 2, 2004). Tiffany was thus a prep through her friendships with other preps on the soccer team and in her accelerated classes, most of whom lived in Cotton Park.

Example 8.6: “Read my shirt” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

1 White Tiger: Piggy do you like Tiffany?
2 Piggy: She’s alright.
3 Miss Thang: Which one is she?
4 Piggy: I’m not really fond of any of (th)em.
5 White Tiger: Chunky one? I guess?
6 Miss Thang: Oh.
7 White Tiger: Big boobies?
8 ((Deleted info))
9 White Tiger: Mhm.
10 Piggy: She wears like frickin fi:ve sports bras?
11 And she’s // still hanging out there. H h
12 Miss Thang: Yeah. (xxx) her shirts are like this?
13 ((Sucking in sound))
14 // She’s got bowls poppin out?
15 Piggy: You know in first class
16 she’s like. (0.5)
17 She’s like **“Read my shi:rt”** ((exaggerated stress,
nasality))
18 and like the guys are staring straight at her
boobs
19 and she’s like **“Not my boobs. My shirt”**
((exaggerated stress, nasality, fronted /u/))
20 and then the guys are like “oka:y?”
21 So they read it.
22 and then she’s like “/p^h/
23 **“That doesn’t mean look at my boobs you guys.”** Man.
((exaggerated stress, nasality, fronted /u/))
24 Miss Thang: She got like bang bang ba:ng.
25 Piggy: H h.

The performance of Tiffany’s speech through quotation constitutes stylized prep mocking on two levels. First, Piggy uses marked features to suggest her negative stance toward an actual prep’s words, and second, these marked features include those that were commonly associated with a stereotypical prep style: nasality, exaggerated stress, a fronted /u/,¹¹³ and an aspirated glottal stop /p^h/. Importantly, these features index specific acts and activities in which Tiffany is depicted as engaging in, namely, inviting sexual

¹¹³ The f2 values for /u/ in Piggy’s two utterances of *boob* are extremely high for these two cases, indicating their relative frontness. The mean f2 values during the duration of the /u/ were 2111 Hz and 1968 Hz, respectively, while the mean of the mean f2 values was 1587 Hz for Piggy’s 17 other instances of uttering *boob* or *boobies* in other conversations.

attention from boys (“Read my shi:rt,” line 17) and whining when they provide it (lines 19, 22, and 23).

Less than a minute (25 lines) later, the girls continue to talk about Tiffany’s sexual practices, describing her as “easy” (line 60)—a descriptor that, like mainstream U.S. uses of the adjective *promiscuous*, devalues a girl who has multiple sexual partners—and using stylization to quote her once again (lines 65 and 75).

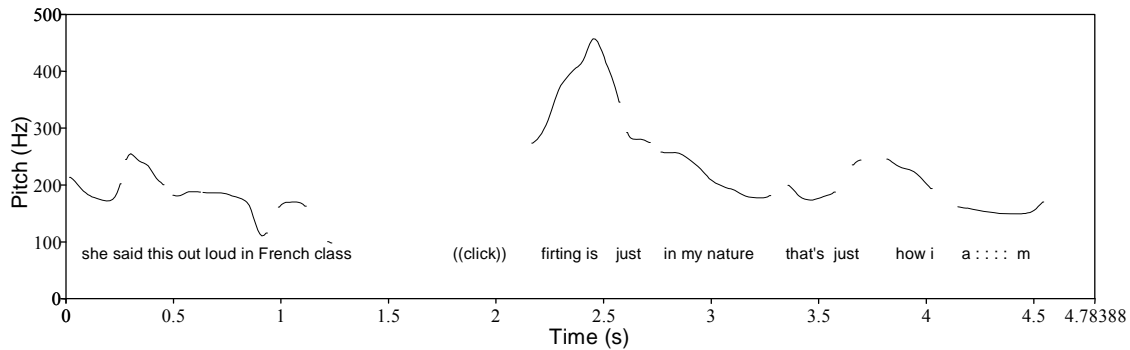
Example 8.7: “Flirting is in my nature” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

51 Elaine: Are you guys warm?
52 I’m gonna open the door
53 White Tiger: I know a lot of stuff about Tiffany.
54 I don’t think Tiffany.
55 If like Tiffany was to talk about me
56 I have so much dish on her?
57 It’s not even funny
58 Miss Thang: For real?
59 White Tiger: I know everything.
60 Miss Thang: I heard she’s easy.
61 The guys all say she’s easy to get to
62 Piggy: Oh you know what she said?
63 She said this out loud in French class.
64 ((click))
65 “Flirting is in my nature. That’s just how I am.”
66 White Tiger: Get a little bit of this too
67 All: ((Laughter))
68 Yoshi: Someone told me how it felt after they did that
69 Piggy: EW
70 White Tiger: EW
71 All: ((Laughter))
72 White Tiger: I remember when Tiffany told me she did that
73 She’s like
74 ((in breath))
75 “It gives me pleasure knowing that I please someone”
76 Miss Thang: EW
77 ((laughter))

The linguistic features used in this excerpt, however, are slightly different from those in the previous. Here, the same girl is constructed as hypersexual, but the cuing of the stylized mocking is performed through Piggy’s click in line 64 as well as a high pitch,

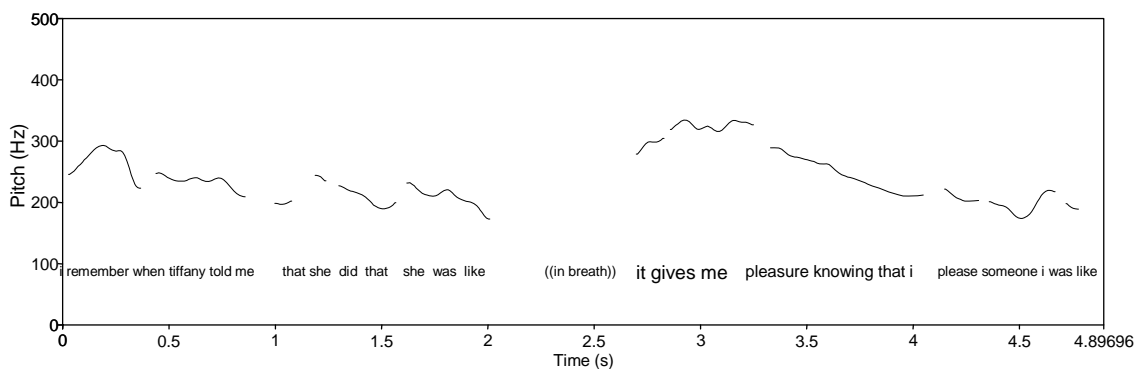
extreme pitch variation, exaggerated stress, slower tempo, and phrase-final lengthening, as seen in the following figure.

Figure 8.5: Pitch track of ‘Flirting is just in my nature’ (Piggy, Sakaci Girls, Example 8.7, line 65)



White Tiger’s stylized mocking, on the other hand, which is cued by her in breath, appears to last only four words into her quotation of Tiffany describing her enjoyment of oral sex (“It gives me pleasure” line 75), after which her slightly higher pitch, exaggerated stress, and slower tempo begins to merge with her quicker, lower pitched, unmarked speech style.

Figure 8.6: Pitch track of “It gives me pleasure” (White Tiger, Sakaci Girls, Example 8.7, lines 72-75)



Although not identical, these two occurrences of stylized mocking by Piggy and White Tiger display similarities. Each stylization is prefaced by a reference to a speaking

event (lines 63 and 72)—a metalinguistic “story preface” (Sacks, 1974)—cued paralinguistically (lines of 64 and 74), and given similar features (high pitch, exaggerated stress, slow tempo). Importantly, their stylizations create the same effect of suggesting that a particular preppy white girl named Tiffany displays her hypersexuality through her speech.

It should be noted that the negative stances that these stylized prep mocking instances convey did not seem to be necessarily indicative of their attitudes toward Tiffany as a person. Piggy’s feelings toward her seemed lukewarm but not antagonistic (“She’s alright. I’m not really fond of any of (th)em,” lines 2 and 4), and White Tiger described her elsewhere as one of her closest friends. Rather, their stances evaluated the kind of practice she was portrayed as engaging in; each of these brief narratives highlighted the negative valuing of certain kinds of female sexual practices: flirting and performing fellatio. Significantly, the initial narrative by Piggy, the group leader, moved the conversation toward a discussion of hypersexual practices, and after Piggy’s demonstration of two narratives that critiqued Tiffany’s sexual displays, White Tiger contributed a similar narrative. Here, we may see both White Tiger’s “socialization through the use of language and socialization to use language” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986: 163), as she may have learned from Piggy both how certain sexual activities were valued within this local community and how the practice of stylized prep mocking could be used as a resource to express such value.

8.2.2 Policing authenticity

In addition to the policing of girls’ sexual activities, the degree to which they presented an authentic persona was frequently evaluated by both girls and boys. This section discusses how the local cultural value of *authenticity* was circulated and taught through narratives about the behavior of preps. As described in Chapter 4 (Section 4.2.4

Ideology of realness), whiteness was often ideologically associated with inauthenticity, and preps, as embodiments of a prototypical whiteness, were stereotypically viewed as inauthentic. In the following example, reproduced from Chapter 7, preppy white girls such as Natalie Smith were depicted as displaying an inauthentic façade of babyish cuteness while in the presence of their teachers.

Example 8.8: “I know the answer” (Tutorial, 12/1/04)

1 Triple X: Hey like that one pandarette uh
 2 Laquisha: [Ramen noodles.
 3 Valerie: [Hey.
 4 Hey.
 5 Be careful.
 6 Triple X: No [she does talk like that
 7 Valerie: [No. Be careful.
 8 LJ: Who.
 9 Valerie: Be careful. h
 10 Triple X: In uh [[Miss Gibson’s class?
 11 LJ: [Natalie? [
 12 Laquisha: h. Be careful. ((high pitched))
 13 Triple X: Yeah one of those skinny white girls?
 14 LJ: “I know the answer” h h ((nasal, high pitch, slow))
 15 Valerie: Oh Ashley?
 16 Triple X: “Like I know the answer” h ((nasal, high pitch, slow))
 17 Vivioni: Natalie Smith?
 18 ((laughs))
 19 Valerie: She~be~like h like “Um Miss James” ((nasal, high pitch,
 slow, final rise))
 20 ((laughs))
 21 Valerie: “I don’t understand this” ((nasal, high pitch, slow))
 22 “Oh Ashley.((low pitch))
 23 You’re so cute.” ((low pitch))
 24 ((laughter))
 25 Triple X: (She) know she be at home
 26 she be like ʔ:::~::~:((voiced pharyngeal fricative,
 growl sounds))
 27 ((laughs))

These students construct the identity of Natalie not only as a “pandarette” dancer (line 1) and “one of those skinny white girls” (line 13) through explicit references but as an inauthentic prep through their stylization of her speech. The collaborative stylized prep mocking is performed using nasality, relatively high pitch (see pitch tracks in

Figures 8.7-8.9 of pitches mainly in the 300-500 Hz range), exaggerated stress (lines 14 and 16, Figures 8.7 and 8.8, respectively), and phrase final rise (lines 19 and 21, Figure 8.9).

Figure 8.7: Pitch track of “I know the answer” (line 14, LJ, Tutorial, 12/1/04) ¹¹⁴

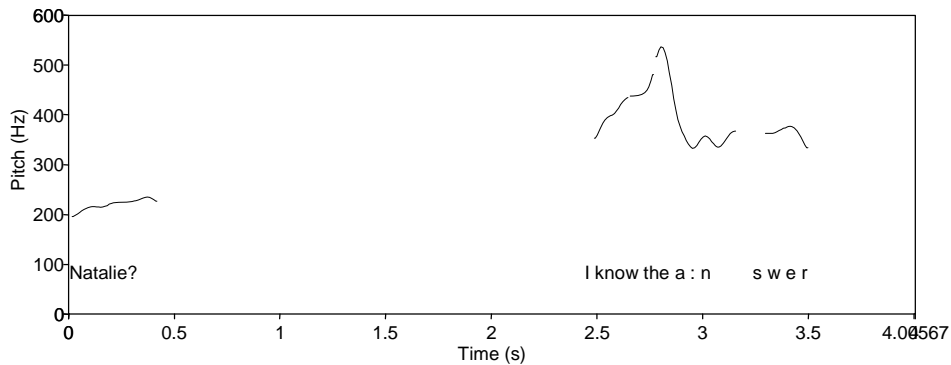
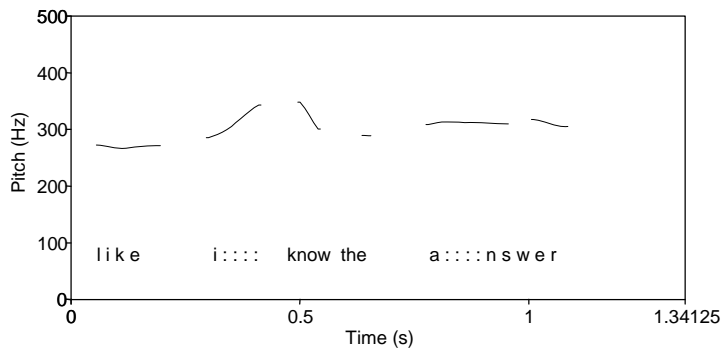
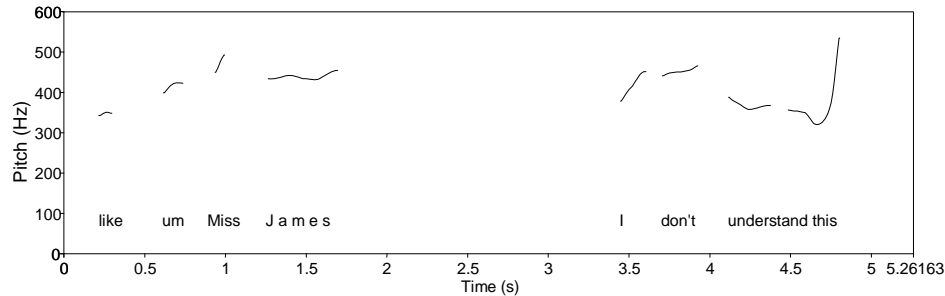


Figure 8.8: Pitch track of “Like I know the answer” (line 16, Triple X, Tutorial, 12/1/04)



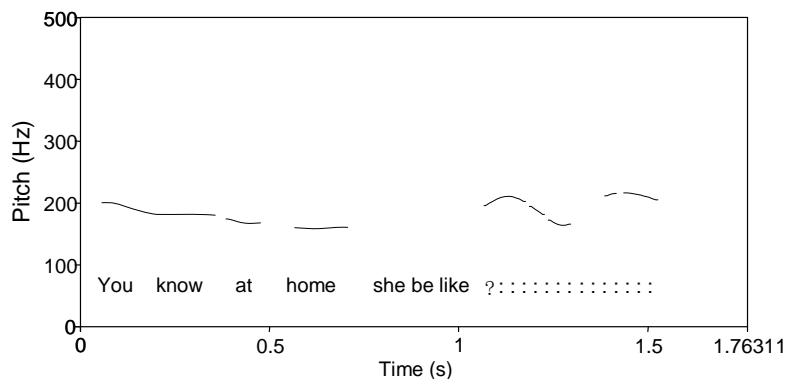
¹¹⁴ The intervening utterances have been manually deleted so that relevant pitch tracks can be compared. The lapse of time, however, has not been changed.

Figure 8.9: Pitch track of “I don’t understand this” (lines 19 and 21, Valerie, Tutorial, 12/1/04)¹¹⁵



The linguistic characteristics of stylized prep mocking features stand in contrast to both the unmarked style of the students as well as Triple X’s portrayal of Natalie’s ‘authentic’ style “at home” (line 26) that hovers just above and below 200 Hz and that consists of a continuous voiced pharyngeal fricative ‘growl’.

Figure 8.10: Pitch track of “You know at home she be like” (lines 25-26, Triple X, Tutorial, 12/1/04)



In addition to describing the linguistic and social characteristics of a particular girl, the students socialize one another into local values of authenticity. Displaying sycophantic behavior toward teachers, for example, is defined as undesirable and thus policed by

¹¹⁵ The intervening utterances have been manually deleted so that relevant pitch tracks can be compared. The lapse of time, however, has not been changed.

these students. The stylization thus not only comments on a particular girl's past behavior but defines and regulates the future actions of students in this Tutorial group.

The next excerpt also critiques the inauthenticity of a specific prep and takes place in the interactional moment between Examples 8.6 and 8.7. from the Sakaci Girls group discussed in the previous section. In this example, the Sakaci Girls diverge from the topic of Tiffany's sexuality to a critique of her potential propensity to gossip.

Example 8.9: "She talks a lot of shit" (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

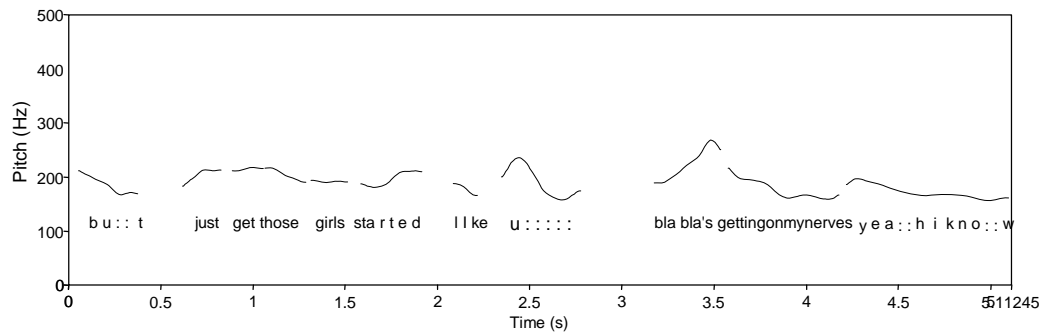
26 Yoshi: It's funny the ways she talks though.
 27 Miss Thang: Yeah.
 28 White Tiger: She changed lots since the eighth grade.
 29 =I used to get in so many fights with her?
 30 You know how she's like-
 31 You know how like to Kathy's face?
 32 She's like all goody goody?
 33 Miss Thang: Uh-huh?
 34 White Tiger: [She t-
 35 Piggy: [**She talks a lot of shit.**
 36 White Tiger: Yeah.
 37 Piggy: Oh crap ((self-correction))
 38 [((Burp))
 39 All: [((Laughter))
 40 White Tiger: It makes me wonder if she ever talk bad about me.
 41 Miss Thang: She probably did.
 42 White Tiger: She probably does.
 43 Miss Thang: Probably **all them white girls.**
 44 Piggy: [Just get **them** started.
 45 ((Deleted 11 lines))
 46 Piggy: But just get **those girls** started?
 47 Just be like "**U:::**
 48 **Blah blah's getting on my nerves"**
 49 "**Yea::h, I kno::w.**" (low and back /æ/, slow tempo)
 50 Swear to god.

Piggy's stylization in line 49, which includes a relatively low and back /æ/ in *yeah*¹¹⁶ and reduced tempo, is interestingly prefaced by her self-quotation of her own engagement in gossiping (lines 47 and 48) in order to "just get those girls started" (line

¹¹⁶ Supporting my impressionistic perception of Piggy's /æ/ as low and back, I used Praat to compare her f1 and f2 values in this utterance with those of 4 other instances of Piggy uttering "yeah I" as non-stylized speech. Her f1 was between 60-120Hz higher (higher f1 indicates a lower vowel) and her f2 between 60-550Hz lower (lower f2 indicates a backer vowel) than her other f1 and f2 values, suggesting that she produced a relatively low and back vowel for her stylized prep mocking.

46). However, her self-quotation does not carry features that differ from her non-stylized speech.¹¹⁷

Figure 8.11: Pitch track of “Blah blah’s getting on my nerves” (lines 48-49, Piggy, Sakaki Girls, 12/6/04)



Still, other than the low and back /æ/ and reduced tempo, no structural characteristics appear to mark Piggy’s quotation of preps as stylized prep mocking, but an interpretation of it as such may be guided in part by the particular activity being portrayed. As noted in the previous chapter, gossiping was frequently and stereotypically associated with preps. Interpreting her speech as stylized prep mocking may be aided by the fact that it is embedded in a collaborative discussion that the girls are having about a specific prep and, by extension, preps in general (“all them white girls” in line 43, “them” in line 44, and “those girls” in line 46), whom they critique not merely because they circulate negative information about other girls but because they do so while pretending to be good friends with them.

Piggy’s stylized prep mocking thus helped portray the inauthenticity of preps (See Chapter 4, Section 4.2.4 Ideology of realness, for a more extensive discussion of the lack of authenticity embodied by Tiffany and other preps.) Yet in addition to constructing

¹¹⁷ Here self-quoted speech in this example include pitch variance in *u:* and a relatively sharp pitch rise in *blah blah*, but these features appear to be within the typical range of pitch variation in her speech. Measuring her typical pitch variation is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

preps in a particular way, Piggy's stylization displayed her negative stance toward 'prep' activities, which built on her initial negative stance conveyed in her vulgar metapragmatic labeling of the activity as *talking shit/crap* ("She talks a lot of shit. Oh crap," lines 35 and 37). As the group's leader, Piggy likely had a particular kind of authority to encourage the other girls to hold similar stances toward such activities that she defined as inauthentic. Thus her stylized prep mocking, which was embedded in narratives about preps, served as an available resource and vehicle for social commentary on, and thus the social policing of, not only the behaviors of preps but those of other girls within this community.

8.3 AMBIGUITIES OF DESIRABILITY AND EMBODIMENT

I turn now to a discussion of why self-identified non-preps so frequently engaged in stylizing prep speech. Most obviously, preps were a visible and audible part of the local social landscape; in addition to being in students' classes, extracurricular activities, and childhood memories, preps belonged at least peripherally to the social networks of non-preps. They also achieved a particular visibility through their 'clustering' in specific physical spaces, such as the back of the bus and one corner table of the cafeteria, as well as by participating in activities, such as dancing and cheerleading, that invited the scrutiny of their peers. While not all face-to-face encounters engendered positive relations, such contact created the potential for adopting symbolic resources and ideological values made available across lines of social difference. Sufficient access may have also allowed "opportunities for learning" how to use these linguistic resources as preps did, which Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985) have noted as being an important factor in the adoption of linguistic resources. For example, although Miss Thang and Yoshi claimed that they were not preps, their acquaintance with girls considered preppy, may be one of the reasons they spoke in ways that could be characterized as preppy.

In addition, this style was likely a useful resource because the prep style had close ideological links with meaningful and relevant stances, acts, and activities in the local community, as I have discussed in the previous chapter. In other words, because style features were ideologically linked to kinds of practices, rather than just social types, these style features could be readily embedded in metapragmatic activities in which students commented on others' practices in moments of identity construction and socialization.

However, in the remainder of this chapter, I wish to focus on how the engagement in mocking preps was primarily motivated by the *ambiguous* status of stylized prep mocking practices that derived from both the fact that preppy practices were regarded as simultaneously desirable and undesirable and the fact that mocking preps may have provided opportunities for non-prep girls to 'try on', or embody, preppiness without committing fully to its identity.

8.3.1 Derision and desire

8.3.1.1 Derision

The prevalence of mocking preps reflected, at least at a basic level, the local devaluing of particular practices that were stereotypically associated with preps, such as whining, gossiping, judging, and flaunting female sexuality. The undesirability of preppiness emerged in part from sexist standards of evaluating feminine behavior. For example, the frequent debasement of cheerleaders in comments such as "They're not even that good. They can't even dance" (Grace, December 2, 2004) seemed to reflect the institutional devaluing of girls' activities at the school. Likewise, girls' bodies were subject to strict standards of behavior, as the pandarett dancers were widely critiqued by others because of rumors of their sexual activities with football players;¹¹⁸ students also

¹¹⁸ Liam, a football player, described discourses in the boys' locker room as typically consisting of bragging about sexual exploits, such as "I banged the pandarette or I banged the cheerleader" (12/9/04).

sometimes referred to these dancers by a nickname that alluded to such activities, although no such evaluative label was given to football players.

The institutional prioritizing of football, a sport that only boys could play contributed to the reproduction of gender hierarchies at the school. Pep rallies, which were school-wide events aimed at building ‘school spirit’, or a sense of institutional unity, were held only before football games.¹¹⁹ During these rallies, the varsity football players, who were mostly black, were constructed as local celebrities. Some even sported fashionable sunglasses as they nonchalantly, and almost shyly, walked across the gymnasium court to their seats amidst wild whistling and cheering. Cheerleaders usually spent hours practicing their gendered role of support, spending their own money to prepare bags of candy for players and painting posters before upcoming games. Yet according to one member of the football team, “Like they’re really bad? And they always mess up their cheers? So it’s kind of like we kind of hope they don’t come to the games? Cause it kind of makes your team look bad?” (December 9, 2004). It may be argued that critiques of cheerleaders and dancers partly contested institutional activities that were based on hierarchically organized gender relations, yet the potential disruption of gender hierarchies seemed, rather, an ironic consequence of sexist discourses that critiqued girls’ bodies and practices.

The derogation of preps, however, may stem as well from a local sense of race and class injustice: on the one hand, preps were perceived as “mean” and “snotty” to other students, while, on the other, they were regarded as receiving institutional benefits they did not deserve based on their ethnicity and class privilege. Some non-white

¹¹⁹ During these rituals in the gymnasium opened by the principal of the school, students sang the national anthem, the marching band played songs, student council members organized class-based competitions (e.g., between freshmen and sophomores), and several groups performed, including the elite choir, the JROTC drill team, and various dance groups: cheerleaders, the pandarattes, a hula dance group, a step group, a hip hop duo, and the color guard.

students, for example, suggested that preps were more likely to make a varsity sports team due to their acts of ingratiation to coaches (Sakaci Girls, December 6, 2004, January 13, 2005), while another student claimed to have heard that parents at preppy Hilltop Middle School had paid coaches for their children to make the top-level team (Academic, December 9, 2004). As seen in an example presented earlier in this chapter (Example 8.8: “I know the answer”), preppiness was disparaged via critiques of both their stereotypical femininity and class- and ethnicity-based privilege. (See Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2 White privilege) Specifically, a white member of the pandarettes was portrayed as using her preppy persona of enthusiasm and babyishness to gain a teacher’s favor. Such discourses may have been particularly salient in this local community where students were largely non-white and from lower-to-middle income families.

8.3.1.2 Desirable femininity

It is evident that even those who mocked preps sometimes engaged in the activities preps were accused of engaging in. For example, the Sakaci Girls in the above examples, were hardly innocent of the critiques they had of Tiffany and her preppy friends; “talking bad” did not seem to be something that these girls tried to mitigate, at least in this context, nor did they deny their interest in issues of sexuality, such as desiring large “boobs” and “booties,” generally regarded at the school, as in other U.S. contexts, as sexual parts of the female body. The seeming hypocrisy partly reflects the generality of the ways in which speakers construct meaning in interaction. The value of social practice is not a locally uncontested truth but the product of interactions in which specific social practices come to be linked with particular kinds of people who are evaluated in particular kinds of ways. In the critique by the Sakaci Girls, Tiffany’s practices *came* to be linked with whiteness, class privilege, and a particular kind of femininity against which these Korean girls meaningfully defined themselves.

The apparent contradiction may also derive from the ambiguous location of preps between both desirable and undesirable values. Though the Sakaci Girls constructed speaking like a prep as undesirable, in Example 8.5: “Really?” (1/13/05) (continued), Yoshi and Miss Thang easily accepted Piggy’s assignment of their speech as prep-like without apparent sacrifice of significant social capital. Preppiness was generally disparaged on an explicit level, but preps were also believed to have physical and linguistic qualities that were often valued among and in girls. For example, Grace, a Korean-white sophomore, observed that preps rarely had “zits” (lines 1 and 2), or acne, linking this observation with their access to medical treatment that less affluent students could not afford (lines 10-13).

Example 8.10: “They’re zitless” (Tutorial Girls, 12/2/04)

1 Grace: They’re zitless.
 2 Yeah they don’t have any zits.
 3 There’s like some of them =
 4 There’s like one or two that have zits. You know
 5 Elaine: The football players
 6 Grace: No not the football players.
 7 The preppy kids
 8 Heather: Yeah
 9 Elaine: Why is that?
 10 Grace: I think it’s because they have more money.
 11 They can just go to the dermatologist and stuff
 12 ((laughs))
 13 Grace: Yeah they can buy all those medicines like Proactive.

Thus, in the local political economy of the school, preps were understood not as having the means of production—the privilege of the bourgeoisie within a capitalist economy as defined by Marx—but the means of product consumption.

White girls were also sometimes constructed as possessing desirable physical characteristics that Korean girls were typically regarding as lacking, such as large eyes, rear-ends, and breasts. For example, the Sakaci Girls sometimes exchanged tips on how to make their eyes appear larger using particular makeup techniques. And in the

following interaction taking place among this group, Piggy describes several phenotypical differences between Miss Thang, who is Korean, and Ashley, “that one white girl” (lines 6) who has “blue eyes blond hair, all that stuff” (line 8).

Example 8.11: “Dang, Koreans got little eyes” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

1 Piggy: I was looking at homecoming pictures.
2 Jess’s right?
3 And I was looking at it.
4 Me and Bob the Third were looking at it.
5 I was like **“Dang::: . Koreans got little eyes:::?”**
6 Cause it was Kari and **that one white girl.**
7 I dunno her name with the glass-
8 she has **blue eyes blond hair all that stuff.**
9 She was at the game that one time we went together.
10 I know who Sheila Winters is.
11 Forgot her name. And then there was um
12 Miss Thang: Oh Ashley ?
13 Piggy: I think so.
14 And then there was you.
15 I was like **“Dang::: . Koreans got little eyes?”**
16 Miss Thang: Yeah that’s (me)
17 I think it’s Christine and not Kari.
18 Piggy: Oh yeah I meant Christine. Christine.
19 Miss Thang: I know what picture you’re talking about.
20 Piggy: And I was like **“Dang:::”**
21 and Bob the Third’s like ((high style)) “Ah:::”
22 We were pointing at **your eyes** right?
23 We were like **“Dang look at how that girl.**
24 **That white girl’s eyes** are compared to these two”
25 (xxx) And the other girl was like **“Damn.”**
26 Miss Thang: In that picture **my eyes came out really small.**
27 **So. It came out extra small.**

While there is no explicit discussion of the attractiveness of large eyes, the description of Koreans as having “little eyes” (lines 5 and 15), prefaced by a lengthened interjection *dang*, suggests the marked smallness of Korean eyes. Their fixation on eyes reflects their significance among Asian American girls and women in general as a locus of racialized beauty, specifically in discourses about eye shape, size, and color as well as the presence or absence of the epicanthic fold (Kaw, 1993).

In other moments, these girls discussed “butts” and “boobies” belonging to themselves, their sisters, their friends, and their sister’s friends, co-constructing a racialized feminine beauty.

Example 8.12: “Piggy has a butt for a Korean” (Sakaci Girls, 1/13/05)

1 Miss Thang: This girl is skinny.
2 She got a flat stomach.
3 Piggy: My sister Patty she got a flat stomach
4 but she got a **flat butt** too.
5 It’s nasty
6 Yoshi: I have a **flat butt**. Ich
7 White Tiger: **Piggy has a butt for a Korean**
8 Piggy: **Miss Thang got a plump butt**
9 Yoshi: I know I hate her.
10 Piggy: That thing is gushy.
11 All: ((laughs))
12 Yoshi: Oh every time I gain weight it goes to my face.
13 It never goes my boobs or butt
14 White Tiger: I was fat-ass.
15 **I still have a fat ass though.**
16 Piggy: Well you’re half white
17 Miss Thang: Heck yeah
18 Piggy: See we’re full Koreans.
19 I mean some people are kind of blessed.
20 My sister’s friend Eunice Kim?
21 We went to California
22 and we lived at Eunice Kim’s house for a while.
23 And like there’s two Eunices
24 and we’re like “Eunice Eunice.”
25 And they both look at us.
26 Anyway.
27 That girl.
28 **She got big old boobies.**
29 and they’re all real.
30 **She has a big butt?**
31 She got like pretty legs.
32 She has big eyes?
33 And like oh my god she’s pretty.
34 But she kind of had a big chin.

In these excerpts, these girls name several Korean girls who do not have stereotypical Korean characteristics: Piggy, Miss Thang, White Tiger, and Eunice are all described as having “plump” and “fat” “butts” (lines 7, 8, 15, and 28). Although this list

of exceptions might have potentially allowed these girls to challenge the generalization that Koreans have “flat butts” (lines 4 and 6), the framing of these cases as ‘exceptions’ rather than typical examples, through phrasings such as “big butt *for a Korean*” (line 7), reproduces assumptions about Korean female bodies.¹²⁰

The reproduction of ethnic stereotypes about specifically sexualized parts of the female body mapped notions of feminine sexuality onto understandings of ethnicity. Koreans as a group were thus constructed in these examples as less sexually desirable than girls belonging to other ethnic groups, despite their acknowledgement of ‘exceptions’. In other parts of conversations among these girls, frequent references to a white feminine sexuality suggested that white girls were regarded as physical ideals, or at least representative of a hypersexual femininity. In particular, the large breasts of white girls were discussed among these girls as objects of scrutiny and suspicion.¹²¹ In line 6 below, White Tiger encourages a discussion of Ashley’s “boobs [that] annoy [her],” which the participants link with her “blond hair blue eye[d]” whiteness (lines 4-5).

Example 8.13: “But her boobs annoy me I swear” (Sakaci Girls, 12/6/04)

1 White Tiger: Ashley isn’t that good.
 2 She’s improved a lot and her kicks
 3 but she’s not all that good
 4 Yoshi: It’s cause she’s like the whole American blond white
 5 Miss Thang: Yeah blond hair blue eyes
 6 White Tiger: But her boobs annoy me I swear.
 7 I’m not like that but
 8 Piggy: I think they’re fake
 9 Miss Thang: She said she wears a C thirty four
 10 Piggy: Ah my butt is C thirty four.
 11 She needs to shut that up
 12 Yoshi: Like she has some but-
 13 Miss Thang: It’s big?

¹²⁰ In addition to reproducing ideals of a racialized femininity, these girls construct their own femininity by engaging in a discourse style often associated with feminine identities, which includes deprecating one’s own body and complimenting others’. Femininity is thus constructed at two levels of discourse.

¹²¹ These discussions suggest that, in addition to breasts, facial attractiveness and body size could also be evaluated.

14 But it's not that big
 15 Piggy: It's not a C.
 16 At the most?
 17 Why are we talking about boobs.
 18 But anyway
 19 White Tiger: They're different sizes
 20 Piggy: At the most it would be B.
 21 At the most
 22 Miss Thang: She said it was B.
 23 It's either B thirty four or C.
 24 Piggy: Well actually she's flat.
 25 I think she's like this
 26 Miss Thang: Not it's bigger than mine.
 27 It's like this much bigger
 28 Piggy: I don't think so
 29 Miss Thang: It seems big.
 30 She's always just like
 31 White Tiger: She wears tight shirts
 32 Miss Thang: She wears tight shirts?
 33 So like they look big?
 34 Yoshi: You can tell her bras are padded though
 35 Piggy: Hey she's white.
 36 I'm sure she shops at Victoria's Secret.
 37 Be getting the water bras.
 38 Those things be making your boobs look big:::.

These excerpts suggest that although these Korean girls did not necessarily regard all white girls to be physically attractive, white girls were associated with physical features regarded as desirable because of their association with a sexualized femininity. Preps represented a standard against which other girls could evaluate their own bodies and bodily practices.

As such, non-preps sometimes desired engaging in practices defined as preppy. In Chapter 7 (Section 7.1.4 Multiple indexicality: Intersections of ethnicity, class and gender), I described Philip, a Filipina girl, who claimed that she was currently adopting a “preppy style” associated with upper-class whites (December 17, 2005). In another part of that same conversation she and her friends (Junior Girls)—none of whom were locally regarded as preps—discussed *being preppy* and *going super preppy* in terms of their clothing. Although preps were more likely to be explicitly critiqued than praised by non-

preps, the desirability of certain characteristics associated with preppy whiteness may have allowed admission to and adoption of a prep style viable options for even non-preps at the school.

8.3.2 Mocking as feminine embodiment

Stylized mocking depended on the use of stylistically marked features; sometimes it involved marked phonological features, such as exaggerated stress or steep intonational rises or falls, or marked lexical features stereotypically almost exclusively associated with an upper-class white persona. Yet their structure in general largely overlapped with features that a mocker might have used as part of her presentation of an ‘authentic’/non-stylized voice. One simple explanation for this linguistic overlap is that all types of styling, whether presented as a momentary presentation of an ‘inauthentic’ voice (stylization) or as ‘authentic’ self-presentation (self-styling), draws from available linguistic resources. Specifically, as discussed in the previous chapter, stylized prep mocking features were linked to a complex set of stances, acts, and activities associated with preppiness, and many of these stances, acts, and activities were those in which speakers might engage in their everyday lives. Linguistic resources that speakers used to mock preppy practices such as whining, for example, drew in part from resources that speakers used in their own expressions of complaint. Features of ‘authentic’ linguistic display thus overlapped with those used for moments of ‘inauthentic’ caricatures.

Additionally, a reverse indexical process may have been involved in which features that were ideologically linked to a stereotypical preppiness might have entered speakers’ ‘authentic’ styles because of the strong ideological links that preppiness had with stances that were both relevant and desirable to speakers’ everyday self-presentations. Linguistic items that were saliently linked with preps, such as a particular intonational shape of *oh my god*, might have been used by speakers when engaging in

acts associated with preps, such as whining, flirting, or expressing delight. Linguistic stereotypes of an ideological out-group may thus be adopted for engaging in speakers' authentic practices (Rampton, 1995). The use of out-group features as part of one's self presentation has been explored in discussions of how non-African Americans employ language linked with blackness to index stances, such as coolness and masculinity, stereotypically associated with certain out-group stereotypes of African Americans (Bucholtz, 1999a; Chun, 2000; Cutler, 1999). The particular value of embodying femininity may be one of the reasons that linguistic characteristics associated with a hyperfeminine stereotype were viewed as desirable. In an example partially reproduced below, Philip and Pinky jokingly mimic preps but simultaneously articulate a certain desire to engage in their language style.

Example 8.14: "I wanna act like that" (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

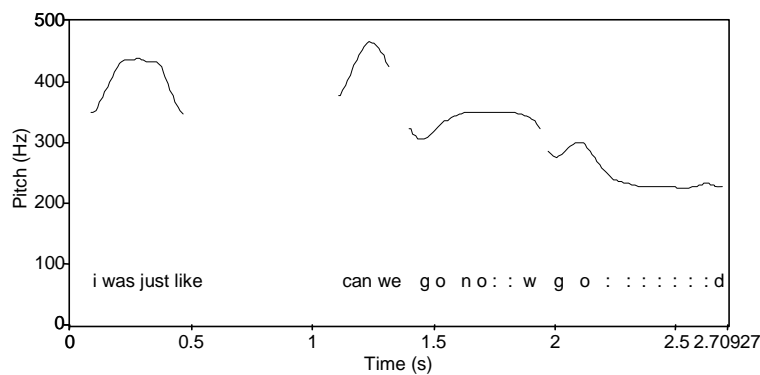
1 John-John: Yeah. That's how they talk
2 Pinky: Like "Oh my god" ((click))
3 "(You shoulda been in training)"
4 Philip: **I wanna act like that.**
5 **I wanna try.**
6 Elaine: Really.
7 Are you gonna try that next year?
8 Pinky: We should do that
9 just one day just come to school
10 Philip: Maybe. New year's resolution.

Although this discussion of "try[ing]" (line 5) to talk like a prep as a playful challenge for themselves implies its inauthenticity at an ideological level, Philip and Pinky suggest a positive alignment with this style, which they consider adopting as part of their own persona, not unlike how they try out new clothing styles. In other words, they suggest the possibility of engaging in a form of emulatory styling. And as I will discuss in Chapter 9 (Section 9.3 Relationship between ideology and interaction), the line

between emulating an out-group and using stylistic features as one's own may not always be clear.

Although these girls suggested that they did not currently embody a prep style of speech, they displayed alignments with it in their practices. For example, in Philip's self-quotation of complaint using stylized prep mocking, she engaged in stylized prep mocking while quoting herself. The intonational shape of her utterance, which includes phrase-final lengthening and wide pitch variance is visible in the pitch track below.

Figure 8.12: Pitch track of "Can we go now god" (Philip, Junior Girls, 12/17/04)



Additionally, about three minutes prior when I asked these girls about popular slang words, Philip and Pinky suggested that they used certain stereotypically preppy expressions, such as *duh* and *chaw* as part of their own slang repertoire.

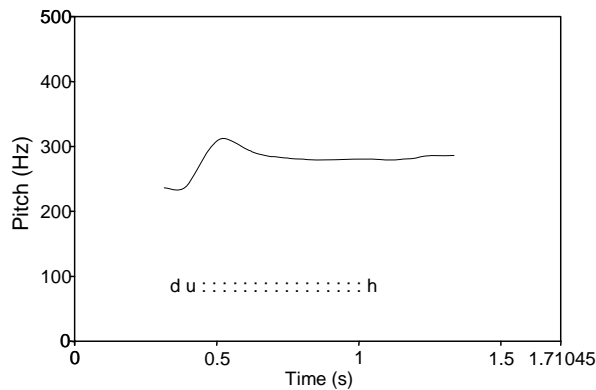
Example 8.15: "Duh" (Junior Girls, 12/17/04)

- 1 Elaine: What are the most popular slang terms these days?
 2 John-John: Right now what is that
 3 Pinky: I dunno I can't think of it.
 4 I think we're starting to **bring back** the old slang
 5 Philip: "**Duh:::**"
 6 Pinky: We **bring back** that old stuff now.
 7 Philip: Do we say "duh" **anymore**?
 8 Pinky: I say "duh". I say "chuh"
 9 John-John: No what do we say all the time
 10 Elaine: Is "chuh" the same thing as "duh"?
 11 Pinky: It's like "**Chaw:::**"
 12 Philip: Like "**Chaw:::**"

13 Pinky: It's like "Whatever:::" (/wʌʔ.ʔɛ.və::ɪ/)
 14 It's kind of like that.
 15 Philip: "Whatever" (/wʌ.rɛ.və:/) ((AAE phonology))¹²²
 16 "Whatever" (/wʌ.rɛ.və:/) ((AAE phonology))
 17 Pinky: Or "uh-uh." (/ʔʌ.ʔə/) ((nasal, AAE intonation))

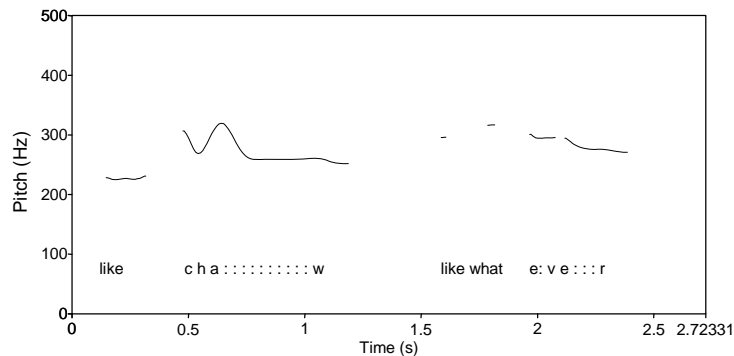
The sarcastic expression *duh*, which may mimic an unintelligent person “pausing in thought” (Random House, 1999), was associated with a prep style by Philip in Example 7.15: “They talk happy” (Junior Girls, 12/17/04), but now is described as part of her own style. Similarly, Pinky claims to use *chuh/chaw*, which she equates with *whatever*, an expression of dismissal (Wikipedia, 2006b). As seen in the pitch tracks below, *duh* and *chaw*, and *whatever* have similar extended final level intonations.

Figure 8.13: Pitch track of “Duh” (line 5, Philip, Junior Girls, 12/17/04)



¹²² Philip’s use of what may mimic and AAE phonological pattern—most saliently the absence of post-vocalic /r/—may suggest the “bivalent” status (Woolard, 1998) of this lexical item. The dismissive stance indexed by this term may be linked to both a stereotypical whiteness and blackness.

Figure 8.14: Pitch track of “Chaw” (lines 11 and 13, Pinky and Philip, Junior Girls, 12/17/04)



These examples suggest that the same linguistic forms they associated with an out-group could be adopted as part of their own everyday linguistic repertoire. At the same time, they classified the use of such terms as transitory in nature through their reference to change over time—“bring[ing] back” (lines 4 and 6) and “anymore” (line 7)—as they assumed that linguistic stylings of identity—like clothing trends—were subject to change over time. In this sense, the line between styling one’s own and “styling the other” (Rampton, 1999) may not always have been clear, as ‘styling the other’ seemed to be how students in this local community often styled themselves. (See a discussion of a similar issue with regard to stylized Asian mocking in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.1 Emulation)

In addition to linguistic overlap between the speech of preps and non-preps who mocked them, the distinction between ‘authentic’ and ‘inauthentic’ styling was sometimes unclear. One reason was that engaging in stylized prep mocking required the mocker’s embodiment of a stereotypical preppy style that could potentially point to the mocker’s own potential preppiness. The fine line between embodying preppiness and mocking it may be one of the reasons that boys rarely engaged in stylizing preps: among

the 39 cases of stylized prep mocking closely analyzed in this dissertation, boys performed the style in only 5 cases.

The following example shows one of these relatively rare cases. Here, a Korean-white boy named LJ mocks a Mexican girl named Maggie, after she speaks directly into the microphone at a table where students are being recorded (lines 1-2). After several comments that construct her act as intrusive (lines 3, 4, 6, 7, and 8), LJ mimics her contribution, using a high-pitched, falsetto voice quality (lines 10-11).

Example 8.16: “I can speak fluent jive” (Tutorial, 12/2/04)

1 Maggie: ((into mic)) Maggie here speaking.
2 Um. I can speak jive
3 Vivioni: What the hell is jive
4 Laquisha: What is that
5 Maggie: It was in a movie
6 LJ: You’re not wanted here
7 Vivioni: At all
8 LJ: Just stupid
9 Ann: Y’all are mean
10 LJ: “Uh Maggie here.
11 I can speak fluent jive”
12 All: ((laughs))
13 Laquisha: You sound so feminine when you said that
14 Triple X: He is feminine
15 Vivioni: Out of all the Koreans I ever seen
16 He got the widest eyes.
17 He got the widest eyes.
18 Laquisha: Oh feminine side feminine.
19 I’m just playing

LJ seems to construct Maggie as simultaneously hyperfeminine, arrogant, and tactless through his mocking act. Her claim to be able to speak “jive” may also an attempt to claim a local ‘coolness’, which LJ’s counters with his mocking. Interestingly, LJ’s mimicry of Maggie, while garnering laughs in line 12, leads the other participants to comment on LJ’s style, suggesting that his stylized femininity may reflect an authentic femininity. Laquisha claims, “You sound so feminine when you said that” (line 13) and later teases in a singing intonation, “Oh feminine side, feminine” (line 18). LJ’s friend

Triple X playfully and paradigmatically replaces Laquisha's verb (*sounds*, line 13) with what he presents as a more accurate verb (*is*, line 14). Such teasing commentary about LJ's femininity suggests that mocking a hyperfeminine persona created the potential for understanding such mocked femininity as part of the mocker's own persona. Such an interpretation may parallel the kind of "leakage" present between participant roles that prevents an animator's complete "insulation" from personal responsibility (Hill & Irvine, 1993; Irvine, 1996; Jaffe, 2000).

In addition to the potential for such leakage, mocking the femininity of preps was locally regarded to be a feminine act because mocking preppiness was rarely about constructing an oppositional gender identity of *masculinity*, but one of the ways in which girls often made distinctions between *different kinds of femininity*. As described earlier in this chapter, stylized prep mocking was a useful practice for critiquing other girls' practices and talking about their practices in relation to them. In other words, styling preppiness, whether as part of one's own voice or the voice of a derided other, was typically about performing a speaker's particular kind of feminine identity. And in some cases, it may even have been a means of 'trying' preppiness on, for just a moment and with little risk of being attributed the undesirable aspects of what it meant to be a prep at Diversity High.

8.4 DISCUSSION

I have shown in this chapter that stylized prep mocking was a useful resource for engaging in important cultural activities at Diversity High, particularly among female students. Like all forms of stylized mocking, this practice allowed speakers to construct their own identities in opposition to those they mocked. Second, mockers constructed their identities by being able to showcase their local cultural and linguistic competence, particularly as humorous speakers. Importantly, I have suggested that processes of

identity construction were not only collaboratively achieved in interactions but embedded in relations of power. By definition, stylizing preps through mocking was a claim about the identity of the mocked speaker as being a prep—or like a prep—and the authority to make such claims could be hotly debated. Such claims and negotiations were the very sites where relative status within friendship groups were established and contested.

Additionally, stylized prep mocking was used by students to socialize one another into local community norms. Specifically, I focused on how such stylization was embedded in narratives featuring actual preps whose speech was quoted and simultaneously stylized, in an act of “marking” (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972). Through such stylization, narrators established their critical stance toward practices in which protagonists were said to have engaged in, thus serving to potentially regulate the future practices of the narrative’s audience. I demonstrated how two particularly important values in the local community—sexual morality and authenticity—were thus circulated and potentially learned through the kinds of narratives students often shared with one another.

Moving beyond a description of how stylized prep mocking could be put to use in local cultural activities, I then addressed some of the reasons that this specific form of stylization may have been frequently adopted in the community. I gave particular attention to the ambiguous status of preps in the community as embodying both desirable and undesirable qualities. Consequently, talking about preps—and talking like preps—was a means for female students in particular to assess their own practices, bodies, and symbolic displays. As discussed by Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), speakers require sufficient motivation to speak in ways resembling a social group whose language features are accessed, analyzed, and performed.¹²³ The stereotype of the prep, while often

¹²³ Focusing on these students’ motivations and desire to emulate a preppy style in their everyday lives may appear to risk a problematic focus on psychological states as the basis of language practice. My point

negatively framed in explicit discourse, was also associated with certain enviable characteristics, potentially motivating some girls to try to speak like them, even in moments framed as mocking.

In other words, although self-styling and stylized mocking can be defined as very different kinds of practices—in one case, a speaker claims to be preppy and, in another, such preppiness is constructed as an object of ridicule—I have problematized this distinction in the case of stylized prep mocking. I have argued that mocking the stereotypical femininity of preps was centrally about constructing a speaker’s own brand of femininity. According to Coupland (2001a), speakers can manipulate the ambiguity between self-styling and stylization, and “the assessment of whether this utterance ‘is really mine’ rather than ‘me playing’ or ‘me subverting’ can often be left deliberately unclear” (349). But I wish to additionally suggest that regardless of whether a speaker intends to play on this ambiguity, the potential for readings other than those intended always exists, leaving all moments of styling potentially ambiguous. It may merely be that certain moments are left more ambiguous than others.

is not to claim that desire itself motivates specific uses of features associated with preps, as according to a rational model of language use (e.g. Myers-Scotton, 1993), but that the positive value of language features associated with certain groups are more likely to be adopted on a regular basis, thus become part of a speaker’s habitus. In addition, it is important to note that using elements of language associated with preps does not reflect a desire to be a prep, or even to be preppy; despite the salient links that certain features have with preps, they can be used in moments of interaction to achieve diverse interactional meanings.

Chapter 9: Dimensions of Multivocalic Styling

This chapter proposes a model for understanding the complex interaction between the meanings of styling practices at the levels of ideology and interaction. Although much of this dissertation has focused on stylized mocking practices specifically, I turn now to a discussion of how such practices can be understood as both distinct from and related to other linguistic phenomena that may also be described as *multivocalic*, such as *crossing* (Rampton, 1995), *style-shifting* (Coupland, 1980; W. Labov, 1972c), *accommodation* (Giles & Powesland, 1975), and *strategies of condescension* (Bourdieu, 1991) as well as Hill's (1999) and Bakhtin's (1981; 1984) notions of *mock language* and *stylization*, respectively. Unlike past discussions that have tended to allude to their overlaps as a passing comment, I hope to provide a relatively systematic description of these practices based on some of the underlying dimensions that define them.

This goal, however, is accompanied by a small caveat. As a necessary step to providing some analytical order, my model introduces particular dimensions that may appear to oversimplify practices that are no doubt more complex than my initial description of them. I wish to suggest that such 'neat' analytical dimensions are meant to be a starting point from which we can begin to discuss the 'messier' aspects of these practices. Much of this messiness has already been illustrated in the preceding chapters.

The more specific goals of this chapter include the following: First, I present the three relevant dimensions of my analysis (*context*, *authenticity*, and *value*) and examine the complex relationship among them by drawing primarily on examples from my data. In important respects, the interactional uses of styling practices at Diversity High were distinct from the relatively more enduring ideological relationships that speakers had with particular language varieties as discussed in Chapter 4. However, I suggest that, despite

the slippage between these two levels, the meanings that emerged in interactions necessarily depended on and were limited by ideologies of authenticity and value that circulated within the local community. Second, I use the model to illustrate how certain practices sometimes received interpretations that may have diverged from the speaker's intent, as they were understood as mocking, even if not intended as such. Additionally, the model also shows how the ideological value of styles, and language varieties more generally, were products of where speakers were positioned in relation to them. Finally, the last part of this chapter delves into some of the 'messiness' mentioned earlier, specifically in regard to the ambiguities between the dimensions of authenticity and value. I hope to show how this model might help bring order to some of this mess without wiping it completely from our analysis.

9.1 CONTEXT, AUTHENTICITY, AND VALUE

I argue in this chapter that styling practices, and multivocalic practices more generally,¹²⁴ can be analyzed in terms of three key dimensions: *context*, *authenticity*, and *value*. By *context*, I refer to the particular cultural or linguistic frame to which a styling event is anchored, placing the styler in a particular relationship with the style she uses. While I acknowledge that contexts are potentially infinite, as (re)contextualizations can occur limitlessly by different performers and for different audiences across space and time, my analysis focuses on two primary types of contexts: the *ideological* and the *interactional*.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Given the generalizeability of this analysis to multivocalic practices such as dialect-shifting and codeswitching, I use the terms *style* and *variety* interchangeably in this chapter.

¹²⁵ Keith Basso's (1979) important work on stylized portrayals of the Whiteman among Western Apaches makes a similar, though not identical distinction between "cultural" and "social" meanings. The notion of the "social" in his analysis, however, refers to interpersonal relations, rather than the speaker's alignment with the style she embodies, which is my central interest here.

I suggest that the ideological context intersects with the two remaining dimensions of the model. I thus introduce the next dimension of *authenticity*, which describes the speaker's 'proximity' to a style. Such proximity may be understood in terms of whether she is a 'native' or 'non-native' speaker or whether she is a speaker of the variety at all. It may also refer to whether a speaker is a 'member' of the relevant speech community, and if so, what kind of member, such as 'core', 'peripheral', or 'honorary'. For matters of simplicity, I suggest that, at the ideological level, the 'authentic' status of a speaker may be called *in-group* (I) while the 'inauthentic' status may be called *out-group* (O). Clearly, real situations are far more complex. However, beginning with a binary classification, and keeping in the backs of our minds that there is both a continuum and multiplicity of authenticities, will be necessary for the present analysis.

The third dimension of *value* is also present at the ideological level, referring to the 'prestige' that a particular variety has. The value attributed to local varieties in the context of Diversity High was discussed in Chapter 4. As noted in past discussions, there may be competing value systems, such that certain varieties have a covert prestige while others have overt prestige (W. Labov, 1972a; Trudgill, 1972). In addition, the status of language varieties in formal institutions is not necessarily hegemonic (cf. Bourdieu, 1991), given that "alternative markets" may exist (Haeri, 1997; Woolard, 1985). Thus I present *high prestige* (H) and *low prestige* (L) without specifying to whom and in what situation the variety at hand is prestigious, allowing the model to be flexibly applied to different kinds of linguistic settings and speakers.

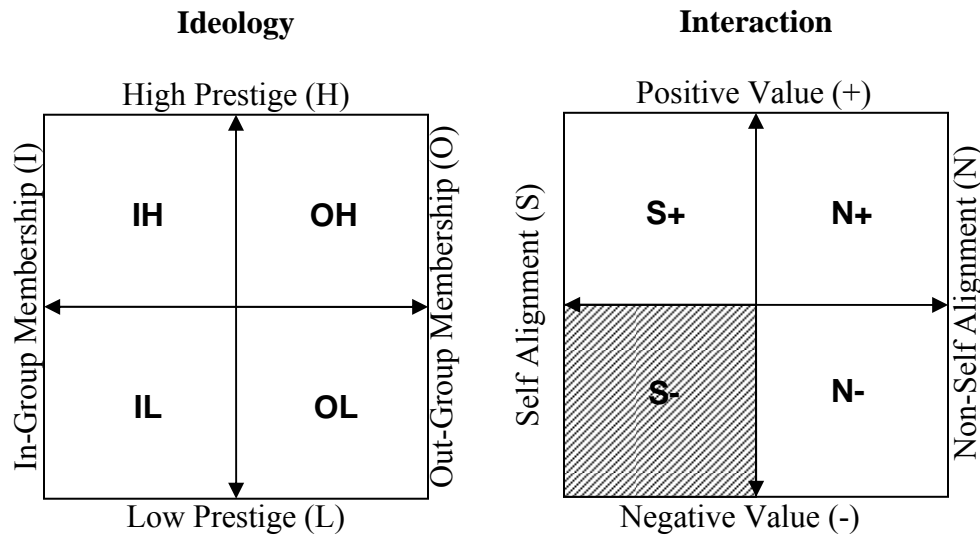
I move now to the interactional level, where corresponding dimensions of authenticity and value can be found. In previous chapters, I examined the ways in which speakers could *de-authenticate* (Coupland, 2001a) the styles they used and have suggested that such interactional positioning did not necessarily depend on ideological

definitions of community membership. Such stylization, in which a speaker presents a style as if it is not her own ((N)on-self), contrasts cases in which a style is embodied to style the self (S), such that it is presented as authentic, at least in the moment of interaction.

Many of the mocking practices I explored in this dissertation constituted a specific type of stylization in which the speaker, in a particular interactional moment, *negatively* aligned in relation to the de-authenticated style. As discussed in Chapter 2, the particular oppositional positioning of the speaker to the stylized discourse thus constituted what Bakhtin (1984) refers to as *vari-directional double-voicing*, or *parody*. In his discussion of British adolescent practices, Rampton (1995) describes uses of stylized Asian English as falling under this category (see also Quist & Jørgensen, in press). In contrast, *uni-directional double-voicing* involves a style that is still stylized but that reflects the speaker's "own particular aspirations" (Bakhtin, 1984: 193), such as in uses of Creole by the same adolescents Rampton studied. A dimension of *value* is thus relevant to the kinds of interactional meanings that speakers achieve and may not correlate directly with the value that registers, styles, and varieties have within circulating ideologies. In this model, I represent these values as positive (+) and negative (-), again recognizing the complexities that may arise from competing interpretations as well as ambiguities.

Combining the three dimensions just discussed, I illustrate them in the two 2x2 matrix below. (The impossibility of presenting a style in a negative (-) light when framed as a speaker's own style is represented in the figure on the right by the shading in the lower left quadrant (S-).)

Figure 9.1: Dimensions of authenticity and value at the levels of interaction and ideology

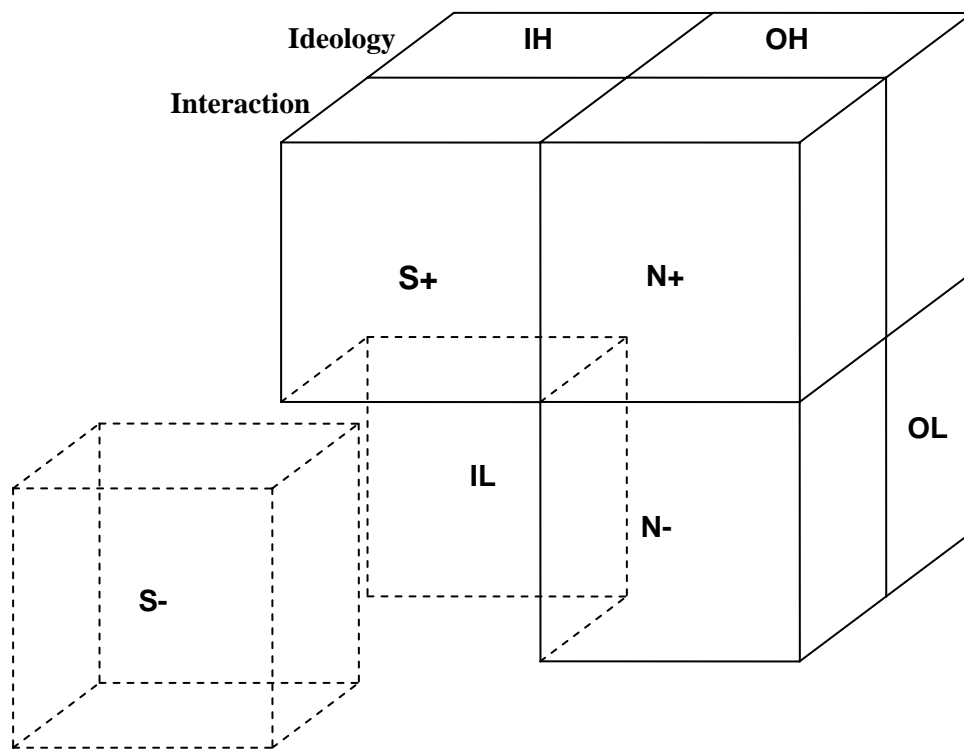


Before continuing, it may be worth mentioning the striking resemblance that the dimensions of value and authenticity have to previous sociolinguistic discussions of *power/status* and *solidarity* (e.g., P. Brown & Levinson, 1987; R. Brown & Gilman, 1960; Keating, 1998; Woolard, 1985, among others). The resemblance may not be coincidence, possible reflecting particular “universals” of interpersonal relations across cultures (White, 1980). In this dissertation, I have chosen to use the alternative terminology *value* and *authenticity* so not to confuse my discussion of a *speaker’s relationship with the style she uses* with those that focus on the *relationship between speakers and addressees*, such as in discussions of politeness pronouns and honorific markers. Though, clearly, as noted by Agha (2007), the use of registers and styles is related to speaker-addressee relationships as styling can be regarded as well as a means of indexing a particular set of participant relations between speakers and “performed figures” (178).

9.2 TYPES OF STYLING

Each moment of styling involves both ideological and interactional contexts. The involvement of both of these levels can be represented by combining the two 2x2 matrix, such that the 'interaction square' is placed in front of the 'ideology square', resulting in a three-dimensional cube. The front-to-back axis represents the dimension of *context*, the vertical axis, *value*, and the horizontal axis, *authenticity*. As explained above, the fact that styling presented as a speaker's own voice is never negatively valued in the immediate interaction is represented by the empty front, lower right quadrant where S- would be.

Figure 9.2: Cube figure illustrating three dimensions of styling



The resultant figure generates 12 possible kinds of styling practices. With each instance of styling involving ideological and interactional meanings, styling combines (at least) one of the four back ideology quadrants (IH, OH, IL, or OL) and (at least) one of

the front interaction quadrants (S+, N+, or N-). The mention of there being “at least” one from the front and one from the back is important, given that certain practices may be ambiguous with respect to which boxes represent them. The table below, which lists 12 (3 x 4) possible combinations, includes more conventional descriptions of each of these styling types. Examples of each of these types will be introduced later in this chapter.

Table 9.1: Twelve types of styling practices

STYLE TYPE	ABBREV	IDEOLOGY		INTERACTION		DESCRIPTION
		MEMBER-SHIP	PRESTIGE	ALIGNMENT	VALUE	
1	IHS+	in	high	self	positive	Prototypical self-styling of a prestige style
2	ILS+	in	low	self	positive	Prototypical self-styling of a low prestige style
3	OHS+	out	high	self	positive	Upward convergent adoption (accommodation, emulation)
4	OLS+	out	low	self	positive	Downward convergent adoption (accommodation, condescension)
	-	in	high	self	negative	-
	-	in	low	self	negative	-
	-	out	high	self	negative	-
	-	out	low	self	negative	-
5	IHN+	in	high	non-self	positive	Positive in-group stylization of a prestige style
6	ILN+	in	low	non-self	positive	Positive in-group stylization of a low prestige style
7	OHN+	out	high	non-self	positive	Positive out-group stylization of a prestige style
8	OLN+	out	low	non-self	positive	Positive out-group mocking of a low prestige style
9	IHN-	in	high	non-self	negative	In-group mocking of a prestige style
10	ILN-	in	low	non-self	negative	In-group mocking of a low prestige style
11	OHN-	out	high	non-self	negative	Out-group mocking of a prestige style
12	OLN-	out	low	non-self	negative	Prototypical out-group mocking of a low prestige style

These 12 types can be grouped into overlapping, superordinate categories based on labels commonly used by sociolinguistics researchers.

Table 9.2: Conventional categories of styling practices

TYPES	INTERACTION	IDEOLOGY	DESCRIPTION
1, 2	S	I	Self-styling (style-shifting)
3, 4	S+	O	Convergent adoption (accommodation)
3, 4, 7, 8, 11, 12		O	Crossing
8, 12		OL	Mock language (Hill 2005)
5-8	N+		Stylization (Bakhtin 1984, Rampton 1995)
5-12	N		Stylization (as defined here, also Coupland 2001a, 2001b)
8-12	N	OL	Stylized mocking (as defined here)
	N-		

Engagement in self-styling¹²⁶ (Types 1 and 2) requires that the style be regarded as authentic to the speaker at the level of ideology (I) and framed in the interaction, thus at the level of interaction, as part of her own voice (S). Examples of these types at Diversity included the use of prototypical style-shifting, including casual, polite, or cheerful styles, among a vast array of other namable and unnamable styles (Eckert, 2004). These styles were non-stylized, or framed as part of an authentic persona, such that their styling acts sent the message that ‘this is really me speaking’. For the bilingual and bidialectal students at the school, self-styling included instances of non-stylized code-switching and dialect-shifting, such as between English and Korean and MAE and AAE, respectively, as long as these varieties were ideologically regarded and interactionally presented as authentic to their users.

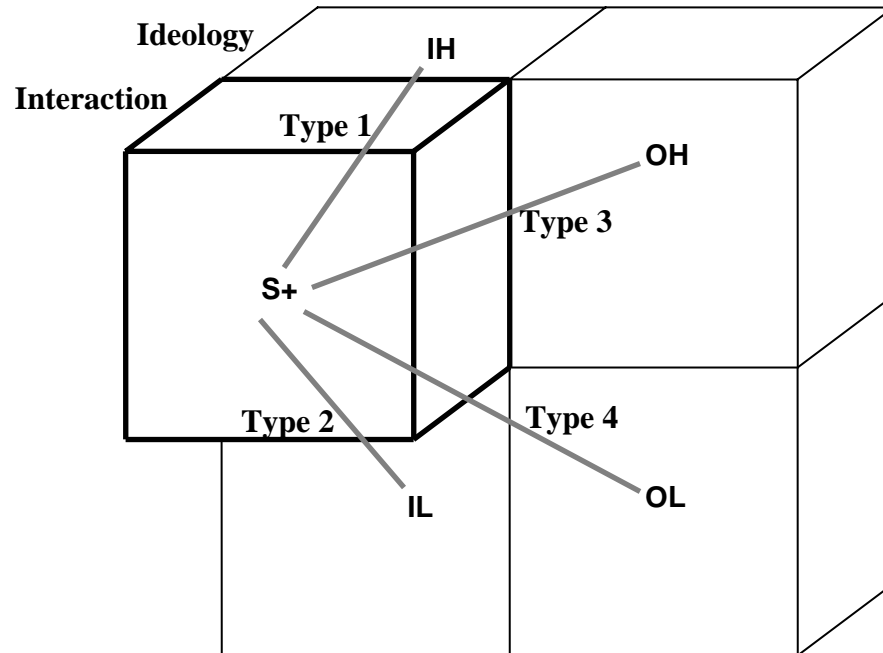
¹²⁶ I use this term opposite *stylization*, which involves the speaker’s de-authentication of, or temporary distancing from, the embodied style. In contrast, Cameron’s (2000, p. 326) use of the “self-styling,” refers to the use of styles as a speaker’s own “choice,” which she contrasts with uses of styles that are enforced by a social superior as a form of “verbal hygiene” (Cameron, 1995).

Convergent adoption (Types 3 and 4) involves the use of an out-group style (O) framed as part of the speaker's own voice (S+). If a speaker uses an out-group style associated with others present in the conversation, she *accommodates*.¹²⁷ Such was the case when a U.S.-raised Korean student named Brian sometimes code-switched from his more proficient English into his less proficient Korean to communicate with his recently immigrated Korean friends who had limited English proficiency. One specific form of accommodation is *emulation* (OHS+), in which a speaker adopts a style regarded as having prestige (OH), at least locally, and linked with an image of a kind of speaker that may or may not be present. In the local community, the use of features of AAE by white *wiggers* was often interpreted as a form of emulation given the local prestige associated with AAE particularly among boys.

The following figure illustrates the four types of styling I have mentioned so far in which a style is presented as authentic to the speaker at the level of interaction (S+). Gray diagonal lines connect cubes at the level of ideology with cubes at the level of interaction, given the involvement of both levels in each moment of styling. Style Type 3 (upward convergent accommodation or emulation by wiggers), for example, involves cubes OH and S+, an ideologically inauthentic, prestige style framed at the level of interaction as both positive in value and authentic to the speaker.

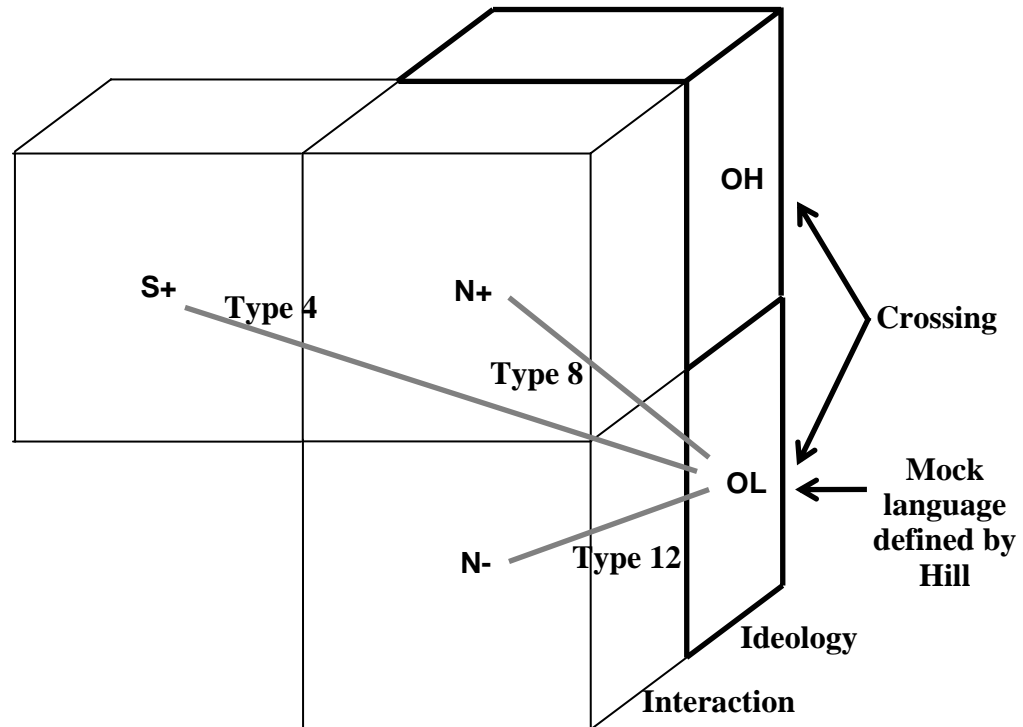
¹²⁷ Giles and Powesland (1975) discuss accommodation in terms of social motivations, such as a speaker's attempt "to modify or disguise his person in order to make it more acceptable to the person addressed" (158). I refrain from addressing this psychological component of accommodation given the difficulty of ascertaining motivations that potentially lie at less explicit levels of consciousness. This is not to say that motivations are not involved. In fact, ideologies about speakers' motivations are central to how styling acts are interpreted.

Figure 9.3: Styling presented as authentic to the speaker



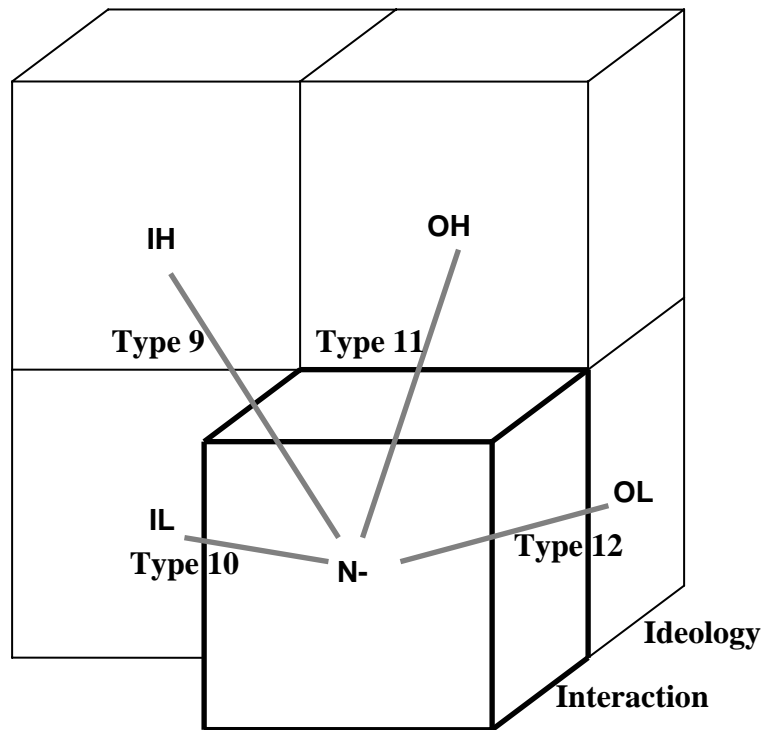
Crossing (O) (Types 3, 4, 7, 8, 11, and 12) is a practice that overlaps with many other styling types, given its inclusive definition: the use of a language features ideologically regarded as inauthentic to the speaker (Rampton, 1995), regardless of how these features are framed in interaction. It thus includes a range of practices such as *adoption*, *positive out-group stylization*, and *mocking*. Hill's (2005) discussion of Mock Spanish involves a practice that constitutes a subtype of crossing, given that she delineates it as Spanish spoken by an out-group (O), namely, "monolingual English speakers who are not of Latino descent" (114). Her analysis also assumes as relevant the low prestige (L) of Spanish among many monolingual English speakers.

Figure 9.4: Ideologically defined crossing and mocking



In this dissertation, I discuss mocking as being of two types. *Ideological mocking* includes Hill’s definition (Types 4, 8, and 12, OL), while *interactional mocking* is defined by its interactional framing not only as inauthentic to the speaker but also as negative in value (N-)—regardless of its ideological prestige. It is thus a subtype of stylization, whereby a style is constructed as inauthentic within the interaction, at least temporarily. As mentioned earlier, it is what Bakhtin (1984) refers to as *vari-directional double-voicing* and what other scholars have identified as *parody* (see Chapter 2, p. 8). Instances of stylized mocking of this second type are represented as Types 9-12.

Figure 9.5: Mocking defined at the level of interaction



Mock language as defined by Hill (OL) thus does not include self-deprecatory uses of styles of low or high prestige (Types 9 and 10) (e.g., mocking uses of a hyperstandard variety by academics), nor does it include out-group mocking using a high prestige style (Type 11) (e.g., parodic uses of MAE by non-MAE speakers). In this dissertation, I have suggested that the stylization of preps as speaking with forms that may have been locally regarded as somewhat desirable, and thus have some degree of prestige, were still clearly instances of mocking because of how the style was framed as both negative and inauthentic to the styler.

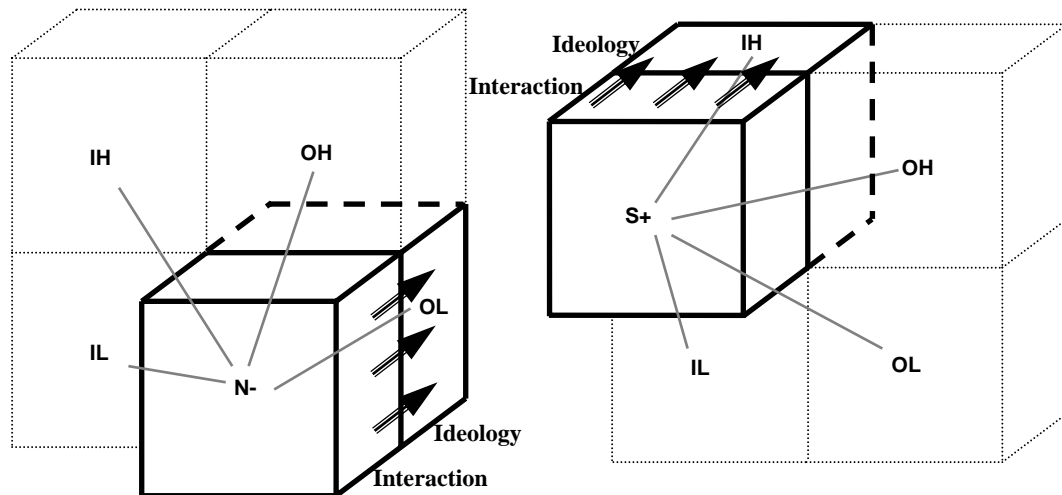
9.3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IDEOLOGY AND INTERACTION

The definition of mocking I follow in this dissertation is not intended to replace Hill's definition but to provide a perspective on mocking practices that additionally

considers the meanings that speakers achieve within moments of interaction and the relationship of these meanings with ideologies of language and identity. This section describes in particular the mutually constitutive, but non-deterministic, relationship between ideology and interaction.

My interaction-based approach assumes that language practices are not only influenced by ideologies but their cumulative moments can reproduce or create shifts in ideologies. For example, the repeated mocking of a style by framing it as both inauthentic and negative in value, regardless of its more widely understood ideological value, can lead to a local community's revaluing of the style. The following figures, which show arrows pointing from the level of interaction to that of ideology, illustrate the potential effects that the accretion of interactional meanings can have on ideological meanings. In the first case, the repeated framing of styles as both inauthentic and negative in value (N-) can result in the ideological status of a style as both inauthentic and low in prestige (OL). For example, the use of a style drawing on Standard English features, often considered a prestige style within formal educational settings (e.g., in classes), may become devalued in the local community if it is used repeatedly in mocking practices (e.g. outside classes).

Figure 9.6: The effects of cumulative practices on ideological meanings



In the following example, the institutional prestige of Standard English phonology ('ing' pronounced with a velar rather than alveolar nasal) is challenged through its presentation in a stylized form, leading to both metalinguistic discussion and repeated stylization among this local group of students. The initial stylization by Damon is a commentary on cookies I had baked for him and his friends.

Example 9.1: "These are bitching" (Middle School, 11/30/04)

- 1 Damon: These are bitching Elaine with a capital B.
- 2 Ralph: Bitching
- 3 Momi: Hey you sound like a white boy
- 4 trying to be black h h
- 5 Ralph: Wow Damon
- 6 Damon: These are bitching.
- 7 They're bitching.
- 8 Want some?
- 9 Momi: "They're bitching"
- 10 Jap: He says it like with a G?
- 11 Momi: h h
- 12 "They're bitching."

Although Standard English had contested prestige in this community long before this particular conversation, it was still associated with an "overt prestige" defined by the

educational institution, and moments such as this contributed to the local contestation of its overt prestige value.

The cube on the right in the figure shown above illustrates the repeated presentation of a style as authentic and positive in value (S+), thus reinforcing the idea that a particular style is authentic and prestigious (IH). The widespread and positive uses in the mainstream media of some AAE-origin features associated with the hip hop community has led to the potentially higher level of prestige for these features, despite the prevailing belief in many formal mainstream institutions that AAE has low prestige.

Although I have suggested that historically low prestige styles can become positively valued if given such value repeatedly across interactional contexts (ILS+ and OLS+), in individual cases, there may be limits to the potential positive meanings associated with these forms of styling. Hill (1999) addresses such limitations in her discussion of Mock Spanish, which indexes negative stereotypes of Spanish speakers. She suggests that even though non-Spanish-speaking users of Mock Spanish may frame it in positive ways, such as elevating the mocker's persona as "easygoing, humorous, yet cosmopolitan" (Hill, 2005: 113), the stereotyped variety necessarily reproduces a negative stereotype of Spanish speakers as "lazy, dirty, unintelligent, sexually loose, and politically corrupt" (p. 114). Importantly, she notes that Spanish is typically subordinated to English in U.S. public settings, reflecting the ethnic subordination of Latinos by whites. Hill's reading of Mock Spanish as a racist practice may be augmented by its performance by out-group speakers, or "monolingual English speakers who are not of Latino descent" (114); not only is the hierarchical relationship between Spanish and English unambiguous, but speakers are often less likely to espouse a positive alignment toward an out-group variety than to their own. Similarly, uses of Mock Ebonics (Ronkin & Karn, 1999), or written representations of stereotypical AAE primarily by whites, can

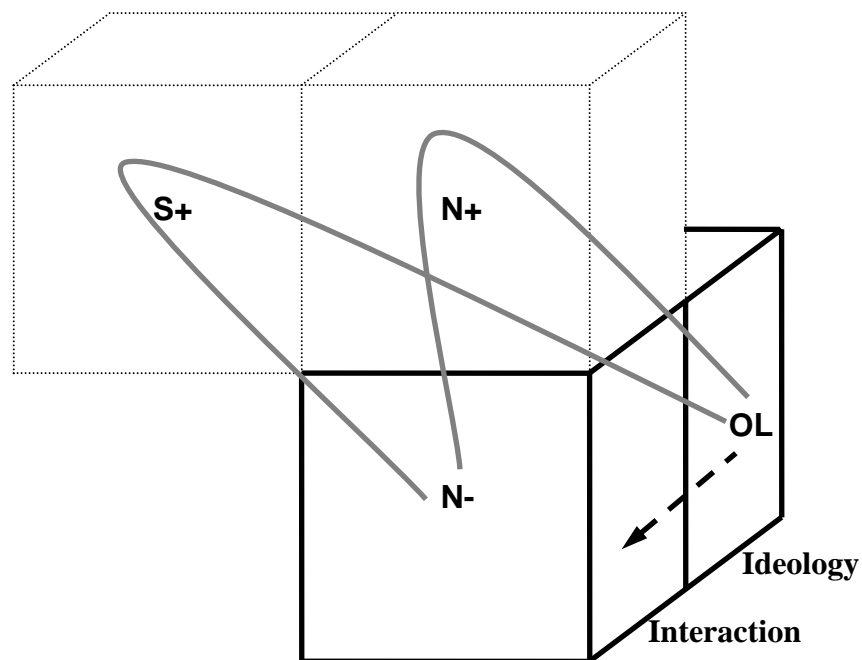
subordinate AAE to standard varieties of English by representing the alleged linguistic laziness and disorder of AAE speakers. It has also been argued that even apparently emulatory uses of a historically subordinated out-group language engages in a similar semiotic process of reproducing ethnic hierarchies. For example, non-African American uses of AAE-origin elements, which Bucholtz (1999b) refers to as CRAAVE (Cross-Racial African American Vernacular English), may be used by white Americans (Cutler, 1999), Asian Americans (Bucholtz, 2004b; Chun, 2001; Reyes, 2005a), and other ethnic groups in ways that index positive urban, youth, and often masculine, identities, while also reproducing racist stereotypical images of African Americans as urban, masculine, hypersexual, and tough.

As noted by Hill (1999), crossing practices are limited in their potential to change the racial order, given that potentially subversive moments tend to be restricted to a limited set of contexts, such as childhood games (e.g. Hewitt, 1986). It is also important to note that their common framing as play leaves ambiguous the degree to which the act is intended as ideological subversion or reproduction. Such ambiguity and tension is often the basis of the humor understood in play. In the context of Diversity High, stylization practices that could potentially be regarded as subversive, such as the use of out-group prestige styles to create negative interactional meanings (OHN-) and the reverse (OLN+), were indeed usually understood as playful acts.

Central to Hill's argument is the ideological persistence of social meaning at the interactional level. As she notes, the interactional meaning of Mock Spanish depends on knowledge of racist stereotypes: "It is impossible to 'get' Mock Spanish—to find these expressions funny or colloquial or even intelligible—unless one has access to these negative images" (1999: 683). The use of out-group styles of low prestige thus invites their interpretation as a form of mocking at the interactional level—that is, as if

constructed as having negative value and as stylized—even if such a reading has not been intended. This potential interpretation is represented by the curved lines that initially connect cube OL (a low prestige, inauthentic style) with S+ and N+ (positively framed stylistic practices) but then end up at N-, such that the resultant interpretation is that of interactional mocking. The influence that ideological meanings may have on meanings constructed at the level of interaction is represented with the straight dotted line pointing from OL to N-; ideologies are ‘guiding forces’ that invite, attract, and allow interpretations at the level of interaction that mirror meanings at the level of ideology.

Figure 9.7: The tendency for ideologically defined mocking to be interpreted as interactional mocking



The persistence of ideological meanings in the interpretation of practices can explain why register shifts by native speakers of English in order to accommodate to non-native speakers (OLS+), often called “foreigner talk” (Ferguson, 1975) (see discussion in Chapter 6, Section 6.3.2 Accommodation), can sometimes be interpreted as a form of

stylized condescension (OLN-) that indexes differentials of social and linguistic power and thus the negative valuation of the non-native speaker's language abilities. Even in cases in which the speaker might claim partial membership in a particular community associated with an ideologically subordinated variety, such a "strategy of condescension" is possible. As Bourdieu (1991) describes, the positive evaluations of a Béarnais mayor who spoke the local and less prestigious Béarnais variety was predicated on his ability to speak the legitimated variety of French and thus his secure membership in a dominant out-group. Consequently, although the mayor engaged in a positive use of the local variety, it depended on and reproduced the ideological and hierarchical relationship between non-legitimated and legitimated varieties of French.

In an example presented earlier in Chapter 6, the most visibly apparent purpose of Piggy's narrative about her mother's use of slang terms, portrayed with a stylized 'Asian accent', was to illustrate the 'surprising' fact that her mother had acquired such terms rather than to critique her mother's English. Still, an interpretation of the stylization as mocking prevails because of the low prestige of English spoken with Korean phonology as well as Piggy's out-group relationship with the style according to local ideologies.

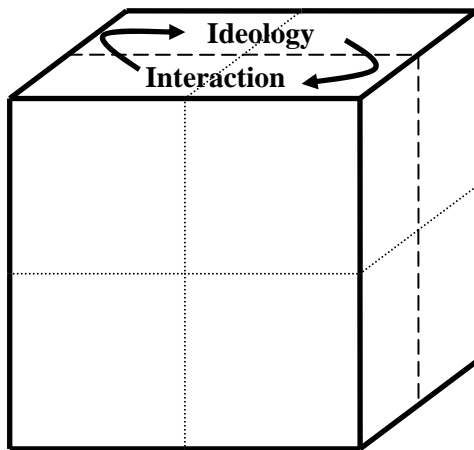
Example 9.2: "What's *whack*" (Sacaki Girls, 1/13/05)

1	White Tiger:	My mom used to hit me every time I cursed
2		but now she gives up.
3		She curses back at me.
4		I'm just like "okay"
5	Miss Thang:	My mom don't care.
6		Sometimes she does
7	Piggy:	I'll be teaching my mom slang.
8		I'm like "That's whack."
9		She's like " <u>What's whack?</u> "
10		I'm like "Whack means messed up."
11		She's like " <u>Messed up?</u> "
12		I'm like "Messed up"
13		She's like " <u>What's that?</u> "
14		I dunno.
15		And then one time
16		she's like " <u>Oh, whack, whack.</u> "

17 All: ((laughs))
 18 Piggy: I never told you that?
 19 We were watching TV
 20 and there was this black guy.
 21 He started hitting on this white guy.
 22 She's like "Oh, whack, whack."
 23 All: ((laughs))
 24 Piggy: We started cracking up.

The dynamic relationship between ideology and interaction, as just discussed, is represented more generally by the circular arrows on top of the figure below.

Figure 9.8: The dynamic relationship between ideology and interaction



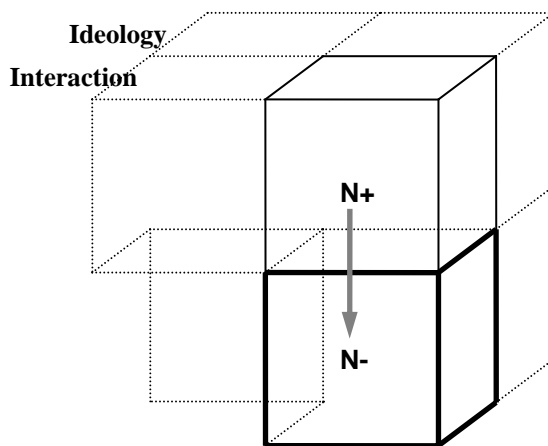
The two levels have a degree of slippage as illustrated earlier in my discussion of framing low prestige varieties positively in interaction and high prestige varieties negatively, suggesting a non-deterministic relationship between ideology and interaction. The recurrent framing of styles as authentic or inauthentic and positive or negative can, over the course of time, either reproduce or lead to changes in ideological meanings. At the same time, as this figure illustrates, ideological meanings guide the interpretations of practices.

9.4 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUTHENTICITY AND VALUE

Another complex aspect of styling practices is the interaction of two separate dimensions: *authenticity* and *value*. At the level of interaction, particular kinds of

relations of authenticity tend toward particular kinds of valuations. More specifically, stylization (N, Types 5-12) frequently leads to an interpretation of negative valuation (N-, Types 9-12), such that even when speakers construct their intentions as positive (N+, Types 5-8), the potential for a mocking interpretation may exist. For example, a stylized performance of an Asian immigrant parent's speech style, even if not intended to portray the parent in a negative light, has the potential to be understood as mocking, as shown in the following figure.

Figure 9.9: The tendency for stylized practices to be interpreted as mocking



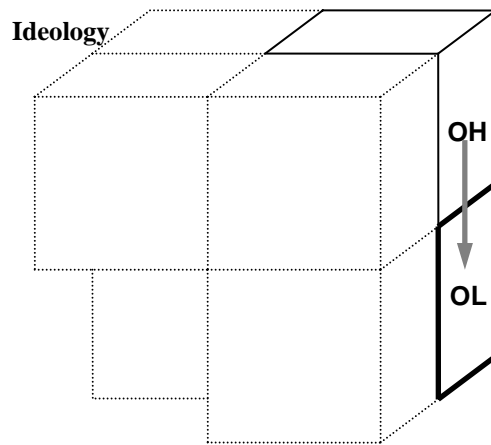
The only exception to this generalization may be style 5, which involves stylization using a high prestige style ideologically regarded as authentic to the stylizer (IHN+). In such cases, for example, when a student's stylization draws on features based on the style of an admired professor but simultaneously regarded as within the students' authentic repertoire, the combination of the style's ideological authenticity and prestige may sufficiently prevent an interpretation of mocking. Rather, such acts may be understood as authentic style use, or emulatory adoption (IHS+), reflecting once again that ideological meanings guide the interpretation of practices.

The potential for a stylized act to be understood as mocking, unless sufficiently prevented by its ideological location of authenticity and prestige, derives from the

interactional distance that both stylization (N) and interactional mocking (-) achieve. Stylization involves the interactional relinquishing of style ownership, which is necessitated in cases of style critique, or mocking. Furthermore, when stylization is combined with quotation, another form of de-authentication, the interpreted alignment is almost always, if not always, negative; that is, stylized quotations, or “marking” (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972), typically constitute instances of mocking.

A second interaction between the dimensions of authenticity and value occurs at the ideological level: the inauthenticity (O), or out-group status, of a style can invite interpretations of its negative valuation (OL), perhaps because it is often believed that speakers more readily recognize the positive value of their own cultural and linguistic practices in contradistinction to the practices of others (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996, 247). Consequently, Types 3 and 7 (OHS+ and OHN+) might be readily understood as Types 4 and 8 (OLS+ and OLN+).

Figure 9.10: The tendency for ideologically inauthentic styles to be to be interpreted as having low prestige



The potential to interpret uses of out-group language as negative in ideological value, in combination with the persistence of ideological meanings on interactional ones, as

illustrated earlier, leads to out-group language use, or crossing, of any kind to be potentially understood as mocking.

It must be emphasized, however, that the negative valuation of ideologically inauthentic forms does not always hold, and the hegemonic status of particular varieties, such as MAE, often precludes their negative valuation even by those who do not identify with a MAE speech community, as discussed in Chapter 4. An additional layer of complexity results from the fact that styles can be positively valued on the basis of their ideological inauthenticity, such as in symbolic displays that highlight a social group's 'exotic' quality, deriving from social difference. Yet forms of exotic admiration of practices regarded as 'other' often represent their simultaneous devaluing. Many scholars (e.g., Maira, 2000; Said, 1978) have noted that these out-group practices can contribute to negative understandings of out-group practices through the ideological homogenization of complex cultures and cultural practices.

9.5 PROBLEMATIZING AUTHENTICITY AND VALUE

Another aspect of complexity in the proposed model of styling is that degrees of authenticity and value can be fluid and ambiguous. The lines separating cubes in the figures—that is, the differentiation of style types—are intended as an idealized sketch for understanding and analyzing key differentiations made by speakers. Yet in real world settings, neither the authenticities nor values of styles are clearly demarcated. Rather, styles slide along continua of authenticity and value and are characterized by multiplicity and fluidity across contexts and time.

A styling practice such as stylized Asian mocking can be considered ideologically authentic when spoken by Asians to the extent that they can claim membership in the ethnic community represented. Yet the style can be considered ideologically inauthentic given that some Asians assume a different national citizenship status from the mocked

target, indexed by differentiating uses of ‘accented’ and ‘accentless’ speech (Chun, 2004). Further complicating matters, a Korean speaker who mocks a Chinese speaker (e.g., Example 6.5. “Gimme one lotto ticket”) might also presume *racial* authenticity but highlight her inauthentic *ethnic* status, drawing a distinction between racial and ethnic forms of membership. In other cases, authenticity might be claimed based on different definitions, including social networks (e.g., whether and how close the speaker is to ethnic Asians), language ability, ethnic biography, and ethnic appearance, among other possible bases for claiming community membership. Additionally, speakers understood as members of a particular social group can have different forms of membership, for example, as core, peripheral (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Wenger, 1998), or honorary. These membership status can shift over time, as a speaker can ‘lose an accent’ or ‘become a member’ at a later stage in life as well as become recognized as a member as a conversation progresses. One of the assumptions throughout this dissertation is that it is because membership in a particular imagined community can be understood in many ways that speakers have multiple types of authenticity with respect racialized styles.

At the level of interaction, ambiguities abound as well. Any form of stylization, no matter how clear the framing as mocking, makes potential a leakage between the voices of mocker and mocked (Hill & Irvine, 1993; Irvine, 1996), as seen in Chapter 8 (Section 8.3.2 Mocking as feminine embodiment). Instances of accommodation and emulation through which speakers adopt the style of a social other also lie in ambiguous relation to forms of mocking, as I have suggested in Chapter 6 (Section 6.3 Adoption). Such ambiguities are especially apparent when stylization is performed as play, in which the styler may adopt a style as her own but within a marked frame that suggests only a conditional commitment of authenticity to the style; playful stylization neither commits fully to serious adoption (S+) nor to serious derision (N-).

Much like authenticity, the value of a style is not always clear-cut, depending on the particular ideological and interactional context of stylistic practice. Such multiplicity brings to the fore the importance of considering meanings specific to local contexts, while also considering the possibility of ambiguity even within a single context. Contexts are never isolatable units, as their social meanings depend to some extent on those in previous, concurrent, and potential contexts, even if not determined by them. Beyond being a local phenomenon, stylistic practice is an interactional product, constructed by speakers and their co-participants through ratifications, contestations, and negotiations.

9.6 DISCUSSION

This chapter has illustrated the various types of relationships between speakers and styles in styling practices, exploring meanings at the ideological and interactional levels with respect to the dimensions of authenticity and value. I have assumed that stylistic meaning—both intended and interpreted—is largely a product of discourse. Specifically, the model I have presented, which illustrates the relationship among various kinds of styling practices, explains how potential and likely interpretations are often guided but not determined by ideological understandings of a style’s authenticity and value. I have also addressed how each of these dimensions interact: how meanings at the level of ideology and interaction ‘leak’ and become reinforced and how stylistic de-authentication and devaluation may go hand-in-hand. Importantly, this chapter problematizes any clear-cut notion of whether a style is authentically adopted or positively valued. Ambiguities of authenticity and value are inherent given that interpretations of styling practices can represent different interests and positions across time and space. Still, I hope to have shown one way that we might move toward a clearer understanding of how social meaning can emerge in the midst of such complexity.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

10.1 OPENING QUESTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE STUDY OF STYLE

The preceding chapters have presented an array of descriptive analyses of how Asian immigrants and preps were mocked through students' acts of stylization. To tie these analyses together, I return to the questions with which I opened this dissertation:

10.1.1 What features were used to mock Asian immigrants and preps?

It is not surprising that language features were important tools for constructing stereotypical social personae in this community. However, in my investigation of the particular features that students used to stylize Asian immigrants and preps, it became clear in my descriptions in Chapters 5 and 7 that students' styling practices did not depend on a set of 'essential features', but on a flexible variety of linguistic resources, none of which *necessarily* appeared and many of which *potentially* did. In one case, Piggy evoked an image of an Asian immigrant with a single phonemic switch, pronouncing *English* as *Engrish* (Example 5.10). Yet in another case, LJ constructed a similar image using a range of phonetic, phonological, syntactic, and discourse features in his impersonation of a Korean barber: "You want no sideburn?!" (Example 5.5). Although Piggy and LJ drew on quite different kinds of features and in different combinations, they both playfully enacted the imagined voice of an Asian immigrant who lacked English competence. Likewise, a stereotypical prep image was sometime evoked with an aspirated glottal stop ($ʔ^h$) (Example 7.14) but, at other times, with utterances alluding to particular 'prep' activities: *I got stuff stuck under my nails* (Example 7.8). In other words, the indexical relationship between language and social meaning appeared to exist as a "non-exclusive relation" (Ochs, 1992: 340-341).

A second general finding was that style features came in many shapes and sizes. Here, I am referring not merely to the different linguistic levels that speakers could draw on—phonetic, phonological, syntactic, and discursive, among others—but also to the diverse codes (English, Korean, or Tagalog) and semiotic resources (e.g. table-pounding, Example 5.5) as well as features of very different ‘feature statuses’. For example, as I discussed in Chapters 5 and 7, some features had been widely circulated in past contexts, while others that were less conventionalized emerged in the moment of utterance as socially meaningful indexes. In Chapter 5, I also illustrated that some features closely resembled the linguistic patterns of actual Asian immigrant speech, while others were clear distortions. Additionally, the analysis in Chapter 7 suggested that some features seemed to index preps in a relatively direct manner (e.g. the discourse marker *like*), while most others appeared to be mediated by the kinds of practices with which preps were stereotypically associated (e.g., certain renditions of *oh my god* directly indexed preppy displays of excessive emotion).

The apparently “diffuse” (Le Page, 1980; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) nature of this styling practice, seen here by the apparent ‘hodge-podge’ of potential features for indexing the same meanings, may in part result from the relatively non-conventionalized status of styles used to mock an out-group. However, I also suggest that the flexibility of language features stems principally from what a style is. As Eckert (2004) writes, “style (like language) is not a *thing* but a *practice*” (43). More important than the use of the same set of features was the *practice of indexing* the same image. Certainly, in some cases, the same conventionalized features were used across different occasions (e.g., *oh my god*)—as the regular patterning of form and social meaning provided features with their indexical potential—but other features only became

recognizable in the moment of their interactional emergence. My efforts to describe style features thus lead me to my second question:

10.1.2 What do these features tell us about style?

Styles are practices through which speakers construct particular social personae, and understanding styles as such has broad implications for how we study them. Viewing styles as *constructions* of social meaning, rather than as *reflections* of social meaning, is more than a theoretical sleight-of-hand that ‘flips the arrow’ between *language* and *social meaning* in order to celebrate speaker agency. Rather, I suggest that understanding style—or styling—as practice provides important insights into how the relationship between language and social meaning can be studied.

First, given the potential for different kinds of language features to index a given social meaning across different moments of practice, understanding what these features mean begins with a close examination of these moments. Such a claim is not meant to discount quantitative analyses that locate the social meaning of variables through their distributional patterns. However, such analyses fail to demonstrate that an instantiation of a feature in a particular moment of practice necessarily serves as and becomes recognized as a meaningful index to interlocutors. As Irvine (2001) has noted, “[styles] are part of a system of distinction, in which a style contrasts with other possible styles, and the social meaning signified by the style contrasts with other social meanings” (22). A frequency count directs us to what a feature *potentially* means to community members, but analyses of interactions illustrate—for both researchers and speakers—contrastive styles and meanings that emerge through practice.

A second insight that understanding style as practice provides is that style features gain their social meaning from their present and past context(s) of use/practice. For example, when I discussed in Chapter 5 how John-John used the phrase *goibarararara* to

imitate her friend's fluent Tagalog, this feature emerged in the moment of talk as an index of an 'incomprehensible Asian language' (Example 5.8). The utterance was understood as 'John-John stylizing Tagalog' because it immediately followed evaluations of this friend's Tagalog abilities and because another friend subsequently engaged in a similar stylization. In this case, the meaning of *goibarararara* depended on the immediate interactional context in which it was embedded. Yet I also illustrated that features could be tied to contexts in other ways. The phrase *ching-chong*, for example, had gained its 'racist' valence because of the past contexts of 'racist' practice to which the phrase was linked. Features carry individual social histories (Zhang, 2006) of past uses, become tied to meanings in present practices, and hold the potential to be meaningful resources for future styling acts.

Third, conceptualizing style as practice entails *a stycler* who stands in particular relation to the style. It is thus important to consider how the particular form of a feature reflects the stycler's alignment (e.g., above/below, near/far) within the moment of interaction and the stycler's social position in relation to the style (e.g., in-group/out-group) within ideologies of social membership. As I discussed in Chapter 5, Miss Thang's pronunciation of *milk* as [mil.k^hə] using 'real' Korean phonological features indexed her biographical links to a Korean immigrant community. The meaning of her stylized rendition may have indexed 'Asian immigrant speech', but it also positioned her in particular relation to her Korean friends as well as Korean immigrants. Based on the potential interactional alignments and ideological positionings of a stycler, I provided in Chapter 9 a systematic descriptive schema of different types of styling. Importantly, such positionings were not given facts about the world but constructed and negotiated by stylers and their audiences.

Finally, I suggest that analyzing style as a practice recognizes style features often do not directly index social meanings but are mediated by practices. This claim parallels Ochs' (1992) discussion of the typically indirect indexical relationship between language and identity, as this relationship is mediated by *stances*, *acts*, and *activities*. My suggestion also recalls Sherzer's (1987) insight that the relationship between language and culture is mediated by *discourse*. Reconceptualizing the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, he writes:

Instead of asking such questions as does grammar reflect culture or is culture determined by grammar, or are there isomorphisms between grammar and culture, we rather start with discourse, the nexus, the actual and concrete expression of the language-culture-society relationship. It is discourse which creates, recreates, modifies, and fine tunes both culture and language and their intersection.

Practice plays a mediating role because speakers encounter the social meanings of language features in moments of their use. Linguistic resources are not readily arranged in a 'styler's toolbox', but stylers encounter these features via situated acts and activities—practices and experiences—in which these features are embedded. The mediating role of practice was especially apparent in my analysis of stylized prep mocking that I described in Chapter 7, where I found that style features were largely defined by the kinds of practices preps were stereotypically regarded as engaging in.

10.1.3 What did speakers achieve through stylized mocking?

Having suggested that a close analysis of style features used in mocking tells us a great deal about the nature of style, I now turn to what social and cultural functions mocking served for students at Diversity High. In Chapter 8, I argued that stylized prep mocking was a useful resource for engaging in important social activities, particularly among female students. Like all forms of stylized mocking, this practice allowed speakers to construct their own identities in relation to those they mocked, in addition to

showcasing their local cultural and linguistic competence as humorous speakers. Through these acts, speakers positioned themselves not only within ideologies of social identity and within the local community but also in relation to their interlocutors. Stylized mocking also served as a tool for students to socialize one another into local community norms, specifically as students embedded styles in narrative quotations of social others who were constructed as flouting local norms of social and linguistic behavior.

Yet the cultural value of stylized prep mocking was not merely about how mockers located themselves *in opposition to* preps but about how they located themselves *in relation to* them, given the locally ambiguous status of preps as embodiments of both desirable and undesirable qualities. In other words, although ‘styling the self’ and ‘styling the other’ can be defined as very different kinds of practices, my analysis of prep mocking problematized this distinction. I have argued that the mocking of the stereotypical femininity of preps was centrally about constructing a speaker’s own brand of femininity. In this case, mocking did not define who mockers were not but who mockers measured themselves against; stylized others were targets of derision but simultaneously also targets of potential desire.

While I have suggested that it is important to analyze interactional moments to understand the social and cultural functions of mocking, it is equally essential to understand the circulating ideologies with which these practices articulated. The examples of stylized Asian mocking and stylized prep mocking I have presented demonstrated that styling practices both reflected and reproduced ideologies of social identity at Diversity High. The salience of these particular forms of styling arose from the particular perceived alignments of stereotypical Asianness and foreignness as well as between stereotypical whiteness, class privilege, and femininity. In turn, the salience of these forms allowed stereotypical Asian and prep stylistic features to be resources for

students, ultimately reproducing ideologies of ethnicity, nation, class, and gender. Although I have suggested in Chapter 6 that students could use stereotypical linguistic forms in flexible ways that partly diverged from widely circulating discourses and sometimes challenged ideological links between Asianness and foreignness—for example, through overt resistance, adoption of Asian linguistic forms, and language play—ultimately, the underlying doxa (Bourdieu, 1977) of ethnicity and nationality lay unquestioned. The particular impervious nature of ideologies despite apparent resistance may have been the product of the divergence between overt and covert meanings (Hill, 1999). As I have suggested in Chapter 4, explicit and implicit discourses often differed; while many non-white students were quick to explicitly critique privileged whiteness, they implicitly valued linguistic forms, namely ‘proper English’, that they associated with whiteness. However, I offer this observation of ideological reproduction not as a critique of students’ practices but to suggest that language potentially served as a relatively unanalyzed vehicle of cultural reproduction.

This finding is particularly interesting in light of the particular demographic characteristics of a multiethnic high school in a military city where white students, such as preps, were not always explicitly characterized as embodying local forms of cultural capital. Despite the uniqueness of this specific community, the ideologies within this school were products of wider institutional and structural constraints on the material realities that students experienced. For example, intersections of whiteness and class privilege were tangible because of ethnic differences between military officers and enlisted soldiers, middle-class white ways of speaking were validated by the educational curriculum, and gender hierarchies were created through the particular gendering of institutionalized extra-curricular activities. These students frequently framed their

experiences as ‘unique’ because of the local military culture, but their experiences were in many ways like those of students in U.S. public high schools more generally.

10.2 CLOSING ISSUES: CURRENT LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE STUDY OF LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL MEANING

In this dissertation, I have attempted to tie together the complex issues that surrounded stylized mocking practices at Diversity High. However, the analyses I have presented undoubtedly raise theoretical and methodological issues I have been unable to address. First, an issue that merits deeper investigation is *the nature of the relationship among the deauthenticating practices of stylization, quotation, and play*. Although I have presented a brief overview of these concepts in Chapter 2, this dissertation has focused primarily on issues of *style*, and I have given relatively scant attention to why and how speakers may use stylization alongside quotation and play. Clearly, stylization seemed to function much like quotation, as it constructed a stereotypical social type just as quotations are “constructed dialogues” rather than faithful reports of previous speech (Tannen, 1986). Yet the question remains as to why these two strategies often emerged together as well as what the effects of their co-occurrence were, whether ‘additive’ or merely ‘complementary’. Furthermore, the distance constructed between a stylizing mocker and the stylized target seemed potentially subverted by constructions of such of acts as play (Goffman, 1974), and at the same time, such acts frequently *invited interpretations as play*. The complex relations of interdependence among these strategies present fertile ground for exploration.

A second issue that deserves greater attention in future research is the issue of how the manner of recontextualization is tied to relations of power. On the one hand, previous research suggests that relatively faithful replications may reflect the power of the originator relative to the replicator (Urban, 1996). My own findings in Chapter 5

suggested that structural resemblance may index a stylizer's relatively proximity to her target, thus potentially minimizing power differences. Yet researchers of African American verbal art have also noted that the ability to mimic with "verbal virtuosity" (Mitchell-Kernan, 1972: 179), such as in acts of "marking," is precisely what makes the art of mimicry an effective tool of resistance (Walters, 1999). The issue of how forms are transformed through their recontextualization—as well as how speakers interpret such transformations—has relevance to 'real-life' issues of power, as Jane Hill's work on "disorderly" Mock Spanish has aptly demonstrated. Further research on this issue can lead to insights into not only how replications and distortions reflect and reproduce relations of power 'under the radar' of critique, but how such practices might be applied strategically to effect positive social goals.

I close this dissertation with an epistemological issue with which I struggled throughout this project, namely, the issue of *how we know a style is a style*. The analyses in this dissertation are based on my understanding that these styles were 'real' for students, as 'evidenced' in explicit metalinguistic descriptions of them as well as practices that implicitly linked "ways of speaking" (Hymes, 1974) with particular social meanings. However, there always lay ambiguities of what it meant to style an 'Asian immigrant', an 'Asian', an 'immigrant', a 'Korean', or a 'Filipino'. Likewise, stylizing preps was often ambiguously about styling 'femininity', 'whiteness', and 'class privilege' as well as 'whininess', 'arrogance', and 'babyishness', among other characteristics. Given the overlaps of these styles, how do we know where one style ends and another begins, and what is the best conceptualization of these overlaps?

On the one hand, methodological techniques such as ethnographic "thick description" (Geertz, 1973), rigorous examinations of interactions, and quantitative analyses of form-meaning links are certainly ways to 'disambiguate' styles and to 'know

what speakers know'. On the other hand, I offer the idea that ambiguity may simply be the 'nature of the beast', and, perhaps, ambiguities of social meaning were what ultimately drove practices like stylized mocking, which were sense-making practices that attempted to present a particular social order. When Felicia mockingly addressed me as *pro-FESS-orrr* after I displayed my obvious lack of competence in a youth written style,¹²⁸ her act playfully constructed my social difference in response to the sudden ambiguity of my positioning. Not unlike my struggle to make sense of the symbolic flurry within the walls of Diversity High, the students, too, engaged in their own 'interpretations of culture'—albeit from a vantage point quite different from my own.

¹²⁸ This incident is discussed in Chapter 3 ("Ethnographic positioning and paradoxes").

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Vita

Elaine Wonhee Chun was born in Portland, Oregon on April 12, 1973, the daughter of Peter Chun and Helen Chun. After graduating from The Catlin Gabel School in Portland, Oregon, in 1991, she attended Stanford University in Stanford, California from which she received the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1995. During the following year, she taught English at the YBM/ELS Language Institute in Seoul, Korea. In August 1997, she entered the Graduate School of The University of Texas.

Permanent Address: 1610 Waterston Avenue, #1, Austin, Texas 78703

This dissertation was typed by the author.