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**The Cross-Cultural Classroom in the Context of Radical Language
Shift: Humor, Teasing, and the Ethnolinguistic Repertoire in the
Blackfeet Nation**

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Blackfeet Nation**

by

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Dedication

For the students of ‘Gopher Peaks.’

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2013

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In this dissertation, I analyze classroom interactions between a White, nonlocal high school English teacher and American Indian students on the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. I focus on the participants' strategic use of humor and distinctive linguistic features in these interactions, particularly teasing as a cultural activity among the students, the teacher's immersion and adaptation to that culture, and the affective and sociocultural importance of the ethnolinguistic repertoire to the students. I argue that the main functions of the humor and teasing are threefold: (a) to build rapport, (b) to accomplish interactional goals in the classroom, and (c) to negotiate teacher–student power struggles in a socioculturally acceptable way. I show that the students' humor and discourse is constitutive of local culture and often counterhegemonic, implicitly and at times explicitly critiquing mainstream educational practices and the marginalized status of the students. My analysis considers the data from a discourse level as well as examines the indexical and patterned use of microlevel linguistic resources from the student's ethnolinguistic repertoire—specifically, distinctive interjections and scooped-accent intonation. The primary data is naturally occurring classroom discussions, complemented by individual and group interviews and ethnographic observations.

This study points to the importance of sociocultural factors in language variation and change in communities undergoing or having undergone radical language shift. It thus adds to the literature that considers how cultural practices are disrupted and may be restructured as the linguistic code changes. This research also contributes to the research that details the difficulties nonmainstream students face in public schools when their home culture and language practices are at odds with those of the school, and it examines humor and teasing as student strategies to navigate these differences. This study aims to help paint a more complete picture of the contemporary social and linguistic contexts in which American Indian speakers live, with a mind toward how this understanding can be applied to the real-world circumstances of these youth

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Research on humor has a long history in other disciplines and theories of humor in philosophy date back to ancient Greece, but humor has only relatively recently been a topic of investigation in anthropological linguistics, and less so in sociolinguistics. This is an important area of study for language researchers because humor is “often at the heart of intersections among language, culture, society, and individual expression” (Sherzer, 2002, p. 8, discussing the related concept of “play” [Bateson, 1972]). Studies that have considered intersections among, for instance, youth linguistic and sociocultural practices (e.g., Bucholtz, 2002; Chun, 2007; Eckert, 2000) have not explicitly considered these practices as they relate to humor. Including a focus on humor in such studies could help illuminate, for instance, how language contributes to humor’s universal function of creating in-group and out-group identity among young people and how they understand and produce culturally appropriate teasing and joking (see Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Likewise, studies of youth’s linguistic practices in the context of language shift do not consider humor and teasing practices in detail, and for the most part also do not examine the use of micro-level linguistic resources (cf. Wyman, 2004; see also discussions in Webster, e.g., 2011). My study brings together this research to examine how American Indian youth in a community at the tail end of radical language shift use humor and linguistic features strategically in interactions, and what this can show about language variation and language shift in Native North America and on the Blackfeet Nation specifically.

In this dissertation, I analyze classroom interactions between a high school English teacher (a White, 25-year-old man) and American Indian students on the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. I focus on the participants’ strategic use of humor and

distinctive linguistic features in these interactions. I argue that the main functions of the humor and teasing are threefold:

1. *To build rapport*: The students “test” the teacher to see whether he understands them and the local Blackfeet culture and to initiate him into this culture; likewise, the teacher teases the students to display cultural competence. Related to this, both the students and the teacher use humor affectively, to express affection and affiliation.
2. *To accomplish interactional goals in the classroom*: The students use teasing to create a collaborative floor and have more control over the pace of instruction, and create locally meaningful personae; the teacher uses teasing to get the students’ respect and attention and to move his lessons forward.
3. *To work out teacher–student power struggles in a socioculturally acceptable way*: The students’ teasing the teacher enhances group solidarity as they present a unified front to the teacher; the teacher teases the students as a way to critique their classroom behavior.

I show that the students’ humor and discourse is constitutive of local culture and often counterhegemonic, implicitly and, at times, explicitly critiquing mainstream educational practices and the students’ marginalized status. My analysis considers the data from a discourse level as well as the indexical and patterned use of microlevel linguistic resources from the student’s ethnolinguistic repertoire (defined in 1.3).

1.1.DATA

To study relationships among education and contemporary Blackfeet linguistic and cultural practices, I collected data through ethnographic fieldwork conducted from 2007 to 2009 in a small, public K–12 school in a town of 600 people on the Blackfeet

Nation. The Blackfeet community is undergoing radical language shift, at Stage 7 of Fishman's (1991) stages of language endangerment. Most of the students at the school know a few South Piegan Blackfoot¹ words and phrases and are native English speakers. The primary data are naturally occurring classroom discussions, the majority of which were recorded in May 2009, and complemented by individual and group interviews and my observations.

1.2.SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCHOOL AS A RESEARCH SITE

The public school system is an important place for detailed sociolinguistic studies, as it is one of the first places nonmainstream students encounter pressure to conform to mainstream linguistic and sociocultural practices. My research thus contributes to the research that details the difficulties nonmainstream students face in public schools when their home culture and language practices are at odds with those of the school (e.g., Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003; Cazden, John, Hymes, 1972; James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards, & Oetting, 1995; Michaels, 1981; Phillips, 1983; Sanders, 1987). Particularly on Indian reservations, public schools are one of the main sites of assimilation, historically and today, with language shift one of the legacies of boarding schools (see, e.g., Crawford, 1999; Rehyner, 1993). Further, because the majority of my data are from an English classroom, these data are relevant in examining the school as a “terrain of contestation” (Giroux, 1991, p. 3) in light of changes to the Blackfeet community brought about by radical language shift, as such shift is “abrupt and involves languages from different world areas, different language families, and different traditions of usage” (Woodbury, 1998, p. 235).

¹As Miyashita (2011) describes, when Blackfoot tribal groups refer to themselves and their respective dialect, Blackfoot is used more often in Canada and Blackfeet is used more often in the United States. I use Blackfeet to refer to the Blackfeet people and Blackfoot to refer to the language (Southern Piegan; *Aamsskáápipikani*), in part because some of my speakers made this distinction and in part for readability.

This dissertation is in the vein of work that follows Giroux (e.g., 1997; Willis, 1981) in looking not just how school is an ideological machine that imposes dominant ideology on students but rather looks at active social agents as they reproduce these ideologies, “bring[ing] into focus the intersection of the macro- and micro-level of sociopolitical structure as actors play out culturally stereotyped personae” (Urciuoli, 1995, p. 536).

1.3. OVERVIEW OF THE DISSERTATION

The two chapters that follow provide a background on the theory (Chapter 2) and the research site and methods (Chapter 3). As the foundation for my analysis, in Chapter 2 I survey the broad literature on humor, including the social functions of teasing within Indian humor (e.g., V. Deloria, 1969) and relationships between humor and culture. I also place my study within the sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics literature on identity, language variation (particularly, sociolinguistics’ recent approaches to “style”), and relationships between linguistic ideologies and practice, and within educational research focusing on Native Americans in the classroom. Chapter 3 introduces the demographics and linguistic ecology of the research site, as well as methods of data collection and analysis. In this chapter I also describe my approach to ethnography and my relationships with students and others in the school.

The next three chapters are my analysis chapters, in which I examine humor as a resource in cross-cultural communication in the classroom, that is, between the teacher and students (Chapter 4); student and teacher ideologies of ethnic group distinction and how these ideologies are related to personae construction (Chapter 5); and the students’ ethnolinguistic repertoire as a resource for intergroup distinctiveness and intragroup solidarity, although I also touch on the ways in which the ethnolinguistic repertoire might

be used for intragroup distinctions as well (Chapter 6). I conclude the dissertation in Chapter 7, in which I review and discuss my findings in the context of the sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics literature. In particular, I discuss what my sociolinguistic and ethnographic approach adds to the literature on language variation, language shift, and Native American studies (particularly, Native American education), and I explore directions for future research. This study aims to help to paint a more complete picture of the contemporary social and linguistic contexts in which American Indian speakers live, with a mind toward how this understanding can be applied to the real-world circumstances of these youth.

Chapter 2: Background: *Theory*

In this chapter, I review the foundational literature for my study. I begin Section 2.1 by providing an overview of the literature on humor generally, including relationships between humor and play (e.g., Sherzer, 2002). In 2.1.2, I discuss the scholarship on Indian humor specifically, focusing on joking and teasing's social function and humor's relationship with American Indian identity, as discussed in the research. I conclude this section with a discussion of relationships between humor and culture. In 2.2, I review approaches to style and stylization, then move on in 2.3 to the linguistic and anthropological linguistic research on identity, ethnic identity, and its relationship with culture, including recent research that seeks to integrate into contemporary theory indigenous views of ethnic identity. In Section 2.4, I describe relevant research on heritage languages; language shift; American Indians' use of, and attitudes toward, English; and the notion of the "ethnolinguistic repertoire." I then discuss (2.5) the relevant research on language, culture, and American Indians in the classroom; I wrap up this section by discussing the few studies that have examined humor and teasing in the American Indian classroom. Throughout the chapter, I show how I will draw on the previous literature to examine language variation and the use of humor in the linguistic construction of identity and cultural negotiations in the classroom.

2.1. RESEARCH ON HUMOR

2.1.1. General Literature on Humor and Teasing

What is humor? How do people understand situations as humorous? Most definitions and classifications take as a starting point that humor, at its most basic, is attempts to amuse (Monro, 1988). Theories of what makes a situation laughable are generally classified in the following typology, which includes theories dating back to

Plato: Social² (humor is related to interpersonal relationships and an understanding of social context), Incongruity (feelings of disharmony or inappropriateness resulting from seemingly disparate ideas being brought together), and Relief (feeling of release from emotional or psychological tensions). Most relevant to this dissertation are the Social theories that refer to humor's social management function (see Attardo, 1994); the Incongruity theories that include the concept of "play" (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974); and the Relief theories that refer to the "play" within grammars (i.e., "all grammars leak"; Sapir, 1921, as discussed in Sherzer, 2002).

From a linguistic point of view, humor is a "pragmatic accomplishment" that involves "a wide range of communication skills" (Beeman, 2000, p. 103).³ Recent literature on the linguistics and sociolinguistics of humor has moved, however, from a strictly pragmatic description and analysis of humor to emphasizing the importance of interaction (e.g., Norrick, 2010). This line of research, which I follow here, draws on discourse analysis, contemporary social theory, and interactional sociolinguistics.

Teasing, one of the types of humorous interactions I analyze in this dissertation, illustrates the paradoxes of humor—it contains the "pretense of hostility and a real friendliness" (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952, as cited in Drew, 1987, p. 248) or the pretense of friendliness and a real hostility⁴; it is aggression "tempered with playfulness" (Feinberg, 1978, p. 9); it is a form of play in which "the playful nip denotes the bite, but does not denote that which would be denoted by the bite" (Bateson, 1972, p. 141); and, as described by Bourdieu (1984):

²The Social category includes Hostility, Superiority/Disparagement, and Aggression theories; as Attardo (1994, p. 50) notes, these negative associations all relate to social bases of humor. I use the "Social" label to include a range of social bases of humor.

³ Beeman describes humor as a "performative pragmatic accomplishment," with a focus on the effect rather than a "performative" in the Austinian sense.

⁴I think A. Woodbury for making this point; some forms of teasing (sarcastic or passive aggressive) appear friendly but have a hostile intent.

[The joke is] the art of making fun without raising anger, by means of ritual mockery or insults which are neutralized by their very excess and which, presupposing a great familiarity, both in the knowledge they use and the freedom with which they use it, are in fact tokens of attention of affection, ways of building up while seeming to run down, of accepting while seeming to condemn—although they may also be used to test out those who show signs of stand-offishness. (p. 183)

The literature on teasing also illustrates the social management functions of humor—its ability to “test” others, as described in the quote above; to build rapport (Bell, in Norrick & Chiarro, 2009); to support feelings of solidarity and ingroup identity (e.g., Holmes, 2000); and to provide a “social corrective” (Bergson, 1901, as cited in Attardo, 1994) or social control (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, citing Eisenberg, 1986; P. Miller, 1986; and Schieffelin, 1986). Teasing can “communicate implicit expectations and rules concerning the kinds of behavior that are acceptable within the group” (Rod, 2007, p. 119) and is a way of “criticizing without overt attack” (Mulkay, 1998; as cited in Attardo, 1994, p. 327). It is a kind of playful interaction (Mulkay, 1998) or joking relationship (Radcliffe-Brown, 1940) that can smooth interpersonal transactions. Drew (1987) describes the continuum of responses to teasing, from serious to nonserious. Likewise, teasing itself runs along a continuum from “bonding to nipping to biting”⁵ (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, p. 279). The content and dynamic context of teasing, and responses to it in interaction (including audience responses), are an important part of my analysis, particularly when considering the negotiation of identities and social category membership (e.g., ingroup, outgroup; Drew, 1987, p. 221) and the “testing” functions of teasing. Because much of the teasing I analyze is in a group setting—a classroom setting—the role of the audience is also important, as they (students) often join in and tease the teacher, aligning with each other and against the teacher, as I discuss in Chapter

⁵ The “nipping” and “biting” metaphor is from Bateson’s (1972) theory of play.

4 (e.g., Strachle, 1993, and Zajdman, 1995, for more on audience and alliances in teasing).

Aside from humor's social function, I also draw indirectly on Incongruity and Relief theories that relate to "play." Lincoln's (1993) and Sherzer's (2002) descriptions of humor and play largely fit within these theories: Humor arises from surprising juxtapositions, seeming incongruities, against "the backdrop of entangled cultural and personal presuppositions and assumptions" (Sherzer, 2002, p. 4). Sherzer describes language as an open structure with some "give," some "play"; inherent in language is the possibility for play (p. 4). Many of the examples in this dissertation contain speech play, following Sherzer's broad definition of the term: "The manipulation of elements and components of language in relation to one another, in relation to the social and cultural contexts of language use, and against the backdrop of other verbal possibilities in which it is not foregrounded" (Sherzer, 2002, p. 2). In emphasizing humor's relationship to the social and cultural contexts of language use and that "speech play often emerges from languages, styles, and varieties in contact," Sherzer argues that speech play can provide insight into "attitudes towards the sociolinguistic repertoire of a community" (p. 9)—or, language ideologies. Lincoln's (1993) analysis of play and humor explicitly discusses their relationship in intercultural interaction. He writes that humor "declares 'the other' game to be played with" (p. 25). This function of humor—engaging "the other" through play—is important in the interactions between the students and English teacher, as I describe in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

2.1.2. Indian Humor: Joking and Teasing

As V. Deloria (1969) discusses, much early anthropological and linguistic research on Native Americans did not describe humor in Native communities: "The

humorous side of Indian life has not been mentioned by professed experts on Indian Affairs. Rather the image of the granite-faced grunting redskin has been perpetuated by American mythology” (p. 146). Anthropological studies of joking in indigenous cultures have shifted from studying the role “joking relationships” in, for example, establishing kinship through marriage (e.g., Radcliffe-Brown, 1940, 1949) and teasing between relatives (cursorily noted in Kluckhohn & Leighton, 1946), to studying the joking itself—its content, form, and social and interpersonal functions (see also discussions in Basso, 1972, pp. 99–100, and Palmer, 1994, p. 15).

The research on Indian humor, joking, and teasing I review focuses on its (a) myriad social functions and (b) relationship to Indian identity. Discussing the history of teasing, V. Deloria (1969) argues it was “a method of social control ... for centuries before the White invasion” (p. 147) and describes self-teasing or self-deprecating humor: “Gradually people learned to anticipate teasing and began to tease themselves as a means of showing humility and at the same time advocating a course of action they deeply believed in” (p. 147). W. W. Hill (1943), one of the first researchers to give attention to Native American humor and its social importance, noted that Navajo humor accompanied many formalized social interactions (p. 21). Kluckhohn and Leighton (1946) further noted Navajos’ extensive use of humor, arguing that one characteristic of Navajo joking that differentiated it from White humor was that it did not have any cruel intention (p. 53).⁶ Another early study, by F. Miller (1967), discussed “ribbing” and “wise-cracking” as having social functions in a tribal council: promoting group solidarity and friendly relationships with outsiders—both themes picked up by more recent research. For instance, Pratt’s (1988) study on the Osage Nation describes the identity work

⁶ Kluckhohn and Leighton also describe complicated linguistic puns (p. 188).

accomplished by “razzing” (“a teasing ritual enjoyed as humor”): “a means of testing and establishing cultural identity—as a means of answering the question, Is he or she really one of us? It is, then, a method for the rapid evaluation and affirmation of cultural competency” (p. 237). Similarly, Theisz (1989) describes the ingroup/outgroup-delineating function of teasing (as cited in Gruber, 2008) and Shutiva (1994) argues that humor helps to maintain an emphasis on the community rather than individualism and competition. A study very relevant to my work here is Ayoungman-Clifton’s (1995) article on humor in Siksika (or Blackfoot; to the southeast of Calgary, Canada) language and culture. Ayoungman-Clifton shows that one of the main functions of Siksika humor and teasing is for social cohesion: to maintain social cohesion in an extended family, as an affirmation of values, to distinguish insiders from outsiders, and to control the behavior of children and adults. Further, she argues that “even if non-Siksika people understand the language, they may not understand the humour, [which is] intertwined with both the language and the culture and the two cannot be separated” p. 21. As I discuss (especially in Chapter 4), the functions of teasing among the students are similar to what Ayoungman-Clifton’s work demonstrates.

Related to research on joking and teasing’s role in establishing group identity, some studies have further investigated relationships between humor and Indian identity—specifically, humor as being intrinsic to being Indian and its importance in constructing relational identity (e.g., Basso, 1979; V. Deloria, 1969; Lincoln, 1993). As Gelo (1998) describes, “it is axiomatic among powwow-goers that Indians have a distinct and particularly well developed sense of humor” (p. 50), and Native American joking often refers directly or indirectly to issues of Indian identity: poverty, foodways, satirizing Whites, and miscegenation (pp. 50–54). Lincoln (1993) links Indian humor to Native American history via trickster tales and, seeing humor as central to Native American

identity and culture, argues for a reimagining of Native Americans: “The surviving Indian as comic artist more than tragic victim, seriously humorous to the native core” (p. 5). Two important studies investigating the relational construction of identity, Basso (1979) and Lincoln (1993), discuss Native American ethnic and cultural identity being constructed over and against joking depictions of White culture and “The Whiteman”: “‘The Whiteman’ serves as a conspicuous vehicle for conceptions that define and characterize what ‘the Indian’ is not” (Basso, 1979, pp. 4–5). Basso (1979) further notes: “It is by no means uncommon, as Vine Deloria, Jr., has observed, for conceptions of ‘the Whiteman’ to find articulate expression in jokes” (p. 6).

My research draws on this research on jokes and other metapragmatic commentary about race and ethnicity in the examination of humor, stylization (defined and discussed in Section 2.2), and ideologies of ethnicity, including White ethnicity (discussed in more detail in Section 2.3.2). The studies reviewed above are from the fields of anthropology and anthropological linguistics (with the exception of Ayoungman-Clifton, 1995, which is from linguistics/sociolinguistics). One of the anthropological studies that examines linguistic features used in teasing is by Gelo (1999), who describes the use of aayyyyyyy, with rising intonation,⁷ as used by the powwow emcee after he jokes and by the audience to say, “That was an Indian joke, and I got it” and that the emcee’s aayyyyyyy and the audience’s aayyyyyyy “occur together, giving the exchange a unified conclusion and again promoting solidarity” (p. 50). This feature is also noted by Samuels (2004), who describes the “drawn out” “interjection” eeeei as possibly being “intertribal in original” and used “when something turns out to be nothing or of no good” (p. 249). Similar to these discussions of aayyyyyyy and eeeei, I

⁷Gelo notes: “It is a sound reminiscent of Indian song vocables, many of which serve cueing functions for the singers and dancers” (p. 50).

analyze the Blackfeet high schoolers' use of *hey*, *heyz*, *oke*, and *okes* in joke telling and teasing by the speaker and audience as a way of indexing and promoting group identity. Another anthropological research line I follow in looking at the micro-level language use in humor and speech play is that by Webster and colleagues (e.g., Peterson & Webster, 2013; Webster, 2010c), who consider the affective and creative aspects of language use and "local ways of speaking and writing Englishes" (Webster, 2011, p. 63).

2.1.3. Relationships Between Humor and Culture

Researchers, describing the relationship between humor and culture, acknowledge humor as being culture specific but argue that its social functions, especially those relating to ingroup and outgroup identity formation, are similar cross-culturally (e.g., Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Recent research emphasizes the importance of locally constituted meanings of humor, and the ways in which humor is "tied to common understandings" (e.g., Fine & De Soucey, 2005, p. 2) to form communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These "joking cultures" have a shared history in which jokes' "referential afterlife" (Goffman, 1981, p. 46, as cited in Fine & De Soucey, 2005, p. 2) becomes part of a group's cultural tropes and cultural memory. This aligns nicely with Coupland's (2007; building on Bauman & Briggs, 1990) description and definition of culture as discourse: "discursive social action is where culture and social identities 'live'" (p. 108). In other words, a group's humor draws on that group's shared history and becomes part of its culture through discourse.

The humor I analyze draws on a wide range of resources—popular culture, local social types, and stereotypes about race and ethnicity. I show how these sources are brought together through humor and stylization by Blackfeet high schoolers. In so doing, I draw on Samuels's (2004) analysis of the ambiguities of culture (and identity) in

contemporary American Indian life: Culture “takes on the nature of a pun—the structure of a sign that points in multiple directions at once” (p. 8). In other words, there are a “multiplicity of cultural practices circulate on the reservation” (Samuels, 2004, p. 5) and can be traced to a group’s history.⁸

2.2. STYLE

Early studies by quantitative variationists considered linguistic style on one dimension, as attention paid to speech (e.g., “casual style” vs. “formal style”; Labov, 1966), or as a response to the characteristics of the audience (Bell, 1984). These earlier approaches focused less on speaker agency and creativity and, especially in Labov’s (1966) work, use quantitative methods to correlate language with macrolevel demographic categories (e.g., class, age, sex). More recent work draws on social and postmodern theory, which sees style as a practice-based, dynamic process of social agents employing various semiotic (including linguistic) resources at their disposal to make social meanings (e.g., Bucholtz, 1999, 2001; Coupland, 2001b, 2007; Zhang, 2006, 2008), particularly in the local context (Eckert, 2000). The two main veins in the contemporary research on “style” are (a) quantitative (e.g., Eckert, 2000), which grows out of Labovian traditions of sociolinguistics and (b) more qualitative (e.g., Coupland, 2007), which grows out of anthropological linguistics’ focus on performance (e.g., Goffman, 1981; Hymes, 1972) and Bakhtin’s (e.g., 1981, 1986) approaches to stylization and “voicing”⁹ (see also discussion in Deuber, 2009, Section 3.1). Many recent studies (e.g., Chun & Podesva, 2010) use both quantitative and qualitative approaches.

⁸ This approach differs from those that use metaphors of “walking in two worlds” (as criticized in Henze & Vanett, 1993; see also discussion in Peshkin, 1997, ch. 4).

⁹ Specifically, the notions of *uni-directional double voicing* (“in which speakers are in agreement with a second voice they are adopting”) and *vari-directional double voicing* (in which “the two voices are separate and opposed”; Deuber, 2009, p. 59. I thank L. Hinrichs for pointing me to Deuber’s clear discussion of “style.”

Within the more quantitative approach, the most recent directions on language and style continue to focus on the dynamic and situated meaning of stylistic variables, expanding on the view of style as a process of bricolage (Hebdige, 1979; Levi-Strauss, 1966) in which social agents “combine a range of existing resources to construct new meanings or new twists on old meanings” (Eckert, 2004: 43; see also Zhang, 2005). In these more recent approaches, these meanings constitute an “indexical field, or constellation of ideologically related meanings, any one of which can be activated in the situated use of the variable” (Eckert, 2008, p. 15, drawing on Silverstein, 1976, 1985, 2003). For instance, E. Moore and Podesva’s (2009) analysis of adolescents in a British high school follows this style as indexicality model, showing that tag questions have a direct “conductive” social function (i.e., to encourage the speaker–hearer agreement) and also indirectly index any of a range of ideologically related values (e.g., “friendliness,” “coolness”) to create “distinct local social types” (e.g., Townie, Popular, Geek; p. 477).

Within the more qualitative approach, Coupland (2001, 2007) views style as a process in which linguistic resources are deployed to project personae, best analyzed by focusing on the particular moments where styles emerge. Coupland (2007) most recently makes a distinction between *styling* (“the way linguistic resources are used to make different types of meanings on the levels of personal identity and interpersonal relations”; Deuber, 2009, p. 51) and *stylization* (the projection of “personas, identities and genres other than those that are presumably current in the speech event”, where “projected personas and genres derive from well-known identity repertoires, even though they may not be represented in full”; Deuber, 2009, p. 51).

In this research, I build on both the quantitative and qualitative approaches to style (while not analyzing data quantitatively, although I do use instrumental measurements of intonation). In Chapter 6 I analyze the ways in which students variably

use ethnically distinctive features to produce in-group distinctions (e.g., differences in use of interjections that may index different ways of being feminine), following the Eckertian, bricolage, and indexicality approach to style but doing so qualitatively (but with intonational analysis using Praat). I also consider the ways in the which, for example, the English teacher's constructed dialogue is a stylization in the Couplandian (and Bakhtinian) sense, that is, the ways he projects teacher and student personae by drawing on "nerd" repertoires and the students' ethnolinguistic repertoires. Further, following Chun's (2007) discussion of the intersection of style and play (p. 302) in which stylization can construct "stereotypical social types" and stylized mocking can be interpreted as play, I consider the humorous and playful dimensions of stylizations.

I also examine the language ideologies (i.e., beliefs, values, and attitudes about language) of these adolescents and the teacher through their stylizations and constructed dialogue to add a more nuanced understanding of how the meanings emerge. Woolard and Schieffelin's (1994) and Woolard's (1998) work showed how ideologies can influence linguistic practices, thus influencing individual and group identity (see also Kroskrity, e.g., 1998, 2000, 2010). Previous work on style (e.g., Eckert, 2004; papers in Eckert & Rickford, 2001) emphasizes the deployment of linguistic resources in situated practices to make styles meaningful, but connections between ideology and style have not been examined in detail (but see Irvine, 2001) or in American Indian communities. Irvine and Gal's (2001) discussion of semiotic processes of iconization, fractal recursivity, and erasure is also particularly relevant to examine ideology and style in my study and its focus on relationships between ideologies of social categories and linguistic practices. This study follows this research and analyzes the complex interrelationships between ideologies, styles, and linguistic and sociocultural practices, keeping in mind the diversity of ideologies within a community (Kroskrity, 2004; Kroskrity & Field, 2009).

2.3. IDENTITY AND ETHNICITY

2.3.1. Identity

I define identity following Mendoza-Denton (2002): “individual- and collective-level semiosis” in “active negotiation of an individual’s relationship with larger [sociocultural] constructs” (p. 475; see also Bucholtz, 2003a, p. 407). Anthropological and sociolinguistic researchers have noted relationships between identity and culture, made most explicit by Samuels (2004) in his discussion of the “produced nature” of both: Culture is “the creative negotiation of personal and social identities within shifting fields of social power, history, and imagination” (p. 5). Similarly, Hartigan (2005) argues that one dimension of culture “involves the basic cultural process of sorting out belonging and difference” (p. 273).¹⁰ Put simply, language is one of the symbolic resources for the “cultural production of identity” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

Early research on language and identity within the quantitative linguistics paradigm treated linguistic features as “markers” of predetermined identity based on social categories (e.g., gender, class; Labov, 1966); Mendoza-Denton (2002) labels this approach “sociodemographic-category based identity.” As with sociolinguistic studies of “style,” researchers have moved to focus on the agentive and creative role of language users, particularly in local, situated practices (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992; see also Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Schilling-Estes, 2004). Recent research emphasizes that “social practice is the very basis of identity” (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 478) and the importance of ethnographic work in understanding these practices, while keeping in mind the ways ethnographies are “unique products of the personal histories of the ethnographers

¹⁰ Hartigan’s operationalization of *culture* includes reference to spatial practices and “body work” that, he argues, are only “sketchily reference[d]” by discourse; thus, his view of culture is less language-centered than other research described here.

themselves and of their interactions within particular communities (Agar 1996)” (Mendoza-Denton, p. 478).

Two broad directions in this practice-based approach to identity are to (a) compare variation across practice groups or, the approach I follow, (a) “focus on variation as practices unfold, identifying the use of symbolic variants in the moment-to-moment dynamics of interaction” (Mendoza-Denton, 2002, p. 489) My research draws on this type of practice- and ethnographic-based approach to examine relationships between humor, teasing, and identity constructions, particularly ethnic identity, and how these are intertwined with other axes of identity, as played out in the classroom (drawing also on Wortham’s, 2005, work on the interactional construction of social identity in the classroom). Further, I follow recent turns in sociolinguistic research that focus on identity in broad terms and as a process that includes several social levels (as discussed in E. Moore & Podesva, 2011): macrolevel demographic categories; mesolevel local positions; and microlevel transient stances created (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 592; Coupland 2007, pp. 113–114). Thus, speakers are “constantly engaged in identity work” (p. 449), be it on the demographic level (e.g., “Indian”), local level (e.g., “jock” in Eckert’s, 2000, study), or stance taken (e.g., “tough”; see my analysis in 5.5.1)—that is, a multiplicity of identities are negotiated in interaction.

As discussed by Bucholtz and Hall (2004, p. 369), the concept of “identity” has been implicit in the linguistic anthropological studies’ focus on, for example, performance (e.g., Bauman, 1977) because these studies describe the production and reproduction of identities through language use. Samuels (2004) echoes the recent sociolinguistic emphasis on practice described above: “identities are emergent, produced out of the practices and expressive forms of everyday life” (p. 5), where the practices and forms of “everyday life” constitute culture and, in Samuels’s work on the Apache Nation,

can include practices as seemingly diverse as listening to heavy metal, going to powwows, and playing baseball. These practices “index the social history of the community and thus help people express the complex layers produced out of centuries of cultural expropriation, resistance, accommodation, negotiation, maintenance, and shift” (p. 5). While these and sociolinguistic approaches to identity are anti-essentialist (see discussion in Mendoza-Denton, 2002, p. 476), other research (e.g., Clifford, 2001)¹¹ has tried to theorize identity in a way that includes and accounts for some communities’ often more essentialist views of their ethnic and cultural identity (see, e.g., Bastien, 2004), as I discuss at the end of the next subsection.

2.3.2. Ethnic Identity

In sociolinguistic research on ethnicity, in addition to the prolific literature on African American speakers and African American English (Green, 2002; Labov, 1972; Rickford, 1999; Wolfram, 1969), there has been a rapid growth in the study of the linguistic construction of ethnicity in other groups (Bucholtz, 2001; Chun, 2001; Fought, 2006; Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985; Mendoza-Denton, 2007). However, there is little sociolinguistics research on the linguistic construction of ethnicity by American Indian speakers (but see Schilling-Estes 2001, 2004; Trechter, 2001), and research on the linguistic construction of Whiteness is only recently developing (see discussion below). As an example of a “constructionist” study that examines Native ethnic identity as a process, Pratt (1988) describes “Indian-ness” as “not something that one can simply be, but is something one becomes and/or is, which requires the participation of other culturally competent members” (p. 241).

¹¹ I thank A. Webster for pointing me to Clifford (2001); any errors in characterizing the literature are my own.

Research on ethnicity considers how Native American ethnic identity is viewed relationally, against Whiteness (Basso, 1979; Lincoln, 1993), as I discussed in Section 2.1.3. An additional study in this vein is Bashkow's (2006) work on the Orokaiva's evaluations of the moral superiority or inferiority of Whitemen, and alienness or affinity for Whitemen, in turn are used by the Orokaiva for "cultural self-critique" (p. 14). This approach to ethnicity is in line with contemporary research in anthropology and anthropological linguistics that follows the pioneering work of Barth (1972), who analyzed ethnicity as a process in contact situations, rather than a static category (see also Urciuoli, 1995).

In focusing on White and Blackfeet ethnic identity, I also draw on research on the linguistic construction of Whiteness (e.g., Special Issue of *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology*, 2001; Bucholtz, 2011). Some of this research has examined which linguistic features are used in constructions of White social types: for example, nerds (Bucholtz, 2001), fraternity members (Kiesling, 2001), or Southern "rednecks" (Fought, 2006). Another line of research discusses White speaker's "crossing" (Rampton, 1995) that is, performing speech of ethnic others, through mocking (Chun, 2007; J. Hill, 1999) or through appropriating linguistic features to construct, for instance, masculinity (Bucholtz, 1999; Cutler, 1999). I build on this research, and, from anthropology, Hartigan's (1999, 2005) and Brodtkin's (2001) work on the perception and production of Whiteness, and Whiteness as an analytical object (Hartigan, 2008; see also Roedigger, 1999).

Finally, I draw on Clifford (2001), whose "articulation" social constructivist model includes indigenous people's assertions about their identities—for instance, assertions of "social and cultural persistence" (p. 479)—and counters criticism of constructivist models as apolitical and ahistorical. Clifford uses "articulation" following

Hall (1986, as cited in Clifford, 2001), that is, as linkages (e.g., as with an articulated vehicle). With this model, ethnicity is rearticulated over time, with various elements of cultural practices and traditions linked together in different formulations: “made, unmade, and remade” (Clifford, 2001, p. 479) so that “any socio-cultural ensemble that presents itself to us as a whole is actually a set of historical connections and disconnections” (Clifford, 2003, p. 44). My approach also borrows from Webster’s (2012; drawing on Spicer, 1971, 1975) work that views identity as “a kind of storytelling” that “locates identity in the circulation of narratives and discourse” (p. 5) that is consistent with (in Webster’s work) Navajos’ views of their identity. In Clifford’s model, these narratives (selectively) connect aspects of a group’s identity to its past and to its cultural traditions (see also discussion in Webster, 2012, e.g., pp. 153–154).

2.4. LANGUAGE SHIFT, HERITAGE LANGUAGES, AND ENGLISH

I draw on the rich literature on language shift, endangerment,¹² and revitalization generally (e.g., Fillmore, 1991; Fishman, 1966, 1991; Gal, 1979; Hill & Hill, 1986; Hymes, 1981; Kulick, 1997; McCarty, 2002, 2003; Rehyner, 1999; Rehyner et al., 2003; Woodbury, 1998) to better understand the sociolinguistic context of Blackfoot and English in Gopher Peaks. Researchers have described what is lost when a language is lost (see, e.g., Hale, 1998; Jocks, 1998; Nettle & Romaine, 2000; Webster, 2010c; Woodbury, 1998) and the importance heritage languages have for their speakers’ identities and cultures, as well as affective ties speakers have to their heritage languages (e.g., Fishman, 1991).

Also relevant to my study is recent research that has begun to examine the role of youth in language shift, endangerment, and revitalization. Many of these studies examine

¹² Webster and Peterson (2011) note that a metaphor other than “endangerment” might better align with indigenous people’s conceptualizations of their language (e.g., “sleeping”; Leonard, 2008, 2011).

influences on youth's learning and retention of their heritage language in light of peer pressure and identity formation (Bielenberg, 2002), schooling practices (Nicholas, 2005), and language ideologies (McCarty, Romero-Little, & Zepeda, 2006; McCarty & Zepeda, 2010). One recent study (Wyman, 2004) examined relationships between language and youth culture among a group of speakers in the context of language shift, and found that peer influence was very important in shaping youth's ideologies about language. My study considers the role of humor (particularly, teasing and stylizations) in forming that influence.

Another relevant strand of research in communities undergoing language shift focuses explicitly on American Indians' range of linguistic practices (e.g., use of code-switching, English, heritage languages, multilingualism) and ideologies accompanying these practices (see, e.g., Webster, 2008, 2011). For instance, a recent special issue of *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* (2011) focuses on "Indians in Unexpected Places," inspired by P. Deloria's (2004) book of the same name, which criticizes the promotion of a monolithic "Indian" (see also Meek, 2006), without considering the range of language practices and cultural production and consumption of contemporary American Indians. The articles in this special issue, as a whole, echo Kroskrity's (2009) call for researchers to examine their own expectations and assumptions for Native American language use, as well as to reconsider "what is to be counted as Native American language" and the tendency (including the academic/research tendency) to treat as "authentic" only those Natives who speak their "authentic" heritage language (Webster & Peterson, 2011, p. 8; see also Meek, 2011). Related to this is research describing American Indians' attitudes and feelings toward English (e.g., Webster, 2012). For instance, Samuels (2004) describes Native American ideologies of being simultaneously proud of their distinct variety of English and considering it "Whiteman" (sentiments

echoed by some participants in my study). Lincoln's (1993) discussion of English is also particularly relevant to my dissertation, as he relates "Red English" and the self-identifying term Indi'n (a pronunciation used by speakers in my study) to humor: Indi'n is "an interesting twist on an old misnomer, 'Indians,' as the pan-tribal word has been taken in and turned around. Such dialectal inversion—and ritual transformation—lie at the heart of Indi'n humor" (p. 10).

My research is along these same lines, examining the array of language use and its relationships with local language ideologies, in everyday linguistic practices of Blackfeet adolescents. I do not seek to describe a distinctive ethnic variety called "Blackfeet English" or "American Indian English." Rather, I examine how Blackfeet adolescents draw on linguistic resources from various sources—local (Blackfoot and regional English) and supralocal (e.g., language found in popular culture and mass media, such as "Hip Hop National Language" [HHNL], see, e.g., Alim, 2004; also, features from what could be described as "Pan-Indian English"; Leap, 1993). I focus on the students' *ethnolinguistic repertoire*, "a fluid set of linguistic resources that members of an ethnic group may use variably as they index their ethnic identities" (Benor, 2010, p. 159, drawing on Gumperz's, 1964, notion of verbal repertoire). This repertoire comprises ethnically distinctive linguistic features: "any elements of language that are marked as distinct from language used in other groups (whether or not speakers are aware of them), including system-level morphosyntactic, phonological, and prosodic features, as well as sporadic lexical and discourse features" (p. 160). Under this approach, the social meaning of language emerges through "alignment and distinction" in interaction. Although this approach focuses on the "features" of the ethnolinguistic repertoire, I conceptualize and analyze the students' language as being a complete, patterned system (following Green's,

e.g., 2002, approach to what she labels ‘African American English’).¹³ The study analyzes how meaning emerges when these resources are combined in teasing, joking, and stylization. I describe and analyze distinctive features that, I argue, index ethnic heritage, including linguistic features (e.g., [ʔ], *innit*). I look at the situated, interactional use of these variables¹⁴ to better understand relationships between their use, ideology, constructions of identity, and cultural negotiations in the classroom, which I turn to in the next section.

2.5. NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE CLASSROOM

2.5.1. Overview of Relevant American Indian Education Research

The education of American Indians has changed from initially maintaining American Indian methods of education, to a focus on assimilation, and more recently, to teaching about heritage culture as well as mainstream educational topics and beginning heritage-language-immersion schools (e.g., Reyhner et al., 2000, 2003).¹⁵ Broad topics within Native American education research include analyzing factors for academic success or failure, the role of culture in education, and language instruction and use in school. I do not directly discuss factors for academic success or failure but focus on related research on culture and language in the classroom, including research that details the difficulties non-mainstream students face in public schools when their home culture

¹³As Green (2003) describes, the features- (or components-) based approach of Labov (1988) sees a complete, General English component and an incomplete, ethnic component. Benor (2010) describes her approach as being similar to Labov’s (1998) model. Although the focus of my analysis is on “features,” I see them as part of patterned language use; the patterns I focus on are sociocultural (as well as linguistic).

¹⁴ I do not take a quantitative approach to these features; see Sharma (2011, 2012) for an approach that melds quantitative and qualitative methodology, style, and the ethnolinguistic repertoire.

¹⁵Regarding the Blackfeet Nation specifically, Blackfoot children were sent to off-reservation boarding schools beginning in 1889 (to Carlisle, Pennsylvania); on-reservation U.S.-government-run day schools were opened in 1915; and public schools were opened in 1905; the Cuts Wood School, a privately funded Blackfoot-language immersion school, opened in 1995 (Hungry Wolf, 2006; see also D. Kipp’s “Schooling the Blackfeet” pp. 192–193 in Hungry Wolf, 2006, and Still Smoking, 1997). See Section 3.1.1 in this dissertation for brief discussion of the Cuts Wood School.

and language are at odds with that of school (for more on these difficulties, see, e.g., Cazden, John, & Hymes, 1972; James, Chavez, Beauvais, Edwards, & Oetting, 1995; Lein, 1975; Michaels, 1981; Phillips, 1983; Sanders, 1987; Whitbeck, Hoyt, Stubben, & LaFrambois, 2001).

Regarding American Indian culture and mainstream schools, some researchers have argued that there are communication styles (Phillips, 1983) and learning styles unique to American Indians, and others have shown this can encourage stereotyping (see, e.g., the discussion in Pewewardy, 2002). For instance, some researchers have discussed “cooperativeness,” as opposed to “competitiveness,” as an American Indian cultural value, and they argue that classrooms with a cooperative format are better learning environments for Natives (Sanders, 1987, and Swisher & Dehyle, 1992, cited in Huffman, 2008; see also Pewewardy, 2002). Other research has urged educators to “nativize” the classroom, that is, to make the curriculum culturally relevant to students (Rehyner, 1994/2006)—and the difficulties in doing this (e.g., Peshkin, 1997). Examining relationships between Native students and their teachers, some researchers have showed that the “cultural dissonance” American Indians experience in mainstream schools “can be diminished when students and teacher share the same culture” (Trujillo, Viri, Figueira, & Manuelito, 2005, citing: Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Kleinfeld, 1972; Philips, 1983; Wilson, 1991). There are a couple relevant studies specifically regarding public education in the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. Still Smoking’s (1997, 1999) work shows that traditional formal education systems have “severely weakened” “the family role of transmitting tribal knowledge” because they “do not transmit tribal knowledge, language, or cultural elements as part of their learning process” (Still Smoking, 1999). Seery’s (2006) master’s thesis research was conducted in the Blackfeet Nation and focuses on educational practices on spaces of formal education (school) and spaces of informal

education (family, community), and how this affects identity formation in the “traditional student”; see Seery for a discussion of the ways in which Blackfeet students may feel uncomfortable in formal, mainstream classroom settings because the teachers do not understand “the meanings and values connected with the student’s behavior” (p. 110). In this dissertation, I focus on humor as a way the teacher and students negotiate these cultural differences in the classroom.

Regarding language in Native communities and schools, research has found that heritage-language education gives students a sense of American Indian ethnic identity and pride (e.g., McCarty, 2002) and that including heritage culture in education positively affects academic performance. McCarty (2003) argues that for students of language-immersion schools, knowing or having learned some of their heritage language (either in school or in the home or community) counters the homogenizing effects of globalization and provides resources to negotiate local values and mainstream cultural values. In this research, I consider whether and how humor as a cultural resource also helps students to navigate school culture. In the next section, I discuss research on humor in the Native American classroom.

2.5.2. Humor in the Native American Classroom

Some research has noted, though cursorily, the importance of teachers using humor in the classroom, specifically that it can be an effective teaching strategy (Pewewardy, 2002) and can reaffirm kinship bonds (Herring, 1999, as cited by Pewewardy, 2002, p. 19). Other research has discussed in more detail the effectiveness of using humor in the Native classroom (Cleary & Peacock, 1998; Gilliland & Rehyner, 1998). To my knowledge, no sociolinguistic or other study has investigated in-depth the use of humor in the classroom.

Two studies (Dehyle, 1992; Lee, 2007) have discussed the role of teasing in the classroom, focusing on its negative effects on students. Dehyle (1992) describes teasing as social control in school; specifically, that students who do well and who go away from the reservation for education are teased for trying to be “better” than the others or for forgetting how to be Navajo. Dehyle also notes that teasing as a “means to maintain a position of cultural solidarity” can have a negative effect on kids when, in the example she gives, she takes kids swimming and they are teased about trying to be White because they are with a White person and not with Navajos. Lee (2007) describes teasing’s negative effects relating to Navajo language maintenance: She found that students are reluctant to speak Navajo at school because (a) they felt “demeaned, embarrassed, and defensive” when teased by an adult about their lack of knowledge of Navajo language and (b) peers tease students about use of Navajo and “disparaging someone for coming from a more traditional, Navajo-speaking home” (p. 22). The only other study to discuss teasing in the classroom, to my knowledge, is Holder (1967), who briefly notes that he used humor (making fun of his own name) when he initially met Native students, and that this kind of self-teasing facilitated rapport with students.

2.6. SUMMARY

The contemporary theories reviewed above have in common a focus on processes, dynamism, interaction, and ambiguities. Researchers in both linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics view identities and culture as ongoing processes, emerging from situated practices and related to the larger sociocultural, political, and economic context of speakers. Including an analysis of speaker’s language ideologies can further illuminate relationships among language use and this larger context (see, e.g., recent studies on Native Americans’ language ideologies in Kroskrity & Field, 2009) as well as the

ambiguities of indexicality (Samuels, 2004). Finally, this research takes as a foundation Sherzer's (2002) description of relationships between language and culture: "Instead of viewing language and culture as systems where everything holds together nicely and neatly, I see them as open systems with squishes, fuzziness, leaks, inventions, constructions, negotiations, and imaginations, and as constantly emergent" (p. 9). I examine humor and stylizations as a window into these processes.

Chapter 3: Background: *Site and Methods*

3.1. RESEARCH SITE

In the subsections below, I provide a general description of the research site (3.1.1) and the high school more specifically (3.1.2 and 3.1.3). I then describe methods of data collection (3.2) and methods of analysis (3.3).

3.1.1. Demographic and Linguistic Overview of Research Site

The main research site is “Gopher Peaks High” (GPH; pseudonymous name selected by students),¹⁶ in a town of 600 people (U.S. Census, 2010) on the Blackfeet Reservation in Northwestern Montana. The town is 95% American Indian, 1.5% White, 2.4% Hispanic, and 1% “two or more races” (U.S. Census, 2000). About 10,000 people live on the 1.5-million-acre reservation (the population includes “8,500 enrolled Blackfeet, several hundred Blackfeet descendants, and Indians from other tribes, and a few hundred non-Indians”; blackfeetnation.com). This part of Montana is geographically isolated from more populous areas; the off-reservation economy is agriculture based. Gopher Peaks does not have a gas station, restaurant, or grocery store; the only commercial establishment in town is a small convenience store. Teachers at Gopher Peaks School who are not from the reservation or nearby towns live in school-provided housing across the parking lot from the school. The three nearest off-reservation towns are 30–50 miles away; have a population of about 500–2,500 people; and range from 73%–94% White, 1%–18% American Indian, 1%–2% Hispanic, and 2%–5% “two or more races” (U.S. Census, 2010). The poverty rate was 33.8% on the Blackfeet Reservation, compared with 13% and for the state of Montana, in 2000 (Montana State

¹⁶Because the community is small and to further protect the anonymity of participants, I use pseudonyms for the name of the town and school where I conducted my research, and for personal names. However, to provide more social and historical context, I do not replace the names of the U.S. state or tribe.

University, n.d.). The teenagers living in or near Gopher Peaks go to Gopher Peaks School (Grades K–12; 160 students total, 70 in junior high and high school), although some attend schools in neighboring towns on or off the reservation. Most of the high school classes I sat in on had between 2 and 8 students in attendance.

The Blackfoot language variety in Montana is one of four dialects of Blackfoot, namely, Southern Pikuni or Southern Piegan (Mithun, 1999). Including speakers in Canada, 5,000–8,000 of the 15,000 Blackfeet population are fluent Blackfoot speakers (Mithun, 1999). However, in Montana, less than 1% of the Blackfeet population speaks Blackfoot; there are about 100 fluent Blackfoot speakers of the 8,600 enrolled Blackfeet on the Reservation (Mithun, 1999). South Piegan Blackfoot is at Stage Seven of Fishman’s (1991) language endangerment, in which only adults in the community speak the heritage language. Community members in a reservation town about 30 miles from Gopher Peaks are attempting to revitalize the language through establishing a Blackfoot-language-immersion school. The Nizipuhwahsin Center, established in 1995 in that town, operates the Cuts Wood School, a K–8 Blackfoot-language immersion school modeled after successful Hawaiian immersion schools (see, e.g., Reyhner, 2003). It was founded by the Piegan Institute, to “research, promote, and preserve Native languages” (www.pieganinstitute.org; see also D. Kipp, 2000). One high school student who attended GPH for part of the time I was there had attended the Cuts Wood School. (See also work by Miyashita [e.g., 2011] and Miyashita & Crow Shoe [2009] for work on language revitalization in this community.)

3.1.2. Research at Gopher Peaks High

I made initial contact in the community using the friend-of-a-friend method, that is, by my mother (who lives near the reservation and is a waitress at a truck stop) talking

with people in the community. She was told of the good reputation of the Cuts Wood School in the community: “Kids who go to that school know who they are,” one Blackfeet local told her. I made further contacts by cold-calling school administrators and asking if I could talk with them. I first attempted to work at the high school in another town on the Reservation, but the administrators declined to allow me to conduct my research at that school. When I contacted the principal at GPH, she was immediately open and enthusiastic about me working at GPH. She talked with the superintendent on my behalf before she introduced me to him, and I then received formal, written permission from the school to conduct my research there.

I also contacted Darrell Kipp and met with him. I was still working out the details of my study (the exact focus, where I would conduct the research) when I met with him, and he helped me think about the “subjective” and “objective” understanding of my research—that is, that as an outsider and academic, I can talk with people in the community to try to understand their language ideologies, but I will never experience the subjective relationships these speakers have with language, and so my research will necessarily not have the kind of subjective understanding of a community insider. Regarding this dissertation’s topic of humor, this means, for instance, that there are some meanings and nuances of the humor I analyze that I do not have access to. In other words, I understand that this dissertation is a “partial account” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986, as cited in Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). This research would be stronger with both an outsider account (such as mine) and the advantages of being more distant from the community it brings, complemented by insider accounts. My questions about language ideologies, which included asking the students for their description and understanding of their language use and practices, bring in this insider perspective to some degree.

Before starting my fieldwork, I naively thought that my local connections would make it easier for me to be accepted in the community. My family has ties to the area surrounding the Blackfeet Nation: I grew up on a farm homesteaded by my great-grandfather in the early 1900s, 51 miles from Gopher Peaks. Indeed, it did give me some advantage for people in the community to be able to “locate” who I was: Some of the older Blackfeet people knew my great-grandfather; some had been waited on by my mother; and one of the parents was friends with my cousin. However, given the racism that many Blackfeet people experience from many local Whites,¹⁷ my localness may have worked against me. For instance, I told one White teacher that I was related to a family in the closest off-reservation town, and the teacher said, “The [family name]s? They’re rich, own everything in town” (my cousin owns the gas station in that town). I discovered that the more “outsider” my initial status was, the better. The students at GPH were much less interested in that I was from the local area than that I was from the University of Texas—I began my research within 2 years of the Texas Longhorns winning the national college football championship at the Rose Bowl in 2005. Most students in the school were college sports fans, and many wore Texas Longhorn-logoed baseball caps, stocking caps, and shirts. The students knew what it is like to visit nearby towns, but they had never been to Texas, and they were curious: What Indians lived in Texas? What’s Texas like? Did I know quarterback Vince Young?¹⁸

Before beginning my research, I thought I was aware of the complexities involved in doing field work in this community. I recognized that my presence alone, my ethnicity (White), my gender, and my age (mid-30s) affected the data I record (Bucholtz, 2006) and the willingness and openness of some community members to interact with me. As I

¹⁷ Many of the students and adults I interviewed talked about this; I discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5.

¹⁸ I think this last question was a half-joke.

conducted my research, I became further aware of the complexities of conducting fieldwork as a local/nonlocal White. For instance, in interviews I noticed that students were very aware of my Whiteness (as was I) when they were talking about the racism they experienced and their ideologies of race—the students would say things like “you guys” (to mean “Whites”) at times but then also shift to “White people,” creating distance between me and “Whites.” I made similar interactional moves: In listening to my interviews, I noticed that I always said “White people” and not “we.” Although most students did not know Blackfoot, beyond a few words and phrases (see 6.1.2), I also was a linguistic outsider in terms of not knowing Blackfoot (besides some basic greetings) and in not, especially initially, knowing some of the local features of their ethnolinguistic repertoire (Benor, 2010). One time in particular, I was confronted with my outsider status and I learned first-hand the power of language to exclude.¹⁹ I was sitting in the high school English classroom by myself, waiting for students to come in and for the class to begin. One boy came in, looked at me, and said to me, “Amskapi Pikuni” (“Southern Pikuni” or, as one man translated it for me, “I am Southern Pikuni”), and then looked away from me and sat down. My initial reaction to this was that I felt my outsider status highlighted; I was not sure what he said. It was my first lived, personal experience of some of the academic concepts of language and borders that I had read about in my graduate work. The student’s utterance created a border between him and me—it was an example of Urcuoli’s (1995) discussion of borders being “places where commonality ends abruptly” and of language that can “stand for and performatively bring into being such places” (p. 539). By saying this to me, he was also communicating a range of messages, including ethnic and linguistic pride.

¹⁹ Of course, that this is one of the first times I experienced this also speaks to my privileged status as a White mainstream English speaker, even though I grew up just 50 miles from these students.

3.1.3. A Blackfeet Nation High School

“Kids here are just like kids everywhere,” Darrell Kipp told me when I told him about general plans for my research. My time at this high school did indeed remind me of my own high school experience at a neighboring (~60 miles away) off-reservation town. In Gopher Peaks, as with most rural towns in Montana, high school sports—especially basketball—are central cultural activities. Most of the towns turn out for basketball games, even if they do not have kids on the team. Guest speakers at the GPH school frequently cited former basketball players from the community and their accomplishments after high school. In the general store at another reservation town, a little over one third of the large store is devoted exclusively to basketball, from shoes to jerseys to t-shirts with caricatures of American Indians twirling basketballs on their fingers.²⁰ Basketball games between reservation teams and White teams iconize the history of the region: My high school mascots were the “Cowboys” and “Cowgirls”; we played a reservation town with the “Indians” as their mascot. I remember playing in high school games, as a “Cowgirl” against the “Indians” on the reservation school: The lights were low, and the Indian team entered to beating drums, singing/chanting a Blackfeet song, and wearing war bonnets.

Besides sports (basketball, football, golf, volleyball, and track) other extracurricular activities include the Indian Club, Drum Group, and student council. Students in this school form the kinds of social groups described in linguistic and anthropological work in U.S. high schools (e.g., Bucholtz, 2011; Chun, 2007; Eckert, 2000; Perry, 2002): jocks, girly girls, cowboys/cowgirls, and preps (as labeled by the students in this school in interviews). These groups are often constructed and

²⁰ I do not explore in-depth the role of basketball culture in these students’ lives, but this would be an interesting area for future research.

distinguished through the use of visible cultural consumption (e.g., buying and listening to heavy metal, country music, or rap) and through the use of semiotic resources such as clothing (e.g., South Pole brand, cowboy boots), hairstyles, and language, as I discuss more in Chapter 6. Students at the school have the opportunity to engage in uniquely Blackfeet cultural activities through Indian Club and Drum Group, as well as through taking Blackfoot Language electives.

3.2. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

This study adopted an ethnographic approach to data collection, primarily through participant observation. Participant observation is an effective method for studying why and how linguistic and other semiotic resources are employed in youth's daily practices. This research follows recent work in American Indian communities in North America (as reviewed by Strong, 2005), which uses a "reflexive ethnography" and an ethnography of "mutual engagement." I initially consulted with Blackfeet community members such as Darrell Kipp, and parents, teachers, and administrators at GPH; I also later talked with Dr. Lester Johnson, a local education activist. Feedback from the principal (who in 2008–2009, when I collected the majority of my data, was the superintendent) was especially valuable in focusing the topic of this dissertation; when I told her I was considering focusing on humor, she said, "That would be wonderful."

I collected and analyzed four types of data: naturally occurring spontaneous interactions in the classroom, interviews, nonlinguistic–visual semiotic data, and fieldnotes. The methodology was designed to elicit a range of data collected through a variety of methods to get a fuller, more accurate picture of the ideologies and sociolinguistic practices of this community. The research and locations for data collection were approved by the GPH administration, and I talked with the superintendent to get

feedback on potential focuses for analysis that would be of use to the school. My research was conducted over 8 months: May, September, and October 2007; September–December 2008; and May 2009. The bulk of the recorded data (a little more than 60 hours) is from May 2009, as my earlier months were spent establishing my presence in the community and securing informed consent forms.

While I conducted my research, I lived in a town close to the reservation, about 30 minutes away from the school. I tried to find housing on the reservation near the school (including looking into whether I could stay in the teacher housing near the school) but could not find any. Living in Gopher Peaks would have given me a better perspective for the study, including more naturalistic interactions with more members of the community. Related to this, going to more public events outside of the school (e.g., summer celebrations) would have also given me better insights.

3.2.1. Initial Meetings With Teachers, Students, and Pilot Study

In my pilot study (May, September, October 2007), I talked with several junior high and high school classes (English and science), introducing myself, linguistics, and my research project in general terms. I took an approach that was more formal and more classroom-based than some researchers, for example Chun (2007) and Eckert (2000). I used this more formal approach to meet the kids as a group (rather than one-on-one) in case they were more comfortable asking me questions as a group. I talked with them about linguistics, what linguists do (e.g., study slang and variation, document language, computational linguistics), and phonology (on a very basic level). I said that I would be talking with them individually and in groups, if they wanted to.

Although similar to Chun's (2007) approach in that neither of us tried to pass as students, Chun describes the ways in which the "salience of [her] status as an adult" (p.

51) (and as a U.S.-raised, college-educated, heterosexual Korean woman) varied across social groups, gaining memberships to some social groups and remaining an “observer” to other groups (e.g., recent Korean immigrants who “upheld the Korean cultural assumption of age as a central determinant” of social positioning; p. 53). My salience as an adult and a cultural outsider was held relatively constant across social groups: I did not become a member of any group (see 3.2.2. for a discussion as my positioning as a White person from Montana). However, I would not characterize my status as only an observer either in that I gradually got to know many of the students as we jointly discussed their language use and their experiences with school, teachers, and other outsiders (e.g., at camps, at bordering towns); see also 3.2.2.

My initial meeting with the students gave me my first insights into the language ideologies of some in the community. I asked the students what kinds of slang they used and heard, and I asked if they had noticed people’s accents. Some of them had recently traveled to Washington, DC, for the Close-Up program,²¹ and they said that students from other states they met on the trip told them they had accents. In response to my question about whether they thought I had an accent, one boy said, “I don’t want to sound racist or anything, but you sound White.” I asked him what sounded “White” about me, and the students said my pronunciations and the “big words” I used. I also asked them what other languages they knew, and some said they knew some Blackfoot words. In one of the high school science classes I talked with, the science teacher (White, male, 20s, from Iowa) said to one of the students, “Hey, this girl knows Blackfeet.” The student replied, “Just because I am Blackfeet doesn’t mean I know Blackfeet.” Then, she turned around to the

²¹Close-Up is a program in which students travel to Washington, DC, to learn about U.S. government and democracy; the trip includes meeting with elected officials and touring DC.

blackboard and wrote “Blackfeet Nation” on the board in graffiti-like script, a quiet assertion of Blackfeet identity.

Related to this, these initial meetings showed the range of language ideologies that the students encounter daily. For instance, the science teacher mentioned above was joking with the students that he was “an Apache Chief.” One of the students asked him if he spoke Apache and he said, “No, I’m an Apache and I speak English. I’m not a caveman.”²² On the one hand, the students are told by some teachers in the school and by others in the community that the Blackfoot language is an important part of their culture, that it is an important part of being Blackfeet, but on the other hand, they encounter racist language ideologies regarding their heritage language.

In Fall 2008, I provided an in-service for the teachers, in which I talked about my research and research on language and education more generally. One of the teachers told me about students I might want to talk with, for instance, students who were rappers and recorded their own music. I talked about some of my previous research, on child speakers of African American English (AAE); one administrator asked me what attitudes AAE speakers had about their variety and standard English. When I said that some do not want to speak mainstream/standard English, I saw her and some of the Native teachers nodding in recognition of this attitude of linguistic pride and resistance to mainstream English. This instance and my conversation with the students about their unique slang were my first glimpses of attitudes about the importance of their ethnolinguistic repertoire to their identity.

During my pilot study, I sat in on English, science, and shop classes and volunteered in the elementary and high school administrative offices (located in the same

²² This teacher left the school the following year, and I did not get the chance to interview him. Another teacher told me that he is not Apache. This teacher was in his early to mid-20s, I believe, and was from Iowa. Some of the students cited him as one of their favorite teachers.

building as the school) before recording any data, to establish relationships with people in the community. Activities during the pilot study continued into part the main research included tutoring elementary students and clerical work (answering phones, greeting visitors) at the front desk (until May 2009, when I focused on being in classrooms). In addition, I continued to observe teacher–student and peer–peer interactions in high school English and shop class, primarily, and occasionally in the Blackfoot-language, history, and U.S. government classes. The English class was selected for most of my observation because the teacher (a White, 25-year-old man from Michigan) and the students often explicitly discussed issues of culture, race, and ethnicity, and the teacher had an open-door policy for me visiting his classroom. Most students take shop class, an elective, and the students and teacher (a Blackfoot man) have a good rapport, and one that may approximate relationships between Blackfoot adolescents and adults in the community.

Working at the front desk allowed me to meet and talk with students, parents, and other adults, and to generally be integrated in the community. Over time, my interactions with community members may have been similar to interactions they have with other locals (Johnstone, 2000). Further, by conducting research at these public sites, I minimized my intrusion on private spaces (following Strong, 2005). I was openly received for the most part, building relationships in part on mutual familiarity with people in surrounding communities. Most people had positive reactions to me and my research; for instance, I overheard students saying “She’s a good person.” Yet, the students did not tease me, which would have indicated social closeness (see analysis in Ch. 4 and Webster, 2010), besides occasionally joking with me by, for example, pretending to cry while saying things like “We’ll miss you, Nikki!” when I left at the end of my pilot study. I had my daughter (who was about 6 months old in Fall 2008 and 1 year old in Spring 2009) with me during some of my fieldwork, which helped the students get to know me a

little outside of my “researcher” role. The students at the school, especially the girls, asked me questions about my daughter and joked with the English teacher about how he was “scaring her” (by smiling). The girls would also say things like, “Hey, I like your baby” and “she’s cute.” One time, the freshman girls said, “It’s really cute. It should be a model, for, like Gap, or JC Penney”; another girl humorously followed up with, “Or Walmart,” and the students all laughed²³ I discuss my rapport with people at the school in more detail in the next section.

3.2.2. My Rapport With Teachers and Students

Most of the teachers, staff, and administrators were very open and welcoming to me. For instance, the English and shop teacher said I could come to their classes anytime. The shop teacher encouraged me to interview the students because “it’s good for them to have someone interested in talking with them.” Some audio-recorded group conversations took place in the shop room, and the teacher later remarked to me that he could tell that the students really trusted me because they were very open with me. In time, students were enthusiastic about being interviewed and many asked if they could be interviewed. Some teachers seemed uncomfortable with me being in their classes, and I thus spent less time in those classes.

I tried not to align myself with the teachers or administrators but was friendly toward them; I also did not try to align myself with the students by trying to have peer-like interactions with them. I instead tried to have what I hoped was more naturalistic, sincere interactions with them inside and outside of interviews, improving as I went along

²³ This joke was funny for several reasons, including: (a) saying a baby is a Walmart model is not quite the compliment that saying a baby is a Gap model is, in part because of the stereotypical Walmart shopper compared with the Gap shopper, and (b) the students sometimes joked about how, for instance, “Indians love Walmart,” so saying she was a Walmart model also was a comment that built on previous jokes circulating in the community, as I describe in more detail in 4.3.1.

on establishing rapport with them. For instance, in one interview, I was talking with a student about hunting. He asked if I hunted and I said, “No.” He laughed and asked if I was “one of those people who say ‘poor little deer,’” and I laughed and told him that I in fact was. However, I followed up on this by telling him that my husband was really interesting in going hunting with my dad and that my brother-in-law was going on a Texas hog hunt, which he found interesting and allowed us to talk a little more about a subject he was interested in. In my interview with another student, I elicited mostly one-word yes/no answers until I started asking him about his plans to play college-level sports. I learned to better tailor my follow-up interview questions to the interviewee. I also slightly revised my interview questions as I could see which ones the students reacted negatively to. For instance, I was initially asking students about their religious practices, until one student said, “I don’t think I want to talk with you about my religion.” I realized that in-depth questions about the students’ religious beliefs and practices were, at best, not directly related to topics of my dissertation and, at worst, intrusive and potentially exoticizing. As another example, when I first talked with one of the adults in the school, he asked me a series of questions: What’s my race? (White.) What is my heritage? (German, mostly.) Did I speak German? (No.) What German cultural activities am I involved in? (None.) I took his points: The interviewer comes to the interview with a set of expectations, the interviewee is aware of those expectations, and those expectations may make the interviewee uncomfortable. I later interviewed this adult; I learned a lot from him and, I believe, we developed a good rapport.

3.2.3. Naturally Occurring Classroom Interactional Data

The majority of the data was recorded in the high school English classes in May 2009. In addition to offsetting the observer’s paradox of interview data, these naturally

occurring data are crucial for understanding how identities and styles unfold in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Schilling-Estes, 2000, 2001). Interaction provides a broader range of data for understanding the relationship between ideologies about language and social categories and (a) humor and (b) daily stylistic practices. For instance, I observed and noted that during interactions, metapragmatic linguistic strategies (e.g., teases such as “this Indian thinks he’s a cowboy”; performing “White” speech) were often used, and these observations and data recordings helped to illuminate ideologies about ethnicity, language, and social groups. I also audio-recorded the students as they worked on projects in shop class and worked on their floats for homecoming, to better understand students’ language use, humor, and interactions outside of the typical classroom environment. Many times during the English class, there were peer conversations that were not sanctioned by the teacher, which provided another source of naturalistic data.

Recording the classes allowed me to analyze, in depth and over time, the changing relationship between the English teacher and the students, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4. I expected that there would be naturalistic conversations in the group interviews, but I think the classroom data has better naturalistic data, as the classroom setting was familiar to them, as was my presence (especially by May 2009). Additionally, the students talked a lot among themselves in class, so classroom data provided a range of talk. When I first met the English teacher and students in his class in 2007, it was his first year working at the school, and his first teaching job out of college. I wrapped up my research in May 2009, the teacher’s last month at the school before he quit and looked for work in another town in Montana, off the reservation. Observing different classrooms helped me to better understand different types of relationships and interactions students have with their teachers. For instance, like the English teacher, the shop teacher teased

the students but was, impressionistically, more gentle about it, and laughed along with them more as he teased them (as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 4). He told me that he knew the families and so he understood what was going on in the kids' lives outside of school, and he adjusted his interactions with them accordingly. For instance, he said some days, the kids just needed a quiet place to relax and be left alone.

3.2.4. Interview Data

I began conducting semistructured individual and group interviews after the students were familiar with me, and vice versa. The interview data allowed me to more directly investigate specific linguistic features and ideologies about language and culture. I analyzed both the linguistic form and content of the data from these interviews. Using both individual and group interviews provided a good mix of data, particularly because some of the students were I think very open with me in the individual interviews because they did not have to consider their peers' reactions to what they were saying. Likewise, in group interviews, I believe that when some of the students saw other students talking openly with me, it encouraged them to do so as well.

The interviews took place in empty rooms, and each interview took about one hour. Drawing on Seidman (2006), McCarty, Romero, and Zepeda (2006), and the pilot study, I arranged the interviews around 4 topic areas: (a) demographics and background: growing up years, educational background, and general questions about school; (b) cultural activities and consumption: basketball, pow-wows, watching TV, using the Internet, buying and listening to music, opinions about clothing styles; (c) language: language resources in the home environment, adolescents' own linguistic repertoires (e.g., knowledge of Blackfoot, English, "slang"), evaluations of language (Blackfeet, English, Hip-Hop Nation Language [HHNL; Alim, 2004], accents); and (d) identities:

ethnicity, gender, class, stereotypes, labels for social groups inside and outside of school. Group interviews focused on cultural activities and on areas b–d above. As I spent more time in the school and the prominent use of humor in interactions became clearer to me, I also began to ask questions about humor to gain insight into the students’ understanding of their use of humor. Early into my fieldwork, I noticed the students’ use of humor with each other and their teachers, particularly their English teacher, and became interested in the student’s ideologies of humor; adjusting my interviews to ask the students about humor helped me more directly investigate these ideologies.

3.2.4. Visual Semiotic Data and Fieldnotes

I made observations and notes about students’ use of nonlinguistic semiotic materials, for instance clothing styles (see, e.g., Eckert, 2000) such as t-shirts with pictures of professional basketball players, “Native Pride” t-shirts, and shoes; hairstyles; and make-up (see, e.g., Mendoza-Denton, 1996). This allowed me to investigate how linguistic and nonlinguistic resources work in concert in the construction of style, although I discuss that only briefly in this dissertation (see Section 6.6). Following ethnographic work in sociolinguistics (most notably, Eckert, 2000), I made and used fieldnotes as data and to interpret and record my findings (Eckert & Gaudio, 2002). Throughout my research, from initial meetings to the ethnographic activities described above to data collection, I noted peer–peer and adolescent–adult (e.g., teacher, parent, administrator) interactions that I observed but that were not audio-recorded, as well as my own interactions with students and adults in the school. While I was in the field, observations of these interactions were recorded as unobtrusively as possible.

3.3. METHODS OF ANALYSIS

In this section, I describe how I determined which data I would transcribe, the transcription conventions I use; qualitative analysis; and some examples of the linguistic features that I noted during my fieldwork, transcription, and initial analysis. I discuss linguistic features in more detail in Chapter 6.

3.3.1. Transcription

I asked the participants whether they would like to self-select a pseudonym, which was used for coding, transcribing, and reporting the data. In some cases, either because I recorded a student in class but did not interview her or him or because the student did not want to select a pseudonym, I selected one. Some students used selecting a pseudonym as an opportunity for humor—such as one boy selecting the name “Runs With Squirrels” (a humorous take on common Blackfeet last names), and the students selecting “Gopher Peaks High” (a humorous interpretation of some of the Blackfeet landscape) as the name of their school. In selecting data to transcribe, I kept in mind that my decisions about which data I transcribe would influence my analysis (Bucholtz, 2000). My approach to transcribing data was to transcribe any talk (a) accompanied by laughter, (b) about race/ethnicity, (c) about language, and (d) about popular culture. I chose criteria a–c because of my focus on humor, identity construction, and language ideologies. Additionally, because the students’ often likened the English teacher to characters from popular culture, I transcribed talk about popular culture to better understand their consumption and use of popular culture as a resource for humor and stylization. My general transcription, in addition to my pilot study, determined which linguistic features (e.g., phonological, semantic/syntactic) and segments of interactions were analyzed in greater detail.

My transcription conventions are adapted from Norrick and Spitz (2008; pp. 1684–1685) and from Chun (2007, p. 63):

1 Speaker pseudonym:	Contributions of different speakers are numbered, followed by the speaker's pseudonym (or my name, if I am the speaker)
<u>border underline</u>	focus of analysis
CAPITALS	increased volume
:	lengthening
-	sudden cut off
.	falling contour
?	rising contour
Overlapping [speech [speech	overlapping speech
(1.5)	Numbers in parentheses indicate timed pauses (in seconds).
< >	Utterance spoken more slowly than the surrounding discourse
> <	Utterance spoken more quickly than the surrounding discourse
°utterance°	Utterance spoken more quietly than surrounding discourse
(xxx)	Utterance not heard or understood clearly enough to transcribe
(utterance)	Utterance not heard or understood but there is a likely interpretation
((laughter))	Other aspects of the utterance (laughter, whispers); replacing
real	names uttered in data with pseudonyms; my back channeling in interviews

In addition, I set continuously any lines by the same speaker unless that person was using constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1986) or quoting someone, in which case I use a carriage return and number that line. Following Chun (2007, p. 62), I sometimes use eye dialect (e.g., *heyz*) that is commonly used in writing (e.g., *kinda*; also, the students write “heyz”) or contributes to the analysis (e.g., more accurately reflects how an utterance is said without using phonetic transcription).

3.3.2. Qualitative Analysis

I analyzed recorded data from interviews and interactions qualitatively, using theory from discourse analysis, for instance, with heavy attention to context (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992) and ideologies (e.g., Kroskrity, 2004). I also considered and analyzed the use of microlevel features (e.g., intonational patterns), drawing on theory in

linguistics (e.g., Pierrehumbert & Hirschberg's [1990] work on the contribution of intonational contour to discourse interpretation) to understand whether these features are used stylistically and how they are deployed for humor. Qualitative analysis of recorded interactions, including examining these microlevel features in interactions, was conducted to understand the local meanings of those features used in speech play and how they were related to language ideologies. Metapragmatic commentaries were also analyzed qualitatively to better understand the students' and teachers' use of humor, as well as salient local ideologies and personae. The qualitative analysis was informed by contemporary theory and research in linguistics, sociolinguistics, anthropology, and sociology, such as that outlined in Chapter 2.

I also analyzed interactions between myself and the participants, considering research arguing that the interviewer–interviewee interaction has an influence on the data elicited and may encourage linguistic performance that is as valuable as naturalistic, nonperformative data (Schilling-Estes, 1998, 2004). As I describe in Section 4.3.2 and Example 4.11, my reactions to the students' humor provided more data for understanding the process of acculturation, outsiders' immersion in the local culture. Finally, including data from myself, whose linguistic repertoires include some of the features of the Montana English, enabled additional insights into the research questions relating to interethnic variation.

3.3.3. Examples of Features Analyzed

In considering the students' ethnolinguistic repertoire, I examine locally available resources, such as those from Blackfoot and Montana regional English. For instance, some of the distinctive linguistic features of English used by Blackfeet adolescents include the glottal stop occurring word-medially (e.g., “mou[?]ain”), certain intonational

contours (e.g., peak accents in the pattern L*+H), and *hoa* as an interjection (e.g., “Hoa, this one”). Additionally, I considered potentially distinctive features that overlap with those discussed in work on what has been labeled “Indian English” (Leap, 1993), such as the pronunciation “Ind’n” (Lincoln, 1993). Some of the Montana regional English features used by the Blackfeet adolescents include grammatical features, such as the use of the past participle (e.g., done and seen) in simple-past contexts, and phonological features such as /u/-fronting and diphthongized and raised [ɛ] and [æ] before velar stops and velar nasals. Further resources for identifying which other features used by Blackfeet adolescents are also used by other speakers in Montana include O’Hare’s (1965) dialectology survey of lexical items used in Montana and Beltramo’s (1980) work on linguistic diversity in Montana. Also useful were studies on Colorado Plains English (Antieau, 2003, 2006), Rocky Mountain English (Antieau, 2004), Oregon phonology (Conn, 2005), general Western English (e.g., Carver 1987, Labov et al. 1997, Metcalf 2000), and the Linguistic Atlas of the Upper Midwest (Allen, 1973–1976).

Supralocal linguistic features used by Blackfeet adolescents observed in the pilot study include use of aspectual “be” as in AAE and HHNL (e.g., the lyric “A Native offender be takin’ hundred dollar bills and makin’ it in this Native game” by a freestyle rap in an interview with an 18-year-old boy), as well as lexical features such as “homie” and “player,” used in HHNL. Some participants also performed stereotypical “White English,” using features such as nasalization, higher pitch, faster rate of talking, and hyperarticulation (see Bucholtz, 2001).

3.3.4. Ethnic Labels

Throughout this dissertation, for ease of discussion, I use the terms “American Indian,” “Native,” and “Native American” interchangeably and “White,” which (a)

reflects some of the students' ideologies and labels for these ethnic categories (e.g., talk of "Whites" and "Natives") and (b) obscures students' more nuanced understanding of their ethnicity and tribal cultural differences. For instance, in response to my demographic question about race/ethnicity, participants' responses varied and included responses such as "Native American," "Blackfeet," "Blackfeet and White," and "Irish, Northern Cheyenne, Blackfeet, French Canadian." Similarly, the English teacher describes himself as "White" but in interactions with students, portrays himself as a White ethnic, discussing his Polish heritage, as I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Humor, Teasing, and Cultural Conflict

4.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I present and analyze examples of student–student teasing and student–teacher teasing. I show how teasing functions among students to constitute their culture and the classroom culture, and that this is the culture that non-local teachers must adapt to. I analyze teasing between students and teachers as a way (a) for students to test the teacher’s cultural competence, create a collaborative floor, and have more control over the pace of instruction, and likewise, (b) for teachers to demonstrate cultural competence and encourage student participation. The data are primarily from observations and recordings of freshman, junior, and senior English classes; interviews with students and with the English teacher; and fieldnotes. In Section 4.2, I analyze student norms for teasing by examining teasing among students: teasing sequences’ typical structure, topics of teasing, alignments, participant roles, and the social functions of humor. The heart of the chapter is in Section 4.3, in which I analyze the teasing discourse as constituting the students’ culture and describe how it is different from outsiders’ (nonlocal Whites’) views on teasing and insults. I then describe and analyze student–teacher teasing (Section 4.4), focusing on teasing as a student strategy to create a collaborative floor and to control the pace of instruction and as a teacher strategy to manage the classroom. I describe how teasing is related to student ideologies of communication and teasing’s social functions in the classroom in Section 4.5. Before concluding, I analyze teasing’s role in the student–teacher relationship over time.

4.2. DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSES OF TEASING AMONG STUDENTS

I use the noun *tease* to refer to a single turn, often a witty turn (Dynel, 2008), in a range of activities from put-ons (Philips, 1975) to mock insults, and following the

students' use of the term tease (e.g., referring to an insult as “a little tease”; 05/15/2009, junior English). Teasing refers to the “potentially multiturn” verbal activity of teasing, and teasing sequence describes the progressing of teasing (Eisenberg, 1986). In the subsections below I describe and analyze how teasing sequences proceed, topics of teasing and alignment shifts during teasing, present examples of self-teasing, and the social functions of teasing.

4.2.1. Progression of Teasing Sequences

The first example of a typical teasing sequence between students (senior boys in English class, which was a study hall for the day) is below. Here, Nighthawk and Lawrence are playing the card game Speed (a game in which players play cards in sequence onto piles, as fast as they can; whoever sheds all their cards first wins), and Ace teases them about how slowly they are playing.

Example 4.1. “It’s called ‘Slow’ with those dudes” (Senior English, 5/15/08)

- 1 Mike: You guys playin’ Speed?
- 2 Lawrence: Yeah.
- 3 [I’m gonna lose
- 4 Ace: [No, it’s not called “Speed,” it’s called “Slow” with those dudes
- 5 Mike: Hoa, hoa, look at ’em!
((laughter))
- 6 Mike: You’re supposed to lay down fast, (hoa, xxx)
- 7 Boys: ((laughter))
- 8 Nighthawk: [Quiet, you.
- 9 Ace: [Jeeez, sloooow, innit
- 10 (Jeffery): They’re just playin’ cards.
- 11 Boys: ((laughter))
- 12 (Mike): They’re just playin’ regular.
- 13 Boys: ((laughter))
- 14 Lawrence: That’s the way we roll
- 15 Mike: Just playin’
- 16 Ace: Hey, hoa, a-really bad.
- 17 Boys: ((laughter))
- 18 Nighthawk: Is this Speed, or what, man?
- 19 Ace: [(Speedy.) Call him “Speedy” in college.

20 Nighthawk: ((quickly lays down cards)) [Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam! Biff!

((4 minutes later))

21 Ace: You guys are slow

22 Lawrence: >You're slow.<

23 Boys: ((laughter))

24 (Church): [(xxx)

25 Sally: [You guys playing Speed?

26 Ace: No, they're playing Slow

The progression of this teasing is typical of what I observed between students and similar to Eisenberg's (1986) description of teasing sequences. The teasing begins with a mock challenge or insult (Line 4). Other audience members often join in (Lines 5, 6, 10, 12), sharing the floor. The target's responses to the tease typically include laughing and briefly rebutting the teaser (e.g., "Quiet, you" in Line 8; other variants include "shut up," "that's ignorant," or nonverbal responses, such as laying down cards quickly in Line 20). The target often slowly or quickly accepts the tease and plays along with it, as when Nighthawk says "Is this Speed, or what, man?" (Line 18). Teases often continue to build on each other as they are taken up creatively and through speech play, as the irony in "Call him 'Speedy' in college" (Line 20). The topic becomes available for reference later on in the conversation, as in Lines 21–26 above. As Eisenberg describes, for teasing to be understood as such and not taken as a serious insult, teasers trigger a "play" frame (Bateson, 1972; Goffman, 1974) through contextualization cues that are culturally dependent (Gumperz, 1982, 1992), indicating to the target and audience that the mock insult should be interpreted as "play." Contextualization cues include laughter and statements such as, in Eisenberg's data, "Don't believe it...I'm just playing" (p. 184). Here, the cues that signal "This is play" are laughter and *hoa* ([*hoa*]; Lines 5). *Hoa* in this and in other teases (e.g., the frequently used phrase "Hoa, this guy!") usually means

something along the lines of “can you believe that this person just said or did that?”²⁴ Other teases among students share this structure, often have a similar topic (teasing someone for having a characteristic perceived as negative), and include similar contextualization cues (and *okes*, *jokes*, *hoa*, *hey*, *heyz*, *yayz*, and *ayz*; terms discussed in more detail in 6.5.3).²⁵

In the next example of teasing, the structure and topic are similar to that just described. This is an excerpt from an interview in which I was asking a group of juniors and seniors in shop class and Spiff (28-year-old woman who works at the school)²⁶ how students dressed in the school.

Example 4.2. “Goodwill” (Shop, 10/27/08)

- 1 Nikki: ((to Jeffery)) What about, like, if somebody, so, wait, let’s start with you. If somebody asked you what your style is, what would you say?
- 2 Spiff: Hood.
- 3 Jeffery: ((Laughter; Jeffery, Spiff)) Little bit. Uh, probably like she said, a little bit hoodish. ((laughter, Jeffery, Spiff)). No doubt about it, but I like to be, like, I like to look good, so, I just wear what looks good on me. I don’t know how to explain, how would you say I look? ((to Spiff))
- 4 Spiff: Goodwill.
- 5 Everyone: ((laugh))
- 6 Jeffery: Salvation.
- 7 Spiff: Oh, did you switch to Salvation Army?
- 8 Jeffery, Spiff: ((laugh))
- 9 Jeffery: Yes.
- 10 (xxx): (xxx)
- 11 Everyone: ((laugh))

²⁴ *Hoa* is also used as a call for attention or for emphasis; discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

²⁵ Note also Ace’s use of the distinctive interrogative *innit*, which means something along the lines of “right?” I discuss this, too, in 6.5.1.

²⁶ Spiff is not a teacher and knows many of the students well; as such, her relationship with the students reflects like-relationships among students and younger adults in the community. I do not know whether there are social rules about who can tease whom are in traditional Blackfeet society (e.g., intergenerational teasing, familial teasing).

- 12 Jeffery: Burned down.
13 Jeffery, Spiff: ((laugh))
14 Jeffery: [(ha:h), I jokes.
15 Spiff: [You should know.
16 Everyone: ((laugh))
17 Spiff: That's why you were cryin'.
18 Jeffery: ((laughs)) A:y.

This teasing sequence begins with mock insults (Lines 2, 4), followed by laughter but without a rebuttal, and the target joins in (Lines 3, 5, 6). The teasing continues and builds, with Spiff saying, “Oh, did you switch to Salvation Army?” and Jeffery again playing along by answering “Yes.” Contextualization cues include laughter and “Hah, I jokes” (Line 14), an overt contextualization clue, to clarify the play frame.

Spiff's tease “Hood” suggests Jeffery dresses in an urban, gang style; she is teasing him about the way that he does, to some degree, dress (i.e., “gangster,” as described to me by students in other interviews about style). By speaking for him, she is both teasing him and attempting to describe to me his style, that is, to make me believe he has a “hood” style. After highlighting these elements of his style, she then shifts to put down his style as “Goodwill,” implying that he does not dress well or that he does not care about his clothing, and implying poverty. These teases contain the possibility for ambiguity in the literal message of it being a putdown, but because the participants know each other well and Jeffery responds with laughter, it is clear to Jeffery and the others present—including me, as the interaction unfolded—that Spiff does not intend the literal message of her tease. One of the main features of teasing is that it involves the nonliteral and nonserious acts of putting people on (Philips, 1975, pp. 7–8),²⁷ whereby people are made to believe something contrary to fact, in this case that Jeffery has a “Goodwill” style. That Spiff teases him about inattention to his style immediately after he describes

²⁷ Philips (1975) talks about the instigator (Spiff; the person who acts on one interpretation that she does not subscribe to but acts as if she does), the deluded (me and, to some degree, Jeffery; the one who is put on), and the included (Jeffery and the other participants; people who understand the act as a put-on).

how he likes to look good and asks her to describe how he looks, indirectly inviting her to compliment him, suggests that she is teasing him about bragging about looking good. Spiff's teasing of Jeffery may illustrate socialization through teasing (see Eisenberg, 1986) and teasing as a social corrective (Bergson, 1901, as cited in Attardo, 1994) or social control (Deloria, 1969)—teasing as a way to gently chide Jeffery for not describing himself humbly.

In the next segment, Jeffery teases Spiff in a way that parallels how she teased him, that is, teasing her about dressing in a sloppy way.

Example 4.3. "Sweats" (Shop, 10/27/08)

- 1 Nikki: ((to Spiff)) What about you?
- 2 Jeffery: ((laughs))
- 3 Jeffery: She don't give a shit. ((laughs))
- 4 Spiff: I wear this to work, but outside I like...
- 5 Jeffery: She likes sweats
- 6 Spiff: Not even!
- 7 Jeffery: ((laughs)) Sweats and big shirts.
- 8 Jeffery, Spiff: ((laughs))
- 9 Spiff: What do you call those things?
- 10 Jeffery: Bell bottoms-ah?
- 11 Spiff: Tear aways? ((laughs))
- 12 Jeffery: Ah, yeah, those are (sweats-ah/sweats sah). ((laughs))
- 13 Spiff: I don't know, I like wear, just name brand stuff?

In the example above, the teasing sequence begins in Line 3 with "She don't give a shit" (with Jeffery answering for Spiff in the same way she answered for him in Example 4.2, Lines 2 and 4). Jeffery continues to tease Spiff, who says "Not even!" (brief refute), and others present laugh at Jeffery's attempts. Here, although the target laughs along with the teases a little (Line 8), she does not join in by teasing herself or by teasing back, so the teasing sequence ends, despite Jeffery's attempts to engage Spiff through teasing.²⁸ In

²⁸ Most of my data is from student-student or student-teacher teasing, so I do not have enough data of intergenerational teasing to know whether it is typical for the older person to not respond to teasing by a younger person by laughing or going along with the tease. Ayoungman-Clifton (1995) discusses parents

this example, Jeffery teases her in a way that mirrors how she teased him, with “She don’t give a shit” (Line 2) and his subsequent lines carrying the same metamessage as “Goodwill” and “Salvation” in the previous example. Examples 4.3 show that other members of the community have similar teasing patterns that I observed among the students, illustrating that the students’ teasing is typical of teasing in the wider community.

4.2.2 Topics of Teasing and Alignments

The examples above illustrate the main topics students are teased about: potentially negative personality qualities (e.g., being slow). Students also tease each other about dating, sexuality, and masculinity.²⁹ In an example from junior English, a group of junior girls collaboratively tease a senior boy, Mike, about wanting to see “his woman.” The boy answers with, “Shut up, you!” One of the girls then turns to another girl and tells her how “his woman” writes to her to ask if he talks about her; she says this in a way that’s loud enough for Mike to hear, but she is clearly not addressing him. She excludes him from the conversation as a way of continuing to tease him (similar to Straehle’s, 1993, description of participants excluding another participant through teasing). This kind of teasing creates collusion (Eisenberg, 1986, p. 192) through the girls aligning against the boy in a collaborative floor (Edelsky, 1981), in which they all join in on the teasing. Returning to the interaction, Mike defends himself by saying that the girl is “stuck on” another boy, to which one of the girls responds, “That’s only because she hangs out with you!” and the girls laugh. The girls continue to collaboratively tease Mike throughout the class, on a range of topics, including that his favorite musician is a boy band, whose

using teasing to control the behavior of children and that it is unacceptable to criticize older people; thus, it might be more acceptable in this community for Spiff to tease the students but for them to not tease her back. By not responding, Spiff may be reinforcing these norms.

²⁹ These kinds of teases are likely part of flirting, which I do not investigate.

poster, they allege, he has hidden under a Taylor Swift poster in his locker; his height (teasing him that he is not tall); and that he would star in the “rez version” of the 1990s sitcom “Beverly Hills 90201” but that with him as the star, it would be “just boring.” The boy does not say much back to the girls, besides occasionally briefly refuting them.

Impressionistically, girls tease boys about appearance, dating, and masculinity more than boys tease girls about appearance, dating, and femininity—but boys do tease girls about these same topics.³⁰ Other instances from my fieldnotes of cross-gender teasing along these lines include a girl saying a boy’s nails were so long he scratched her when they played basketball, a girl suggesting a feminized version of a boy’s name for his pseudonym for my study, a group of senior boys teasing a senior girl about “having a woman,” and Mike trying to tease Fogal³¹ about her appearance in the example below. When Mike tries to tease Fogal in the example below, it is after he has been teased throughout the preceding 40 or so minutes of class.

Example 4.4. “Your face looks pretty rough” (Junior English, 10/27/08)

- | | | |
|---|--------|----------------------------------|
| 1 | Mike: | Your face looks pretty rough. |
| 2 | Fogal: | You lookin’ in the mirror again? |
| 3 | Mike: | ((laughs)) No, not really |

In Line 1, Mike issues a (mock) insult to Fogal, to which she responds aggressively—she does not refute it or laugh to indicate she takes his insult as a tease. In Line 3, Mike acquiesces to Fogal’s retort by laughing but not teasing or putting down Fogal. This example highlights the aggressive aspects of teases noted by researchers (e.g., Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997; Dynel, 2008) and the fine line between putdown humor and teasing. As Dynel (2008) describes, “Whether an utterance can be classed as a tease

³⁰ I do not analyze teasing and gender in this community; this would be a good area for future research.

³¹ The girls’ pseudonyms *Fogal* and *McLovin* are from the movie *Superbad* (Goldberg & Rogen, 2007); the girls’ pseudonyms *Pedro* and *Rico* are from the film *Napoleon Dynamite* (Hess & Hess, 2004)

or a putdown depends on the hearer's response, i.e., the next turn proof procedure (Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998)" (p. 248, italics in original.) That is, the mock insult begins a teasing sequence only when it is interpreted and responded to as a tease. Here, by responding aggressively (not mock aggressively), not laughing, and not directly refuting the tease, Fogal denies Mike's statement as a tease and thereby keeps social distance between her and Mike.

In a group interview, the junior girls (including Fogal) describe Fogal's typical role in teasing.

Example 4.5. "Fogal just turns a little tease into a big argument" (Group Interview, 5/15/09)

- 1 Dragon: Around here, you'll notice that a lot of the kids that don't say anything back are the ones who get teased a lot.
- 2 Nikki: O:h yea:h.
- 3 Aunty: So if you like, if you get, like, say I was to tease ((Fogal)) and she didn't do nothin', I'd ALWAYS tease her.
- 4 Nikki: Oh, but if ((Fogal)), if she said something back to you, you would stop teasing her?
- 5 (Rico): [You can't tease ((Fogal)).
- 6 (Rico): [Well, ((Fogal)) just turns a little tease into a big argument.
- 7 Girls: ((laugh))
- 8 Fogal: I don't like to lose, OK.
- 9 Girls: ((laugh))
- 10 Aunty: [(She's gonna be a lawyer.)
- 11 Rico: [That's where ((Runs With Squirrels)), that's where ((Runs With Squirrels)) learned to argue was from ((Fogal)), because she never gives up.
- 12 (Girl): I know, she taught him too well.
- 13 Aunty: Oh, yeah, ((Runs With Squirrels)) doesn't give up.

In addition to knowing the history of a tease and knowing how to follow the teasing sequence, knowing who plays what role and the practice of playing these roles bolsters solidarity and rapport functions of teasing and humor. Example 4.5 shows Fogal's role: "arguing" instead of going along with the tease.

Another role in teases is that of willing target, that is, being someone “who [doesn’t] say anything back” and who “get teased a lot” (Line 1, Example 4.6); Mike is one of these students, and he is well-liked and well-respected. Pollio (1983) describes situations in which the target of teasing does not tease back: “The person ridiculed often enjoys a safe position in the group and laying him or herself open to verbal attack, boasts strength and resilience to feigned denigration [and] enhances his or her individuality and high status in the social group” (as cited in Dynel, 2008, p. 258). These willing targets do not have to tease back, because their position in the group is secure, and the teasing and their responses reinforce their social position.³²

Another example of a popular student being the target of joke is in the presented below, from the student newspaper. This popular student, a boy, is generally quiet—and he is teased about this characteristic. The first two sets of questions below (Lines 1–12) are an interview with two girls on the track team. The third set (Lines 13–18) immediately follows these interviews, as if real, but is a fictional interview with the boy.

Example 4.6. “Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?”

- | | | |
|----|---------|--|
| 1 | Sam: | In which events will you compete? |
| 2 | Amanda: | Shot-put, discus, and Javelin |
| 3 | Sam: | What kind of sacrifices have you made for the season |
| 4 | Amanda: | Pop and after school opportunities |
| 5 | Sam: | How afraid are you of being hit by a golf ball when practicing on the football field with the golfers? |
| 6 | Amanda: | Not too scared. Can they even hit that far? |
| 7 | Sam: | In which events will you compete? |
| 8 | Ethel: | Shot-put and discus |
| 9 | Sam: | What kind of sacrifices have you made for the season? |
| 10 | Ethel: | None |
| 11 | Sam: | How afraid are you of being hit by a golf ball when practicing on the football field with the golfers? |

³²The example of the junior girls teasing Mike also suggests that older members in a teasing dyad do not tease back, as in the Jeffery–Spiff interactions above. I thank P. Epps for pointing this out to me.

- 12 Ethel: I fear nothing!
- 13 Sam: I didn't know you were on the track team. In which events will you compete?
- 14 Boy: Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?
- 15 Sam: You know, the track events. Are you going to throw a discus? Shot-put? Javelin?
- 16 Boy: Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?
- 17 Sam: What did you say?
- 18 Boy: Uhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh?

In Line 6 above, the girl teases students on the golf team about not being good at hitting the ball; in Line 12, the girl asserts her toughness (a topic I discuss in more detail in Chapter 5). The reporter, Sam, then exploits the interview structure in a fictional interview with the boy, teasing him about being quiet in way that has the effect of making him seem unintelligent. In close-knit communities such as that of the school, public teasing as in the “Uhhhhhhhh?” example from the school newspaper is common because all the students know each other well, know each other’s social position, and have a common history of teasing.

Some students’ being willing targets and Fogal’s turning teases into arguments illustrate what Norrick and Klein (2008) define as “humor identity”: the roles that that people play in humorous interactions, such as being a “class clown, a witty letter writer, ... a person who uses humor to defuse aggression rather than to attack others (or vice versa)” (p. 104). In another example from a later issue of the school newspaper, a picture of the popular boy with “FORE!” (from golf, meaning to look out because a ball might hit you) over the picture and “Uhhhhhhhh?” written over the picture elaborate the “Uhhhhhhhh?” tease in Example 4.6, above. Ace, also very popular, has a different humor role: He teases and jokes around almost constantly (in almost every interaction I had with him, he gave me a nonserious anecdote or a nonserious answer to my questions; see Example 4.7 below for an illustration typical of his humor). The Junior girl Auntie is

another student who often initiates teasing, especially teasing the English teacher. In my data, the teasers, targets, and the audience take up often-repeated roles in interactions, and knowledge of these roles becomes part of knowledge of the teasing culture and putting people on. As Philips (1972) describes, “putting people on requires cultural knowledge of the social contexts and role relationships for which such non-literal communication is appropriate” (p. 17).

4.2.3. Self-Teases

Besides teasing each other, the students also engage in humorous self-teases, as in the example below between a senior boy and Mr. Denver, the English teacher, during a senior class meeting.

Example 4.7. “I can barely read.” (Senior English, 5/08/09)

- 1 Ace: Who’s takin’ minutes?
- 2 Mr. Denver: You are
- 3 Ace: I can’t *write*. I can barely *read*.
- 4 Students, Denver: ((laughter))

Here, Ace teases himself about his own reading and writing as an attempt to avoid being the one who writes the minutes of the meeting, and he creatively juxtaposes “can’t write...can barely read” for humorous effect. This example also shows another topic of teasing—teasing about being, as the students say, “ignorant.” Through self-teases, students can show that they are willing targets of teases and can, as discussed above, emphasize their safe position within the group. Self-teases can be used strategically, for other purposes as well, as Ace does here as a protest to being the one who takes notes and to playfully avoid the conflict that would be created if he outright refused to take notes when the teacher asks him to.

4.2.4. Social Functions of Teasing

Most research on teasing and humor focuses on its social functions: It creates solidarity through collusion (e.g., Eisenberg, 1986; Dynel, 2008), and a group can use teasing as a social control (e.g., Deloria, 1969), as I described in more detail in Chapter 2. In the previous subsections, I briefly noted some of the functions of teasing in my data: as a playful warning against bragging about one's appearance, accepting teases as a way of signaling a secure position within a group, creating solidarity and alignments, and protesting without causing overt conflict. Teasing as a way of shaming into socially acceptable behavior as noted by Deloria (1969) was also common in the teases in my data, as referenced in the examples below (most relevant lines are underlined).

Example 4.8. "You laugh and you get 'em shamed out" (Interview, Junior Girl, 12/08/08)

Like, when we went to: Billings, me and my mom? There was a lady, she was, like, from Italy or something? And, she said so:?'n', "Oh, my god! You live in teepee!" ((laughs)) "No, I live in a house, hey." ((laughs)) ((Oh, like she found out you were in an Indian?)) Yeah. ((And she asked that.)) Yeah. ((Oh yeah.)) And then I have some friends from other reservations and they, it kinda bugs them, and they're like, "It doesn't bug you, you just laugh." I said, "I know. You laugh and you get 'em shamed out, and they won't ask you the same stupid question."((laughs)) ((Nikki laughs)). And my friend, uh, my friend ((Travis)), he's from Rocky Boy, he just kinda goes, "Yeah, this one time, this lady asked me if I lived in a teepee, and, he said, I just glared at her, and she just kept asking me." ((laughter; Nikki and girl)) And I said, "Laugh at 'em and say, 'No: ' That'll shame 'em out." And then he goes, "Really?"

A man from the community similarly described one of the functions of teasing:

Example 4.9. "You do a little shame work on 'em" (Interview, 05/19/09)

And a lot of it, you (1.8 s) you kind of humiliate 'em. You do a little sha:me work on 'em. Where, then they realize, oh, if I quit doin' this, they won't, (.7 s) they won't be uh, (.7 s) makin' fun of me. ((laughs))

In this section, I described and analyzed teasing among students, including its structure and social functions. I now turn to relationships between teasing and culture.

4.3. TEASING AND CULTURE

In this section, I use the metaphor of sedimentation to describe how teasing constitutes “culture.” From there, I describe how cultural outsiders react and, sometimes, adapt to this culture.

4.3.1. Circulation and Sedimentation of Culture

One can imagine that people present for a tease might take up the topics of the teasing in later conversations. For instance, considering Example 4.1 (“It’s called ‘Slow’ with these dudes”), Ace or any of the boys present might reference the “slow” tease, or it might be that being slow is a topic continued from teasings past. I observed that topics of teasing are repeated and take on “a referential afterlife” (Goffman, 1981, p. 46, as cited in Fine & De Soucey, 2005, p. 2; see 2.1.3 above) in later teases. In this way, teasing discourses circulate in the community and become part of the students’ culture. Understanding the structure, topics, and contextual cues are important in demonstrating cultural competence: Teases are “‘ways of speaking’ [Hymes, 1984]—discourse genres through which competent cultural members display their cultural knowledge” (Bucholtz, 2003, p. 46; see also Bauman & Briggs, 1992, for genres as part of cultural systems).³³ Similarly, Hopper (1998), describing the metaphor of sedimentation, writes, “speakers borrow heavily from their previous experiences of communication in similar circumstances, on similar topics, and with similar interlocutors” (pp. 157–158, as cited in Pennycook, 2007, p. 72). Hopper’s (1998) “poststructuralist” approach argues that “sedimentations” are “grammar”; I do not follow this view here, but the metaphor can describe ways of speaking and the ways that a community’s linguistic and cultural

³³ For teasing as genres, see Kotthoff (2007).

practices are coconstitutive—discourse as culture and culture as discourse—and have a historical dimension.

Ewers (1958) provides some historical context for the putting-people-on aspect of teasing among Blackfeet:

The Blackfeet loved to poke fun at strangers, especially members of other bands. When a number of men gathered in a lodge to welcome a guest it was common for some of them to make indecent remarks about him. Should the guest appear annoyed at their jibes, they only intensified their efforts. It was the host's duty to prevent the joking from going too far. One Piegan band was noted for annoying visitors by a mock family row. The host began a quarrel with his wife. Neighbors rushed in and took the woman's part. In the general row which followed all fell upon the guest and roughed him up without doing him any serious injury. (p. 145, as cited by Philips, 1975, p. 4).

I observed this putting-people-on aspect of teasing among students: deliberately misleading the target and/or audience through a tease. The concept of putting people on is one of the primary means through which teasing is accomplished in this community (as in other American Indian communities; Philips, 1975). For example, once in Senior English, a girl told a boy that he got a lower grade than he did, in fact, get. When he found out what his grade really was, he said “You liar!” to the girl. The girl laughed and said, “I’m not a liar, I just like to joke,” demonstrating the deliberate misleading that often takes place with teasing among the students. Putting people on and a teasing culture is the students’ culture that outsiders—nonlocal teachers—must adapt to. The Ewers quote also demonstrates teasing to distinguish insiders and outsiders, as Ayoungman-Clifton notes for contemporary Siksika interactions.

4.3.2. Views of Teasing: Mock Insults and Linguistic Creativity

To understand what is meant by the teases and how to appropriately respond to the students’ teases, outsiders (such as the English teacher and me) must learn the rules of teasing, including appropriate contexts and topics of teasing and the structure of

teasing—rules that may be different from those in the outsiders’ culture. Researchers have only relatively recently begun discussing the prolific use of humor among American Indians, as I discussed in Section 2.1.2 (see also V. Deloria, 1969), and the ways it is striking to non-Indians (Philips, 1975). Philips (1975) describes that she could not discern “in the same way that Indians could when people were being put on” and that it “gave me cause to treat the relationship between literal and non-literal messages as problematic in a way that I would not in my own cultural milieu” (p. 4). Miyashita and Crow Shoe (2009) give an example of a Blackfoot song (a lullaby) that “sounds threatening, but ... is in fact humorous to Blackfoot speakers” (2009, p. 185). Similarly, Delaware writer Daniel David Moses discusses the teasing of visitors to his home reserve of Six Nations near Brantford, Ontario, Canada:

The first few times I take new friends home to the reserve I have to prepare them, because a large part of how we function is [through] teasing each other. If they’re not prepared, they’re going to feel under attack (11/02/1992, quoted in Ryan, 1999, p. 59)

From a White middle-class perspective (Mr. Denver’s perspective, and mine), the teasing can indeed feel like being “under attack,” as Moses describes in the quote above.³⁴ Mr. Denver instituted “the Compliment Game” as an alternative to the “attacks” and ritualized insults so common in his classroom. An example of this game, and the students not playing along, is below.

Example 4.10. “You look like pretty poop” (Freshmen English, 12/08/08)

- | | | |
|---|-------|-------------------|
| 1 | Ali: | ((laughs)) |
| 2 | Chad: | Shut up, ((Ali))! |

³⁴A. Woodbury (personal communication, February 2013) told me that in Yup’ik, similar behavior toward new outsiders is glossed as “testing.” I do not know what the Blackfoot word for this kind of behavior is, but it would be interesting if it were something along the lines of “testing.”

- 3 Ali: You shut up!
4 Chad and Ali: ((laugh))
5 Chad: [Ali]'s just turning red.
6 Ali: I'm gonna (kick your butt)
7 Students: ((laughter))
8 Mr. Denver: We should play the compliment game again.
9 Ali: ((Chad)), you look like pretty poop.
10 Chad: ((laughs)) Hoa, what'd you say?
11 Ali: ((Chad)), you look like pretty poop
12 Chad: Hoa ((laughter))
13 Ali: Can we play the Compliment Game?
14 Chad: As long as she doesn't get to compliment me!
15 Students: ((laugh))
16 Mr. Denver: You guys need some positiveness

In this example, the students use the Compliment Game as a way to deliver mock compliments and (literally) scatological humor. Here, Ali pairs the compliment “pretty” with “poop,” a statement that clearly is not a compliment and is creative in its unexpected pairing. Here, the students creatively use the structure of the Compliment Game to continue to deliver mock insults.

Sustained and group teasing are such frequent occurrences among the students and are striking to outsiders that it is easy for outsiders to miss the role of linguistic creativity involved in the teases. That is, it is clear to see that teases are insults and are meant and interpreted as mock or play, but it is easy for outsiders to miss the linguistic and social nuances of these teases. Examples from my data suggest the important role of creativity, skilled linguistic play, and unexpected juxtapositions (e.g., Philips, 1985; Sherzer, 2002) in successful teases. For instance, in 4.6, Sam capitalizes on the question-and-answer structure to tease the popular boy about being quiet. In another example, after a discussion of rap music, Aunty puns on the rapper Weezy's name to say that a boy's nickname is “Wheezy” because he has asthma. She and Fogal then build on this pun, teasing him about his medical conditions and infantilizing him through describing how

one of his relatives had to give him cough medicine by doing “the airplane” with a spoon and holding his nose until he opened his mouth. The girls all laughed during this story, at one point saying, “I’m just jokin’” and the boy smiled along.

The example below shows that I, as an outsider, did not understand relationships between mock insults, teases, and speech play. In this excerpt from an interview with a group of junior girls, I ask the students about which teachers they tease. I insist that Mr. Denver teases them back, and I am confused about why they do not consider some of his insults as teases.

Example 4.11. “Jeepers Creepers” (Group Interview, Junior Girls, 05/15/09)

- 1 Nikki: Do you guys, you guys tease Mr. Denver, I’ve heard, all you guys tease Mr. Denver
- 2 Rico: [Hoa, yeah, all the time!
- 3 Aunty: [He’s easy to tease
- 4 McLovin: [Hoa, yeah, he is, uh
- 5 Rico: He doesn’t even say anything back.
- 6 Nikki: Does he, he teases you guys [back a little bit.
- 7 Rico: [No he doesn’t. He tries, [but they’re not funny
- 8 McLovin: [Sometimes, but it’s like, like (1 s) dumb.
- 9 Aunty: ((Clark)) used to be[really bad for it.
- 10 McLovin: [Hoa, yeah.
- 11 Dragon: [Hoa, yeah, we tried to tease him, and he’d just burn us.
- 12 Aunty: [He’d just tease us right back, so you, we stopped.
- 13 Nikki: Oh, so it’s not, so, once he teases, wait, you don’t tease ((Clark)) anymore because he teases you back, but you DO tease—
- 14 Aunty: Yeah, you can’t win with him
- 15 Nikki: [Oh
- 16 Dragon: [Like, around here
- 17 Nikki: [But with ((Denver)), you think you can win?
- 18 Dragon: Around here, you’ll notice that the a lot of the kids who don’t say anything back are the ones who get teased a lot.

((Data from Example 4.5 here))

- 19 Nikki: But ((Denver)), (.4 s) tries to tease guys, he teases you guys back, like he says, like, “Oh your face is funny lookin’,” [or (s) stuff like that.
- 20 Students: [((laughter))
- 21 Rico: That’s not even funny.

- 22 Dragon: He called me Jeepers Creepers.
 23 Students: ((laughter))
 24 Nikki: Was that funny? Did you think that was funny?
 25 Dragon: Yeah it was.
 26 Nikki: Yeah?

In this example, I do not understand the rules for appropriate teases, and I insist (Lines 6 and 19) that Mr. Denver does tease them. I think that “Oh, your face is funny lookin’” would qualify as a tease and do not understand relationships between mock insults, putting people on, and linguistic creativity in teasing. In Lines 7 and 9, the girls tell me that his insults were not teases because they were not funny. They then contrast it with Mr. Clark’s teases, which were so funny and clever that the students could not think of anything back (“he’d just burn us,” Line 11; “you can’t win with him,” Line 14). These descriptions of Mr. Clark’s teasing them also suggests the verbal dueling (Sherzer, 2002) and competitive aspect of teasing. Finally, Dragon indirectly corrects me that “Jeepers Creepers” (Line 22), with its rhyming speech play, was funny and is a tease, an example of an appropriate response.³⁵

Of course, what is “funny” varies culturally, and students’ notions of what is funny often differed from the teachers, as Mr. Denver described to me in the excerpt below. Here, he is telling me about a time when he denigrated the students’ humor.

Example 4.12. “You guys laugh at the silliest things” (Interview, 05/22/09)

- 1 Nikki: So when we were talking yesterday, you told me about, um, like, one time that they were joking around or something, and you said something.
 2 Mr. Denver: Oh, sure, yeah. I was havin’ a, a weird day, and the kids were jokin’ around about something, and, sometimes I put up with it. Most of the times I put up with it, maybe add a few things. And then. I was frustrated to the point I said, “Ya know, that’s not even funny. Why do you think that’s funny?” I was just, it was

³⁵ That this was a group interview also highlights the solidarity function of teasing and humor: It is possible that the girls do not want to claim in front of their peers that they think Mr. Denver is funny.

just frustration, and then, I said, “You guys laugh at the silliest things. Like, you say hi to each other, and ya laugh, like it’s funny.” And, uh, yeah, that pissed ’em off. And (.5 s) they were (.7 s) BS-ers the rest of the hour. And it, then, then amazingly, the next day, they’re completely different. Be--, it’s like they forget about it, or, they just want to move on.

- 3 Nikki: Mm-hmm.
4 Mr. Denver: Like, they noticed I was having a bad day. But yeah, at the time, they they noticed that, and they got mad, and they, their behaviors really worsened.
5 Nikki: [Yeah.
6 Mr. Denver: [So.
7 Nikki: So, the rest of the period they didn’t joke, try to joke around with you, they just, like--
8 Mr. Denver: No, they didn’t joke around with ME any more. They were jokin’ around with each other and totally (.4 s) and not following directions. Misbehaving.
9 Nikki: Yeah.
10 Mr. Denver: Not completing work. They were being defiant.
11 Nikki: [Yeah
12 Mr. Denver: [And I think that was the cause.
13 Nikki: Yeah.
14 Mr. Denver: Me telling them what I did, that was the cause of that. Cause and effect.

In this example, rather than going along with the students teasing or trying to joke with them, he highlights his cultural-outsider status by negatively evaluating the students’ use of humor. In the next section, I explore in more detail teasing between outsiders (i.e., the nonlocal English teacher) and insiders (i.e., students). I show how the students use teasing in part to control classroom interactions and how, by adapting himself to the students’ teasing culture, the teacher becomes accepted by the students through his demonstrating his cultural competence.

4.4. DESCRIPTIONS AND ANALYSES OF STUDENT–TEACHER TEASING

In this section, I show the ways in which the English teacher does or does not engage in teasing, his reactions to student teases, and his teasing the students. The list

below summarizes norms for teasing in the student's culture, as discussed above, and what teachers must understand in order to display cultural competence in and through teasing:

- Teasing sequences usually follow the pattern mock insult/challenge, brief rebuttal, and laughing along and/or teasing back.
- Teasing and similar speech play are put-ons, which require knowledge of local culture and participant roles to understand as such.
- The students extensively use teasing, humor, and speech play in interactions and value creativity in these activities.
- Appropriate topics of teasing discussed above include appearance, perceived negative personality characteristics, masculinity, and sexuality (I discuss other topics in the next chapter).
- Teasing has a range of social functions, including as a social corrective.

4.4.1. Description and Topics of Student–Teacher Teasing and Cultural Competence

The students tease Mr. Denver about the same topics they tease each other about, but especially about his appearance, his sexuality, and his masculinity, as well as his race and ethnicity, which I discuss in the next chapter.³⁶ As one of the junior girls, described, in response to me asking what they tease Mr. Denver about.

Example 4.13. “We tease him about everything” (Interview, 05/22/09)

Well, we tease him about, uh, his old age. You know, he thinks he's OLD, and he's like only, what, 25. We tease him about Clark [another White teacher in the high

³⁶Topics that appear to be off limits for student–student and student–teacher teasing include teasing about family or family members (besides generic jokes about “in-laws”). Ayounman-Clifton (1995) reports that in Siksika, it is socioculturally inappropriate to “make humorous remarks about sacred or taboo topics [including] the sun dance, death, and sex” (p. 16).

school] either [Clark] being his daddy, his, uh, his boyfriend. Uh...and then we tease him about him, uh, lookin' for a big Indian³⁷ woman, you know, ((Nikki laughs)). But he has a wife. And then we tease him about maybe having KIDS, and, uh, we tease about his HAIR, we tease him about his SHIRT, his SHOES. We tease him about his, uh, ties. We tease him about anything, [you know, ((yeah.)) [because he's just a cool guy, a cool guy to tease.

This quote also indicates that this student likes teasing the teacher, and likes the teacher. Examples of teasing sequences about some of the topics the girl mentions are below. In the next excerpt, I answer the phone when Mr. Clark calls Mr. Denver's room. He tells me to tell Mr. Denver the phrase "Reading ro-man," which I do. The students do not know what this means (nor do I), and they tease Mr. Denver about speaking "in code" with Mr. Clark.

Example 4.14. "Code words" (Junior English, 05/20/09)

- 1 ((phone rings))
- 2 Nikki: ((To Mr. Denver)) Should I get it?
- 3 Mr. Denver: Yeah, sure
- 4 Nikki: ((to phone)) ((Denver's)) room. Oh, he's here, just sec. OK.
Reading ro-man?
- 5 Nikki: ((to Mr. Denver)) Reading ro-man.
- 6 Mr. Denver: Oh, I--OK.
- 7 Mr. Denver: That was ((Clark))?
- 8 Nikki: [Yeah.
- 9 (Fogal): [He:y. You guys usin' code words?
- 10 (Pedro): [(sent him a) code?
- 11 Aunty: [Sayin', "I miss you."
- 12 Mr. Denver: [That wasn't a co:de ((laughs)).
- 13 (Cali): Yo:u
- 14 Mr. Denver: ((laughs)) that's cute. ((laughs))
- 15 We don't have a code!
- 16 Fogal: [Yeah you do.
- 17 Aunty: [What does it mean?
- 18 Fogal: [You don't have to hide it no more.
- 19 Aunty: "I love you baby, I miss you"
- 20 Mr. Denver: ((laughs))
- 21 Fogal: Apparently, not your guys's wives, but heck.
- 22 Mr. Denver: ((laughs)) I'm blushin'

³⁷ The students use "big Indian" (or "Ind'n," as I discuss in Chapter 5) to mean something like "very ethnically Indian."

- 23 Aunty: He is.
 24 Monty: Everytime, every time you hear ((Clark's)) name, you just turn pink.
 25 Aunty: Hoa, your whole face just turns like your shirt.
 26 Students: ((laugh))

Note here that the structure of the teasing sequence is the same as the student–student teases I presented above: Mr. Denver briefly refutes the tease (Line 12), laughs along with the teasing, and plays along (Line 22). In this example, members of the audience join in, creating a collaborative floor and collusion. This is typical of the way the students teased Mr. Denver: One student initiated an insult or tease, and other members of the audience/class joined in, which created camaraderie and solidarity among the students, as they jointly put down the teacher. In many, but not all, cases the teacher played along.

The students tease Mr. Denver often, and often relentlessly, and he teases them (Examples 4.15), as well, and himself (Example 4.16). In 4.15, below, the senior boys are discussing that they want the speaker at their senior graduation to be a man instead of a woman; Mr. Denver accuses them of being sexist.

Example 4.15. “That’s ‘cause you don’t KNOW much.” (Senior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Ace: Nothin’ sexist about that, that’s just what I think.
 2 Denver: That’s ‘cause you don’t KNOW much.
 3 Students: ((laugh))

Here, the teacher puts focal stress on “know,” highlighting and juxtaposing it with the student’s utterance of “think” (which was not pronounced with any kind of emphasis)—thereby suggesting Ace is ignorant, a common theme among student–student teasing. In another exchange between the teacher and the senior boys, the teacher teases Ace about a negative characteristic (i.e., being lazy), after Ace has spent a long time sharpening his pencil using the loud electric sharpener.

Example 4.16. “Ace’s SO lazy” (Senior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Mr. Denver: ((Ace's)) SO lazy, he can't use the manual sharpener, he has to use the electronic one.
- 2 Students: ((laugh))
- 3 Ronald: (manual one)
- 4 Ace: Why? What's so lazy about that?
- 5 Ronald: Electric just [
- 6 Mr. Denver: [Oh, I gotta tu:rn
- 7 Ronald: Electric just makes it more easier

In this example, the students first laugh along with the teacher, thereby aligning with him and against Ace. They quickly realign with Ace, though, when he refutes Mr. Denver's tease (Line 4) by jumping to Ace's defense (Lines 5, 7). Note also that the Mr. Denver is using teasing as a corrective here; he is calling attention to Ace using the pencil sharpener so loudly and so long. As one would expect, the students generally move to affiliate with each other rather than the teacher. Mr. Denver sometimes joins in with the students in teasing another student, thereby affiliating with them and expressing camaraderie with the students.

By following the structure of teasing sequences (e.g., 4.15) and making the students laugh (e.g., 4.15 and 4.16), Mr. Denver demonstrates his cultural competence—he understands when and how to tease and about what topics. As Hay (2000) describes, “Whenever you attempt humor and it succeeds, your status within the group is positively affected. You have amused the audience and so illustrated that you share with them a common idea of what is funny” (p. 716). A few other examples of Mr. Denver demonstrating that he knows the students well and that he understands the cultural rules for teasing and humor follow. In the first example, Ronald is standing behind Mr. Denver's desk and is looking out the window.

Example 4.17. “You're makin' me nervous back there.” (Senior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Denver: Take a seat, ((Ronald)). You're makin' me nervous back there.
- 2 Students: ((laugh))
- 3 (Jeffery): ((Denver)), are you feelin' intimidated?

Ronald is very tall; by this tease, Mr. Denver displays knowledge of the students' valuing being tough, intimidating, and tall (discussed in Chapter 5). This is also a humorous, and successful, attempt at classroom management, to get Ronald to sit down with the other students so Mr. Denver can continue teaching. In the next two examples, Mr. Denver disparages a student through teasing him about his appearance. In Example 4.18, my 1-year-old daughter is in class and is smiling and laughing at Ace, who is joking around with other students.

Example 4.18. "All right, Denver!" (Senior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Nikki: She thinks you're funny, ((Ace)).
- 2 Students: ((laugh))
- 3 Mr. Denver: She's probably just lookin' at him
- 4 Students: ((laugh))
- 5 Ace: All right, ((Denver))!

In this example, rather than teasing Mr. Denver back, Ace congratulates him (Line 5) on his tease, on being funny—essentially, on “getting” how to tease them. By so doing, Ace puts himself in the role of teacher who teaches Mr. Denver how to interact with them, and shifting the power away from the teacher and toward him and the other students (for discussions of teasing and power, see Hay 1995a, 2000; Straehle, 1993; Tannen, 1993).

In the next example, Mr. Denver teases himself about his own appearance, communicating to the students that he is a willing target of teases.

Example 4.19. "Nope, I got a big nose." (Junior English, 05/13/09)

- 1 (Girl): Do you have a big eraser, Mr. Denver?
- 2 Denver: Nope, I have a big nose.

Being a willing target of teases here, as also described in Section 4.2, is important because, as Pollio (1983) describes, it is a way of “laying him or herself open to verbal attack, boast[ing] strength and resilience to feigned denigration” (as cited in Dynel, 2008,

p. 257). By teasing himself, Mr. Denver also shows solidarity with the students, helping to defuse any power struggles.

4.4.2. Humor, Teasing, the Collaborative Floor, and Pace of Instruction

As the above example shows, the teacher's use of humor helps the teacher have a positive rapport with students; or, in the case of Example 4.20, not using humor makes his job as a teacher more difficult. In this subsection, I present examples of what in mainstream classrooms might be considered disruptions or "humorous disruptions" (Norrick & Klein, 2008). The "disruptions" in my data are the ways that the students, almost daily, (a) test the teacher to verify that he understands them, (b) create a collaborative floor that is familiar to the students, and (c) have some control over the pace of instruction. The examples show the students teasing the teacher, and the effects of when the teacher plays along versus when he takes the mock challenges or insults as serious challenges and disruptions. Data for the first three examples in this subsection are from the junior English class. In the first example, Mr. Denver attempts to introduce *The Grapes of Wrath* as the next book the class will be reading.

Example 4.20. "*Grapes of Wrath*" (Junior English, 05/19/09)

- 1 Mr. Denver: OK, we're gonna move on to a new book, it's called, it's called
The Grapes of Wrath. Who's ever read it?
- 2 Aunty: [Hoa, we can't finish it.
- 3 Pedro: [We have two weeks left.
- 4 Mr. Denver: We're not gonna finish it, [but we're gonna get started, and
we're gonna discuss a lot of important themes.
- 5 Rico: [Do we get to have some grapes?
- 6 Mr. Denver: I'll bring grapes.
- 7 Fogal: (xxx) at the book
- 8 Mr. Denver: Sure. But it's not even about grapes.
- 9 Pedro: Well, then why's it called *Grape*?
- 10 Mr. Denver: Because it's about a grape farm.
- 11 Pedro: Well, then it's about grapes.
- 12 (Girl) ((laughs))
- 13 Mr. Denver: You're gonna find out, don't worry about it.

14 Pedro: It's about grapes then.
 15 Mr. Denver: `No it's not about grapes.
 16 Pedro: Yeah it is.
 17 Mr. Denver: No it's not. It's about the DEPRESSION.
 18 Who in here was affected by the depression? Exactly, not a person.
 19 Pedro: I was depressed. Yes I was.
 20 Mr. Denver: Not depression, as in a psychological state. I'm talkin' about Depression, as in a state in American history.
 21 Pedro: I'm depressed right now because the book's not about grapes

In this example, the students do not answer the question the teacher is asking, questioning whether they have time to read the book before the end of the school year (Lines 2–3), then asking the teacher if they can eat grapes in class (Line 5). The students and teacher engage in a combative back-and-forth (Lines 8–16), and the teacher's lesson on the book does not move forward. In the next utterance after Line 21 (presented as Line 1 in Example 4.21, below), the conversation quickly turns away from the topic of the book as one of the students issues an insult to Mr. Denver:

Example 4.21. "Your tie don't match anything on you." (Junior English, 05/19/09)

1 Aunty: [Your tie don't match anything on you.
 2 Denver: Why do you care so much? Your shoes don't match your, your jacket.
 3 Pedro: [That's just ignorant.
 4 Fogal: [Your face doesn't match your_body
 5 Students: ((laugh))
 6 Denver: What are you talkin' about?
 7 Rico: He has blue in his tie.
 8 Denver: Who cares about my tie? You, Why?
 9 Pedro: You know, your tie is really, like, colorful today.
 10 Dragon: ((to Mr. Denver)) Hey, you calm down there.
 11 Pedro: That's a good one. Hoa, hoa
 12 Mr. Denver: You ruined my day, thanks.
 13 Pedro: (xxx) ((overlapping speech))
 14 Mr. Denver: [Yeah, right, you can bring it to me.
 15 Pedro: He likes that movie ((laughter))
 16 Dragon: Thinks that was a good one.
 17 Rico: Hey, are you writin' a story, in that part?
 18 Mr. Denver: What?
 19 Rico: About (xxx)
 20 Mr. Denver: No, I didn't. But (xxx)

21 ((overlapping talk))

Rather than responding with a brief rebuttal or playing along, Mr. Denver treats the insult (Line 1) as literal (Line 2) and issues an insult back, which the students denounce as “ignorant”— Mr. Denver does not give the right kind of response. Note that saying “Your shoes don’t match your jacket” is not creative or unexpected in the way that other teases in previous examples are (e.g., Mr. Denver’s “She’s probably just lookin’ at him” in Example 4.18). Unlike in the student–teacher teases in Examples 4.14–4.19, which occur outside of Mr. Denver attempting instruction, here he is trying to introduce a book they will read in class and is trying to move the lesson forward. In this example, he interprets the teases as interruptions, evident through his growing frustration, which is clear to the students (“Hey, you calm down there”; Line 10). In Line 4, Fogal models a culturally appropriate comeback: “Your face doesn’t match your body,” which gets laughter. In the next utterance after Line 21 (presented as Line 1 in Example 4.22, below), Mr. Denver tries to come up with an appropriate insult, and the students and teacher affiliate through them complimenting him, then they tease him about Mr. Clark, and he joins in by laughing and by referencing a past joke or tease in a way that successfully puts on the students.

Example 4.22. “It is, it’s a great sweater.” (Junior English, 05/19/09)

- | | | |
|---|-------------|---|
| 1 | Mr. Denver: | Your necklace doesn’t match your jacket, ok? |
| 2 | Pedro: | Make you feel better |
| 3 | Mr. Denver: | ((to student handing in a paper)) °Oh, thanks.° |
| 4 | Mr. Denver: | Why don’t you, why don’t you pick out some ties, why don’t you draw some ties on some paper and match them with the shirts that I wear. I have 4 shirts. I have a 4-shirt rotation, ok. |
| 5 | Aunty: | Hoa, 4 shirts. |
| 6 | (Girl): | Do you? Where’s your black sweater? |
| 7 | Students: | ((laugh)) |
| 8 | Mr. Denver: | That’s retired. It’s, like, ripped, or something |
| 9 | (Fogal): | Hoa, hoa, you should have ((Home Ec teacher)) sew it, it’s a good sweater. |

10 Aunty: I know.
 11 Mr. Denver: It is. A great sweater! I've had it since sophomore year.
 12 Fogal: I wish you'd quit tryin' to fit into that one no more, hoa.
 13 Mr. Denver: Which one?
 14 Students: ((laugh))
 15 (Girl): You shouldn't, you shouldn't have let ((Clark)) borrow it, it
 wouldn't have ripped.
 16 Fogal: That's 'cause you wanted to be like, cause you wanted it to smell
 like him, gosh.
 17 Students: ((laugh))
 18 Dragon: Ask for his spray!
 19 Aunty: I know
 20 Fogal: Or just go sneak next door, and kind of, spray up.
 21 Cali: It's called 'Obsessed,' hey
 22 Students: ((laugh))
 23 Aunty: I know.
 24 Mr. Denver: ((softer voice)) Yeah, is that what it's called?
 25 Fogal: 'Stalker'
 26 Mr. Denver: ((looking out the window, softer voice)) Hey, there's your mom!
 27 Fogal: Hoa, really?
 28 Mr. Denver: ((in higher voice)) Yeah, come on in!
 29 Students: ((laugh; someone says, "Ya:y"))
 30 Monty: Looks like you're just lookin' cross-eyed
 31 Mr. Denver: ((in higher voice)) "Yeah, come on in"
 32 Thanks a lot, ((Dragon)), I appreciate it.
 33 Dragon: [Yeah
 34 Fogal: [(xxx) just a [little kid.
 35 Mr. Denver: [So let's talk, let's talk a little bit about the Depression.
 36 (Fogal): Hoa, that's not my mom, it's my truck. You liar.
 37 (Pedro): [pants on fire
 38 Mr. Denver: [Let's talk a little-- What do we know about the Depression,
 [Rico]?
 39 Monty: [Hang them on a telephone wire.
 40 Rico: We have no more money
 41 Mr. Denver: Ok, yeah, in the Depression era, there was not a lot of money.
 42 Dragon: The economy collapsed.
 43 Mr. Denver: The economy collapsed.
 What else happened?
 44 Rico: Hoa, I read a book about that.
 45 Mr. Denver: [K, good. About the economy, about the Depression?

In Lines 9–11, the students and teacher affiliate through the student complimenting the teacher on his sweater, then the students insult the teacher about trying to fit into a different sweater—here, the teacher laughs and plays along rather than

insulting back or directly taking on the challenge. Mr. Denver laughs along with the teases and then (Line 26), he shifts the topic to an earlier joke or tease between him and the students,³⁸ an affiliative move that creates solidarity between him and the students, solidarity based on past joking. Note also that his joke in Lines 26 and 28 is a put-on and is consistent with the students' teases and jokes' centering around putting people on; the girl's mom is not really right outside, but for a few seconds (Line 27), until Mr. Denver makes the play frame clearer through the contextualization cue of speaking in a higher voice, the girl believes that she might be. After this exchange, the students answer the teacher's questions about the Depression and otherwise participate in the teacher-directed topics of discussion, and they continue to interject teases and jokes throughout the class. Mr. Denver continues to either express frustration at their teases and jokes, laugh along with them, or return their teases.

The above three examples from this class (4.20–4.22) illustrate the ways in which teasing is an “instrument by which social control is exerted” (Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997, p. 275). In Examples 4.20 and 4.21, the students exert their social control by disrupting the teacher's attempt to introduce a new topic (*The Grapes of Wrath* and the Great Depression). Through teasing, the floor shifts from the teacher-directed, one-at-a-time turn-taking of teaching to a collaborative floor in which the participants more equally participate (see e.g., Coates, 1997; Edelsky, 1981; and Holmes, 2006, as reviewed in Dynel, 2008, p. 247). Thus, the teasing is a form of a power struggle whereby the students alter the interactional dynamics to control the pace of the lesson.

Below I present a junior girl's explanation of the pace of learning and her culture. In my interview with her, she described students as being interested in Blackfeet heritage

³⁸ I was not present for the earlier joke; the teacher referred to it as an “in-joke” when I asked him about it later.

activities such as ceremonies; I asked her whether she thought the school or community should do anything to provide more opportunities for cultural learning to the students. Her response is below; I have underlined the most relevant parts of her discussion of pace of instruction.

Example 4.23. “With this culture, you all have to do it in your own time” (Interview, 05/22/09)

I think it'd be more, basically, the community that does (yeah) it. The school, it's like, it's drabby. (yeah) I gotta admit, the school is like, white, you know, (yeah) I mean, the white walls. You really feel a sense of, all you want, all you have to do is learn here, (yeah) you can't, (yeah) and like, kids, you know, the school, it's like, you have to go on one pace, (mmhm) you know. But with this, this this culture, you all have to do it in your own time. You can't just go in a book and say, Oh this is how you read it, you better get this down tomorrow, by tomorrow, and then we're gonna go on. (mmhm) It's like, well kids, they have to learn on their own pace, so the community, I think the community has to be more involved in it, you know, like I said. I don't know what they can do anything about it, you know, (yeah) because like I said, you know, you can't really force kids, any type of kid, to do something that they don't feel like doing at that particular time. (right, yeah) Because sometimes a kid could come in, be all energetic, and when he can't get it the first hour, he gets down and wants to leave and not come back. (right) Then the person tries to push him in, and it completely (right). It's like art, you know, they push him, and they completely hate art after that. (right) So why not let 'em, come in when they want to and learn something at their own pace (yeah), but here at the school, a kid but here at the school, it's like, get this done, get this done by tomorrow, and tomorrow we're gonna go on to a NEW thing. It just goes, like I said, in one ear and out the other.

Here, she describes how the pace of instruction at school is sometimes at odds with the students' pace. Philips (1972) describes different “participant structures, ways of arranging verbal interaction with students” (p. 377), in which Warm Springs American Indians in her study favored a participant structure in which “students control and direct the interaction” (p. 379). Phillips describes of the types of instruction students receive at home—they learn independently and with little adult, authoritative instruction, and at a pace chosen by the child. I did not observe any instruction outside of the school, but

based on student interviews and their interactions with Mr. Webster (the local, Blackfeet shop teacher), a similar case seems to hold for this community as well. Also, the model of learning in shop class also likely drew on the Blackfeet learning model of observation (Seery, 2006, and Still Smoking, 1997, as cited in Seery, 2006). In my time in the shop class, I noticed a more collaborative, and less authoritative, floor, in which the students often controlled the pace of instruction and work, with support (but not authoritative direction) from the teacher. As one of the students described it to me in a group interview, “He’s [Mr. Webster’s] outgoing. He doesn’t treat you like the other teachers do; he’s teaching you, but it seems like he’s learning with you.” Part of this difference is due to the different nature of teaching English or other academic subjects versus teaching a hands-on subject like shop, but part of the difference is due to the shop teacher being a member of the community and having a shared teasing culture with the students.

The difference in student–teacher interactions with Mr. Webster and with Mr. Denver was striking in other ways as well. For instance, the students did not tease the shop teacher. He teased them in a gentle way, for instance, saying “Hoa, this guy!” and laughing along with the students. When the teacher laughs and joins in with the teases, as Mr. Denver does sometimes and Mr. Webster does regularly, the students and the teacher more equally share power (see, e.g., Hay, 2000; Tannen, 1993). The teacher “participates as the students’ equal and does little in the way of instructing and structuring the conversation through use of authority” (John, 1972, p. 365). It might also be that Mr. Webster fits into the authority structure of the community so he can exert authority in a way seen as acting as more of an equal, whereas Mr. Denver is not part of the community and does not understand or know cultural norms for authority, which creates a situation in which student behavior is less intrinsically restrained and Mr. Denver is at a disadvantage

in then trying to influence student behavior.³⁹ Indeed, Ayounman-Clifton (1995) explains that for the Siksika, it is unacceptable to criticize someone older than you, that humor is used to distinguish insiders from outsiders, and that humor is used to control the behavior of children. Thus, it might be that the students do not tease Mr. Webster because the teasing would be taken as criticisms whereas Mr. Denver is an outsider and is closer to their age. Mr. Webster's gentle teasing of the students is likely the students in a socioculturally appropriate way for older people in this community to control youth's behavior, and the students understand that it is not acceptable to tease him back.

The students' teasing otherwise forces Mr. Denver to conform to their cultural rules for interaction (teasing back, laughing, conversational joking, collaborative floor, student control of the pace of instruction) before they allow him to teach. By teasing him, the students here control and direct the interaction, thereby creating an interaction on their terms. Mr. Denver, too, uses teasing and humor as social control and to control conflict, to end the real combativeness by (in 4.22) referencing an earlier joke, laughing with the students, and only then moving back to his lesson. My data contain several examples of this pattern: When Mr. Denver does not tease or joke around with the students, they do not follow his expectations for classroom participation; that is, they either continue to try to tease him, engage in verbal combat with him, joke around with each other, or are silent in response to his questions and his attempts to lead classroom discussions. When Mr. Denver does tease and joke around with the students, they participate in class, and the lessons move forward, partly on the teacher's terms and partly on the students' terms. The students typically do not allow the lesson to move

³⁹ I thank A. Woodbury for this point.

forward unless the teacher engages in some form of joint humor (usually, teasing) with them, or if he tells a humorous story. The junior girls explained this to me as follows.

Example 4.24. “They know when to have fun” (Group Interview, 12/11/08)

- 1 Nikki: What is it that you like about the teachers you like?
- 2 Fogal: They’re like [funny.
- 3 Dragon: [Funny.
- 4 Nikki: [Funny.
- 5 Dragon: [And laid back, and like, it’s, if you haven’t noticed, the ones that me and ((Fogal)) picked are Native American teachers, ((Mr. Smith)), and ((Mr. Webster))
- 6 Fogal: They’re not really crabby all the time.
- 7 Dragon: Yeah, they know when to have fun
- 8 Nikki: Yeah. And, what difference does, does it make, if they’re Native American, [do you think?
- 9 Dragon: [Well, like, I don’t know--
- 10 Fogal: Like, teachin’, prob’ly teachin’ at like at a Native school, it prob’ly [(xxx)
- 11 Dragon: [like they throw a joke in their lessons, and all that, and that just likes gets our attention and and gets us laughin’ and we’re like (oh)
- 12 Fogal: And if you joke with like a non-Native teacher, then they like--
- 13 Dragon: They’re like, Referral Sheet! [Like, That’s ((Mr. Denver.))
- 14 Fogal: [(xxx) take it, but sometimes they don’t.
- 15 Dragon: [Like, that’s Mr. ((Denver)).
- 16 Fogal: Yeah, [they sometimes take it.
- 17 Monty: [And Mr. ((Clark)).
- 18 Fogal: [And sometimes they don’t.
- 19 Dragon: But when ((Mr. Clark)), the very first time he came here, like, what, we were in like, 8th grade?
- 20 Fogal: Yeah.
- 21 Dragon: He joked around, A LOT, like,
- 22 (Girl): [(xxx)
- 23 Dragon: [He probably thought like, “Well, yeah, if I, ya know, joke around, they’ll really like me.”
- 24 Nikki: [Yeah.
- 25 Dragon: But then after a while, he probably just got tired of us.
- 26 Fogal: Yeah.
- 27 Dragon: Because now he’s a little bit crabby.
- 28 Fogal: That’s probably because there’s all those little kids ((middle schoolers)) up here now.
- 29 Dragon: But if you get on his good side, he’s, a pretty good guy.

Through teasing, the students make teachers like Mr. Denver and Mr. Clark conform more to the norms of them and their Native teachers. As John (1972) describes for Cherokee student and White teacher interactions, the students send the message (through their selective use of silence, in his study): “We do not change unless you do” (p. 358). In other words, the teacher must adapt or assimilate to the students’ conversational norms, discourse styles, and ultimately the students’ culture, before the student will participate in class.

As another example of the conflict over teacher authoritarian style versus collaboration in teaching, I present the below excerpt, in which Mr. Denver is asking the junior girls questions, after they have been answering his questions all at the same time, overlapping in their speech, and not responding seriously.

Example 4.25. “You’re missing a tooth!” (Junior English, 05/19/09)

- 1 Mr. Denver: There should be no ruckus going on right now
- 2 Aunty: Hoa.
- 3 Dragon: ((laughing)) Hey, I heard a ruckus.
- 4 Mr. Denver: K, in order to have an intelligent conversation, which we’re havin’ now, we have to have one person speak at a time and the no-nonsense, BS that’s happening in the background has to stop. So if you have insight, I need you to share it. ((Dragon)), what’s your insight?

((3.5 minutes later))

- 5 Mr. Denver: If we can’t do this orderly, and in an adult fashion, we can go straight to the book and start readin’.
- 6 (Fogal): [OK
- 7 Dragon: [Well quit usin’ all these big words with us.
- 8 Mr. Denver: I can’t smile, without you talking.
- 9 Dragon: [(xxx) what you’re talkin’ about
- 10 Mr. Denver: [Like that? Huh? Does a smile automatically take away authority in life?
- 11 Fogal: You’re missing a tooth!
- 12 Dragon: Hoa
- 13 Students: ((laughter))
- 14 Mr. Denver: Am I? ((smiles but covers teeth with tongue)) [This time I’m

missin' a face.

15 Students: ((laugh))

16 Rico: [He's just coverin' his teeth with his tongue.

17 Students: ((laugh))

18 (Girl): He:y.

19 Students: ((laugh))

20 Dragon: You've been in ((Gopher Peaks)) too long.

21 Fogal: [What do I think about it.

22 Mr. Denver: [I know, that's why I'm leavin.

23 Students: (((laughter)))

24 (Aunty): Ha:h

25 Fogal: [Well....

26 Dragon: [Forget you too.

27 Students: ((laughter))

Here, the girls try to deflate the teacher's authority through teasing him, making a mockery of his attempts at authority (Line 11). The teacher responds by going along with the joke and by covering his teeth with his tongue, as if they are all missing (Line 14).

Mr. Denver recognizes the need to adapt to the students' culture, as the interview excerpt below illustrates, when I asked him what he thought needed to happen in the school or in the community for the students to be successful. He said that besides having positive role models come out of the school and having more job opportunities on the reservation after graduation:

Example 4.26. "Adapting to some of the family and cultural values around here"
(Interview, 05/22/09)

Another key is maybe the school adapting to some of the family and cultural values around here. Because the school has strict, I think, traditional White school standards. And if we enforce those here, to a culture and to families who don't understand them, what good is it? Because they come here, and we tell them to do something, and they're completely, confused, or they, don't care. (Like wearing hats in school?) Like that. They don't understand that, they don't understand uh, obeying rules. And you can tell at home, their values are different, and the community, their values are different. Completely different. Whereas if I were to go to ((off-reservation town)), or you, go back to ((off-reservation town)), the values at school at home are fairly similar. (right.) Whereas here, I think they're complete, polar opposites. (right) So I think if somehow we close that gap and adapt to some of the values, family and

cultural, we can start to pull, some of the students in to what we're trying to get across to 'em a little more effectively too.

4.4.3. Managing Teasing: Conversational Repair in Teasing

In some of the joking exchanges between the English teacher and students, the teacher occasionally had to step out of the play frame to clarify his intentions and manage rapport, through repair (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973) as in the example below from senior English.

Example 4.27. “Just a bunch of Indians up here” (Senior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Ronald: So, your in-laws are in town, huh, Denver?
- 2 Mr. Denver: What's [that?
- 3 Ace: [In-laws are here?
- 4 Ronald: Your in-laws [are in town, huh?
- 5 Mr. Denver: Uh, they are
- 6 Mike: Yay:z, in Gopher Peaks]?
- 7 Ronald: In [Gopher Peaks]?
- 8 Mr. Denver: No.
- 9 (Student): (xxx)
- 10 Students: ((Laughter))
- 11 Mr. Denver: I said, “Whatever you do, don't come up to ((Gopher Peaks))”
- 12 Students: ((laugh))
- 13 Ace: Just a bunch of Indians up here.
- 14 Students: ((laugh))
- 15 Mr. Denver: No, they came last year. They are just taking care of ((Mr. Denver's wife))

In this example, the topic of Ace's joke—that Mr. Denver would tell his in-laws that Gopher Peaks is not worth visiting because there are “just a bunch of Indians up here”—highlights potential ethnic tensions between the teacher and the students, a topic I discuss in more detail in the next chapter. To manage rapport and avoid misunderstanding, the teacher steps outside of the play frame to state that he has taken his in-laws to Gopher Peaks.

4.5. STUDENT IDEOLOGIES OF COMMUNICATION AND TEASING

4.5.1. Student Evaluations of Teachers' Communication

Besides engaging with the teacher through humor and teasing as a strategy to create a collaborative floor and to control the pace of instruction, the students sometimes give Mr. Denver direct feedback on his communication style, as in the data below.

Example 4.28. "Why do you holler at us?" (Junior English, 05/13/09)

- 1 Pedro: [Why do you holler at us?
- 2 Aunty: [loud. (I know.)
- 3 Rico: [It hurts my feelings.
- 4 Pedro: (xxx) I get hollered at too much.
- 5 Mr. Denver: Because so many times, I tell you stuff, ((Pedro)), and you don't seem to get it, [so I have to start hollering.
- 6 (Girl): [(Stop yelling)
- 7 Mr. Denver: [Can you hear me?
- 8 Dragon: [(Inside voice.)
- 9 Pedro: You yell because you think we don't hear you. We just choose not to listen."
- 10 Mr. Denver: Do I really need to yell?
- 11 Pedro: Yeah.

This example shows some teachers' tendencies to talk louder or yell as a solution to students' not understanding classroom expectations or instruction,⁴⁰ rather than changing his or her expectations or meeting the students in the middle. Mr. Denver does, however, often alter his communication after getting this kind of feedback from students. For instance, a few minutes later in the class, he says "Sorry, I'm talking loudly."

The students similarly evaluate a teacher who they will have next year as "loud" and not letting them talk or joke, as in the example below.

Example 4.29. "We'll all just have to sit there, quiet" (Freshman English, 5/07/09)

- 1 Leigh: She seems OK.
- 2 Bearpaw: Don't know her.

⁴⁰ See Philips (e.g., 1975) a description of American Indian students faking misunderstanding of teacher instructions as part of people on.

- 3 Ali: She's kinda loud, a little bit.
- 4 Mr. Denver: She's kinda loud, what did she teach you guys already?
- 5 Leigh: No, she came in, she talked to us, she wasn't even teaching and she was loud.
- 6 Ali: She was just talkin'
- 7 Jack: Worse than ((another female teacher)).
- 8 Ali: Hoo, [yeah.
- 9 Bearpaw: [Hoo, we'll all just have to sit there, just quiet.
- 10 Leigh: Exactly.
- 11 Ali: Looking up at her.
- 12 Bearpaw: Just sit there, just kinda

The above examples show some of the ways teachers respond to students teasing and joking: With anger, by being loud, and/or by not letting the students talk. In naturalistic conversation in Mr. Denver's classroom and in my sociolinguistic interviews, the students talked about teachers who do not attempt to meet them in the middle—teachers who become angry about being teased and who do not tease or play along, as in the below example about Mr. Clark.

Example 4.30. “Anybody could piss him off, easy.” (Freshman English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Bearpaw: Anybody could piss him ((Mr. Clark)) off, easy.
- 2 Ali: Probably PMS-ing.
- 3 Leigh: I know, it's dumb.
- 4 Mr. Denver: It's DUMB?! ((Mr. Clark's)) a good guy. Not just because--
- 5 Ali: --You're friends
- 6 Leigh: --We're best friends
- 7 Students: ((laugh))
- 8 Leigh: We're best friends forever!
- 9 Mr. Denver: Not just because of that, he's a good guy.
- 10 Leigh: [Ya:y
- 11 Mr. Denver: [He's an all-around good guy, he cares a lot about you guys.
- 12 Ali: He's an all-around cowboy

In this example, the students talk about how a teacher does not take their teases as teases (Lines 1–3). Teachers who yell or become angry in response to student teasing do not demonstrate cultural competence; rather, their anger highlights cultural differences. In this example, Mr. Denver tries to smooth out the students' understanding of the other

teacher by defending the teacher, which is met by teasing (Lines 5–8). The tease ends with a playful turn of “good guy” to “cowboy” in Line 12.

As one more example of the students evaluations of teacher’s communication and classroom management styles, I present the below excerpt from an interview with Bearpaw, a sophomore boy. The previous year, he went to school at a nearby majority-White school off the reservation. In the interview, I asked him to compare the two schools.

Example 4.31. “The humor is unbelievable” (Interview, 10/28/08)

- 1 Bearpaw: Over in ((off-reservation town)) it was like more, more handled.
- 2 Nikki: Um, and which do you like better, which do you like better?
- 3 Bearpaw: I like here, [on the Rez.
- 4 Nikki: [Yeah. Why?
- 5 Bearpaw: Because it’s:s, it’s:s like, the humor is: unbelievable. ((short laugh))

Here, Bearpaw talks not only about liking the humor on the reservation but also contrasts the presence of humor at reservation schools with students being “more handled” in the off-reservation town. This excerpt also illustrates the students’ dislike of being “handled” and how they associate humor with a style of communication and interaction they are familiar and comfortable with.

4.5.2. Other Social Functions of Teasing in Student-Teacher Interactions

Thus far in my discussions of student–teacher teasings (Sections 4.4 and 4.51), I have analyzed participating in teasing as a way the teacher can demonstrate cultural competence and manage the classroom, and that creates solidarity and camaraderie among teasers, creating a shared floor, and controlling the pace of instruction. It has other social functions that are similar to its social functions of teasing among students, as I discussed in Section 4.2.4—specifically, some of the teases are meant to embarrass or

shame the teacher as a way of testing the teacher to see how he or she handles it (4.5.2.1), or to correct his or her behavior (4.5.2.2.), to see whether a teacher is “mean” (4.5.2.2.), to diffuse conflict (4.5.2.3.), and to show respect (4.5.2.4.). Related to these functions is the way the passive-aggressiveness of some of the teases helps the students exert control in the classroom and critique their marginalized status (4.5.2.5).

4.5.2.1. Testing Teachers to See How They Handle Embarrassing Comments

In the below example, Ray is telling a story to the class about being in school in another, larger reservation town, when the teacher in that school was telling the students about what her favorite food is. He describes how he successfully embarrassed a teacher, which made her angry, and she kicked him out of class.

Example 4.32. “Men in shorts?” (Freshman English, 5/07/09)

- | | | |
|----|-------------|---|
| 1 | Ray: | She said, “Um, lemon with pork” |
| 2 | | and I said, “What? Men in shorts?” |
| 3 | Students: | ((laugh)) |
| 4 | Ray: | She just got red and almost kicked me out of that class. |
| 5 | Students: | ((laugh)) |
| 6 | Ali: | “Men in shorts.” ((laughs)) |
| 7 | Mr. Denver: | [For saying that? |
| 8 | Ray: | [Yeah, she got mad. |
| 9 | Mr. Denver: | G-rated. |
| 10 | Bearpaw: | Ki:nda. |
| 11 | Ali: | Men in shorts. |
| 12 | Denver: | We can barely kick kids out of class here for saying,
“Eff you! Go to hell,” (1.0s)“ugly man!” |
| 13 | Students: | ((laugh)) |
| 14 | Bearpaw: | I know, right. |
| 15 | (Champion): | Right, “ugly man”! |
| 16 | Students: | ((laugh)) |
| 17 | Ali: | ((laughs)) “ugly man”! |

Line 2 is a kind of pun, playing with the sound similarities in “lemon with pork” and “men in shorts.” Ray’s deliberate mis-hearing is humorous in its risquéness and was intended to be funny and to embarrass the teacher. Indeed, the student explains that the

teacher was so embarrassed and angry that she almost kicked him out of class (Line 4)—which the students thought was funny (Line 5). Mr. Denver aligns with the students to a degree in Line 7 by saying that he was surprised she kicked him out of class for such a relatively minor offense, comparing it with more direct verbal assaults (Line 12). Mr. Denver adds the “ugly man!” insult to the end, thereby making his version of a student’s insult more similar to the kinds of teases the students use, and the students laugh with recognition and endorsement at “ugly man!”. As a group of students described to me in an interview, a lot of the girls in the school use “ugly” (e.g., “eww, you’re ugly!”) “not like in a bad way” but as a tease to mean “get away from me” (10/29/08, group interview with Spiff and students). This example shows that Mr. Denver understands that these kinds of teases (“What? Men in shorts?”) are not meant seriously—and that this teasing occurs so often that teachers cannot reasonably kick kids out of class for saying them.

4.5.2.2. Testing to See Whether a Teacher is “Mean”

In one of my group interviews with the junior girls, I ask more about why the girls tease some teachers and not others.

Example 4.33. “She takes it too serious.” (Group Interview, 5/15/09)

- | | | |
|----|-----------|---|
| 1 | Nikki: | So, there’s, teachers that, like, ((Mr. Webster)) jokes, jokes around with you guys all the time, right? ((Mr. Webster))? |
| 2 | (Dragon): | [Yeah |
| 3 | (Aunty): | [Yeah |
| 4 | Dragon: | [But we don’t tease [shop teacher], |
| 5 | (Aunty): | [Yeah, he’s too cool. |
| 6 | Nikki: | He’s too cool for you to tease. What other teachers don’t you tease? |
| 7 | (Girl): | Mr. ((Young)). |
| 8 | Aunty: | The mean ones. |
| 9 | Nikki: | [So you don’t tease ((Mr. Young)). |
| 10 | Aunt: | (Yeah), he’ll get mad. |
| 11 | Fogal: | We don’t tease ((Mr. Young)), he’ll write us up. |
| 12 | Aunt: | [Mr. ((Smith’s)) funny. |
| 13 | Dragon: | [We can tease Mr. ((Smith)). |

- 14 Auntie: He'll LET you tease him.
 15 Fogal: Mr. ((Young's)) just like--
 16 Dragon: Then if he tries to tease us back, we're just like, "Hoa, this is stupid."
 17 Students: ((laugh))
 18 Dragon: Who else don't we tease?
 19 Fogal: [((Mr. Wilson.))]
 20 Auntie: But you know who's not fun to tease, though, is ((Ms. Taylor)), because she's just like—
 21 (Girls): [Yeah
 22 Fogal: [She takes it too serious
 23 (Girl): [She doesn't even care.
 24 Dragon: She's one of those people who, we DON'T want to make her laugh. Because her laugh is not [(xxx)
 25 (Girl): [(xxx)
 26 Dragon: [It's not a fun laugh.
 27 Auntie: Like when she farted that time, and we laughed at her, she's like, "Oh, next time, I'll, I'll remember to laugh." She's like, "I don't know what's so funny."
 28 Students: ((laugh))
 29 Dragon: Like, you just don't fart, OK? It's funny.

This example shows that being “mean” is strongly associated with not being funny and that they only tease teachers who they like and who will participate in teasing (such as Mr. Denver often does). Also, as shown in Line 29, it shows the use of teasing and laughing as social control, to correct inappropriate behavior through shaming, as I discussed in Section 4.2.4.

4.5.2.3. Teasing to Diffuse Conflict

Teasing can also defuse student–teacher conflict (see also Boxer & Cortes-Conde, 1997), as I showed in, for instance, Example 4.7 and in the example below, from senior English. Mr. Denver was explaining how to fold paper for a project, in a joking way (e.g., “fold it like either a hamburger or a hot dog”), which is followed by this dialogue:

Example 4.34. “Folding paper” (Senior English, 12/19/08)

- 1 Ace: You're not talkin' to a bunch of little kids here.
 ((almost 3 minutes later))

- 2 Denver: ((loudly)) What are you doing, Ace?
 3 Ace: I'm still thinkin' about how to fold a piece of paper!
 4 Everyone: ((laugh))
 5 Ace: It takes a lot [of thought].
 6 Denver: (((Ace)) Is going to get a whitewash after school today.
 Please be in attendance.
 7 Students: ((laugh))
 8 (Students): Yay! Woo-hoo!

Here, Ace protests the teacher's (mock) condescension in explaining a simple task to them and then he picks it up later in the conversation as a defense against the teacher's accusation that he's not working on the task (Line 3), turning the teacher's earlier condescension, and current accusation, into a joke and defusing the conflict. This example also shows how students pick up topics of conversation from the past, and creatively incorporate them into teasing and joking.

4.5.2.4. Teasing to Show Respect and Affection

Teasing is a way that students indicate that they like and respect a teacher, as one of the girls describes to me in an interview, excerpted below.

Example 4.35. "It's our way of showing him respect." (Interview, 05/22/09)

Around here, teasing, it's not to be me-, well some of it can be mean. But most of it's just good-natured fun, you know, but in other places, it's like teasing's a serious, evil thing. But around here, you constantly hear people teasing each other. And I know, teachers try makin' it stop, well don't really care, but sometimes they want it to stop. And they hold like, assemblies and stuff, but we, don't pay attention and stuff because that's how we show our love, (yeah), is to tease each other.

Nikki: Some of, I've noticed that, I can't remember, I'm sorry but I can't remember if you were in class when I was talking with the, uh, with classes about this. It was last Friday. I've noticed that the kids tease Mr. Denver a lot, too. (yeah) Is that, like, why is that?

Why do we tease ((Mr. Denver))? ((laughs)). (yeah) Well, I don't- well there's something about [Mr. Denver] that's really kind of open, you know (uh-huh), I mean, he's really, funny to be around, because he teases us too, you know, it's not like- he kinda, and sometimes he actually starts us going, too. (uh-huh). And, well, I think he

actually, you know, he likes Native Americans. He's been here for 2 years. We kinda, like I said, it shows our love, so I think we're showin' our love to him in that way, or our respect. (yeah) You know, because ((Mr. Denver)), we always tease him about ((Clark)), and stuff like that, (yeah; laughs) so it's just it's just I think it's just our way of showing him respect, (yeah) and the only way we really know how, (yeah) around here, is to tease him, and he's just so easy to tease, too. (yeah) He's just funny. (yeah)

Nikki: What about, there's teachers that you guys don't tease, too, right?.

Yeah, there's some, there's some teachers that kind of, well, we respect them in a way, but it's not openly, not an open relationship like with ((Mr. Denver)), ((Mr. Smith)). (right) And, like ((Ms. Jones)), she's she's really hard to tease, because you don't know, she'll just blow up on you, any minute, you'll be joking, trying to have a good time with any- body, really, and they can just blow up on you. But Mr. Denver, you know, he tries to get mad at us, but then we tease him about that, too, and he kinda cheers up. (oh, yeah) He just kinda, "Uh, whatever, I'll just let 'em tease me." And Mr. Smith, and when you're teasing other, Native American teachers, they already know that you're teasing, you know, for the respect, so they kind of tease you right back, and stuff.

The girl's description of the functions of teasing is similar to what Webster (2010a) describes as affective displays to "indicate a degree of social intimacy" (p. 51). Similarly, an older (middle-aged) man from the community described to me the reasons students tease teachers:

Example 4.36. "They're comfortable with that person" (Interview, 05/19/09)

- 1 Nikki: I've noticed that the teachers, uhr, that the kids kind of tease, some of the teachers a lot
- 2 Charles: Mm-huh
- 3 Nikki: And, um, it seems to me that they're just kind of, like—
- 4 Charles: They're comfortable with that person.

Webster (2010a) has similarly noted teasing as an "affective display" (p. 51) between himself and Navajos he spent time with. Teasing to show respect is not common in the White, middle-class culture that is familiar to me or to the English teacher, as he describes below. Here, I asked him whether he thinks it's easier for Native teachers at Gopher Peaks.

Example 4.37. “He’s lived that part of the culture” (Interview, 05/22/09)

Uh, I...you know what, it depends on the Native teacher, (mm-hm) I think. Um, I think some Native teachers, they’ve been in, they’ve been in the culture, they’ve been in the communities. And I think they understand and, understand the their behavior a little more and the interactions more. So yeah, that prepares them better for, what’s gonna happen in the classroom. (yeah) And often times, the teachers’, the Native teachers’ reaction to their, to the students’ behavior is, is positive in the eyes of the students because, that’s how they interact with each other. And, it’s kind of a weird, it’s kind of an odd thing to explain but like, with, Mr., give him a name (Me: Uh, Smith). Mr. Smith, for example, um, I think he puts up with a lot of, uh, beha--negative behavior because, he understands the culture, he understands. He understands and he’s lived that part of the culture. So it’s easier, easier for him to do that. Whereas me, I get frustrated more, because I’m used to, uh, more discipline, and I’m used to more respect. But it’s so, their humor and their see- misbehavior seemingly is accepted, and so Mr. Smith is able to connect with that more. It’s just, he can connect with it easier than I can. Just because of experience and background. (right, yeah). But not like I can’t. But not all the time.

To Mr. Denver, the teasing is “negative behavior” and is disrespectful, and he associates the students’ humor with their misbehavior. He believes the students and the community, however, have almost the opposite interpretation of it: “positive.” However, given that the students do not push Mr. Webster or Mr. Smith through this kind of teasing, it is probably the case that teachers from the community interact with the students in such a way that the students understand the kinds of (hostile or passive-aggressive) teases that a would not be allowed in a Native classroom and the kinds of teases that would, and the students also probably would not have the need to use teasing as a critique, as I discuss a little more in the next subsection and more in Chapter 5.

4.5.2.5. Teasing as a Way to Exert Power and as Critique

Related to the point above, the students tease the teacher as a way to create and exert power as a group and as a way to see how far they can push the bounds of “disruptive” behavior through humor, as Norrick and Klein (2008) describe: “Disruptive humor ... [is] the pupil adjusting to the restrictions and possibilities of the system” (p. 83). Part of the testing function of teasing, then, involves seeing if the teacher will let them

tease him or her, and how far they can push it, or whether the teacher will be “mean.” These teasing relationships are complicated because they often have an undercurrent of aggression⁴¹ (following Hostility theories of humor, that it is aggression tempered with playfulness; Feinberg, 1978), and over time, the students and teacher grow to know each other and have genuine affection for each other. Part of their aggression stems from typical teenager behavior of trying to test authority, but it seems that part of their aggression is aggressive with the pretense of friendliness (see 2.1.1), a way to critique their marginalized position as Native Americans, often using Mr. Denver as a proxy for Whites and White oppression (which I discuss in the next chapter; the most clear example of this is 5.16). In classrooms with Native teachers from the community, however, the expectations for student behavior are clearer and the Native teachers are part of the fabric of the community and so can correct student behavior in a culturally appropriate and well-understood way.

4.6. TEASING RELATIONSHIPS OVER TIME

Mr. Denver had been at the school for 3 years and was in his final month of teaching when I conducted some of my interviews and most of my class recordings. I discuss teasing as a way to express affection for the teacher in more detail here, following a discussion of how the students and English teacher’s relationship changed over the course of his 3 years at the school.

4.6.1. Testing the Teacher to Get to Know Him

Mr. Denver describes how the students began to tease him when he was first at the school.

⁴¹ I thank A. Woodbury for helping me to see this angle.

Example 4.38. “They start pokin’ around, finding stuff to tease you about” (Interview, 5/22/09)

See, when I first got here, they didn’t tease me. (mmhm.) They would just simply, laugh at the things I did, and look at me funny. And then it evolved into the teasing. (mmhm.) And then they started pokin’ around for information, and then, yeah, they got specific. And teased me about bein’ White, about bein’ Polish, about having big hands, about having whiskers, or whatever. And, uhh, bein’ goofy, and that kind of thing. So, and I know a lot, a lot of Blackfeet, they say, it’s when they stop teasing you that you have to worry. In this school, they say, for all Indians. And the kids say that too: “Oh, don’t worry, we’re just teasin’ you ‘cause we like you,” and that kind of stuff If you don’t tell them too much, they start pokin’ around, finding stuff to tease you about.

In this school, White, nonlocal teachers pass through, stay for a couple years, and the students must adjust to this transience, as the students discuss in the two examples below from student–student interview data.

Example 4.39. “We have to re-start over again, getting close to new teachers.” (Student–Student Interview, 12/19/08)

- 1 Ali: Now knowing that there’s so many stu, so many teachers gonna be gone, I mean, leaving ((Gopher Peaks)) High School, I mean leaving the school, to find a new job, how does it make you feel?
- 2 Karla: Because they’re leaving? Kinda, I don’t know, a little bit sad. Hey.
- 3 Ali: How about ((Mr. Denver))?
- 4 Karla: Yeah.
- 5 Ali: Is it sad that ((Mr. Denver)) is leaving?
- 6 Karla: Yeah ‘cause he makes you, he kids around with you. He just likes to talk about things.
- 7 Ali: How did you, how would you feel if, wow ((mic trouble)). Well, anyway. Now that we have to re-start over again, getting close to new teachers. We have to meet new teachers. How does that make you feel that we have to meet new teachers?

Example 4.40. “Good teachers like Denver” (Student–Student Interview, 12/19/08)

- 1 Lawrence: ((to Ali in interview)) I hope you’ll have some good teachers, good teachers like ((Denver)).

The students got to know Mr. Denver through teasing and he engaged with them through teasing more than some of the other nonlocal teachers did. In time, many (but not all) of

the students grew to like and accept him, because he also was able to, at least at times, engage with the students through teasing, follow their rules for teasing, and thereby demonstrate cultural competence.⁴²

4.6.2. Expressing Affection Through Teasing

Most of my recordings took place during Mr. Denver's final month at the school, after teaching there for 3 years. The students and teacher joked and teased about him leaving—and the ambiguity of “play” and “not play” or “putting on” and “being serious” allowed the student and teacher to express affection for each other, as the example below shows, in a way that is socially safe. That is, the students can tell the teacher that they like him but by doing so through teasing, they can continue to align with their peers. Similarly, the teacher can express his feelings about leaving by highlighting ambiguity of his telling through teasing. These examples are from the last couple weeks of the school year, Mr. Denver's last weeks at the school.

Example 4.41. “He ain’t cryin’, his eyes are just sweatin’” (Junior English, 05/18/09)

- | | | |
|----|-------------|---|
| 1 | Rico: | So ((Denver)), you gonna leave? |
| 2 | Mr. Denver: | Yeah, I’munna leave. |
| 3 | Rico: | You’re gonna leave? |
| 4 | Mr. Denver: | Yeah |
| 5 | Rico: | [Jeez. |
| 6 | Pedro: | [aw, heck. |
| 7 | (Girl): | [Yeah. |
| 8 | Aunty: | [Giving up on us. |
| 9 | Dragon: | [Hoa. |
| 10 | Aunty: | [Can’t believe you. |
| 11 | Mr. Denver: | Yeah, that’s exactly what [I’m doing, giving up on you. |
| 12 | Aunty: | [You’re just letting us down. |

⁴² Another part of the students growing to like and respect Mr. Denver was no doubt that he attempted to “nativize” his curriculum. He taught units on Native American writers, including Momaday and Vine Deloria, and he often related topics covered in class to Native American issues. As Lawrence told me regarding Mr. Denver's knowledge of Native American history and issues, “[Denver] knows what he’s talking about.” He also varied the participant structure of the class—often letting the students work together or individually on small projects.

13 Mr. Denver: No.
 14 Aunty: What, do you like the seniors this year, [and you just, after they leave, you just wanna go (xxx)]?
 15 Dragon: [You don't want to stick [around to watch us grow up.
 16 Mr. Denver: I gave up on you the first year I was here on you guys, I don't know what you're talkin' about.
 17 Some students: ((laugh))
 18 Rico: Heck.
 19 Fogal: When we were freshman?
 20 Mr. Denver: I don't want to talk about it.
 21 Dragon: Hey.
 22 Everyone: ((laugh))
 23 Dragon: ((laughs)) His eyes are startin' to sweat!
 24 Students: ((laugh))
 25 Dragon: ` He ain't cryin', his eyes are just sweatin'
 26 Students: ((laugh))
 27 Dragon: Hooo, crazy. Let's just stay here and visit.
 28 Aunty: Yeah, when you came here, it seemed like you were scared and shy.
 29 Rico: Yeah, and you had like long, [curly hair. And high waters.
 30 Aunty: [Curly
 31 Students: ((laughter))
 32 Fogal: [High waters
 33 (Pedro): [And a beard.
 34 (Fogal): You were just a stick,
 35 (Aunty): Yeah you were just like a walking stick.
 36 Aunty: [Now you're shorter
 37 Dragon: [Hoa.
 38 (Pedro): [Yeah, shorter
 39 Fogal: You look like you got a baby bump.
 40 Students: ((laugh))
 41 Mr. Denver: What'd you say?
 42 Students: ((laugh))
 43 (Girl): Baby bump
 44 Mr. Denver: I wouldn't go so far as to say I was a stick.
 45 (Girl): Hoa, you were. You were. You were. Like, before your stomach was just flat, but now it's not.
 46 Students: ((laugh))
 47 Mr. Denver: That's what you guys did to me
 48 Students: ((laugh a lot))
 49 Mr. Denver: [I go home, and I--
 50 Fogal: [He goes over to ((Clark's)) and eatin'
 51 Dragon: I know, we just made him eat his feelings
 52 Fogal: [((Clark)) cookin' dinner for you every night.
 53 Mr. Denver: Are you done now?
 54 Dragon: It's private stuff.

Here, Mr. Denver, jokingly admits to being sad about leaving, and the girls talk about how they toughened him up (“When you first came here, it seemed like you were scared and shy”; Line 28) and were hard on him, making him “eat his feelings” (Line 51) and ruining his health (“baby bump”; Lines 39, 43). In this example, Mr. Denver plays along with the teases, and they all laugh.

In another interaction between the students and the teacher about him leaving, the students tell Mr. Denver that he is their favorite teacher because of how he reacts to their teases.

Example 4.42. “‘Cause I like teasin’ you” (Junior English, 05/22/09)

- 1 Pedro: ((Mr. Denver)), did you know that you’re my favorite teacher?
- 2 Denver: Thank you.
- 3 Students: ((laugh))
- 4 Pedro: You are. ‘Cause I like teasin’ you, you’re funny. You don’t take everything all serious and get mad.
- 5 Denver: Yeah I do.
- 6 Pedro: No you do:n’t.
- 7 Denver: Yeah I do. I go home and cry
- 8 Students: ((laugh))
- 9 Pedro: But, yeah, you are my favorite teacher. You beat ((Clark)).
- 10 Denver: That’s incredible.

In another example, Mr. Denver similarly jokes about being sad to leave.

Example 4.43. “We’re all so wonderful, big Ind’n kids” (Junior English, 05/21/09)

- 1 Denver: I never thought I’d be depressed, leavin’ [Gopher Peaks] of all places.
- 2 Dragon: You’re just depressed because to leave all us wonderful kids.
- 3 ((Girls)): Yeah.
- 4 (Pedro): I know. We’re all so wonderful, big Ind’n kids. You know you’re gonna miss us.

Line 4 of this example is especially interesting with the use of “big Ind’n kids,” which highlights their ethnic differences. I talk more about teasing and humor as a way of smoothing ethnic tensions between the White teacher and the Blackfeet students in the

next Chapter—here, my point is that over time, the teacher and students come to know and understand each other, through teasing.

4.7. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I showed that teasing among the Native students and their White teacher functioned in a way that is analogous to Basso's (1970) analysis of silence among the Apache and John's (1972) analysis of Pima students use of silence: Knowing when and how to tease is "basic to the production of culturally appropriate behavior" (Basso, 1970, p. 215). It is a "highly refined means of selective interaction, subtly ensnaring the teacher in order to teach him those forms of teaching and learning which they were comfortable and with which they could work" (John, 1972, p. 358). This chapter echoes Norrick and Klein's (2008) call to "turn disruptions into moments of playful interaction for the whole class" (p. 101). This is especially true in cross-cultural situations such as that of nonlocal, White teachers and American Indian students. As Mr. Denver described it to me, as a White non-local teacher, he had a steep cultural learning curve when he first started working at the school:

Example 4.44. "It was tough to get used to" (Interview, 05/22/09)

When I first got here, I really didn't know what to expect because, first of all, I didn't really know who the Blackfeet were. So, when I got up here, I was completely, immersed in, a culture I had never even, understood or even, knew existed. (mmhmm) So, the culture shock was, different and then the location was different, too, because we don't even have a gas station, or any sense of entertainment, or barely anything out there. It's just a, it was tough to get used to, but uh, I don't know what I expected, so I can't, I don't know if I can answer that question. I was comin' in here blind, and I felt blind throughout the year too. Until my 2nd year, I felt a little more comfortable. And then this year, I THINK I understand more about the culture and expectations around the community also.

I have shown that humor can help negotiate cultural differences and that by using humor, the teacher can signal to the students that he understands them, and he can

express affection for them. I also have shown that what White, mainstream teachers view as “disruptions” are part of an elaborate and extensive teasing culture, and that the students use disruptions for myriad social functions—to test the teacher and test the boundaries of how far they can push with the teasing, to shape classroom dynamics, to create a collaborative floor, to control the pace of instruction, and to critique their marginalized position. From the outsider teacher’s perspective, the teasing (especially initially) can come across as aggressive, and there is indeed sometimes a passive-aggressive element to this type of testing. In time, the successful teacher learns to follow the structure and rules for teasing, including responding to teases in a playful and linguistically creative way. This chapter also provides a concrete illustration of why both the students and teachers are at a disadvantage when the teacher is a cultural outsider (see Rehyner, 1993b). Local teachers do not have to learn cultural rules (e.g., for teasing) and are a part of the fabric of the community and its authority structure, and students and teachers share an understanding of the bounds of acceptable behavior. In short, the ideological struggles of schooling (Giroux, 1981) are lessened when the students and teacher share a culture and its discursive practices. When I asked one of the older adults from the community who sometimes worked in the school what he thought could be done to help improve the experience of school for the students, he said, “Native American teachers are so important. When I was in school, we didn’t have any Native American teachers. That’s, I think Native American teachers have a lot of influence on the kids.”

Chapter 5: Articulations of Identity

5.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I cover a broad range of topics: Indian laws, Indian–White conflict, humor, stereotypes, and group identity. In my discussion of these topics, I show that the students conceptualize their group identity as being distinctive and that they draw on group values and group identity in persona construction. Section 5.2 focuses on relationships between history and contemporary ideologies, specifically: (a) Indian–White history and (b) ideologies of Indian–White differences, including differences in humor. This section provides the background and context for understanding the English teacher–student interactions I present in 5.3, in which I analyze teasing and joking that specifically references Whiteness, Indianness, and White–Indian historical conflicts. In 5.4, I discuss how students and the teacher draw on racial/ethnic stereotypes in humor and in articulating group identity. Finally, in 5.5, I focus on one aspect of the students’ group identity—toughness—that is indexed in personae construction.

I draw on Clifford’s (2001) work on articulation, rearticulation, and disarticulation as the “connecting and disconnecting, the hooking and unhooking of elements—the sense that any socio-cultural ensemble that presents itself to us as a whole is actually a set of historical connections and disconnections” that are “constant processes in the making and remaking of cultures” (p. 45). In the section on ideologies of Indian and White humor, I adapt Basso’s (1979) work on joking depictions of “the Whiteman” as a “social category and cultural symbol” (p. 4) against which the students define their group identity. Regarding relationships between group and individual identity, I use Meyerhoff and Niedzielski’s (1994) proposal that “that individual identity might be conceived as a complex of interacting aspects of different group or social identities” (p. 127), drawing on Tajfel’s Intergroup Theory, in which individuals see themselves in

interactions as “belonging to a particular group” as part of “positive ingroup distinctiveness” (Vine et al., 2005, p. 127, citing Tajfel, 1974, 1978, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). I follow recent trends in sociolinguistics, seeing identity in terms of speakers highlighting certain aspects of identity in interaction through the process of constructing personae—that is, social types that are locally meaningful.

5.2. ARTICULATIONS OF DIFFERENCE

In interviews, students and adults in the community often stressed the importance of Blackfeet culture in their lives and in defining who they are. They also frequently referenced their history and the idea of permanence or persistence of Blackfeet culture, as expressed in this quote below from Mr. Smith.

Example 5.1. “Heritage and culture, it’s all within them” (Interview, 05/19/09)

Heritage and culture, it’s all within them. What they know, what their daily experiences, that’s reflective of their heritage and culture. Whether they talk Blackfeet at home, whether they go to ceremonies, whether they pow-wow. Whether they, um, you know, spend a lot of time with their grandparents. It depends on the individual and the situation. And, you know, the cultural teachings are about the same for every family, but you know, they also add their own, what they believe and what they want their kids to know. And a lot of it has to do with their knowledge of history, and how history has impacted why we are the way we are today. That’s really where I try to go with what I teach. Is history is a lens you can look back and see this is why we’re here, this is why it’s like the way it is.

Blackfeet culture and history is seen as embodied in the Blackfeet students. In Clifford’s (2001) terms, Mr. Smith asserts that culture is rearticulated by each family, as they connect with their culture and history through practicing heritage cultural activities⁴³ (e.g., ceremonies, pow-wows) and through their other daily practices (including expressions of humor, I argue). Another way the students and community members

⁴³I did not examine students’ engagement with the heritage cultural practices the teacher lists here; how contemporary Native/Blackfeet identity is intertwined with these heritage practices and other practices (e.g., listening to hip-hop) would be an interesting area for further sociolinguistic research (see Samuels, 2004).

define themselves and their culture is in relationship to (often in contrast to) their definitions of Whites and White culture, as I describe in the subsections below.

5.2.1. Group Identity: Discourses and Ideologies of Difference

Sociolinguists and anthropologists have long noted that the conceptualization and construction of “an Other who can be positioned against those socially constituted as the same” (Bucholtz & Hall, p. 371) is central to establishing group identity. Social contact between groups has been argued to maintain and create ethnic boundaries: “Ethnic groups only persist as significant units if they imply marked difference in behaviour, i.e. persisting cultural differences” (Barth, 1969, pp. 15–16). An important part of this contact is its historical and political dimensions, which are emphasized by the students and adults I talked with at Gopher Peaks and in work by, for example, Clifford (2001, 2003) and Lincoln (1993).

In my data, many of the students’ and adults’ descriptions of Indian–White differences reference racism, historical oppression, and conflict, as in this interview with Dance McAliber (DM), an adult Blackfeet man.

Example 5.2. “You know, it’s just different.” (Interview, 11/20/08)

DM: No, but I tell you like this, though. There’s, there’s a lot, I mean. There’s just, the outlying towns of reservations, yes, there is racism, because they’re directly affected by Native Americans ((mmhm)) and Native American problems, and, becomes their, their problems, ((mmhm)) you know. Like, you know, a Native American comes off the reservation, wants to go partyin’ in the town, you know, or go stay in a town. And they mess up in the town, and then right there is a negative outlook on the Native American. And with White people, it’s one bad apple spoils the whole damn bunch. That old cliché is SO TRUE with White people here in Montana, you know. If you can’t win them over, the first time, forget it, you’re not gonna win them over a million times AFTER that. Because they are, the seed was already planted, that negativity seed. ((Yeah.)) You know? Just like in Conrad, you know, I heard that they have a LAW, still, to where it’s illegal for a bunch of Indians to congregate with each other.

Nikki: Specifically Indians?
 DM: Specifically Native Americans. ((Oh, really?)) You can look it up, this is what I've heard from people who live in Conrad and in the surrounding areas. This is what I've heard. ((Oh, wow.)) You know, it's just different. A lot of differences, in culture, really. ((Yeah.)) You know, this is the way, this is the way the Conrad people want it done, and this is the way it should be like that, because that's the way it was ever since the town was founded. And then, then you hear, you come in, you have a few Indians come in here, and they don't want to, you know, they don't want to go by these rules, ((mmhm)) and right there, it makes 'em bad. And there's nothing WRONG with that, you know, because the town was founded like that, and this is the rules you have to live by to live in this town. And then you have some Indians here who don't follow the rules, and they get in trouble, you know. And then, right from there, it's just negative. ((Yeah.)) It's not to put the blame on the Blackfeet OR the people in Conrad., it's just DIFFERENCES, that cultural line. And that's where it comes from, this cultural line right here. ((Yeah.)) It's just differences.

...

DM associates Indian laws with cultural differences, “that cultural line” between local, off-reservation Whites and Blackfeet. Biolsi (2001)⁴⁴ analyzes discourses about Indians and non-Indians as being rooted in U.S. Indian law and as representing and producing the social reality (citing Foucault, 1980; Said, 1979) of Indian–White racial conflict. These conflicting laws, which Biolsi dates to 1830, construe Indian people as both “members of distinct (sovereign) nations, and as people within the United States”⁴⁵ (p. 13)—and he shows that public discussion of these laws continues to shape local Indian–White relationships. For instance, in the above example, DM discusses the law against Indians congregating as a concrete example of racism and as defining Indian–White relationships. Below, DM's discussions of Blackfeet and neighboring Whites reference the citizens/foreign-nationals aspect of being Native.

⁴⁴ I thank A. Webster for pointing me to this work.

⁴⁵ Tribes were treated as foreign so the U.S. government could make treaties with them and as “domestic dependent nations” for purposes of home rule.

Example 5.3. “But, it’s just the way we live that is different” (Interview, 11/20/08)

The same? Yeah, we care for our families, we care where we come from, we care about our culture, we’re Montanans. ((mmhm)) You know, the bottom line is, we’re Montanans. ((Yeah.)) We’re United States citizens. But, it’s just the way we live that is different. ((Yeah.)) You know, I mean, take a look around you, look how trashy it is, then go to Conrad. It’s not like that. It’s very square. Conrad is very square. ((It is, yeah.)) Here it’s WILD, still. Still wild, and um, it’s just the way Blackfeet were brought up, we were, near genocide, you know, ((mmhm)) never wanted to trust a White person, you know, because they messed us around so many times. ((Yeah.)) And you see that, and there’s, there’s some pride missing on our side, to where we haven’t really got it down like the White people.

DM places historical and present-day relationships between Whites and Blackfeet as the center of racial/ethnic differences. One of the main differences he sees is Conrad (Whites) being “very square,” compared with Gopher Peaks (Natives) being “still wild.” I saw this conception of Whites as a cultural category of being “controlled” echoed in several of my interviews with students, as when Bearpaw described the off-reservation school as being “more handled” (Ex. 4.31).

DM also constructs Whites as being both feared (in part because of being untrustworthy, as he discusses above) and fearful, as in the example below.

Example 5.4. “White people are EASILY scared”

Not a lot of [White] people come here, because they’re scared of it. Because of so many bad things happening in [larger town] and [Gopher Peaks.] People getting killed, people getting’ beat up, people gettin’ in car wrecks. I mean, that little baby that just got found in the trunk of a car.⁴⁶ I mean, that scares White people, White people are EASILY scared, you know? I mean, more than any other race, your fear takes over. And your fear is your, your number one shield. It makes you stronger, I’ve noticed. Throughout my years, I’ve noticed that, that White people, when they’re scared of something, they come together, you know, where other, other cultures and other ethnicities and races, that fear divides ’em, but White people come together. I, I just don’t see how that happened, how God made ’em different in that, light.

⁴⁶He is referencing a news story about a dead child being found in the trunk of a car in Great Falls, Montana; the child and the suspect, his mother (later sentenced for negligent homicide), were from the Blackfeet Nation. (<http://buffalofire.com/summer-many-white-horses-sentenced-to-55-years-for-negligent-homicide-of-toddler/> and <http://www.kfbb.com/news/local/47887552.html>)

As Basso (1979) describes, “‘the Whiteman’ serves as a conspicuous vehicle for conceptions that define and characterize what ‘the Indian’ is not” (p. 5). Whereas to the students, Whites are square, controlled,⁴⁷ and untrustworthy (and cold and serious, as I discuss below), Natives are free and trustworthy (and warm and funny, as I discuss below). These differences become naturalized or seen as essential or organic (Biolsi, 2001), as in DM’s assertion of “God made ’em different in that light.”

The students, also, often talked about differences between Natives and Whites, as when in an interview, a freshman girl said “Indians are very, very, no disrespect though, very different from Whites, very very much.” I asked her if she thought there were any similarities between Indians and Whites, to which she responded:

Example 5.5. “I don’t see the similarities” (Interview, 10/27/08)

I know we’re different, but I don’t see the similarities, or, nothin’ like that, with the Whites AND the Indians. ((Yeah.)) Yeah, we’re just kinda like, I really don’t, I don’t know how to explain it, but we’re just kinda kinda different from THEM, kinda thing”

Her description here is similar to DM’s description of Natives and Whites as being different “along the cultural lines.”

In addition to differences in controlled vs. free and untrustworthy vs. trustworthy the students construct Whites and Indians as being different according to kinship and relationships (below) and in the role of humor in Blackfeet and White cultures (Section 5.2.3).

Example 5.6. “”They express their love more.” (Senior English, 5/15/09)

⁴⁷ Note that this depiction is different from the Apache’s depiction of the Whiteman who lacks self-control (Basso, 1979). (I think A. Webster for making this point.) As Basso (1979) describes, “Although the opposition ‘Indian’ versus ‘Whiteman’ is fixed and culturally general, the manner in which this opposition is interpreted is mutable and culturally specific. The ‘Whiteman’ comes in different versions, because the ‘Indian’ does” (p. 5)

Julie: No,⁴⁸ I think that Indians are more of a (2.6s) they express their love, more, I guess. ((laughter in background)) They're, everybody's family. Even if you're not cousins, you're like, oh hey, cousin! And they're not even their cousin. The White people are like, Oh, that's a stranger, y'know. You have to get used to it, I guess. I don't know.

As I discuss in the next section, these conceptualizations of differences, including Natives as warm and Whites as not, can be seen in ideologies of Indian and White humor. These ideologies of differences in Blackfeet and White humor underlay constructions of group distinctiveness. The students, English teacher, and older adults in the community saw humor as central to Blackfeet culture and identity and saw humor as an expression of Blackfeet and White ethnic differences, as I discuss below.

5.2.2. Ideologies of Blackfeet Humor

One Blackfeet adult man described humor as being a constant, persistent part of Blackfeet culture and identity.

Example 5.7 “We’ve always been a humorous people” (Interview, 05/19/09)

- Man: Our humor is, you can date that back from, from when time began with us ((Yeah.)) We’ve always been a HUMOROUS people ((Yeah.)) And nowadays, you know, you talk to some psychologists, or, whatever, and they’ll say, “Well, it’s a way of HEALING for what the Blackfeet people has gone through within the past hundred years.” ((Uh-huh.)) And, so, in a way I DO believe it and in another way I don’t.
- Nikki: What don’t, like, why do you think that’s not quite right?
- Man: Uh, because within our culture, we have humor. And that’s why, you know, like with Napi. Our Napi stories. Napi is one of ones who came down and, uh, instructed the Blackfeet people. Was one of their teachers, until he THOUGHT he was as powerful as the person that created us, that we all seek to. ((mmhm)) So then, Kut-toe-yis, Bloodclot, came down, to fix all Napi’s mistakes, but you know, they all say, Napi was a trickster, and whatnot, but in order for, uh, for us to UNDERSTAND things, you go back, and within the Napi stories, and you read ‘em, and you find, OK, what was the meaning of that story. You know, what was the lesson plan WITHIN that story. Like, Reflections, when Napi almost

⁴⁸ “No” here is not contradicting the previous utterance but is a discourse marker to shift topic (see Lee-Goldman, 2011, for “no” used in this way).

drowns lookin for berries, ((yeah)) underneath the water, you know. The moral of the story is you look before you leap, ((mmhm)) or be sure of your situation ((Yeah)), before you pull a Napi and almost drown. ((man laughs))

In Clifford's (2001) terms, humor as part of Blackfeet identity is rearticulated over time, from the Napi stories to the present-day Blackfeet—it is always there but changes to adapt to present-day conditions and is a process of hooking (articulating), unhooking (disarticulating), and rehooking (rearticulating) of group cultural identity. In this narrative of group/cultural identity, the man disarticulates humor as a psychological coping method of the Blackfeet people and instead rearticulates it as part of a continuous trajectory of Blackfoot history and traditional stories. The articulation model highlights the importance of a group's cultural self-definition, as this man is defining the Blackfeet as a “humorous people.”

The students, too, defined themselves as a group with humor as a central part of their identity:

Example 5.8. “We’re funny people.” (Junior Girls, Group Interview, 12/11/08)

- | | | |
|---|------------|--|
| 1 | Dragon: | If you haven’t noticed, we like to laugh a lot, and tease, and stuff, [a lot |
| 2 | Girls: | ((laugh)) |
| 3 | Nikki: | [Yeah, yeah, I have noticed that, yeah, that you guys [tea-- joke around a lot |
| 4 | ((Girls)): | Yeah |
| 5 | Dragon: | We’re funny people. Hey. |

This was a common theme in my discussions with students and adults in the community; being funny and humor as an important group value, across generations and seen as being a constant throughout their history. As one more example, in a quick assignment at the beginning of English class, the students were asked to choose between two characters from *Smoke Signals* (Eyre/Alexie, 1988).

Example 5.9. “He’s more of an original Ind’n” (Junior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Aunt: I don't know, they're both really cool. I say Thomas, then, 'cause he's, he's crazy, he's more of an original Ind'n.

((2:40 later, after students hand in papers with "Victor" or "Thomas" written down.))

- 2 Mr. Denver: Everybody likes Thomas.
 3 Aunt: Everybody likes Thomas ((“Thomas” is said much higher, sing-songy way))
 4 Mr. Denver: (Why didn't you pick) Victor?
 5 Rico: 'Cause, um,
 6 Aunt: 'Cause Victor's too, like, mean.
 7 Rico: Too sto:ic.
 8 Aunt, Rico: ((Yeah/Ya:y)) ((laugh))
 9 Aunt: That's what he says, innit?
 10 Rico: “Hey, you gotta be sto:ic” ((quoting line from *Smoke Signals*))

In Line 1, Aunt says Thomas is more of an “original Ind'n”; it is unclear whether she means “original” in the sense of “unique” or “prototypical”—either way, she clearly is associating being “crazy” (funny) as an important aspect of being Indian. Students in this class, and in other grades, chose Thomas (see Line 2 above). In Line 6 Aunt contrasts the “mean” Victor with the “crazy” Thomas, thereby convey the conception of humor as being part of warmth and friendliness, similar to Julie saying that Indians “express their love more” (Ex. 5.6).

5.2.3. Ideologies of Indian Humor Compared With White Humor

In many of the jokes and discussions about White people and White humor, students (and sometimes the English teacher) constructed Whites as being not funny, too serious, and dangerous. For instance, one day in class, Mr. Denver read a joke from a book,⁴⁹ followed by the interaction below.

Example 5.10. “The White Man Kills Everything.” (Senior English, Fieldnotes)

- 1 Ace: That's a White man joke.
 2 Mr. Denver: That's an Indian joke. It's in the book.
 3 Ace: A White man wrote the book.

⁴⁹ I unfortunately did not note which book he was reading or what the joke was.

- 4 Mr. Denver: (No.)
 5 Ace: Maybe it sounded funny back then, but when a White man says it, it kills it. The White man kills everything, especially jokes

It was not clear to me what, exactly, made the joke a “White man joke,” except that it was not funny.

One of the assigned readings for English class was Deloria’s (1969) “Indian Humor.” Mr. Denver told me that Deloria’s book resonated with the students: “A lot of times, they’d read a sentence and say, ‘Oh, yeah! That’s us!’” (05/22/09, interview). After they read and discussed the book as a class, Mr. Denver asked the students to complete an assignment comparing Indian humor and “European humor” (which they took to mean White humor, he told me). Below is a table showing text from posters Mr. Denver and the seniors prepared as part of their discussion for this assignment.

Table 5.1. English Class Assignment: White Humor and Indian Humor

Teacher	What is it [European Humor]?	How is it different?	Give examples	What does it suggest about European [White] culture?
Mr. Denver	Well, E.H. is inscrutable, most of the time. It attempts to lighten the standard, dry identity of European culture. E.H. is a secondary element of European social standards.	E.H. is mostly pre-fabricated, an addition to social patterns, not a primary element.	Q: “Why did the chicken cross the road, Samuel?” A: “To get to the other side, by Golly! Ha haa ha!”	E.H. suggests that European culture itself requires a communicative system that allows an occasional wise-crack to provide <u>relief</u> for an otherwise dull discourse. If this did not happen, European culture would solidify...
Student group	What is it [Indian Humor]?	How is it different?	Give examples	What does it suggest about Native culture
Ace, Ashley	Indian humor is joking around about everything. It is having fun even in the most serious of situations.	Indian humor is made up right at the moment and is not prefabricated.	“Stop trying to reform me”	Native humor suggests that Native culture is not as serious as other cultures

Church, Mike, Ronald	Indian humor is making fun of something that is usually held as a serious matter. It is spontaneous and spur of the moment. Often it is one person making fun of another (high school humor).	Indian humor is different from European humor because it has a more exitable feel. It makes people laugh, rather than wonder why the person told the joke in the first place.	For example, “Hitchhikers Guide to the Galaxy” vs. “Smoke Signals” or the clashes of humor in the “Shang Hai” and “Rush Hour” series	It suggests that native culture is very humorous, they are able to laugh with each other and most times at themselves
Julie, Girl	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jokes • Slangs • laughs on outlook of life • stories • racist comments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn’t matter how clean or dirty a joke is • Always has a meaning of truth behind it • Laugh at the situations of life • Depends on your type of culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ho heck dis one! • I’m a Rez Warrior, the older I get the better I was • F.B.I. = Fry Bread Investigator • Where’s my snag bag? • Ho, where you at, I can’t see you! 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We’re happy people • We like to laugh • Part of our circle of life • We like to eat fry bread • Enlightens all the past events that could be Indians tragedy
Jeffery, Lawrence	All Indians are different. We all have different slangs. Some are mean, some are nice, but Blackfeets are the meanest.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. We like to joke. 2. We like to hang out. 3. Love going to sweats 4. Love going to pow-wows 5. Like to run. <p>We joke to laugh but Europeans joke about blood. Europeans love having horses.</p> <p>In competitions just like us Native Americans.</p> <p>There’s not too many Europeans that have humor inside them.</p>	Most NDN’s take jokes seriously but some take jokes as jokes. Some take life serious but others think it’s a game.	Native Americans make light of serious matters.

First, note that Mr. Denver has set up the assignment in a way that presents White humor and Indian humor as being contrastive. As a nonlocal White, Mr. Denver is in the cultural minority here and, as I described in the previous chapter, has acculturated to the

students' humor norms. He has thus had to understand their humor from the same perspective as the students have had to understand White humor: As a cultural/ethnic minority. Thus, the ways the students' humor is different from humor in White, middle-class culture is striking to him, and he is more likely to focus on differences between the two types of humor than if he were in a culturally dominant position (see Holmes & Hay's, 1997, work on a minority ethnic group's focusing on differences in humor norms whereas the majority group does not notice differences in these norms).

Mr. Denver's description of White humor conveys ideologies about Whites and White culture: Confusing or hard to understand, dry, rigid, not funny, nerdy (as indexed by "by Golly!"), strict, and dull. When I interviewed Mr. Denver about this assignment, he said that he used his own conceptualizations of European humor for the assignment. Because he has adapted to the students' humor norms, he also knows that this is what the students' believe about White humor and culture. He described his views on differences between Whites' and Natives' humor and the role of humor in culture.

Example 5.11. "No matter what, they're always jokin' around." (Interview, 05/08/09)

It [humor] just seems like a secondary thing for Europeans. Where, humor for Indians is primary, I think. No matter what, they're always jokin' around. And, uh, especially-- like, individual Na-- Blackfeet that I know are ALWAYS jokin' around. They, and sometimes, I, you know, I, and some of the students, I ask, I mean it's good to be funny, and humorous, but I say, you gotta be serious too. I let them know that there should be a balance. Because if they leave the reservation, there's a good chance they're gonna need to find that balance so let's work on it here in school before you leave. And some understand that, and some don't. There's some older Blackfeet that I know, too, that are just jokin' all the time.

By seeing White humor as a secondary part of White culture and Indian humor as being a central part of Indian culture, Mr. Denver shares the student's conceptualizations of the students' humor as being a central part of their culture, and he compares it with White humor being less important to White culture. Here too is an important part of the public

school's role as an assimilatory force and an echoing of Biolsi's (2001) discussion of American Indians as being separate and U.S. citizens: Mr. Denver recognizes the role of humor in Blackfeet culture but believes that the students will need to change if they leave the reservation. He understands their cultural norms, but from the perspective of mainstream culture, he thinks the students will need to change to be successful off the reservation, and he urges them to change.

The students, to some degree, give answers about Indian humor that directly contrast with Mr. Denver's descriptions of White humor: Indians and Indian humor are spontaneous, happy, warm, light-hearted, and interesting. In the second column of the table, the students emphasize the points about Indian humor discussed above: that Indian humor and teasing are ways of conveying "the truth." In the third column, European and Indian humor are contrasted in ways similar to the above as well: Indians make light of serious situations and that "we joke to laugh" compared with "Europeans joke about blood" (e.g., Whites do not joke appropriately). Some of the examples of Indian humor in the second and fourth columns include slang and specific linguistic examples (*hoa*), which I discuss more in Chapter 6. Finally, the fifth column contains examples of what the students believe constitutes them as a group: That they are humorous and happy.

Natives as humorous and happy and Whites as serious and anxious is conveyed by this assignment, in the interviews I described above, and in conversations throughout my fieldwork, as when a student said, "Whites are more serious. They're always afraid something bad is gonna happen." This is similar to Dance McAliber's discussion of Whites being fearful (see Ex. 5.4). The Seniors described Indian humor as follows.

Example 5.12. "It's telling the truth." (Group Interview, Seniors, 5/15/09)

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Nikki: | How would you describe what Indian humor is? |
| 2 | Ace: | Indian humor is, I don't know, teasing, |

- 3 (Jeffery or Ace):[simple, sarcastic]
 4 Julie: [It's, it's telling the truth. It's basically the truth, and everybody laughs about it. But when, it's White humor, they don't really, you know, say the, [say the, truth, you know or make fun of stuff.
 5 Ace: [We joke around about serious stuff, like situations, like serious situations.
 6 Julie: [They try not to offend people
 7 (Church): Really make it, like, accentusize it,
 8 Nikki: Like, what did you say?
 9 (Church): Like you really accentusize it, make it seems bigger than it is [overaggrerate it

Here, the students drew on what they read in Deloria (1969), and they shared their own conceptualizations of White humor and Whites, as an abstract social category or cultural construction (Basso, 1979), as in Line 4: Whites as not telling the truth (not to be trusted). By depicting Whites as serious, untrustworthy, and afraid, the students and teacher simultaneously construct Natives as nonserious, trustworthy, and brave. Indeed, being tough and intimidating is a common theme in discourse, teasing, and joking among students (see Section 5.5).

5.3. RACIAL/ETHNIC HUMOR IN INTERACTION

In this section, I explore how these ideologies of difference play out in student–teacher interactions, with a focus on the emergent quality of identity and personae in these interactions. I also explore humor's function to ease potential conflict in these interactions, especially given the racism Blackfeet have experienced and the teacher's and students' ideologies of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences.

5.3.1. Humor About “White”-ness

As I mentioned briefly in Chapter 4, one of the main topics the students teased the English teacher about was his race and ethnicity. In some instances, the students focused specifically on the color white in reference to him, as below.

Example 5.13. “WHITE paper” (Senior English, Fieldnotes)

- 1 Ace: You got any WHITE paper?
- 2 Mr. Denver: To what, to take off my glare?
- 3 Ace: Or did you take the white paper out, so I wouldn’t say anything?

This teasing references the students’ frequent teasing of the teacher about being White (Line 3; Ace implies that Mr. Denver removed anything white to avoid being teased about being White), and that Mr. Denver understands Ace’s emphasis of “white” as being a tease. Mr. Denver responds by the self-teasing “to take off my glare?” (Line 2), thereby indicating that being teased about being White is OK, contributing to student–teacher bonding and easing potential conflict over racial differences. In example below, “White”-ness/“white”-ness is the object of teasing as well.

Example 5.14. “The perfect white” (Senior English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Mr. Denver: ((Denver)) White, it sounds like a paint choice, at like Ace ((Hardware)).
- 2 Ace: ((Denver)) White, ((sophomore boy)) black.⁵⁰
- 3 Mr. Denver: ((Denver)) White is like the right kind of white, right shade. The perfect white.
- 4 Ace: That’s the right shade of white, the kind of pale-ish-looking white of the door. ((laughs))

Mr. Denver positively portrays his “white”-ness (Line 3), which Ace derogates as not being a nice color (“pale-ish-looking white” like “the door”). The humor in these instances “tacitly, if not openly, declares ‘the other’ game to be played *with*” (Lincoln, 1993, p. 25). This type of humor playfully dramatizes racial difference and eases potential conflict by shifting such discussions to a play frame. Finally, in excerpts in this section, the students and teacher dramatize “White”-ness, thereby playing with the

⁵⁰ The students teased one of the freshman boys about being Black (he is not, as far as I know). I am not sure why. He was described as having a cowboy style, not the gangster style that one might assume would be associated with him being black.

concept of Whiteness as invisible and normative (see, e.g., Dyer, 1997; Hartigan, 2005; Wilson, 2002).

As a final example of humor about “white”-ness, a student references “White” and “Mr. Denver” in a story about himself in the student newspaper:

Example 5.15. “This huge white mass.” (*Word of the Warrior*, n.d.)

.....As I reached the top of a treacherous peak, I noticed ((boy)), my baby brother, and ((other boy)), my older brother, struggling with this huge white mass. No, it wasn't ((Mr. Denver)). After scoping it out with my optics, I found that it was actually a polar bear....

This kind of public teasing indicates that the students generally tease Mr. Denver about being White and that they have accepted him enough to tease him about being White. I asked an older man I interviewed about the students teasing the teacher about him being White and whether that was common among interethnic friendships. He said, “A [White] friend of ours, and we tease him, that he’s another bundle holder, but he always comes back, “Yeah, you use the ‘W’ word, huh?” but he teases just as hard” (05/19/09, interview).

5.3.2. White–Indian History in English Teacher–Student Interactions

In other instances of teasing, the students and teachers directly reference Native–White history, as in the below, in which Mr. Denver and the students are discussing what it would be like to live in another Great-Depression-like era.

Example 5.16. “Grandpa Denver” (Junior English, 05/19/09)

- | | | |
|---|-------------|--|
| 1 | Dragon: | <u>I think the Rez would go first then. The Rez people would go crazy first, because we get all our money from the government, and, if they go down, we're gonna go down, really fast.</u> |
| 2 | Mr. Denver: | K, interesting point, interesting point. So, do you think, what about, what about when this food runs out where we are, what do, where do we go next, what happens next? |
| 3 | (Holly): | We move. |
| 4 | Mr. Denver: | We move, we migrate to? |

5 (Holly): Up, someplace that has food.
 6 Mr. Denver: Are we gonna move to a warmer place?
 7 (Pedro): Or we can go PLANT some stuff.
 8 Mr. Denver: We can go plant some stuff, where, in fertile ground?
 9 Dragon: I'll, I'll raise some deer, or somethin'.
 10 Mr. Denver: You're gonna raise some deer. Where we gonna go? Are we
 gonna go up to Alaska and [freeze?
 11 Aunty: [We could just be Native American again, and uh, just go huntin'
all the time.
 12 Mr. Denver: [OK, I wish.
 13 (Pedro): [Learn our language
 14 (Girl): (xxx)
 15 Mr. Denver: [Not gonna happen
 16 (Rico): Wearin' some butt flaps.
 17 Girls: ((laugh))
 18 Mr. Denver: Loincloths. Dude, it's a windy day (xxx) ((laughter))
 19 Dragon: We could just wear regular clothes, I don't think I'll be growin'
 out of my clothes anytime soon
 20 Mr. Denver: OK, could, could you guys, uh, hang out like, your [ancestors?
 21 (Girl): [Nope.
 22 Dragon: [Whaddya mean?
 23 Mr. Denver: And how long would it take for you to adapt to those conditions?
 24 (Aunty): It would be probably take us a long time to adapt.
 25 Fogal: It would be HARD, because, like you'd get cold, probably.
 26 (Dragon): A lot of sicknesses, no more vaccines
 27 Mr. Denver: OK.
 28 (Fogal): You'd prob'ly die.
 29 Mr. Denver: Well, bef- before European oppression, were, there the
 sicknesses that are today? >No, OK.<
 30 Aunty: [There were no sicknesses.
 31 Mr. Denver: [Where did that stuff come up? Where'd that come from? Mass,
 people living in the masses in the city in filth.
 32 Dragon: And then they come over [here and they got us sick.
 33 Mr. Denver: [Yeah, and they spread that disease when they came over here.
 >We all know [the story.<
 34 (Girl): [Just ignor'nt
 35 (Dragon): [You came over here.
 36 (Rico): [That was your idea.
 37 Girls: ((laugh))
 38 Mr. Denver: Yeah, Grandpa [Denver], remember Grandpa [Denver]? He
came over here on, on his rowboat, he rowed over here from
Europe.
 39 (Aunty): Hoa.
 40 Mr. Denver: Said ((in stereotypically old-man, Michigan "Yooper" accented
 voice)) "Hey! Goin' to America."
 41 (Fogal): "Kill 'em all." ((laughter))
 42 Aunty: Hey. Grandpa [Denver] ((laughter))

- 43 Mr. Denver: Took the St. Lawrence seaway, and surprisingly, it ran all the way to Montana back then, and, settled here. And here I am.
44 Rico: Thought you said you lived in Michigan.
45 Students: ((laugh))
46 Mr. Denver: Just-
47 Dragon: (xxx) being sarcastic.

In this interaction, the students reflect on their current economic and cultural circumstances: In Line 1, Dragon asserts that “Rez people” are dependent on the government; Aunty (Line 11) and Pedro (Line 13) say that “be[ing] Native American” would be to return to a time when they lived traditionally and equates that with speaking Blackfoot (I discuss this line about language in more detail in Chapter 6). Rico then jokes about the idea of her and her classmates wearing “butt flaps,” highlighting the difference between historical and present-day life and humorously reinterpreting Mr. Denver’s utterance: “Not gonna happen” (Line 15). Mr. Denver joins in with the students in his successful joke about loincloths and wind, thereby aligning with the students. The alignments shift, however, with the girls drawing ethnic boundaries between themselves and Mr. Denver, when he dismisses “European oppression” (Line 29) by his quick utterances in Lines 29 and 36 (“No, OK” and “We all know the story”). In their reaction, the girls reinforce their solidarity and align against the teacher by saying that he is “ignor’nt” and by asserting that Mr. Denver is one of the “they” that “came over”: “You came over here” and “That was your idea” (Lines 35 and 36). In other words, they highlight his ethnicity to make him the proxy for White oppression. Mr. Denver responds in a mocking and ironic way, joking that he is a direct descendent of Whites who first met the Blackfeet in northern Montana, thereby dramatizing and creating an alternative history and ironically abdicating responsibility—that is, through using humor, he creates distance between himself and the history of Whites and Native Americans. The students jokingly join in (Line 41) and add to his story by saying “Kill ’em all,” underscoring the

significance of even this alternative history. In the next line, Aunty says “Hey. Grandpa [Denver],” lightening the joking and realigning to some degree with Mr. Denver by echoing his joking. The interaction continues with Mr. Denver trying to move on to a different topic.

The teasing and joking here create group solidarity and group identity among the students through their shared history and in aligning against the teacher and his joking depiction of history. This excerpt also shows the emergence of multiple levels of identity in interaction (following Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Coupland, 2007; E. Moore & Podesva, 2009). The students reference their (a) macro-level demographic category of Blackfeet/Native, for example, through use of “they” and “us” (Line 32) to express solidarity as a demographic group; (b) their meso-level, local, ethnographically specific cultural positions, or personae, as being “funny people” by teasing Mr. Denver about his story (e.g., Line 41); and (c) their micro-level evaluative stances⁵¹ toward their history (e.g., Lines 1, 41). Similarly, the teacher adopts a stance, through teasing, that distances himself from his macro-level identity of “White” and does so through the meso-level locally- and culturally-appropriate persona of being a joker.

Another example about the students joking with the teacher about him as a White oppressor is presented in the excerpt below.

Example 5.17. “Your people” (Senior English, 5/15/09)

- | | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Denver: | Has anyone sent the thank you letter to the [((Tribal Council))]? |
| 2 | Jeffery: | [Who needs to. |
| 3 | Denver: | Oh my god. |
| 4 | (Boys): | (xxx) |
| 5 | Ace: | <u>Don’t tell us what to do. You guys are always tryin’ to tell us keep us down.</u> |

⁵¹ I follow Bucholtz & Hall’s (2005) definition of *stance* as “the display of evaluative, affective, and epistemic orientations in discourse” (p. 595).

6 Denver: Didn't I say, "Why don't you send a thank you to say thank you the Councilmen?"

7 (Boys): (xxx)

8 Jeffery: [That's, that's makin' us.

9 (Ace): [We already got the money.

10 Nighthawk: Of course we got the money.

11 Jeffery: We always got the money. He:y. ((laughs))

12 Denver: You always got the money? ((laughs))

13 Nighthawk: Of course we always got the money, man.

14 Denver: Where'd you get that money from?

15 Jeffery: Y'never know.

16 Nighthawk: [Stole it.

17 Ace: [From our tribe.

18 Denver: That's the least you could do.

19 (Boy): [You never know.

20 (Boy): [From my tribe.

21 Jeffery: We stole it from the White Man.

22 Denver: You can say thank you, that's the least you can do.

23 Ace: Your people tryin' to tell us what to do all the time, tryin' to keep us down.

24 Denver: Oh, that's it, ((lowers voice)) "Your, your people."

25 Nighthawk: Yeah, you and you people.

26 Ace: You Polish people, all the time. ((laughter))

27 Nighthawk: No!

28 Jeffery: Bring that damn Polish sausage in here.

29 Nighthawk: No!

30 Jeffery: Bet you don't know where this pencil is made.⁵²

31 Nighthawk: (It's been in the toilet.)

32 Ace: Probably made in Poland.

33 Jeffery: No. It's Chinese.

34 Denver: ((Ace)), you're just mad because my fish can eat your fish, that's all.

In this example, Ace playfully protests the teacher asking the students to write thank-you notes to the Tribal Council for giving them money for their Senior Trip by saying that it is typical of Whites "tell[ing] us what to do all the time, tryin' to keep us down" (Lines 5 and 23). Similar to his strategies in the previous example, Mr. Denver distances himself from being (playfully) cast in the role of White oppressor by mocking

⁵² This might be a reference to the Blackfeet Indian Writing Company, which was a tribally owned pen- and pencil-manufacturing company from 1972–1992 and then became a privately held (by tribal members) company named Blackfeet Writing Instruments Inc. (<http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/ictarchives/2000/03/29/blackfeet-pencil-factory-competes-in-volatile-industry-86840>)

Ace's use of "your people." Ace then humorously picks up on this by casting Mr. Denver not as "White" but as Polish (Line 26), a White ethnic. On the one hand, Ace is playing with the White-Indian dichotomy by referencing "Polish," but on the other hand, this tease shifts the portrayal of Mr. Denver as belonging to an abstract category of "White" to being "Polish," therefore ironically erasing his "Whiteness" and removing him from the role of "tryin' to keep us down," because there is no troubled history between Indians and Polish people (directly). Jeffery creatively picks up the joke, referring to Mr. Denver as a "Polish sausage" (Line 28). The teacher continues the play frame, shifting it away from topics of race and ethnicity to fishing, and the teacher and students engage in light verbal dueling about fishing (presented as Ex. 5.30 in Section 5.5).

The examples in this section demonstrate humor's ability to, as Lincoln (1993) describes, "alchemize ... Indian-White tragedies ... through the alembic of modern Red humor" (p. 27) and "lighten the burden of reality" (p. 96). In these excerpts from my data, as the interaction unfolds, the frame shifts between serious and play, the students and teacher align with each other, against each other, and/or with or against White-Indian history, as they strategically draw on their ideologies of race/ethnicity to manage interactions.

5.4. STEREOTYPES AS A SOURCE OF HUMOR AND CONSTRUCTION OF SOCIAL TYPES

Both the students and the teacher draw on stereotypes of (a) characters in popular culture and (b) social types. In the previous section, I analyzed how the students construct the teacher as "White" or a White ethnic, depending on their interactional needs (e.g., constructing him as "White" as a way to create distance and provide an avenue to protest tasks he asked them to do, or as a way to check his understanding of their sociohistorical-political positioning; constructing him as a White ethnic rather than "White" to build

rapport through mutual teasing). In this section, I first analyze how the students humorously construct the teacher as a particularly White social type (5.4.1), and then I analyze how they construct themselves as Indians over and against stereotypes of Indians (5.4.2).

5.4.1. Stereotypes and White Ethnicity

The teachers and the students draw on stereotypes and popular culture in teasing and constructing the teacher as any of several White social types: Hutterite, nerd, gay, or lumberjack. Hutterites are a local Anabaptist sect living in colonies near the reservation and elsewhere in rural Montana, and the students often jokingly refer to Mr. Denver as being a Hutterite or looking like a Hutterite. For instance, one day one of my recorders was beeping during Senior English, and Mr. Denver moved toward it (the recorder was near him). The recorder beeped loudly when Mr. Denver approached it, and Ace said, “Hutterites ain’t good with technology.” Other times in that class, one of the students said, “I hate Hutterites,” as a code to refer to Mr. Denver. Another topic of teasing Mr. Denver was that he looked like a “lumberjack.” In a senior class meeting about their upcoming Senior Trip, they said they wanted to buy Mr. Denver something for being their class adviser, to which he responded, “No, don’t buy me anything.” Jeffery said, “Yeah, you need a new axe to complete your lumberjack look. New axe, fits your lumberjack look.” The students also frequently teased Mr. Denver about being a nerd (as in Ex. 4.41, in which they reference his “high waters”). Other examples include the students teasing him about being in a fraternity like the nerds in “The Revenge of the Nerds,” sounding like the “gay guy from *Blades of Glory*,” and that he looks like a gay character in the TV show “Degrassi.”⁵³ In these examples, the students are constructing

⁵³In response to the teasing about the “Degrassi” character, Mr. Denver jokes, “Well, I once was a gay hockey player,” which the students laugh at. He then says, “No, I’m just kiddin’.”

the teacher as racially marked White types (see, e.g., Hartigan's, 2004, work on certain White social types as being racially marked, and Bucholtz, 2001, on the nerd as a racially marked White.). Here, too, playing up the teacher's Whiteness has the effect of erasing his Whiteness by shifting talk of Whiteness from a serious frame to a play frame.

5.4.2. Stereotypes, Popular Mythology, and Native Ethnicity

As summarized by Meek (2006), representations of American Indians in popular media depict them as “wild, savage, heathen, silent, noble, childlike, uncivilized, premodern, immature, ignorant, bloodthirsty, and historical or timeless, all in juxtaposition to the white civilized, mature, modern, (usually) Christian American man” (p. 119; see also, as cited here, e.g., Bordewich, 1997; Deloria, 1988; Marsden & Nachbar, 1988; Stedman, 1982; Strong, 1996, 1998). The students and adults in the community draw on stereotypes in popular culture in their humor in a way that undercuts the stereotypes. In terms of the articulation theory, they select these stereotypes, and humorously ‘unhook’ them from their association with Indians through what is essentially absurdist humor. Besides referencing these stereotypes, the students also commonly cite the mythology of the American West, including cowboys and Indians, and their felt attachments⁵⁴ to that mythology. In focusing on these feelings, they are able to disarticulate from their past the impacts on Native American communities that Westward expansion brought while articulating their identity as Westerners.

5.4.2.1. American Indians as Premodern and Equated With Nature

The students I spoke with at Gopher Peaks were confronted with popular stereotypes about Native Americans when they met non-Indians off the reservation, as well as when they watched movies and engaged with other forms of popular media. For

⁵⁴ Here I draw on Webster (2002): “identity is a feeling” (p. 5).

instance, Ali describes a class trip to Washington, DC (through the national Close-Up program), and that “the other girls were surprised how we dressed, that we lived in houses, that we used computers.” Several other students told me about people they met thinking that all Indians were the same (e.g., that people did not know any differences between tribes). The students said that mainstream America does not know anything about Native Americans and does not want to know anything, beyond what they read about in the encyclopedia (e.g., what reservations tribes live on and what their populations are). They also often discussed that people think that they live in a way that is premodern (e.g., “Do you still live in teepees?”), echoing Deloria’s (1969) sentiment that “to be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical” (p. 2). During these discussions, some of the senior boys made jokes like “I live in a two-story teepee with running water” and “my house is my lodge.” When I asked one student what she would say to people who did not know much about Natives, she said she would say, “We are very modern, we have running water. We are just like you except for our heritage.”

Refuting these mainstream ideologies of Native Americans often came in the form of teasing and joking. In an English classroom assignment based on the book *Lord of the Flies*, the students worked in groups, with the Mr. Denver alternating between the groups, to come up with a contemporary *Lord of the Flies* scenario. Mr. Denver sat with Ronald, Ace, and Nighthawk and was trying to help them brainstorm a place where they would get lost. At every suggestion the students gave, Mr. Denver said that they would not get lost because, for instance, “No, that’s just right up the road!” and “No, that’s on your Dad’s property, you wouldn’t get lost there!” (while laughing in a friendly, incredulous way at the suggestions). After several back-and-forths along these lines, Ronald suggested a place in the mountains.

Example 5.18. “Because we’re Indians” (Sophomore English, Fieldnotes, 05/2007)

- 1 Mr. Denver: How would you get there?
- 2 Ronald: In my truck.
- 3 Mr. Denver: No, you wouldn’t get lost. You could see your tire tracks.
- 4 Ronald: Yeah, we’d go all around, this way, and this way ((waves hands in back-and-forth and circular movements)).
- 5 Mr. Denver: You wouldn’t get lost.
- 6 Ronald: We would.
- 7 Mr. Denver: Why? Why would you get lost there?
- 8 Ronald: Because we’re Indians.
- 9 Everyone: ((laugh))

The source of humor here, as with much humor anywhere, is juxtaposition: In this case, Ronald draws on the stereotype of Indians being good trackers and being equated with nature and unexpectedly turns that stereotype on its head—disarticulating Blackfeet identity and culture from these stereotypes.

“Because we’re Indians” also draws on the theme of the foolish protagonist common in Blackfeet stories, as in the Napi stories (see Ex. 5.7) and other humorous stories students and adults in the community told me. The theme of being foolish was also in a staging of *Napi Iksipahsitapi* (“Napi Always Messes Up”) by the elementary students in the school.⁵⁵ As another example, one of the Blackfoot Language teachers told me about hiking in the mountains with her friends and talking with them about what they would do if they saw a bear. She said that they told each other that if they saw a bear they would “talk Ind’n to it.” Then she laughed as she told me that they did in fact see a bear and they all got so scared they ran as fast as they could. These stories are a kind of self-teasing—showing humility through being able to joke about oneself (and Indians as a group).

⁵⁵ The play was in English, with the Blackfoot language teacher speaking the Blackfeet-language lines in the play.

5.4.2.2. *Mythologies of the West*

In class and in interviews, the students often referenced mythologies of the West—Cowboys and Indians; the majestic, romantic West; and so on—and articulated their place within it, as well as their felt attachment to it (e.g., Webster, 2012). Returning to my interview with DM, after the excerpt transcribed in Example 5.2, I (naively) suggest similarities between Whites and Blackfeet:

Example 5.19. “Where are we divided?” (Interview, 11/20/08)

- 1 Nikki: You know, it’s funny because it seems like, like, um, like Whites and Indians around here have, a lot of things in common like, farming, um, ranching
- 2 DM: Some.
- 3 Nikki: Some, I guess, not all, yeah, that’s true, ‘cause, yeah, that’s true.
- 4 DM: There’s not a lot of ranchers that are Blackfeet, I mean, there’s not a lot.
- 5 Nikki: Are there farmers? There’s farmers.
- 6 DM: There’s some, but, I mean, but, see, that’s, the, we’re goin’ geographical here again. That’s not the way we were raised, we were hunters and gatherers.
- 7 Nikki: Yeah.
- 8 DM: Whereas, the White people, they were gatherers, you know, they were growers. And they were TAUGHT by Indians to SURVIVE on the land like that. But as Blackfeet, we hunted the buffalo
- 9 Nikki: Yeah.
- 10 DM: We ROAMED the plains.
- 11 Nikki: So, I say farming and ranching, assuming that it’s in common between White people and Blackfeet, but really, when I say that, tell me if this is right, but I, you hear, “Oh, no, that’s something White people do and, the Blackfeet, some Blackfeet are about something different.”
- 12 DM: Exactly. Now you’re hearin’ me out. Now you’re seein’ the difference, you know.
- 13 Nikki: [Yeah.
- 14 DM: I mean, like, you’re trying to investigate this, you know, “(Hoa,) where, where is it? Where’s the line?,” you know. “Where’s it—Where are we divided?” “Is it our LANGUAGE is it our CULTURE?” And it’s both. It is.

The ideology I express in Line 1 is probably typical of some local Whites: To define people living in the area as farmers and ranchers, ahistorically, in the same way perhaps as Mr. Denver tried to distance himself from White–Indian history in Example

5.16. I present an idealized, abstract portrait of people in the region, farming and ranching in harmony. DM, in Lines 6 and 8, presents an also idealized, abstract portrait of the Blackfeet roaming the plains, teaching the Whites how to survive, similar to stories about early colonists and their experiences with Indians. Both DM and I present homogenous “Whites” and “Indians,” and DM abstracts Blackfeet–White relationships to the level of Indian–White relationships in the early colonial days (before referencing the Blackfeet, specifically, hunting buffalo). He is also asserting original Blackfeet ownership of, and relationship with, the land and continues his theme of a stark cultural division between Blackfeet and Whites. The Blackfeet writer Woody Kipp (2008) similarly describes the differences between Blackfeet ranching and White ranching:

My pop, like so many Indians then and now, had *become* a cowboy. And something vital departed when that happened. The similarities between raising domestic cattle and hunting buffalo for Blackfeet pale when their differences are considered. The rituals associated with the running and killing of the buffalo were many; the horse was sacred; the buffalo was sacred; and the Grandmother, the Earth Spirit, was sacred. Cowboys are tough and work long, hard hours and ride dangerous horses for little pay, but they lack ritual, a sense of being a part of something larger. The rituals of the Blackfoot Confederacy and other buffalo-hunting peoples offered a sense of spiritual connectedness. Cattle kept the body alive for my Blackfeet family and others, but something essential was gone. Something existential. Something ontological. Something necessary. (p. 8)

Here, W. Kipp is first rearticulating Indians as cowboys and then disarticulating his Blackfeet ethnic and cultural identity and cowboy identity, and presenting it in opposition to these White social types.

In interviews and in their interactions with each other, the students articulated, rearticulated, and disarticulated their group and individual identity in relationship to mythologies of the West as well. For instance, in my first visit to the school, I asked the students what kind of music they listened to. One of the boys was listing a lot of country

singers when a girl interjected, “This Indian thinks he’s a cowboy,” implying that being an Indian is at odds with being a cowboy. Other times, the students asserted both a cowboy and Indian identity (or perhaps an Indian Cowboy identity), as in Ace’s utterance of “I, myself, am a cowboy and an Indian” (in response to an assignment on the board in English class that asked the students to pick between items in a long list, two of which were “Cowboy” and “Indian”). Similarly, students described other students as having “cowboy” or “cowgirl” style (e.g., wearing Wranglers and cowboy boots).

In the November 2008 student newspaper, *Word of the Warrior*, dedicated to the West, the introduction, “Ode to the West,” by the student staff is below, and idealizes the West.

Example 5.20. “An embodiment of the true western lifestyle” (*Word of the Warrior*, 11/08)

We live in the west. We eat in the west. We sleep in the west. [Gopher Peaks] is an embodiment of the true western lifestyle...The celebration of western culture is past due, so we proudly hail the rugged, famed lifestyle of figures like John Wayne and Bonnie and Clyde. Saddle up, partner, and enjoy this special issue that illustrates the wonder and joy of the living, breathing and sleeping in the big west.

Similarly, the West is romanticized in another of the articles, “Is that you, John Wayne,” the first paragraph of which is below.

Example 5.21. “Hometown heroes and storybook endings” (*Word of the Warrior*, 11/08)

Where does the spirit of the west live? Who is the spirit of the west? Can you narrow it down, or is it as big as the state of Texas? From John Wayne to Buck Owens, to the Big Sky to the big Vegas Lights, the west has no one definition. It does, though, define what a lot of Americans strive to be—big and free. Cowboy boots anoint store shelves like shells on an ocean floor. Western songs flood the small-town radio-stations. Basketball teams from towns like ((Gopher Peaks)) produce hometown heroes and storybook endings. John Wayne echoes in our minds. There is a little bit of west in everyone, but only a handful get to experience it.

Both of the above examples demonstrate a valorization of the West and cowboys, and the students articulate their place in this mythology, aligning themselves with mainstream

romantic notions of the West, different from W. Kipp's (2008) views. What is important in these stories is how the students feel about being Westerners, and they focus on this part of their history in articulating their identity. W. Kipp, on the other hand, disarticulates Blackfeet identity from this type of Western identity. One final example from the student newspaper is below; in this case, the student author critiques representations of Natives in movies, and then associates the West with the Western Conference in basketball.

Example 5.22. "You Wanna Know What Really Grinds My Gears" (*Word of the Warrior*, 11/08)

The boring west. Where every old time western movie was made and always had natives as the bad guys but when a good native comes along he is played by a white guy, which is bogus. Oh, wait, John Wayne can kill 5 natives with one shot. Yea, the movies back then were horrible with unreal shootings. Sometimes the "cowboy" will fire continuously and not reload. The west is alright, at least today's west is alright. I hate the west for its un-balance in the NBA. The east stinks, except for a few teams like the Celtics, who are probably the only ones who can challenge the west....((more about basketball.))

The examples in this section show the heterogeneity of contemporary Indian identity, the myriad ways identity can be articulated, rearticulated, and disarticulated with and against other identities and histories.

5.5. VALORIZATION OF TOUGHNESS

In my interviews with students and in talking with adults in the community, one dominant theme was that of Blackfeet as being tough, strong, fast, hard-working, and intimidating. This seems to be a value across the generations; for instance, one of the older Blackfeet-language teachers described herself as a fast runner and a fighter when she was in school. Some other examples of the valorization of toughness are listed below.

Example 5.23. "She's really tough." (Interview, Junior Girl, 10/29/08)

((Talking about why she looks up to the people she does.)) Well, um, let's see, I-uh, like, my dad, I, he's I don't know, like, I want to play ball as long as I could like he

did, like he's still playing, and he's playing with um, like when he was in high school, the people that he were playing with, he's playing with THEIR kids. (oh, yeah) And um, my mom's, like, really smart and she gets really good jobs. And, my grandma knows Blackfeet really good, and she's really strong, I mean, like, mentally and physically, because she's like, I think, like 70, like 75 or 76, and she still goes to work in...She broke her arm, like 3 days ago and she don't even, like, don't even act like it happened—she's really tough....

Example 5.24. "I like to fight" (Interview, Freshman Girl, 10/24/08)

((in response to me asking what she does for fun)) I like to ride horses and race, and uh, I like to fight ((laughs)), and uh, I like to rodeo and dance, stuff like that ((I ask about her liking to fight; ask what kind of fighting)): I don't know, just like, I was in boxing for a while, and you know I got into boxing because, like, my dad's a coach and stuff, and I like to run, too, so like he's like, he's like, my family's like athletic, too, and I grew up around like, I don't know, yeah, so I got into fighting and wrestling and stuff and I like to play football and, I don't know, just like all those sports, like football and wrestling and boxing, and, I don't know. I like all those sports. Like, when I get angry, I just like to fight ((girl laughs))...I've been boxing for a while with my dad and stuff, and then, and then, since I live out in ((Gopher Peaks)) now, like, I don't box no more cause we don't have a boxing club but I still, I still practice and stuff, like I do 200 push-ups every day, and I'm goin' on to 250 a day ((oh, wow)). Yeah, and I work out, yeah, stuff like that. ((I ask if there's more boys or more girls in boxing club)) More boys ... almost all were boys. ((I ask what was it like to be a girl)) Well, I don't know, I like lift weights and stuff, so I was already pumped up, and like, I'd always run and stuff, every day, and keep in shapeI was just like one of the boys but a little bit weaker. ...I like to play football and wrestle...

Example 5.25. "They feared the Blackfeet" (Interview, Senior Boy, 11/05/2008)

When you're a Blackfeet, you don't really like Crees or Crows or any other Native,⁵⁶ 'cause they were FEARED by, you know, they FEARED the Blackfeet. (yeah) And you know, and y'know what? They should be. (yeah). Because even now, you know, they're still dangerous. (yeah) If you ever hear about [other town on reservation], you know, that's the wrong kind of dangerous to be. ... The good type of dangerous is like, "Oh, look at that guy, man, don't mess with him, that guy's dangerous." You know. (yeah). It's not like a feared, it's more like a respected, but I like to say it's a little bit of both.

Example 5.26. "They will get the job done." (Interview, Senior Boy, 11/05/2008)

((talking about Blackfeet fire crews)) It's been a while since uh, a Blackfeet crew, and I was lucky I was one of the first, one of the ones that headed down there once

⁵⁶I think he is talking about the past here.

again. [yeah.] All these other places, they're like really glad, or you know, enlightened, to know that a Blackfeet crew is goin' to come work with 'em. [yeah.] Cause, (known) out on a fire, everybody out there knows that a Blackfeet crew is the hardworking crew, you know. They will get the job done.

Example 5.27. "Indians are the most feared in prisons." (Seniors, 05/12)

- 1 Lawrence: You wanna know somethin', did you know that Indians are the most feared in the prisons....We get feared, like, cause, we're Indians. ((little laughter))
- 2 Nighthawk: Yeah, but that is true.
- 3 Lawrence: Yeah, did you know that? We're the most feared. That's how come, even a Black guy won't mess with an Indian.

Example 5.28. "We're the mean ones." (Senior English, 05/12)

- 1 Jeffery: If you go to any reservation in the United States, I swear it would look the same as here. Like, it'll be a different place but it would, it'll look the same.
- 2 Nighthawk: And it'd have like, same like, problems happenin' too, just in different manners.
- 3 Jeffery: It's the same everywhere, on the Rez.
- 4 Lawrence: Except we're meaner. Sh- he:y, just jokin'
- 5 Nighthawk: [That's right.
- 6 Lawrence: I said, we're the mean ones.
- 7 Nighthawk: Yes, we are.
- 8 Jeffery: We're just the real Indians, hey.((laughs))

These excerpts show that being tough is a quality the students value and is part of what they ascribe to being "real Indians" (Ex 5.28, Line 8). This is an important aspect of identity for many of the boys and the girls, and one that they draw on in personae construction in interactions.

I do not analyze in depth the differences and similarities in "toughness" or teasing styles between girls and boys, but this would be an interesting area for future research, as there are some differences. For instance, as discussed one day in senior government class, the girls at GPH get in physical fights more often than the boys do. Rather than fight each other, it is more common for the boys to tease each other to resolve conflict, they describe.

Example 5.29. “We just tease each other, so that just sets it.” (Seniors, 05/12/09)

- 1 Church: You know this, there’s probably like 3 boy fights in the past 3 years here, and maybe like 10 girl fights.
- 2 Lawrence: At the same time girls get dirtier than boys, you know
- 3 Ashley: Girls are so conniving, boys are just straight up.
- 4 Church: We just tease each other, so that just sets it.

The conflict-resolving function of teasing (Deloria, 1969) is apparently prevalent between students (especially between boys) and between the students and the English teacher, as I discussed in Chapter 4. Another example of this function between the students and teacher is below, which is a continuation of the utterances presented in Example 5.17.

Example 5.30. “My fish can eat your fish” (Senior English, 05/15/09)

- 1 Denver: ((Ace)), you’re just mad because my fish can eat your fish, that’s all.
- 2 (Boy): Whoa
- 3 Ace: You’re just lucky you’re getting’ laughed at.
- 4 Denver: I am lucky I’m gettin’ laughed ((laughs)).
- 5 Boys: ((laugh))
- 6 Jeffery: You’re just mad cuz you’re getting laughed. Hey.
- 7 Mr. Denver: Not quite
- 8 (Lawrence): Who gets cold when they’re fishing?
- 9 Denver: Who, me? That’s because I didn’t have my shoes on. ((laughs))
My feet were freezin’.
- 10 Ace: Who goes fishin’ with no shoes on?
- 11 Jeffery: I know! Honestly.
- 12 Denver: I had shoes on, they had holes in them.
- 13 Ace: Who wears holey shoes?
- 14 (Lawrence): Who wears holey shoes?
- 15 Denver: A smart guy does. They’re light.

This example is probably typical of the types of verbal dueling and teases that the boys use to resolve conflicts: teasing is a kind of one-upmanship, back-and-forth that shifts conflicts to the play frame, where they can be resolved verbally.

5.5.1. Toughness in Teasing and Jokes

Toughness, an important aspect of group identity, is conveyed through the kinds of commentary I described in the previous subsection and through being a theme in teasing and joking. The students draw on their valuing of toughness to construct and present tough personae. In the example below (expanded from Ex. 5.15), the student describes his toughness and bravery in a fictional story:

Example 5.31. “This huge white mass” (*Word of the Warrior*, continued)

Well, let me take you back to 1996, when one of the most amazing things in the world happened to me. Yes, me—the one and only [student’s full name]. It started off as a normal day. I was deep in the mountains, and running my daily fifteen mile route. It was nice in the mountains that day. No wind, rain or snow—it was just wondrous.

As I reached the top of a treacherous peak, I noticed ((boy)), my baby brother, and ((other boy)), my older brother, struggling with this huge white mass. No, it wasn’t Mr. ((Denver)). After scoping it out with my optics, I found that it was actually a polar bear. What a polar bear was doing in the Montana mountains was beyond me. This polar bear had to weigh 1500 pounds, and it stood 10 feet on its hind legs. After observing this disastrous event, my heroic instincts suddenly kicked in. I bounded over the peaks of mountains, dodged falling boulders, wrestled mountain lions, ran through deep-rooted pines, and finally reached the altercation. The huge bear took notice of my presence, and suddenly leaped to me. It swatted me back 30 feet, but I somersaulted right on to my feet. Let me just say that my Steven Segal-like reflexes helped me greatly with that occasion. Next, I bolted to the monstrous Polar Bear and unleashed some mad ninja skills that I learned back in ((teacher’s)) PE class. The bear retreated like a sad puppy dog, and victory was ultimately mine. I carried ((brother)) and ((other brother)) to safety soon after. At the base of the mountains, an ambulance and a news crew was waiting for our arrival. They go the story of the century.

The student exaggerates his toughness in a humorous way, for instance describing “mad ninja skills” that he learned in PE class (of course the PE teacher does not teach “ninja skills”). It is also an example of personae construction: the tough hero. (In the next chapter, I talk about how these tough personae are related to linguistic style.)

The teacher, acculturated to the values and humor norms of the students, often draws on these values in telling humorous stories to the students, as in the example

below, in which he presents a tough persona in his description of scaring a group of people from another town on the reservation.

Example 5.32. “They were scared.” (Freshman English, 05/11/09)

- 1 Champion: Oh my god, I asked these boys to go, to go to prom with me, and you know what they said, they said they don't want to 'cause they're scared of my mom. 'Cause my mom scared 'em before, 'cause I stayed out until, you know, like 3 o'clock in the morning.
- 2 Denver: Did she call'em and she was like, “Listen you little—“
- 3 Students: ((laugh))
- 4 Champion: [No:, No:. She literally went up to their faces, and like, scared them, like literally scared them and like they don't wanna come to ((Gopher Peaks)) no more, ((Matt laughs)) because they're scared of their, my mom (xxx)
- 5 Mr. Denver: That was like these guys from, a red truck in ((another town on reservation)), they were rollin' through ((Gopher Peaks)), and uh, I was standing outside, you know changing my oil. I had a bandana on. ((makes tough pose))
- 6 Champion: He:y.
- 7 Matt: [A:y.
- 8 Mr. Denver: And I got up from my wall, I was like ((tough pose)).
- 9 And they were like, “Uh” ((gives threatening look)).
- 10 I was like, “Yeah” ((tough pose)).
- 11 And they were like ((does noise like wheels squealing from driving fast; makes motion like driving away fast, scared)).
- 12 And they were like, “Never comin' back!”
- 13 Students: ((laugh))
- 14 Mr. Denver: And I was like, yeah ((proud and tough pose)).
- 15 Students: ((laugh))
- 16 Mr. Denver: They were scared.
- 17 Students: ((laugh))
- 18 Matt ((to Nikki)): You sure you don't want to videotape this? ((laughs))

The teacher, building on the student's story of her mom scaring people, is successful at his attempt at humor because the theme of the story aligns with the students' valuing of toughness. As I described in the previous chapter for Mr. Denver's successful attempts at humor, he gets the students' attention through humor and then he begins his lesson (about diagramming sentences, in this instance); the students are quiet, listen to him, and work on the sentences.

An example of a girl presenting a tough persona in interaction is below.

Example 5.33. “I can palm a boys’ basketball” (Junior English, 05/05/09)

- 1 Aunty: You didn’t even know who, I said, or WHAT I said.
- 2 Denver: Yeah I did.
- 3 Aunty: What’d I say?
- 4 Denver: I don’t need to repeat it.
- 5 Aunty: ((laughs and says softly “He:y”)) I said, “Guess who goes out?”
- 6 Denver: You said ((lowers voice and talks quickly)), “Guess who I’m goin’ out wit?”
- 7 Rico: Nu-u:h.
- 8 Denver: “(xxx like) a pow-wow, (xxx up on the) wall.”
- 9 Aunty, Rico: ((laugh))
- 10 Denver: “(I like his) little hands.”
- 11 Aunty: [Hoa, I don’t have little hands. I have big hands.
- 12 Denver: [No, I said, “I like his little hands.”
- 13 Rico: [(xxx)
- 14 Aunty: ((laughs)) I have big hands.
- 15 Denver: That’s good.
- 16 Aunty: For a girl. My hands are prob’ly bigger than yours.
- 17 Denver: Than mine?
- 18 Aunty: I got pretty big hands. I can palm a boys’ ball.
- 19 (Rico/ Aunty): Hoa.
- 20 Aunty: Those are just puny (xxx), I’ll just embarrass you.
- 21 Rico: [Hoa (xxx), look how big those are.
- 22 Denver: You probably have small hands, don’t you?
- 23 Aunty: [No, they’re pretty big.
- 24 Denver: Those are pretty big hands for a girl. You know who else has big hands? ((freshman girl.))
- 25 (Girl): Hoa, did you ever see ((girl in another class))?
- 26 Aunty: [Hoa, her hands are bigger than mine.
- 27 Denver: No wa:y.
- 28 Aunty: They’re bigger than mine.

Here, the teacher is teasing Aunty in a way that, in mainstream White culture, would masculinize her—by teasing her about having a low voice and about her liking boys with small hands, that is, boys who are physically smaller than she is (Lines 6, 10, 12). Aunty reacts by bragging about those same qualities, teasing herself about being able to palm a boys’ basketball (Line 18) and that her hands are bigger than his “puny” hands (Line 20). This creates a tough persona through her positive stance toward being tall and having

“big hands.” Through humor, she also “subverts the pervasive influence of the dominant group by ... contesting normative boundaries” (Vine, Kell, Marra, & Holmes, 2009; p. 125, citing Holmes, Stubbe, & Marra, 2003). She is not embarrassed by having big hands, and she does not align with mainstream ideology of femininity being associated with being physically small and unthreatening. This excerpt also nicely demonstrates how “the personal and group identities which make up an individual’s persona are not static but rather can be activated or called on to different degrees depending on the situation” (Meyerhoff & Niedzielski, 1994, p. 319). That is, the toughness value is part of the students’ group identity, and here Auntie draws on it in constructing her tough persona in response to the teacher’s teasing.

5.6. CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I showed how the students self-define their group identity over and against notions of Whites and Whiteness and through the valuing of humor and toughness. In doing so, they “draw selectively on their past to articulate a positively valorized position of difference” (Rumsey, 2006, p. 50, as cited in Webster, 2012, p. 153). As Lincoln (1993) describes, “Ethnicity comes through cultural self-definition and biological given, individual epistemology and collective history” (p. 12). This “cultural self-definition” in “articulation” terms can help describe how, for instance, the students can simultaneously embrace some aspects of the mythology of the American West through their felt attachments to the land and space while disarticulating from their stories the parts of that mythology that caused their (sociocultural-economic-political) marginalized position.

I also discussed how the students draw on ethnic stereotypes as a source of humor in a way that undercuts the stereotypes and shows humility (through self-teasing). In

interactions with the teacher, joking and teasing about race/ethnicity both conveys ideologies of difference and eases potential conflicts, as the teacher and students align with and against each other as the interaction unfolds. The students strategically construct Mr. Denver's Whiteness depending on their interactional goals: They (hostilely) tease him about being the White oppressor as a protest to him being dismissive of their history ("Grandpa Denver" example); they distance his role in this history by constructing him as a White ethnic (Polish) rather than "White"; and they insult his masculinity through teasing him about being, for instance, gay or nerdy. Similarly, the students and DM present a more homogenous "Indian" (e.g., teaching the Whites to survive) or a specifically Blackfeet Indian (e.g., hunting buffalo, tough), depending on the interaction.

The identities of these high schoolers, like high schoolers everywhere, are complex, shifting, and not always in focus (Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985). Through humor, the students bring to the fore (or "articulate") particular aspects of their group identity, specifically, being tough and intimidating, and use them in constructing personae. In the next chapter, one avenue I explore is how this persona construction is done through use of the ethnolinguistic repertoire. In the terminology of Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), the use of certain linguistic forms, used or diffusely by a community, come to be used in a more or less focused way over time—a view on language variation and change generally not taken into account by more quantitative or Labovian (e.g., 20001) approaches. I show in the next chapter how this community uses features from their ethnolinguistic repertoire in a focused way in humor and in the creation and indexing of group identity.

Chapter 6: The Ethnolinguistic Repertoire in the Classroom

In this chapter, I focus on the micro-level features of the Blackfeet students' speech to show how certain features—especially prosody patterns and use of interjections⁵⁷—are constitutive of group identity and cultural emblems. To briefly recap my discussion in Chapter 1, I conceptualize and analyze the students' language as a complete system comprising at least: regionally distinctive features, ethnically distinctive features, and features shared with (an idealized, abstract) mainstream English. I analyze how features of the Blackfeet students' ethnolinguistic repertoire are unique resources for (a) *intergroup* distinctiveness and (b) *intragroup* solidarity and discourse, including humor. I also touch on the ways in which the resources are used variably within the group to present different facets of identity (e.g., femininity).

I spend the first part of the chapter on Blackfoot and English before describing the meaning and use of distinctive features in the students' ethnolinguistic repertoire. I describe the students' use of Blackfoot (6.1.2), note their use of regionally distinctive features of English (6.2), as well as to what extent they use supralocal linguistic resources (6.3). Because I am interested in the sociocultural role of language and how student ideologies are related to their linguistic practices, I describe students' language ideologies regarding Blackfoot and mainstream English in 6.1.3 and 6.4, respectively. I then provide a description of ethnically distinctive features, with a focus on interjections and prosody. In determining whether a feature is distinctive, I used student commentaries and stylizations of their own and others' speech, resources outlined in 3.3.3, and my own knowledge of the linguistic features used in this region and in mainstream English. In 6.6,

⁵⁷ I thank A. Woodbury for helping me recognize the L*H prosody patterns and stylized elongation, for pointing me to the category of interjections, and for helping me with some phonetic transcriptions (any errors are of course my own).

I analyze intracommunity variation in use of interjections, particularly age-based variation and stylistic variation (that is, social variation used to construct personae). I discuss student ideologies toward their ethnolinguistic repertoire (6.7), showing the ways in which the students generally expressed feelings of pride and valorization of these features, especially regarding distinctive (L*H) prosody and interjections, which were bound up with feelings of ethnic group pride and valorization. I then examine the sociocultural functions of these features in a peer interaction (6.8). In the penultimate section, I examine the English teacher's stylizations (performances) of Blackfoot speech to investigate in more detail how, as Eckert (2008) describes, features that index ethnicity "can index far more than ethnicity" (p. 26, as cited in Benor, 2010, p. 168). I conclude the chapter in 6.10 by reflecting on the role of the ethnolinguistic repertoire as a resource in classroom discourse; discussing the ways in which the students' linguistic practices index their range of cultural practices and their sociohistorical position; and comparing my approach to other researcher's approaches to American Indian's communicative repertoire (mainly, Webster's, e.g., 2011, 2012a, 2012b).

6.1. BLACKFOOT: USAGE AND IDEOLOGY

In this section I describe the extent to which the students use Blackfoot, and I generally describe variable features shared with off-reservation Whites in this geographic region. I include some of the descriptions students gave of their use of Blackfoot and these features, and although some of these descriptions reveal aspects of their language ideologies, I reserve a more thorough discussion of these ideologies for 6.1.3.

6.1.2. Blackfoot Usage

Most of the students reported hearing Blackfoot, and many reported fluent older speakers in their family (mainly, grandparents).⁵⁸ Some students talked about being from multilingual families, in which in addition to English, some spoke Blackfoot and some spoke another Blackfoot variety (e.g., Blood), or another American Indian language (e.g., Salish, Cree). For instance, Molly (a freshman) told me she knew a few words in English and a few words in Cree. Ashley (a senior) told me that Salish is her first language, spoken with her by her grandmother (who raised her), and her mom speaks English with her. She described how some cousins talked to her in English because their moms did not want them to speak Salish, and her grandmother did not speak English “unless she had to.”

None of the students in the school described themselves as being fluent Blackfoot speakers, and they told me that no other students in the school are fluent speakers, with the exception of one girl describing as fluent the high school boy who had gone to the Blackfoot-immersion school (Cuts Wood School) for several years. That boy told me that he would rate his Blackfoot as about a “4” on a 10-point scale (a scale he suggested). He said that he can understand Blackfoot “a little bit” and described it as “easy to learn” and “easy to remember.” Most of the other students I interviewed knew a few words and phrases, and a few said they had passive understanding of Blackfoot. For instance, Jeffery told me that he can understand Blackfoot but cannot speak it; in a group interview, he and other boys told me that they know about 10 Blackfoot words. Some students said that they sometimes hear students say a couple Blackfoot words or phrases in the school

⁵⁸See Still Smoking (1997, 1999) for the importance of the extended family and on grandparents’ focus on teaching grandchildren the Blackfeet language and knowledge base.

hallway: *pohtsapota* (“come here”), *anitakit* (“hurry up!”), and *oki* (“hello”).⁵⁹ One senior boy told me he speaks “mismatched words” in Blackfoot, and that he learned them in school and a little from his grandfather. Two students (a boy and a girl) reported that Blackfoot was their first language but that they no longer spoke it. It is possible that, as McCarty et al. (2005) discuss for Navajo youth, some students had more (or less) fluency in Blackfoot than what they reported to me, although students and adults in the community similarly reported teenagers as not being fluent in (or “not knowing”) Blackfoot. The girl who reported Blackfoot was her first language provided a fairly detailed description of her early use and exposure to Blackfoot, including that she spoke it with her grandfather when she was young, until she was in 5th grade, when she felt like she “couldn’t really get [her] thoughts in there,” regarding the 5th-grade teacher’s science class. She said that one day her grandmother said something to her in Blackfoot and she apologized for not understanding it. Her grandmother then urged her to not “close the book” on Blackfoot. This girl strongly associated the use of Blackfoot with being Indian/Blackfeet (i.e., she referred to it as “talking Indian,” as do most others in the community) and with being close with her grandparents and helping her with the “way to be.” She also implied that she quit speaking Blackfoot because of her mostly monolingual peers.

The students and Mr. Smith (the history teacher) described families with members who know Blackfoot as being “more traditional.” Dance McAliber similarly describes the intracommunity variation in exposure to, and use of, Blackfoot.

⁵⁹ The girls said that there was one boy boys often says “hurry up!” in Blackfoot in the hallways; this boy declined to participate in my study, and I did not ask him about his use of Blackfoot.

Example 6.1. “Whereas there’s other families who’ve never been associated with it”
(Interview, 11/20/08)

Because there’s some families that, they’ve never heard Blackfeet, you know, never. Never even wanted anything to do with it. Then there’s really strong cultural families who are into sun dances, who are into sweat lodges, who are into praying with sage and sweet grasses and smoking the pipe, having strong cultural ties, whereas there’s other families who’ve never been associated with it.

Contexts in which students heard Blackfoot included at lodges or from “old people” and people in their family (mainly, grandparents or great grandparents); one boy told me that a peer-aged girl in his family went to the Cuts Wood School and speaks it fluently. The students’ experience with older speakers varied; some who said that they heard Blackfoot by older people in their family said that these people did not try to speak Blackfoot with them, but other students reported that older people did speak it with them. For instance, one of the girls said that her grandpa asks her and her younger sister questions in Blackfoot every morning before school (but that the younger sister, who knows Blackfoot, answers); another girl said that her mom says commands to her in Blackfoot. One interesting avenue that I did not explore was whether and how older people use teasing to teach Blackfoot to youth; when I asked Bearpaw about how his grandparents talked with him in Blackfoot (e.g., commands, conversations), he said, “Well, they just do it, like it’s, it’s like a tease, but like, so that way we can learn our language, you know, they just kinda take it slow and teasing.” This boy’s attitude toward teasing and languages-learning is similar to what Nicholas (2008) reported for language shift in a Hopi community: Speaking Hopi meant understanding the nature of teases and not speaking it meant not understanding—teases that are meant to encourage language-learning were seen by non-Hopi-speaking youth as being criticisms. By this account, Bearpaw had enough linguistic and (heritage) cultural fluency to understand the nature of these teases.

I did not hear the students speaking Blackfoot words or phrases in school in naturalistic settings,⁶⁰ besides the boy saying *amskapipikuni*, as I described in 3.1.2, and in the excerpt below, in which the junior girls were talking about choosing a pseudonym to identify themselves in my research. In this sample, when I ask about the choice of *Fogal*, the students jokingly suggest Blackfoot words as pseudonyms.

Example 6.2. “Call me *oki*” (Junior English, 05/15/09)

- 1 Nikki: What’s that from, is that, does it mean anything?
- 2 Dragon: [((laughs))
- 3 (Fogal): [*Superbad*
- 4 Girl: [It’s from *Superbad*.
- 5 Nikki: Oh, it’s from *Superbad*.
- 6 Dragon: Just call me *oki*. Hey. ((laughs))
- 7 Fogal: Hey. *Oki*
- 8 Dragon: ((laughs))
- 9 Rico: Call me *Napi*.
- 10 (Aunty): *Boynapsi*.
- 11 Dragon: Hoa, no.
- 12 (McLovin): *Boynapsi*.((laughs))
- 13 Rico: Call me *owltapsi*.
- 14 Girls: (xxx. Hoa, I know.) ((laughs))
- 15 Dragon: I want a na:me.
- 16 Fogal: Do you know what *suotis* means?
- 17 Dragon: What? [I heard that before!
- 18 Fogal: [Do YOU know what *suotis* means?
- 19 Dragon: I heard that before. [What does it mean?
- 20 Fogal: [What does it mean?
- 21 Dragon: [I think my, I think grandma-
- 22 (Girl): Can’t tell you.
- 23 Pedro: It means “buck.”
- 24 Girls: ((laugh))
- 25 (Girl): Hoa.
- 26 Fogal: Just tell me, please.
- 27 Rico: Who always tells you that?
- 28 Aunty: Nobody, I mean, cuz my cousin and I text, and uh, that’s his uh signature.
- 29 Rico: *Suotis*? Prob’ly just an Indian name.
- 30 Dragon: [It means “hung like a horse.” ((laughs))

⁶⁰ Molly and Ali exchanged a few Blackfoot phrases with each other when I asked them about speaking Blackfoot in an interview.

- 31 Nikki: [(Do you know xxx?)
 32 Rico: I know *boynapsi* is bothersome. Uh, what was that other one I
 just said?
 33 Fogal: *Owltapsi*
 34 Rico: *Owltapsi* is
 35 (McLovin): [Like, crazy
 36 Rico: [Crazy.

First, note that in Line 2, Dragon is likely laughing because she thinks I am asking if *Fogal* is a Blackfoot word. She responds by saying, “Call me *Oki*. Hey.”; *oki* means “hello,” which every student knows, and here it is used humorously as an emblem of being Blackfeet and as an inside joke between Dragon and her friends (slightly at my expense). As I discuss more in 6.5.3.1, *hey* as used here (spoken quickly) indicates that she is joking and positively evaluates her own joke. From there, the students suggest other Blackfoot words as pseudonyms, and most seem to know what they mean. This excerpt demonstrates the status of Blackfoot in this generation: it is for the most part no longer a code of communication and is objectified as having cultural value, though students still understand some “words” in Blackfoot (see R. E. Moore, 1988; see also discussion in Webster, 2008, p. 512, and Webster, 2010b, p. 44). However, as I discuss in 6.4., some interjections from Blackfoot are used in the students’ ethnolinguistic repertoire, although the students do not associate them with Blackfoot, for the most part.

6.1.3. Blackfoot: Ideologies

In interviews and in naturalistic conversations, the students expressed similar ideologies toward their heritage language and toward English as what McCarty, Romero-Little, Warhol, and Zepeda (2005) found: in general terms, positive and negative attitudes toward both languages. These ideologies vary within the community, and within speakers’ own repertoires, as some of the quotes from interviews and in class in this section demonstrate (see also Kroskrity, 2004, regarding diversity of ideologies within a community). I discuss attitudes toward English in more detail in 6.4.

Most of the students said it was important or very important to them to know Blackfoot. Some talked about wishing they knew Blackfoot from childhood (as a first language), as when I asked one boy if he would have liked to go to an immersion school if there was one in Gopher Peaks, he said that he would have rather had learned it growing up (as opposed to having to go to a school to learn it). The boy who went to the Cuts Wood School said it is “very important” for him to know Blackfoot. He said that he is glad to be taking a Blackfoot language class in GPH: “It’s fun, finally to get to learn it again.”

Not surprisingly, the students strongly associate Blackfoot with their culture, being Native, and their families (especially with their grandparents), and have a sense, as he said, of ownership of Blackfoot. In an interview, Nighthawk was telling me about people who are “into the culture” and I asked him if he was one of those people; he said, “Yeah, I know a few words.” In response to the quick question posed in class—Blackfeet or English?—Nighthawk said, “Blackfeet, because I want to be one of the real Natives.” Another student said that students should want to know Blackfoot because “it’s who we are.” Many of the students expressed affection toward Blackfoot as a special way they could communicate with their grandparents. Some students spoke affectionately of Blackfoot, saying it was “calm, religious, caring”; “very unique”; or “it’s our own language.”

Many of the students associated Blackfoot with the past—for instance, in Example 5.5, when the girls talk about “Be[ing] Natives again” and “Learn[ing] our language.” This line conveys complex attitudes about both “being Native” and speaking Blackfoot: She feels that the Blackfeet are less Native than they used to be because they do not dress like they used to, and she also sees Blackfoot as being a part of this past, the linguistic equivalent to antiquated ways of dressing. Although they feel it’s a language of

the past, many students also said things like they feel “bad” or “sad” about the status of Blackfoot: As one girl said, “I know that my language is dying, and I know it’s in danger of (0.6s) and if we lose it, we’re never gonna get it back.” Bearpaw said he would like to know Blackfoot because “it would be an honor to bring it back”; similarly, a girl told me that hearing Blackfoot “makes me feel great, because you, we get to learn more about it, and it’s helping our culture out.”

Some students described an attitude of seeing Blackfeet as important symbolically but not as important in their day-to-day life. For instance, one of the girls told me that she wishes she knew her “Native language” and she could speak it with her grandma, and she also said in response to my question about if she wanted to take Blackfeet classes:

So, do I want to ((take Blackfeet classes))? I would KIND of like to, you know, but then it seems like now that I’m older, and kinda think about it more, I don’t really think me learning, it’d be cool, special to me to learn my Native American language, but, as far as goin’ to college and stuff, I- I just don’t think it’s somethin’ necessarily I need to do. I’d like to learn Spanish or French or somethin’ like that, too, y’know. Because it seems like that’s basically more common than Native American languages. Especially if you go to a different school where there might not be many Blackfeet, so, what’s the point of learning? Except for your personal feelings.

Mr. Smith, who grew up on the reservation, described a similar attitude when he was in high school but now wishes he knew Blackfeet for both heritage reasons and daily communication:

The students know why they they should know their language. But there’s one senior in the Blackfeet language class ... I was in the same boat. I didn’t take Blackfeet throughout high school. Kids are given choices in school, which is their right. BUT I didn’t realize until after I’d entered college for a couple years, that you know what, man, it’d be really neat to know Blackfeet. It’d be really awesome just to pick up some terminology, some (competency) of the language, just so I can you know, pass it down, in the daily life.

In individual and group interviews, the students almost uniformly told me that Blackfoot was important or very important to them. Some of the students also told me that they heard people in the community talking about how the Blackfoot language is

dying; perhaps to some extent, the students repeated this rhetoric in interviews with me. In the English class one day, some of the students were talking and said that they thought one of the teachers (who knew Blackfeet) was going to come to the classroom and said, with annoyance, “he’ll prob’ly try to talk Ind’n to us.” Although this is the only instance of this type of negative evaluation of Blackfoot, it could indicate an attitude among some of the students that they think “talking Indian” is something put on them by older people and, like teenagers everywhere, they rebel against it in their journey to adulthood.

The language ideologies varied among students, among people in the community, between generations, and sometimes within the same person, depending on the context and interaction (or, as McCarty et al., 2005, describe for their informants, students have “ambivalent and conflicting” language ideologies). For instance, it could be that the girls who said “he’ll prob’ly try to talk Ind’n to us” said that because they do not like that teacher, they think his Blackfoot is not “good,” and/or that they just want to be doing sometime else (e.g., talking with their friends) during class time. At other times and in other contexts (perhaps especially during a sociolinguistic interview), these same students could feel that Blackfoot is very important to them, or is important in a different way. As a specific example, in English class, Nighthawk said he wanted to know Blackfeet to “be one of the real Natives.” Yet, in an interview with me, he told me that Blackfoot was “not very important” to him. During this interview, he was telling me about rapping with his friends and he said that one reason he did want to know Blackfoot was so he could put it into his music. In other words, in one context (class discussion of language), he said Blackfoot was important to him; in another context (an interview in which he was telling me about his music), the main importance that that Blackfoot had to him was as a symbolic object for his music (perhaps similar to what R. E. Moore, 1988, describes of the objectified value of Wasco).

Students and adults sometimes compared Blackfoot and English, sharing their ideologies toward both. Ali told me that if you told a story in English, it would sound “plain”; but in Blackfoot, a story would sound “more specific.” A different kind of comparison was made by one adult told, who told me that,

What I have heard from people who speak Blackfeet is, it, Blackfeet takes, EFFORT to speak. English, it's lazy speech. You can say it any way you want, you know, I mean, it's like, it rolls off the tongue a lot easier than Blackfeet but you have to actually have the, a FORCE in your voice to speak Blackfeet.

What is in part interesting about the above is that the Blackfeet valorization of being tough and intimidating (see 5.5) and related qualities (e.g., forcefulness) are also attributed to the ability to speak the Blackfoot, and the language itself. English, on the other hand, is “lazy speech.” After my description below of the students’ use of regionally distinctive features of English and some of the possible influences of supralocal resources that become available via mass media, I talk more about attitudes toward English.

6.2. ENGLISH: REGIONALLY DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

As I discuss briefly in 3.3.3, the students and adults used some of the Montana regional English features also used by Whites in this region (the West, Pacific Northwest, and Canada; sometimes referred to as the “Third Dialect”; Labov, 1991, 1994, 1996). Specifically, many of the students used raised [ɛ] and [æ] (to something approximating [eɪ]) before velar stops and nasals (e.g., the vowels in *egg*, *bag*, and *tang* are all near [eɪ]), similar to Wassink, Squizzero, Scanlon, Schirra, and Conn’s (2009) discussion of the raising of /æ/, /e:/ and /ɛ/ before /g/ in Seattle English and Pacific Northwest English (which some linguists include Montana as part of; e.g., Riebold, 2010). One girl also used creaky voice, also reported in the West and Pacific Northwest (e.g., Ingle et al., 2005, as reported in Riebold, 2010; see Ex 6.7). Another regional feature used by the students is

/u/ fronting (e.g., *soon*), a variation reported in California (Hall-Lew, 2011) and Portland English (Ward, 2003), and possibly other back-vowel fronting (see e.g., Conn, 2002). Some students used at least one aspect of Canadian raising: /aʊ/ as [ʌʊ] before voiceless consonants, as in *about* (but with less fronting than in Canadian raising). Grammatical features include use of the past participle in simple-past contexts (which Antieau, 2003, describes for Plains English in Colorado), and both Blackfeet and older Whites in this region use the word *plum* adverbially (e.g., “plum crazy”). These features seemed to be below the level of awareness; that is, the students did not volunteer that they had these pronunciations and if I asked if they did, they repeated the words (e.g., *bag*) to see how they said it. I also observed one adult woman from the community saying [ja] (*ya*) typical of Yooper/Minnestan dialect and “eh,” typical of Canadian English and the Yooper/Minnesotan dialect as well. The students had a mainly neutral attitude toward these and other regional features, to the extent that they identified them as such.

6.3. SUPRALOCAL LINGUISTIC RESOURCES

As I mention in 3.3.3, I observed features of HHNL used in very specific contexts, that is, when they were performing rap music, not in conversations or in teasing. So although there was not an obvious influence from HHNL on the students’ patterned language usages, as Seifert (2006) discusses, recent research shows the indirect influence of media on linguistic behavior, that is, that it provides awareness of linguistic innovations (see also Carvalho, 2004), and can be a resource for identity construction (e.g., Cutler, 1999). That is, “the forces of popular culture and the media do not influence language in any direct, one-to-one kind of way, but rather act as mediators” (Seifert, 2006). In my data, these influences could perhaps be seen in knowledge of, for instance, understanding Mr. Denver’s use of nasalization in constructing himself as a nerd and in

the Ex. 6.19 (discussed later in this chapter), in which the students draw on memes and tropes from popular culture in humor.⁶¹

I do not discuss what could be called Pan-Indian English in detail here, but I note features in 6.5 that might be shared with other Natives in the West and/or throughout the United States (see Cogshall, 2008) for how these Pan-Indian features might be related to American Indian Red Power movements, and see, e.g., Leap, 1993, for a discussion of “American Indian English”).

6.4. ATTITUDES TOWARD (MAINSTREAM AND STANDARD) ENGLISH

The students generally had negative or neutral evaluations of an abstract, idealized “English”⁶² —for instance, saying that it was “regular” or that it had a utilitarian purpose (McCarty et al., 2005). For instance, in response to a quick questionnaire in English class, in which the students had to choose “Blackfeet language, English, or both,” Dragon said, “I say both, because one’s important to me because of my culture, and the other I need to learn because I need to learn to talk to other people outside.” Other students had a more negative evaluations of English, articulating its association with White oppression and cultural/linguistic genocide, saying, “I speak Whiteman” (similar to what Samuels, 2004, reported) and “We’re talking English and doing all their [White’s] stuff.” Other students, it is not surprising, also associated mainstream English with being White, as when one student told me that I sounded “very White.”

Many of the students expressed negative evaluations of, and feelings toward, “their English” when compared with standard English. For instance, when I was talking

⁶¹ See Pennycook (2003) for an example of considering language variation in light of “popular culture flows.”

⁶² The students seemed to have in mind both Standard English (“school English”) and mainstream English (“unmarked English,” as I described in Chapter 3).

with a class about language and I asked if the students had any questions, one boy asked, “How’d you learn to talk so good?” I answered him (in way that I am not happy with)⁶³ that people talk like the people around them, and I’ve been in school for a long time, so that’s why I sound the way I do. He said, “That’s cool. Because, you’ve probably noticed, our English ain’t really as, good as yours?” I went on to describe that I (and linguists) do not think there is “bad English” and “good English,” and I asked him if he wishes he talked in a way that he would describe as “better English.” He said, “No, I’d just like to learn more words, like, really big words, that’s all.” Another girl in class answered “yes,” that she would like to speak “better English.” They also talked about the “broken English” of their speech and about those on another reservation in Montana: “It’s really, it’s really bad. We have broken English, but you should hear them, it’s really bad.”

6.5. DESCRIPTIONS OF ETHNICALLY DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

In this section, I provide an overview of the students’ ethnically distinctive linguistic features (i.e., features used by these students but not used, for the most part, by off-reservation Whites). I follow Irvine (2001) that “distinctiveness” depends on contrasts (see also discussion in Chun, 2007, pp. 212–213); the students explicitly contrast these features (either through metalinguistic comments or through stylized performances (in the sense of Coupland, 2007), with those of others, mainly Whites. In the subsections below, I describe and analyze the use of lexical items, interjections, and intonation in interactions.

As a bit of an aside, similar to what Mithun (1992) described for Pomo English, it might be that the relatively high frequency of certain lexical items (e.g., *this one* and *this guy* being gender-specific, and the interjections I discuss in 6.5.3) can be traced to them

⁶³ I wish I had instead focused on what judgments of “good” and “bad” mean, and where they come from.

being loan-translations of Blackfoot expressions (see Mithun, 1992, pp. 104–105). Also, it would be interesting to study the influence of Blackfoot phonology, tone, and stress on the intonational patterns I discuss in the subsections below (see, e.g., Weber & Allen’s, 2012, review of typological approaches to Blackfoot prosodic system, the discussion on pp. 286–287 in Miyashita, 2011, and Hyman’s, 2009, argument for determining how languages “systematize” the available variations). Related to this, future research could look into to what extent the patterns I describe below (a) could be part of what might be described as “Pan-Indian English,” such as high frequency of glottal stop in [t] and [d] environments in syllable-final position and distinctive intonation (Leap, 1993, pp. 50, 52) and (b) are distinctively Blackfeet. I discuss these features as being distinctively Blackfeet in comparison to surrounding White populations, but the features likely vary between and within Blackfeet and other Native communities. (See Section 6.7 for a discussion of intracommunity variation in my study.)

6.5.1. Distinctive Lexical Items

The students frequently (impressionistically and through student self-reports) used *plum*, *ignor’nt*, *behave*, and *pissy* distinctively. They use *plum* as an adverb to mean “completely” or “very,” as in “plum burn it” or “plum nasty”; they use it more frequently than Whites in the region, and the students associate its use as distinguishing their speech.⁶⁴ *Ignor’nt* [Ignərənt] means “mean” or “stupid” (and can have connotations of racial or other prejudice) usually in the phrase “That’s just ignor’nt.” *Behave* means something along the lines of “I don’t like what you’re saying” and is usually pronounced with a lengthened final vowel: [bihei:v]. The students use *pissy*, usually said with a

⁶⁴The students were explicit that these were some of the features that distinguished their speech from other regional English speakers. An analysis that combines quantitative and qualitative methodology (in the manner of Sharma, 2012) could help to answer to what degree these and other distinctions are used consciously.

lengthened [s] and [i] and often with a “scooped accent” (L*H; following Pierrehumbert, 1980, and Pierrehumbert & Hirschberg, 1990, a bitonal accent in which the nucleus of stressed syllable is said at a relatively lower pitch and then raises to a higher pitch) to mean “bad,” as in “that’s just pissy!” or as in the example below,⁶⁵ in which Pedro is repeating a joke she heard.

Example 6.3. “That’s a pissy line” (Junior English, 05/15/09)

- | | | |
|---|----------|---|
| 1 | Pedro: | Are you from Tennessee? Cuz you’re the only 10 I see. |
| 2 | McLovin: | Hoa, that’s a pissy line. |
| 3 | Pedro: | I know. |

Another distinctive lexical feature is the tag *innit* ([Inəʔ]), spoken rapidly and glossed as “right?” or, as an adult described to me, “Are we in agreement?” For example, one of the sophomore girls asked Mr. Denver if she wrote the name of a male character on her assignment, and she said, “I put him down, innit?” When I asked Dance McAliber about its meaning, he gave me the example “Innit, Nikki, we’re doing an interview.”⁶⁶

The students also used the collocation *this one* (used exclusively to refer to girls and women “unless we’re jokin’ around”) and *this guy* (used mainly for boys and men) to mean something along the lines of “Can you believe what this girl/boy just did/said”? These collocations frequently occur in teases, and thus, because of their heavy circulation, function in part as contextualization cues. An example of this is “Hoa, this one!” (Ex. 6.18. Line 10) or “Hoa, this guy” (Ex. 6.5, Line 13); the collocation can be used as the noun phrase of a sentence, as in the below.

⁶⁵ In this example, no segment in *pissy* was lengthened.

⁶⁶ The use of this tag is similar to that of the tag *isn’t it* in negative questions in “New Englishes,” as discussed by Watts and Trudgill’s (2002; e.g., “He came there, isn’t it?” = “He came there, didn’t he?”) (p. 117). Thus, *innit* might reflect some Blackfoot substratum influence.

Example 6.4. “This guy’s talkin’ to himself.” (Freshman English, 05/08/09)

- 1 Bearpaw: I’m already done with it. I got skills. Mad skills.
- 2 Mr. Denver: ((talking as if Bearpaw or himself)): “(xxx) I did 20 sentences actually for you.” Just kiddin’.
- 3 Bearpaw: This guy’s talkin’ to himself ((laughs))
- 4 Mr. Denver: I was talkin’ about you, buddy.
- 5 Bearpaw: ((laughs))

Because *this guy* is a collocation that expresses a dismissive, negative evaluation, using *this guy* highlights Bearpaw’s stance, indicates a play frame, and puts Mr. Denver’s behavior on display for other students (more than, e.g., “You’re talkin’ to yourself”), which Mr. Denver responds to jokingly and with the veiled aggression of “buddy.”

6.5.2. Distinctive Phonological and Prosodic Features

Some of the variable phonological features include word-initial [th] realized as [d]: for example, in *this* and *there* ([dis] and [der]). Other impressionistically frequent features are use of the glottal stop word medially before a vowel (as in *huntin’* [hʌʔən]; where the second vowel is nasalized) or finally (*what* as [wʌʔ]). As an example of this as a distinctive feature, when I said [t] in a student’s name that had a /t/ in it that was in this environment for a glottal stop, several students commented on (and reproduced) how I said it. Another frequent feature was lengthening: of vowels, voiced consonants, and sibilants syllable-finally; and of the glottal stop before [k] as in [nɛʔ:k] and [hɛʔ:k].⁶⁷ Also, the word *Indian* is variably pronounced [əndən] or [Indjən].⁶⁸

⁶⁸ There is inter- and intraspeaker variation in these pronunciations; in “Indian Days,” it is almost always said [əndən] or [Indən], even by speakers who in other contexts use the other variant. The pronunciation also likely interacts with prosodic and pragmatic constraints—for instance, in a stylized, elongated ending, [Indjən] might be used.

Distinctive prosodic features include the “scooped accent” (later characterized by Pierrehumbert, e.g., 1980, as L*H or L*+H⁶⁹) and stylized intonation (in the sense of Ladd’s, 1978, description of modifications of the usual contour; in this case, varying intonation rather than keeping it more level or smooth). I discuss these prosodic features subsections below, 6.8, and 6.9.

6.5.3. Distinctive Interjections

Students use the interjections *hoa* and *hey*, lengthened *hey:ya:y/hey:z/ay:z/yay:z*, *okes/ks:*, and *sah*, in a variety of contexts but especially when they are teasing each other (or, to a lesser extent, Mr. Denver). I follow descriptions of interjections as (a) being sentential, context-dependent, and context-restricting⁷⁰ (Cruz, 2008) and (b) “express[ing] a mental or emotional attitude or state” (Wharton, 2003, p. 177). These interjections convey positive or negative evaluation and sometimes surprise; they are also sometimes used to get attention or to hold the floor. I discuss these interjections in detail below and then present a summary chart at the end of these subsections.

Prosody plays a large role in the meaning and interpretation of these interjections, as researchers have noted for other interjections (e.g., Quirk et al., 1985; Wilson & Wharton, 2006). Some interjections (*hoa*, *hey*) are said with unitonal L* intonation, some with bitonal L*H (*he:y* and variants), and some with unitonal H*/L* or bitonal (*okes*). I separate these interjections according to whether they are unitonal or bitonal because the bitonal L*H generally indicates teasing more strongly than the unitonal interjections. I do

⁶⁹Pierrehumbert’s (1980) data are from mainstream English; the L*H or L*+H accent in her data are used for incredulousness or to indicate one’s response is not complete (see, e.g., p. 76 in Pierrehumbert, 1980).

⁷⁰That is, they “encourage the hearer to access some contextual elements, such as objects, events, actions, states of affairs, propositions or manifest assumptions, to which they are projected or targeted” (Cruz, 2008, p. 5) and they narrow the hearer’s search space and indicate the general directions the hearer should search for the intended meaning (Wharton, 2003, p. 58, as cited in Cruz, 2008).

not have any instances of bitonal L*H *hoa* interjections. Although both *hey* and *okes* can both be said bitonally, the unitonal and bitonal *he:y*'s meaning differs more than the unitonal and bitonal *okes*'s meaning, so I discuss “different” *heys* but not different *okes*.

6.5.3.1. Unitonal Interjections: Hoa and Hey

Hoa and *hey* are usually said with a relatively flat L* pitch accent; that is, in Pierrehumbert's (1980; Pierrehumbert & Hirschberg, 1990) terminology, the pitch lines up with the stress and is relatively lower than surrounding utterances. As interjections have the status of complete utterances, they also have phrase and boundary tones; these utterances usually slightly trail off at the end with a L⁻L% intonation. I analyze *hoa* and *hey* as being complementary interjections: *Hoa* conveys a negative evaluation and *hey* conveys a positive evaluation.

First, I look at usage of *hoa*. As a brief example, in response to Mr. Denver giving the students a reading assignment, one girl said, “Hoa. We have to read the epilogue, too?” Here, *hoa* indicates displeasure (negative evaluation). *Hoa* can be a contextualization cue to indicate teasing and/or a play frame, as in the following excerpt. *Hoa* in Lines 10, 13, and 18 in this example is said quickly and, in simplest terms, with L* intonation.

Example 6.5. “W-E-B-B-I-E” (Junior English, 05/08/2009)

- | | | |
|----|--------|--------------------------------------|
| 1 | Mike: | So, who sings “Independent”? |
| 2 | Aunty: | Webbie. |
| 3 | Mike: | It's not Webbie, is it? |
| 4 | Aunty: | Yeah it is. Look it up: W-E-B-B-I,-E |
| 5 | Mike: | Webbie?--- |
| 6 | Pedro: | ---Yeah |
| 7 | Mike: | Or Debbie? |
| 8 | Pedro: | Yeah. |
| 9 | Aunty: | Webbie. |
| 10 | Pedro: | <u>Hoa</u> , [Debbie. -- |
| 11 | Aunty: | [Webbie. |

- 12 Mike: W-E-B-B-I-E?
 13 Aunty: Yes:. Hoa, this guy.
 14 Pedro: It's like tryin' to spell *independent*
 15 Mike: ((laughs))
 16 Aunty: W-E-B-B-I-N-D-E-P-E-N-T
 17 Pedro: ((laughs))
 18 Aunty: Hoa, 'at's ((peer-aged family member)), you know that
 Valier song, their like, school song or somethin'? Where they
 spell their name, or they spell "Valier"? She's like "V-A-L-I-E-
 E-E-E-R...."
 19 Students: ((laughter))

In Line 10, Pedro uses *hoa* to show a negative evaluation of Mike's (perhaps mock) confusion of *Webbie* and *Debbie* and as a contextualization cue that she is teasing. Aunty collaborates with Pedro in expressing frustration over Mike's not understanding by her lengthening of *Yes* and then expresses negative evaluation (disapproval) by saying *hoa*, *this guy*. Pedro then teases Mike about his spelling skills by suggesting that it is as difficult for Mike to spell *Webbie* as it is to spell an ostensibly more difficult word like *independent*.⁷¹ Aunty picks up this tease and creatively combines the spelling of these two words, then makes a joke about one of her family member's spelling ability—prefacing it with *hoa* to convey her light-hearted negative judgment of the family member.

The pitch tracks for Aunty's "Yes, *hoa*, this guy" and for Pedro's "Hoa, Debbie" are below (Fig. 6.1 and 6.2) and are the typical way students say *hoa*.

⁷¹ The students might also be referencing a past interaction in which someone tried to spell *independent*.

Figure 6.1. “Yes, *hoa*, this guy” (Line 13; Example 6.5)

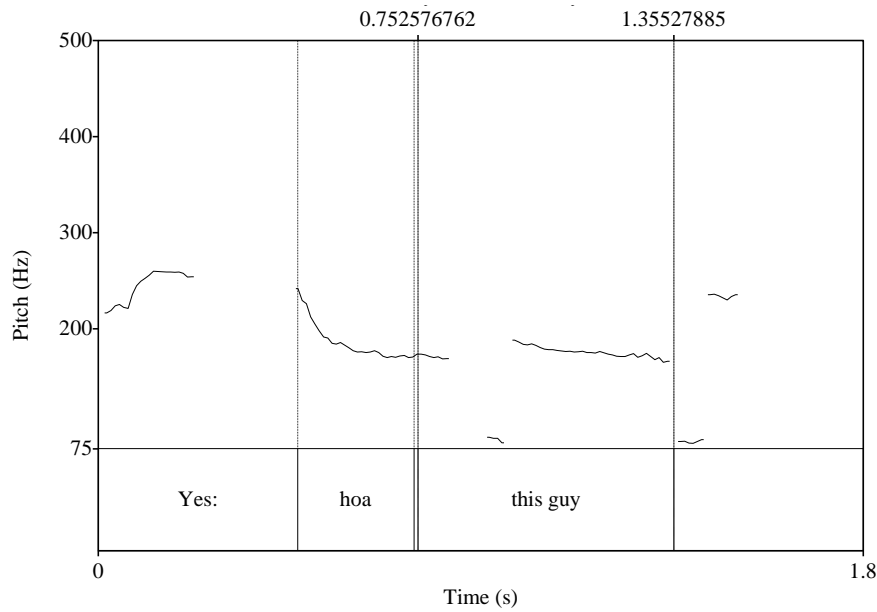
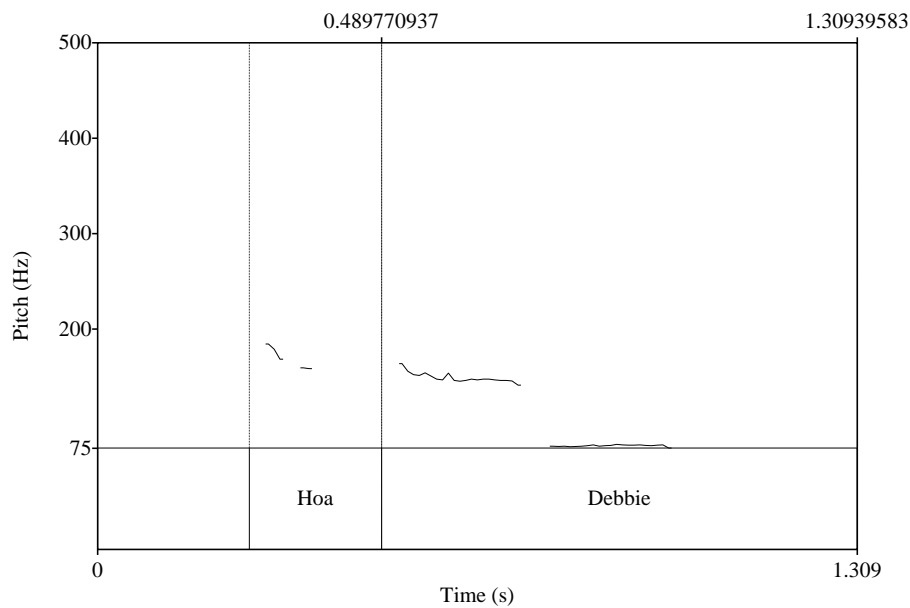


Figure 6.2. “*Hoa*, Debbie” (Line 10; Example 6.5)



Note that in both figures, the intonation for *hoa* is $L^* L\bar{L}\%$ (i.e., *hoa* is stressed on the low tone, followed by a low phrase tone (slightly falling intonation) and a low boundary tone. Aunty’s “*hoa*” is at the .3-second range and Pedro’s is just slightly faster (in the .2-

second range). Note that L*L⁻L% is the intonation for “this guy,” too. In the second figure, “Debbie” is an intonational phrase, H*+L L⁻ L%. In the case of both “hoa”s, “this guy,” and “Debbie,” the falling intonation helps convey the message of disapproval.

As they did for many features of their ethnolinguistic repertoire, the students had a high metalinguistic awareness of its frequency and use, as the below excerpt demonstrates.

Example 6.6. “We tease each other over saying *hoa* or *hey*” (Junior English, 5/13)

- 1 Fogal: You know what we do? We tease each other over *hoa* or *hey*, but yet we still say it.
- 2 Nikki: Oh, really? Like how do you tease each other?
- 3 Aunty: Hoa, like, ((boy)) always says it (hey, xxx)
- 4 Fogal: OK, like, say if ((Dragon)) or ((Aunty)) said it, and I NOTICED, I’d tease her about it, [but if I-
- 5 McLovin: [Hoa, like this one, you just said *hoa*
- 6 Fogal: But, like 5 seconds later, I’d say it, and I wouldn’t even notice it.
- 7 Aunty: Hoa, I’ve never seen anyone pop their fingers like that. I’m gonna try it.

Hoa used in this example to get attention (Line 3) and possibly to convey surprise (Line 7), both uses of interjections also described by Wharton (2003). *Hoa* is described in a 19th Century Blackfoot grammar (Lanning, Kipp, & Gladston, 1882) and is similar to the students’ use of *hoa*. This grammar classifies *hoa* as an interjection:

There are in Blackfoot several independent words such as ho! and ya YA! &c. used only to show surprise or emotion, and are easily understood by their use. (p. 11)

None of the students or community members mentioned *hoa* as being from Blackfoot, but it is interesting that, through radical language shift, the community apparently retained this interjection from Blackfoot grammar (following Cruz’s, 2008, argument that

interjections are more linguistic than paralinguistic; see also, e.g., Crystal, 1971).⁷² I return to this point in the conclusion.

Regarding the interjection *hey* (which could be similarly related to the “yaYA!” that Lanning et al., 1882, describe), when it is said with a relatively flat, low tone, as in the example below, it indicates a positive evaluation of one’s own or someone else’s utterance. I thus analyze it as the complement to *hoa*. In the excerpt below, one of the girls is telling me about White girls at a camp asking her and her Blackfeet friends about how they talked.

Example 6.7. “‘I was born like this.’ Hey.” (Interview, Two Freshman Girls, 10/22/08)

((laughing)) And then, like, I don’t know, they’ll just like at us, “Why do you talk like that?” “Hoa, I don’t know, I was born like this:.” Hey.

As I explain in more detail below, the students generally had a positive evaluation of their ethnolinguistic repertoire. In Example 6.7, the girl first says “hoa” very quickly (in the .27-s range), which indicates a negative stance toward an outsider’s view of how she talks, followed by a slightly longer “hey” (.5-s range) with $L^* L^- L\%$ and with a creaky voice (typical of her pronunciation of *hey* and other words but not of other students’). *Hey* here conveys her own positive stance toward her speech—note also that although it has the same intonation as *hoa*, speakers understand it as conveying positive evaluation.

⁷²Miyashita (2011) also notes the use of *ho* and *aho* in Blackfoot as vocables, that is, as “nonsense words or syllables sung with the melody” (citing Hinton’s, 1994, definition), used repeatedly at the ends of songs. As I mentioned in 2.1.2, Gelo (1999) and Samuels (2004) also describe *aayyyyyy* and *eeeei* as vocables. Miyashita further describes the use of *ya*, *yo*, *ki*, and *kə* in lullabies (which are not used in my data and which she classifies as clitic vocables).

6.5.3.2. *Lengthened, Bitonal Interjections: (Y)(H)ey(z)*

Whereas *hoa* is not said with L*H, as far as my data indicate,⁷³ students said the *hey* interjection with a lengthened, bitonal (specifically, L*H) accent, and used the phonologically similar *hey:z*, *yay:*, *yay:z*, *ay:*, and *ay:z*, variants, which seem to vary by speaker and possibly by context (I could not determine in exactly which contexts a speaker might use which variant). Whereas unitonal *hoa* and *hey* were clearly used in complementary distribution by students as a group (with *hoa* indicating negative evaluation and *hey* indicating positive evaluation), there was more interspeaker variation (and perhaps intraspeaker variation) with these interjections. When an interjection is lengthened and L*H, it seems to more strongly indicate teasing another person, as I mentioned in the introduction to this section. The L*H interjections described in this subsection might be used similarly to, or derived from, the *yaYA!* [transcription] that Lanning et al. (1882) described.

An example of a lengthened, bitonal interjection that is typical of these interjections' use is below, in an excerpt from an interview with Ali and another girl.

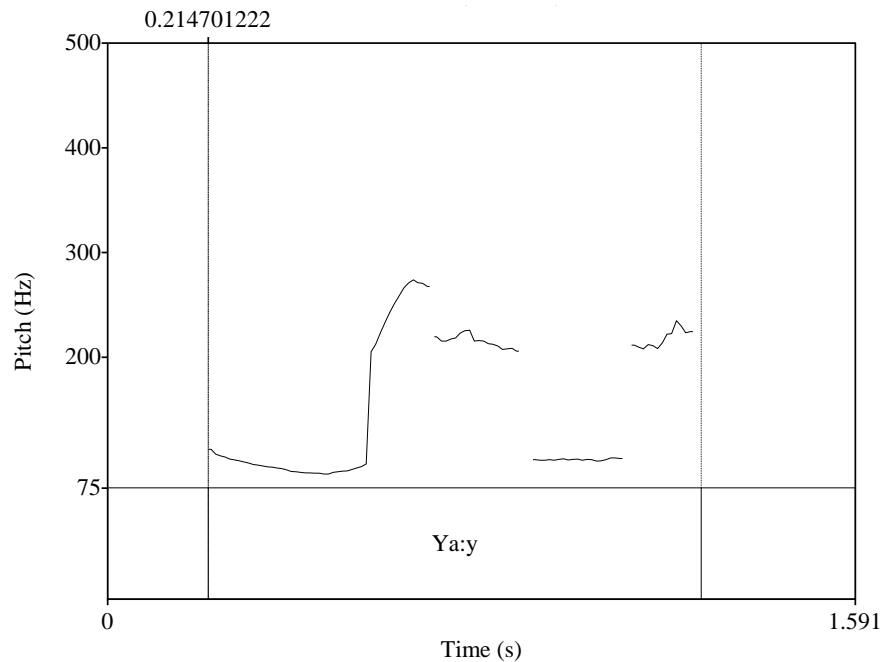
Example 6.8. “Ya:y” (Interview, 10/22/08)

- | | | |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Ali: | Her dad, is the singer of A-Aerosmith? |
| 2 | Nikki: | Oh, Liv: Tyler? |
| 3 | Ali: | Liv Tyler plays in there [and |
| 4 | Girl: | Ya:y |

In Line 4, the girl uses “yay” to positively evaluate the actress or movie, or is using it as a way of saying “yes”; the intonation is scooped (L*H), as I show below, and ends with creaky voice.

⁷³ Also, when I asked the students when they would say *hoa* with L*H (which I produced), they gave me examples using the L* pitch accent.

Figure 6.3. “Ya:y” (Line 4; Example 6.8)



Note also that she varies the intonation as it is lengthened, as did other speakers sometimes for bitonal interjections (and in other instances, e.g., Ex. 6.18).

6.5.3.3. *Unitonal or Bitonal: Okes*

The students use *okes*⁷⁴ in a way similar to *hoa*, that is, as a contextualization cue and to convey negative evaluation. Whereas *hoa* conveys something along the lines of “I don’t like what you did or said,” *okes* conveys something along the lines of “What you just said or did was stupid or clumsy.” Dance McAliber explained to me that if I got up I knocked over my tape recorder, he’d say: “Okes, this one.” As another example, once when Mr. Denver gave the students a quick assignment at the beginning of the class, in which they had to choose which car brand they preferred, a senior boy said, “Ford or Chevy? Okes. Dodge ain’t even up there.” In this and most cases, *okes* is said fairly

⁷⁴ *Okes* might be related to (shortened from) the students use of *I jokes* or *jokes*, used to mean “I am joking,” as one boy explained to me. *Jokes* and *I jokes* could also be considered interjections.

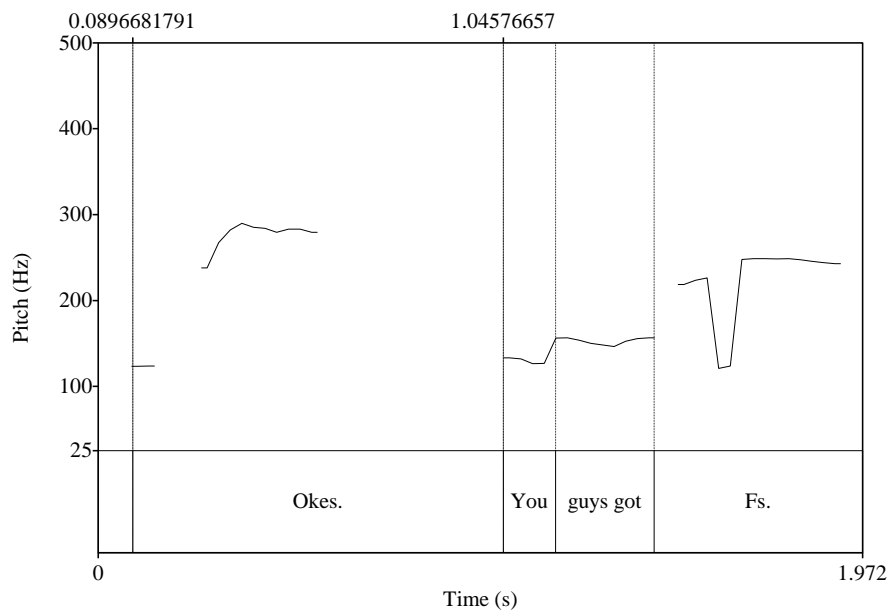
quickly and with L* intonation, and it can also be pronounced without the vowel ([ks:]) and conveys a similar, though perhaps sharper, meaning (i.e., it might convey more scolding than *okes*, as far as I can determine). An example of *ks:* is when Ali was whispering things like, “[Bearpaw’s] a loser” and “[Denver] looks constipated” into my microphone:

Example 6.9. “Ks:. You’re supposed to share it.” (Freshman English, 05/08/09)

- | | | |
|---|----------|--|
| 1 | Bearpaw: | Get your own microphone. This one’s pointed at me. |
| 2 | Ali: | Ks: You’re supposed to share it.” |

Okes can also be lengthened and said with a L*H (scooped) accent, which seems to more strongly be a contextualization cue for a teasing or play frame, as with other L*H interjections. For instance, one day in senior English, the students were talking about grades, and Nighthawk said, jokingly, “Okes. You guys got *F*s.” The intonation is plotted in the figure below.

Figure 6.4. “Okes. You guys got *F*s”



6.5.3.4. Sah

Another interjection, used to a lesser extent by students, is *sah* [s:a:], which (as Molly told me) means “no” in Blackfoot but that students might use it in the context of, for instance, someone looking for their glasses and then realizing they were in their own pocket: “Where’s my glasses? Sah! They’re on me.” Spiff and a group of senior boys told me that you might say it (quickly and with lowering/trailing intonation) if someone told you something and you did not believe them.

6.5.4. Summary of Interjections

In the table below, I review my analysis of interjections commonly used by the students, the students’ descriptions of the interjections, other descriptions of their usage, and a summary of my analysis of the interjections. Note that all of these can also serve as requests for attention and are contextualization cues.

Table 6.1. Interjections Commonly Used By Students

	Unitonal			Bitonal	Unitonal or Bitonal
Interjection	<i>Sah</i>	<i>Hoa</i>	<i>Hey</i>	<i>Hey/Yay/Ayz/Yayz/Heyz</i>	<i>Okes/Ks:</i>
Typical prosodic qualities	Quick, L*, trailing intonation [s:a:]	L*	L*	Lengthened, L*H	Quick, usually L*; Can be elongated, L*H (<i>okes</i>)
Students’ description	If someone told you something you didn’t believe.	Like, say if I told ((Dragon)) somethin’ stupid, she’ll look at me, “hoa”; if you see something new; if you’re surprised or didn’t expect something	Like if somebody says something cool	<i>Hey</i> : Teasing ; what boys say when they tease girls “Hey:, your boyfriend; hey”	After something ironic or something stupid, or if somebody gets hurt
				<i>Heyz/Yayz</i> : Use with teasing; No difference between the two; Another word for laughing; if you see somebody holding hands	
				<i>Ayz</i> : If making fun of; sarcastic praising; somebody says something and you don’t believe them	

Summary	Means “no” in Blackfoot	Negative evaluation or surprise; negative judgment; usually directed at previous utterance; noted in 1882 Blackfoot grammar	Positive evaluation; can be directed at speaker’s own utterance	Positive or negative evaluation; strong association with teasing	Negative evaluation; disparaging of something deemed “stupid”
Other notes	Used less frequently than other interjections in my data	Not said with L*H; one girl uses <i>huh-hoa</i> (Ex. 6.16)	Seems to be used more frequently by girls.	High degree of intracommunity (and possibly intraspeaker) variation; often stylized in terms of intonation. Seems to be used more frequently and seems to be more elongated by boys.	Some said they sometimes say as [oksa:] (possibly related to use of <i>sah</i>); one instance of <i>oke</i> (Ex. 6.16)

6.6. INTRACOMMUNITY VARIATION IN (ETHNICALLY DISTINCTIVE) INTERJECTIONS

In this section, I describe age-based variation and stylistic variation in these interjections. By “stylistic,” I follow recent research in sociolinguistics (e.g., Coupland, 2007; Eckert, 2002) to mean the ways in which (ethno)linguistic resources are deployed to project personae. As I discussed in Chapter 2, recent work in this vein talks about the array of stances and qualities these resources index; I do not talk in detail about the indexicality of these features in this section, rather I note that these ethnolinguistic features are used variably in the community to project different ways of being Blackfeet and/or Indian.

The students uniformly told me that older people in the community do not use the *hoa* and *hey* interjections—or, specifically, that they would “not hold them out for so long.” Ali jokingly told me that the difference was that teenagers would hold the interjections for “10 seconds”). When I asked Aunty about which kinds of students would say *hey* vs. *heyz* vs. *yayz*, and so on, she said, “it just depends on the person.” When I asked her who would not say them, she said “older people” and then clarified that they might say them, but that they would not elongate them. I discuss this more in the conclusion, but this suggests that the students are leading a language change in the usage

of these interjections, especially in regard to prosody, and possibly in regard to frequency (i.e., the students use these interjections more than older people). The students also discussed certain types of peers in another reservation town who would not use them—“preps” and “jocks” (for these social categories in other youth populations, see e.g., Chun, 2007; Eckert, 1989):

Example 6.10. “You sound like a big Indian” (Junior English, 5/15/09)

- 1 McLovin: Did you guys ever talk to someone from a different Rez, and they’ll be like, “Hoa, you sound like a big Indian”?
- 2 Rico: Yeah.
- 3 Nikki: What do they say?
- 4 McLovin, Rico: “You just sound like a big Indian”
- 5 Nikki: Oh, really? They say that to, about you guys? And, do they sound the same way do you think, to you?
- 6 Rico: Yeah, that’s how those one girls were
- 7 Aunty: (xxx notice they’ll talk like that.) Like those preps and stuff like that they don’t say *hoa* or *heyz* or nothin
- 8 Nikki: In ((bigger town on reservation)), they don’t?
- 9 Dragon: The preps.
- 10 Aunty: [Like the preps. And the jocks, and stuff like that.
- 11 Dragon: ((Boy)) does sometimes.
- 12 (Girl): [Does ((boy)) even say that?
- 13 McLovin: The preps don’t say that.
- 14 (Girl): ((Boy)) does sometimes. He says when he goes to Salt Lake, he don’t talk like that no more.
- 15 (Girl): Oh my god, that guy.

This passage indicates that these interjections are on the one hand strongly associated with Indian ethnicity (Line 1) but that they are not associated with all types of Indian—preps. The students told me that no one in their school would be considered a prep, and I thus do not analyze use of these interjections according to the “prep” social type. Given the description of other Natives telling these girls that they sound like “Big Indians” (Lines 1, 4) it might very well be that these interjections could index the degree to which a student, for instance, participates in heritage cultural activities and/or mainstream cultural practices.

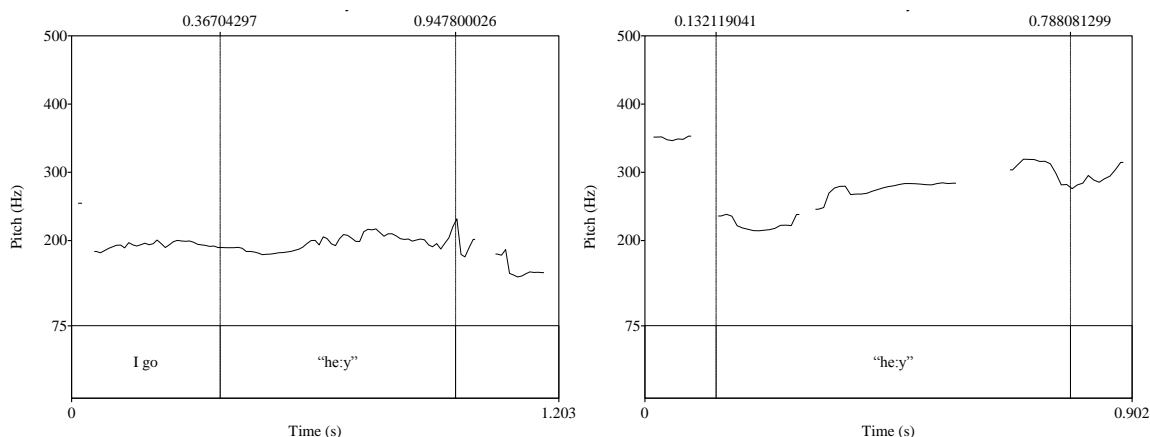
The girls also told me about variations in ways to say *hey*, as transcribed below.

Example 6.11. “I go “>Hey:<” (Junior English, 05/15/09)

- | | | |
|----|----------|---|
| 1 | Dragon: | I know ((girl)), like, if you say so?n’ to her, um, say it sounds cool, sometimes she’ll like, <i>hey</i> , like really fast. |
| 2 | (Girls): | ((some laughter)) |
| 3 | Aunty: | < <i>Hey</i> .> Yeah, like really fast, like < <i>hey</i> > |
| 4 | Nikki: | Do you think you guys, do think you say that, too, like “< <i>hey</i> >”? |
| 5 | Dragon: | I don’t know |
| 6 | (Girl): | (xxx) |
| 7 | Aunty: | I go, “> <u>Hey</u> :<” |
| 8 | Dragon: | [Never really pay attention. |
| 9 | (Girl): | [>“ <u>Hey</u> :”< |
| 10 | Girls: | Hoa ((laugh)) |

Both of the slow *hey*:s above (Lines 7 and 9) are scooped (the second more so than the first) and with stylized intonation on the lengthened vowel:

Figure 6.5. Comparison of intonation of *Hey*:s (Lines 7, 9; Example 6.11).



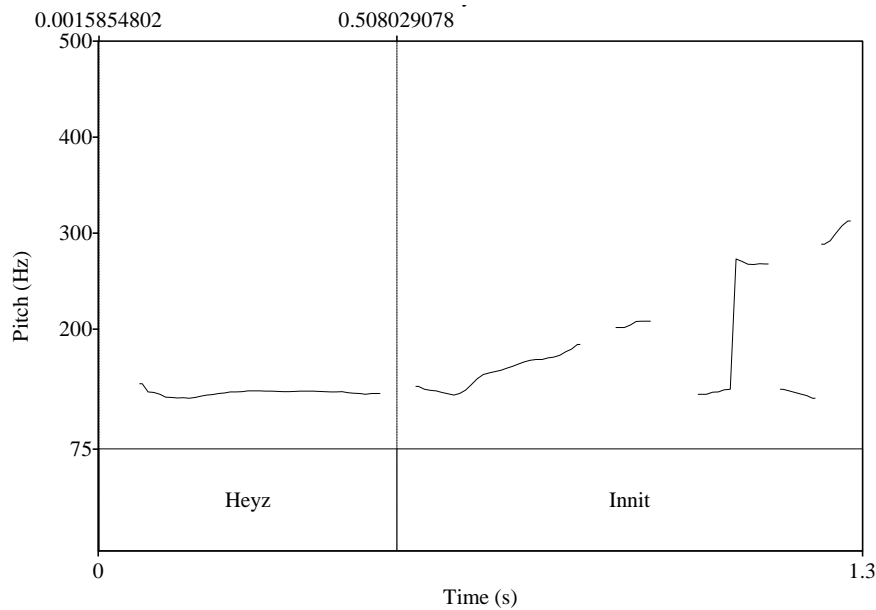
In Line 10, the girls say “hoa” and laugh—presumably because the “hey” in Line 9 is said with a more scooped accent and is more elongated. It seems here that Aunty is being teased about the way she (at least claims to) says “hey” and/or perhaps the girls have another social type (perhaps boys) in mind in saying this scooped, elongated “hey.”

Although I do not analyze ideologies or constructions of femininity in this community, prosodical variation in use of these interjections could be a part of the ways social differences in ways of being feminine (or masculine) are produced and understood. For instance, one of the girls frequently (impressionistically) uses the short “hey.” She told me she really liked fashion, and she wore her hair down most of the time and usually wore make-up. She was also a runner, a boxer, and had a widespread reputation in the school for getting in fights. Aunty, on the other hand, said she likes to dress “comfortable” and often wore jeans and a t-shirt, usually wore her hair up, and was not (as far as I know) a fighter. The girl who likes fashion used the fast *hey* more frequently (impressionistically) than most other girls and often used creaky voice when she lengthened it, whereas Aunty describes herself as using saying *hey* with lengthened [ei] (though in my data she says the fast *hey* as well).⁷⁵

In a group interview when I asked the students about whether they used *innit* and interjections, Jeffery said, “Heyz. Innit,” to mean that yes, he does say it (with the connotation, I think, that he positively evaluates it). This *heyz* is longer than most instances of the girls’ *hey* and it is very low and flat and has a very slight scoop.

⁷⁵Although there could be, and probably is, discrepancies between how a speaker believes they use their language (e.g., saying *hey* slow or fast), the fact that she believes that she thinks she says it slowly could suggest that there is a difference in types of people who would say it more slowly or quickly.

Figure 6.6. “Heyz. Innit”



I discussed whether the girls and boys say these interjections differently with the girls:

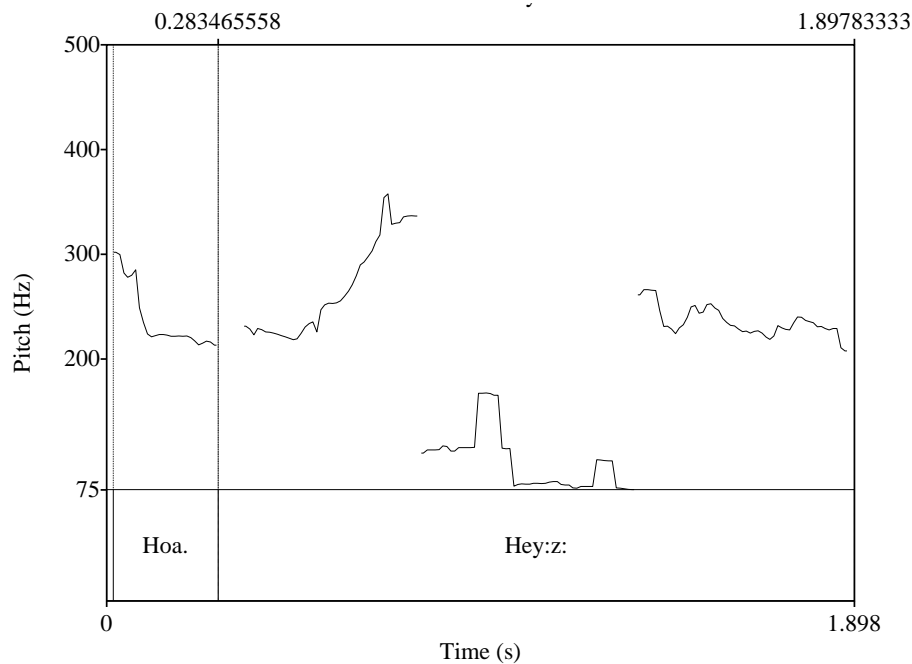
Example 6.12. “They [the girls] probably say it more than the boys” (Junior English, 05/15/09)

- 1 Dragon: I don't think we even realize how many times we say *hoa*.
- 2 Girl: Hoa.
- 3 Rico: And I mean, it's hard when we talk without saying that.
- 4 Aunty: I can't say *hey*; I cannot not say *hey*, if that makes sense.
- 5 Dragon: Or *okes*.
- 6 Nikki: Do you think, is there a difference, do you think the girls in the school say like *hey* or *heyz* or *okes*?
- 7 Aunty: They prob'ly say it more than the boys, but the boys still say it a lot.
- 8 Nikki: Yeah, the boys still say it a lot. That's kind of what I thought.
- 9 Dragon: I never really paid attention to it,
- 10 Nikki: [Yeah.
- 11 Dragon: [Because to me it's just regular [
- 12 Nikki: [Yeah.
- 13 Dragon: [Regular talk.
- 14 Nikki: Yeah. Tell me if you agree with this, it seems like the boys, say, like, a little bit louder and maybe a little bit longer? Do the boys say like “He:y”? Do they say that a little bit?
- 15 Dragon: Hoa, [(xxx)

- 16 Aunty: When they're tryin' to sound (smart) [but like
 17 Pedro: Like (Mike), he's like "HE:Y"
 18 Rico: Hoa.["Hey:z."
 19 (McLovin): [They probably say that, but they don't realize it, but they don't
 say it like, because that's when they try to tease us.
 20 Girl: Long.
 21 Dragon: Yeah longer.

When the girls reproduce the boys' way of saying *hey*: , it is longer and with stylized (in Ladd's, 1978, terms: varied) L*H, as the intonation shows.

Figure 6.7. "Hoa. Hey:z" (Line 18; Example 6.12)



Two boys similarly told me that the girls and boys say *hey* and *hoa* differently, by demonstrating that the girls say *hoa* shorter and they (jokingly) said it as “how” (in a high, breathy way).⁷⁶ Because *hoa*, *hey*, and *heyz* occur so frequently in teasing, an interesting area for future research would be to examine variable use of *hoa* and *hey* by girls and boys and gender-based differences in teasing styles.

⁷⁶ The girls are likely also presenting a joking or exaggerated stylization (in the sense of Coupland, 2007) of how the boys say “Hey:z.”

6.7. THE ETHNOLINGUISTIC REPERTOIRE: IDEOLOGIES

In contrast to their feelings toward Blackfoot and toward their language system as a whole in comparison to standard or mainstream English, the students' ideologies toward ethnically distinctive features of their English was relatively straightforward and positive.⁷⁷ The students essentialized or naturalized their distinctive L*H prosody and interjections as being part of them and valued the features as providing solidarity and in-group distinctiveness.⁷⁸

The use of *hoa* and L*H prosody was strongly associated with being Indian/Blackfeet and was contrasted with White ways of talking. For instance, Aunty told me that she went to an off-reservation, majority-White school, and when she came back, she said, "Like, if I said a joke, I'd be like, 'Hoa, I just jokes,' But when I came back from there, I'd just be like, 'I'm just kidding [kIdɪŋ]'" She said that when she said this, her friends looked at her "like really puzzled."

In a performance of "Native American" and "White" speech, the girl specifically contrasted the heavy use of L*H intonation to indicate being Blackfeet/Native American with a more H* or H*L pattern for White speech. In response to my interview question, "Have you noticed different accents or different ways people talk here or other places?" one of the girls gave the following response:

⁷⁷ I did not assess parent attitudes toward these features. One parent (who was Native and spent significant time in other indigenous communities, e.g., in Hawaii) told me that she tries to teach her kids "proper English" and does not want her kids to use *hoa* and *innit*.

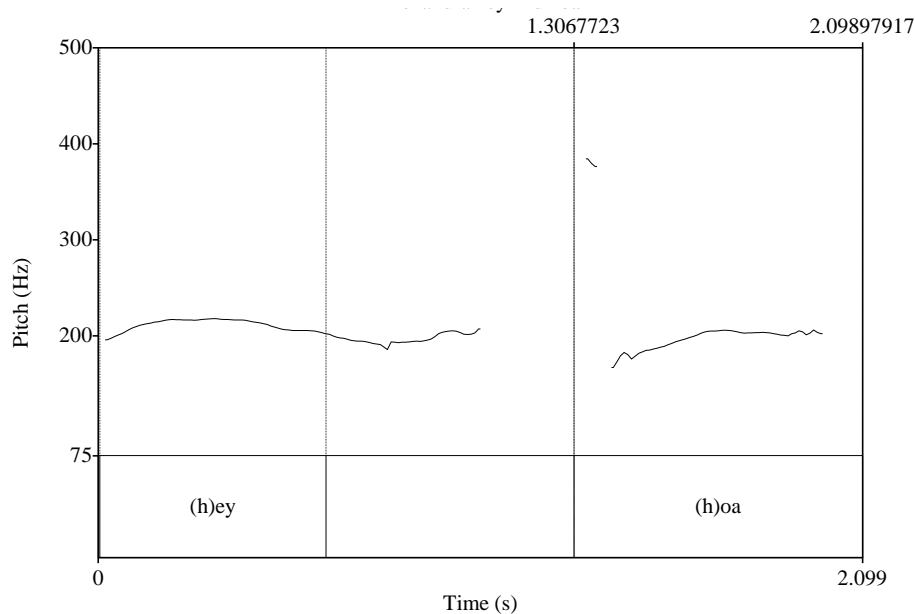
⁷⁸ Another ethnically distinctive feature that I do not analyze here is use of the glottal stop, although it was certainly identified as being ethnically distinctive. For instance, one day in English class, Aunty said, "Did you hear that? I just sounded like a White girl" when she said *shut-up* as [ʃʌɾʌp], which she then repeated with more of a [t] than a flap ([ʃʌɾʌp]) before then saying it with a glottal stop (i.e., the Blackfeet way): [ʃʌʔʌp].

Example 6.13. “Hey, My Grandma Is Makin’ Fry Bread” (Interview, Junior Girl, 05/22/09).

((girl laughs)) Yes, I have, um, here, it’s more like “(h)ey:” or “(h)oa:” ((yeah))... When I go, when I hear a Native American, any Native American really, ((mmhm)) and then go out into the, sorry, White world, ((mmhm)) y-you know, um, they talk more formal, they- they don’t really, you know, they have more bigger words and us, we’re like, completely different, I don’t know, (yeah)) you can really see- hear: “Hey, my grandma is makin’ fry bread,” you know, like that, yeah ((yeah)) and then like White people’d be like, “Yeah, my grandma’s making fry bread.” And, you know, so, completely ((yeah)) different ((yeah)).

First, note that she, like other students, strongly associates the interjections *(h)ey* and *(h)oa* with Native Americans, and her example of White speech uses *Yeah* as being equivalent with *Hey*. In “Here, it’s more like ‘(h)ey:’ or ‘(h)oa:’,” the interjections are spoken with a L-plateau intonation (L-L%; though *(h)ey* slightly lowers and *(h)oa* slightly raises).

Figure 6.8. ““(H)ey:’ or ‘(h)oa:”” (From Example 6.13)



These interjections are held relatively flat at the lower end of her pitch range (at about 200 Hz) and lengthened: .62 and .79 s, respectively. As a slight aside, not also that she

also uses “fry bread,” a pan-tribal dish that is iconic of Native American ethnicity, in these examples. The intonation, pitch ranges, and rate of speech is contrastive in these two stylizations, as the figures illustrate, below.

Figure 6.9. “Hey, my grandma is makin’ fry bread, you know” (From Example 6.13)

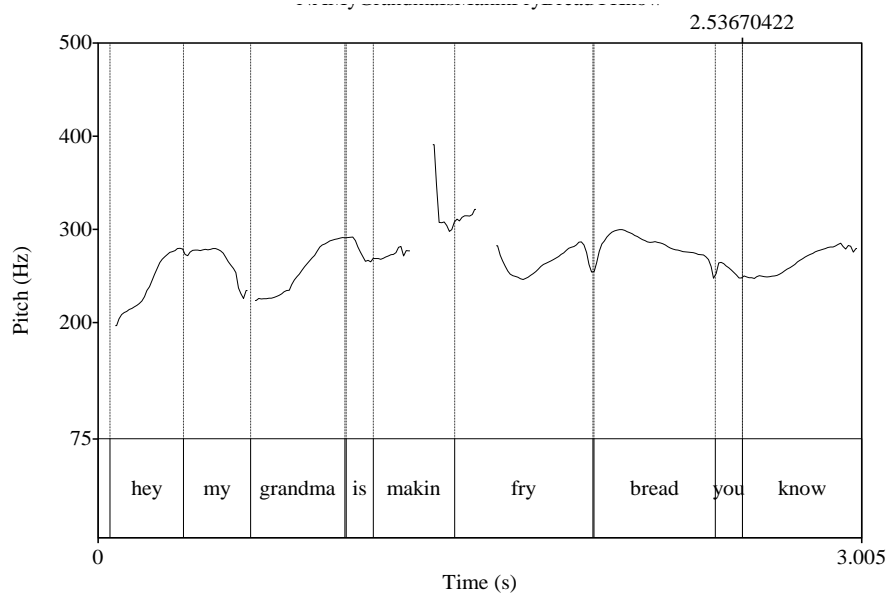
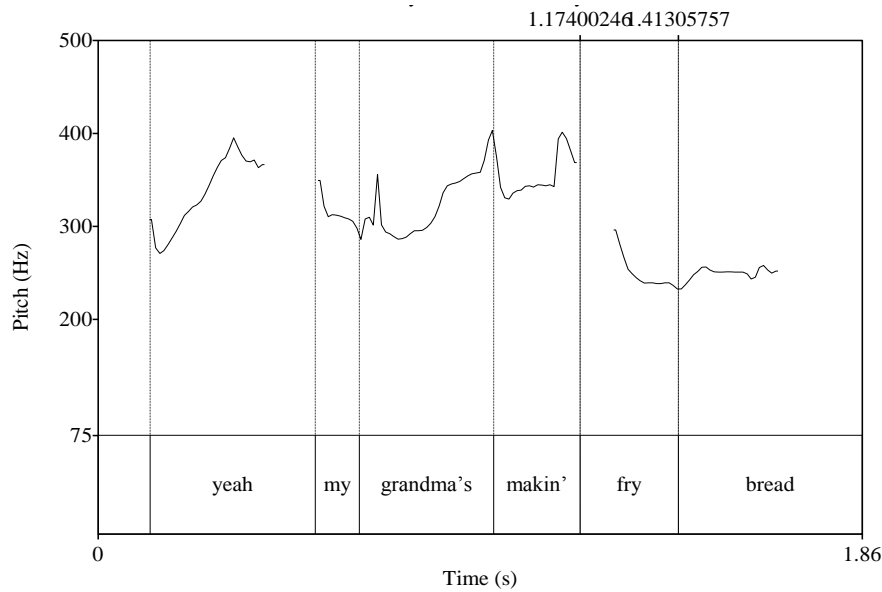


Figure 6.10. “Yeah, my grandma’s makin’ fry bread” (From Example 6.13)



In the Native American stylization, the pitch range is lower and smaller (mostly 200–300 Hz, with the exception of *makin*, compared with 250–400 Hz). Most strikingly, the intonation pattern is L*H, or a “scooped accent,” in the Native American example contrasted with a H* H* L L% pattern in the White example, and the speed of the Native American stylization is indeed slower than the White stylization (2.41s for the Native American version [excluding “you know”] compared with 1.67 s for the White version). Looking at *Hey*, it is L*H H%, whereas *Yeah* is LH*L%. Overall, the Native American version has L*H patterns, whereas the White version has H* and LH* patterns. In providing these contrasting stylizations, the girl conveys the importance of prosody and interjections⁷⁹ to indexing Native American and White speech, and the ideological dimension of this indexing is to show the two groups as being “completely different” (as well as other qualities she might ascribe to Native Americans vs. Whites).

One avenue of thought in linguistics asserts that some types of prosodic variation may be cultural emblems (Sperber, 1996; Origgi & Sperber, 2000; both as cited in Wilson & Wharton, 2006, and drawing on Ladd, 1978). In my study, the ways in which interjections (at least *hoa*) appear to have sedimented over time (dating back to at least the late 1800s), and the intertwinedness of these interjections, L*H prosody, Blackfeet ethnicity, and teasing seem to point to this type of prosody as being iconic of being Blackfeet and Blackfeet culture—features that may have resettled during and after radical language shift (a point I return to in Chapter 7).

As described below by Dance McAliber, the interjections and elongated sounds emblemize the social and natural landscape of Gopher Peaks.

⁷⁹ Because the meaning of interjections is tied to prosody, it is not surprising that these appear in tandem in indexing group identity.

Example 6.14. “The natural SOUND of things around here.” (Interview, 11/20/08)

It’s not, like how I’m talking right now, I’m talking very STRUCTURED. The way you use your SLANG in Blackfeet is, it’s kinda like elongated, I would say? You know, like hoa, hoa, innit? Okes, you see that? You see how it kinda carries out? THAT’S how it’s used. And you’ll see that, and that’s where the accent kinda jumps in. And plus, it’s like the natural, the natural SOUND of things around here, you know, I mean, like, *you know*.

In this example, the first *hoa* has a very flat, low intonation that trails off at the end; the second *hoa* is shorter and still low and flat; *innit* has rising intonation, and *okes* raises.

The students also used the distinctiveness of their interjections as a source of in-group humor, as the excerpt from an interview with two freshman girls, below, demonstrates.

Example 6.15. “You just called me a ho!” (Interview, Two Freshman Girls, 10/22/08,)

- 1 Ali: I went to this camp, and I’ll talk my slang and tell like a, jokes around here, and the people don’t get ‘em [(xxx).
- 2 Molly: [Yeah, like if I go, “Hoa, this guy.”
- 3 And then they’ll be like, “What, I’m not a guy! Why’d you call me aho?”
- 4 And then (I’ll be) like, “Hoa, not even!”
- 5 Ali: [“Hoa, hoa this one!”
- 6 Molly: I know, ha. “What?” [(sah).
- 7 Ali: [“You just called me a ho!”
- 8 “No I didn’t!”
- 9 Molly: “Ha, whatever!” Hey.
- 10 Ali: It’s fun. (xxx) “Behave!”
- 11 Molly: ((laughs)) Ha, I know.
- 12 Ali: (xxx) “Don’t tell me to BEHAVE!”
- 13 Molly: ((laughing)) Yeah, when we go to this town—[
- 14 Ali: “For reals, stop it—“
- 15 Molly: ((laughs.)) I know.
- 16 Ali: “Don’t call me a *ho*!”
- 17 Molly: ((laughs)) And then, like, I don’t know, they’ll just like, at us, “Why do you talk like that?”
- 18 “Hoa, I don’t know, I was born like this.” Hey.
- 19 Ali: Just like you, born with that sweater, I was born with this [slang.
- 20 Molly: [Yeah.
- 21 Ali: [You wore that sweater, I wore slang.

In contrasting *ho* and *hoa*, the girls share in-group knowledge of *hoa* and delight in that others do not understand it (or the particular connotations of their use of *behave*; Lines 10 and 12). The girls are playing with interethnic variation, using it as a source of in-group humor. At the end of this excerpt, the girls describe being born with their slang (and they allude to the equivalence of speaking styles and clothing styles). At an earlier point in this interview, Ali similarly described, “You’re born with it. It’s like you’re born with your, with like, ears, that’s the way you’re born with slang.”

As another example of *hoa* and in-group solidarity and identity, a girl told me a humorous story in which she similarly plays on the homophony of *hoa* and *ho* and in-group understanding:

Example 6.16. “Hoa, no, I’m not callin’ you a ho!” (Interview, 11/03/08)

- 1 [Yeah. ((laughs)) And then, um, this one time we were in Great Falls, and I was visiting my friend, and then here I went, “Hoa, who you with?”
- 2 And uh, she was, “Oh, my friend, and she was like, ‘Genu- GenuINE White girl, she didn’t know what you were talking about.’”
- 3 And she’s like, “She just called me a ho!”
- 4 “Huh-hoa, that’s just rude, I didn’t call you a ho”
- 5 “Huh-hoa, hey now”
- 6 “You don’t gotta-”
- 7 She’s like, “You called me a ho!”
- 8 “Hoa, no, I’m not callin’ you a ho!”
- 9 ((Nikki laughs))
- 10 And here, that, my friend goes, “Shut up!”
- 11 ((laughs))
- 12 (xxx) It’s not, “Don’t talk, don’t talk more, because you use those words too much.”
- 13 I’d be like, “Oke, that’s mea:n.”

Aside from the fairly direct commentary in Line 2 about there being something quintessentially White about White people not understanding Blackfeet ways of talking, she also uses *huh-hoa* [hɛ.ho] as her own unique production of *hoa*, that is, with the syllable [hɛ] before *hoa*, and she says *oke* without an [s] at the end. In an interview, she

explained to me that she uses *huh-hoa* in the same way as *hoa*: Like if you say, ‘Hu-hoa, that’s mean,’ you’re sayin’ that don’t really like the word, that you don’t really like what they’re tellin’ ya.”

Other attitudes toward the distinctiveness of the student’s (and community’s) ethnolinguistic repertoire include thinking of *okes* as being superlocal. As Dance McAliber described: “*Okes* originates from here, not [another town on the reservation], not [a different town on the reservation].” The strong association of *okes* with being from Gopher Peaks also illustrates its value as an index of superlocal identity.

The students saw use of these interjections as also conveying something essential about being Indian: Being funny, as the example below demonstrates.

Example 6.17. “Hoa, but she really talked Indian” (Junior English, 05/15/09)

- 1 Dragon (to Nikki): You should have been here to record that lady yesterday. [
- 2 Nikki: [Oh, why?
- 3 Dragon: [Hoa, but she REALLY talked Indian cause like, almost after every sentence she said, it was like practically a joke, when she’d tell a joke, [
- 4 Nikki: [Oh, really?
- 5 Dragon: [and then everything after her joke, she’d be like, “He:yz, <I was just jokin>” or, “I was just kiddin” she said, “I was just kiddin’
- 6 Aunty: [(she wouldn’t even be smiling and she’d be like “hey:z” and “I was just kiddin’”)
- 7 Dragon: [Hey:z” and “I’m just kiddin’”]

Here, “talking Indian” is equated with humor, with telling jokes—and this humor and joking was not communicated with smiling or laughing but in a specific linguistically Indian way, through *hey:z*.

6.8. A DETAILED LOOK AT INTERJECTIONS, THE SCOOPED ACCENT, AND IN-GROUP MEMBERSHIP

To examine more in-depth the sociocultural functions of the ethnolinguistic repertoire, I examine an interaction among a close group of friends. In this example, the

students frequently use *hoa* and a L*H accent in their discussion about playing the game Twister together recently.

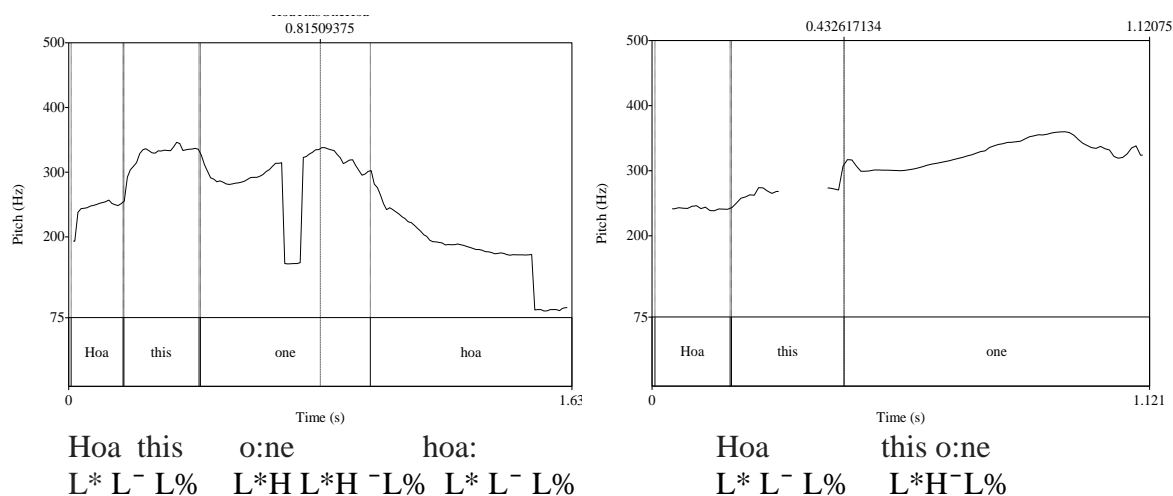
Example 6.18. “Twister” (Junior English, 05/20/09)

- 1 (McLovin): Hey, where’s that Twister game?
- 2 Dragon: I don’t know (xxx) they prob’ly just bought it.
- 3 (McLovin): I want to play it again.
- 4 Dragon: That was fun, huh?
- 5 (Aunty/McLovin): <Hoa>, ((girl)), “<I can’t stand (up)!>” ((laughter))
- 6 Fogal: I think that’s why I got so sore was playing that.
- 7 McLovin: I know, hoa
- 8 (Aunty): (xxx runnin’ around)
- 9 McLovin: Hoa, I just got a bunch of bruises from being on that
[(xxx)]
- 10 (Aunty/McLovin): [Hoa, this one, ho:a
- 11 Alexandra: Hoa, this o:ne
- 12 Fogal: Wh:a:t
- 13 (McLovin): Pushed me, hoa, I just hit the floo:r
- 14 Fogal: ((laughs)) Hoa, you pushed me too, and (I jus’ xxx)
- 15 (McLovin): But you had cushion, ho:a
- 16 Fogal: Hoa, whatever, I jus’ about hit the ground, and ((girl))
was behind me, ho:a
- 17 Alexandra: You fell, and you were tryin’ to throw the ball at me, and
you were by the door?
- 18 Rico: ((To Denver)) I’m done.
- 19 Fogal: [Hoa, yea, slipped (xxx).
- 20 Rico: ((To Denver)) I don’t know if it was good, but (yeah)
- 21 Aunty: Hoa, ((girl)) fell, huh?
- 22 Fogal: Hoa, she really fell in that doorway
- 23 Alexandra: Hoa, I seen, hoa, I seen it, hoa I just heard it.

More clearly here than in other examples, *hoa* is used to trigger and clarify a play frame; because the girls are talking about pushing each other, the frequent use of *hoa* helps them to communicate that they are accusing each other in a light-hearted way. It also both indexes and creates in-group identity, so using it here also helps to lighten the accusations. (Note also the use of *seen* [Line 23], a feature of Plains English [Antieau, 2003] and in Leap’s [2003] description of American Indian English).)

Typical of its usage, *hoa* was mostly said with L* intonation, with the exception of the second *hoa* in Line 10, as indicated in Figure 6.11 (left panel), which has a more dramatic drop to indicate disapproval (as does the *hoa* in Line 16). A notable feature of Lines 10 and 11 is the stylized intonation on “one,” as seen in Figures 6.12 and 6.13.

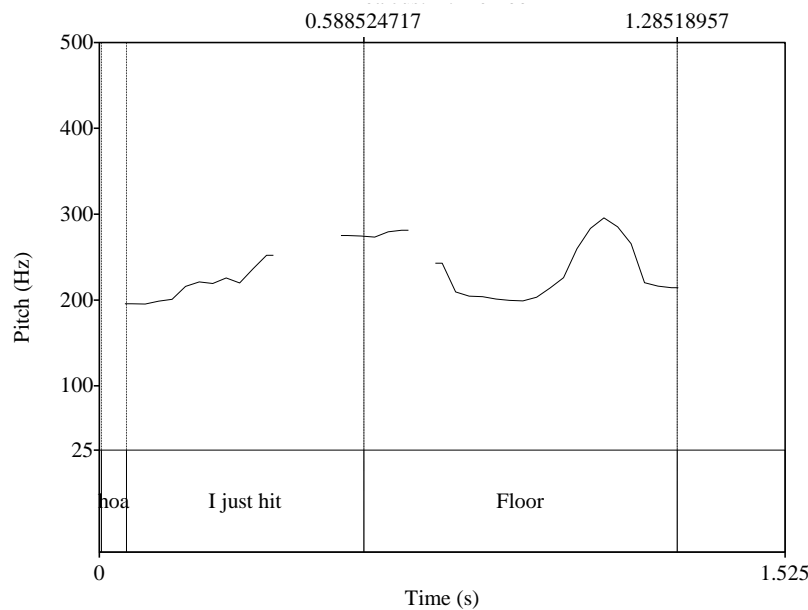
Figure 6.11. “Hoa, this one, ho:a” (Line 10) and “Hoa, this o:ne” (Line 11) (From Example 6.18)



Alexandra repeats or returns Aunty/McLovin’s stylized “one,” antiphonically, that is, it is a form of intonational call-and-response. This poetic use of intonation has the pragmatic function of bringing attention to what Fogal did—pushed someone during Twister.

Another notable aspect of this excerpt is that it is heavily L*H. One of the many examples of L*H intonation is “floor” in the figure below.

Figure 6.12. “Hoa, I just hit the floo:r” (Line 13; Example 6.18)



Use of this intonation, like *hoa* similarly works to reflect and create in-group identity, also helping to lighten the accusations of pushing.

The L*H prosody used here is also the prosody of the lengthened interjections used so frequently in teasing. As I described in 4.3.1, teasing discourses become sedimented over time as they circulate in a community—the linguistic and paralinguistic elements (interjections, prosody) of these teases also become sedimented through their association with teasing. For instance, just as Alexandra amplifies Aunty/Fogal’s stylized intonation in “this one,” the L*H prosody could similarly be learned/mimicked in the community to sediment in its association with teasing and Indianness.

6.9. THE TEACHER’S ETHNIC SPEECH STYLIZATIONS

In this section, I describe the teacher’s stylizations (in the sense of Coupland, 2007, as I described in Chapter 2: That is, the projection personae that may or may not be present, using well-known identity repertoires) of ethnic social types—that is, how the teacher draws on the Blackfeet ethnolinguistic repertoires to construct stereotypical

personae. In this section, I describe the teacher's humorous stylizations of the students as its meaning emerges in interaction.

In his Blackfeet-speech stylization, below, he uses the students' ethnically distinctive features of rate of speech, lengthening, interjections, and lexical items; in his White stylization, he uses nasalization prominently. Below, Mr. Denver urges the students to talk in their "Blackfeet dialect" into my recorder and then stylizes their speech himself in his playful construction of a classroom dialogue.⁸⁰

Example 6.19. "Okes, just behave, this o:ne." (Junior English, 05/08)

- 1 Denver: ((Whispering)) Say a bunch of Blackfeet dialect.
- 2 Aunty: Hm?
- 3 Denver: Be like, "Idnnit, idnnit, okes."⁸¹
- 4 Girls: ((laugh))
- 5 Denver: ((nasally)) "So what do you think about this book so far, ((Aunty))?"
- 6 Girls: ((laugh))
- 7 Denver: "O:kes."
- 8 Aunty: Hey, "okes."
- 9 Girls: ((laugh))
- 10 Aunty: Hoa, Hey, "okes," hoa. (3.0 s) YOU say sozin'
- 11 Dragon: Hoa, innit?
- 12 Aunty: Go in there and say, uh-[
- 13 Denver: [Hoa, idnnit. This book is just plum piss:y
- 14 Girls: ((Laugh))
- 15 Aunty: Yeah, say like-
- 16 Denver: ((nasally)) ["What did I say about talking in class, Tom?"
- 17 "Uh, be quie:t, okes."
- 18 Aunty: You should say, "Okes just behave."
- 19 Denver: "Okes, just beha:ve, this o:ne."
- 20 Aunty: ((laughs)) Hey, "this one." ((laughs))

In his Native stylizations, he uses a generally lower and smaller pitch range than his usual range and in his White stylization range; he uses *hey*, *okes*, *innit*, *plum*, *pissy*, and *this one*, which the girls laugh at and repeat in recognition (Lines 8, 10, 20), as well

⁸⁰ I analyze this in terms of stylization rather than in terms of "constructed dialogue" (Tannen, 1989; see also Chun & Podesva, 2010).

⁸¹ Mr. Denver includes a [d] in *innit*, which the students do not.

as lengthening of /s/ (Line 13) and vowels (Lines 7, 19). He does not use any L*H intonation, but he does use the L* and trailing off intonation I described for Figures 6.1 and 6.2, an intonation which signals negative evaluation. These features, together, index Blackfeet ethnicity (macro-level, or n th-order indexing, following Silverstein, 2003). At the meso- and micro-level (or $n + 1$ orders), these features index the students' "student personae" and their associated stances (as Mr. Denver sees them)—specifically, their negative evaluation of both (a) classroom discourse and (b) his expectations of them. Additionally, the indexicality depends on both the linguistic form and content of these stylizations (E. Moore & Podesva, 2009); that is, it depends on the frequent use of features from the students' ethnolinguistic repertoire combined with the content of their speech in the constructed dialogue (e.g., saying "okes" to indicate negative evaluation and that something is not serious; declaring the book "plum pissy").

Although Mr. Denver is portraying a negative characterization of the student, the students interpret his stylization as humorous (even if negative) and it does not have the kind of ridiculing aspect that Chun (2007) describes for stylized mocking. Rather, it skirts the line between a mocking display and an affectionate display: It is thus a kind of playful aggression, paralleling the students' passive aggressive teasing of him. In this stylization, he is dramatizing the cultural differences in the classroom—using nasalization and a comparatively faster speech to present himself as a marked White social type (nerd; see Bucholtz, 2001) with authoritarian expectations ("What did I say about talking in class, Tom?") and using many features of the students' ethnolinguistic repertoire to present the students as a group as misbehaving Blackfeet. Further, because the students and teacher have some degree of social intimacy and he is not explicitly placing a value judgment on their language—unlike when he tells them that "*hurted* is only a word on the

reservation”⁸²—this stylization is seen as playful, even affectionate, at the same time that there is an aggressive or hostile element to it (i.e., he is “voicing” his dissatisfaction with classroom dynamics). The students find it humorous in part because of, as Chun (2007) describes, “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)” (p. 13).

Mr. Denver’s stylizing the students’ language is a way of teasing the students and, as I described for his teasing of them in Chapter 4, enables him to demonstrate his understanding of them and their culture (while also communicating his evaluations of them as students). As a similar example of Mr. Denver stylizing the students to show an understanding of their values, one day when I had my 14-month-old daughter with me at school, Mr. Denver was describing to the students something that scared her.

Example 6.20. “She’s on the Rez:” (Freshman English, 05/07/09)

- 1 (Boy): That baby start cryin’?
- 2 Mr. Denver: No, she’s tough.
- 3 (Boy): ((laughs))
- 4 Mr. Denver: She’s on the Rez:
- 5 (Boy): °((laughs))°

In Line 4, Mr. Denver final-lengthens the [z],⁸³ a distinctive Blackfeet feature, which is a second-order indexing of the Blackfeet valuing of toughness. Here, he uses one of the same features—lengthening—as he used in the previous example and whereas it indexes (*n*th-order) Blackfeet ethnicity in both instances, here it indexes the (*n*th+1) value of toughness.

⁸² I observed the teacher referring to *hurt* twice in this manner; I did not hear him otherwise describe or devalue their linguistic practices.

⁸³ Mr. Denver did not otherwise stylize his speech (e.g., he did not alter his intonation to a L* or L*H pattern).

As one final example, and one that involves both students and the teacher stylizing stereotypical Native personae, the junior girls asked Mr. Denver to tell them a story (as a way to distract him from the lesson).

Example 6.21. “Two moons ago. Hey” (Junior English, 05/05/09)

- 1 Mr. Denver: I don’t have any stories.
- 2 Rico: How about, “This one time, at Ind’n Days.” He:y.
- 3 Everyone: ((laughs))
- 4 Aunty: Instead of, instead of two years ago, “Two Indian Days ago”
- 5 (Girl): Hey.
- 6 Mr. Denver: “(Many) Ind’ns ago. Hey.”
- 7 Rico: “Two moons ago. Hey.”

The students and the teacher collaborate on a joke and teasing, accomplished in part through Mr. Denver’s stylization of a stereotypical Native storyteller, building on Aunty and Rico’s utterance. As Chun (2007; reviewing Coupland, 2001) discusses, stylization is an act of dis-identity (p. 1), or a deauthenticating practice, in which “although stylizers employ a style *as if* it were their own, they simultaneously ‘deauthenticate’ (347) themselves through the implicit artificiality of the display” (p. 9). Here, the students are teasing Mr. Denver *as if* he was a teenager at Indian Days; Mr. Denver builds on this tease by using features from the students’ ethnolinguistic repertoire to stylize himself *as if* he were a Native at Indian Days. Another interesting aspect of this excerpt is the way in which Rico Indianizes a meme from popular culture to tease Mr. Denver. That is, in Line 2, “This one time, at Ind’n Days” quotes the line “This one time, at band camp” from the movie *American Pie*, which (in the meme) is “used to start off the description of any random, usually kinky or otherwise appalling sexual act” (urbandictionary.com). One final minor point, Rico acknowledges Mr. Denver’s playing with the stereotype of the wise Native storyteller in their “(Many) Ind’ns ago” by saying “Two moons ago” (Line

7). This student–teacher teasing, like the teasing I discussed in Chapter 4, creates rapport between the students and teacher.

6.10. CONCLUSION

The students’ ethnolinguistic repertoire in the classroom provides resources not only for indexing identity but also for humor, teasing, and to create and display socioculturally meaningful personae and stances. This repertoire is used in the humor I described in Chapters 4 and 5—that is, they use *hoa* and other distinctive features as contextualization cues, to convey their attitudes and evaluations, and to create group cohesiveness in teasing the teacher. Likewise, the teacher uses features of the student’s ethnolinguistic repertoire in the stylization to accomplish his own interactional goals, that is to both display affection for the students and to implicitly criticize their classroom behavior.

The analysis in this chapter shows the ways in which the students’ language “points in multiple directions at once” (Samuels, 2004, p. 8), which can be traced to the students’ history and current practices. Use of ethnically distinctive features intertwined with regionally distinctive features can be traced to the students’ current position as Blackfeet and Montanans (e.g., use of *hoa* alongside *seen* in simple past contexts; Ex 6.17), and their language use indexes and creates them as such (see also discussion of Biolsi, Chapter 5, and “We’re Montanans” [Ex. 5.3]). Participation in both heritage and mainstream cultural activities also provides them with resources that point in both of these directions at once—for instance, in Rico’s combining “This one time, at band camp” with “Indian Days” in 6.19.

Regarding culture and language variation and change, the students use *hoa* (from Blackfoot) even as they are not fluent Blackfoot speakers. Furthermore, it is interesting

that its function is similar to what it was 150 years ago (and may have expanded to heavy use in teasing and joking)—and that it does a lot of the “work” of culture (i.e., signals an important cultural activity like teasing). This suggests that certain linguistic forms might be more tied to a group’s culture than others. As Beardsmore (1986, as cited in Agar, 1991) discusses, “Much of the friction across different linguistic communities can arise out of situations where speakers of two languages have acquired two sets of linguistic patterns but then proceed to use the second set with the cultural values of the first” (p. 173). In these situations, there are “rich points” (Agar, 1991)—points that are so tied to a communities’ culture that they cannot be simply “lifted out” (Agar, 1991, p. 176; see also Still Smoking, 1999, who discusses how Indian languages are “well attuned to Indian ways of life and Indian value systems. English cannot be used to describe these concepts and thoughts. English is incapable of expressing these values because the connotations would not be the same”). My analysis suggests that the interjection *hoa* (and possibly *hey*), tied as it is to the culturally important activity of teasing, is a “rich point” and is thus retained through radical language shift and used in teasing. Related to this, future research could show whether and how some of the substratum influence of Blackfoot may be seen in a community’s ethnolinguistic repertoire, “provid[ing] speakers with stylistic options that not only structure discourse, but also add a special community flavor” (Mithun, 1992, pp. 113–114).

Finally, in this chapter, I showed that the students’ ethnolinguistic repertoire is similar to what Webster (e.g., 2010b, 2011, 2012a) describes as *intimate grammars* in his investigations of Navajo, Navajo English, and Navlish: “Linguistic forms and ways of speaking ... that ... have felt attachments to, which are ‘satisfying’ to some degree and yet are, also, simultaneously marginalized ways of speaking in relation to some dominant expectations” (Webster, 2012b, p. 187, drawing on Povinelli, 1986, and Herzfeld, 1997).

Additionally, I showed the ways some of these linguistic forms index Blackfeet ethnicity, group identity, and associated qualities (e.g., toughness). In other words, the ethnically distinctive features are heavily relied on for sociocultural expression and for producing in-group identity and solidarity. This too suggests that not all parts of “a language” are valued equally or used equally socioculturally. In the next chapter, I discuss what this means in terms of language shift.

Chapter 7: Summary and Conclusion

In this dissertation, I examined humor and teasing among Blackfeet students and between the students and their White, nonlocal English teacher. I also examined the use of micro-level linguistic features used in the students' linguistic and sociocultural practices. My ethnographic approach relied on the students' and teacher's understanding of these practices, as well as my own impressions and observations. My empirical focus was on how meanings emerged both in interaction and over time, as well as how the students' linguistic ideologies were related to their linguistic practices through their ethnolinguistic repertoire. I analyzed teasing as a cultural activity among the students, the teacher's immersion and adaptation to that culture, and the affective and cultural importance of the ethnolinguistic repertoire to the students. I discuss these findings from Chapters 4 through 6 in more detail below and conclude the chapter with a discussion of implications and future directions.

7.1. REVIEW OF FINDINGS

In this work, I followed the work on the ideology of schooling analyzes "*how* schools sustain and produce ideologies as well as *how* individuals and groups in concrete relationships negotiate, resist, or accept them" (Giroux, 1981, p. 22). That is, I looked at the concrete, "daily classroom social relationships" (in Giroux's, 1981, terms) between the students and their English teacher and showed that teasing and humor was a group strategy of resistance to mainstream educational practices and expectations. Through teasing, the students contested mainstream educational practices of the teacher as the authoritarian voice in the class as they negotiated a participant structure in which "the students control and direct the interaction" (Phillips, 1972, p. 379) to a stronger degree. As Vine, Kell, Marra, and Holmes (2009) describe, "humor is one of a wide variety of

linguistic and pragmatic strategies available to those 'out of power' to construct a positive identity, and also to subvert the pervasive influence of the dominant group by testing, stretching, and contesting normative boundaries” (p. 125). The Blackfeet students were “out of power” in two senses: They were the students in the classroom, and they are marginalized Americans in a school system whose ideological goal is to assimilate them. Teasing provided the students an avenue to critique their marginalized position, in addition to critiquing the teacher’s expectations of them and to change the classroom discourse. The passive-aggressive element to their teasing in these critiques allowed them to deliver, in Bateson’s (1972) terms, a nip that denotes a bite but “does not denote what would be denoted by the bite” (p. 180).

Likewise, the teacher, as an ethnic and cultural outsider, was also “out of power” culturally. After learning culturally appropriate teasing through cultural immersion, he was able to use humor and teasing as a way to move his lessons forward. He gained this competence in part through engaging with the students in their ritualistic teasing practices, enculturation that followed a trajectory in which the students and teacher grew to know each other through teasing. One area I did not explore in depth is the ways that the teacher used teasing and joking to acknowledge and play with his ideological role in the school, for instance, when he once joked to the students who were hanging out in the hallway, “Come Over to the White Side” (in a voice meant to sound like Darth Vader), to get them to come into the classroom. The teacher and students thus used teasing and humor to express affection, play with the roles of “teacher” and “student,” and accomplish their interactional goals. The students teased the teacher both because they liked and respected him and because it was an avenue to power in the classroom. My study would be strengthened with more ethnographic work in the community to better

understand cross-generational teasing and local constructions of authority to see how student–teacher interactions fit in with these patterns.

Chapter 5 provides additional background and context for the linguistic practices examined in Chapter 6. Specifically, In Chapter 5 I first discuss the ways that ideologies of group distinctiveness both reflect and are created by Indian Laws (Biolsi, 2001) and the sociopolitical position of being both United States citizens and foreign nationals. In this chapter I also show how group ideologies (e.g., of toughness) are related to personae construction. For instance, I showed how in interactions with the teacher (Ex. 5.33), Aunty constructs a tough personae through both drawing on and projecting toughness as a value. This and other group values are promulgated through humor and teasing. I also discuss the ways in which the students disarticulate, articulate, and rearticulate (Clifford, 2001, 2003) their identity in relationship to their history, their sociopolitical positioning, and stereotypes of Native Americans and other dominant ideologies.

Chapter 6 builds on some of the themes of Chapters 4 and 5—specifically, how ideologies of distinction are related to linguistic practices and the role of the students’ ethnolinguistic repertoire in their humor. The chapter shows that the students valorized distinctive features of their ethnolinguistic repertoire (interjections, prosodic features of scooped accent and a relatively slower cadence) as being iconic of their group culture and values. I also demonstrated that these ethnically distinctive features could be considered the anchoring points for cultural expression, or “rich points” (Agar, 1991). That is, the students heavily relied on their in-group use and understanding of interjections (e.g., *hoa* and *hey*) and scooped-accent pitch in teasing each other and in the circulation of this discourse as culture. These distinctive features also were focal points for stylistic, aesthetic, and sociocultural variation among the students. For instance, I described one of the girl’s intonational variation in *yay* in Ex. 6.8 and the girls’ stylized intonation of

“one” in 6.17. In both instances, these stylizations are rhetorical and poetic devices (Sherzer, 2002) in the sense that they play with the intonational possibilities of lengthening to achieve a pragmatic purpose: conveying emotion, evaluation, and shaping the listener’s understanding. Example 6.18 also showed the ways in which the students mirrored each other’s intonation (stylized variation in elongation and L*H pitch accents)—a micro-example of the interrelationships of language and culture. That is, the antiphony in this example strengthens the association of L*H intonation, interjections, and teasing, patterns that settle in the community. These distinctive features were also used stylistically in the sense of recent sociolinguistic work on “style” (e.g., Eckert, 2008; Coupland, 2007): They were used variably by the students in producing and indexing different ways of being Blackfeet.

7.2. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Especially regarding frequency and contexts of use of ethnically distinctive features within the community, findings from this dissertation would be nicely complemented by (a) quantitative analysis (see Sharma, 2012) and (b) a closer look at the indexical values of these features (in the manner of, e.g., E. Moore & Podesva, 2009). Many of my observations of frequency of use were impressionistic; quantitative analysis could verify these impressions. Additional linguistic features that could be analyzed quantitatively include word-medial glottal stop (which seemed to be used more frequently by the boys than the girls); glottal-stop lengthening before voiceless stops; and syllable-final lengthening of vowels and alveolar fricatives. This kind of approach could also look in more detail at different ways of constructing femininity and masculinity as defined by the community. Related to this, future work could examine relationships

between gender, linguistic practices, and the extent to which there are gender-based styles and functions of teasing.

7.3. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study follows calls to examine the roles of linguistic ideologies in linguistic practices (e.g., Gal & Irvine, 1995; Kroskrity, 2010) as well as those that call for attention to the microlevel linguistic practices in communities undergoing language shift (e.g., Webster). This study also aims to help researchers gain a better understanding of language shift by placing it “within a broader framework of expressive and symbolically used linguistic variation” (Gal, 1979, p. 3; as cited in Hornberger & Coronel-Molina, 2004, p. 9, and King, 2001, p. 17).

My sociolinguistic and ethnographic approach to the students’ language showed the important role of ideologies and sociocultural identification (e.g., Le Page & Tabouret-Keller, 1985) in language variation and change, a role undervalued in some approaches (e.g., Labov, 2001, who is mainly concerned with frequencies of interactions, and Trudgill, 2008; see discussion in Sharma, 2012). These approaches would predict that the new or emerging “dialect” of English that is developing in the Blackfeet community would, through accommodation and leveling and depending on the frequency of contact with other English speakers, move closer to mainstream English. However, the students’ language use shows that that does not seem to be what is happening: Instead, the students’ language seems to be becoming more divergent with that of Whites in the area.⁸⁴

Language variation and change within and after radical language shift have different natures than other types of contact-induced language variation and change, in

⁸⁴ Parallels to this phenomenon are debated with regard to African American English (e.g., Butters, 1989)

part because in the former, the target language is first learned in formal settings (i.e., boarding schools) and then in untutored, “natural” settings (Winford, 2003, pp. 15–16, p. 253), there is a shorter period of bilingual speakers, and during the shift there may be less group contact between groups of (for example) native English speakers and those acquiring English. Winford (2003) outlines structural factors in language shift, for instance, whether the target language and a group’s native language are structurally similar; in the case of radical language shift (as defined by Woodbury, 1998, and the case for my data), the languages are from different language families and are not structurally similar and language learners will “create compromises” between the two languages’ grammars “or other innovations that have no exact counterparts in either of the ... languages” (p. 251). Winford discusses social factors as the primary determiners of which (in this case) heritage language elements are selected as, or new innovations created for, the new vernacular (p. 252). My analysis points to the importance of these sociocultural factors in the selection of these elements. Regarding the sociocultural factor of language ideologies, in my study, the students had a clear idea of what “sounding White” and “sounding Indian” were, and because of the history of White oppression, their contemporary experiences with racism, their continued social isolationism, and their cultural pride, they do not want to sound White and thus place higher value on distinctive features of their ethnolinguistic repertoire. Running parallel to this is that certain long-standing linguistic–cultural practices (i.e., teasing) were necessarily disrupted when the linguistic code was disrupted (following, e.g., Woodbury, 1998). As Ayoungman-Clifton (1995) describes for Siksika, “In translating Siksika into English and English into Siksika, for example, it is not merely the use of equivalent words that is difficult; in order to have equivalent meanings, the translation must deal with many subtle aspects of the culture” (p. 15). English and Siksika (or, in the case of my study, Southern Piegan

Blackfoot) are not “interchangeable, contentless vehicles for social expression” (Woodbury, 1998, p. 237). As Ayoungman-Clifton closes her article with, language and culture (in the case of my study, teasing and humor discourses as culture) that are so “intertwined that the two cannot be separated” (p. 21)—when the language changes, so too do the cultural practices. My study points to the importance of social evaluation and cultural expression as an explanatory tool in this language variation and change. That is, I showed that the students’ humor is an important part of their culture—humor discourses constitute their culture and are specifically Blackfeet, sedimented over time. Further, this “sedimented” metaphor fits nicely with Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s (1985) description of the way linguistic forms become (or settle) into patterned usages in a more focused way over time and the important role of speaker creativity and agency in this process. Such patterns include the ways in which the Blackfeet community variably draws on ethnically distinctive forms for intergroup and intragroup distinctions and persona constructions, creating and reinforcing the indexical function of language, especially through humor and teasing.

To “restructure” (Woodbury, 1993, p. 14) (or “resettle,” to continue the sedimentation metaphor) the cultural practice of teasing, it seems to me that the students’ language use shows transfers from the heritage language and innovations in the linguistic code that fit their sociocultural needs. That is, the way English is (re)settling in their communication is closely tied to the needs of their cultural practices and thus the interjection *hoa* (and possibly *hey*) have been retained through language shift. *Hoa* (and other interjections) is a form-dependent expression that encodes emotional stances and attitudes, which often do not get translated across languages (Woodbury, 1998, as discussed in Wyman, p. 192), so these interjections have been retained (and are perhaps relied on to a greater degree) to carry on the cultural tradition of teasing. Indeed, *hoa*’s

use and L*H intonation of other interjections (e.g., *he:y*, *yay:z*) seems to be changing among younger generations: That is, younger people use *hoa* more frequently and lengthen interjections more than older people do (as the students reported). To substantiate these claims, research would need to compare, for instance, (a) the structure of Blackfoot with the students' current linguistic practices and (b) linguistic elements in teasing among older Blackfoot speakers and among the few young, fluent Blackfoot speakers in the community.

My study could potentially add to the theoretical linguistics literature on the nature of interjections with regard to where they fall on the showing–saying continuum (Wharton, 2003), to what degree they are cultural (e.g., Sperber, 1995), and the ways in which interjections interact with prosody. A more detailed look at the interjections and prosody would be needed in order to contribute to these areas of linguistics.

Regarding American Indians and education, my study points to the importance of educational practices that “cultivate a sense of collective agency, both to curb the excesses of dominant power and to revitalize indigenous communities” (Grande, 2004, p. 29). The students gained agency in the classroom through teasing. Mr. Denver, too, recognized the cultural gap between the students' home culture and school culture (Ex. 4.26) and how that made it difficult for him as a teacher and for the Blackfeet youth as students. Both he and community members felt that there was a cultural disconnect between what students at Gopher Peaks School needed and Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) policy demanded (see also Still Smoking, 1997, 1999). For instance, one middle-age Blackfeet man I interviewed said that “OPI doesn't understand the kids,” and Mr. Denver told me that in an OPI training seminar, the teachers were told that “humor has no place in the classroom.” This dissertation demonstrates how important,

even central, using humor is in Blackfeet classrooms, perhaps especially by outsiders—the students’ educational outcomes may depend on it.

Studies of American Indians have been criticized as promoting a monolithic “Indian” (Deloria, 2004), without considering the range of practices American Indians engage in or ways of being Indian (see related discussion in Webster & Peterson, 2011). The study shows that different axes of “being Blackfeet” become salient in different interactional moments, and the ways in which the students (often humorously) articulate, rearticulate, and disarticulate (Clifford, 2001) their group and individual identity in relationship to, for instance, stereotypes of Indians. This study can thus help to paint a more complete picture of the contemporary social and linguistic contexts in which American Indian speakers live, with a mind toward how this understanding can be applied to the real-world circumstances of these youth.

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