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Words that hurt and heal: Feminist language policies, ideologies, and practices on campus

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Words that hurt and heal:
Feminist language policies, ideologies, and practices on campus

By

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DAVIS

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates how feminist and LGBTQ undergraduate students involved in activism on UC Davis use language to construct their identities, focusing on two gender and sexuality-based resource centers (the women's center and LGBTQ center). It seeks to address two research questions. First, how do cisgender, trans, and nonbinary students draw on linguistic resources to construct their dynamic gender identities? Second, in what ways do policies and practices in the two centers aid them in their identity formation (thus either reproducing or challenging larger ideologies regarding language and gender)?

The dissertation is situated within sociolinguistics, with theoretical and methodological influences from linguistic anthropology and feminist studies. It seeks to describe and analyze a snapshot of a constantly changing linguistic and ideological landscape regarding gender and sexuality. These shifts in ideologies have been enacted, produced, and reproduced through linguistic strategies and policies. Online and real-life progressive feminist and LGBTQ communities have expounded on the importance of language in anti-discrimination and pro-social justice efforts. The analysis also compares larger media discourses around feminist language with how language is used in a small, localized context.

On-campus resource centers are ideal environments to study these phenomena. University students, especially those at prestigious institutions, are often more radical in their political beliefs, and close contact to like-minded individuals on campus allow them to organize and build solidarity. On-campus centers like the women's center and LGBTQ center provide physical spaces for students to gather, learn, and organize. This creates a community within the larger university community specifically dedicated to issues of equity and social justice, including feminism. I collected written materials from both centers, including pamphlets in their

physical space and posts on their websites and social media accounts. I also interviewed students and staff members affiliated with each center. I used discourse and prosodic (intonation) analysis to explore underlying ideologies and speakers' attitudes toward these ideologies and practices. Results indicate that knowledge of language norms acts as social capital within activist spaces on campus. What is considered acceptable language changes quickly, and students who are able to master the terminology are respected by other students. They also police any transgressors of these norms within interactions in the community. These seasoned community members, along with staff members, socialize new students into the informal policies about language within the centers' physical and online spaces. Students also report learning about new terms and how to use them on social media like TikTok and Instagram. A major ideology promoted by both centers in their written materials and echoed by student participants is the importance of language for self-identification. By selecting identity labels and third-person pronouns, members to reify their inclusion within the LGBTQ community and express how they fit within it. Part of this ideology mandates that other members should affirm each other's linguistic choices to be inclusive.

This dissertation has implications for the field of sociolinguistics as well as feminist and LGBTQ activist communities. Instead of prescribing how activists should use language, the dissertation investigates how language is actually used. It explores how widespread ideologies about language, gender, and sexuality are upheld, challenged, and negotiated at a local level.

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Ch. 1: Introduction

This dissertation seeks a clearer articulation of how feminist language ideologies, language policies, and practices interact and are produced in activist-oriented student-based resource centers on a university campus. It also investigates how broader media discourses are discussed in newspapers and then taken up in local contexts. The combination of these domains has not been fully addressed together thus far in sociolinguistic literature. This investigation is prompted in part by the recent cultural shift regarding gender, sexuality, and feminist activism, catalyzed by the spread of social media and the election of Donald Trump. The rise of social media has allowed people from across the world to connect and interact, exchanging ideas and organizing solidarity.

Some theorists and activists have claimed that social media has helped to create a Fourth Wave of feminist activism. According to Looft (2017), "distinctive trait of the fourth wave movement is its reliance and usage of technology and social media to connect and reach populations across cultural and national borders" (p. 894). Looft (2017) dates the fourth wave as starting around 2008. She defines the preceding third wave as questioning the "universal ideals" that were claimed by the first and second waves: that all women share sisterhood and that they should put their differences to the side (p. 894). The second wave, in the 1960s-1980s, focused on legal and economic equality for women, while the first wave, during the late 19th and early 20th centuries aimed for women's suffrage. The advent of social media has allowed for an increase and diversification of feminist activism globally.

In addition, the election of Donald Trump and its aftermath led to an increase in feminist and other types of progressive activism, as evidenced by the popularity of the Women's March each year on the anniversary of his inauguration (Gomez Sarmiento, 2020). Likewise, the

visibility of sexual and gender minorities has been raised in the last decade. Words like *transgender* and *intersex* have become more common in popular discourse, reflecting a slow shift in ideology toward (partial) acceptance of diverse sexual and gender identities (Bragg, et al., 2018).

These shifts in ideologies have been enacted, produced, and reproduced through linguistic strategies and policies. Online and real-life progressive feminist and LGBTQ communities have expounded on the importance of language in anti-discrimination and pro-social justice efforts. While feminist language reform is not a new phenomenon (see Ehrlich & King, 1992), its goals and spread have changed with the affordances of social media and the shifts in ideologies about gender and sexuality. For example, there has been a major effort to emphasize the importance of individual's chosen third-person gender pronouns. Some proposed guidelines include asking for interlocutors' pronouns and divulging one's own. There has also been a push toward the acceptance of *they* as a singular, gender-neutral pronoun. Indeed, singular *they* was voted the Word of the Decade by the American Dialect Society in 2019, while *my pronouns* was selected as Word of the Year (American Dialect Society, 2020). An underlying language ideology of many LGBTQIA and feminist-focused communities emphasizes inclusiveness in language, aiming to affirm and recognize the individual agency of marginalized subjects. This ideology is enacted through formal and informal language policies within these communities of practice, recommending better language practices and discouraging those that appear harmful.

On-campus resource centers are ideal environments to study these phenomena. University students, especially those at prestigious institutions, are often more radical than their non-college-educated peers in their political beliefs, and close contact to like-minded individuals on campus allow them to organize and build solidarity (Van Dyke, 1998). There has been a long,

distinguished history of on-campus activism in universities for social justice, most recently including the COLA for ALL and Occupy Movements on the University of California campuses (Holmes, 2017; Wang, 2015; To, 2020). In addition, students in their late teens and twenties are more likely to be considered "digital natives," being proficient in social media and other online tools that allow them to optimize their political activism via the Internet. On-campus centers like the WRRC (Women's Resource and Research Center) and the LGBTQIARC (LGBTQIA Resource Center) at UC Davis provide physical spaces for students to gather, learn, and organize, creating a community of practice within the larger university community specifically dedicated to issues of equity and social justice, including feminism. These centers reflect and reproduce wider ideologies and policies about feminist and inclusive language usage, distributing on a more local level to students.

On-campus student resource centers dedicated to supporting marginalized gender and sexual communities are positioned between a plethora of seemingly opposing forces. They must navigate how to discuss widespread ideologies about gender and sexual identity in a local context. They also are connected to and influenced by academic and activist discourses but are still subject to control and funding by the university. They are sites of community-building, activism, and resistance for students and other campus community members as well as providing education, resources, and awareness trainings to the broader community. These tensions and activities make on-campus gender and sexual identity centers productive research sites to investigate how language is used to configure ideologies about gender and sexuality, especially in how these constructs interact with other factors like race, class, ability, and geopolitical difference.

Positionality and Project History

This project started in 2017 when I began a pilot study on the resignification of *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* in popular discourse and media. I was asked by a colleague if I'd be interested in joining a conference panel about gender and language. I had noticed that during the 2016 US election cycle that these two phrases had been reclaimed by feminist activists. They are unlikely targets of reclamation on their face: both originally used by male Republican politicians (Donald Trump and Mitch McConnell) to disparage female Democratic politicians (Hillary Clinton and Elizabeth Warren). I was intrigued by activists proudly displaying these phrases on t-shirts, signs, even tattoos. From the initial conference paper looking at *nasty woman* on a few Facebook groups, I eventually branched out to using corpus methods to investigate the phenomenon further. Then, I decided to engage in an ethnography to see how popular language ideologies about gender and politics are enacted at a local level.

Intellectually, I position myself primarily as a sociocultural linguist. This label is more inclusive than sociolinguist or applied linguist; sociocultural linguistics was conceived of by Bucholtz and Hall (2008) as encompassing the theoretical and methodological insights of variationist sociolinguistics (especially the Third Wave (Eckert, 2012), linguistic anthropology, and discourse analysis. My training as an undergraduate focused on this broad foundation. Moving into graduate school, I have focused more on language ideologies and their relationship with language policy at an institutional and interpersonal level. This has leant a depth to my research on language, gender, and sexuality. Agentive language change such as reclaiming an insult term relies on an ideology of how language relates to sociopolitical reality. Based on this ideology, groups can make formal or informal policies on how to use language. This is where the

community of practice model (Lave & Wenger, 1991) and language socialization (Thompson, 2020) have been helpful in my thinking; individuals must be socialized into these ideologies, policies and practices in order to participate in a community of practice. Discourse analysis, including critical discourse analysis (Cameron, 2001), ethnographic discourse analysis (Roth-Gordon, 2020), and discourse prosody (Ramanathan, 2018), has been very useful as a methodological approach to examine the ideologies embedded within texts. Discourse analysis can combine multiple methods including corpus linguistic analysis and sociophonetic analysis, which are used in this project.

This project had to bridge the challenges that the COVID-19 pandemic wrought on research and the world as a whole. I originally began collecting written data and planning for the project before the pandemic. While I initially wanted to conduct a traditional, in-person ethnography at the centers I was focusing on, lockdown restrictions made this impossible. Like many researchers, I adapted to digital and remote methods, conducting interviews over Zoom, participating in virtual events and communication venues and collecting social media data. The focus group was conducted after lockdown had ended, on campus, face-to-face. This dissertation combines multiple modalities of data: written text, digital text, speech recorded online, and speech recorded in person.

Queer and feminist research methodologies encourage the researcher to be reflexive about their own positionality and how it affects their research (Paris & Winn, 2013). I conducted the research in my mid-to-late twenties. I identify as a white, queer, cisgender, middle-class, Catholic woman. Pieces of these parts of my identity became relevant during my research process. For example, when asking the LGBTQIARC for permission to work with them and look at their materials, the student staff wanted to know my connection to the community they were

serving. They were wary of an outsider exploiting their marginalized population. I explained my identity and how I am part of the community they serve, making them trust me a bit more. Being a woman and a student on campus made it easy for me to get into contact with the WRRC.

As a cisgender person, I tried to be cognizant of cisnormativity and my own cis privilege, especially when speaking to trans participants. Also, being white working with people of color meant I needed to be aware of how white supremacy has historically been perpetuated by researchers. I did this through reflection while writing questions and speaking with participants, but also by attending events and reading about queer and trans people of color. I have tried to use an intersectional lens in my analysis; while the primary focus is on gender and sexuality, these axes of subjectivity cannot be extricated from other parts of identity like race, class, etc. (Crenshaw, 1991; Levon, 2015). I also considered how my position as a graduate student and researcher may cause a power imbalance when working with undergraduate students. To attempt to overcome this with my focus group participants, I brought food to share and sat in a circle on a table outside. I intended to make them feel more relaxed and that the space was informal. I also let the participants dictate how the conversation flowed, even if it didn't align with what I originally had planned on discussing.

Language and Feminism Research

This study is part of a long, rich history of feminist linguistic research over the past half century. Bucholtz (2014) provides a helpful summary of this body of research from the Women's Liberation Movement to the present, splitting the theoretical underpinnings of the authors into several thematic and chronological categories. She associates linguistic research influenced by second-wave feminism of the 1960s to 1980s primarily with Robin Lakoff's (1975) classic book, *Language and a Woman's Place*, which discussed the features of language stereotypically

associated with woman that are therefore denigrated. Deborah Tannen's (1990) work built upon this, claiming that men and women do not communicate well because they have different communicative styles and preferences. Bucholtz points out that these viewpoints have subsequently been criticized for essentializing gender, including by Cameron (1995).

More recently, with the rise of Third Wave (and possibly Fourth Wave) feminism since the 1990s, language, gender, and sexuality studies has reflected a shift to interrogate binary, supposedly stable categories such as gender. For instance, Cameron (2005) criticizes both the difference and dominance frameworks as well as Tannen's miscommunication theory for its binaristic simplicity. Many language, gender, and sexuality theorists have adopted Butler's (1990) assertion that gender is *performative*, constantly being constructed through language and other actions. There has also been research within the field of applied linguistics focusing on the effects of gender in educational contexts (Menard-Warwick, Mori, & Williams, 2014), including in ESL classrooms (Norton & Pavlenko, 2004).

Scholars have also incorporated theorizations of intersectionality, critical race theory, and queer theory to complexify their understanding of the connections between language and social constructions like gender and sexuality. For example, Mendoza-Denton (2014) investigated the linguistic and related semiotic practices of Chicana adolescent women as they constructed an intersectional ethnic and gendered identity. Relatedly, while language and sexuality studies have historically focused on white, gay men (e.g., Podesva, 2007), more recent work has expanded to focus on more marginalized, less visible members of the queer community. For example, Fine (2019) investigates the sociolinguistic practices used by a graysexual speaker to index their identity. Fine found that the graysexual participant she worked with used three distinct voices to create his sexual identity: "a questioning voice, a judgmental voice, and a non-desiring voice" (p.

1). She concludes that the study's "results emphasize the importance of stylistic reticence to the construction of graysexuality." (p. 1).

Likewise, while language and gender studies mostly focused on cisgender women's language, more recent research has shifted to study trans and nonbinary speakers. For example, Crowley (2020) and Brotherton (2020) have investigated how nonbinary speakers use linguistic labels to construct their gender identities. Crowley explored how nonbinary Youtubers place themselves in relation to the label *trans* with some identifying with the term as a hypernym for *nonbinary*. Others distanced themselves from the term *trans* to describe their experience. Zimman (2012; 2017) has focused on the speech of transmasculine speakers, including their voices during transition. For example, in Edelman & Zimman (2014), he argues that transmasculine Livejournal users in the mid-2000s used alternative terms to refer to their genitalia, which had been traditionally associated with female sex and sexuality. Some labels users utilized include *boycunt* and *bonus hole*.

At the same time, scholars like Cameron (2006) have argued that in addition to studying marginalized gender and sexual identities, it is important to study unmarked identity categories like heterosexuality and masculinity in order to combat "their taken-for-granted status as 'just regular folks'" (p. 165). A prominent example of this is Eckert's (2011) study on preadolescent girls' performance of gender, reifying the connection between hegemonic femininity and heterosexuality and how it is socialized among peers in school.

This dissertation contributes to language and gender research by combining perspectives from sociophonetics and language policy and planning to investigate how interlocutors are negotiating rapidly changing ideologies about gender and sexuality. The study is timely because data was collected during multiple simultaneous upheavals: the end of the Trump administration

and the threat to democracy in the wake of the 2020 election, the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting global crisis, and the inexorable progress of climate change. People are trying to make sense of the constant change happening around them and reflect that in the language that they use in their daily lives. This dissertation explores snapshots of members of a few interconnected communities of practice.

Methods/Data Collection

Chapter 3 relies on one set of methods and a corpus while chapters 4 and 5 use another set of methods and corpora. Chapter 3 is a corpus-based discourse analysis of the semantic prosody of *nevertheless she persisted* and *nasty woman* in US newspapers. The beginning of chapter 3 has a much more in-depth discussion of the methodology for data collection and analysis. After conducting my study of lexical reclamation and language ideologies of activism in mass media, I decided to focus on how these ideologies play out in localized communities of practice. That is why I conducted ethnographic work at the WRRC and LGBTQIARC.

To address issues regarding language use and reform in local contexts of gender and sexual identities, I conducted fieldwork in two resource centers on campus: The Women's Resources and Research Center (WRRC) and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center (LGBTQIARC). According to the LGBTQIARC, "The purpose of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center (LGBTQIA Resource Center) is to provide an open, safe, inclusive space and community that is committed to challenging sexism, cissexism/trans oppression/transmisogyny, heterosexism, monosexism, and allosexism" (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021). The WRRC's mission statement reads, "The WRRC's mission is to promote gender equity and social justice. We provide a place for students and the Davis community to learn about resources and to attend

educational programs that focus on gender equity and social justice… specifically for people with marginalized gender identities, including, but not limited to: womxn, transgender, nonbinary, and gender expansive individuals" ("Women's Resources and Research Center").

The Resource Centers had overlapping but distinct missions. They both aimed to combat gender and sexuality-based discrimination and promote equity and social justice. The WRRC focused on providing resources for cisgender women and trans and nonbinary individuals, while the LGBTQIARC concentrated on non-heterosexual and non-cisgender individuals. These Centers made for interesting and productive sites of research for feminist language policies, ideologies, and practices because they both have an openly anti-oppression, feminist, and pro-LGBTQ message. Universities have historically been a place for activism and counterculture, and there has been an especially long and rich history of student activism at the University of California, including at Davis. These Resource Centers catered to students, combining both research and resource support systems. They provide online and in-person networks and structures for students to communicate and organize social activism. More critical for this project, both Centers promulgated formal and informal guidelines for language usage both online and in paper materials they distribute, including in FAQ pages and glossaries. Both Centers were communities of practice (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) within the greater university community that produce and interact with policies and consist of students that are negotiating, challenging, and upholding the policies and ideologies that the Centers circulate.

In addition, both Centers acted as spaces to socialize students into community-appropriate ways of speaking, partially through the policies they disseminate (Jacobs, 2004 discusses a similar phenomenon in Israeli feminist communities of practice). This dissertation uses a critical discourse analytic (CDA) approach informed by queer, feminist, and intersectional

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linguistic perspectives. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I joined the LGBTQIARC's Discord server.

This dissertation uses a critical discourse analytic (CDA) approach informed by queer, feminist, and intersectional linguistic perspectives. It aims to explore how language is used to challenge normative ideologies, propose alternative discourses, and construct identity. Critical discourse analysis investigates how language at the grammatical, lexical, and discursive levels interacts with systems of power and ideology. According to Fairclough (2013), "CDA brings the critical tradition in social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical social analysis a particular focus on discourse, and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power, ideologies, institutions, social identities, etc.)" (p. 178). Leap (2015) and Motschenbacher and Stegu (2013) argue that CDA is particularly well-suited for a queer linguistic study because it explores of gender and sexual normativities as well as intersecting systems of oppression.

This study dissertation on a few major research questions:

1) how are language ideologies about activist language use produced and disseminated in mass-media?

2) how are these wider ideologies taken up by localized communities of practice through interaction?

3) how do cisgender, trans, and nonbinary students draw on linguistic resources to construct their dynamic gender identities?

4) And in what ways do policies and practices in the WRRC and LGBTQIA aid them in their identity formation (thus either reproducing or challenging non-localized, global ideologies regarding language and gender)?

Chapter 2 presents a corpus-based discourse analysis of newspaper articles from 2016-2019 to investigate their usage of the reclaimed terms *nevertheless, she persisted* and *nasty woman*. It uses the concept *semantic prosody* to discuss how reclaimed terms can serve multiple semantic purposes. Moving from media representations of activist language, Chapter 3 and 4 investigate the language ideologies, practices, and policies within two overlapping communities of practice focusing on equity for marginalized gender and sexual identities. Chapter 3 includes more specific details on the relevant literature and methods for both chapters, since all the data for the two chapters was collected together. Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a discussion of major findings, the implications for both the field and activists, and future directions of the research.

Chapter 2: *Nasty Woman* and *Nevertheless, She Persisted*: a sociolinguistic analysis of semantic prosody

During the last presidential debate on October 20, 2016, Hillary Clinton was answering a question about tax reform when Donald Trump interrupted, calling her, "Such a nasty woman." The reaction online was swift; within hours there were dozens of Facebook groups and statuses of women of all ages claiming the label of *nasty woman*, selling t-shirts and pins proclaiming their pride to be *nasty*. In an election characterized by harsh sexism and misogyny, this phrase encapsulated the frustration of many women and reflected their everyday experiences. After Donald Trump won the election, these women returned to Facebook groups to commiserate and organize, eventually planning and executing Women's Marches the day after Trump's inauguration across the globe that attracted more than three million participants.

A few months later on February 7, 2017, Senator Elizabeth Warren was censured and silenced when attempting to question Senator Jeff Sessions during his confirmation hearings to become Attorney General. When asked later about the incident, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said, "Sen. Warren was giving a lengthy speech. She had appeared to violate the rule. She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted" (Wang, 2017). Like with *nasty woman*, *nevertheless, she persisted* was immediately claimed as a feminist identity label, with some activists going so far as tattooing the phrase on their skin.

Mostly female progressive activists took originally pejorative phrases from male Republican politicians and used them to express their political opposition to the speakers, spreading the new meanings on social media like Facebook. From there, various local and national newspapers reported on the rise of these slogans, even using them themselves to describe certain women. This process could be framed as lexical reclamation or resignification, a semantic process where previously derogatory insult terms are "consciously employed by the

'original' target of the derogation, often in a positive or oppositional sense" (Chen, 1998, p. 130).

In this chapter, I explore the semantic prosodies and resignification of *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* by investigating different features associated with discourse prosody, including the collocations. Semantic prosody refers to the discursive function a word or phrase carries across contexts which can be deduced by patterns in its collocations. Phrases such as these have become fossilized clusters of sorts, in that they appear in their full chunked forms, across diverse contexts, with very particular ascribed meanings, thus contributing significantly to the prosody of written discourse. My research questions are as follows: 1) How are *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* (now chunked frozen forms) recycled and thus resignified in different contexts in online newspaper articles from 2016 to 2019? 2) In what ways can the concept of *semantic prosody* help us understand the dynamic semantic shifts of socially charged words and phrases? This paper concludes with a discussion of how *resignification* can be conceptualized as using an unexpected semantic prosody and stance to draw listeners' attention to a mismatch in meaning and thus to the speaker's intention to create a new semantic preference and prosody.

Literature Review:

Entextualization, Resignification and Recontextualization

Much of language recycles previously uttered phrases. This includes slogans, idioms, and memes. Speakers reusing language bits can affirm the original meaning of the utterance or can challenge it to create a new message. According to Butler (1990), resignification is the disruption and subversion of preexisting categories and meanings. The resignification of linguistic units has also been called lexical reclamation (Chen, 1998) and semantic reanalysis (Washington, 2010). Lexical resignification relies on several interconnected discursive processes,

including entexualization and recontexualization. Entextualization occurs when a part of a speech act is removed from its original context, becoming a text. According to Sung-Yul Park and Bucholtz (2009), a piece of discourse becomes a text when it becomes "circulable" (p. 486). A speech act itself is not necessarily a text because it may not be removed from its context and distributed to other interlocutors in this form. Once a text can then be used in a new setting with new interlocutors, thus becoming recontextualized (Bauman & Briggs, 1990). For example, when Donald Trump tweeted the misspelling "Covfefe" on X DATE, it became entextualized and recontextualized as a meme that many Twitter users reused the term to parody and deprecate Trump. When situating recontextualization, Bauman (2005) references Bakhtin's (1981) theories of the dialogic process of speech, arguing that every utterance relies on previous utterances to make meaning and is thus multivoiced. In other words, no speech act is uttered in a vacuum. In order to be understood, it is placed in the context of many other previous utterances.

When an utterance is entextualized and recontextualized, features of its meaning inevitably change due to the transformation of temporal and spatial context. Silverstein (2003) describes this shifted meaning as *creative or entailed indexicality,* where the "social meanings of an indexical sign are both partly established and partly recalibrated when that sign is brought into a new context" (cited in Hodges, 2008, p. 4). Further, Kristeva (1980) posits that a recontexualization can critique or oppose a previous iteration of the entexualized utterance.

Thus, recontextualization itself is a political act, laden with judgment toward the original utterance (Hodges, 2008). A speaker's judgment toward the "form or content" of their utterance can be called their stance (Jaffe, 2009, p. 3, as cited in Bax, 2018, p. 119). Du Bois (2007) describes *stance* further as "a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through overt communicative means…through which social actors simultaneously evaluate subjects… and

align with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (p. 163, as cited in Jaffe 2009, p. 3). According to Bax (2018), by taking a stance "language users are able to mobilize and connect past social formations to the current speech situation" (p. 119). Speakers can also use stancetaking to align themselves with other interlocutors and groups to build solidarity and index group identity (Bax, 2018). Thus, speakers can use semiotic resources like lexemes to index their stance toward a subject and thus construct social positionings between speakers. According to Jaffe (2009), there is no neutral word or text, each linguistic "choice is defined in contrast to other semantic options" (p. 3). To continue with the previous example, the recontextalization of *covfefe* allowed Twitter users to index their negative stance toward Trump and his perceived intelligence. They negatively evaluate the seemingly inadvertent coinage and position themselves in opposition to Trump's policies and ideologies.

Jaffe (2009) also describes a "metasociolinguistic stance" where "speakers can use sociolinguistically salient forms in such a way as to question-or leave unchallenged-specific language hierarchies" (p. 17). For example, when a queer woman refers to herself as a *dyke* when surrounded by other queer femmes, she may be signalling a metasociolinguistic stance that she is not self-deprecating and is instead building in-group solidarity based on the slur's pejorative power. Thus, speakers engaging in recontextualization and resignification are deploying a specific metasociolinguistic stance, challenging and drawing attention to ideologies of the pejorative meanings of certain sociolinguistically salient terms. This is similar to Brontsema's (2004) description of "stigma exploitation," where speakers employ reclaimed insult terms like *queer* in order to highlight the ideological stigma attached to them. Further, according to Chen (1998), each time a slur like *queer* or *nasty woman* is used, the full semantic weight of its previous negative usages is instantiated. They argue that this pejorative history is hard to

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overcome; instead, it is precisely the stigma attached to these terms that can give power to their resignification. Using these terms in a resignified way can bring attention to the underlying ideologies that make them pejorative. For example, a gay person referring to themselves as *queer* can point out the history of homophobia and how it has been reproduced in language (Brontesema, 2004). Thus, resignification is intertextual and dialogic.

Resignification depends on the context of the utterance. A slur is more likely to be accepted as a non-pejorative resignification when it is uttered by a in-group member to other members of a marginalized group (Chen, 1998; Sutton, 1998). For instance, it is often acceptable for members of the African American community to use the *n-word* to refer to one another while it is seen as highly offensive for a white person to use the word (Washington, 2010). This dichotomy is in part because of the history of usage for many of these slurs, where people in dominant groups used them as a way to insult people in marginalized groups. People in marginalized groups may use resignified insult terms as a solidarity marker but a person from a dominant group attempting to use them recalls the injurious historical usages of the term.

Entextualizations and recontextualizations of words and phrases can be disseminated among speakers through media. According to Spitulnik (1996), knowledge of media discourse is an important component of a speaker-listener's linguistic and cultural competence. Words or phrases may be projected by a media source like a movie, the radio, or a news broadcast; these utterances may be entextualized and repeated by listeners over and over, becoming what Spitulnik terms *public words*. *Public words*, which may consist of "proverbs, slogans, clichés and idiomatic expressions" that are repeated many times long after their first utterance, becoming part of the sociolinguistic fabric of a community (p. 166). An example of public words is an idiom like "the early bird gets the worm," or a political slogan like "Make America Great Again."

Similarly, Joersz (2015) describes a political process of entextualization and recontextualization within mass media as *sloganization*, whereby an utterance becomes a text and then a slogan. A slogan which has been repeated and recontextualized within mass media is Nike's "Just Do It." Due to the rise of social media, recontextualizations and resignifications can be distributed quickly online. In addition, because these phrases are so commonly distributed and reproduced, they become frozen chunks with the power to be recontextualized into a variety of contexts without the need to adhere to the cadences of the new text, containing the significance of fuller texts.

A few recent studies have used sociolinguistic methods to investigate resignified terms in marginalized communities of practice. For example, Wong (2005) explores the resignification of *tongzhi* (meaning 'comrade') in Hong Kong by LGBTQ activists to refer to non-normative sexual identities, based on ethnographic fieldwork in the community and analyses of newspaper articles. In addition, Washington (2010) conducted interviews of Black speakers in Pittsburgh to investigate their attitudes toward the resignification of terms like the *n-word*. Meanwhile, Beaton and Washington (2015) analyzed data from online blogs and forums to examine the indexical complexity of the partially reclaimed word *favelado* (meaning 'slum-dweller) as used by Brazilian soccer fans.

Semantic preference and prosody

Semantic prosody has been used in a multitude of ways in the literature, each with a slightly different meaning. Hunston (2007) splits these usages into two main camps: the discursive function of a unit of meaning OR the attitudinal meaning associated to a word across different contexts. An example of the latter is displayed in Louw (1993), which defines *semantic prosody* as the "constituent aura of meaning with which a form is imbued by its collocates" (p.

151). Similarly, Bublitz (1996) describes *semantic prosody* as the "halo of meaning" forms gain over time based on their consistent collocates, eventually taking on an essence of meaning from frequent neighbors. Like Louw (1993), Bublitz (1996) characterizes semantic prosody as either positive or negative. Partington (1998) also describes it as an evaluative meaning, which is spread out over several words. Louw (2000) expands upon his original argument, asserting that semantic prosodies are the "product of fractured contexts of situation" (p. 30), focusing less on the "aura" of meaning (Stewart, 2009, p. 13). He also posits that *connotation* and *semantic prosody* are distinct. On the one hand, connotations are instinctive semantic associations a listener has connected to a word. On the other hand, *semantic prosody* depends on collocations and is only inferable based on a large corpus. For example, for a given English speaker the word *persistent* may have a neutral or even positive connotation. However, according to Hunston (2007), in a large corpus of written English, *persistent* had a negatively evaluative semantic prosody.

The other school of thought on *semantic prosody* focuses on discursive function that a particular form or group of forms have, derived from their frequent collocations with other forms. This view of *semantic prosody* mainly draws on the works of Firth and Sinclair. According to Hunston (2007), semantic prosody refers to "the discourse function of the unit formed by a series of co-occurrences: 'the unit of meaning'" (p. 257). According to Sinclair (2004) and Hunston (2007), functional meaning resides not just in a lexical item, but in context across a chunk of language. Just like phonological prosody occurs over multiple segments in speech, semantic prosody by analogy refers to an aspect of meaning above just the single word (Hunston, 2007). Similarly, Stubbs (1995, 2001) references the pragmatic meanings of frequently collocating forms, terming *discourse prosody* to emphasize the role of discourse in the contextual

construction of meaning. Stubbs asserts that when a speaker uses forms with a certain discourse prosody, they can indicate their own attitude toward a subject. Going back to the form *persistent* in Hunston (2007), "[it] is a word that can be used to indicate a mismatch of viewpoints, with the producer of a text indicating a difference between his or her own values and those of one of the participants in the text." (p. 256) This is more complex than simply labeling the semantic prosody as "negative."

Following Sinclair's (1996) model, the semantic prosody of a lexical item or phrase relies on the "collocational and colligational patterning…[which] build up to a multi-word unit with a specific semantic preference, associating the formal patterning with a semantic field, and an identifiable semantic prosody, performing an attitudinal and pragmatic function in the discourse" (Tognini-Bonelli, 2002, p. 79, as cited in Ebeling, 2013). *Collocation* refers to the co-occurrence of different words based on shared "semantic links", while *colligation* refers to patterns of cooccurring grammatical categories or orderings (Sorli, 2013, p. 101). For example, common collocations for the word *dog* might include *good*, *bad*, *big*, and *little*. Common colligations of *dog* could be that it is often used in the subject noun phrase in a sentence alongside a determiner and adjective, like in the sentence "The little dog barked at the mailman." In the present paper, *semantic preference* will refer to the "attitudinal meanings typically associated with a word or phrase" (Hunston, 2007, p. 266), which "controls the collocational and colligational patterns" (Sinclair, 2004, p. 34). For example, the semantic preference of *stink* is negative, which controls its common collocations like *garbage* and *rotten*. While semantic preferences can be simply positive or negative, semantic prosodies can be complex and hard to describe and must rely on evidence of language in context such as in a large corpus, not introspection as can be seen in the above example of *persistent* (Louw and Chateau, 2010).

While the concepts of *stance* and *semantic prosody* have mostly resided in their fields of sociocultural linguistics and corpus linguistics, respectively, they have significant overlap. It could be useful for both sociocultural and corpus linguists interested in meaning in discourse to take a combined approach to use semantic prosody as a way to evaluate a speaker or writer's stance. Sociocultural linguistic perspectives on *stance* move beyond polar evaluation, much like Sinclairian *semantic prosody* which also exceeds just *positive* and *negative*. Both of these perspectives emphasize the importance of context on meaning, including *semantic prosody*. According to Jaffe (2009), meaning is both "emergent and conventional," "context-sensitive" and "context-creating" (p. 86). Likewise, corpus linguists investigating semantic prosody use context in order to determine the functional meaning of a unit of meaning. As Hunston and Thompson (2000) explain, a word or phrase can gain a certain semantic prosody when frequently collocating words bleed a bit of their evaluative meaning onto neighbors. Thus, meaning is dialogic and intertextual, relying on previous iterations and their contexts. At the same time, it is negotiated based on specific context in which a form is deployed.

Methods

In order to investigate the resignification and semantic prosody of *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted,* I compiled a corpus of 260 online newspaper articles, consisting of 339,000 words. I chose to look at newspapers because news discourses help to disseminate and replicate ideologies through language (see e.g., Salahshour, 2016). As Spitulnik (1996) argues, media sources like newspapers contribute to the sociolinguistic fabric of a community and help to create *public words*. In addition, news media and social media have a dialogic relationship. News media often report on trends on social media, including Tweets by Trump. At the same time, social media users often post and comment on news media stories. The resignification of

the target phrases occurred mostly on social media but exploring their resignification in newspapers indicates the amount these resignifications have been recontextualized and spread to the wider public beyond smaller communities of practice online.

The corpus is composed of two different databases of news articles: one that comprised of local California newspapers and one that consisted of national US dailies. The former database is called NewsBank's California Newspapers, and the latter is called ProQuest's Major Dailies**.** Both national and local newspapers provided a broad perspective to see how each term was being utilized and whether there was a discernable difference between the two different categories due to their distinct audiences. I searched each of these databases for the key terms *nevertheless she persisted, nasty woman*, and *nasty women.* the search was limited to articles published between 2016 and 2019 and the language to English. I then copied and pasted each article into Word documents for ease of reading and analysis. Repeated articles that had been published in more than one newspaper were deleted, as well as any reprinted articles. The corpus consisted of 118 local newspaper articles, with a total of 152,000 words and a corpus of 142 national newspaper articles, with a total of 187,000 words. The differences between national and local newspapers were not particularly significant, and thus will not be discussed heavily in the following analysis. The details of the corpus, including the number of articles from local and national newspapers, and wordcount from each of these sources, are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Corpora sizes

	Local	National	Total
Number of newspaper articles	118	142	260
Total number of words	152,000	187,000	339,000

The data analysis is split into quantitative and qualitative analysis. The qualitative analysis came first. A smaller subcorpus was generated in order to perform a closer discourse analysis to which could then be used to make predictions about the whole corpus. In order to make this smaller corpus, each one of the articles in each newspaper type (local, national) were numbered and a random number generator on Google was used to select 20 articles from each newspaper type. From there, MaxQDA 2020 was used to code the smaller corpus by common themes (Verbi Software, 2019). For example, each instance of *nasty woman* was marked as either reclaimed or unreclaimed (this is important to be able to tell the different kinds of semantic prosody for each term). These notes were used to generate specific hypotheses about common collocations and possible semantic prosodies that could be tested in the full corpus.

Next came the quantitative analysis (see Table 2 below for a summary of these steps). AntConc (Anthony, 2019), a free concordance software, was used to view concordance lines and common collocating words of the keywords. Frequently occurring collocating words were assessed to inform the next steps of analysis. Collocations were considered as chunks seven words right and left of the target word. To measure collocation strength, both collocation frequency as well as Mutual Information statistic (MI) were calculated. MI refers to "…the extent to which observed frequency of co-occurrence differs from what we would … the strength of association between words *x* and *y*. In a given finite corpus MI is calculated on the basis of the number of times you observed the pair together versus the number of times you saw the pair separately" (Collins, 2008). For example, to explore the collocation strength of *nasty* and *women*, the MI score would take into account how often *nasty* and *women* occur together and how often they occur separately within the corpus. The more times they occur together instead of separately, the higher the MI statistic. AncConc calculates MI for each collocate automatically. By noting

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the common and strong collocates of each key phrase, the patterns contributing to each phrase's

semantic prosody could be preliminarily assessed, which was subsequently explored through

further qualitative discourse analysis of the full corpus.

Table 2: Steps of quantitative analysis of data

Step 1	Use random number generator to make smaller corpus.
Step 2	Use MaxQDA to code smaller subcorpus, make hypotheses about full corpus
Step 3	Use AntConc to look for common collocations and calculate MI
Step 4	Use AntConc's concordance feature to evaluate each instance of target phrases

Third, the hypotheses generated from the subcorpus analysis were tested in the full corpus to

verify whether they represented the usages of key terms in a greater number of contexts. The

concordance feature on AntConc was used to look at the discourse environments each token of

the target words came up and evaluated if each example fit into one of the proposed semantic

prosodies. The common collocates that were occurring in the discourse could be observed. To

test the proposed semantic prosodies for each target phrase, patterns across discourse

environments between collocates were analyzed. The proposed semantic prosodies were revised

based on this review of all the tokens. The combination of quantitative collocational analysis and

qualitative discourse analysis allowed me to approach semantic prosody from different angles to

improve my ultimate evaluation of the corpus. The collocational analysis on AntConc allowed

for the quantification of the strength of the relationships between cooccurring words, confirming

or disproving my initial impressionist analysis of the smaller corpus on MaxQDA. Following up

with a fuller qualitative discourse analysis of each occurrence of the target phrases provided a fuller picture of how these phrases are interacting with other words in the actual discourse. Both of these approaches led to the positing semantic prosodies for both *nevertheless, she persisted* and *nasty woman*.

Results

Nasty woman

The main semantic prosodies of *nasty woman* include self-identification, branding merchandise, its original negative prosody, and identifying other women as nasty.

Table 3: common collocates and mutual information statistic of *nasty woman*

Word	Mutual Information
Called	5.91
Such	5.78
Hillary	5.16
Comment	7.50
Shirts	6.017
Calling	6.09
Band	6.79
Bad	5.18
Proud	5.9
Phrase	6.02
Debates	5.53

Table 4 Semantic prosodies and their frequencies of *nasty woman*

Semantic Prosody	Frequency
Self-identification	18
Merchandise	20
Original negative prosody	32
Identifying other women as *nasty*	6

Nasty woman as self-identification

Nasty woman and the plural form *nasty women* had several interrelated semantic prosodies in the corpus (see table 4 above for these prosodies and their frequencies). There was a total of 147 tokens of *nasty women* and *nasty woman.* One major semantic prosody that appeared regularly in the data was as a marker of self-identification as a feminist and an opponent of Trump. Individuals quoted and described in the articles called themselves *nasty women* and bought and displayed merchandise bearing the slogan. Some collocating words that support this semantic prosody include *shirts* (MI=6.017), *band* (MI=6.79), and *proud* (MI=5.9) (see table 3 above).

For example, on November 3, 2017, the *Los Angeles Weekly* wrote in an article, '"A lot of people use "nasty" as synonymous to having an opinion,' says Godard. 'It's as if having a public opinion if you're a woman, or being independent if you're a woman, and you speak out — you are nasty. And so if this is the definition of nasty, yes, absolutely we're nasty women."' In this quote, the quoted individual engages in metalinguistic talk about the resignified meaning of *nasty woman*. Being a *nasty woman* is connected in its discourse environment with being *independent*, *having an opinion,* and *speak[ing] out*. In the final sentence of the quote, the speaker uses the first-person plural pronoun to claim that she and her allies claim *nasty woman* as a label for themselves. She marks her strong, positive stance toward this self-identification using the

affirmative interjection *yes* and the intensifier *absolutely*. Thus, in this quote, *nasty woman*

functions discursively as a self-claimed identity label to index one's political and gendered

positionality. There was a total of 18 examples of an individual directly self-identifying as a

nasty woman.

Likewise, there are 20 examples of an individual wearing an article of clothing or carrying a

sign that says *nasty woman*, marking the individual as a self-identified *nasty woman*. For

instance, the *Orange County Register* wrote on November 8, 2018, "The woman, who also was

wearing a 'Nasty Woman' T-shirt, removed the hat, albeit reluctantly." Here, the phrase *nasty*

woman is between quotation marks, and the initial letters of each word are capitalized, marking it

as a set phrase borrowed from elsewhere. The phrase is also in an attributive position, further

signifying that it is a single unit of meaning. Similarly, *The Chicago Tribune* opined on January

20, 2019, "'Nasty woman,' a phrase used by then-candidate Donald Trump to describe opponent

Hillary Clinton in the third 2016 presidential debate, was embraced by many of her female fans

as quickly on T-shirts and protest signs as 'deplorables' -- her description of pro-Trump

extremists -- went viral throughout his support base." Again, the phrase is put in quotation marks,

signifying its intertextual nature. The verb *embraced* used after the parenthetical expression has a

positive polarity, and the subject of the *embracing* are Clinton's *female fans*, indicating who can

indeed resignify the phrase. Resignification takes place through the display on *T-shirts* and

protest signs. Thus, like overt self-identification as a *nasty woman*, wearing a t-shirt or carrying a

sign exhibits how *nasty woman* has a semantic prosody of marking an individual's stance.

Nasty woman as a marker of another's identification

In the corpus, *nasty woman* had another resignified but distinct semantic prosody. While the

previously discussed prosody was mainly deployed in constructions of self-identification, the

second came into play when the author or speaker identified another woman as a *nasty woman*. This occurred a total of six times in the corpus. Some common collocates related to this prosody include *calling* (MI=6.09) and *called* (MI=5.91). The prosody seemed to mark the woman in question as unconventional or powerful in some way. For example, *The San Francisco* wrote on April 19, 2018: "The Beyoncé Mass is part of three-part series the Vine is hosting at the Nob Hill church that started with a program on Mary Magdalene called 'The Original Nasty Woman.'" Here, the historical figure Mary Magdalene is described as a *nasty woman*. The program referenced is being put on by a Christian church, implying that it is unlikely that the labeler is attempting to insult Mary Magdalene or to create a negative stance against her or the resignification of the phrase. Instead, by labeling her the *original nasty woman*, the writer connects the saint with contemporary women who label themselves as *nasty women*, implying that the modern women are in a long line of rebellious women.

Similarly, The Washington Post on February 3, 2019 wrote, "Also fascinating is how [Dorothea] Lange was able to achieve mythic heights of success professionally while struggling with marriage and family. Labeled difficult in her time, Lange would almost certainly be a proud 'nasty woman' if she were alive today." Like with Mary Magdalene, a deceased figure is branded as a *nasty woman*. In this case, the author contrasts Lange's contemporary description as *difficult* with the more modern *nasty woman*. Thus, the author implies that to be *difficult* is not necessarily negative and instead displays sexist discourses toward powerful women, as is highlighted in the resignification of *nasty woman*. The author further marks their stance toward both Lange's persona and the resignification of *nasty woman* with the collocation of the positive adjective *proud*. These two examples exhibit one semantic prosody of *nasty woman*: a label to give to another, especially deceased, woman to highlight her challenging of gender norms.

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Negative semantic prosody of *nasty woman*

While most of the examples of *nasty woman* in the corpus were resignified, there were some instances referencing Trump's original utterance retaining his negative semantic prosody. These examples were most common in 2016 when the debate occurred and before the first Women's March when the press covered the common resignification of *nasty woman*. A common collocate for these examples of *nasty woman* is *such* (MI=5.71), which preceded the phrase in Trump's original utterance. The original negative semantic prosody was retained in 32 examples in the corpus. Many of the authors reference Trump's utterance to build their own negative stance toward Trump. For example, *The Chicago Tribune* on October 27, 2016 wrote, "In the final debate, Trump was put back on his heels for a third time. He lashed out, calling Hillary Clinton a 'nasty woman.' He is angry, impulsive and mean. That's the nominee." The writer characterizes Trump's utterance as *lash[ing] out*, a phrase with a negative semantic preference. In addition, the author follows the description of the quote by labeling Trump as *angry*, *impulsive*, and *mean*, all negative adjectives. Likewise, *The Washington Post* on October 23, 2016 wrote, "His final debate performance this week was a bust, with him snarling that Clinton was 'such a nasty woman' and gritting his teeth as he angrily ripped pages off a notepad when it was over." The author describes Trump's debate performance as a *bust*, while also using negative polarity verbs and adverbs *snarling*, *gritting*, *angrily*, and *ripped*. These collocating words in the discourse environment provide context clues that the author has a negative stance toward Trump and thus to his usage of *nasty woman*.

Nevertheless, she persisted

While *nevertheless, she persisted* and *nasty woman* are similar in that they have both been resignified as political slogans during and in the aftermath of the 2016 election, they have

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different semantic prosodies and are resignified in different contexts. Like *nasty woman,*

nevertheless, she persisted has a few different semantic prosodies that are activated in varying

contexts (see table 6 below). In order to determine these, it is helpful to first look at the

commonly collocating words. These include *women* (MI=5.48), *theme* (MI=9.04), *history*

(MI=7.03), *honoring* (MI=10.03), *fight* (MI=7.76), *phrase* (8.75), *warned* (MI=10.29), *rallying*

(MI=8.82), and *feminist* (MI=7.05) (see table 5 below). The phrase is likely to co-occur in its

discourse environment with positive adjectives and action verbs related to speaking. These

factors contribute to the construction and differentiation of three interrelated, resignified

semantic prosodies.

Table 5: Collocating words and mutual information statistics of *nevertheless, she persisted*.

Word	Mutual Information
Women	5.48
Theme	9.04
Year	5.98
History	7.03
Honoring	10.03
Fight	7.76
Month	6.99
Phrase	8.79
Warned	10.29
Words	5.95
Gala	8.65

Rallying	8.82
Feminist	7.05
Event	5.93
Cry	7.97
Call	5.77

Table 6: Semantic prosodies and their frequencies of *nevertheless, she persisted*

Semantic Prosody	Frequency
Self-identification/objects	14
Events/themes	28
Woman overcoming difficulties	22

Nevertheless, she persisted as self-identification

The first semantic prosody is similar to one of the previously discussed prosodies of *nasty woman*: to mark the speaker or wearer as a feminist and a political opponent of Trump. This occurred 14 times. Common collocating words related to this semantic prosody include *phrase*, *rallying, women,* and *cry* (n=5, MI=7.97). For example, *The New York Times* wrote on February 10, 2019, "It happened during a Senate floor debate on Feb. 7, 2017, when Mr. McConnell declared: 'She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted.' The last three words quickly became a feminist catchphrase, and a slogan for Ms. Warren in particular (to this day, Ms. Warren's campaign sells, among other "persisted" items a "purr-sist" cat collar for

$22.95).” The author metalinguistically labels the term a *slogan* and a *feminist catchphrase*, entextualizing it and marking its resignified status. The original utterance is referenced, but the resignified meaning is made clear in the following sentences. Likewise, *The Washington Post* on July 30, 2018 wrote, “Warren has embraced such pushback, expressing pride that so many women have tattooed their bodies with ‘Nevertheless, she persisted,’ the words McConnell used to describe her parliamentary rule violation when criticizing Sessions. At the Lookout Farm orchard on July 8, T-shirts with those words were the most common fashion accessory.” Within the discourse environment surrounding the phrase, the author again references McConnell’s original utterance. They also mention t-shirts with the phrase on them as well as women who have “tattooed their bodies” with the phrase, indicating a strong self-identification with the resignified phrase. The author also describes Warren, the original target of McConnell’s utterance, as *embracing* the slogan and *expressing pride* toward its resignification and women’s self-identification with it. Both authors mark positive stances toward the resignification of *nevertheless, she persisted* and display a semantic prosody of feminist self-identification through resignification.

Nevertheless, she persisted as an event theme

A related semantic prosody of *nevertheless, she persisted* is as the title of various events put on by feminist groups. This showed up in the corpus 28 times. Related collocations include *theme, year* (MI=5.98), *honoring,* and *gala* (MI=8.65). For example, *The Reporter* from Vacaville, CA on March 25, 2018 wrote: “This year, the National Women’s History Month has as its theme ‘Nevertheless She Persisted: Honoring Women Who Fight all Forms of Discrimination Against Women.’ I celebrate all women who have been honored this month, including those whose stories we will never hear. They too persisted and fought forms of discrimination not

limited to sexism." The following clause in the theme title after *nevertheless, she persisted* includes the words *honoring*, *fight*, and *discrimination against women*. The collocation of these terms with *nevertheless, she persisted* marks the stance of the organizers of the Women's History Month as supporting the resignification of the phrase and for Warren's behavior that garnered the original remark. Similarly, on March 15, 2018 *The Westside Today* wrote, "The tour was produced in conjunction with the Santa Monica Commission on the Status of Women and honored this year's theme of Women's History Month, 'Nevertheless she persisted,' by highlighting women who had combatted discrimination." Again, *nevertheless, she persisted* is used as a theme for a feminist organization. The author indexes their stance toward the resignification of the phrase by using positively oriented terms like *honored*, *highlighting,* and *combatted discrimination*. *Nevertheless, she persisted* has a semantic prosody of a positive, feminist title for its use in these contexts.

Overcoming difficulties

Finally, *nevertheless, she's persisted* has a semantic prosody of describing and lauding a woman who has overcome a difficult circumstance, even if that circumstance is not explicitly sexist. This prosody happens most commonly in local newspapers (see more examples in table 7 below). This appeared 22 times in the corpus. Associated collocates include *women* and *fight.* For example, in an obituary published in San Luis Obispo's *The Tribune* on March 11, 2018, the author wrote, "In 2008, Anna suffered a debilitating stroke, which paralyzed the right side of her body. This drastically changed her life, as everything became incredibly difficult physically for her. Nevertheless, she persisted, teaching us all so much about courage, patience, and love through her daily struggles." In this passage, the deceased subject is described to have *suffered* from a stroke, which *drastically* impacted her life and made activity *incredibly difficult* for her. These

negative-polarity words set up the stroke as an obstacle, which the subject then *persisted* over. The positive prosody of *nevertheless, she persisted* in this context is reinforced by the positive collocating words *courage, patience,* and *love*. While this woman did not overcome a political difficulty or discrimination like the other usages of *nevertheless, she persisted* refer to, the use of the term here draws a parallel between her struggle and that of feminists who tattoo their bodies with the phrase.

Similarly, on November 27, 2018 *The Davis Enterprise* described a local gymnast's comeback thusly: "Perkins' last two seasons were hampered by injury, nevertheless, she persisted, and her precisely executed uneven bars routine won that event in the Level 8 session. Perkins confirmed her return to form with a bronze all-around." In this case, Perkins was *hampered by injury*, representing the barrier that she had to *persist* to be able to eventually triumph and receive a bronze medal. Again, the impediment that the gymnast surmounted had nothing directly to do with her gendered or political stance. However, the deployment of the term marks a semantic prosody of feminine determination in the face of adversity. More examples can be seen in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Examples of this prosody from the corpus

Perkins' last two seasons were hampered by injury**, *nevertheless, she persisted*,** and her precisely executed uneven bars routine won that event in the Level 8 session. Perkins confirmed her return to form with a bronze all-around.
Ultimately, Ironman allowed Recchia the use of "Barb's Race," but only for shorter-distance triathlons and not too close to the Vineman, lest it diminish Ironman participation. *Nevertheless, she persisted.* And with the help of Brand and Ray, the trio revived the race in modified form.

This drastically changed her life, as everything became incredibly difficult physically for her. ***Nevertheless, she persisted***, teaching us all so much about courage, patience, and love through her daily struggles.

Seay eventually lost her home to foreclosure. ***Nevertheless***, ***she persisted***, and continued to work toward maintaining the life that she had fought so hard to keep.

Comparing target phrases

While *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* were resignified from different contexts and have varying functions in discourse, they also have similarities in their deployment. For example, both terms are often talked about metalinguistically in the articles. They are called "catchphrases," "feminist rallying cries," and "political slogans." By describing them as such, authors are signaling their awareness of the resignification process and the importance of these recontextualized phrases in recent feminist activism. There are slightly more of these comments directed at *nevertheless, she persisted*, with 37 occurrences compared with 30 for *nasty woman*. Likewise, in both cases authors strategically included or omitted direct references to the original utterances of each phrase. In some cases, the phrases are used without explaining where the original phrase came from, while in others, the authors explain the context the phrase was first uttered. When an author deploys one of the target phrases without referring directly to the original utterance, they are assuming the audience understands the context of the phrase. By using the frozen chunk of language in isolation, the social and semantic meanings are called up without further explanation, indicating the power of these miniature texts. In contrast, when an author references the original utterance when using one of the target phrases, they could be assuming a lack of audience knowledge. They could also be emphasizing the power the resignified phrases

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receive from the intense negative meaning they were originally imbued with. In the corpus, as summarized in Table 8, authors refer to the original *nasty woman* utterance when discussing the resignified term 25 times, while they do the same for *nevertheless, she persisted* 25 times.

Table 8: comparison of target terms, numerical counts

	Metalinguistic commentary	Referring to original utterance
Nasty woman	30	25
Nevertheless, she persisted	37	29

Discussion

Semantic prosody refers to the functional meaning of a word or group of words that resides on the phraseological level and depends on common collocating words. Prosody implies movement and dynamism both semantically and phonologically, which is more closely associated with speech than more rigid writing. By turning to corpus and quantitative methods, discourse analysts can more easily view patterns of what is happening across chunks of prose, thus enriching qualitative analysis.

In this project, AntConc was used to calculate the frequency of collocating words and their mutual information statistics and MaxQDA was used to look at patterns in discourse environments in order to posit semantic prosodies for *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted*. This dual-pronged approach allowed me to tie my initial qualitative analyses to numerical, empirical evidence. In addition, this study helps to support the Sinclairian conception of meaning going beyond a single word. These set phrases, chunks of frozen language, co-occur time and again with other words, telling us the author's stance and evaluation of the subject

without a lengthy explanation. These phrases pack a powerful punch, calling the social and semantic meanings of previous iterations into the particular discourse context.

Most of the usages of *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* in the corpus were resignified. Out of 268 occurrences of *nasty woman* and *nasty women* in the corpus, 208 were resignified. Likewise, out of the 129 occurrences of *nevertheless, she persisted* in the corpus, 118 of them were resignified. Although *nasty* and *persist* (Hunston, 2007) both can have negative semantic prosodies, the writers and speakers in the corpus have channeled novel pragmatic meanings in specific sociolinguistic contexts. The users of the resignified forms seem to be taking a metasociolinguistic stance (Jaffe, 2009), deploying sociolinguistic saliently terms in order to challenge the stigma attached to their original usage. Resignification occurs when speakers use a previously pejorative term in a new positive way. The original usage of the term has a negative semantic preference and prosody. When a speaker uses this term in a new way that counters its expected prosody and preference, it marks the terms' semantic salience to the listener (Hunston, 2007). Thus, by using a term in a resignified way, the speaker draws the listener's metalinguistic attention to the mismatch between the current usage and the term's typical semantic prosody and preference. To illustrate this using the data, consider the example *nasty woman*. In the initial utterance used by Donald Trump toward Hillary Clinton, "Such a nasty woman," the attitudinal meaning is obviously negative. Since this is one instance, it is difficult to extrapolate what the term's non-resignified semantic preferences or prosody may be. However, for illustration purposes, let us hypothesize that the preference is negative, and the semantic prosody indicates that when someone is called a *nasty woman*, the speaker believes that the referent is acting in an inappropriate and undesirable way based on their gender. When feminist activists online began calling themselves *nasty women* and expressing their pride in being *nasty*,

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this usage directly contradicted the original semantic prosody and preference. This contradiction can lead to two different interpretations by the listener: the speaker is insulting themselves, or they are attempting to resignify the term to have some kind of positive meaning. Thus, resignificiation of *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* is a dialogic and intertextual process. It relies on the original utterances as well as the congealed semantic prosody historically created through infinite usages in similar discourse contexts. The chunk of language from the original utterance becomes entextualized and then recontextualized within new contexts to formulate new semantic prosodies. This process is stronger for *nasty woman* than it is for *nevertheless, she persisted*, since *nasty* has a more negative semantic prosody in unresignified contexts. While *persist* can be used in both positive and negative contexts, *nasty* has almost always had a negative prosody. This allows its resignification to be more transgressive.   While most of the semantic prosodies of the target phrases were resignified, there were several distinct functional meanings that the terms performed. This supports Hunston's (2007) argument that it is too simple to view semantic prosody as simply positive or negative. The meanings of these fixed units depended strongly on the discourse environments they were contained in, so it is faulty to claim a single semantic prosodic meaning for either of them. Instead, several related functions can be inferred from patterns of collocations, colligations, and semantic preferences. This is more evidence to support Sinclair's (2004) claim that meaning does not reside in a single word, but instead across phrases.

This paper also attempted to bridge a theoretical gap between sociocultural and corpus linguistics, both of which attempt to uncover and analyze a speaker or writer's evaluation or stance toward their utterance and how they encode this in language. In this study's data, speakers and authors indexed their stance toward Trump, feminism, and sexism by activating certain

semantic prosodies through the creation of various discourse contexts. While corpus linguists often ignore the social aspects of meaning making and sociolinguists frequently use introspection to guess at social and pragmatic meaning in interaction, this approach provides an empirically based alternative to combine both social and contextual meaning. Future directions could explore the discourse and semantic prosodies of these politically and socially-charged phrases in face-to face or online interaction.

Chapter 3: Language and Self-Identification

On-campus student resource centers dedicated to supporting marginalized gender and sexual communities are positioned between a plethora of seemingly opposing forces. They must navigate how to discuss widespread ideologies about gender and sexual identity in a local context. They also are connected to and influenced by academic and activist discourses but are still subject to control and funding by the university. They are sites of community-building, activism, and resistance for students and other campus community members as well as providing education, resources, and awareness trainings to the broader community. These tensions and activities make on-campus gender and sexual identity centers productive research sites to investigate how language is used to configure ideologies about gender and sexuality, especially in how these constructs interact with other factors like race, class, ability, and geopolitical difference.

This chapter uses theories and analytical methods from the interrelated subdisciplines of queer, feminist, critical, and intersectional linguistics to investigate how two UC Davis student resource centers' websites and social media pages, the Women's Resources and Research Center (WRRC) and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Asexual Resource Center (LGBTQIARC), utilize discursive strategies to produce and proliferate specific ideologies about gender and sexuality and how they relate to language. The chapter begins with an overview of how linguistics has incorporated queer, poststructuralist, and feminist theories to strengthen the analysis of the social meaning of language usage. Next, the collection and analysis procedures of data are described. The analysis of the data focuses on metalinguistic and intersectional ideologies found frequently in the webpages. The analysis emphasizes how prosodic cues are used to index the speakers' stances toward language policies and ideologies. The chapter

concludes with a discussion of the implications of the study for sociocultural linguistics as well as how discourses of neoliberal subjecthood are deployed.

Literature Review:

Language Policy and Planning regarding gender-based language reform

Policies play a crucial role in what is/not possible regarding language use, and this is evident in contexts regarding gender and sexual identities as well. Applied and sociolinguistic scholarship on language policy typically considers governmental or community-level mandates and guidelines as ways in to addressing linguistic human behavior. The language of (language) policies is crucial to address because they are mutually constitutive with (language) ideologies. Ideologies, policies and practices, then, are inextricably intertwined. Spolsky maintains that language ideologies could be described as 'language policy with the manager left out, what people think should be done…language practices, on the other hand, are what people actually do' (2004, p. 14). (Language) policies are often discussed in conjunction with (language) planning; authors like Grin (2003) distinguish between these two concepts. He posits that *language policy* is a broader term, 'located at a more general or macro level,' which focuses on the relative positioning of various language varieties to one another (p. 28). In contrast, he defines *language planning* as highlighting changes to the language itself, such as spelling standardization. Most early research in language policy had a *top-down* perspective, focusing on the macro-level implementation of policy and its impact, while more recent research (including this study) takes a more *bottom-up* approach, instead highlighting the ways policies are negotiated, enacted, and lived out at a local level (Ramanathan & Morgan, 2007), including at the level of language choice in individual families (Schechter & Bayley, 2004).

It is amid this background that the present focus on feminist or gender-based language reform is to be understood. Feminist language reform refers to formal and informal policy and planning efforts focused on highlighting and/or ameliorating sexism and related forms of discrimination in language. In this regard, the study of feminist language reform combines perspectives from both language, gender, and sexuality studies as well as language policy, and planning. Ricento and Hornberger (1996) provide a helpful model, comparing LPP processes to an onion. According to this analogy, there are several interconnected layers of settings, ideologies, institutions, and contexts that all combine to create and operationalize language planning and policy. They state that "the outer layers of the onion are the broad language policy objectives articulated in legislation…at the national level" which are then "interpreted and implemented in institutional settings…composed of diverse, situated contexts" which in turn "individuals from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and communities interact" (p. 409). Thus, they split their LPP onion into three main interacting layers: national, institutional and personal. At each level, ideologies and discourses intermingle and overlap as policies are negotiated and interpreted. This model helps to account for both structural power and individual agency within LPP studies. When applied to feminist language reform, the outer layer of the onion could be official language policies legislated by a national language board regarding gender. The middle layer would be institutional settings in which the language policy is enacted, while the inner layer would be composed of the speakers that are negotiating, following, and/or contradicting these policies.

There is a growing focus of LPP research on not just analyzing the consequences of language-focused policy, but also analyzing the discourse of all policies. For example, Torres (2019) investigated the use of modals in opioid drug policies as the use of opioids was

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deemed a national crisis. Outside of LPP itself, several scholars of education policy have used discourse analytic methods to analyze the language of policy to elucidate the ideologies behind its writing (e.g., Taylor, 2004; Mulderrig, 2011). Likewise, Williams (2009) explores the use of modals in legal English. Analyzing the language of policy allows actors and researchers to better understand the interpretive space that policies do and do not offer.

One of the major goals of feminist language reform is to combat sexism embedded in language. According to feminist language reformers, language produces and reproduces sexist ideologies and norms. Thus, feminist language reform gathers its strength because "deliberate departures from conventional usage are meant to bring those assumptions to the surface so they can be noticed and challenged" (Cameron, 1995, p. 157). Likewise, in Jacobs' study of Israeli feminists' language practices, she notes, "For the women in my study feminist consciousness includes an awareness of the way that language use in mainstream society contributes to the reproduction of sexism in Jewish Israeli society" (2004, p. 235). Ehrlich and King (1992) similarly argue that feminist language reform "sensitize[s] individuals to the ways in which language is discriminatory towards women: language has become one of the many arenas in which social inequalities are elucidated" (p. 156). Through the propagation of feminist language reform, the invisiblized and naturalized links of gender and dominance can be made clearer and challenged.

Cameron (1995) distinguishes between two major approaches to feminist language reform which differ in their tackling of sexism and their goals for reform. First, she describes a "liberal" framework that asserts that "language is still a 'fixed code'…[that] has certain imperfections that both can and should be corrected. This is the same benevolent rationalism that animates such enterprises as spelling reform" (p. 155). Cameron opines that this perspective

emphasizes classically liberal values such as civility, equality, and mutual communication. In contrast, she claims that more radical reformers, feminist language reform, "is not a modernist attempt to construct a 'perfect' language, but a postmodernist attempt to dramatize the impossibility of such a language. They take it as axiomatic that words can never stand in a simple and direct relationship to 'reality', that their use is contested, and their meaning is unstable…the object of tampering with linguistic conventions is to make the point that way of using language which most people consider 'natural' is not natural at all" (p. 156). An example of the latter approach to language reform is some types of linguistic resignification, such as of the slur *queer*. According to Chen (1998) and Brontsema (2004), the reclamation of an insult gains its power through the exploitation of the stigma attached to it, not through replacing the pejorative meaning with a more positive one. This approach differs from the modernist approach by avoiding a normative policy mandate to speakers.

Feminist language reform not only complements social change, but it is also a form of social action in itself (Cameron, 1997). According to Jacobs (2004), "Feminist language reform or linguistic innovation is at least the use of language as a tool for feminist social change work…feminist linguistic innovations must also be understood as the social acts of women negotiating their identities between 'this house,' that is, the feminist community, and the 'outside,' that is, mainstream…society" (p. 9). By engaging with feminist language reform, speakers index stances toward sexist and feminist ideologies and practices "through which speakers engage in the performance of a united feminist self" (Jacobs, 2004, p. 257).

According to Cameron (1995), a modernist feminist language reform effort must have several parts to operate: "someone has to make the rules, someone has to codify those, and those in receipt of these rules must decide-or be compelled-to follow them" (p. 132). Focusing on the

first and second aspects of this formula, feminist language reform can be initiated by language planning organizations or by grassroots organizations. According to Liddicoat (2011), the latter is much more common, as language planning organizations sometimes resist feminist language reforms due to prescriptivist ideologies. (The language policies produced and distributed by the Resource Centers can be seen as both grassroots and institutional). Milles (2011) gives several examples of each type of feminist planning efforts in Sweden. Feminist and queer organizations led campaigns to introduce two new words to the Swedish lexicon: *snippa*, a colloquial term for women's genitalia that can be used with children, and *slidkrans*, meaning 'vaginal corona' and meant to replace the older word for hymen, *mödomshinna*, a compound for 'maiden membrane.' Both of these efforts were inspired by feminists' desire to better represent women's sexuality and eliminate what they saw as sexism in the lexicon. While the official language planning body The Language Council endorsed their efforts, the main driving force in the reform campaign came from non-profit feminist organizations and educators.

However, as Cameron (1995) and Ehrlich and King (1992) point out, just because a feminist language policy is announced and spread does not mean that individual speakers will take those policies up and change their linguistic behavior. In other cases, the original intention of the reform effort could be skewed or discarded altogether. For example, while *Ms.* was originally meant to be a feminist, generic term to overtake *Mrs.* and *Miss*, in many cases it is lumped in with *Miss* to refer to unmarried women or it is used for divorced women (Ehrlich and King, 1992). McConnell-Ginet (2010) argues that efforts to challenge sexist language are more likely to have an impact in localized communities of practice that already share feminist ideologies. Likewise, Ehrlich and King (1992) argue that "gender-based language reform is dependent on the social context in which the language reform occurs. When language reform

occurs within the context of a larger sociopolitical initiative whose primary goal is the eradication of sexist practices, it is more likely to succeed" (p. 157).

Recently, one of the most prominent language reform campaigns related to gender equality/equity is to support the linguistic recognition of trans and nonbinary people. As Zimman (2018) explains, this type of language reform argues that language can be cissexist and trans-exclusionary. In order to ameliorate this, activists recommend reforming language in order to be more inclusive of trans and nonbinary people. One of the most well-known aspects of trans language reform is its focus on gendered third person pronouns. In English, referring to someone in the third person requires assigning them a gender. Trans activists assert that to avoid misgendering someone, people should be asked what pronouns they wish to be used in reference to themselves. This includes the use of the pronoun *they* to refer to a single person. In addition, trans language reform activists argue that gendered expressions should be made more inclusive. '

An example Zimman (2018) is the phrase "ladies and gentlemen," which could exclude people who do not identify as men or women. Instead, Zimman suggests using gender-neutral terms like "honored guests" (p. 180). Likewise, trans activists contend that speakers should avoid naturalizing the connections between bodies and genders through language. For example, they would advocate saying *pregnant people* instead of *pregnant women.* Trans language reform efforts fit into a broader ideology upheld by some communities within the feminist and pro-LGBTQ movements, toward a "language of inclusivity," avoiding the exclusion of marginalized groups through language (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015, p. 398). This kind of trans language reform becomes much more complicated in languages that require grammatical gender, but grassroots efforts have emerged in languages like French (Shroy, 2016), Hebrew (Morse, 2008), and German (Hord, 2016).

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Two recent examples of studies investigating language norms and ideologies regarding gender and sexuality within specific communities are Årman (2020) and Savcı (2016). Årman (2020) positions his study as investigating the micro-level inclusive language policies within a Swedish secondary school. He connects the motivation for and implantation of such language activism to affect. Within the school, "everyday language use was often regarded as an important site of political struggle. The students' activism was underpinned by a view of language as not merely reflecting the social, but also shaping it, and meta-commentary on language was often guided by an understanding of language as a fundamental tool for achieving social transformation" (p. 152). As a result, evidence of language activism was displayed on the walls of the school on posters, and labels were frequently debated by students.

Årman (2020) connects this so-called "verbal hygiene" to the "affective practice of shaming" (p. 154). Shaming people when they use non-inclusive language leads to the desire for interlocutors to learn and conform to linguistic norms. In this way, language becomes a resource, and access to "proper" language is redistributed by policy: certain language should be used and if it is not, the user will be shamed. Students reported looking up terms on social media to increase their linguistic competence to avoid shaming. Within the community of practice, certain words became a shibboleth for a particular political stance, such as using gender-neutral pronouns. Successfully acquiring these linguistic practices was an "important symbolic asset for those who want to speak with a voice that is deemed legitimate and worth paying attention to. Mastering the discourse of the politically 'woke' is here described as a prerequisite for having agency and voice" (p. 164). As a result, "the emancipatory potential of such language activism does not exclude its potential to create new normativities, hierarchies, and possible exclusions" (p. 169).

Savcı (2016) conducted an ethnography of an "anti-militaristic, anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, anti-hierarchical volunteer-based organization" comprised of Turkish LGBTQIA people in Istanbul (p. 396). She also observed more working-class LGBTQIA people in bars outside of the organization. The educated LGBTQIA organization members had access to Western, English education and terminology as well as digital literacy. According to Savcı (2016), the "transnational dispersal of knowledge" about gender and sexuality "is emancipatory for many, but it also creates its own disciplinary mechanisms and regimes of truth" (p. 372). She found that some members of the LGBTQIA organization, who tended to be more educated and wealthier, perceived the working-class gender performances as "problematic...[because] they did not have the *proper language* to express and defend their gender performances" (p. 375, emphasis original). She argues that access to the "proper language" was a type of "*politico-cultural capital:* the knowledge and the language that enabled one to be 'political'" which is based on "demarcated class boundaries" (p. 379). Meanwhile, the working-class LGBTQIA bar-goers viewed the organization's members as "pushy, know-it-all, and corrective" (p. 381). This study indicates that even in a community of practice committed to dismantling oppression there can exist hierarchies based on class and access to cultural capital.

Identity creation through language

Sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists have theorized extensively about how speakers construct and/or reflect their identities and stances through language. A particularly useful concept is that of *indexicality*. Originating from Peirce's (1991) categorization of signs, indexes "point to" their meaning. For example, smoke points to the fact that there is a fire, even if the observer can't see the fire itself. Social indexicality refers to the sociocultural meanings associated with a linguistic feature. Indexicality can have multiple levels (Silverstein, 2003) and

depend on context (Eckert, 2008). For example, while released [t] can index gay male identity in some contexts while in others it is associated with an angry stance (Eckert, 2008).

Language and gender researchers, beginning with Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), have theorized how social meaning is contextual using community of practice theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Communities of practice are useful to conceptualize how linguistic features are linked to social categories like gender, sexuality, and race. This approach focuses on the local iterations of these concepts, instead of their macrosociological impacts. Unlike the speech community (Labov, 1989), the community of practice is linked through a common purpose and are able to communicate with other members. For example, a group of friends could be a community of practice linked by their purpose to have fun. A pub trivia team could be considered a community of practice due to their common goal of winning a competition. The community of practice model is also helpful in theorizing how new members of a group are socialized into appropriate linguistic practices. When an individual joins a community of practice, they first engage in "legitimate peripheral participation" (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This means that they practice smaller, less intensive tasks that contribute to the group's common purpose first, observing other members and slowly developing mastery. For example, if a person started at a new job, they may engage in simple, short tasks related to the job while being trained in more complex ones over time.

This is related to the concept of language socialization. While much of language socialization research has focused on children and their adult caregivers (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Schiefflin, 1990), Thompson (2020) investigated how new members to a progressive mosque were socialized into inclusive language practices. She found that language socialization among adults is "particularly relevant when adults are in the process of self-consciously creating new

communities" (p. 38). Because the progressive, queer mosque is a purposefully-created community of practice with the goal to be more inclusive, "acquiring queer cultural and discursive competency is necessary for all of the members…regardless of their own gender and sexual identities, and they constantly socialize one another toward it" (p. 38).

Another concept related to indexicality is *enregisterment*. Agha (2007) defines enregisterment as "processes and practices whereby performable signs become recognized (and regrouped) as belonging to distinct, differentially valorized registers by a population" (p. 81). He describes registers as "cultural models of action that link diverse behavioral signs to enactable effects, including images of persona, interpersonal relationship, and type of conduct" (p. 145). In Johnstone's (2016) explanation of enregisterment, she argues that a register is "a set of linguistic forms linked with and constitutive of a context" (p. 633). According to Roth-Gordon (2020), a register is "a particular form of voicing that draws on more established discursive figures that have wide social recognizability…registers create personae that call to mind for listeners social attributes…professions…, or other social characteristics" (p. 39). Johnstone (2016) asserts that enregisterment is helpful to "see how linguistic variation becomes linked with (and may help create) contextual variation of any kind" (p. 633). In order to illustrate this description, Johnstone discusses how she has used enregisterment to conceptualize how a particular set of linguistic features have become connected to Pittsburgh, PA, to the degree that the register is known as *Pittsburghese*. According to Johnstone, enregisterment relies on links of indexicality and the particular context where the features are being spoken and interpreted.

In addition, Bucholtz and Hall's (2004; 2005) theorization of *tactics of intersubjectivity* are helpful to analyze interlocutors' linguistic practices to index their identities and stances. For Bucholtz and Hall (2005), identity is emergent in interaction, not just a psychological feeling of

Self. They also argue that identity is not reducible to a collection of social categorizations but span how individuals interact localized and temporally-based positions and stances. Bucholtz and Hall (2005) also link indexicality to interaction in the following passage:

> Identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: (a) overt mention of identity categories and labels; (b) implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; (c) displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant roles; and (d) the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups (594).

Point (c) connects to the concept of *stance* explained in a previous section of this review, while (d) is reminiscent of the use of enregistered linguistic features or stylistic bricolage (Eckert, 2008).

Bucholtz and Hall (2005) then describe the relationality principle of identity, that identity positions are taken in relation to each other on axes beyond "sameness and difference" (p. 598). They describe three categories of relations: "similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy" (p. 598). These can be thought of as sets of practices or stances that speakers can draw on to help construct their identities in relation to each other. To emphasize similarity is termed *adequation*, while highlighting difference is called *distinction*. For example, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) discuss Hodge's (n.d.) critical discourse analysis of a George W. Bush speech in 2002. In the speech, Bush emphasizes the similarity of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein and terrorist group Al Qaeda. This strategy associates Hussein with a perceived enemy to an American listener while distancing him from a normative American identity.

Next, Bucholtz and Hall discuss "authentication and denaturalization…the processes by which speakers make claims to realness and artifice, respectively" (p. 601). Finally, "authorization and illegitimation…conside[r] the structural and institutional aspects of identity formation" (p. 604). Authorization occurs when identity is ratified by "structures of institutionalized power and ideology" while illegitimation "addresses the ways in which identities are dismissed, censored, or simply ignored by these same structures" (604). A recent example of illegimation is Florida's so-called "Don't say gay" bills, legislation which prohibits discussion of gender identity or sexual orientation in public schools. The state is using its authority to delegitimate nonnormative sexual or gender identities by forbidding even discussing them. Lastly, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) claim that identity is dynamic and shifting, where an individual may emphasize a part of their identity over another in a given context.

Labels as identification in trans communities

The choice of an identity label, an agentive linguistic act, is often emphasized to reify an identity, especially a non-normative one. Zimman (2018) argues that using language to aid in self-identification is important in trans and nonbinary communities when choosing labels and pronouns. He connects the emphasis on self-identification to neoliberal governmentality as articulated by Inoue (2007). Neoliberal governmentality emphasizes the importance of a discrete, independent, pre-existing "self" which can achieve actualization through choice (Inoue, 2007). Label usage can change over time, coming in and out of vogue quickly especially on social media (Zimman & Hayworth, 2020). Individuals can use labels to connect with or distance themselves from various communities; for example, Crowley (2020) found that some nonbinary Youtubers identify with the term *trans* while others do not, representing a difference in their perception of their gender identity.

While there is a public perception that queer and trans language including label definitions change quickly, Brown (2022) found that in online trans communities these changes are contested and fairly slow. They argue that "while people vocally advocate for language change, change itself is gradual and distributed-which could mean that broader conceptions of impossibly fast trans language change may be based on vocal individuals or simply the degree of metalinguistic awareness the community members display" (61). Brown also found that the most influential, prolific users in the online communities tended to lead trends in language usage, which could potentially be problematic since these users were often from more privileged backgrounds. They describe four levels of "trans community language change:"

> At the broadest level, there is the societal perception of trans language change and the way that it is constituted in wider sociopolitical discourse. Linking to this, perhaps most transparently, there is terminology around gender itself and the way that queer and trans language is negotiated, critiqued, and constructed across queer and trans communities. Then there are lexical and discourse norms at the level of communities of practice-and the way that such norms are established within them. Finally, there are the actual individuals themselves and how their individual language changes (p. 60-61).

Brown's argument that prominent community members' language usage and metalinguistic ideologies are repeated relates to Valentine's (2007) finding that when certain labels become more common within a community, they can erase more marginalized experiences. Valentine (2007) investigated the category *transgender* in the 1990s and argued that as it gained more popularity, some (especially people of color) participants felt that it did not describe their gender/sexual identity. Valentine asserts that universalizing labels like *transgender* can uphold certain ontological constructions of gender and sexuality while erasing alternate ones.

Dame (2016) connects the contestation around labels to what they term "ontological security:" individuals construct their identity through "a reflexive self-narrative" which provides "the sense that the individual is complete and whole in themselves-one must not only know who they are and where they'll fit in, but also be able to communicate it to the wider world" (p. 24). Without a coherent self-narrative, this leads to "a lack of ontological security" which "contributes to a sense of failed bodily integrity, of being out of place within oneself" (p. 24). Since lexical items are thus linked to constructing a self-narrative of identity, they "can become a site of debate" (p. 33). Dame (2016) found that on Tumblr, some users in the trans community self-nominated themselves as "monitors" to police other users' terminology. They connected this finding to a tendency to want to categorize and measure:

> The performance of self cannot exist independent of the social and technical classification systems that will be applied to it. In a social tagging architecture like Tumblr's, users are expected to self-categorize, to transubstantiate their lived gender performance into a set of subcultural linguistic labels. To refuse is to become invisible; again, the data-base cannot make sense of that which goes unnamed. As I have found, users had two responses when they felt constrained by the imperative to self-categorization, as embodied in social tagging and the folksonomy: create new terminology or police other users' tag usage. In both cases, *the linguistic carries within it the unbearable weight of the self, which continually exceeds and overwhelms its capabilities* (p. 35, emphasis mine).

Labels have gained classificatory ontological authority, imbuing lexemes with the power to constrain and define ephemeral experiences of identity. The system must be upheld through other users policing language usage. To be outside of the classification system is to not be understood

by others or possibly the Self. Westbrook (2010) similarly argues that the term *transgender* allowed gender identity variation to become more legible and less abject to cisgender people, but at the same time, "The process of making previously illegible genders readable reproduced the idea that all people have a knowable gender, thus reinforcing the norm of knowability" (p. 44). To fit within the bounds of legibility by others, the subject must "know" their gender and be articulate it through labels, promoting a certain epistemological conception of gender.

Ekins & King (2010) associates the trend to categorize identity to "the move to the acceptance of greater diversity," which "led to the emergence of new refinements of categorization and identity, as they sought to identify precisely who and what they were…significantly, this…paradigm shift coincided with developments in internet technology that made the Internet an increasingly accessible resource for trans people" (p. 27). The authors contrast this impulse to specify identity to the "postmodernist 'gender queer' label" which defied direct definition (p. 27). Both of these strategies they connect to trans resistance to medical and psychiatric categorizations of trans identity as pathological. The authority to label shifts from the medical establishment to the individuals experiencing gender non-normativity themselves.

Prosodic analysis:

In chapters 3 and 4, the discourse analysis of the spoken data from interviews and focus groups integrate sociophonetic prosodic analysis to help disambiguate participants' stances. The sociophonetic analysis of the participants' voices focuses on two main features: creaky voice and rising intonation, sometimes also referred to as *uptalk*. These features have been extensively studied by sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists for their social indexical meanings. Creaky voice occurs when the vocal folds are vibrated at a slower rate than in modal voice. It is often associated with a lower fundamental frequency. In English, creaky voice frequently occurs

at the end of declaratives because pitch tends to fall. Uptalk or high rising terminal intonation is marked in declaratives because English speakers typically use a final rising intonation to create a question. While their meanings differ based on context, creaky voice tends to be ideologically associated with youth and femininity (Becker, Khan, & Zimman, 2022). Becker et al. (2023) found that participants of various gender identities use creaky voice to mark a variety of affective stances.

Uptalk is often associated with uncertainty and is connected with middle-class, young women (Levon, 2016). Levon (2016) found that while both men and women used uptalk, women tended to use uptalk to maintain the floor and build rapport while men used it as a face-enhancing strategy.

Breathy [æ̤]   Modal [æ]   Creaky [æ̰]
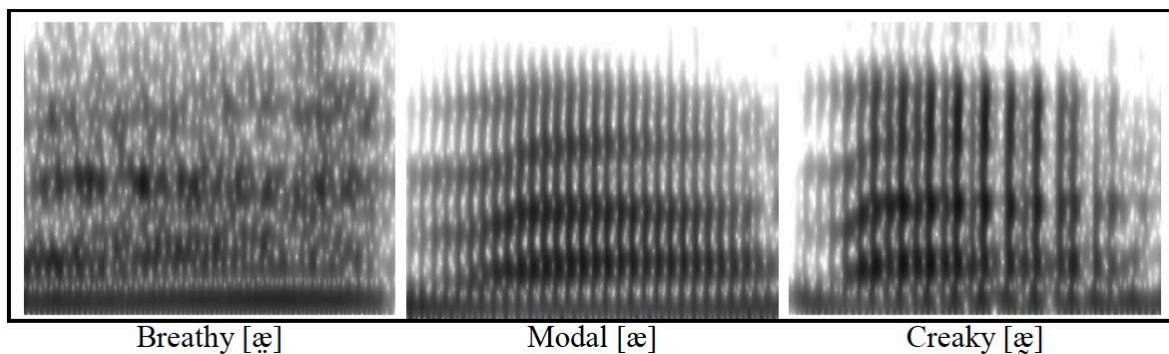
Figure 1: comparing spectrograms of the vowel [æ] in breathy, modal, and creaky voices. (Wright, Mansfield & Panfili, 2019)
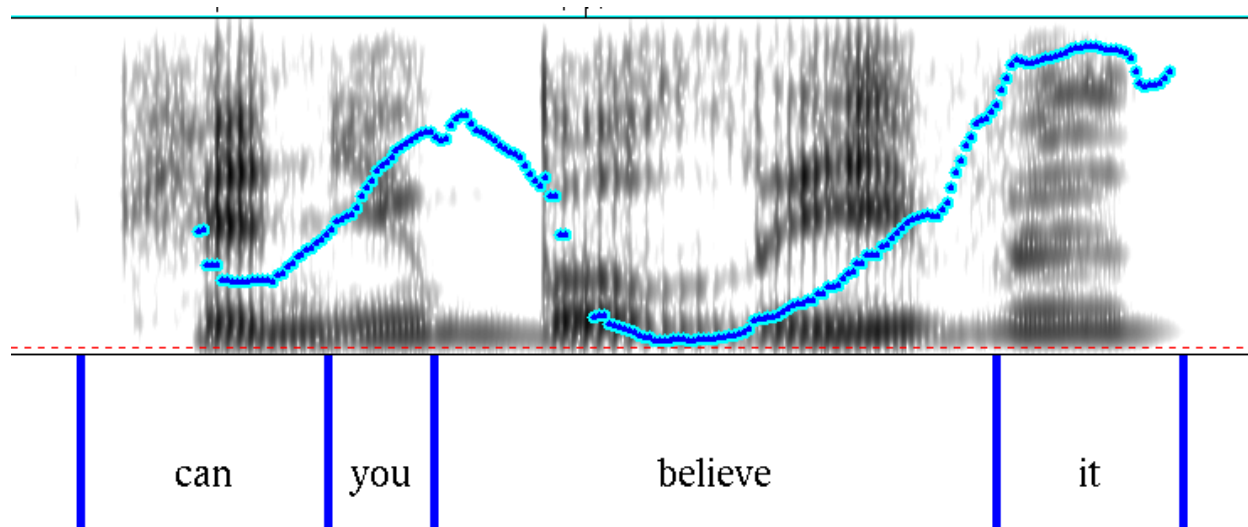
Figure 2: Spectrogram of the utterance "can you believe it," with the blue line tracking the pitch to indicate uptalk (Liberman, 2008).

Ethnographic Data Collection

In order to collect my spoken and written data for analysis, I have used ethnographically-influenced methods. From Hymes's (1971) theory of the ethnography of the speaking to Eckert's (1989) investigation of the linguistic practices of high school cliques, ethnographic research has been crucial to major findings and theorizing in the field of sociolinguistics. In the closely related discipline of linguistic anthropology, ethnography has also been used in a variety studies, including of language socialization (e.g., Ochs, 1988; Schieffelin, 1990; Schechter & Bayley, 2002; Watson-Gegeo & Bronson, 2013). Bucholtz (1999) and Mendoza-Denton (2014) used ethnographic methods in order to look at their participants' usage of different linguistic resources to construct gendered and racialized identities.

Eckert (2012) argues that the "Second Wave" of sociolinguistic inquiry starting in the 1970s used ethnographic methods to provide a "local perspective" on the general survey findings of earlier studies, connecting "macrosociological categories and the more concrete local

categories and configurations that give them meaning on the ground" (p. 93). However, these studies treated identity categories as pre-existing and static. Because "ethnography brought stylistic practice into view," Third Wave scholars began to investigate "the linguistic practice in which speakers place themselves in the social landscape through stylistic practice" (p. 94). These theories of how speakers construct their identities with language dovetail with queer theoretical frameworks on the performativity of gender (Butler, 1990) and with Women of Color feminist theorists' position that identity categorizations such as "woman" are not static or homogenous (see Lorde, 1984/2007). Speakers can index different aspects of their intersectional identity through their linguistic and other semiotic practices.

Ethnography has many definitions by different scholars (see Hammersley, 2018 for a detailed explanation of their differences). I align myself with Brewer's (2003) definition: "Ethnography can be defined as the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by means of methods which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting (if not always the activities) in order to collect data in a systematic manner, but without meaning being imposed on them externally" (p. 99).

Ethnographic methods have been used historically in both language, gender, and sexuality studies as well as LPP research. Critical ethnography is especially suitable for feminist-oriented research, since it demands the researcher to be reflexive and reflect on their positionality and the power dynamics inherent in the research (Skeggs, 2001). In addition, ethnographic methods "tackle both the complexities of language as an index of social identity and the complexities of these identities…. [they] can provide particularly powerful insights into the way in which humans can mobilize language to create and contest structures of power and difference... ethnography …offers the tools to bridge the traditional divide between microscopic

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and macroscopic analyses" (Besnier & Philips, 2014, p. 137). Likewise, Hornberger et al. (2018) argues that ethnography is particularly advantageous for LPP research because it "unite[s] a critical focus on the power of LPP activities to both exacerbate and transform inequalities with an ethnographic focus on individual agency and the complexities of local processes of policy interpretation and implementation" (p. 159).

Ethnographies of language practices rely on a variety of data types, including participant observation, interviews, and written artifacts so as to "create a triangulated database, adding depth, breadth, and credibility to research findings" (McCarty, 2015, p. 89). My data pool is comprised of different kinds of written and spoken data, which I will detail in the next sections.

Before collecting data, I familiarized myself with each center. This was mostly before the COVID-19 pandemic, which shut the centers down. I went to various programs and events put on by each center, informally talked to staff members, and read materials they distributed. I also got into contact with the Graduate Student Liaisons at each center, who introduced me to career staff members. Each liaison introduced my project to the staff during staff meetings. The WRRC was more willing to give me greater access to center documents and programs than the LGBTQIARC, due to the latter's worry about confidentiality of students using their resources. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I joined the LGBTQIARC's Discord server. Discord is a social media messaging application that has different "servers" that users can join. Each server has various channels that are based on the topic. The LGBTQIARC used the Discord server to help LGBTQIA students connect with others and build community during a time when they could not physically be together. While I did not collect data from the server due to privacy concerns, participating in the server informed the kinds of questions I asked during interviews. It also

indicated that even during multiple global crises, students and staff were able to use technological resources to stay connected and build solidarity.

Written data

In this project, I collected and analyzed both written and spoken discourse data. Data collection focused around two resource centers on campus: the Women's Research and Resource Center (WRRC) and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Queer, Intersex, and Asexual Resource Center (LGBTQIARC). I collected handouts, flyers and brochures distributed by each center. I also requested internal documents which discussed language policy for staff members. In addition, I collected language data from each center's webpage and Instagram pages.

The paper focuses on the resource centers' websites firstly because during the COVID-19 pandemic, the websites have been their main presence while campus has been closed. Secondly, the websites represent the public face of the resource centers. The choice of content which is placed on the website indicates that a prioritization of certain messages over others. Pages under each site's "Get Educated" pages were chosen as the specific focus because they engage in metalinguistic discussions of identity most directly and are meant to inform their audience about the centers' positions on gender and sexuality ideologies. Mission statements and about pages were also analyzed as representative summaries of the resource centers' main goals. Through the act of defining and answering hypothetical questions, the resource centers' staff index their stances toward ideologies regarding gender and sexuality. The text of these webpages was collected in January 2021.

In order to examine if the external communications of the Resource Centers align with their linguistic policies promulgated on their websites, I also collected social media posts from both centers. I focused on Instagram posts starting in March 2020, when campus shut down

because of the COVID-19 pandemic. This is because the Centers' social media pages became their primary source of communication with community members and students due to the spaces' closures. There were 167 Instagram posts from the LGBTQIARC's Instagram page from March 2020 to December 2021. The captions of these posts totaled 14,700 words. The WRRC's Instagram had 132 posts in this time period with a total of 15,000 words in the captions. The captions and photo posts were coded for theme and discursive practice. Frequency counts were also taken of key terms from both Centers' caption corpora.

Spoken Data:

In addition to the written data I collected, I also conducted semi-structured interviews and a focus group. I recorded each interaction; the semi-structured interviews were recorded using Zoom's native recording feature. The interviews took place on Zoom due to COVID-19 restrictions from November 2020 to March 2022. I interviewed three students and two WRRC staff members individually. The focus group took place in April 2022 at the WRRC. There were eight participants, all undergraduate students. All participants either chose pseudonyms or had one assigned to them. Three participants were quoted in the analysis, Shannon, Alice, and Alex. Alice and Alex were both in their early 20s. Alice was white and identified as a cis woman and sapphic. Alex identified as Latina who identified as queer and non-binary. Shannon was a non-traditional student who identified as a cis, straight, biracial woman. Jesse, S, and Lina were interviewed individually. Jesse was a nonbinary, white, 25 year old graduate student who previously worked for the LGBTQIARC while they were an undergraduate. S decided to go by their first initial. They identified as a nonbinary person of South Asian descent; they were an undergraduate who was 21 years old. Lina was a 19-year-old woman who identified as bisexual; she was a first-year undergraduate. The two staff members I interviewed chose the names

Marianne and Nicole. Marianne identified as a biracial, Black queer woman. She was the director of the WRRC. Nicole was the program coordinator of the WRRC; she was a biracial, Asian woman in her mid-twenties.

The focus group interaction was recorded both with a digital recorder and an iPhone as a back-up. According to Wilkinson (2004), focus groups are helpful for conducting feminist research projects because they produce knowledge through social interaction and are more natural than other methods. In addition, focus groups allow participants to converse among each other, replicating normal conversation more than a one-on-one interview. As a sociolinguist, I focus on naturalistic speech data, which matches the format of a focus group. Wilkinson (2004) also contends that focus groups put more power into the hands of the participants, because they outnumber the researcher and can steer the conversation's direction easily. I asked both the focus-group participants and interview participants open-ended questions of the group to start conversations, including what it meant to them to be a feminist, how a feminist should talk, how they talk about gendered pronouns, and how they feel about using gender-inclusive language. The conversation developed naturally from these topics.

All recordings were roughly transcribed using Otter.AI software at first. Next, the interview transcripts were hand-corrected by one of three undergraduate research assistants who added prosodic information. I hand-corrected the focus group transcript due to the complexity of the interaction and turn-taking. I also checked the research assistants' annotations on key transcript excerpts I use in my analysis. I used Praat (Boersema & Weernink, 2003) to confirm selected instances of uptalk and creaky voice visually using spectrograms and pitch tracker.

Analytic Methods:

As mentioned in the introduction, I used a critical discourse analytic approach to analyze both the spoken and written data that I collected. I was also influenced by Roth-Gordon's (2020) framework of *ethnographic discourse analysis*. According to Roth-Gordon (2020), "in order to simultaneously engage in linguistic and cultural analysis, scholars must integrate: (1) linguistic features (2) interactional context (3) ethnographic context (4) sociopolitical context" (p. 33). This approach ties together both macro and micro sociocultural contexts with linguistic practices taking place within them. Roth-Gordon (2020) encourages discourse analysts to attend to how speakers mark stance, use registers, blend genres, and practice intertextuality.

To analyze the discursive data I collected, I read through the material first taking notes on what struck me as notable, especially as it related to metalanguage. I then examined these notes looking for common themes across different texts. I used NVivo (Lumivero, 2020), a qualitative data coding software, to code and organize different themes across the data. Once the data was coded, NVivo allowed me to view which pieces of data I coded for various themes, again allowing me to look for patterns in what language was being used in each theme. For the spoken data, I listened to the recordings alongside the transcript to listen closely for prosodic features like speed, pauses, and pitch. When I began writing my analysis, I went back to the codes on NVivo to be able to choose illustrative examples. I identified passages that aligned with the arguments I was trying to make and could be analyzed using concepts in the literature I had cited.

This was an iterative and non-linear process. Sometimes I would read a new article and come back to my data to code and annotate it in a different way. During writing, when

attempting to integrate my data analysis with the literature, I came up with new ways of analyzing the language that I had not noted before. When writing the analysis of each passage, I tried to include each of the four contexts Roth-Gordon (2020) lays out to ensure I had given a full-breadth of ethnographic context and linguistic description.

Analysis:

Using these variety of analytic tools, fine-grained, nuanced descriptions of voice and voice quality illustrate affect-related internal shifts and markings within individuals that often get ignored in policy-related research. Typically, enactments of policies get documented via interview data and observations and field notes, and seldom via prosody-related data. Torres (2022) combined these data sources to explore how analyzing voice quality analysis can be used to better understand how individuals enact policies. This chapter explores a few key themes that emerge from CDA of the WRRC and LGBTQIARC's written materials as well as interview data:

1. Linguistic self-determination
2. Language is secondary to interior feeling of Self
3. Dialogic identity construction
4. Microlabels and neo-pronouns

Linguistic self-determination

The WRRC and LGBTQIARC's webpages promulgate the ideology that language is necessary and important to express one's gender and sexual identity. They use a neoliberal framing of self-identification to construct the individual subject as the authority of their own identity and what language to use to describe it. For example, the introductory note on the LGBTQIARC's glossary states, "Ultimately it is most important that each individual define

themselves for themselves and therefore also define a term for themselves" (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021). Here, the meaning of words in relation to an individual's identity is placed in the control of that individual. There is a parallel construction of self-definition and modifying words' meanings to fit that self-identification. This relates to Dame's (2016) concept of ontological security: the individual chooses words to classify their experience through narrative to themselves and others to maintain the security of their being.

In addition, further on in the introduction, the author quotes Audre Lorde as saying, "If I didn't define myself for myself, I would be crunched into other people's fantasies for me and eaten alive." The deployment of this quote by an influential Black lesbian feminist theorist in this context emphasizes the connection between linguistic self-identification with agentive resistance against oppression. Likewise, a page dedicated to allies describes pronouns as "integral to who we are" and thus it is critical to ask for and give interlocutors pronouns in interactions (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021). Thus, the linguistic expression of gender identity through pronouns is positioned as "integral" to the construction of self. Likewise, on the Center's "Pronouns and Inclusive Language," the staff write, "Try to avoid using the phrases "preferred pronouns" or "preferred name" as these suggest an element of flexibility or that someone's identity is less than valid. Someone's name and pronouns are not suggestions and are not preferred over something else. They are inherent to who we are." By moving away from the previously used adjective "preferred" to describe someone's pronouns, they suggest that pronoun choices are not optional and are instead "inherent to who we are."

Language is secondary to feelings of self

While the WRRC and LGBTQIARC posit that language is critical to self-definition, they also assert that language is secondary to some kind of internal conception of identity. For

example, on the LGBTQIARC's guide to coming out, the author writes, "Identifying yourself can be a powerful way to affirm who you are to yourself and to others but remember that it's ok if you aren't sure how you identify. 'Labels aren't important; your feelings are'" (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021). Using language to identify oneself is positioned as powerful for the individual as a way to "affirm" their identity and connect with others, but "feelings" about one's identity are portrayed as more important. This presupposes an autonomous self that has a pre-existing identity consisting of feelings that language can then help the Self make sense of and publicize. This connects to Inoue's (2007) and Zimman's (2018) argument regarding toward neoliberal governmentality: the autonomous Self can choose language to actualize and become legible to others. This ideology is mirrored in the LGBTQIARC's definition of *gender identity*: "A sense of oneself as trans, genderqueer, woman, man, or some other identity, which may or may not correspond with the sex and gender one is assigned at birth" (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021). Again, identity is framed as an internal "sense" or "feeling" of oneself that preexists labeling or interaction with others. This is in contrast to Butler's (1990) theorization of performativity, where subjectivity does not pre-exist language.

Dialogic identity construction through inclusive language:

In addition to emphasizing individuals' agency in creating their own identity through language, both Resource Centers' websites also emphasized that members of the community also had to reaffirm and respect an interlocutor's identity through what they term "inclusive language." Ahearn (2001) defines *agency* as "the socioculturally mediated capacity to act" (p. 112). According to the LGBTQIARC, inclusive language includes respecting and using people's chosen pronouns, not assuming someone's pronouns, and using gender neutral language. The author implies that the reader will have a strong chance of misidentifying and offending an

LGBTQIA interlocutor. The Center's page "Pronouns and Inclusive Language" models how someone should ask for an interlocutor's pronouns and how to share their own in conversation. In addition, they suggest readers take several steps in making their language more inclusive, including changing "you guys" to "y'all" or "everyone." Likewise, the LGBTQIA Ally Tips page lists several directives of what to say or not say. For example, "Always use the pronouns & name people want you to use. If you're unsure, ASK!" The imperative in this excerpt is highlighted with the adverb *always* and the all-capitalized command *ASK* along with the exclamation mark. Another example is the tip: "Don't ask trans people what their 'real' name is (i.e., the one they were born with). This is invasive and implies their chosen name is invalid and less 'real.' If you know their birth name, do not divulge it to others." Here, a negative imperative is used to discourage someone from asking a trans person's name given to them at birth, putting the adjective *real* in quotation marks to emphasize its inappropriateness in this context.

These directives regarding language usage for both people in and outside the LGBTQIA community act as informal language policies for this space on campus. Crucially, these policies try to mandate that people respect and affirm LGBTQIA people's constructed identities by using practices and avoiding others. This reflects Zimman's (2018) argument that the construction of identity through language is dialogic and relies on the audience's ratification. This means that it's not enough for someone to announce that they identify with a certain label, other people need to affirm and openly accept (or at least not reject) their interlocutor's construction. This could be framed in terms of the relation of authorization as discussed by Bucholtz and Hall (2005); interlocutors are given the power to affirm (or reject) one another's identity constructions.

A standard policy within the queer community is that each individual can define their own name, gender pronouns, and identity labels, while their interlocutors must respect and use

those lexemes in reference to them. Thus, as Zimman (2018) argues, the identity construction process is dialogic and depends on a positive response from interlocutors. When an interlocutor fails to use the correct language to refer to an LGBTQIA person, this creates a discordance between their identity and the perception of the interlocutor. This mismatch can cause discomfort and harm to the LGBTQIA person. In Dame's (2016) terms, misgendering can threaten ontological security. Thus, the policy that all interlocutors should affirm each other's identities seeks to ameliorate these possible tensions. This policy is connected to the creation of new identity labels and pronouns, often called *microlabels* and *neopronouns*. *Microlabels* are neologisms coined to describe a very specific gender or sexual identity. *Neopronouns* are third person pronouns other than *they*, *she*, or *he.* Common neopronouns include *ze/zem/zir* and *fae/faem/faer*, representing the subject, object, and possessive forms respectively. Three interview participants expressed an opinion about microlabelling while two discussed neopronouns. S asserted the following opinion:

> I think (.) individually microlabels are fine (.) But you *can't* keep establishing microlabels as a community, because **that** pushes apart the LGBTQ community as a whole even {hi} more.(.) And you can be like, this is a *sub* community (.) you can make it its own (.) and like (.) insists that it has its own {hi} acronym (.) can *have* its own flag, that's **fine**. So you can find people who identify with the same way as you do. (.) Um (.) But beyond that, there needs to be a limit (.) for where it's where there's a divide between it being a community and a sub community […] that will cause more and more infighting. More or less, that's what I don't want.

Here S conforms with the standard ideology that people should be allowed on an individual level to use a microlabel, especially to create a subcommunity and to get distinctive semiotic resources

like a flag and acronym. However, they raise the concern that continuing to create new microlabels could create divides within the queer community over what they deem as insignificant differences. S emphasizes this concern with using creaky voice on *that*, stressing that splitting the LGBTQ community into subcategories based on microlabels could result in divisions. Likewise, the creak on the word *fine* o indicates S's stance that while it may be acceptable for users to create semiotics for their subcategory defined by the microlabel, S ultimately supports a united LGBTQ community without infighting. This seems to mirror Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) adequation/distinction spectrum: according to S, using a microlabel emphasizes an individual's distinction from others within the LGBTQIA community, while using a more common label would create adequation between different identities.

Jesse expresses a similar attitude in the following excerpt:

> {hi}Yes, I definitely think it's helpful {hi} um on like, a personal {hi}level. But at the same time, I think that, like, there should be sort of in an ontology of labels, where like, micro labels are (.) for the most part subsumed into **other labels**. Like we can talk about the difference between bisexual and pansexual, and trisexual, or whatever it is, but we should also have a word to talk about all of those people. Generally, because just, I mean, when you're having conversations about, like, forms of oppression and systems of oppression, like they don't really operate on these micro label **levels most**, I mean, depends on the label you're talking about. But like, like, demi sexual, and asexual people face a lot of the same issues, right, and: bisexual and pansexual people. So I think that micro labels are good and are important to like, have as like things to latch on to, or like two ways to build community or for people to understand each other within the community. But I think we also need to, especially for people outside of the community

that like barely know, like the word *transg ender*. I think it's good to like, have these

more general labels that we can, like, help explain a little bit to other people, our

experiences and why our experiences are unique for this **reason**, or **for that reason**.

Jesse's usage of creaky voice on the words *reason* and *levels* indicates their emphasis on

individual experience and choice. *Transgender* is highlighted with a rising intonation to mark it

as unique in that is the most well-known by cis people. Like S, Jesse approves of microlabels

being used on an individual level to allow for self-definition and solidarity building, but also

wants there to be more general labels that can describe a group of similar identities and

experiences who are subject to the same kinds of oppression. These reactions indicate that there

is an ideological tension that LGBTQ community members must deal with: on the one hand,

allowing people to self-determine their own identity with infinite specificity. On the other hand,

solidarity across differences is critical for the LGBTQ movement to grow and cooperate. Again,

this tension in identity formation reflects the adequation/distinction divide: using a general label

like *asexual* highlights commonalities between people who have a common experience of not

experiencing sexual attraction. However, some individuals may want to emphasize their unique

understanding of their own sexuality, leading them to use a distinct label like *demisexual* or

graysexual. This strategy recalls Zimman's (2018) argument that self-identification reifies the

autonomy of the neoliberal subject. The tension between solidarity and uniqueness or broadness

and specificity is also reflected by Ekins and King (2010), who claim that the increase in the

amount of trans identities and their spread across internet communities has led to both a desire to

escape definition through labels like *queer* and to be as specific as possible.

Lina seems to disapprove with microlabels, although she mitigated her condemnation

because she did not feel like she could explain it well when asked to clarify:

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Also you have to be careful with stuff like microlabeling where you kind of are getting to where it's like very like a very long list of labels that kind of are almost overtaking um and maybe you know that's I think might also come with like not understanding it as well either but like generally I would say um that with all the kind of new identities and stuff like orientations and stuff that if it's something that um is what makes you feel comfortable…[microlabels are] just kind of the idea of kind of identifying with a number of labels but to a very, very specific point where it's (…) I feel like I'm not explaining it well but um… But um where it can kinda be just harmful I guess in a way yea. It's interesting to look up I read an article about it awhile back it was interesting.

Here Lina first identifies as potentially problematic because they could be "overtaking." However, she hedges her opinion by pointing out that she could be basing her stance on "not understanding it well." She also says that she's generally in favor of neologisms for people to find what makes them "feel comfortable." When pressed to describe her opposition to microlabels, she demurs by saying she "feels like [she's] not explaining it well," uses the hedges "kinda," "I guess," and "in a way" when saying that they can be harmful. She also uses discourse markers indicating hesitation like *um* and uses frequent pausing. This patterns with the rest of Lina's interview, where she positions herself as a novice and not knowledgeable enough to speak on certain topics. This reflects Lina's legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in the community: as a novice, she does not feel able to give a definitive opinion on a controversial topic, instead voicing what she's read or heard.

S and Jesse also agreed that there should be limits on the use of neopronouns, again challenging the policy that all forms of self-expression through language should be affirmed in any context. S says:

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I am fine with neopronouns. (.) Um (.) But there's a couple of rules that *I've* seen. This is

mostly on TikTok where I think it's a lot more verbal- *based*. (.) But there are a few rules

I've seen on TikTok that I like, and I would like them to be established everywhere, which

is (.) if you're neopronouns are really (.) {hi} out there (.) like based on like an object or

whatever (.) which I've seen […] which are fin:e (.) but there are people who might not

be *comfortable* with those. It would be nice if you had an *alternative*. Um (.) And other

ones where if your neopronouns move into something that might be a little (.) that can

ha:ve something of a bit of an inappropriate context behind {hi} it. […] Those were the

{lo} mai:n sort of rules (.) And I think those are **really** good and those **should be**

imposed.

In this passage, S argues that certain rules that they have observed on the social media platform

TikTok "should be imposed" in other contexts. While S generally approves of neopronouns, they

assert that alternatives should be given when the neopronouns are based on objects or sexual

concepts which could make an interlocutor uncomfortable. S thus disrupts the policy and

ideology that self-identification must be affirmed in all circumstances no matter the opinion of

the audience. Instead, they propose an alternate set of policies or "rules" in order to protect

interlocutors from discomfort or confusion. S emphasizes their stance by using creak on the

words *really* and *should be imposed*. Using rising intonation on *comfortable* and *alternative*

highlights the affective consequences of individuals' choices of neopronouns on others. At the

same time, S also hedges their opinion, by using terms like "it would be nice" and "something of

a bit of" to mitigate an absolute stance. In effect, S asserts that while they personally would like

to see certain policies followed when using neopronouns, they do not want to offend users by

stating their stance too harshly. This seems to stem from S's hesitation to be seen as contrary to

the commonly-held policy within queer communities that self-identification is paramount and should not be questioned. S's stance is more nuanced, but they do not want to be perceived as not affirming other community members' identities, which could lead to them being "called out." This is related to Årman (2020) that shame is attached to language policies: in order to avoid being shamed for breaking a community norm, S hedges their position. This legitimizes their stance in the eyes of the community.

Likewise, Jesse also positions I as in favor of neopronouns for individual expression but says their use should be restrictions on them in certain contexts.

Yeah, so I think {hi} (.) to be honest, I have a pretty controversial opinion about {hi}pronouns. That's a little bit in {hi}opposition to like, the standard ideology. And um specifically, I think it's with regard to like neo-pronouns, okay So, it's *not* that I think they shouldn't **exist**. I do acknowledge that people have certain pronouns that they've created or that they have community with other people and that feel best for them that they really like to **use**. Um but I feel like it's kind of the same thing that we've been talking about, like pure ideology versus practicality. […]U::m and I know that that is very controversial, because a big part of this queer ideology is that is like self-**determination**. And like you, you get to say, what your name is, what your pronouns are, how you want to be referred to how you don't want to be referred to. U::m and like I, on a fundamental level, I do agree with {lo} **that**, like, I think that people should get to choose, um like how they are {lo} **addressed**. But on like a larger }*scale*. I 'think it's gonna be difficult, especially - if we're starting to think about like mandates of like people using right pronouns and then having like, physical *consequences* for not *doing* so[…]. I- personally, I think in a professional setting like that, the little bit too much to **ask**. And I know that's extremely

controversial. U::m and maybe that part of it is like my own privilege because I do have

pronoun' that I'm okay with. And u::m like, I don't feel the need to use like, a neo-

pronoun. However {hi}, at the same *time*, I've met a lot a lot of people through my **work**

through, you know, my fraternity through just generally, I've never met a single person

that exclusively uses a **neo pronoun**.

In this section, Jesse acknowledges several times that they are expressing an opinion that is

somewhat contrary to the "queer ideology" of self-determination, and they affirm that they

believe in that ideology overall. For example, they state that their opinion is "pretty

controversial," and they acknowledge that they "on a fundamental level" they "do agree" that

LGBTQ self-determination through language is important. Jesse uses creaky voice on topically

important words like *determination* and *neopronoun*. They hedge and mitigate their stance by

acknowledging that it goes against the policy of ultimate self-determination, even conceding that

their viewpoint may come from a place of privilege. Like S, Jesse frames their stance within the

dominant ideologies of the community of practice in order to retain legitimacy and avoid

shaming (Årman, 2020).

Most of their concerns with neopronouns center on the practicality of asking other people

to use brand new words and that there would be concrete consequences for making a mistake. At

the same time, they remark on the fact that no one they've met only uses a neopronoun, implying

that those people use both a neopronoun as well as a more standard pronoun like *they*. In this

excerpt, Jesse positions themself as slightly heterodox, but not as an ultimate arbiter of policy.

They express what they deem as a controversial opinion on an enactment of self-determination

policy but insist on still aligning with the underlying ideology of the importance of language.

Both S and Jesse use hedges to mitigate their divergence from what they perceive to be the

dominant ideology of self-identification. The hedges are used as an adequation strategy to emphasize solidarity between themselves and other members of the queer community who might use neopronouns/microlabels, as well as their potential audience (the interviewer and eventual readers of the dissertation). Because audience approval is so important in identity constructions in queer communities, carefully situating their opinions is critical to be accepted by other interlocutors, including myself as their interviewer and a member of the LGBTQIA community (cf. Årman, 2020; Savcı, 2016).

For some participants, labeling their gender and sexual identity was very helpful when discovering their own identity and becoming active in the LGBTQ community. For example, Alice (a member of the focus group) argued that labels were important for her own coming out process:

I do feel like sometimes I find labels helpful for finding other people in the community that I can then connect *with*. I think it very much depends on context. Like if I'm being labeled, like in a stigmatized or like *way*, then it's like, yeah, no, yes. But if it's like, in a way that I'm trying to find *community*, or relate to other people who have similar experiences to me, like I'm for *that*, I think it's *interesting*, because I've, this is my experience. And I've, when I've talked to other queer people about *this*, I've noticed, I definitely will be very conscious about what labels I will use for certain *people*... I don't really like the term lesbian. And I feel like I now only use it in the context for straight people […] so they have some context of what I'm talking about. But when I'm talking with like, *queer people*, I'll use like more broad terms, I like more the fluidity because I feel like it's more inclusive, because I also still identify as on the asexual **spectrum**. So I'll use terms like **gay** or **queer** or **sapphic**. And I feel like I like those terms much *more*.

And I identify with those *more*, but I definitely notice myself depending on who the

audiences are for and I will change what labels I'm using ...

Alice's labels for herself are not static; they depend on the context and interlocutors she is using

them with. This is similar to S and Jesse's explanation that microlabels and neopronouns should

be used only in certain contexts when they would be affirmed and understood. Alice claims that

using labels allowed her to find community with people who use similar labels, which was S's

argument against using microlabels too broadly. This also indicates that labels can be used as a

way to indicate the similarity between an individual's identity and those of others in the

community (adequation) (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Although she claims that she doesn't like the

term *lesbian*, Alice uses it with straight interlocutors to give them "some context" that they will

understand. With other LGBTQ people, Alice "feel[s] like [she] likes[s] [broader] terms much

more" like *gay, queer* or *sapphic* than specific ones like *lesbian*. Like Jesse, Alice uses creaky

voice to mark topically important words like *gay, queer,* and *sapphic.* While both *sapphic* and

lesbian both refer to the ancient Greek poet Sappho of Lesbos, *lesbian* tends to refer to women

who are exclusively attracted to women. In contrast, *sapphic* can be used for women who are

attracted to women and to other genders. There are some queer people who gravitate toward

more general vague terms like *queer* to distance themselves from rigid definitional boundaries

(Ekins & King, 2010).

Participants also changed their pronouns and labels depending on who they were

conversing with. For example, one of the focus group participants, pseudonymized as Alex,

explained that even though they identify as nonbinary and use they/them pronouns, they may not

disclose that at first in conversation.

So like, when, (.) whenever I'm, talking to *someone new*. (.) If like, I feel like safe around **them**, then I will like, because I always tell people like *pronouns* she/her? If I don't know **you**, you know, because I feel like I present pretty *femininely* […] But like, when I'm talking to someone new, and I feel comfortable, I'll tell them like, oh, like pronouns, are they/them, and then see how they react *towards them*. Because I feel like it's, it's like, a good place to start to see like, whether or not this person will like, take a whole identity **seriously**. Because it's like, you can't like me and not- and still see me as a girl. So I think that it's just like (.), a way of making sure of like, protecting *myself*, **starting with them**.

And then moving on towards like, sometimes I feel this way, just like more *fluid*.

Alex describes a method to "protect" themself, to determine if a listener is open to respecting their non-girl identity before exposing themselves further. Later, if the interlocutor passes the test, Alex will explain that their gender identity is actually fluid and more complex than the pronouns *they/them* encapsulate. Still, Alex uses *they/them* as an indexical marker for LGBTQ identity and community membership and as a heuristic to measure interlocutors' openness. Using creaky voice on the words *seriously* and *starting with them* indicates the importance Alex gives to this "test" of openness in order to maintain their safety. This again indicates the importance of interlocutor reaction when a speaker discloses an LGBTQIA identity. Alex uses their interlocutor's reaction to pronouns as a proxy to how safe they will feel interacting with the person.

Alice, Alex's friend who they came with to the focus group, agreed and said the following.

Um, I feel like I'll have like similar experiences. … sometimes I'll use like certain language, whether it be like inclusive, gender inclusive language, or like, queer *inclusive*

language, just to like, test the waters. Can I trust you? So I definitely like I definitely

have used language and context to test the water to kind of evaluate this person, because

like, you know, for people have strong feelings about language. And I feel like language

is definitely one of those things that like people get very reactionary about. And so yes, I

definitely have used language in a **way** to suss out if I feel safe around this person. **And**

can I trust them? Can I be like *myself* around though? And that's like, a sad reality. But

you know, it's definitely a *safety like defense mechanism.*

Like Alex, Alice uses "inclusive language" as a way to examine if interlocutors are open to the

LGBTQ community more broadly. She describes this practice as a "defense mechanism" against

potential hostility or microaggressions due to her queer identity. Again, certain lexical items

become indexes for solidarity with the LGBTQ community. Usage of gender-neutral pronouns

and other inclusive language has become enregistered (Agha, 2004) to represent a safe,

trustworthy persona that will accept Alice for her non-normative identities. While the last

sentence of the passage emphasizes the importance of this register to her safety, she uses uptalk

while laughing to build rapport with other group members and commiserate on their shared

marginalization.

Discussion:

Each participant discussed the level of knowledge required for successful interaction in

LGBTQIA spaces both on and off campus, including online. Much of this knowledge was

language-focused, such as which terms should and should not be used, the norms around asking

for and sharing pronouns in conversations, and practices like selecting microlabels and

neopronouns for self-identification. These features have become enregistered (Agha, 2004) as a

way of speaking associated with acceptance, openness, and trustworthiness, as Alex and Alice's

comments indicate. Adherence to these norms, especially when others are sharing their identity, grants the interlocutors legitimacy within the community of practice (Årman, 2020).

In addition, all members espoused a tacit agreement that language is important for individuals within the LGBTQIA community. However, they also each pushed back on this ideology when discussing neopronouns and microlabels. S and Jesse both asserted that microlabels are helpful in LGBTQIA spaces for specificity and solidarity within very small subsets of the community but argued that broader terms should also be used in order to describe common experiences. Likewise, S and Jesse thought that the use of neopronouns should also have limitations to provide ease for the listener in interactions. Discussions with participants reveal a tension between choosing very specific or broad language to describe identity. On the one hand are umbrella terms like *gay*, *queer*, or *sapphic*, like Alice prefers. On the other hand, are microlabels, like *faegender* or *demigirl* which describe a very narrow identity. Using broader terms allows participants to build solidarity with others based on shared experiences. However, using microlabels and neopronouns represent an extension of the ideology of self-determination: each individual can define their own identity, including creating their own words to describe it. This connects to Inoue's (2007) and Zimman's (2018) discussions of neoliberal governmentality as it relates to identity: the Self can become legible when it chooses language to describe itself. The conflict between solidarity and individuality reflects Bucholtz and Hall's (2004) conceptualization of tactics of intersubjectivity. The most closely related tactics that Bucholtz and Hall discuss are adequation (emphasizing similarity) and distinction (emphasizing difference). By using neopronouns and microlabels, people emphasize their distinction from other members of the LGBTQ community and straight/cisgender people. This explains the concern that S and Jesse have about the possible divisive aspect of new terms. At the same time,

some people like Alice are drawn to the definitional ambiguity of broader terms like *queer*. Many people use multiple labels and pronouns in different contexts, some more specific/obscure and some more broad/recognized based on the context.

The communities of practice framework (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992) is helpful to conceptualize the dynamics of power and language in the data. The centers represent physical loci where students are able to communicate and learn; there are several communities of practice which are associated with the centers. These include clubs, staff, students who attend programming or use the space, and digital spaces. During the COVID 19 lockdown, the WRRC and LGBTQIARC created Discord servers where students could communicate to replicate the in-person centers.

Lina positions herself as a novice to the LGBTQIA and feminist communities of practice on campus. She hedges her stances and uses many pauses and high-rising intonation to mark this positioning. On the other hand, S and Jesse position themselves as more experienced members of the communities. Jesse in particular, as a former staff member of the LGBTQIARC, speaks with authority on the dynamics within the center. Still, they still hedge when they express a possibly controversial opinion that contradicts inclusive language and self-determination norms.

Lina, Jesse, and S describe legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). As novices, they stayed to the periphery, observing and listening to other members' use of language. They also actively used the internet to look up meanings and educate themselves on the "proper" way to use language in these spaces. Through gradually more active engagement in person and online, S and Jesse became more comfortable with the language norms of their communities of practice and thus became more central members. At the time of her interview, Lina was at the very beginning of this process.

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This study investigates how activist-oriented communities of practice on college campuses portray their ideological stances on gender and sexuality and how they distribute that to a wider public audience. Both centers' websites claimed an intersectional view and asserted that they were against all kinds of oppression. Their choice of language and content indicates that they were attempting to act as a bridge between activist and academic theorizations and discourses to a wider audience who may not have background in the study of gender and sexuality. They negotiate wider discourses about gender and sexuality with what will be relevant to the hyperlocal context of the campus community, modeling this language usage on their Instagram pages. At the same time, the LGBTQIARC's discussions of language use in identity construction presuppose a coherent internal identity that the neoliberal subject can then choose language to express (Zimman, 2019). This ties into Zimman's (2019) discussion of the dialogic identity construction; it is not enough to announce one's identity, it must be affirmed and ratified by interlocutors in order to be successful. Interview participants negotiated with ideologies of self-identification and dialogic construction through their interactions with other community members and indexed their stances of these informal policies through prosodic cues like pitch and creaky voice.

Chapter 4: Activism and language norms

Introduction:

It is crucial to be able to closely understand the language of policies in order to better understand how particular activist positions regarding gender and sexuality emerge. This is because policies in general tend to uphold a sense of 'norm', activist positions need to be understood in terms of normative positions they are resisting. In this case, the policies are themselves working to be more activist and in this sense are emerging out of contesting normative, conservative ideologies around sexuality. This chapter explores how participants constructed an activist identity, enregistering how a feminist/LGBTQIA activist is "supposed to" speak based on community policies. The analysis focuses on the following themes emerging from the data:

- Metalinguistic awareness and importance of language

- Learning about language ideologies and policies

- Educating others on language reform

- Knowledge as social capital

- Breaking language policy

Metalinguistic awareness and importance of language

In the materials collected from both the WRRC and the LGBTQIARC, there is an emphasis on the choice of language both by individuals served by the centers as well as by the institutions themselves. Both resource centers openly discuss their decisions and rationale behind choosing to use certain words and not others. For example, on the WRRC's FAQ page there is a statement on the side of the page saying,

Why an 'x?' We intentionally spell some words with an 'x' in order to recognize the

agency of womxn, individually and collectively, and to challenge the notion that womxn

are necessarily defined through their relation to men. This spelling is intended to honor

anyone who has ever, ever will, or currently identifies as a womxn. For example,

using *womxn* instead of 'women' and *hxrstory* instead of 'history'". (Women's Resources

and Research Center, 2021)

Here, the WRRC connects the orthography of the word *woman* with the ideology that women are

subordinate to men. Thus, the WRRC justifies their usage of *x* in their spelling of *womxn* and

hxrstory as intentional linguistic disruptions of sexism. In addition, the author links this move to

women's agency, defining this agency in terms of breaking away from a masculinist view of

gender and toward women's self-definition.

The LGBTQIARC engages in a similar metalinguistic explanatory note on their glossary

when defining the words *homophobia*, *transphobia,* and *biphobia* (LGBTQIA Resource Center,

2021). These entries follow the same format, beginning with the word in question, then directing

readers to another definition (such as *cissexism* or *heterosexism*) and presenting the following

note:

*As a staff, we've been intentionally moving away from using words like "transphobic,"

"homophobic," and "biphobic" because (1) they inaccurately describe systems of

oppression as irrational fears, and (2) for some people, phobias are a very distressing part

of their lived experience and co-opting this language is disrespectful to their experiences

and perpetuates ableism. (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021)

The authors emphasize the intentionality of the choice and attribute it to the staff as a whole,

framing it as a collective dynamic movement away from what they perceived as problematic

terminology. They explain that they find this language objectionable because the suffix *-phobia* typically refers to a set of medicalized conditions characterized by, as they state, "irrational fear." They contrast what they frame as an "authentic" phobia with "systems of oppression." There is a distinction between an individual level phobia with a system level oppression. In addition, they assert that to "inaccurately" use the suffix *-phobia* to describe non-phobic phenomena negatively affects individuals who experience true phobias by comparing their experience to hostile systems and ideologies toward marginalized gender and sexual groups. The author labels this practice as perpetuating ableism, which they define elsewhere in the glossary. Thus, there is an acknowledgment of an intersection between gender, sexuality, and ability. While the document including the disclaimer is not specifically a policy demanding readers' compliance, it models an ideal way of using language its audience.

Harmful Words:

On a page of the LGBTQIARC's website titled "Words that Hurt," the staff present several posters that used to hang in the Center in the early 2000s that contain offensive language to avoid. They label this page with a content warning: "CW: harmful language and viewpoints" to warn readers that the homophobic and misogynistic language may be offensive to readers even in the context of disavowing them. The page then lists about twenty offensive words or phrases and explains why they should be avoided in speech. For example, the first entry says, "Bitch (In Any Language): Targets and dehumanizes women, even if used toward men, including queer and gay men. Devalues women and femininity. Reinforces sexism." Another entry further down labeled "that's so gay" says, "Stigmatizes gay and queer people. Uses their identities to describe something as undesirable and bad. Replaces negative adjectives with words related to LGBTQIA identities." Both entries emphasize how the word or phrase in question upholds

systems of oppression and stigmatization toward a marginalized group, in this case LGBTQIA people and women. This page stresses that just as language can be used for self-affirmation and dialogic acknowledgment, it can also be used to harm an individual and contribute to discrimination on a larger scale. The Center's focus on harmful language indicates the high level of metalinguistic awareness and its ability to affirm and tear down marginalized group members.

Learning about policies/practices/language

The interviewees discussed similar ideologies, practices and policies regarding language, gender, and sexuality related to the LGBTQIA community on and off campus. One key practice all of them participated in was researching language norms within the queer community before and during their involvement with the LGBTQIA Resource Center. This usually meant Googling new terms and paying attention to discourse on social media. This is similar to the Swedish students in Årman's (2020) study and the Turkish activists in Savcı's (2016) ethnography. For example, S said:

> But I usually tend to make sure I'm aware of everything before myself in a space (.) especially one as nuanced as the LGBTQ community spaces tend to be…It's a combination of Google and social media, I think. So like, if I feel like I need to know something, or like, if I feel like I'm not getting directly from social media, or Google websites, check forums and see how it works there. If not, social media usually always has the answer.

S uses uptalk on the word *usually* and chose the mitigating verb *tend* to emphasize that while the reported practice is standard for them, they do not guarantee that they always follow it. This reflects S's claim that they pay attention to nuance in their interactions in the LGBTQ community. Here, S positions LGBTQ community spaces as especially "nuanced," where

preparation is necessary for them to engage fully as a member. Social media is their primary source of information, where they actively seek new knowledge.

Similarly, Jesse discussed how prior to their formal training at the Center as a staff member, most of their knowledge about language policies and practices within the queer community came from social media:

Coming to Davis, I was not super aware of, I guess, like social, like sociology *kind* of stuff, like, oppression power a *little bit*, I learned, honestly, anything. Anything I learned before coming to this, to UC Davis was through Tumblr… So a lot of people our age kind of learned about stuff like that at first. So I had some knowledge from **that**.

Like S, Jesse uses uptalk on *little bit* to highlight their hedging, in this case their lack of knowledge before coming to UC Davis. Jesse and I also discussed the importance of Tumblr, a microblogging social network, for the socialization of LGBTQ late millennials and early Gen Z folks. Jesse highlights our shared experience by stating "a lot of people our age kind of learned about stuff like that at first." This again reflects the way that social networking sites like Tumblr provide important virtual spaces for LGBTQIA youth can communicate and socialize each other and themselves (Brown, 2022; Dame, 2016).

I asked S, who is several years younger than Jesse and myself, if they also used Tumblr. They confirmed the continued importance of Tumblr for the socialization of queer people into the community:

Tumblr still the entry because .. while most of us do use {hi} Instagram (.) a lot of the queer content, like it's *still Tumblr*, it's just Tumblr repackaged in Insta**gram**.

Tumblr in particular has been labeled as a queer utopia (Zamanian, 2014; Dame, 2016) which offers LGBTQ youth an opportunity to learn and gain community. There are many Tumblr pages

that are dedicated to being resource pages for people of a variety of specific LGBTQ

subcommunities. These pages often include FAQs (frequently asked questions), glossaries,

memes, and interactions between bloggers and followers.

> Lina also reported researching terminology online in order to educate herself:
>
> Um yea definitely like Googling sprees like maybe if I come across something on (..)
>
> Instagram or like from a friend or something I've learned in class I'll go on Google and
>
> kind of look for you know key words search and kind of look for like articles or
>
> information on like (.) definitions or websites or like current happenings {lo} definitely to
>
> like learn about it learn about a vast amount of stuff.

The participants indicate how crucial online resources, especially on social media, are for queer

youth even before they enter into physical LGBTQIA spaces. They provided several

explanations for this, including that there was a lot of expected knowledge for community

members entering queer spaces, which Jesse characterized as "intimidating," while S called it

"overwhelming." Lina, the youngest and most recently out participant, expands on this, saying:

> … Yea definitely cus I think just um (…) there's definitely a lot that I don't know um (.)
>
> and some things I'm not sure like sh- like is that expected {hi} I know that or is that so
>
> there is definitely some things so kinda like you said with like the big {hi} terminology
>
> and the big kinda {hi} theories there's definitely some of that that I'm just not maybe in
>
> touch with or I haven't learned and it definitely kinda feels like at some point I'm like
>
> ooo maybe I don't know enough to like (.) be putting so much of a *voice* into it because
>
> I don't have quite as much say experience of knowledge so yea I would say for sure.

In this excerpt, as in other places in her interview, Lina indexes her position as a newcomer with

hedging, pausing, and other stance markers. For example, she uses phrases like "I don't know,"

"I'm not sure" and "I'm just not maybe in touch with." She also frequently mitigates her stance using "kinda." She asserts that she doesn't have enough knowledge of community norms of language to even engage by "putting so much of a voice into it." She reiterates her hesitant stance with frequent pausing and rising intonation. Being a novice in these kinds of communities of practice can feel overwhelming for new members, where they must educate themselves on the "right" terms to use and the norms to follow. Their preparation by researching online is a form of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The participants are undergoing language socialization as young adults being socialized by other young adults into non-normative ways of speaking and being (Thompson, 2020). They are gaining what Savrı (2016) calls *politico-cultural capital*, competence in using language in the "right" way to be able to be seen as legitimate in the community.

Jesse also reflected on their entry into the queer community on campus and how they tended to listen and not contradict more experienced members of the community:

> Because in the beginning, I was at the bottom of the totem pole and in experience and understanding. So I would just defer, defer, defer, learn, listen. And slowly, like, you know, I got more understanding, I became a staff member, I got explicit training about this stuff.

Jesse emphasizes the importance of deference and listening when becoming a new member of this community of practice. Over time and with training, they eventually became an active member and leader. This shows how Jesse began as a novice engaging in legitimate peripheral participation by observing at first, then mastering the lexicon and norms of space, gaining more cultural capital along the way.

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Other participants in the focus group reported learning about important concepts about gender, sexuality, and language from peers and classes. Within the focus group, several participants positioned themselves as newcomers and/or unknowledgeable about current terminology and definitions. For example, when discussing where she learned about inclusive language, Shannon said, "…I'm a she/her, I'm straight. So it's, it is all new territory for me…And I do have to check myself in the fact that I am a straight woman and I'm going to fuck up a lot. But then I'm trying, you know…" Here, Shannon positions herself as a straight, cis woman who does not have the lived experience that queer and trans people have with language. She cautions that she may make mistakes in her language due to her lack of experience and knowledge but reiterates her effort in trying to be inclusive. Later in the conversation, Shannon reiterates her straightness and willingness to learn to her fellow participants, "Don't sugarcoat stuff because I'm straight…I love this…to hear everyone's thoughts." Discursive positionings like this one frame the individual as an eager novice that may be given more grace in case of a mistake. Others in the focus group would often claim that they didn't know exactly what a word meant, even after they gave a perfectly reasonable definition for a term. The humility around knowledge within this space appears to be part of the socialization process within these communities of practice.

Educating others about gender and language norms

Some participants claimed that educating others about gender and language norms was a key part of being an ally and/or member of the LGBTQ community. This reflects S's contention that the best way to deal with possible violations of language norms is through education. In the following excerpt, Alice recounts an interaction she had with her father.

... My dad approached me to ask me about like, they/them *pronouns*. And because he

didn't really *get* it, and I was like, Okay, here's a moment to like, education, I'll try my

best, I don't know, identify as a they/them and I'll try my best as a queer person to *explain*

it to you. Um, and so I was explaining like, oh, yeah, like, when people use they them

pronouns. Like, they prefer that, as opposed to, like, say, like, she/her or he/him. […] And

then he started yelling at me, and telling me that I'm stupid, and that's stupid. And I don't

know what I'm *talking about*. And then, like, immediately, like, I was like, You came to

me. [...] I always, like when I tried to be like, you know, a good ally and spread

information like, um, I try my best, but um, I don't know, I do find it really frustrating

that people like, do have such a *negative reaction*. And then it makes me like, you know,

like, it's sad, but it's also like, what if someone's like, *nonbinary* like that you're just

making a, like, an *unsafe environment for them*.

Although Alice does not identify as "a they/them," as a queer person she seems to feel an

obligation to be a "good ally" to nonbinary people by "spreading information." This excerpt

shows the possible negative consequences of trying to explain language and gender norms to

people outside of the community. Alice faced hostility, which she found "really frustrating" and

could make "an unsafe environment" for nonbinary people. This relates to Alex and Alice's

comments chapter 3 about how they use certain words to test if an interlocutor will make them

feel "safe." Alice emphasizes the affective consequences of being rejected by using uptalk on

nonbinary and *unsafe environment for them* at the end of the utterance. There is a tension

between avoiding violence and trying to prevent violence by educating others about the LGBTQ

community and its language practices. Other participants navigated this in different ways.

Shannon eventually gave up on trying to explain her feminism to her stepbrother due to his

unwillingness to listen. Two participants attributed their hesitation to discuss LGBTQ matters with their families to the family's immigrant background and traditionalism. Still, as discussed in the following section, displaying one's own knowledge to "educate" others was an important sociolinguistic practice within the LGBTQRC's community of practice.

Knowledge as social capital/activism

As mentioned previously, access to the "right" kind of language is an important form of cultural capital in the communities of practice of focus. Jesse also reflected on how increased knowledge was tied to social status within the hierarchy within the Center among student staff and other community members. According to them, members who displayed their knowledge of systems of oppression were valued. They elaborate on this hierarchy in the following excerpt:

And um I think something that I'm aware of now that I wasn't aware of at the time is, I think another a little more insidious form of *oppression* that it can, maybe not- is not as much anymore because it's been addressed but definitely at the time, when I first got there was this hierarchy of like, people who have knowledge and people who don't and like people that are more aware, or more woke or more understanding, having a certain kind of privilege in those spaces. U::m and so there definitely was that kind of dynamic of like (..) like um (.) you're here to listen, right. And I'm here to talk because I'm- I'm more aware, I've done more work, you know, I've done more reading than your kind of thing. And I don't think it was intentionally trying to be antagonistic. But it definitely could come off that way, especially for um people like me, who are like very new and very, like, oh, like, I don't know, anything like just trying to {lo} learn.

This system of prizing knowledge about community norms and the theories tied to them

"creates an incentive for people to educate themselves and be more aware" according to Jesse in order to have more cultural capital (Savcı, 2016) within the community of practice. The participants were socialized into this system and into the ideologies and policies structuring it both by conducting their own research and by observing other members of the community. By mastering the register (Agha, 2004) of the community of practice, some members have situated themselves in positions of power over less knowledgeable members. They need to demonstrate this knowledge in order to legitimate their position within the community of practice, like the students in Åmran's (2020) study. This relates to Savcı's (2016) critique of the Turkish LGBTQIA organization's classism. While inclusive language is intended to affirm people's identities, it can also set up new hierarchies of knowledge based on access.

Nicole, the WRRC staff member, critiques student activists who solely focus on using "correct language:"

> But I've noticed that a lot of students *here* in part of it might be because the pandemic and part of that just might be the *generation* is a lot of them seem to be on the page of like, what is correct and *incorrect*. And they will do a lot of the smaller things like let me share these types of things on social *media* or let me sign this *petition*. But a lot of them don't know much about **like**, I don't know, like organizing in the history of *organizing*… And they'll do things that makes them feel like they're doing **stuff**, but it's more focused on **like** very, very specific details like am I using the correct *language*, or signing petitions or sharing stuff on social media and all that is important. It's it's in regards to learning but some I feel like the **the** action step is **kind of** missing a little bit, which I think partially could be in regards to COVID.

To Nicole, it is not enough to just use the correct register or share inclusive language policies and practices on social media, student activists should be organizing on the ground about more concrete issues. She indicates that some of this phenomenon could be related to the COVID pandemic-related restrictions on in person organizing. Still, she mitigates her criticism of student activists by using hedging terms like "kind of…a little bit."

Breaking language policy

The participants also discussed how violations of language policy within the community were treated. Usually, if a community member used a term that was dis-preferred by the community, they would be "called out" publicly by another member of the community. Jesse explains the practice in the following quote.

> …people would say something and then there was all about like, correcting or like, the word that was super popular was problematic, everything was problematic, this is problematic, that's problematic. And like, the things that they were talking about were problematic. Like, I'm not saying that they weren't, but it was, it became more of a buzzword than anything like to kind of shut down certain ways of thinking or certain um like ideologies that they didn't agree {lo}**with.**

Jesse remarks in this passage about the popularity of the term *problematic* to label an utterance which breaks language policies. Jesse criticizes the use of this term, arguing that it eventually lost meaning through overuse and was used to shut down differing ideologies. Still, Jesse hedges that they are "not saying that" other people were not being "problematic" in their interactions. Here, Jesse positions themself as aligning with the overall ideology of the space that interlocutors should be inclusive and that breaking these norms could be harmful. At the same time, they are arguing that some of their colleagues were using the "buzzword" *problematic* in

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ways that could be damaging to other members. The term *problematic* indexes language

practices that break the norms of inclusivity within the community of practice: *problematic*

individuals did not use language correctly and must change or exit.

Later on, Jesse gave more detail on how these interactions would unfold during the

calling out:

…they would usually try to give some sort of explanation, like it perpetuates this form of

oppression, or it relies upon this kind of stereotype or something like that.

When asked how people responded to being called out in what seems to be a very public, face-

threatening act, Jesse grouped responses into two categories.

Yeah, so there was two ways that people would **respond** one *way* was just likes (.)

basically (.) like submission and acknowledgement, and end of conversation like, "Okay,

I'm sorry". Um like, just sort of, like, that's it. The other way was very, like**, push back**,

like, there were certain people that {hi}really didn't like that, that that was happening, and

didn't think that it was fair that people could just say that this is problematic and then that

was that and then, you know, there wasn't really a discussion **about it.** And so they would

um get a little bit {hi}upset and, and push back a little bit. And it would, it would

sometimes cause, like a scene a **little bit**, like, oh, this is now a confront{hi}ation. And

that usually didn't go over well and it usually ended with the person who was like pushing

back or causing the confrontation being painted in a negative light, **like**, generally

socially in the **community** {lo}… Yeah, so kind of like a little bit of blaming and

shaming, I **would** say and I don't know, I don't. I don't like to talk a lot negatively about

this kind of stuff. Because I do believe that the intention behind a lot of the educating

people were trying to do was {hi}good and {hi}for a positive social good. Um but yeah, I

definitely think that in certain situations, the way that it was navigated **u::m** was not

necessarily um achieving the desired effect, if that makes sense {lo}.

Through public correction and the threat of possible exclusion from the community, it seems that

the call out system worked through shame (Årman, 2020). Members were socialized to conform

to language norms with the community, and if they made a mistake, to quickly apologize and

move on. To defend oneself was to risk being labeled as overly problematic and thus excluded by

other community members. Jesse indicates their overall negative stance toward this practice, but

states that they "don't like to talk a lot negatively" about it, because they "believe that the

intention behind educating people was trying to do good." They still want to align themself with

the community and the underlying ideology the practice is based on, legitimizing their stance as

a community member. Still, in the last line, Jesse asserts that no matter what their intention, the

practice of correcting and excluding members based on perceived violations was not "achieving

the desired effect" of building community and being welcoming.

In addition, according to Jesse, the members who called other speakers out the most "had

the best reputations at the Center…a lot of times, it was…this kind of game of like, social points

and you gained a point by calling someone out and you lost a point by saying something that was

called out." Thus, social standing in the community was linked to the linguistic act of calling out.

This is similar to the self-assigned tag monitors on Tumblr in Dame's (2016) study. Interlocutors

gained more cultural capital (Savrı, 2016) by correcting other people the most. This is related to

the previous section's discussion on how this system of assigning capital to linguistic knowledge

can cause division and exclusion within the communities of practice.

S described a similar interaction with friends on Discord, a social media chat application

available both on desktop and smart phones that contains different "servers" of people with

common interests to talk. While S is active on the LGBTQIA Resource Center's Discord server, this particular interaction occurred on a different server they are a part of.

> Someone did say something that came off as a bit (.) on the nose and just (.) ignorant maybe (.) and we {hi} all chimed in like, "Hey (.) did you mean {hi} this or **not**?" And like, they're like, "No we don't mean to be {hi} offensive." And we explained why it was offensive. **That** was more or less it. […] Education is the **way** I think.

In this excerpt, S uses several pauses, seeming to slightly struggle to articulate what the alleged norm-violator did to warrant correction. They emphasize that the rest of the group members ("we all") "chimed in" to ask the alleged offender whether they meant to be offensive, highlighting the question with creaky voice on *not*. The target said that they did not, then S and the other members explained why the utterance had been offensive. S states that after this exchange, the problem was resolved: "that was more or less it." In the end, S asserts their belief that educating interlocutors about community norms is the best way to ensure their compliance with them.

> S also said that when calling out occurs on a Discord server, other members let the "most confrontational" member "take the *lead* […] and then everyone else will chime in and pick a side or what**ever** {…}and then be like, 'Hey, so yeah, we are all, this is what we stand for, and like stay or leave,' kind of thing." Online, it seems that calling out is a communal activity where certain members take the lead while others come to back them up to present a united front.

Alice also talked about how she might go about addressing a broken language norm. She asserts that her approach would be based on how safe she feels with the person she's interacting with.

> I feel like definitely I agree with those that are taking them aside privately. And I feel like also, it depends who it *is*. But I feel like they're a safe person to approach this with. … I

feel like I definitely always I'm thinking about kind of predicting how I think this person

might react to it, and like, how receptive they might be and like, from past experiences,

when I interact with this person, like, oh, do they seem like, open and welcoming to this

conversation? But definitely, **like**, isolating them or not isolating them, but like, taking

them into?

Instead of S's approach or what Jesse described at the LGBTQIARC, Alice and other participants

in the focus group said that they would rather speak to someone privately to discuss their

behavior. Alice considers how the person might react and tailors her response to this. Later, when

asked how they would react if corrected, Shannon said she might get defensive at first but would

work to listen and to apologize. She also laughingly said that she might cry based on the

criticism, showing how personally interlocutors might take critique.

` Both WRRC staff members also discussed how they approach correcting and educating

students who may break the norms of inclusive language in the space. Marianne discussed

guiding student staff members in their programming:

because a lot of *that*: . (.hhh) how do I do this the right *way* is driven by *fear*: They don't

want to be ca:nce{hi}led They don't want to be *wro::ng* (.) umm *Granted* yeah there a-

are there *ideal* ways to (Marianne laughs) word something? sure right? **umm**: SO I think

steering folks away from some of those pitfalls of . YOU kno:w (.) umm . HEY like this

is the- THIS is how this might alienate these **communities** that you're trying to *connect*

with.

Marianne points out that students often fear saying something "wrong" and getting "cancelled"

by other members of the community, as discussed by Jesse above. Marianne portrays her

approach as a gentle guide, using hedges like *might* and the verb *steering* instead of direct

imperatives to the students. She acknowledges that some ways of using language may be more "ideal" than others, but that using overt correction may lead to the "alienat[ion]" of "communities that you're trying to connect with."

Likewise, Nicole discusses how she trains her student staff members to deal with correction from others in the community:

I usually have a whole presentation that's in regards to language, because yeah, that does have an impact. You don't want to miss gender, people, you want to know what you say afterward, instead of saying, like, oh, like you took it the wrong way. Bla bla bla bla, no, it's like, you know, thank you for correcting me, sorry, I messed up, I'll do a better job at like making sure that I don't miss gender, you and I'll use the pronouns that use type of thing, or understanding because they facilitate programs, right?

Both Marianne and Nicole discuss language policy and correction with student staff members who they have the most contact with. The student staff members then facilitate events where it is up to them to put inclusive language norms into place, correct those breaking them, and be willing to be corrected by others. The student staff members are the public-facing representatives of the WRRC's language policies to the rest of the student body, so it's important for the career staff members to inculcate them with these policies and practices during their training.

Shannon, a straight and cisgendered woman who participated in the focus group, discussed how she self-corrects when she finds herself making an "error."

And, you know, I've had times where I catch myself, and I'm like, shit that, you know, one time I met with a TA, and they referred, they, their pronoun was they and I said, Oh, I'm going to be late for the appointment with her and and then I realized two minutes, and I'm like, I'm so sorry. And so it's retraining the **mind**, right? I'm retraining and I have to

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be **more** cognizant and **aware** and just respect everyone as to how they would like to be

defined or identified. So and it's a hard like, we say, we're just on this path of norm right.

And so now I'm you've got to retrain **the** brainwaves and all things.

Shannon describes the process of correcting herself as "retrain[ing] the brainwaves" to become

"more cognizant and aware," using creaky voice on *more* and *aware* to emphasize the retraining

process. She portrays her mistake (misgendering her TA) as accidental, in which she forgot about

the TAs preferred pronouns until a few minutes later. She immediately apologized and reflected

on the experience as a moment of growth. Shannon connects the practice of being aware of how

someone would like to be referred to and affirming this through language as a way to be

respectful.

Centers' social media language usage

In order to evaluate if the WRRC and LGBTQIARC staff were using language according

to the guidelines they promulgate, I analyzed their language on social media The WRRC and

LGBTQIARC both used Instagram to publicize events and introduce community members to

their services. Overall, the usage of language on Instagram by both Centers seems to match their

language policies of promoting inclusive language. For example, both Centers used terms like

y'all and *folks* to refer to a group people in the second person instead of the possibly gendered

you guys. As Perleberg, Dy, and Hippe (2023) argue, *y'all* has extended in use past its traditional

isogloss of the American South and has become an index for inclusive, feminist or queer identity.

The WRRC's Instagram used *y'all* six times, *folks* 16 times, and *folx* (a phonetic spelling of *folx*

using the popular letter *x*) six times. The LGBTQIARC's page used *y'all* nine times, *folks* 36

times, and *folx* one time. In addition, both Centers put a person's chosen pronouns after their

name when introducing them in a post. For example, when introducing Nicole, a staff member at

the WRRC, they wrote, "Nicole (she/her)." The WRRC listed pronouns after names 104 times (78% of name introductions) while the LGBTQIARC did so 13 times (17% of all name introductions). While the WRRC emphasized that they used the spelling *womxn* for political reasons, they used that spelling only seven times while using *women* 18 times. The LGBTQIARC did not use *womxn* at all. Using pronouns in introductions and key terms like *womxn* and *folx* are being enregistered as characteristic of inclusive, LGBTQIA and feminist-focused language.

Discussion:

The theories of indexicality and enregisterment are helpful to interpret the data. Enregisterment is the process by which linguistic features are attached to social meaning where they are associated with specific subgroups of speakers (Agha, 2004; Johnstone, 2016). The data show several ways of speaking and lexical items that are being enregistered, indexing membership or allyship with the LGBTQIA community.

Linguistic practices such asking interlocutors for their pronouns and sharing their own are suggestions given by the LGBTQIARC's language guidelines. These practices index the speaker's positive stance toward LGBTQIA people and their respect for their interlocutor's linguistic self-determination. Likewise, using the orthographic innovation of replacing sounds with <x> marks a feminist/pro-LGBTQIA stance. This difference is only visible in written forms like *folx* and *womxn*. However, there may be a linkage to the ethnonym Latinx, which has become more prevalent in progressive circles in the US (Mora, Perez, & Vargas, 2022). In addition, changing the second person plural pronoun from *you guys* to *y'all* in this context signifies not an alignment with Southern identity but rather a desire to be inclusive. Integrating *they/them* as a singular pronoun in reference to a specific, known person is another grammatical

change that speakers enact to index their inclusive position. These grammatical and lexical features are being enregistered, linking to a register of "inclusive language" that feminists, LGBTQIA people, and their allies must use to be legitimate members of related communities of practice.

A major point of disagreement between participants was how to handle incidents when interlocutors broke language policies in their communities of practice. S described having the most vocal member of a group confront the offender and having other members back them up. Jesse discussed that when they worked at the LGBTQIARC, members with the highest knowledge of language norms and who corrected others the most had the most social capital and power in the space. Meanwhile, Shannon, a straight and cisgender feminist, explains how she is trying to "retrain" her brain to self-censor to avoid misgendering an interlocutor. The two WRRC staff members, Nicole and Marianne, both emphasize not using accusatory, direct language to challenge students' use of language, instead gently steering them toward "better" linguistic choices. Meanwhile, the focus group participants discuss talking to possible rule-breakers privately and carefully gauging their reaction so as to not provoke a negative response. In particular, Alice and Shannon talked about that while they saw their duty as allies to educate others about LGBTQ issues, they did not push conversations with non-receptive listeners to protect their own well-being. The heterogenous approaches to enforcement of inclusive language policies show how the variation of linguistic practices within these communities of practice. Although all participants affirmed inclusive language ideologies, they went about practicing them in distinct ways based on their comfort levels, personal experiences, and position within the communities. This chapter focused on how the WRRC and LGBTQIA construct policies and

norms of how to interact within their communities of practice and how interlocutors within these spaces negotiate these policies.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This dissertation investigates dynamic language policy, ideology, and practice in the context of the nascent Fourth Wave of Feminism and LGBTQIA liberatory activism. Just like language is always changing, ideology is not static, and neither are the policies that proceed from language ideology. By using ethnography, discourse analysis, and sociophonetic methods, this dissertation takes both a global and local lens to analyze how activists use language to align themselves with sociopolitical stances. The popularity of social media has allowed speakers to educate themselves and others about changing language norms, which eventually spread to in-person local contexts like the WRRC and LGBTQIARC. Community members use knowledge of language policies to correct other speakers' utterances, leading to some members' self-censorship. Displaying linguistic knowledge becomes cultural capital, creating hierarchies within the communities of practice. While conceptions of gender, bodies, and sexuality become more fluid within activist spaces, the limits of what constitutes inclusive speech is both constantly changing and fairly narrow.

Major Findings:

Language change is both reflective of and constitutive of greater social change. In the last decade, there have been multiple cultural shifts pertaining to gender and language, including the Women's March, #MeToo movement, the greater awareness of trans and nonbinary people, and reactionary legislation targeting LGBTQIA people. Within each of these movements, language has played a key role in connecting members with shared vocabulary and norms. For example, according to the Florida "Don't Say Gay" bill, public school teachers are not allowed to discuss sexual orientation or gender identity in front of their students (Goldberg & Abreu, 2023). This proscription mirrors the right-wing intention to erase non-normative genders and sexualities from

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public spaces. Likewise, Women's Marchers reclaiming *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* reflects their commitment against reactionary politics.

This dissertation has focused on both the local and the global by investigating newspaper discourse as well as interactions in small communities of practice. The local and the global affect one another. Reporters writing the articles used in Ch. 2 were describing the linguistic and semiotic practices of individuals in real life and online. Participants in the WRRC and LGBTQIARC communities of practice are influenced by media discussions of language norms, like on Tumblr and Instagram. Social media has led to greater access to niche topics of knowledge and allowed marginalized people to share experiences and meanings with one another.

While language ideologies, policies, and practices regarding language and gender are changing rapidly, they are still contested by community members. For example, while *nasty woman* and *nevertheless, she persisted* were found to have mostly positive, reclaimed semantic prosodies in the corpus, their pejorative meanings remain in other usages. Likewise, interview participants indicated differing views on usage of microlabels and neopronouns, as well as the most appropriate way to correct another community members' language. This finding dovetails with Brown (2022)'s argument that trans community language change is perceived to be faster than it is, because some members' voices are louder and prolific than others.

Certain community practice members in the LGBTQIARC and WRRC have more access to linguistic knowledge about which words to use or not use. This imbues them with more cultural capital (Savcı, 2016) than other members, creating a hierarchy based on knowledge. This is similar to Brown's (2022) claim that the most powerful members of online trans communities who set language trends tend to have privileged identities. LGBTQIARC members indicate their

mastery of this cultural capital by correcting other members' speech publicly, "calling them out." This practice can serve to exclude members by directly threatening their face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Participants who don't leave the community instead socialize themselves by listening to more experienced members' use of language and by researching language norms online. They also tend to self-censor and mitigate stances which may be seen as against community norms, including in conversation with the interviewer. Modeling their language to these policies allows the participants to signal their legitimate position within the community of practice (Åmran, 2020).

Inclusive language policies seem to have two major goals: to affirm someone's identity (attending to their positive face) and avoiding offending or marginalizing someone (attending to their negative face) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Interlocutors can affirm each other's identity by using the others' chosen pronouns and identity labels. This contributes to the dialogic nature of self-identification through language (Zimman, 2018). It is not enough for an individual to claim an identity; it must be ratified by community members as legitimate. Community members can avoid marginalizing an interlocutor by not asking personal questions like someone's transition status, not using slurs, and avoiding misgendering someone. (Somewhat contradictorily, the community's practice of "calling someone out" for not following community language norms is an inherently face-threatening act.) Each of these practices are discussed by the LGBTQIARC's website as ways to practice good allyship (LGBTQIA Resource Center, 2021). These linguistic practices, alongside using lexical items like *folks*, *y'all*, and *womxn* and reclaimed *nasty woman*, have become enregistered to be associated with an open, accepting, pro-LGBTQIA and feminist persona. The connection is strong enough that some focus group participants report "testing"

interlocutors by gauging their reactions to gender neutral pronouns in order to determine if the person will react positively to their nonnormative sexual or gender identity.

Individuals' selection of identity labels and gendered pronouns seems to be affected by two competing ideologies: being as broad as possible to build solidarity and escape static definition or to be as specific as possible to highlight the diversity of possible identities and the uniqueness of individual experience. Participants report trying to balance these concerns, often suggesting using a set of labels or pronouns to change based on audience and context. For example, S and Jesse suggest that people who want to use microlabels or neopronouns should choose more recognizable, broad words to non-queer audiences in order to be legible.

Standardizing language usage and meanings within the communities of practice through direct instruction and resources like a glossary enables members to become socialized into norms and be able to express themselves using shared vocabulary. At the same time, as Valentine (2007) and Dame (2016) argue, a classificatory system of labels imposes certain ontological and epistemological conceptions of gender and sexuality. For example, as Westbrook (2010), the system of labels upholds the ideology that gender is a knowable and expressible aspect of identity. While the LGBTQIARC's website claims that language is secondary to one's feelings of identity, as Butler (1990) argues, language constitutes identity itself. Standardizing a register of inclusive language through policy enforcement could potentially constrain members' gender expressions and the fluidity of both identity and language change.

Implications for the field:

This dissertation combines theoretical and methodological insights from several subfields of linguistics, including ethnography, discourse analysis, sociophonetics, and corpus linguistics. It combines an analysis of mass media discourse with a bottom-up analysis of local communities

of practice linguistic norms. While previous studies of gender-based language reform have focused on top-down policies or suggestions for policy (cf. Årman, 2020), this dissertation takes an in-depth look at how members of interlocking communities of practice are socialized into language norms and how that affects their linguistic practices. The findings also point to the conclusion that language ideology and policy do not always align with individual speakers' stances and practices. While certain ideologies and norms have become standardized in the communities of practice, members are constantly negotiating with them and with interlocutors. This indicates that speakers have agency to decide which norms to follow and which words to use in order to conform to or challenge community language policies.

Implications for activism:

This dissertation also has practical implications for individuals and communities who engage in LGBTQIARC and feminist activism and utilize inclusive language. The findings can be used to expand metalinguistic awareness and reflect on community language norms and their impact. For example, how are new members socialized into the language policies of the community and what are the consequences for going against these policies? Communities could also use the results to consider how inclusive language norms might be creating a hierarchy based on access to knowledge and linguistic competency. If that is the case, they may consider the suggestions of Nicole and Marianne in Ch. 4 to encourage education and gentle guidance rather than the confrontational corrections described by S and Jesse. Metalinguistic awareness and reflection can help activist communities build cohesion and solidarity among their members while reflecting the fluid natures of both language and identity.

Limitations and future directions:

  This dissertation is limited by its sample size and methodological choices. For example, Ch. 2 focused only on a small portion of newspaper articles published in a given time period. This doesn't reflect all of the media discourse about *nasty woman* or *nevertheless, she persisted*. Likewise, Ch. 3 and 4 investigate two related communities of practice on a university campus. These communities and individuals that comprise them may have unique characteristics that are not generalizable to similar communities of practice. The sociopolitical context in which this study took place, at the beginning of the 2020s in Northern California on a college campus, also affects the findings. University students in other locations or at other times would have different stances toward language and gender.

  In the future, I would like to expand my analysis to investigate how axes of oppression like racism, classism and xenophobia affect community language norms and individual linguistic practices. While this dissertation has mentioned these factors briefly, in the future I will use a raciolinguistic framework (Rosa & Flores, 2017) to fully flesh out how gender, sexuality, race, and class are articulated together. In addition, I would like to go into more depth in my prosodic analyses of the spoken interview data I collected. In this dissertation, I focused on creaky voice and uptalk as stance markers. I intend on expand to looking at vowel quality, /s/ fronting, turn-taking, and further classifying the pragmatic functions of creaky voice and uptalk. I am also considering using the corpus-based methods discussed in Ch. 2 to further analyze the data described in Ch. 3 and 4. I would be interested in common collocations and colligations and how certain key terms may have variable semantic prosodies between speakers.

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Appendix A

Transcription conventions

Bold: Creaky voice

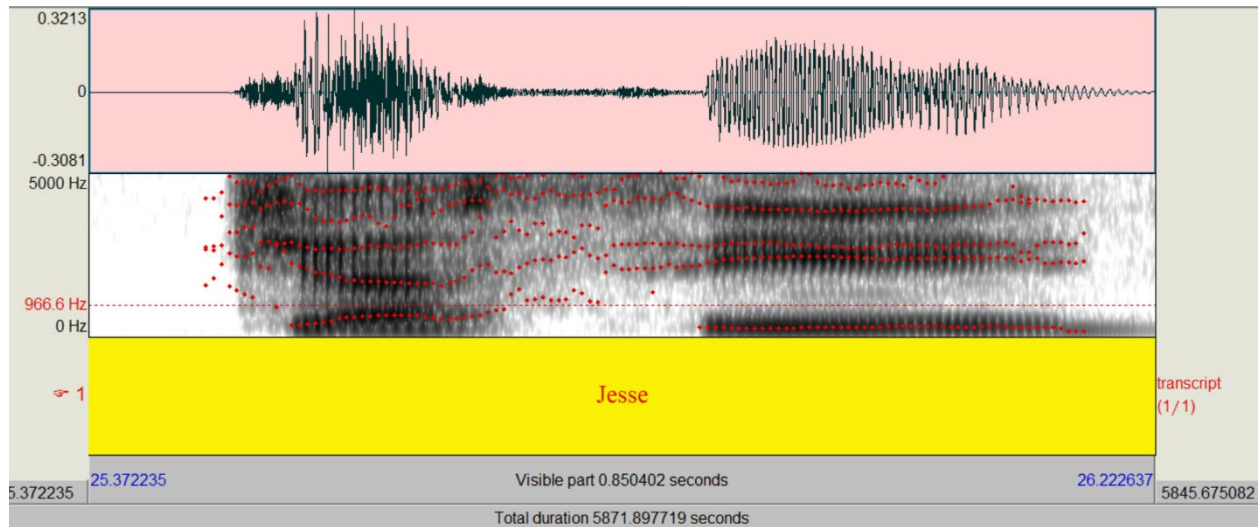*Italics*: rising intonation

: lengthening
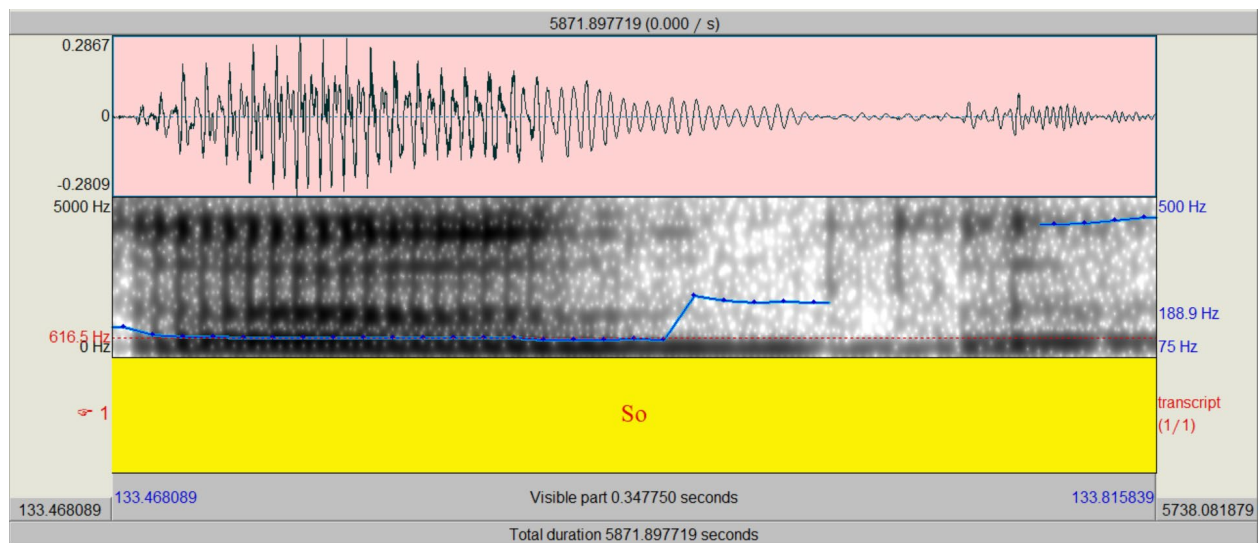
. pause

(.) short pause

{hi}: high pitch

{lo}: lower pitch

Appendix B

Examples of Praat waveforms and spectrograms from Jesse

Spectrogram and waveform of Jesse saying the word *Jesse*. The vertical bands in the

spectrogram indicate creaky voice.

Spectrogram and waveform of Jesse saying the word *so*. The blue pitch tracker indicates rising

pitch over the word, or uptalk.

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