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Queering Conversation:

An Ethnographic Exploration of The Functional Properties of

Camp-Based Language Use in U.S. Gay Men's Interactions

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Applied Linguistics

by

Jeremy Carl Kelley

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Queering Conversation:

An Ethnographic Exploration of The Functional Properties of

Camp-Based Language Use in U.S. Gay Men's Interactions

By

Jeremy Carl Kelley

Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Marjorie Harness Goodwin, Co-Chair

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This multi-sited ethnographic study explores U.S. gay men's interactional usages of *camp*, a queer aesthetic and sociopolitical mode of expressivity that reframes and transforms dominant, heterosexual-constrained communicative conventions and reality through queer forms of experience. Differing from earlier work on camp, which primarily explored the subject from the perspective of cultural studies, the current analyses are premised upon the examination of camp as a product of talk-in-interaction, looking specifically at its role as an interactive resource with the capacity to aid in the construction of queer personhood and community, while also challenging the heteronormative communities that render this queer coalescence subjugated within larger social structures and hierarchies. Drawing from audio-video ethnographic data

collected over a one and one half year period in four different U.S. cities (New York, New York; Atlanta, Georgia, Fort Lauderdale, Florida; and Los Angeles, California), the talk is analyzed from a methodologically conversation analytic perspective, wherein detailed transcriptions are used to explore the systematic and sequential nature of talk. In this way, participants themselves, and by extension the talk of said participants, are taken as the primary sources for understanding social structures and courses of interactional action. As the research is conducted from a participant-observer perspective, follow up interview and survey materials are also used as an additional means for substantiating and grounding the analyses, and in some cases, adding layers of in-group understanding that might be overlooked using etic observational approaches alone. With regard to the analyses, the usage of camp as an interactive practice within queer friendship groups is explored not only for its ability to transform mundane everyday life events into discursively queer interactional spaces, but also for its ability to act as a type of covert code through which queer identity is systematically recognized and performed, to varying degrees. This code, which emerges as a product of explicit usages of queer-identified forms of camp humor, queer associative fields of imagery and pop cultural iconicity, and referential invocations of camp identified media and texts, is shown to in turn discursively reconstruct heterosexual normalcy, resulting in a form of critical subversion of the concept of heteronormative behavior. As a result, the study, in addition, explores both the usage of camp within micro-level social contexts that comprise the daily lives of queer social actors, and within the macro-level contexts wherein resides an ever-present interface between marginalized sexual identities and heterosexually defined institutions and hegemony. This critical subversion, in turn, is argued for as a means to understand queer subjectivity by way of understanding what it is not (as seen through a backdrop of heterosexual conventions that constrain interactive practices). The

research culminates in a call for further explorations of camp as an interactive practice, and for alternative forms of queer expressivity as potential loci for understanding queer experience and social organization.

The dissertation of Jeremy Carl Kelley is approved.

Sue-Ellen Case

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2013

This dissertation is dedicated to

Philippe Tytgat, who always encouraged and supported me,

and to the many gay men who graciously and fabulously made this possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Locating Camp Linguistics: A Move Toward Praxis

Recently, while grading term papers from a course in language and gender, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that of one of my undergraduate students was interested in determining whether or not heterosexuals could interpret the dual meanings of words with both standard dictionary definitions and gay associated meanings that are unique to the U.S. LGBTQ community. She had asked a range of gay and lesbian students and collected from them a list of terms that they had deemed queer. She then tested her heterosexual participants to see whether or not they could derive the desired gay-related meanings. In the first sample, she gave no gay context, and as a result received an overwhelming majority of standard dictionary-based definitions. In the second sample, the subjects were informed that the terms were in relation to gays and lesbians. Though the addition of a queer context did have an affect on eliciting correct interpretations, a large percentage of the terms remained elusive. But one term in particular resulted in utter confusion for the heterosexual participants, literally leaving them stumped in trying to determine its meaning as it relates to the LGBTQ community. That term, which found its origins in the times of Oscar Wilde and has endured until the highly political era in which we live today, is *camp*.

Their confusion is not surprising given that camp is difficult to define even for gay and lesbian scholars. The simple definition would be to say that it is a queer mode of expression, but this characterization is quite vague and barely even scratches the surface. Isherwood (1999 [1954]) was one of the first to use the term, characterizing camp as a type of gay style, which

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functions on two distinct levels: High and Low. High camp, he professes, is the "emotional basis of the Ballet…and of course Baroque art" (p. 51), while Low camp is "a swishy little boy with peroxided hair, dressed in a picture hat and a feather boa, pretending to be Marlene Dietrich" (p. 51). Isherwood's conceptualization of camp importantly depicts a mode of expression that derives its meaning through its position as marginal to mainstream culture, be it bourgeois or common. But more importantly, his characterizations mark camp as a salient outlet through which the boundaries of normative culture may be examined, particularly as they pertain to queer life worlds.

Building upon Isherwood's work, Sontag's (1999 [1964]) seminal *Notes on Camp* sought to deconstruct camp's complexity, making it more accessible to not only researchers, but also to a broader public. Through introspective reflection, she inventoried and exemplified a range of characteristics, which, she argues, portrayed camp as an aesthetic form of expression and interpretation. For her, camp represents a stylistic, which conveys "an attitude which is neutral with respect to content," and as a result which becomes "disengaged, depoliticized" (p. 54). Through her numerous examples, she demonstrated how camp, as an aesthetic, resides in object (e.g., baroque art), person (e.g., a camp, a person who camps), and performance (e.g., *The Maltese Falcon*), thriving on artifice and exaggeration in deriving its meaning. She showed how the spectrum of camp style shared a certain underlying flamboyance and extravagance, all the while thriving on the naïve and notions of failed seriousness. As a result, Sontag posited a straightforward working definition, which seemed to unify camp into a single cohesive entity: "… a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous" (p. 54).

Sontag's depiction of camp, however, marked the beginning of a debate that endures today, stemming not only from her characterizations of camp as an apolitical entity, but also

through her failure to distinguish the traditionally queer from the more mainstream pop-culture movement. Meyer (1994a) marks Sontag's depiction as the moment in which queer subjectivity was rendered invisible, the moment in which camp was released from the bosom of the then burgeoning gay community, and repositioned as a product for heteronormative consumption. Indeed, one of the most contested claims Sontag made was that camp was not the unique property of gay culture, and that gay men, though serving as founding members, henceforth served primarily as its vanguards.

Yet others have shown that camp is much more than an aesthetic sensibility and that it is in fact inseparable from notions of queer subjectivity. Indeed, Meyer (1994a) argues that camp represents a cultural mode of expression that is essential to ongoing queer theoretical research, and that its implications position it as a highly political form of queer representation. Case's (1999 [1988]) work on lesbian camp theatrical performances further substantiates the political nature of camp by demonstrating how depictions of traditionally heterosexual theatrical roles, reformulated through stereotypically queer butch-femme roles, may be used as a tool with the capacity to subvert hegemonic cultural norms, and reclaim queer identities subjected to assimilatory practices that erase them. Core (1999 [1984]) speaks of camp as a means of disguising deviant behavior (e.g., 'sexual anomaly') that is deemed unacceptable by mainstream society by concealing one's social exclusion behind behaviors which are equally ostracized. As a result camp becomes a sociopolitical entity in that practitioners simultaneously "conceal and reveal" aspects of their identities, through what Core defines as "a lie that tells the truth" (p. 81), providing a self-derived voice of agency to the queer subject that can in turn be utilized in navigating one's sociocultural positioning as other. Viewed together, these perspectives demonstrate the potential power of camp as a form of social critique that transcends Sontag's

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representations of camp-as-sensibility, and positions it as a political tool that may be drawn upon for purposes of empowerment and social change.

The term queer, as I have been conceptualizing and using to this point, has been more or less conceived of as synonymous with the terms gay and lesbian. Yet it is important to note that this term, in its definitional sense, includes more than traditionally "queer" people alone. Queer, in this definitional sense, does not entirely exclude the heterosexual life world; it can include the fringe contingency of the heterosexuals that overtly challenge heteronormative values (e.g., those that seek to resist notions of heteronormativity such as the stereotypical marriage plus children, the house in the suburbs, suits/pantsuits, minivans, etc.). Camp, when viewed within this expanded sociocultural framework, may thus be seen as the result of *queer-normative* practices, retaining at its core its gay and lesbian origins and associations, while also allowing for marginal (or queer) representations of heterosexuality to co-exist and to derive a sense of authority from its use. This expanded notion of the term queer thus allows for camp's recognition beyond the boundaries of what we would readily recognize as the queer community (which Sontag's work supports), while maintaining, at its core, the rejection of dominant heteronormative values (a rejection in which gay and lesbian people play a central role). Through this analytical lens, camp thus gains a sense of flexibility that is often downplayed by queer political activism, becoming inclusive rather than exclusive, and viable as both aesthetic and political critique to a larger sense of marginal-status individuals and groups.

Indeed, the interplay between camp's positioning as aesthetic versus political tool for social critique are not easily compartmentalized. As an aesthetic sensibility, camp allows for its practitioners, namely queer subjects, to posit an outlook on reality that is, in essence, divergent from hegemonic society. It allows the queer subject to gain an expressive voice in his or her

positioning as a marginalized 'other'. This serves to substantiate camp's position as a

sociopolitical stance. Further, all sociopolitical positions, in turn, require a point of departure

upon which to build their platform. Camp, as an alternative vision of a (heteronormative) reality

that renders the queer subject marginal, provides such a platform. This is because camp, as an

aesthetic, is a way of seeing life. As marginalized subjects, gays and lesbians (and in some cases

queered heterosexuals), by default see not only the beautiful, but the non-beautiful, which is ever

present in queer subjectivity given the queer subject's status as subordinate within

heteronormative society (see Connell, 2005). It is through this reasoning that both the

sociopolitical aspects of camp as well as the aesthetic aspects of camp may be reconciled as

interdependent entities that thrive upon one another, locked in a symbiotic existence in which the

ebb of one results in the flow of the other. This is essential in that it allows for the two

perspectives to coexist, not in opposition to one another, but in a harmonious and complementary

state in which the aesthetics and political activism converge to form a uniquely queer mode of

expressivity.

　　There have been a range of edited volumes dedicated to the exploration of these two

perspectives (i.e., the sociopolitical versus the aesthetic), with some of the various contributions

perpetuating their separateness (Meyer, 1994b), and others demonstrating their coexistent, if not

complementary qualities (Bergman, 1993b; Cleto, 1999b). Where these works lack in attaining a

full critical understanding of camp as a queer mode of expression, however, is in their ability to

account for its nature within everyday lived practices. Specifically, the work on camp to date has

not adequately treated the everyday conversational interchanges of queer men and women as

central to understanding the role of camp within lived experience. I thus begin this dissertation

with the assertion that there is a lack of understanding of camp-based expression within casual conversation.

In particular, *this dissertation seeks to determine how linguistic notions of camp-based expression are used within casual communicative interchanges among gay men, to find out what functional properties such representations might exhibit when viewed within the context of moment-to-moment unfolding interactive practices. Further, it seeks to better understand how the use of camp may be interpreted and applied beyond the scope of everyday talk, and what, if any, implications these representations may have for the queer subject's place, and future place, within a society that sees homosexuality as other, or more precisely, as soundly subjugated.*

Analytical Features of Camp-Centered Language Use

Reflecting upon my own usage of, and encounters with, camp expression, I begin this endeavor by first pinpointing what I envision as integral features of camp expression within everyday conversation. I do this in order to establish a point of departure for further developing camp's role as a viable source for communicative input within everyday interaction.

The first major aspect of camp-centered language use is humor, in particular sexual joking, verbal dueling, wit, and above all, irony. The second major aspect is the role of pop culture within the daily lives and talk of gay men. This, according to Sontag's aforementioned work, is because camp-as-aesthetic seems to consist of a merger of traditional camp with aspects of pop culture, or pop camp. Though this merger remains contested (Meyer, 1994a), I believe that to speak of one without the other would be to look at the issue from an incomplete perspective. As such, any examination of camp-centered language use, in order to be complete, has to encompass both. And lastly, any approach toward understanding camp representations within conversational talk has to encompass what I, as well as many of the participants in my

fieldwork, have come to term *referencing*, a linguistic strategy of textual invocation which takes on two distinct forms. The first variety can be classified as *nominal referencing*, in which pop culture icons/referents are named within conversation, typically marking parallel associations with something being spoken about (e.g., inserting the name Joan Crawford at a moment of the conversation that bares some similarity to her life or film roles). The second variety can be classified as *polyphonous referencing*, which I define as a polyphonous communicative act in which the exact, near exact, or conceived utterances of another person, character, or sound system (typically from some camp or pop culture source) are used within unfolding interaction through intertextual overlays of voice and persona, recognized as originating within an external context, but interpreted for communicative use within the current real-time interactive frame (e.g., using a line of dialog from a film that is relevant to the immediate interactional context, and accomplishing it through both lexical and paralinguistic accuracy).

Of these camp features, the first two, camp humor and pop culture, seem to permeate gay men's casual conversations. However, based on findings explored within this larger work, the third feature, referencing, seems to occur within limited contexts. Further, referencing seems to perform a variety of complex functions that surpass superficial semantic explanation. Given this, much of this dissertation will be devoted to the development of the third feature. My own reflections, as well as preliminary research, indicate that referencing can be used for a variety of interactional functions, including: 1) as a situational mitigator for contexts deemed risqué; 2) as a tool that reflects how gay men construct and perform aspects of their identities; 3) as a unique type of stance display that derives its meaning from intertextual sources; and 4) as a marker for determining who belongs as an in-group member with regard to both the interactional setting and to larger notions of normative U.S. gay male identity.

To better understand the nature of camp-centered language use, as it has been proposed here, it is necessary to first understand the theoretical background of some of the major concepts that will be addressed in the process of achieving this research agenda. Therefore, in Chapter Two I review some of the key research that has been crucial in the development of my concepts and argumentation. I follow this with an in-depth exploration of the methodological approach that I took (Chapter Three), including details on the settings and the participants themselves, and my role in these dynamics as an ethnographic researcher. The remaining chapters are then dedicated to the analyses themselves, whereby I explore camp according to the various subcomponents illustrated above. In Chapter Four I explore camp's capacity to transform seemingly mundane conversational interchanges into markedly queer, and thus heteronormatively divergent, interactions. It is through these transformations of the mundane, I argue, that the use of camp becomes a tool through which queer discursive space is constructed and positioned as different to heteronormative expectations. In this way, the queering of the mundane becomes a resource for exhibiting queer agency within interactional spaces. In Chapter Five I then explore how camp humor is constructed within talk-in-interaction, and how this humor is intricately connected with pop cultural imagery. The analyses explore how camp humor emerges primarily as a mode of ironic expressivity, which gives rise to queer aesthetic taste and differentiation. The chapter then concludes with an exploration of the collective sense of imagery generated by the various camp invocations used. The result is a tangible field of camp-based pop cultural imagery that is marked as different from heteronormative expectations for men within U.S. culture and society, in turn comprising a foundation for a notion of pop camp culture as a distinct subset of larger pop cultural conceptualizations. In Chapter Six I then explore instances of camp referencing, where participants polyphonously invoke the

recognizable words of camp media icons as interactional resources for the talk at hand. The

invoked words are then explored for the specific communicative functions that they perform

within the discourse, and shown to be unique to the U.S. queer community through their

differentness to the referencing practices of other sociocultural groups and communities.

Chapter Seven carries forward the concept of referencing, specifically delving into how such

practices result in complex interactional stance displays with implications for both the immediate

and larger sociocultural domains of interaction. The final analytic chapter, Chapter Eight, then

explores the use of camp as an interactional resource through the words of the participants

themselves. Using follow up surveys and interviews, I construct an emic perspective which

serves to substantiate the earlier analyses through the voices of those who produced the talk itself.

Finally, I conclude the dissertation with thoughts on camp as a language strategy in itself,

exploring first where camp has come from, and progressing towards where it might potentially

be going. This is important given that the U.S. queer community continues to transition from a

more marginal to a more accepted status. Such transitions thus beg the question, what role camp

will play for future queer generations? I therefore conclude by attempting to open a discussion

on this transition, proposing some final assertions based on the analyses and understandings

gained throughout this larger endeavor, and leaving off with calls for future research, particularly

given that camp, as a queer resource, continues to evolve and transition alongside the U.S. queer

community.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Camp Humor

Examining the work of gay films, stars, and directors, queer film theorist Jack Babuscio (1999 [1977]) defines camp as "a perception of the world which is colored, shaped, directed, and defined by the fact of one's gayness" (p. 19), which sees reality for what it truly is, and in turn seeks to cope with that reality. Babuscio goes on to outline four key features as central to camp as a queer mode of expression, all of which diverge from mainstream conceptions of humor. The first is *irony*, which "refers here to any highly incongruous contrast between individual or thing, and its context or association" (p. 20). The second is *aestheticism*, which acts as a framework within which irony can function given that it represents not only a view of art and of human tendencies, but more importantly of life itself. The third is *theatricality*, whereby Babuscio states that "to appreciate camp in things or persons is to perceive the notion of life-as-theater, being versus role-playing, reality versus appearance," and through which "life itself is role and theater, appearance, and impersonation" (p. 22). The fourth feature of camp is *humor*, which Babuscio further breaks down into some of its most salient sub-features, including bitter-wit, laughter-through-tears, seeing the beauty and value in the worthless and bizarre, subversiveness, and mocking of the dominant culture. He argues that it is through these four basic features of camp that the serious can be perceived through a sense of detachment, which in turn allows gays and lesbians to deal with a society that has, in essence, rendered the queer subject marginal. This coping, however, results primarily from the ironic effect that camp has on dominant discourses.

As Gibbs and O'Brien (1991) point out, "the irony of irony is that we can often recognize ironic situations and language even though we have a terrible time trying to define irony" (p. 523). A traditional approach to ironic speech argues that, in order to create an ironic effect within interaction, one or more of Grice's (1989, 2004) maxims of quantity, quality, manner, or relevance, has to be violated, resulting in a conversational implicature in which meaning must be uncovered through proper pragmatic contextualization. Yet some researchers have shown this traditional approach to be insufficient. According to Barbe (1993), irony can be both implicit (i.e., unmarked as ironic) and explicit (i.e., marked as ironic, as in 'Isn't it ironic that…'), and Kaufer (1981) makes the claim that irony may, in some cases, be irony by analogy (see also Booth 1974 and Kaufer 1977 for a discussion on irony and rhetorical strategy). This is important because camp irony is the driving force behind camp humor, but camp irony does not necessarily derive its meaning solely from sentential level structures. Camp is, as Babuscio asserts, a means of dealing with the perceived absurdity of a reality that positions the queer subject as other. Building upon the Bakhtinian notion of the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1994), Cleto (1999a) asserts that, "while inverting the principle of normality, camp invokes it, for camp presupposes the 'straight' sense that has to be crossed, twisted, queered" (p. 32). As a part of these processes, camp inadvertently polarizes the queer and the mainstream, placing them into incongruent oppositional roles. This implies a type of discursive, rather than sentential, production of irony in that, through camp, normality is both assumed and reframed as different, as other in relation to the camp aesthetic and by extension queer life worlds. Thus camp becomes the ironic other with regard to heteronormativity, and by extension to mainstream society.

Within camp irony, Babuscio (1999 [1977]) subsumes the notion of wit, or more specifically bitter-wit. Norrick (1984) points out that expressions of wit consist of two primary

sub-categories: 1) punning retorts – i.e., wit that plays on the lexical level; and 2) non-punning retorts – i.e., wit that plays on the utterance level. This is a useful distinction because, if wit does in fact play a key role in representations of camp irony, as Babuscio asserts, then Norrick's analyses exemplify how it may be used as a discursive tool at both the micro and the macro levels of discourse. In short, through punning retorts camp may be linguistically invoked within words alone; through non-punning retorts camp may be linguistically invoked within larger discursive segments of talk.

Drawing from this body of research, it becomes clear how linguistic camp representations of wit, mockery, sarcasm, and irony 'do' things in conversation (see Austin 1962, 1975, and Searle 1969), with two of their primary functions being displays of solidarity (Norrick, 1994) and shared identity (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). From a sociocultural perspective, camp humor is thus a way of 'doing' queerness, through a common form of humorous expression that is selected as queer-normative within the U.S. queer community. From a sociopolitical perspective, as Long (1993) asserts, "camp assaults a society that presumes it knows what is serious and what is not," and "it thrives to imitate this authority in distorted form but to expose it explicitly as inadequate" (p. 79). This conceptualization of camp further serves to position it beyond the immediate scope of use (or interactional scene), rendering it a stance with far reaching critical implications. From a linguistic perspective, I assert that camp is the articulation of these two perspectives (i.e., the sociocultural and the sociopolitical), functioning as a tool for the construction and performance of queer identity, while also pragmatically undermining the dominant culture through expressed inversion. Following this logic, camp-based language expressions, and in particular linguistic forms of camp irony, wit, sarcasm, and mockery, emerge

as a type of functional queer voice, providing the queer subject with a sense of agency, and allowing him or her to cope within a marginalized existence.

Camp & Pop as Community

Queen's (1998) work on shared knowledge within LGBTQ interactions demonstrates how mutual epistemic repertoires allow LGBTQ people to create and display their communities of practice, and in turn highlights the fact that various aspects of gay life function in meaningful ways that bind community members into a cohesive whole. Contemporary cultural competence in the discourses of camp and pop culture seems to function in this manner, playing an essential role in everyday gay men's interactions.

One such manifestation of this cultural competence involves the ability to name and reference not only pop culture figures, but also specific lines of dialog from an array of media outlets (including film, music, television, etc.). For example, *People* magazine's online exploration[1] of the contestants of *RuPaul's Drag Race,* a gay themed Logo television network reality series premised upon the search for America's next drag superstar, speaks of one of the contestants, the drag queen Pandora Boxx, as "a part of old world drag esthetic," stating that "she's very smart and knows her pop culture." This statement marks pop culture as a salient feature of the gay male experience. Even when some gay men disclaim an interest in pop culture, they acknowledge its salience. For example, in a testimonial style excerpt from a documentary on gay men and masculinity entitled *The Butch Factor,*[2] one heteronormatively blue-collar, masculine gay man professes that he does not affiliate with pop culture as most gay men do. Yet, in doing so he demonstrates both a recognition of and a stance of opposition to its hegemony within a broader U.S. gay male life world. Though he does not actively affiliate with its use

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[1] http://www.people.com/people/package/gallery/0,,2005517720340490_20731775,00.html#20731781
[2] From Christopher Hines' (2009) documentary, *The Butch Factor*.

within daily life, what his words show is that he recognizes pop culture as a prominent aspect of the American gay male experience, and as a result supports its inclusion as an important aspect of gay identity, including those gay identities that are more distant from its usage in everyday life. Thus there is something about the nature of contemporary pop culture that is widely recognized as a facet of both the broader U.S. gay male experience and of U.S. gay men's identities. The claim can therefore be made that pop culture as it pertains to gay male conversation is, as was previously asserted for camp, representative of a larger construct of queer-normative linguistic practice.

The findings of Bronski's (1984) extensive survey of U.S. gay culture support the important role of pop culture within contemporary gay life. A substantial part of his research is dedicated to examining the important role of media outlets in gay culture, including film, theater, and various media publications. His work demonstrates how each of these outlets plays an integral role in the formation of a modern U.S. queer identity, particularly in regards to camp. In his discussion of film, he asserts that "screen images, perhaps more than any other medium, have shaped popular consciousness in the U.S.," and "gay men in American culture occupy a peculiar position in relation to this consciousness" (p. 92). In examining this link between gay men and film he argues that "gay men, needing an alternative to their oppressive everyday world, would turn to film both to find a means of escape and a vision of something, someplace different. Because movies are an accessible art form, films provide a common bond […] between diverse gay men" (p. 108). As a result, Bronski illustrates a U.S. gay male culture that is highly interconnected with aspects of the popular culture movement, and that in turn derives aspects of its identity from it. Pop culture thus becomes a type of symbolic capital, or what Bourdieu (1991) called "cultural capital" (p. 230), in that epistemic access to pop culture confers to gay men

(when pop is envisioned as interconnected with camp aesthetics) a means of belonging to both a culture and an identity. Pop culture is thereby marked as a symbol of power, of identifying like-minded people, and of signifying the parameters of community.

The shared experience of pop culture also serves as a form of social bonding. Lakoff (1976) argues for social bonding as both a politeness strategy and as a means of establishing camaraderie, which she predominately attributes to male discursive practices. Given my assertions that U.S. gay men's normative interactional protocol prescribes that members recognize and utilize pop referents, pop culture becomes a locus for establishing camaraderie through playful displays of epistemic authority and shared experience. Pop culture thus functions not only as a form of capital (in the sense of Bourdieu, 1991), but as a means of actively, and playfully, testing the boundaries of who's in and who's out, of who belongs and who doesn't, of creating a sense of camaraderie.

Viewed cohesively, these studies indicate that there is something salient about pop culture within the modern U.S. gay male life world. Likewise, the presence of pop culture is intertwined with both the notion of camp expression (Sontag, 1999 [1964]), and, by extension, queer subjectivity (Bronski, 1984). It is thus understandable why, in a sub-culture that draws upon the camp aesthetic, pop culture plays such a vital role in everyday life. The next section, which deals with referencing, demonstrates how pop culture merges with camp and linguistically manifests within U.S. gay men's interactive practices.

Referencing and Intertextual Polyphony

Because of the complexity of the concept of referencing, which draws from both camp and pop culture, I contextualize the concept with an actual excerpt of polyphonous referencing taken from the previously mentioned Logo reality television series, *RuPaul's Drag Race*. In this

example, the drag queen Pandora Boxx has just won the fan favorite Miss Congeniality award. As Pandora accepts the award, he looks to the camera and says *Thank you, thank you everybody*. This is then followed by a polyphonous reference that came from Sally Field's 1984 acceptance speech for her win for the Best Actress Academy Award: *You like me, you really like me*, which is met with laughter from both RuPaul (who is giving Pandora the award) and the other contestants. This laughter stems from the fact that the utterance is performed in a stereotypically feminine voice that mimics Field's original utterance, thus allowing it to be interpreted as a polyphonous reference within the current interactive frame.

As Clark and Gerrig (1990) argue, when we speak of reported speech in its simplest forms we tend to think of it as either quotative (e.g., *Sally Field said, "You like me, you really like me"*) or descriptive (e.g., *Sally Field said that you like her, you really like her*). In both forms, authorship arises through the projector sequences (i.e., subject and reporting/laminating verb), yet the descriptive form exhibits a level of authorial removal that is not present in the quotative form. Indeed, the utterance is not totally the possession of *Sally Field* because the current speaker's voice enters through the third person pronoun *her* (i.e., *Sally Field said that you like her, you really like her*), which allows the current speaker's voice to penetrate the original reported speech by adding a first person perspective. This results in what Bakhtin (1984) characterizes as a "layering of voices" within a single utterance. As such, quotative reported speech restricts authorship in ways that descriptive reported speech does not, creating varying degrees of expressive agential permeation.

Hickmann's (1993) analysis of re-enacted reported speech offers further insight into such structures. For Hickmann, re-enacted reported speech consists of the quotative form, with the projector sequence deleted. Continuing with the Sally Field example, in re-enacted reported

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speech we find, *You like me, you really like me*. According to Goffman's (1981) "production format," the present speaker would embody the position of *animator*, while the re-enacted segments would stem from some preexisting *author* position. Thus, the words being spoken occur through the voice of a current speaker who is in reality appropriating the words of another by "re-enacting" (i.e., repeating the actual words of *Sally Field*, while utilizing their semantic capacities within the present interactive frame). Authorship is thus rendered dual as the current speaker physically remains him or herself, while displaying his or her voice through that of an external other, creating a locus in which the present identities and the invoked identities are momentarily juxtaposed, offering access to both life worlds within a single expression.

Such re-enactments result in one interactive frame, or text (e.g., Pandora Boxx receiving his award) being overlaid with that of another (e.g., Sally Field receiving her award). The resulting synthesis becomes an intertextual display. Bauman and Briggs (1990) and Briggs and Bauman (1992) explore the concept of intertextuality through 'contextualization,' in which texts are created through processes of 'entextualization' (i.e., forming a text), and are then capable of being 'decontextualized' and then 'recontextualized' within subsequent interactive frames. As a result, intertextual displays, formed from both current and preceding discourse, generate meaning with both characteristics of the individual contributors and new characteristics intrinsic to their combined construction.

Through such overlays, intertextuality emerges as a dialogic entity. Linell (2009) argues for dialogicality as a key feature in the creation of interactive meaning in that communicative displays are always linked to some preexisting or resulting communicative display. C. Goodwin (2011) supports this argument in what he terms *cooperative semiosis*, a dialogic process in which participants are seen to perform systematic operations on the signs of others (linguistic,

paralinguistic, and embodied), with the explicit goal of generating meaning. In the example involving Pandora Boxx, the dialogic nature of the intertextual display is achieved not only through words, but also through paralinguistic sound modifications that dialogically connect the current stream of speech with a non-present referent, which Bakhtin (1984) explains as a type of polyphony, or "plurality of consciousnesses" (p. 6). As was previously mentioned, Pandora Boxx does not simply borrow the words of Field, but also appropriates the softer, hyper-emotional acoustic features present in the original display. This intertextually constructed "plurality of consciousnesses" alludes to the presence of not only the identity of the physical speaker, but also to that of the invoked persona. This is also demonstrated in Irvine's (1990) work on register and affect, in which she examined the intertextual speech of Wolof nobles and griots and found that "verbal performances do not simply represent our own social identity, our own feelings, and the social occasion here and now," but rather "they are full of allusions to the behaviors of others and to other times and places" (p. 130)

A prime example of polyphonous intertextuality comes from Günthner (1999), in which reported dialogue was shown to create intertextual links between the reporting world and the story world which signal displays of the reported character's affective stance within the present real-time text. This demonstrates the dialogic, and highly intertextual, nature of polyphony, and in turn substantiates the claim that traces of intertextual identities intermingle with physically present identities to perform communicative functions. Similarly, Barrett (1999), in his ethnographic account of African American drag queens (AADQs), demonstrates how polyphonous stylistics simultaneously index features of Lakoff's (1973) women's language (here termed "white women's speech"), gay men's language, and African American Vernacular English (AAVE). The results of his analyses indicate that through polyphonous invocation of

various linguistic identities, as well as through camp-based performance, AADQs are able to forge unique identities that highlight the cultural hybridity of African American gay men within American society. Such juxtaposed identities thus become the site of highly political contestations that subversively challenge racialized, gendered, and sexual stereotypes in that they draw upon the life experience of others, through polyphony, to reveal injustices and misconceptions that the broader society perpetuates.

The pragmatic importance of polyphonous intertextuality may be further explained through its relevance to face value and situational constraints. According to Goffman (1955) face-threatening acts may have serious consequences for one's social standing within interaction. Indeed, such acts may result from a variety of interactional behaviors, such as committing a faux-pas, venturing into the taboo, not following etiquette, or simply interacting in ways that stand in opposition to socially/culturally acceptable behaviors. In Goffman's terms, such occasions can position speakers "in wrong face," whereby "out of face expressive events are being contributed to the encounter which cannot be readily woven into the expressive fabric of the occasion." He goes on to note that, "should he sense that he is in wrong face or out of face, he is likely to feel ashamed and inferior because of what has happened in the event on his account and because of what may happen to his reputation as a participant" (p. 226). The occurrence of such face-threatening instances thus results in an interactive frame becoming somewhat of a *delicate matter*. The term *delicate matters* may not be the most appropriate term to cover all of the possible sub-types that reside within this categorization; however, given the implied sense of uncomfortableness within sub-type, the term *delicate matters* seems to function rather well in grouping them. The classification of such situations thus requires further investigation. Nevertheless, these delicate matters, and by extension their face-threatening

qualities, in turn warrant mitigating. As Straehle (1993) has shown, mitigation in face-threatening situations serves to strengthen 'social solidarity' (see Heritage 1984, Clayman 2002). Her research demonstrates that prosodic manipulations can result in interpretive frames that situate interactive discourse as acts of teasing, and that through such manipulations tense or face-threatening situations may be mitigated, often in playful and creative ways. Research has also shown that acts of joking, which carry an ever-present potential risk of face value threat for both speakers and hearers, may also be used to generate feelings of "familiarity and friendship," stemming from "shared background and value." As a result, joking, as an interactive tool, may be used in the mitigation of face-threatening qualities within interaction, as long as participants display "agreement of appreciation" (Zajdman, 1995, p. 333). This is important because referencing among U.S. gay men draws upon queer camp humor, and in turn seems to act as a lighthearted way of addressing delicate matters through humorous juxtapositions of text.

The example from *RuPaul's Drag Race* may also be interpreted through this notion of camp referencing as a mitigating tool. Indeed, Pandora Boxx has just won the prize that all of the remaining contestants would have loved to have won. Pandora is thus placed into a situation that could be seen as face-threatening given that he must now accept his award while also inadvertently acknowledging that the other contestants did not win. Here, the delicate matter is one in which a certain level of modesty must be shown so as not to offend others. Now, it could be argued that given the fact that these are drag queens there would be no need for mitigation, particularly since their linguistic expressions often verge on the offensive. However, the drag queens under examination are not in the act of performing; rather, they are individuals (who happen to be dressed in drag) sitting on stage together, rehashing the events of the past season with no studio audience in attendance. This in turn makes the performance caveat less likely

given that they are, in essence, attending to a casual encounter that must be interpreted not as a performance, but as an interchange among peers. As such, the notion of a delicate matter of being modest is substantiated through an examination of the current interactive roles and contextual constraints. With this social interpretation in place, by polyphonously rendering authorship ambiguous, in a campy, comedic manner, Pandora recasts the face-threatening situation as interpretable through dual scenes. In the first scene (i.e., Pandora's current situation), the co-present participants' face may in fact be threatened as losers of an award. In the second, an actor (i.e., Sally Field) is faced with a similar confrontation and handles that situation in a way that allowed others to see her in an endearing way, which serves to reframe the face-threatening act into something positive, humorous. Through this duality in scenes we see a momentary juxtaposition of identities, in which two voices take up positions within a single utterance (Bakhtin 1984). As such, the delicate matter is mitigated through the ambiguity created through overlapping texts, and thus through overlapping identities.

Sexual Identities, Gendered Identities, & the Road to Interactive Practices

Earlier works concerned with understanding the language of gay men placed particular emphasis on lexical dynamism, in hopes of distinguishing the features of gay language that diverged from other English varieties (Cory, 2006 [1951]; Hayes, 2006 [1981]; Legman, 2006 [1941]; Rogers, 1972; Sonenschein, 2006 [1969]; Stanley, 2006 [1974]). In time, gay linguistic research was extended beyond lexicon-based analyses, as was seen in Leap's (1995) edited volume, *Beyond the Lavender Lexicon: Authenticity, Imagination, and Appropriation in Lesbian and Gay Languages*, which drew from both ethnographic and discourse analytic methodologies. Leap's (1996) follow up work, *Word's Out: Gay Men's English*, continued this evolutionary trend as one of the first, and most extensive undertakings to address gay male communicative

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interchanges. Though representing a major contribution and shift in paradigm, the majority of his data, however, stemmed from reconstructed conversations, shorthand accounts, and literary excerpts, rendering conclusive findings on gay men's language use speculative given the overall lack of authentic recorded material. Livia and Hall's (1997) edited volume, *Queerly Phrased: Language, Gender, and Sexuality,* represented a vast step forward in the examination of both gay and lesbian language use. This collection of studies reflected a broad range of perspectives that addressed the central issue of what it means to be queer and to use language in meaningful ways, but still lacked a significant amount of real-time interactive material. Queen's (1998) previously mentioned discourse analytic work on shared knowledge within LGBTQ interactions, which looked at real-time unfolding data, thus stands out as one of the few studies to take into account LGBTQ linguistic practices as they occur in their most natural, interactive form.

Jacobs' (1996) review of gay linguistic research illustrated a range of studies based primarily on phonological and grammatical variations. Kulick's (2000) review, on the other hand, surveyed the existing research from a diachronic perspective, looking holistically at some of the core queer analytic approaches, including 'the lavender lexicon', camp, and finally the performative. From his review, he theorized that the future of gay and lesbian linguistic research did not reside within the categories of the past, which in his opinion had served only as a foundational structure for future research. Rather, Kulick asserted, the future of the field should be concerned with the interface between language and desire (see also Harvey and Shalom, 1997; Cameron and Kulick, 2003, 2006). This highly influential review in turn served to deemphasize crucial areas of inquiry such as sociolinguistic variation and identity. In response, Bucholtz and Hall (2004) made the counter claim that a strict focus on language and desire, to the exclusion of essentially all other lines of inquiry, would have devastating effects on the

progress of language and sexuality research. Through exemplification, they offered an extensive critique of the desire-centric call for research because, as they stated, it not only "threaten[ed] artificially to narrow the scope of the field but also it undermin[ed] the already marginalized study of sexual minorities" (p. 472). As a result they concluded, through an array of contrastive examples, that sociolinguistic research of all kinds is crucial to the future of language and sexuality research and that queer linguistics' future resides in the incorporation of "both gender and sexuality, both identity and desire, all without losing sight of either power or agency" (p. 506).

The above-mentioned research has primarily addressed issues of sexuality, but it is equally important, when discussing the concept of camp, to address the role of gender. Indeed, Bergman (1993a) argues for camp as one of the many ways in which gays and lesbians, in essence, "do gender" (p. 15). This is important when contextualized within Butler's (1999) theory of performative gender in that, if camp is in fact one of the means through which gays and lesbians might "do gender," then the camp reference *You like me, you really like me*, spoken by a gay man, must in turn yield insight into the broader concepts of gay men, language, and gendered representation. In the example of Pandora Boxx, as we are speaking of a drag queen, there is already a juxtaposition of male and female identities through physical camp appearance; however, this additional linguistic support through camp referencing adds yet another layer to the overlay of identities in that physical appearance is no longer the only gendered invocation being utilized. Instead, we now see an invocation of not only physicality, but of persona, manifested through conceptualizations of self in the form of verbal expression. These camp references are thus demonstrated to be a means by which practitioners may play with gendered expressivity,

and by extension with the expression of identity, beyond the notion of camp as an exterior performance.

Johnson & Meinhof's (1997) edited volume *Language and Masculinity* attempted to specifically address the issue of men's language use from the perspective of masculinities. One chapter (Heywood, 1997) focused exclusively on gay males; however, the data from this chapter was based on epistolary accounts taken from a men's magazine rather than real-time interactive practices. Conversely, Cameron's (1997) contribution to this work examined the unfolding discursive practices of young heterosexual men discussing stereotypically masculine themes (e.g., women, wine, sports), while framing them within stereotypically feminine conversational practices (e.g., gossip, cooperation, collaboration). Though her work yielded insight into the broader notion of the discursive construction of gendered identities within unfolding interactive practices, homosexual implications remained a byproduct of heterosexual subjectivity.

Gendered identities have also been shown, in other works, to be a highly collaborative act, resulting from the interactive practices that transpire among sociocultural groups (M. H. Goodwin, 1990, 2006), as well as through indexical manipulations in grammatical structures and lexicon (Ochs, 1992). Some of the studies on men that drew from both interactive practices, as well as from indexicalization. Kiesling (2004) examined the lexical term *Dude* within Anglo-American fraternity brothers' speech, and Bucholtz (2009) examined the lexical term *Guëy* (a Spanish term similar to Dude) in young Mexican male immigrants' speech. In both of these studies, through discourse analytic methods that relied upon unfolding interaction, the selected terms were shown to be both discursively grounded in and indexically linked to conceptions of masculine gendered identity. Though these two studies dealt with heterosexual male populations, they both demonstrate complex treatments of language that is, for lack of a better term, lacking

in work done on gay men's linguistic practices. They therefore serve to both highlight and reinforce the need for an expansion of queer linguistic paradigms, particularly in the direction of interactive practices and indexicality.

Harvey (2000) is to date one of the only studies that examines camp as an interactional stylistic that pragmatically indexes queer representation. In his research he developed a framework for the analysis of verbal expressions of camp, demonstrating that it manifests as a four-tiered system of communicative strategies, including what he terms Paradox (through incongruities of register, explicitness and covertness, and "high" culture and "low" experience), Inversion (of gendered proper nouns, grammatical gender markers, expected rhetorical routines, and established value system), Ludicrism (by motivated naming practices, pun/word play, and double-entendre), and Parody (of uses of French, innuendo, hyperbole, exclamation, and vocatives). Harvey (2002) revisited camp talk through an examination of literary excerpts, and as a result reconceptualized it as a form of citationality (see Austin, 1962, 1975; Derrida 1982, 1988; Butler, 1999), in which a current speaker or writer draws upon echoic representations of previous voices and writings. From this follow up analysis, Harvey described camp talk as a three-tiered system: 1) citing cultural artifacts (e.g., citing the line of a film character); 2) citing the language medium – e.g., citing a word that has just been uttered by someone else, but with new emphasis); and 3) citing femininity (e.g., using feminine associated lexicon or structural forms, which he relates to an emphasis on politeness). However, though Harvey argued that camp exists as a verbal communication device, his assertions were based upon literary camp writing. As such, actual interactional usages of camp were never fully developed, rendering any implications of his work for authentic discursive practices speculative.

Stance & Its Relation to Camp

Given that camp represents an aesthetic outlook on life, as well as providing a means for positing sociopolitical critique toward hegemonic society, its occurrence within interactive practices allows participants to perform an array of conversational functions. One of the most important functions of camp is to demonstrate positions of alignment and disalignment towards both micro level issues (e.g., towards words, utterances, objects, and even other people) and macro level issues (e.g., towards a subjugated existence or heteronormativity as an oppositional force). By taking such positions, interactants are thus understood as performing various displays of stance.

Goffman (1981) characterizes stance as a type of 'footing,' which he goes on to define as a "change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (p. 128). C. Goodwin's (2007) work elaborates upon this notion, demonstrating how stance itself emerges as multiple in interaction, characterized by configurations of bodies (instrumental stance), sources of knowledge (epistemic stance), orientation towards participation (cooperative stance), alignment and taking responsibility (moral stance), and emotional responses (affective stance).

Du Bois (2007) further elaborates upon notions of interactive stance through his conceptual framework of the stance triangle, in which participants and referents are shown to compose an interconnected triangular framework that dialogically connects each of three components to the remaining two, allowing participants to both experience and position themselves in relation to the object of conversation, all the while aligning (or disaligning) with one another. As M. H. Goodwin (2006) has shown, stance displays also have sociocultural implications for the linguistic communities in which they are used. Her ethnographic and discourse analytic examination of the daily lives of preadolescent girls demonstrates how

communicative features such as assessments may be used in displaying (dis)alignment to both co-present and non-present individuals, and in turn offers compelling evidence for how such displays may be used "to construct notions of normative value and articulate […] notions of cultural appropriateness and moral personhood" (p. 209).

In addition, stance has been shown to occur through processes of indexicalization. Ochs (1992) has shown that various linguistic usages have the capacity to 'index' culturally constructed notions of gendered representation (i.e., interactive displays of femininity and masculinity), which in turn may be used in creating more powerful, or less powerful as it may be, tones. These indexical displays, as a result, alter the stance display within the interaction by allowing participants to alter their linguistic course of actions. Drawing upon this notion of indexicality, Jaffe (2009) asserts that stance must also be viewed from the perspective of positionality, or how participants position themselves towards "words or texts, …interlocutors and audiences, …and with respect to a context that they simultaneously respond to and construct linguistically" (p. 4), all of which illustrates how stance displays allow participants to associate with specific notions of identity, as well as with notions of power.

The example from *RuPaul's Drag Race* demonstrates how these aspects of interactional stance function as features of linguistic camp practice. In uttering the polyphonous words, *You like me, you really like me*, Pandora takes a mitigating position towards the delicate conversational matter at hand (i.e., being modest). Likewise, Pandora takes an affiliative position towards the other co-present interlocutors because the mitigating reference serves to lessen face threat value. Through the indexical invocation of an external persona, Pandora intertextually draws upon the stance frame from the original source (i.e., Sally Field), in which a similar delicate matter was well received and thus affiliative. This positions Pandora into a

complex stance display of alignment that in turn derives the bulk of its meaning from intertextuality. The queer aesthetic of camp is represented in that it draws upon the practice of referencing, as well as the reconceptualization of gender identity (i.e., the physically male and the invoked feminine), which are both aspects of camp representation. What we are left with, at the interactional level, is a complex stance display that is both intertextual, and, at its core, queer.

Not only does this invocation of persona affect micro level aspects of communication (i.e., the mitigation of delicate matters), but also macro level aspects. This is done through the reification of camp as an alternate form of expression, which in turn reifies its position as oppositional towards the dominant hegemonic culture. More specifically, the use of camp referencing serves as a subversive ironizing critique, whether intentional or not, against prescriptive hegemonic formulae for dealing with everyday life issues (i.e., a social critique).

As this review has demonstrated, there is a substantial gap in what we know about American gay men's interactive practices, and in particular, representations of camp as a viable source for linguistic input. Indeed, such themes as the discursive construction of gay (sexual and gendered) identity, gay men's interactional pragmatics, and the discursive construction and performance of camp, appear to be in their infancy when compared to non-linguistic/discourse related research that has been conducted within the field. The proposed data chapters for this dissertation, which are briefly described below, have thus been conceived as a means for developing these various areas of inquiry.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The current data, which I collected periodically over a three-year period, consists of approximately 100 hours of real-time interaction taken from four American cities, and extensive follow up interview and survey data conducted after the initial analyses of the aforementioned interactions. The resulting multi-sited ethnographic collection (Marcus, 1995) was then examined to pinpoint specific phenomena that stood out as salient functional features of linguistic camp within U.S. gay men's interactions.

Interactional Data

With regard to the first major data component, the interactional data, the cities that I observed included New York City, New York (a geographically northeastern city), Atlanta, Georgia (a geographically southern city), Fort Lauderdale, Florida (a second geographically southern city not typically associated with traditional southern culture) and Los Angeles, California (a geographically western city). I chose these cities not only for their geographic distance from one another, but also for their cultural differences. For example, the northeast is typically seen as industrial and fast-paced, while southern regions are typically characterized as rural and slow-paced. California, on the other hand, is often characterized as urban, particularly with regard to its coastal cities, and as laid-back in comparison to the northeastern regions of the country. As such, the differences in region (and in cultural conceptualizations) seemed to be a perfect starting point for understanding the possible cultural differences of particular sociocultural groupings within the United States who are spread out by geographic distance, but

who are commonly grouped together as imagined sociocultural communities in and of themselves.

In order to capture the observational data for later analysis, I both audio and video recorded all interactions. I invited the participants to simply participate in research to better understand U.S. gay men's communicative displays as they occur in their most natural form. As such, the notion of camp as a linguistic resource was not articulated to the participants themselves until after I had analyzed the video data, when I collected follow up interview and survey data. Indeed, specifics as to the focus of the research were deliberately shielded from the participants in an attempt to lessen the chances of influencing the data, and to capture their interactions in their most natural form. Upon completion of the recordings, I transcribed the data using the conversation analytic transcription method developed by Gail Jefferson (see Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, as well as Atkinson & Heritage, 2004). I then reviewed the data from a holistic perspective to pinpoint salient features of camp-based language use, which were then narrowed down and categorized for further analysis and development.

All conversations were situated in informal settings, and focused on casual conversations among friends. Locations consisted of coffee houses, the apartments of participants, car/road trips, parks, bars, restaurants and shops. Given the range of locations, it was necessary to make real-time decisions as to what type of data would be recorded, based on both the physical constraints of the location and the contextual parameters. Further, several participants felt uncomfortable about being video recorded in public spaces, and in some cases felt uncomfortable being video recorded in general, especially given the nature of their professions, including some being members of the police force and high ranking officials in large corporate environments. For this reason, I made moment-to-moment judgment calls as to whether or not video or audio

would be used. Likewise, public recording, in some cases, was not always granted. This further

contributed to my decisions to either record using video, audio, or a combination of the two.

Given that the target population represented a socially marginalized group, I set my research

parameters to be respectful of ethical guidelines and considerations. Therefore, the concerns of

even one of the participants outweighed the need to generate video data in every case, resulting

in a mixed data set constrained by participant needs, rather than researcher desires.

A final point on the interactional data is that I, the researcher, was included in the

recordings as both an active participant and an observer. This occurred for multiple reasons.

First, I was already acquainted with the participants of each city, and in some cases had

longstanding relationships with them. This resulted in the bounds of the camera, the *behind* and

the *in front of*, becoming blurred and oftentimes disintegrating within minutes. After multiple

attempts to maintain my position as an observing ethnographer, it eventually became apparent

that this approach would not work, and so I made the decision to set up stationary cameras

around the interactional spaces and include myself as an active member. Second, my inclusion

in the data was a logical decision given that I was, in reality, a member of each of these social

groups. My attempt to limit my role to that of a researcher, as illustrated above, was not

respected because the participants themselves chose not to broaden my role, insisting that I

participate on an equal level through their actions of constant and unyielding inclusion (even as I

sat behind the camera). It therefore quickly became apparent that if I were to capture the social

interactions, in their most natural form, then I too would have to be a part of those interactions.

Though I was apprehensive about this dual role, the realization that my own status as a

community member, and as a researcher, in fact allows me insight that would be inaccessible to

others, eventually played a key role in convincing me to proceed along this path. Further, it was

at this point that I realized that if I were to let the seemingly antithetical nature of these identities deter me, these interactional settings would most likely go unobserved, which would in turn result in a continued anthropological underdevelopment of, and thus misunderstanding of, U.S. gay men and their real-time interactional practices. The next subsection, below, on interview and survey data, is thus a reaction to this analytic shift to participant observation, meant to capture participant perspectives and to offset any issues that might result from my inclusion in the larger video and audio data set.

Interview and Survey Data

The second major component of the data collection process, the interviews and surveys, were the result of my own reflections and desire to ensure that I was adequately treating the lifeworlds of the participants in question. In essence, I wanted to ensure that my initial analyses of the ethnographic data were accurate and true, to the best of my abilities, and so the participants themselves, outside of the video interaction, were conceptualized as a primary source for achieving this accuracy. This additional data set was also in part due to my decision to include myself as an active participant in the data, due to the many interpersonal dynamics between the myself, as both researcher and participant, and the other participants.

The decision to use both interviews and surveys resulted from the fact the participants, two years after the vide data collection process, had moved on to a variety of geographic locations. For those that were accessible, interviews were used. For those that were not, the interview questions were reconceptualized through a computerized survey designed to release information in steps through the set-up constraints of the website used to design the survey (surveygizmo.com). This was important because the interviews were structured in such a way as to refrain from mentioning the notion of camp, or more specifically of camp-based language

forms, until the very end. This was easy when done face-to-face, but difficult to recreate in written form. The tools provided through Surveygizmo allowed me to circumvent this issue by creating a survey that could only be accessed in linear order, saving components that needed to be withheld until the very end, contained within their own distinct webpages. The structure of both the interviews and surveys were thus consistent through careful attention to structure and, in the case of the survey, computerized restrictions.

In taking such a structured approach, I aimed to achieve two primary objectives. The first objective was to ensure that my descriptions of the individual participants were correct. By this, I mean that I aimed to make sure that I was accurately expressing who they, the participants, were in my analyses. To accomplish this objective, the first part of the interview/survey explored the participants' personal histories (e.g., their likes and dislikes, their hobbies, talents, professional backgrounds, political orientations, religious beliefs, and a host of other general information such as age and geographical regions of personal affiliation). The second objective was to ensure that I accounted for participants' own understandings of camp as both a concept and as a linguistic strategy. To do this, I asked participants to articulate to the best of their abilities, and in this order, the following points: 1) an explanation of what camp is, 2) a working definition of camp, 3) the role that camp plays in the U.S. queer community, and 4) how camp might be used from the point of view of language and interaction. In essence, the follow up data became necessary as an analytic check as the analyses became increasingly complex and intertwined with larger social issues. This was to ensure, first and foremost, that my status as a participant-observer was not coloring my analyses in ways that would be biased. And secondly, it was to ensure that the interactional data was treated with fairness, respect, and above all accuracy (to the extent that it can be achieved), by incorporating what participants themselves

thought, thereby ensuring a larger epistemological grounding, while creating a final means of 'checking', so to speak, my own work and conceptualizations. This second data component, as a result, became an ideological undertaking whereby participant voices would either substantiate or refute my own analytic findings through their own rationalizations of the role and functionality of the camp-based interactions in question. The final data chapter of this dissertation was based entirely on this data set.

Participants

The participants represented in the data primarily consisted of non-closeted gay males, with various other people sometimes present for recording sessions. These various others consisted primarily of non-closeted lesbians and heterosexual women, with heterosexual males representing a definite minority. The incorporation of individuals beyond gay males was necessary, to a certain extent, in order to ensure that group dynamics occurred in their most natural forms. This meant, for example, that if a straight female co-worker had been invited by one of the participants to join the central group for an activity, that person would not be excluded, particularly given that quite often gay men associate with a range of individuals who are not, themselves, gay men. Thus, incorporation, rather than exclusion, seemed the optimal choice in ensuring natural fluidity in group dynamics and interactions.

The core group participants (i.e., the gay men) in each of the four cities came from a range of diverse class backgrounds, from both working class as well as upper middle class beginnings. In addition, the participants came from various sociocultural backgrounds. Some were New Englanders and native New Yorkers, while others were Westerners, Mid-Westerners, and Southerners. Though the majority of the participants were native speakers of English, there were occasionally nonnative speakers as well; however, nonnative speakers represented a rather

small contingency. Further, the nonnative speakers of English represented in the data had all lived in the United States for approximately ten years in length, making their status as nonnative speakers negligible as a variable that might inhibit their active participation in the various group discussions. Indeed, of the nonnative speakers present in the data, all were quite fluent, dare I say near-native, in English, which in turn allowed them rather equal interactional footing to the native English speakers.

The participants in the New York data had relationships ranging from three to seven years in length. The shortest relationships, of approximately three years, consisted of boyfriends/ partners who had been brought into the group, and who thus represented the newest members. The longest relationships were those of a tight knit core that had known one another for approximately seven to eight years. The participants in the Atlanta data also had close relationships; however, in this group the relationships spanned a ten-year period. Only one member that was present for recordings had shorter relationships, of approximately two years, which were the result of his status as a partner of one of the core members. However, the participants from the Atlanta group had not been in close contact with each other for a period of approximately five to eight years, though their friendships had endured long distance over the ten-year period. The participants in Fort Lauderdale had known each other for a relatively short period of approximately one to two years, with all participants having roughly the same amount of time invested in the relationships. And finally, the participants of the Los Angeles data consisted of a range of years in relationships. Likewise, there were two separate core data groups. In the first group the researcher, myself, was the newest member, having known the other group members for a period of approximately one month upon recording, while the remaining members had been acquainted with one another for a range of years. Though they had

preexisting relationships with one another upon recording, the common thread in their

relationships stemmed from their co-involvement in a Los Angeles based charitable organization.

Outside of this charitable organization, these members had little interaction. In the second Los

Angeles group, the researcher had an eight-year relationship with the two remaining members.

However, more than in the Atlanta and New York groups, the relationship between the

researcher and the remaining two participants was primarily one of infrequent encounters. In

sum, the Los Angeles data represented the weakest relationships among participants, while New

York and Atlanta represented the strongest relationships among participants. Fort Lauderdale

represented a hybrid data site, in which relationships were indeed strong, but were very short in

duration.

Given the partcipants' gay and lesbian identifications, and the social ramifications that

could result in certain cases from these identifications being made public, the decision was made

to mask individual identities with pseudonyms. As a marginalized group, the risks of using

specific names, for some participants, could have led to financial and/or familial strain and/or

stress. The pseudonyms therefore became a necessary component to ensure that the participants

were at ease while being recorded, and that no harm would come to them as a result of their

participation. Even in my own case, a pseudonym was used throughout the transcripts to

maintain consistency.

Yet due to my desire to be as forthcoming and objective as possible, particularly given

my status as a participant-observer, I would like to end the discussion on participants by

revealing that my pseudonym was Emory. I do this for two reasons. First, I would like for the

reader to be able to visualize my role in the interactions themselves. And second, I would like

for the reader to see that my analyses, in certain cases, stem from first person intuitions based on

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my own co-presence in the interactions themselves. My goal in revealing my identity is therefore to ensure that my descriptions of these communities, and by extension the interactions of these communities, become fully accessible for those outside of the communities' boundaries and membership, thereby allowing the reader to come to his or her own conclusions, while doing so in the most informed manner achievable.

Analytic Approach

As the aforementioned review of existing research has demonstrated, we are only beginning to understand the everyday life-worlds of gay men, particularly in regards to interactive practices. I am concerned with finding a balance in my explorations that will not only reveal the inner workings of these groups, but also do so in a way that will add substantial information to what we know about gay men's in-group communications. My overarching analytic approach thus encompasses not only a detailed account of the ethnographic background of the various participants, but also in-depth analyses of their interactional practices. It is for this reason that I have decided to model this dissertation primarily after M. H. Goodwin's (1990) extensive anthropological work on African American youths, which shares both of my overarching goals: 1) it develops the ethnographic background of the participants in a way that allows the reader to comprehend the everyday lifeworld of this similarly marginalized group, and 2) it provides in-depth analyses of the communicative practices of this group, demonstrating how these practices reveal underlying sociocultural structures which in turn allow for the creation of social organization, as seen through the communicative exchanges of the in-group participants themselves.

Based on this assertion, the present study seeks to understand the everyday lives and interactive practices of gay males through both ethnographic and discourse analytic explorations.

I choose the term discourse analytic (DA), as opposed to conversation analytic (CA), first and foremost because the mere mention of queer identity carries with it an underlying critical tone, principally due to the U.S. queer community's status as a subjugated minority within the broader U.S. social context. Though significant strides have been made within the CA paradigm toward integrating broader sociocultural aspects of interaction (Kitzinger, 2006 [2005]; Stokoe & Smithson, 2001), there remains an underlying paradigmatic tension that seems incompatible, at least superficially, with social groups who derive their existence from aspects of a shared sociocultural identity, particularly when the researcher is looking at these social groups with the understanding that their marginal status is one of the factors that drew him/her to them in the first place. Indeed, research done by Schegloff (1987, 1992) has explicitly stated that the investigation of social identities becomes problematic in CA due to the infinite possible identities that may be present within any single moment in interaction. Likewise, Schegloff has problematized the convergence of micro level processes (e.g., interactive practices) with macro level processes (e.g., class, ethnicity, gender – and by extension sexualities), which in turn makes CA seem, at least superficially, antithetical as a methodological approach for the current research given that my primary interest is in the interplay between these very two areas of inquiry. As research on queer people, by its very definition, involves a sense of queer identity, and can rarely, if ever, be removed from a broader sociocultural context, the division between the CA and DA paradigms becomes a crucial factor in how such research can be approached, and in turn how this research will be received within the larger pragmatic-related research community. It is for this reason that I have chosen to use CA methods primarily as a tool for communicative understanding, while inevitably situating the findings of my research within a supra, poststructuralist discourse analytic perspective.

Given the above stated argumentation, the first analytic approach to be used will in fact be the ethnographic approach, which will serve to establish a clear understanding of the lifeworlds of the participants in question through observational analysis. The ethnographic understanding emerges within the data itself, where everyday interactions become a means through which to explain the values and beliefs of the participants in question. As this endeavor unfolds, the individual data chapters will simultaneously reflect the second analytic approach, discourse analysis, as the sequential order of the talk becomes the primary means for argumentation through systematic contextualization and analytic deconstruction. Though I take a discourse analytic approach, the linguistic analyses themselves are undertaken through the use of CA tools and methods, or more precisely through the Jefferson transcription conventions which have become commonplace in pragma-linguistics studies. Finally, in taking this discourse analytic approach, and in differing from traditional CA parameters for analysis (through the initial perspectival inclusion of social identities), the analyses are framed within a larger DA paradigm that is inclusive of critical discourse analytic perspectives (Fairclough, 1995, 2003; Johnstone, 2008; Kroløkke & Sørensen, 2006; Schiffrin, 1997).

CHAPTER 4

QUEERING THE MUNDANE

Locating Camp Culture

This chapter, the first in a sequence of empirical chapters, is intended as an opening

discussion, or starting point, for developing the notion of a camp-centered linguistics. Camp, or

the queer aesthetic as it is otherwise termed, relies heavily on the transformation of the ordinary

into the extravagant, the over-the-top, the excessive. Commonly associated with queer identity,

camp aesthetics color the world around us through an alternate queer perspective, subversively

contesting normative social constructs and constraints, all the while providing a discursive space

that gives rise to queer subjectivity in action. This chapter seeks to capture this reframing of the

normative in the most ordinary of interactions: everyday talk. Specifically, it explores how camp

aesthetic orientations of U.S. gay men arise within and color the talk of mundane, everyday

interactions, transforming said talk from banal interchanges to moments for the linguistic

establishment of queer subjectivity. As such, this opening empirical chapter is designed to lay

the groundwork for the subsequent chapters and analyses by demonstrating how the mundane,

amongst gay male social actors, is in fact anything but mundane.

To read and understand camp aesthetic orientations within the everyday interactions of U.S.

gay men, we must first conceptualize the interrelationship between the terms "camp aesthetic

orientations" and "U.S. gay men" as productive of culture itself. As Castiglia and Reed (2007

[2004]) note in their analyses of gay-oriented television programming, "campy interpretation and

performance…lie at the heart of gay identity" (p. 228). They imply that it is through campy

performances that "gay memory," to use their term, is established, circulated, and concretized.

Camp, within this gay memory, thus emerges as a construct for the establishment and maintenance of queer selfhood and community, where notions of queer culture come into being. Cautiously, however, Halperin (2012) notes that:

> Any number of considerations make the attempt to speak of "gay male culture"
> risky, problematic, even inadvisable. The foremost danger is that of *essentialism*,
> of seeming to imply that there is some defining feature or property of gayness that
> all gay men share—an untenable notion, which we should categorically reject.
> But we should likewise reject the accusation of essentialism that might be leveled
> against this undertaking. For to make such an objection, to condemn as
> "essentialist" any effort to describe the distinctive features of gay male culture, is
> to confuse a *culture*, and the practices that constitute it, with the indeterminate
> number of *individuals* who, at any one time and to varying degrees, may happen
> to compose it.

What Halperin's insightful words eloquently argue is that though individuality exists within any group or identity category, it does not preclude notions of shared culture and cultural subjectivity. It is from this understanding that I propose just such a culture, a camp-based aesthetic culture, not shared by *all* members of the U.S. gay male population, but rather marked as salient and tangible, and in some ways queer-normative, *for many members* through linguistic practices that reflect its existence across time and space.

Specifically, in this chapter I argue that the mundane within U.S. gay men's friendship groups and conversations diverges from the mundane of non-queer social groupings through the presence of camp aesthetic orientations. Further, I argue that these camp orientations, at the discursive level, in turn transform the talk into queer discursive space, which positions the

interaction as divergent from heteronormative discourse. In essence, this chapter argues for an omnipresence of camp aesthetics, from the most commonplace forms of talk, the mundane, to the most specialized forms of talk that will be explored within the later analytic chapters.

Examining the Mundane

In recent decades, a wealth of linguistic research has resulted in improved understandings of the everyday lives, interactions, and cultures of social actors. As Mandelbaum (1990) notes, drawing upon the lectures of Schegloff (1983), conversation analytic understandings of the mundane are typically analyzed through two key interactional components, "practices *of* conversation — the mechanical features of talk upon which social action is hung, and practices *in* conversation — the activities we carry out in and through these mechanical features" (p. 347). In this vein of research, it is participant orientations that shape and construct analytic findings, where extra-situational variables (such as larger notions of culture) are envisioned as secondary to the talk itself. Yet as Ochs (1979) argues, interactional understandings are always lodged within "social and psychological world[s]" (p. 1). Developing this assertion, C. Goodwin and Duranti (1992) note that to gain insight into these worlds, interactional analyses must equally concern itself with contextual embeddedness, where context is seen as multifaceted and complex, encompassing not only talk, but settings, environments, participants and their behaviors, and larger notions of culture and cultural constraints that exert semantic force on communicative interchanges.

For the linguistic ethnographer, talk is always lodged within its domain of practice; thus interactions are best explained through their relational interconnections with both the context and culture in which they occur. As Moerman (1988) contends, conversation analysis, as a methodological approach to understanding the mundane, everyday lives and actions of people,

can benefit from concerted ethnography through its ability to offer contextual and cultural insight in the explication of interactional texts. He notes specifically that a blending of these two methodologies can powerfully impact our understandings of social action and interactional meaning. Linguistic anthropological research conducted through this methodological blending has in turn yielded powerful analytic insights. For example, M. H. Goodwin (2006) has shown how the micro-level interactive accomplishment of exclusionary practices within girls' interactions is not only constructed through talk (e.g., imperatives used in the enforcement of game time rules), but also through embodied configurations (e.g., reaffirming playtime rules within playground games through embodied action), spatial configurations (e.g., hopscotch grids which frame game time interactions), and prosodic alterations (e.g., enforcing game time rules through pitch variation), just to name a few. Likewise, her analyses yield vital insight into larger notions of sociopolitical power and culture, as exemplified through the young girls' contestations of school spaces and practices, bringing the larger notions of both school and societal culture into perspective through micro-level analytic methods. Similarly, Leap (1996) demonstrates in his examination of U.S. gay male social interactions, how talk revolving around seemingly innocuous physical objects (e.g., a pitcher in a refrigerator) takes on novel and subcultural meaning only when understood as an artifact lodged within queer discursive and physical space (e.g., a gathering of gay male friends, within an apartment, which is itself located within a local gay culture and within gay interactional practices). These works, which make use of such blended innovations, remind us that context wields substantial influence not only over interactional meaning, and also over our understandings of meaning as researchers in observation.

Given the aforementioned establishment of U.S. gay men as a culture intrinsically connected to camp aesthetics, such a blending of methods is here warranted. It is with this understanding

that I begin the analyses, looking closely at both the micro-level structures of talk that comprise participant interactions, while contextualizing said talk within larger macro-level cultural understanding. As such, the four examples that follow represent cross-site instances of mundane social interactions among U.S. gay men within their friendship group settings, demonstrate how camp aesthetic orientations permeate their daily lives and talk, and in turn yield glimpses of an underlying shared camp culture.

Analyses: Camping the Mundane across the States

Recounting Life Events

Speaking of one's interests in life is in itself not out of the ordinary. Indeed, it is the regular occurrence of such content and practices that helps to construct such interchanges as mundane, as everyday. However, the mundane's metamorphosis, through participant-driven camp aesthetic orientations, is quite the opposite. Example 1 below offers a clear depiction of how such transformations on talk color the interaction, marking it as queer-normative and in turn as queer discursive space wherein is established queer subjectivity.

In example 1 below, taken from the Los Angeles data, four interactants have until this point in the talk been recounting recent events in their lives. This seemingly mundane activity of recounting one's actions then led into an extended segment in which three of the participants jointly began telling the fourth participant, Emory, about their participation in an annual AIDS research-related charitable event. The event consisted of a bike ride, funded through sponsorship attained by individual participants, between San Francisco, California and Los Angeles, California. As the joint telling continues, Billy, in lines 1, 2, 4, and 5, begins to describe the rigors one experiences as a participant in this event.

EXAMPLE 1:   LOS ANGELES

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1.  Bil:  Like you're in the trenches with (.) these people doing something that's
2.        *hhhhhh you know Outsi- certainly outside of the nOrm, [I mean,=
3.  Emo:                                                         [uhm hum
4.  Bil:  =*hhh you know most I mean iuh Yeh know I hate to stereotype but
5.        most of us you know are not(.)used to(.)being away from our cell phones,
6.      > and being away from our curlers and O[ur electric toothbrushes=
7.  Kar:                                        [uhm hum hum hun hun hun
8.  Bil:> =*hhhh and [yeh[ know? [ Our (0.2) Egyptian cotton sheets?
9.  Kar:              [uh huh  [huh heh heh heh
10. Emo:            [we [gotta  b[ring the flat iron.
11. Eth:                         [wait I bring my electric toothbrush=
12.       plus yeh know ((chewing food… 1.8)) I bring my cell phone, I bring my
13.     > electric toothbrush, ^What are you [talk[ing about. Bi^tch (0.8)=
14. Bil:                                     [uh h [eh heh heh hehh huhh
15. Kar:                                          [huh heh heh heh heh
16. Eth:  =I have the little solio charger (0.2) ^I'm good.
```

Billy's account describes, more specifically, such rigors as they pertain to gay and lesbian people, as in lines 4 and 5 he directly indexes the people of which he speaks through his use of the words *most of us*. The use of *us* is important because it includes not only himself, but the audience members with whom he speaks, of which Karen identifies as lesbian. It is thus through the contextual dimensions of speaker and hearers lodged within an interactional setting that the *us* here takes on not just gay male, but queer indexicality. This is supported not only through the gay-affiliated nature of the charitable organization itself, but also through the fact that the reality of the ride's participants are by and large gay and lesbian identified (though there is a sizable proportion of heterosexual participants as well, often with strong familial and social ties to queer people and communities, as well as those who have personally experienced loss due to HIV/AIDS).

Billy continues in line 5 by talking about the specific comforts that participants must do

without in taking part in the event, specifying that most gay (based on the use of the pronoun *us*) participants are *n<u>o</u>t(.)used to(.)being away from our cell phones* (reinforced queer indexicality through the possessive adjective *our*). The talk, to this point, represents a prime example of mundane discourse. Yet in line 6 Billy invokes camp-based aesthetics through his use of the phrase *and being away from our c<u>u</u>rlers*. It is at this moment that the discourse is recognized as in a state of transformation through Karen's extensive laughter tokens in lines 7 and 9, all of which coincide through overlap with the continuation of Billy's talk, thus positioning it sequentially as responsive to the continued talk. The transformation, at this point in the example, is understood as camp aesthetics primarily through the incongruent relationship between the object of the talk—curlers, and its context—gay men spending a week outdoors. The camp aesthetic is further realized through Billy's reliance on excessivity in the creation of incongruent imagery. This occurs in line 8, where Billy adds *Our (0.2) Egy<u>p</u>tian cotton sheets.* In this instance, not only is the queer identifying pronoun reinforced, but also the notion of incongruency through the invocation of luxury sheets in a campground setting.

We thus see these invocations as camp through the excessive nature of his list, a list that is flamboyant in nature, that simultaneously criticizes the idea of gay adventurers while inadvertently revealing that his claims are untrue through their over-the-top, nearly unbelievable nature. The result is an incongruent reality that stems from the juxtaposition of the ride event with the stereotypical portrayal of gay men (as feminine, and as in need of such feminine associated objects). All participants know this to be false in reality, as the other participants, with the exception of Emory, are all co-participants in the event in question. And yet it is Emory, the non-participant in the charitable event, who in line 10 overtly displays his understanding of this as excessive camp through his addition of the term *fl<u>a</u>t iron*, which serves to compliment

(through its utilitarian functions and feminine associations) the previous usage of the term *curlers*, as an excessively humorous characterization of gay men as participants in such an event.

Finally, in lines 11, 12, and 13, Ethan counters Billy's camp contribution by listing the items that he himself brings, which include some of the items that Billy mentioned (excluding the campy items). That said, he ends his contestation by in effect returning to the camp aesthetic through his labeling of Billy as *Bi^tch* in line 13. Ethan thus uses gender inversion, a commonly accepted form of camp expressivity, to bring the previous camp event to a close, and to move the conversation back into the unmarked mundane. Importantly, however, Ethan then adds, in line 16, that he uses his *little solio charger* (a brand of electronic charging devices powered by solar energy), which in itself emerges as aesthetically campy due to the fact that it leads to a notion of failed seriousness, in that to be a rigorous biker in this event involves a week of hard labor and the release of everyday luxuries. To the contrary, through his words Ethan demonstrates that he does not release the luxuries, leaving an incongruent vision of a man living the rough life, in the least rugged way possible. It is through the functional characteristics of camp, as an aesthetic grounded in failed seriousness, feminine association, excessivity, and incongruency, that the mundane action of telling life events is thus transformed into queer discursive space, wherein subjectivities are formed through shared courses of interactive action.

Relationship Troubles

It is a common pastime within the friendship groups observed in this research to speak of personal relationships, and the many issues and concerns that accompany those relationships. Relationship troubles, though not frequent in all interactions, frequently arise in talk amongst those group members with longtime ties.

Example 2 below, which pertains to an instance of relationship troubles, explores a

conversation that took place among three of the New York participants while taking a short road

trip in one of the participants' car.   Lloyd, the participant who has been sharing his relationship

issues with the others, has just covered a varied list of concerns that he has with his partner (i.e.,

Paul, who is not present in this interaction). The last of these concerns centers on Lloyd's

increasing expenses, which result from his attempts to appease his partner's selective eating

habits. In lines 1, 2, and 3 below, Lloyd elaborates on a specific confrontation between him and

his partner, where he indicates to the others that his partner refuses to eat *chicken with a bone*

still on it. As a means to make his case, Lloyd further positions Paul's eating habits as absurd,

given his single parent working-class upbringing, as is demonstrated in lines 1 and 2. The

excessive nature of Paul's idiosyncratic behavior at first continues uninterrupted, until line 8,

where the mundane nature of the interaction begins a process of transformation, as Dave

reframes the interaction in a humorous manner (thus transforming a serious situation into a

situation of humor) through his prosodically marked comment *oooh >issa touchy< ^subject*,

which is noticeably intended for comedic effect through its unharmonious realization in relation

to the surrounding utterances.

EXAMPLE 2:   NEW YORK

```
1.  Llo:   [I- I- I'm ju- I'm like- I was (chalked up) like ^you were raised by like

2.         a single mother for like a good thirteen years? An your mother never cooked

3.         chicken with a bone still on it, tha- that's like the-

4.  Emo:  DId he sa:y that she never cooked chi- chicken with a bone on it, did he

5.        admit to that? Or,-

6.  Llo:  ^No he never- he just wouldn't answer me.

7.  Emo:  Exa:ct[ly.

8.  Dav:>      [oooh >issa touchy< ^subject.

9.        (2.8)

10. Llo:  An like uh-

11. Emo:  Maybe it- that- he says that because he always did have chicken with a bone
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12.        on it, an now that he can get it without the bone he's like- (0.4)
13. Dav:> I'm [^NEVER GOING BACK! ((stereotyped feminine crying voice))
14. Emo:>      [(_____) ha heh I'm never go:ing back ta BOW(h)NES!=
15.        *hh[heh
16. Llo:      [thas the only thing I can think of like (1.2) you know? It was ju-
17.        it's jus weird I'm like I mean what's the big deal like *hh I'[m not-
```

After Dave's initiation of humor in line 8, Emory, in lines 11 and 12, reinitiates Lloyd's earlier

assertion of absurdity, but in a rationalizing manner, implying that the possible reason for Paul's

dislike of *chicken with a bone* might reside in his earlier, working class beginnings. This is

achieved through his positioning of deboned chicken as a luxury expense, as something that Paul

could not, as he states in line 12, *get*, while growing up. It is the closing segment of Emory's

utterance, in line 12, that is then acted upon by Dave in his continuation of camp aesthetic

invocation. Indeed, as Emory reaches a highly apparent transition relevance place in his

rationalization (apparent through Emory's insertion of the discursive filler *like*), Dave, in line 13

reenters the interchange with a stereotypically feminine crying voice, which is further

distinguished from the normative surrounding prosody of the talk through intensive

strengthening and pitch increase, by stating *I'm [^NEVER GOING BACK!* (implying that Paul

would say this in this manner).

The ability to understand this utterance as a camp aesthetic event stems not only from the

hyper-emotional feminine characterization embedded within the words themselves, but also

through the referential nature of the word *back*, whereby the previous indexing of Paul's humble

beginnings are appropriated as a locus for witty mockery. Indeed, this is an instance of the camp

aesthetic that stems from exaggeration (through both language and content), as well as from a

play on gender (through the stereotypically feminine characterization). Dave's words thus

transform the interaction into a camp aesthetic event, through his elucidation of the

ridiculousness and excessivity contained within Paul's real and constructed arguments. In line

14, Emory continues the camp aesthetic orientation initiated by Dave through an extended

version of Dave's previous dramatization, stating *I'm never go:ing back ta BOW(h)NES!*, which

similarly carries with it stereotypically feminine sounding speech qualities, and which, as a result,

performs a similar transformative function as the one found within the previous utterance offered

by Dave.

The totality of the sequence results in an everyday, mundane event (i.e., the telling of

relationship troubles) becoming a camp event. But more importantly, the camp event serves to

create a locus in which U.S. gay male social actors can, in effect, display their shared 'gayness'

through their common epistemic knowledge of camp and of their shared, queer lifeworld

experiences and abilities to apply camp within interaction (see Queen 1998, on queer

epistemologies through language). The direct usage of camp aesthetics, as a form of shared

epistemic knowledge and cognition, is thus correspondingly linked to how these interactants

linguistically construct their subjectivities in relation to one another, their intersubjectivities as

co-members of a shared friendship and culture, and their subjective positionings as social actors

lodged within, and oppositionally positioned against, a larger heteronormative world that

relegates them to subordinate sociocultural status.

Remembering Shared History

Another frequent discursive event that occupies considerable space within the gay male

friendship groups I observed involves recollecting shared memories and history. Indeed, such

recollections comprised a considerable amount of talk time, and as such were constructed as a

normative, everyday part of maintaining friendship ties, and thus for producing talk as a shared

experience among friends.

Example 3 below illustrates one such shared remembering. In this example, five members

from the Atlanta data had been reminiscing upon the times that they had shared years before

when all members lived in the same city (two of whom now live in different geographic

locations, one in South Carolina and the other in California). As old friends catching up (with

friendships that spanned approximately ten years), members asked questions of one another,

offered commentary to responses, and unanimously worked together to, in a manner of speaking,

rediscover one another as longtime friends. In what follows, in lines 1 and 2, Taylor, the

participant that now lives in South Carolina, overtly acknowledges this course of action when he

states, *Yeh kno::w, lots of things have stayed the same.* Here Taylor inadvertently refers to a past

known to all members, where all have access to and understand what is meant by the term *lots of*

things through its relation to the preceding discourse, which explored personality and physical

characteristics of the participants (i.e., what has remained the same). Taylor then goes on to tie

their shared history to a more recent change that occurred upon Emory's departure from the city,

moving the discourse away from the past and into the present. In lines 2 and 3 Taylor states, *but*

chu know some things that have cha:nged, (.) ^Emory's now fluent in French. Bailey then

acknowledges this in line 4 through his response, *Yeah right?*, where he situates Taylor's

transition into the present as a relevant next action.

EXAMPLE 3:   ATLANTA

```
1.  Tay:  Yeh kno::w, lots of things have stayed the same, but chu know some things
2.        that have cha:nged, (.) ^Emory's now fluent in Frenc[h
3.  Bai:                                              [Yeah righ[t?
4.  Emo:                                                        [uh heh heh=
5.        =heh he[h heh
6.  Hea:>        [An fluent in foo:d too, [praise Je:sus about thA:t.
7.  Bai:                                  [right, uh heh heh heh heh heh heh,
8.  Emo:> Ay^e me[n.
```

```
 9. Bai:          [*hh  heh.
10. Hea:> Seriously, my: Go:d (0.7) I've never had been so worried about
11.    > someone I had such lukewarm feelings (.)
12.    > fo[r.
13. Tay:    [heh heh huh huh huh huh huh
14. Bai:    [uh heh heh heh ha ha ha ha ha huh huh huh huh
```

In line 6 we see the first occurrence of camp aesthetics in relation to this excerpt. Heath, in

stating that Emory is now *fluent in foo:d too,* offers a play on the word *fluent* by using its

linguistic meaning to stand for proficiency more generally. The meaning behind the words *fluent*

in food is important because it shifts the topic of conversation back to the remembrance of shared

past history within the friendship group. The shared history, in this case, refers to Emory's

earlier struggles with two eating disorders (thus *not* being fluent in food, which at one time

represented a major concern amongst the group's members). But it is in what follows, *praise*

Je:sus about thA:t., that we see a marked deviation from the mundane, into a speech event which

is blatantly drawing from incongruent imagery in its derivation of meaning (i.e., overlaying

queer issues with religious sensibility). The religious imagery and undertones, articulated

through the voice of a staunch atheist (i.e., Heath), thereby results in a comedic parallel of

mundane discourse with highly undesirable (within this group) religiously colored phrases.

For a group of gay men who are themselves not religious, such intertextual overlays mark the

utterances as campy through processes of irony production. Indeed, a somewhat serious shared

past history is transformed into a moment of humor through the juxtaposition of incongruent

belief systems, wherein results a type of absurd play on the serious subject matter. This camp

aesthetic transformation of the discourse is then continued in line 8 when Emory states, *Ay^e*

me:n., which is itself a religious response token to previously uttered religious discourse, situating

his words as both appropriating of the transformational play on religious discourse, while also

extending the humorous effect through his equally incongruent self-identity as atheist. He is thus

not taking a religious stance, but rather a camp stance in response to a previous camp stance. In

line 10 Heath continues the incongruent parallel with religion through his comment *Seriously,*

my: Go:d, which, through the elongation of sounds is articulated in an overly dramatic manner

that further positions the words as humorous through their excessive nature. Finally, in lines 10

and 11, Heath offers what Babuscio (1999 [1977]) describes as bitter-wit with a culminating

playfully sarcastic remark which harkens to the biting nature of camp as a form of humorous

expression: *I've never had been so worried about someone I had such lukewarm feelings (.) for*.

This final campy moment within the sequence in turn leads to humorous response by the

remaining members of the group (Taylor in line 13 and Bailey in line 14). The humorous

response resulting from this instance of bitter-wit is understandable as humorous primarily

through our understanding of the group's shared history itself. Indeed, these friends were a very

tight knit, close group; so to indicate *lukewarm* feelings for someone you were so very worried

about (and the worries of eating disorders were in fact a major concern at one point for all

members) makes no sense in normative discourse. Yet it does makes sense from a queer-

normative perspective, in that camp aesthetic orientations, even within the mundane, allow for

incongruent realities to flourish and be understood as moments of interactional play (rather than

as actual instances of offense or insult).

   With regard to the previous discussion on methodological blending, it is important to note

that for these details and interpretations of the data to be understood as such, line-by-line

conversation analytic deconstructions of interactional text in fact require ethnographic

observation and awareness. To the out-group eye, the linguistic play on the aforementioned

word *fluent* would in fact be overlooked as quite possibly an insult towards Emory's current

weight (which it is not, as Emory is still by far the lightest of the group). This is a reasonable statement given that no other information is provided, which would in turn leave the conversation analytic researcher with only what the participants had overtly oriented to as relevant. Yet the historical knowledge of the participants, context, and culture in which the utterance resides offers further insight that, in essence, gives the utterance a quite complex and in-group specific meaning. Without a cultural understanding of the role of camp aesthetics within this particular U.S. culture, our understanding of this play on the word *fluent*, as well as the instance of bitter-wit which follows, would superficially appear disaffiliative to researchers given the laughter token responses which follow (and which by their very nature frame the preceding instance of bitter-wit as a seeming insult). Conversely, understanding this mundane remembrance of shared history as a moment of queer-normative interactional play, lodged within a shared notion of culture, allows the disaffiliative nature of the words to give way to an intrinsically affiliative social meaning. As such, understanding the culture in which the utterances arise and from which they draw their interactional meaning, is thus crucial if we are to attain a full account of human action as it occurs within this interactional segment of talk.

From Daily Activities & Plans, To Noticing One Another, To Camp

The fourth example, which has been broken into three smaller segments due to its length (i.e., 4.1, 4.2, 4.3), occurs in the midst of a discussion on participants' daily activities, upcoming activities, and plans that they have made or are in the process of making with one another. As friends, this subject matter, as in the previous examples, occurs quite frequently, marking it as an everyday mundane discursive practice. Indeed, across the cities that I examined, plan-setting discussions are abundant and crucially so given their role in maintaining the friendships through their purpose of situating and setting up continuing activities with one another.

Example 4 below stems from the Fort Lauderdale data, and consists of four participants—

two couples, discussing both what they have been up to and what they will be engaged in soon.

Specifics that were discussed were what each person had been doing for the week, what plans

they had coming up, and the solidification of joint plans yet to come. In essence, what the

participants had been discussing was their routine everyday activities and plans. After an

extended amount of time talking about such issues, one of the participants, Paxton, notices

another participant's, Emory's, thumb rings (matching rings, one on each thumb) and asks for a

closer look. This request leads Emory to remove the rings, passing them on to Paxton for his

closer examination. Upon doing this, Paxton begins trying on the rings, which then leads him to

pay close attention to the size of his thumbs, as well as to the size of the other participants'

thumbs. In example 4.1 below, Paxton initiates campy conversational transformation through a

comparison of his thumb with a waist, implying that his thumb appears shapely, in a feminine

manner, through his choice of lexical imagery that is more in line with stereotypical notions of

how a woman's body would be described (i.e., a waist) as opposed to stereotypical notions of

how a man's body would be described (i.e., midsection, stomach, gut, abs).

EXAMPLE 4.1: FORT LAUDERDALE

```
1.  Pax:  But this doesn't fit snug on your thumb?

2.        (1.2)

3.  Emo:  No [it just- it has to-  (0.2)  it has to get past thIs, ((knuckle))=

4.  Pax:>     [see my- my thumb has a waist?

5.  Emo:  =it just- I just have to push it past that and then=

6.        =it's loo[se down h[ere,

7.  Sea:           [the knuck[le,

8.  Pax:>                    [your thumb has a waist tOo,

9.        (0.8)

10. Sea:> I[t's called a knUckle.

11. Pax:   [yeah.
```

```
12. Emo:   ^he::[h
13. Sea:>      [tuh heh heh heh [heh heh, *hhh  a °waist°.
```

As previously mentioned, in line 4 Paxton initiates a transformation of the context into a camp

aesthetic event through his paralleling of the anatomy of the thumb with a waist, stating that his

thumb has a waist. This, as in the previous examples, draws from incongruent referents: a thumb

which is small and boney, and a female body (which is what is normally referenced in relation to

talk about a waist (i.e., curves). As Emory begins to focus on how the rings actually fit in lines 5

and 6, through his utterance *I just have to push it past that and then it's loose down here,* Sean,

Paxton's partner, offers the more specific anatomical terminology to describe what Emory has

just referred to, his *knUckle.* Paxton, in line 8, then continues his camp transformation,

reiterating in line 8 the metaphor of thumb-as-waist, while also acknowledging that Emory too

has shapely thumbs (i.e., *your thumb has a waist tOo,*). Sean then sarcastically comments on

Paxton's metaphorical usage, by stating in line 10 that *It's called a knUckle.* He then follows up

his sarcastic comment in line 13 with an extended stream of laughter tokens, which are in

response to his own previous utterance, and a final sarcastic remark to Paxton, *a °waist°.* From

this course of action, and through the understanding of Paxton's words as drawing from camp

aesthetics through gender ambiguous feminine imagery in describing physically male anatomy,

we see that the mundane conversational matter of events telling and planning has indeed shifted

into a camp event. It is therefore likely that Sean's sarcastic remarks are not actually intended to

shut down this course of action, but rather to partake himself in the camp event through his use

of sarcasm, which Babuscio (1999 [1977]) notes as a form of camp aestheticism. His words,

rather than being counter-productive to the camp aesthetic move, draw everyone's attention to

the ludicrous nature of Paxton's assertions. In basic terms, Sean is attempting to 'one up' his

partner by outperforming, or stealing the spotlight so to speak, through his own camp invocations.

In example 4.2 below, the conversation continues its camp aesthetic transformation through Paxton's reappropriation of the thumb-as-waist metaphor. The argument for Sean's previous words as talk in playful contention for the camp spotlight are in fact strengthened as Paxton's subsequent actions show that he both recognizes Sean's sarcasm as competitive, and in turn attempts to 'one up' the challenges it poses. Indeed, in lines 15 and 16 Paxton targets Sean's thumbs as worthy of analysis at this point, and in his own sarcastic retort, states that he does not *see a waist on th**at** thumb.,* referring to Sean's thumb in an emphatically demeaning tone (through the emphasis placed on the demonstrative adjective *that*).

EXAMPLE 4.2: FORT LAUDERDALE

```
13. Sea:        [tuh heh heh heh [heh heh, *hhh  a °waist°.

14. Pax:>                        [lemme see your thumb. (.) your thumb is=

15.      > =straight up and down. (.) I don't see a waist on that thumb.

16.        (0.6)

17. Emo:   *hhh [uh huh[huh

18. Pax:>      [No.[(0.2) No.(.)I have a- hourglass figure [on my thumb.Honey.

19. Sea:           [there actually is. (0.2) Not like that thi:n[g.

20. Emo:                                          [does Henry £have=

21.        =one?

22. Sea:   °No [I-°

23. Emo:       [do [you have a waist on [your (h)thu(h:)m heh huh huh *hhhhhh. hhhh

24. Hen:          [what.

25. Pax:>                        [do you have a waist on your thumb. (0.2)

26.      > ^NOpe, yours is (.) a fatty (.) just like (.) £hi[s. ((Sean's))
```

In lines 15 and 16, Paxton's camp aesthetic transformational moves are thus strengthened against the sarcastic bid for the spotlight from Sean. As Emory affirms this through his reactionary stance of laughter to Paxton's words in line 17, Paxton intensifies the metaphor of thumb-as-waist that he has created by stating, in line 18, *No.(0.2) No.(.)I have a- hourglass figure on my*

thumb. Honey. Here Paxton becomes not only disinterested in any possibility that Sean's thumb might be considered as having a waist (which is itself a form of camp sarcasm), but also increases his effort to carry the metaphor to a higher, more complex and sophisticated degree of feminine imagery through his characterization of his own thumb as having an *hourglass figure.* For all intents and purposes, this contribution is in itself an unnecessary, excessive analogy to carry his camp event forward. And yet the nature of camp, by its very essence, is in itself excessive. As such we see an elevation in the camp comedic frame that Paxton has established, which most likely is a result of and direct response to the sarcastic camp aesthetic orientation previously made by Sean. Paxton then ends this line by calling Sean *Honey*. But this *Honey* does not represent a term of endearment for his partner (a common gay usage for this word amongst close intimates), but rather exudes a meaning that is playfully derogatory, conveying a sarcastic tone akin to something which approximates 'please', 'don't question me', or even 'whatever', and which in turn emulates a stereotypical field of imagery which is reminiscent of the 'angry Black woman', or at the very least of a stereotypical attitude that accompanies such imagery (Johnson, 1995). The gendered connotations that accompany this term thus serve to invoke gender inversion, which, in conjunction with Paxton's ongoing camp event, functions to increase the comedic effect through the addition of commonly accepted camp-based practices (i.e., male to female gender inversion).

As the discussion continues, Emory then brings his partner, Henry—who had been moving between two rooms socializing in the dining area with the others and cooking in the kitchen—in to the conversation. In line 20 Emory directly asks Paxton, *does Henry £have one?,* inviting Henry's thumb as a next point for camp scrutiny, and further propagating the camp aesthetic invocation across multiple participants. After several lines in which Paxton asks Henry

if his thumb has a waist (lines 23 through 25), Paxton eventually concludes by stating in line 26 to Henry, *^NOpe, yours is (.) a fatty (.) just like (.) £his.* Of note, Paxton's addition of the descriptive term *a fatty* overtly carries forward the connection with feminine imagery established earlier in the thumb-as-waist metaphor. Indeed, research has shown that body conscious discourse resides primarily within the talk of women, marking such invocations as lodged within a stereotypically feminine discursive space, and thus in opposition, or in incongruent position, with how men should describe masculine anatomical features (see Nichter 2000 for an extended discussion on 'Fat Talk' as women's discursive subject matter). The resulting effect is in turn a continuation of the camp invocation through gendered extensions of the original metaphor.

In the final segment of this set, example 4.3 below, Emory, in lines 27 and 28, produces laughter in response to Paxton's humorous characterization of Henry's thumbs. In lines 29 and 30 Henry counters Paxton's earlier characterization by posing the question, *£what do you mean, You callin me fA:t. (.) hah huhm, BItch? Huhm huhm huhm.,* Through his actions, Henry expands upon the implication of being fat by extending it beyond the thumb, as if it were intended for his physique more generally (and in reality, Henry is the most robust of the members, though quite muscular). But Henry's words are not seen as a serious confrontational elevation in that it is Henry himself who then responds laughingly to his own assertion with the laughter token inserts *hah huhm.* The assertion that his words are meant humorously rather then as confrontational is strengthened by the fact that Henry then, in line 30, refers to Paxton as a *BItch?,* whereby he himself begins to partake in the camp transformation of mundane human action through his use of gender inversion practices. Henry then reinforces the fact that his words are meant as campy and humorous through the laughter tokens that he adds after this term,

Huhm huhm huhm., which serves as a type of self-response to his own partaking in the camp

aesthetic orientation underway.

```
EXAMPLE 4.3: FORT LAUDERDALE

26. Pax:   ^NOpe, yours is (.) a fatty (.) just like (.) £hi[s.
27. Emo:                                          [uh hu:h huh=
28.        =[°huh° (0.2) I have lon[g-
29. Hen:   [*hhhh    (0.4)         [£what do you mean,=
30.      > =You callin [me fA:t. (.)  hah huhm, [BItch? Huhm huhm huhm.
31. Emo:               [fingers.
32. Pax:>                                    [No:.(0.8) *hhh I said your=
33.      > =thumb's a fatty,
34. Hen:   uhm hum,
35.        (0.8)
36. Pax:>  Bu[t let's uh- loo- if you look at it I have an- like=
37. Emo:     [I've worn these for years.
38. Pax:>  =an hourglass [figure.
39. Sea:>                [you do, no- yeah it's very thin.=
40.      > =An- [right down here.
41. Emo:        [°huh huh huh° *hhhhh=
42.      > =°oh yes, your thumbs are ve:(h)ry thi:(h)n.
```

In lines 32 and 33 Paxton responds to Henry's response to the thumb characterization by stating,

in a humorous tone, that it was rather Henry's thumb that was a fatty. Henry then responds to

this in line 34 with a sarcastic *uhm hum,* which serves as a closing exit strategy for Henry, while

playfully conveying a sense of disbelief.

The sequence concludes by what could essentially be argued for as a complete yielding

by Sean and Emory to Paxton's domination of the camp event. In lines 35 through 38 Paxton

continues with the thumb-as-waist metaphor, reinforced through the added reinvocation of the

term *hourglass figure.* In line 39 Sean essentially concedes to Paxton's never-ending camp

aesthetic event, and also to his failed attempt to take center stage with his previous sarcastic

remarks. He does this, however, by adding his own unique campy event token in that he

maintains the parallel with the female body, but he adds a new field of imagery that has yet to be

encountered, stating to Paxton, *you do, no- yeah it's very thin.* Emory then, in line 41, responds

to what has transpired first through laughter (which recognizes the humor lodged within the

sequentially preceding action, and thus which recognizes the campy nature of the interchange as

a whole), but then builds upon Sean's previous utterance directed at Paxton, stating °*oh yes, your*

thumbs are ve:(h)ry thi:(h)n.. In doing so Emory adds not only agreement with Sean's previous

utterance, but also a sense of finality in that the two participants have essentially closed the topic

for further discussion through their full concession to Paxton's thumb-as-waist camp

transformation. In short, through these final utterances, Paxton essentially 'wins out' (referring

to earlier challenges to his camp transformation), and the camp aesthetic invocation can safely

come to a close. Of note, after this interchange occurred, the preexisting talk on daily activities

and plans resumed, marking a transition from the campy back into the everyday mundane.

Conclusion: Camp as Omnipresent and Productive

As the analyses in this chapter have shown, the mundane, for U.S. gay male social actors,

is in fact anything but mundane. Seemingly innocuous talk, within these friendship groups,

becomes loci for not only displays of camp linguistic prowess, but also for the shared

establishment of queer subjectivity through such interchanges. In essence, it is through a

camping of the mundane that U.S. gay and lesbian people, to varying extents, navigate their

everyday interactions in relation to both peers and the world around them.

However, to refer back to the argument made and mentioned previously by Halperin

(2012), it is important to note that such instances of camp invocation are not representative of all

individuals who claim gay identity within the U.S. context. Rather, instances of camp, in this line of reasoning, function as modes for queer indexicality, whereby those that partake in the adoption and production of such structures are able to index what could rightly be described as queer-normative practice. The intersubjective understanding that results from such practices in turn leads to notions of community and culture, here grounded in a shared epistemological orientation to camp aesthetics. The analyses thus reinforce why it is only through our understanding of both the micro-level talk-in-interaction, coupled with larger notions of society and culture, that a fuller, more complex understanding of these friendship groups and their interactions will be achieved.

Of note for these analyses is that though I refrain from claiming this as a be all and end all for gay identity, the fact remains that these phenomena are occurring across cities, across participant pools, across friendship groups, and even between individual language choices. What this then implies is that a strong notion of queer-normativity is indeed in play and warranted in continuing work on queer cultures and communities, primarily given that it is this very notion of queer-normativity that is actively functioning as an influential construct in the development of U.S. queer selfhood. In the empirical chapters that follow, I build upon the foundational picture presented in the current analyses, looking at camp as a form of linguistic humor which is highly interconnected with popular culture, camp as a means for producing intertextually rich forms of discourse, camp as a strong conveyor of multileveled stance display, and finally camp as a means for establishing notions of community and belonging.

CHAPTER 5

CAMP HUMOR & POP CAMP CULTURE

Understanding Camp Humor

This second chapter addresses the notions of both camp humor and popular culture's role in everyday U.S. gay male interactions.[3] The chapter consists of two larger sections, dealing with camp humor first, and then addressing the topic of popular culture. The first half further delves into some of the various linguistic acts that make up camp humor, such as wit, sexual joking, sarcasm, and most importantly irony. My goal in doing this is to show how U.S. gay men make use of camp humor, in order to understand its interactive functions as a discursive strategy. This portion of the chapter is concerned, primarily, with micro-level processes; however, I also look at the implications for such linguistic strategies within the macro-level context, as humorous framings of talk that are in opposition to heteronormative masculine expectations. To further situate this section, I have organized the examples of talk through two perspectival components that are sociologically central to the establishment and maintenance of friendship dynamics: shared time (the organizational perspective used for the first subtheme on bitter-wit, sarcasm, and irony) and shared space (the organizational perspective used for the second subtheme on (homo)sexual joking). The second half, or larger section, of the chapter as a whole examines excerpts in which popular culture inundates U.S. gay men's interactions, specifically demonstrating how it is used as a salient conversational theme that unifies the discourse into a

---

[3] The use of the terms 'popular culture' and 'pop culture' within cultural studies are varied and often times used interchangeably. It is for this reason that I too use the terms interchangeably, without the intent of implying differing characterizations or conceptualizations with regard to the content they represent. Thus the terms, within this research, represent the same area of inquiry, and are used interchangeably more so to create fluidity and flow within the written text itself, particularly when used as descriptive terms that modify other nominal forms.

larger conceptualization of gay iconicity through shared schematic camp referential orientations within the larger domain of popular culture imagery.

The Role of Cultural Scripts

Before beginning the analyses, it is important to establish the analytic frame with which these instances will be examined. In speaking about displays of humor, I draw primarily upon Raskin's (1979, 1985) notion of Script Theory and Attardo and Raskin's (1991) revisionist approach termed the General Theory of Verbal Humor, an framework that takes an expanded notion of context as central to understandings humorous displays. Humor analysis, within this paradigm, results from incongruity between discursive scripts. In this way, the normative nature of discursive scripts are reconfigured through a norm-breaking initiation of play on their intrinsic characteristics (which in turn results in a humorous display). A script, for Attardo and Raskin, is comprised of the constituent parts belonging to a discursive segment of talk. For example, the script of a grade school student speaking with his/her school teacher might involve acts of raising one's hand, awaiting acknowledgement, taking one's turn after receipt of acknowledgement, constructing the talk as appropriate social action for student/teacher roles, a teacher offering meta-commentary on the talk and/or transforming the talk into a relevant contribution to the educational discursive space, and possibly the student expressing gratitude as the teacher pushes the classroom talk into a relevant next action. The cohesive image that is generated from this sequence of interaction thus constitutes a normative discursive script. When humor is generated, in Script Theory conceptualizations, it arises through play on one of the constituent interactional parts (e.g., a student speaking out of turn and being sanctioned for the interactional breach in a comical manner by the teacher). This notion of a script is important because it is in the imagery created through the script's invocation that a normative conceptualization of talk is constructed,

and by extension incongruities through their explicit deviations. In the current data, these incongruities are what lead to irony production, and thus to usages of camp aesthetics within the interactive frame.

The Role of Associative Fields

A second analytic feature of importance to the analyses of this chapter is Yokoyama's (1999) concept of associative fields of imagery. In her analysis of children's stories, Yokoyama illustrates how collectively viewing lexical items associated with a particular gender results in an association of schematic imagery (e.g., the imagery of boys in these stories tends to center on technology, sports, hunting and on professional and military spheres, while the imagery of girls tends to be general and humanistic, focusing more so on nature, animals, and daily life). This concept is important because, when viewing segments of talk as scripts unto themselves, it is useful to understand how content can be perceived as colored in ways specific to sociocultural identities. As humorous and pop cultural scripts are generated within the current data, scripts in part take on their camp qualities through the lexical content produced within the interaction. Further, the ability to access this information, within unfolding interactions, becomes a high stakes activity in that it inadvertently demonstrates what you know, how well you can use that knowledge, and whether that knowledge is relevant to the friendship group and interactions at hand. The concept of associative fields thus provides a useful means of demonstrating how content coalesces to construct a summative whole from these constituent parts, with this whole, in these interactions, reflecting a general orientation to camp aesthetics.

With regard to camp humor, in each of the humorous examples below there is an ever-present process of irony production as camp has been shown to position the queer subject into an opposite sociocultural extreme from heteronormativity, with this polarization in turn resulting in

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the creation of an alternative lifeworld perspective. For the purposes of this analysis, I will thus first speak of each example in relation to a specific humorous function (e.g., wit), with the first subsection focusing on instances of bitter-wit, sarcasm, and irony, and the second focusing on sexual joking. While performing these micro-level analyses, in each subsection I relate the examples to a more macro-level process of sociocultural irony production. Finally, in the third subsection, I explore the use of pop culture in the creation of queer humor and subjectivity, specifically exploring how the pop culture used diverges from heteronormative pop usages through its use of campy imagery as opposed to more mainstream, and thus hetero-associated, pop cultural referents. Pop, in this way, emerges as inconspicuously interconnected with the camp aesthetic, superficially appearing accessible to all (meaning both queer and heteronormative consumers), while covertly emerging through the associated imagery as divergent from what is recognized as mainstream. In this way I will show that the array of camp imagery invoked activates a schematic field that, when taken as a whole, produces a campy visual landscape which derives its meaning from referents that would not normatively be selected by hetero male social actors. This permeation of pop culture as a salient, meaningful theme in gay men's interactions, which draws from imagery that dissociates itself from non-queer consumers, in turn leads to the establishment of a queer pop culture visual landscape, whereby pop is viewed as important, while also being viewed as aesthetically unique to U.S. gay male experience.

Bitter-Wit, Sarcasm, & Irony

The four examples within this section are organized in such a way as to carry forth the central focus on everyday, ordinary talk-in-interaction, while focusing specifically on the achievement of camp humor as a discursive resource. Organizationally, the examples move

through time, a central component to the establishment of shared friendship. Examples 1 and 2 explore public and private past friendship memories respectively, while examples 3 and 4 explore friendship memory in present development and yet to come (meaning that a future scene is under examination). The issue of time, and temporal association, is of central concern to the development of friendship, as it is through our temporal relations that friendship and the memories of shared experience resulting from those friendships become common, situated, and reified as instances of commonality and free association. These examples thus elucidate the importance of the notion of time by indicating how varying degrees of familiarity, across temporal dimensions, are colored by and in turn productive of camp aesthetics within U.S. gay men's interactions.

Camping Public Friendship Memories

The first aspect of camp humor that I will address is the previously mentioned notion of "sarcastic bitter-wit" as conceptualized by Babuscio (1993). In the following example, which comes from the New York data, Lloyd has begun to recount a story in which many of the present participants went together as a group to Chinatown for Dim Sum. In this story, which represents a common friendship story that has been retold countless times and that directly indexes strong past friendship ties, he produces an unlikely pairing of terms when describing a now shunned (then) lesbian co-attendee to the event: *psycho lesbian* and *republican senator's wife*, around which the witty sense of meaning unfolds. In this way Lloyd transforms a seemingly mundane public event, the act of going out to dim sum, into a camp event of inversion. Of note, some of the co-present listeners were not in attendance to this shared event, and were thus hearing the story for the first time, which serves as a catalyst for the story's continued retelling.

The wit display within this exchange stems primarily from Lloyd's negative depiction of another attendee, Marie, in lines 7 and 8. Importantly, Marie, who is no longer a part of the group, is described herein by Lloyd as a *psycho lesbian that turn[s] into republican uh senator's wife*. To better understand this characterization, Marie was known for making backhanded remarks about others and doing things that were frequently seen as calculating and hurtful. This positioned her as more and more marginal over time, eventually leading to the group's dissociation from her. Importantly, this dissociation coincided with Marie's self-proclaimed "change" in sexual orientation from homo to heterosexual. Recognized within the group as someone who openly questioned her sexuality well before the event that lead to her alienation, Marie emerges as the referent for a humorous play on words which directly indexes the inverted nature of camp irony production.

EXAMPLE 1: NEW YORK

```
1.  Llo:  Well remember, uh heh remember Dim Sum, heh heh,
2.        (1.0)
3.  Dav:  Which one.
4.  Emo:  [Oh that's ri:ght, that's ri::[ght.
5.  Llo:  [STO::P THE CART.             [STO::P THE CA(h)RT.
6.  Emo:  O:h my go::d.
7.  Llo:  Don't you remember? Marie, psycho lesbians that turn into
8.        republican uh senator's wife?
9.  Emo:  Heh heh.
10. Dav:  Heh heh heh.
```

By characterizing Marie, in line 8, as a *republican senator's wife*, Lloyd shows not only creative wit in his words (as Marie often questioned her sexuality, while also pointing towards Republicans as often times hypocritical opponents to queer sexuality through their opposition sociopolitical stances within public spheres), but also a sense of bitterness by simultaneously

depicting Marie as *psycho* (line 7). Semantically speaking, *psycho lesbian* and *republican senator's wife,* in this juxtaposition, become coreferential, pointing to the same world image (of Marie), and creating an ironic effect which results in a witty humorous interactional display. Further, there is a sense of sarcasm portrayed in example 1 through the fact that Marie, who was once a trusted in-group member of the larger group, in a sense betrayed the others, not only through her backstabbing remarks, but also through her indecisiveness regarding her sexuality. Indeed, since Marie was excluded from the larger group, she has since "gone straight," so to speak, relocating to a different city and dating men as a heterosexual woman. Thus it is in the juxtaposition of the terms *psycho lesbian* and *republican senator's wife*, where they are semantically positioned as coreferential of the same referent source, that an incongruent image arises, giving way to a humorous display.

Through the displays of bitter-wit and sarcasm, there is also ironic humor in that the remarks create a humorous juxtaposition of contradictory identities, wherein emerges camp aesthetic orientations through an incongruity of imagery. This is achieved through the conceptualization of a *psycho lesbian* as a *republican senator's wife*. This oppositional binary ironically frames the utterance as a semantically multifaceted critique. First, it addresses the deviation from the in-group identity (the derogation of Marie's lesbian identity). Second, it addresses Marie's subsequent alignment with the default 'other' categories that may potentially arise through this deviation: American republicanism, which displays fundamental opposition towards the homosexual life world, and the institution of marriage, which historically has excluded queer people from participation. Lastly, it addresses Marie's realignment with heteronormative gender representation–recasting Marie as 'turning into' a wife, and thus into someone who conforms to traditional gendered roles for women.

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This example can also be said to be an ironic social critique in that the recordings occurred during the time of the Mark Foley and Larry Craig scandals, in which the two supposedly straight republican congressional members were caught having sex with underage men (i.e., Foley) and adult men (i.e., Craig). By exemplifying the falsity of Marie's homosexuality, achieved through reframing her in a conflicting heterosexual role (i.e., republican senator's wife), Lloyd creates a parallel critique of a broader incongruity within the American conservative community. This serves as a social critique of the dominant culture in that, through interactive practices, Lloyd is able to relate his assessment of a former in-group member to a larger category of other (albeit a culturally *dominant* other). This dominant other is thus marked as exterior, as not a part of gay culture, and as in a contrastive sociocultural position to the lifeworld of these participants. This is also the case for Marie, who has essentially been characterized as other through her conflicting sexuality and betrayal. From this we see an interesting parallel between the two political parties that is, for all intents and purposes, being assessed or critiqued within a local, casual environment, but which has implications for both the local and extended context. Lloyd's words thus serve to ironize these incongruities by showcasing the conflicting polar extremes, and marking them as worthy of sarcastic, bitter retort.

Though I consistently make the claim that the ironizing effects of camp humor present themselves as a normative aspect of American gay male culture and identity, more convincing evidence may be taken from a source that superficially seems antithetically opposed to such tactics, the Log Cabin Republicans, a conservative gay branch of the American republican political party. Indeed, in a recent gay pride celebration, Log Cabin Republicans hosted an event entitled the "Tea Bag Toss,"[4] a name that puns (in a campy manner) on the conservative

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[4] Taken from: http://wonkette.com/415926/gay-republicans-go-off-message-embrace-camp

American Tea Party movement which does not share the same beliefs as the Log Cabin Republicans. Guests for the event were invited to 'toss tea bags' into painted mouth openings of those who politically stand in opposition to the gay conservative agenda, e.g., Sarah Palin, Nancy Pelosi, etc. Aside from the overtly campy visual imagery, which brings into thought the sexual act of 'teabagging', or the lowering of the scrotum into the mouth of a sexual partner, the name of this event serves as further evidence for camp humor as a queer strategy of social critique through punning effect. The choice of these seemingly contradictory images (i.e., Palin and Pelosi) is not surprising given that Log Cabin Republicans support economically conservative ideals, while also supporting the advancement of social and civil freedoms, such as marriage equality and the general conservative value of individual liberty. Thus, the claims that I make for camp humor as capable of transforming the broader heterocentric lifeworld through irony, and as representative of gay male identity, retain their validity even in cases that appear, at least superficially, counterintuitive. I do not, however, claim that all American gay men align with camp humor as a form of social critique because to do so would be to deny individual agency, and thus reality. Nevertheless, camp seems to play a decisive role in the active establishment of queer culture, materializing as a point of aesthetic coalescence around which a shared sense of culture and identity transpire, and through which queer disalignment with heteronormative social practices and beliefs becomes tangibly visible.

Camping Private Friendship Memories

A second example of bitter, sarcastic wit can be seen in example 2 below, which involves more personal, private past memories from the participants' shared friendship and history. It is positioned as private not only because of the setting itself (which is indeed physically private as it is in one of the participants' residence), but for the private nature of the content itself

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(revealing illegal actions that could have serious social ramifications). In this example, which stems from the Atlanta data, Taylor, Bailey, Heath, and Emory are engaged in a table card game known as Quibbler. In this game, participants draw cards with letters and/or letter sequences (from a letter-card deck designed specifically for the game) that must then be used to construct three or more letter words. In this example, Taylor has just drawn a card with the letter *K* on it. As he prepares to discard (which must be done with each turn), he professes that he is not sure what course of action he should take. Immediately afterward, he lets all of the others know what he has pulled by overtly stating, as depicted in line 1, *Alright is that K gonna help me*, informing the others of the drawn card's content. This revelation is then followed, in line 3, by Heath's acknowledgement token *uh huhh*, and by Bailey's witty and sarcastic commentary in line 4. To explain, line 4 begins with a markedly strong humorous response to Taylor's utterance in line 1, whereby we see that Taylor's words are interpreted in a humorous fashion that seems to carry with it an underlying subtext. The laughter is then followed with *^How many times have you s^aid ^thAT?*, which emerges as a humorous response designed to juxtapose the letter *K* with a humorous in-group story from the past. This story stems from the fact that *K* can stand not only for a letter, but also for an abbreviated name for the club drug Ketamine, a human and animal tranquilizer used to provide a slow, sedated trance-like feeling while dancing. For this group, Taylor's previous usage of this drug was well known and frowned upon, as the others often had to look after him when he used this drug.

EXAMPLE 2: ATLANTA

1. Tay: Alright is that K gonna help me, hhhhh
2.   (0.2)
3. Hea: uh huh[h
4. Bai: [huh huh [hah hah hah hah hah ^How many times have you s^aid ^thAT?=
5. Tay: [huh huh heh ^heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh heh =

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6.  Bai:  =huh huh [huh[ heh ^haaah huh heh heh [heh,
7.  Tay:  =heh heh [heh[ heh    (0.6)           [I heh (h)used to s(h)ay that=
8.  Pet:          [uh [huh huh huh ((snort)) huh heh heh heh,
9.  Emo:              [uh huh heh heh heh heh.
10. Tay:  =a(h)ll the t[(h)ime heh heh,
```

We see this interaction as humorous not only through the covert invocation of a comical (if not dangerous) scene shared by all participants, but also through the extended, overt laughter sequences produced in response by all participants. Though the subject matter is serious in nature, it is also of the past, as Taylor no longer uses illegal drugs. It thus becomes a moment in which Bailey can overtly demonstrate his wit through both his knowledge of their shared past, and through his quick witted ability to transform a simple letter into a tool for the activation of shared friendship history. It is in this lodging of the interaction within queer in-group history and imagery, incongruously colored by the mundane nature of a simple letter, that the humor emerges as a camp aesthetic orientation. What this means is that the seriousness of the situation, a man who abuses drugs, is reframed through a process of irony into a scene that should be interpreted as humorous, no matter how serious the implications. And it is in this reframing of seriousness into humor (to borrow Sontag's notion) that camp aesthetics take form. Through Bailey's use of humor, framed in this notion of failed seriousness, he generates an incongruous field of imagery on the letter *K* that transforms its seemingly innocuous characteristics into a marked instance of queer friendship debauchery that should, in retrospect, be viewed as tragically humorous (which again reifies the camp aesthetic).

An inadvertent implication of this campy transformation is that the letter *K,* through this usage, becomes a symbol of shared friendship and identity, which transpired for the most part in actual queer spaces of interaction (such as bars and dance clubs). Though it could be said that both queer and heteronormative social actors use Ketamine, making it a product that is not

indicative of queer identity unto itself, the discursive transformation and interpretation within this interaction allows its usage to be understood through the shared recollection of drug use within queer interactional experience. It is this invocation of shared experience, produced through camp aesthetic orientations in the form of humor, which allows participants to positively display their understandings of one another as a part of a group, and more generally as co-members in friendship. In this way, bitter-wit and sarcasm become tools for playfully activating camp aesthetics for social functionality, marking the discourse as queer not by the content of the letter *K*, but by how *K* is seen and interpreted in meaningful ways specific to this group.

Camping Developing Friendship Memories

Similar to the previous analyses, example 3 below also draws upon usages of bitter-wit and sarcasm to generate camp-based humor; however, the content differs slightly in that the usage of camp humor, in this example, is the product of a friendship circle that is less established and that is thus in a developmental stage in the here-and-now. Importantly, the lack of shared time, which was present in the previous past examples, does not seem to effect the invocation of camp imagery in the production of humorous expression.

This example stems from the Los Angeles data (the least established of the four friendship circles), and includes four participants: three gay men (Emory, Billy, and Ethan) and one lesbian participant (Karen). In this example Billy is talking about how much his appearance has changed over the years, and how these changes have subsequently led to a decrease in dating for him. In lines 1 and 2 he first professes that he has not dated seriously in quite some time, specifically stating that *It's been many yea:rs. ^Not many years but it's been a good (.) handful of years*. Then in line 2 he downplays his current appearance as a potential reason for his decrease in dating by overtly stating *I'm not as pretty as I used to be*, which in itself marks the

utterance with camp aesthetic orientations through conceptualizations of male appearance as

pretty, a term typically reserved for the description of female appearance, and thus a term that

plays upon notions of gender inversion (a common camp practice) in its derivation of meaning.

```
1.  Bil:  It's been many yea:rs. ^Not many years but it's been a good (.)
2.        handful of years, I'm not as pretty as I used to be,
3.  Kar:  Oh Billy.
4.  Bil:  UH Huh HEH hah ha[h hah
5.  Kar:                  [S t O p.
6.        (0.8)
7.  Bil:  *hhh ^I [wh- I had a (.) gIrlish figure back in the dAy.
8.  Eth:         [whatever girl.
9.        (1.2)
10. Kar:  [I had a boyish figure back I[n the day.
11. Bil:  [It was-
12. Emo:                               [uhm hum heh heh heh humn humn *hhh
13. Eth:  Yeh £sti(h)ll d[(h)o, don't worry abo- huh huh heh heh heh *hhh huh
14. Kar:                [uh huh huh heh heh heh
15. Kar:  £°You [know I(h)'m ga(h)y°
16. Eth:        [That's why Ellie did your hair=
17. Kar:  =hhh yeah [(0.6) I know, (0.2) ^It's true, no I know.
18. Bil:            [ uh huh huh huh huh
```

As the sequence unfolds, Karen, in line 3, downgrades the severity of Billy's self-

assessment through her response *Oh Billy*. This is then responded to by Billy with laughter in

line 4, which is itself overlapped by Karen's continued downgrading of the assessment in line 5,

StOp. In line 7 Billy continues his invocation of camp aesthetics through gender inversion when

he elevates the use of female imagery in describing male appearance, stating *^I wh- I had a (.)*

gIrlish figure back in the dAy. Ethan simultaneously overlaps this continuation in line 8 with an

additional contribution of gender inversion as he responds to Billy's self-assessments with

whatever girl. Interestingly, Karen, in line 10, continues with her original downgrade of the assessment by offering a sympathetic, yet humorous parallel, stating that she *had a boyish figure back In the day*. At this point in the interaction, it is primarily the use of gender inversion that has resulted in the laughter token responses offered by Emory in 12 (i.e., *uhm hum heh heh heh humn humn *hhh*). More specifically, the incongruous juxtaposition of female-on-male and male-on-female body imagery results in irony production that instructs Emory to interpret the interaction as humorous. Yet the humor is not simply humor in a broader sense, but rather humor in a queered, camp sense through the explicit manipulation of normative ideologies of gender common to compulsory heterosexuality. As such, irony through camp abounds in this interaction as it is only through the queering of normativity through camp-based gender inversion that the scene takes on humorous qualities, positioning the interaction as queer-normative, and thus as in differentiated position to heteronormative discursive practice.

In line 13 we see the explicit use of bitter, sarcastic wit as a tool in this camp aesthetic scene when Ethan comments on Karen's parallel gender inversion, stating to Karen *Yeh £sti(h)ll d[(h)o, don't worry abo- huh huh heh heh heh *hhh huh*. The remark takes on a sarcastic tone when viewed in relation to Ethan's previous commentary on Billy's self-assessment through gender inversion. In this earlier interaction, Ethan uses gender inversion himself (i.e., *whatever girl*) to downgrade the severity of Billy's self-assessment, humorously tying his talk to the established gender-play theme while doing so in a manner that dismisses Billy's words as seemingly untrue. Yet in the current interaction with Karen, no such dismissal is offered. In fact, through his words Ethan in essence elevates the severity of negative self-assessment offered by Karen in that he links her past conceptualization to the present, wherein he brings a negative past

portrayal into the here-and-now. This marks Karen's self-assessment as in a state of continued problematicity.

Initially, Karen responds to Ethan's commentary in line 14 with laughter tokens; however, the laughter comes in at the beginning of Ethan's response and tapers off towards the end. From this change in her utterance we begin to see that this commentary is being viewed, as it unfolds, as negative, and more specifically as sarcastic. Indeed, in line 15 Karen offers a form of mild defense to this negative characterization. Here she states, *£°You [know I(h)'m ga(h)y°* , which emerges as a lighthearted, yet defensive retort in response to the harsh, sarcastic commentary offered by Ethan. In truth, her comment appears meant to sarcastically counter Ethan's remarks; but, it is not given the same pragmatic weight within the interaction as the utterances of the men. More precisely, before this retort can be fully uttered, Ethan, in line 16 exacerbates the severity of the original sarcastic remark by stating *That's why Ellie did your hair*, which likens Karen's appearance to that of a shared lesbian friend *Ellie*, whose self-image is readily known amongst in-group members to represent the stereotypical depiction of the butch lesbian archetype (i.e., a hyper-masculine physical appearance through dress and styling). These remarks are then, in a concessionary manner, responded to by Karen in line 17 with *hhh yeah [(0.6) I know, (0.2) ^It's true, no I know*. Importantly, rather than responding with a witty, sarcastic remark of her own, Karen seems to yield to Ethan's comments, accepting them as true with no further retort. Her response, rather than mimicking the quick-witted style of these gay men, emerges as a recognition of truth with no further action, be it true or not.

In line 18 we see the exact opposite response from Billy, as he offers laughter tokens as a next action for Ethan's negative characterization of Karen's appearance. What this implies is that Billy, a gay male, recognizes Ethan's commentary as playful, quick-witted, sarcastic banter,

whereas Karen recognizes it as sarcastic commentary that is hurtful, resulting in her inability to return or counter. This is not surprising given that, throughout the larger corpus, gay male social actors consistently use and respond to such interactional contributions not as hurtful, but as humorous. This provides evidence for camp-based humor as a defining characteristic of U.S. gay men's interactional styles, where even seemingly in-group members (i.e., lesbian participants) display different interactional expectations. In essence, we see this interaction as queer discourse through gender inversion practices that rely on camp aesthetic orientations which are equally accessible for both gay male and lesbian social actors. But it is through the use of camp-based humor, in the form of bitter, sarcastic wit, that we envision this interactional scene as representative of a larger notion of U.S. gay male interactional practice.

Camping Friendship Memories Yet to Come

The final example within this subsection on bitter-wit, sarcasm, and irony stems from the Fort Lauderdale data, and includes four participants, Paxton, Sean, Henry, and Emory. Contrary to the previous examples, this example involves the active construction of what could be conceptualized as a *future* memory (or a memory yet to be realized). What this means is that the participants are discussing a course of action that is envisioned as fodder for stories yet to come. From a temporal perspective, this serves to position the notion of friendship that is accomplished not only through past experience, but also through present experiences (as in example 3 as well), and future experiences that can be conceptualized as feasible by participant members.

In example 4 below, Paxton, who is in a relationship with Sean, is telling the others of his desire to get a dog. He then, in lines 1 and 2, states that one of his reasons for wanting a dog is because everyone else in the local area has one. Emory responds to this in lines 3 and 4, when he asks if this is the only reason why Paxton wants one. In line 5 Paxton asserts that this is not the

only reason, stating in line 7 that a dog could teach him something, with the implication being

responsibility as Paxton is commonly referred to as the carefree member of the group who takes

nothing seriously. As this transpires, in lines 6, 9, and 10, Sean, who is Paxton's partner,

reframes Paxton's assertion into a camp event by transforming the need for a dog into a

whimsical assertion through his characterization of Paxton's desire as a mere fashion statement.

The imagery that results from Sean's contributions, in this way, invokes the stereotypical blond

archetype with a Chihuahua (reminiscent of tabloid photos at this time of young heiress

celebrities Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie). As the talk continues to unfold, the campy imagery

of a man publicly presenting himself in this fashion is appropriated by Emory, resulting in a

sequence of talk where multiple members rely on similar ironic incongruities of imagery,

through the juxtaposition of an adult man portrayed as a young fashionista, to reframe the talk as

a witty and sarcastic camp event.

EXAMPLE 4: FORT LAUDERDALE

```
1.  Pax:  =you go to a movie theater, you go shopping, everybody's got their
2.        GOddamn dog with them.
3.  Emo:  But does- is that why you want one?
4.        Cuz everybody's got o[ne.
5.  Pax:                    [no:::. That's   not    why:::=
6.  Sea:                    [it's a- it's a- it's an accessory.
7.  Pax:  =I just- (.) [I would think it would teach me-=
8.  Hen:             [yeah.
9.  Sea:  =The problem is that then we're gonna have to get five dogs (.)
10.       one for each outfit.
11. Emo:  uhm huhm [huhm
12. Sea:          [uh huh huh huh or(h) color range.
13. Emo:  *hhh [well  this  one  ha::s spO:::ts,
14. Sea:       [let's see I'm wearing blue today.
15.       [So: this dog's gonna have to come- I'm wearing=
```

```
16. Pax:  [oh no no no no no I figured it out, I'm gonna get-
17. Sea:  =brown today, *hhh this [dog. [I-
18. Pax:                         [I'm g[etting a white dog.  (.)  Cuz  white  goes=
19. Emo:                               [I have to have a black one and ah white one.
20. Pax:  [with everything.
21. Sea:  [go- goes with everythin[g?
22. Pax:                         [white [goes with everything.    (1.0)    what?
23. Emo:                         [uhm huhm. (0.2)uh huhm huhm huhm huhm *hhhh yeah=
24.       =but you don't [wanna- you don't wanna take that one out after labor day.
25. Sea:                 [He'll be holding the dog up to his sneakers.
```

In line 9 Sean specifically likens Paxton's need for a dog to the imagery of the young fashionista archetype, stating that *The problem is that then we're gonna have to get five dogs (.) one for each outfit.* This camp aesthetic orientation, originating through the juxtaposition of a male social actor with female imagery, results in an overt display of ironic incongruity primarily given that the words play on masculine aesthetic expectations, resulting in a transformation of the talk into a frame of queer-normative discourse. The analogy is subsequently confirmed as a moment of camp-based humor through Emory's laughter response in line 11, as well as Sean's laughter response in line 12. The laughter sequence is then continued and escalated through additional sarcastic commentary that draws upon the camp-based imagery underway, encompassing lines 12 (Sean: *or(h) color range*), 13 (Emory: *well this one ha::s spO::::ts*), 14, 15, and 17 (Sean: *let's see I'm wearing blue today. So: this dog's gonna have to come- I'm wearing brown today, *hhh this dog. I*).

As the sarcastic remarks unfold, Paxton, in lines 16, 18, and 20, enters into the play frame by stating *oh no no no no no I figured it out, I'm gonna get- I'm getting a white dog. (.) Cuz white goes go- goes with everything?*. While Paxton articulates his acknowledgment of and willingness to participate in the camp humor sequence of sarcasm (thereby showing his

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willingness to enter into the state of verbal play), Emory, in line 19, overlaps his speech, usurping the voice of Paxton himself, stating *I have to have a black one and ah white one.* In lines 21 through 24 the concept of getting a white dog, because it 'will go with everything', is carried forward by multiple participants. The sequence concludes in lines 24 and 25 with Emory stating, in line 24, a stereotypical American rule of fashion that states that white should not be worn after labor day (i.e., *but you don't wanna- you don't wanna take that one out after labor day.*), and in line 25 where Sean overlaps Emory's utterance to make a final assertion of ludicrousness with regard to the scene, stating that Paxton will *be holding the dog up to his sneakers.* Importantly, the grammar of this final statement serves to support the previous notion of a future shared experience in friendship displays, as the humorous camp imagery, in this instance, is indeed yet to come (or at least envisioned as such).

As did Karen in the previous example, Paxton could have negatively received the sarcastic commentary. Indeed, as this sequence unfolds it becomes clear that Paxton, and his excessive actions, emerge as the target or 'butt' of the joke. Yet rather than reacting negatively, Paxton joins in on the play frame, carrying forward the camp aesthetic orientation and receiving the use of sarcasm, even when at his own expense, as both expected and welcomed.

The use of witty remarks, framed in a sarcastic manner, and drawing from a camp-based field of imagery, thus emerges as a defining feature of camp humor, and more importantly as a defining characteristic of U.S. gay men's interactive practices. When viewed in unison, the examples explored in this subsection position these humorous devices as important linguistic components to queer-normative linguistic practice. This is achieved, however, primarily through the ironizing effects stemming from camp aesthetics more generally. Indeed, the forms of humor themselves have no intrinsic connection to queer social actors; rather, it is how they are used, in

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this campy manner, that marks them as humor strategies specific to this social setting and population, positioning as integral components to the construction of a larger notion of shared culture.

As the instances in this subsection are representative of the types of humorous interactions happening across the four data sites, the assertion of their highly regarded position within queer-normative discourse is strengthened as we see their use across social settings of time and space, and among participants who have no connection to one another except in their sexual orientation and the resulting lived experiences that have been shaped by this orientation. That is not to say that all U.S. gay men make use of such linguistic strategies; rather, it is to say that these strategies make up a portion of the normative interactional expectations of U.S. gay male social actors. But more importantly, it is through the camp aesthetic field of imagery generated through these instances that the talk truly takes its camp-based nature, a notion that will be explored more fully in the next and final subsections.

(Homo)Sexual Joking

Just as the previous subsection was organized through time, the current section is organized through a second necessary component of friendship interactions: space. The three examples within this section move through various spatial settings, examining how queer intersubjectivity and friendship emerge as products of queer public spaces (example 5), queer private spaces (example 6), and of spaces not readily associated with queer personhood (example 7). In this way, U.S. gay men's friendship, and by extension its connection to camp aesthetic expression, are positioned as products of a larger scope of interaction and interactional space, one that is not confined to the private sphere of the past (when homosexuality was more aggressively demonized within society). Within this dynamic of space, proximity and shared co-

presence emerge as integral components to the development of friendship, and by extension to the larger scope of production with regard to camp aesthetic displays. As a result, camp-based interactions further move from private discourse, to a discourse in the process of transcending queer discursive space (which is evidenced in the fact that camp, as an aesthetic orientation, has become substantially more accessible to larger groups).

To elaborate, examples 5 and 6 below explore public and private queer spaces as loci for the establishment of friendship and queer aestheticism, while example 3 explores these notions within space not associated with queer personhood (and thus within space that is seen to extend the queer lifeworld, and by extension the friendships that inhabit these lifeworlds, into new domains of interaction). Like time, space emerges as a defining characteristic in the construction of shared experience, here in the form of shared queer experience and personhood.

To begin, just as bitter-wit, sarcasm, and irony constitute important aspects of camp humor, so does sexuality itself, or more precisely sexual joking. Lakoff (1976) argues for joking as primarily the domain of men, stating that women, quite often, do not get or botch the punchline. Though subsequent research has countered some of these claims, demonstrating that gender divides are less pronounced than previously thought (Gray, 1994; Nardini, 2000; Rowe 2001), some of Lakoff's observations continue to carry weight still today, particularly with regard to directness. As Goodwin (1990) notes, male language often takes on grammatical characteristics that position it as more direct than the language used by females, specifically noting how young boys and girls make use of imperatives of second-person-accusatory (e.g., Get Out) and first-person-collective (e.g., Let's Go) structures (respectively). When comprehended with Lakoff's earlier assertions that men are much more apt to use expletives, and by extension crude, direct language, all of which comprise common features of humorous talk, we begin to see

how humorous language may become more readily associated with male discursive space and expression. This would imply that sexual joking, as a practice, loosely resides within a *male* interactional domain as opposed to a strictly *gay male* domain. However, sexual joking in relation to camp deviates from use within heterosexual discourses in that the object of sexual desire is same-sex. As Cameron (1997) demonstrates in her analysis of college age heterosexual male interaction, homosexuality is something to be marked as other and used as "a contrast group against whom [heterosexual] masculinity can be defined" (p. 61). The joking discourse within her analyses thus renders the same-sex object illegitimate as a target for desire. I would thus argue that sexual joking among gay males might more appropriately be termed (homo)sexual joking, in that the same-sex object of desire directly marks gay men's sexual jokes as constitutive of non-heteronormative representations of sexuality, as well as masculinity. (Homo)sexual joking thus becomes a form of camp-based expression given that camp is, quite often, colored with humorous (homo)sexual connotations (Harvey 2000). The sexual nature of camp may be both lighthearted, as seen through gender play and displays of same-sex desire, or obscene, drawing its imagery from explicit graphic depictions of sexual acts. But what is important is that it is the *homo* nature of these jokes that marks these instances as other, as non-heterocentric, and as camp-based aesthetic displays.

Camping Queer Public Spaces

Example 5 below, which stems from the Atlanta data, involves three participants speaking to one another in a gay bar. This interaction is thus situated within traditionally queer discursive space, an obvious locus for the interactional establishment of friendship through talk-in-interaction, and thus an ideal locus for the invocation of queer camp imagery. One of the participants, Rick, is a hockey player and is thus physically quite strong. Rick is bragging about

his strength and attempts to display it for both Tom and Emory by showing that he can pick

Emory up without any problems. Emory, who is both sober and 6'3", is protesting this course of

action. Tom, who is attracted to Rick (revealed through previous discussion in the sequential

organization), but whom is not the object of Rick's attention, has just made a comment about his

recent birthday, to which Emory responds in line 2. In line 1 Rick continues his insistence upon

picking Emory up, while the act of camp-based (homo)sexual joking unfolds throughout the

totality of the interactive scene.

EXAMPLE 5: ATLANTA

```
1.  Ric:  [I was picking you up.

2.  Emo:  [Happy birthday, shugg- no you'll never be able to pick

3.        me up honey, I'm 6'3" that's- no no no don't even try-

4.        don't even try-  ((in response to Rick's advances))

5.  Tom:  I've fucked bigger guys- bigger-bigger guys than this.

6.        ((said to Rick, about Emory))

7.  Ric:  Sweetness, back up.

8.  Emo:  [oh no no no no no

9.  Ric:  [No I'm not going to force you,I'm simply saying that-

10. Tom:  She gon e:ase it in.

11. Bai:  ((boisterous laughter))

12. Ric:  I will. I will.

13. Tom:  Pueh pueh, I'z like gitcha micropho:ne rea[dy,

14. Ric:                                           [Come here,
```

As is clearly shown in line 5, Tom positions himself into the conversation in a joking

manner that is highly (homo)sexual in nature. As someone who is interested in Rick, but who is

not the object of Rick's attention, Tom playfully inserts himself into the conversation in lines 5

and 6 through comedic bragging, stating that he has *fucked bigger guys than this*. The humor

stems from both the crude use of sexualized language, and from the fact that Tom is only about

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5'6" in height. Further, we see this as camp humor in that there is also a clear marking of the utterance as queer. This stems from a male making the claim that he has *fucked guys*. This example also exhibits an underlying sarcastic tone directed towards Emory, who is the current object of Rick's attention (Tom's desired position). This interpretation of sarcasm derives its meaning from Tom's characterization of Emory as *not big enough*, and thus as something less than a meriting conquest.

The most humorous feature of this interchange, however, stems from the utterance performed by Tom in line 10. As Rick moves in closer to attempt to pick Emory up, Emory becomes increasingly nervous and agitated. Of note, Emory is sober within this interaction while the other two participants are intoxicated. This makes the act of picking someone up rather unsafe, especially since the party to be picked up is sober and aware of this dynamic, and sheds light on the assertion that Emory's behavior has shifted to nervousness and agitation. In line 9 Rick reassures Emory that he is *not going to force* him to do it, which prompts a highly sexualized, humorous response from Tom in line 10, in which he states that Rick is *gon ease it in*. This in turn becomes a play on words in that Tom, through format tying (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987; M. H. Goodwin, 1990), builds upon the word *force* in a sexual manner. The original meaning of the word *force*, here, seems to refer to the act of physically picking Emory up. However, Tom reframes the word as sexual given that Rick is now seen as dominating Emory through connotatively constructed sexual roles, one of which is seen as dominator and one of which is seen as dominated. As such, the utterance is interpreted as a type of camp humor in that gay sexual roles are made salient through acts of same-sex, desire-centered sexual joking. Further, it becomes campy through the juxtaposition of gender identities, as seen in the pronoun *she* and the action of *easing it in*, which refers to male penetration. This sexual tone and dual

meaning is also present in line 13, in which Tom says, *pueh pueh*, which can be read as both spitting on the hands to perform a difficult action, and applying spit to the penis as a lubricant for penetration. This is followed by a final sexual allusion by Tom, where he states *I'z like gitcha micropho:ne ready*, which posits double meaning in that the microphone to which he refers is both the physical microphone recording the sequence, and a phallic object which bears resemblance to male genitalia.

The irony within this example stems primarily from the treatment of a casual conversation in ways that would be seen as inappropriate within a hegemonically masculine interactional frame. Tom transforms, through numerous utterances, an all male, queer bar scene into an interactional scene of desire. He then goes on to use terms that mark his utterances as doubly encoded, through his depiction of the physical act of picking someone up as a sexual advance, as well as through his gender-bending play on pronoun use. This reframing serves to mark Tom's utterances as oppositional to heteronormative linguistic expression through the queering effect of camp humor, which markedly situates Tom's words within a distinctly queer discursive space, as opposed to a hetero-masculine space. In doing so, Tom reifies the present participants' identities as queer by, in camp terms, *flouting* homosexuality, which positions his words as subversive to dominant discourses by his normalizing of homosexual desire.

Camping Queer Private Spaces

Example 6 below, also from the Atlanta data (but from a different day and interaction), involves five participants, Taylor, Emory, Heath, Bailey, and Pete. This interaction differs slightly from the previous interaction in that, though constituting a queer discursive space, it is private in nature, situated within the home of a participant rather than within the public sphere (even a queer public sphere, as in the previous example). Traditionally, and in particular

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throughout times where queerness was openly and sometimes aggressively ostracized, the private

interactional space comprised the core locus of queer interaction. It is thus no surprise that queer

specific lingo emerged as a means for interacting in more public spheres, with this lingo often

emerging as cohesively recognizable through its core sexual nature (through which members

could covertly identify one another within public spaces). It is therefore equally important to

understand how this type of private space functions today, and whether it carries with it still

today the camp aesthetic nature of its origins. As the example below will demonstrate, this is in

fact the case, even as the previous example has shifted the focus to spaces less rigidly guarded

from external hetero view.

Similar to example 2 above, this excerpt occurs during the word-building game Quibbler.

Emory, who is playing this game for the first time, in line 1 asks for rule clarification from the

other more experienced members of the group, specifically asking *Oh, so do I have to add?*

Bailey then responds in lines 2 and 4, telling Emory *Yeah add up the numbers and then you get*

ten extra for having the longest word, so add ten to whatever you got. Emory, who has

previously identified math as an area of intellectual weakness for himself, then begins to add up

his total score, overtly expressing his mathematical problems in lines 5 and 6 by stating *okay so::*

(0.2) eighteen Plus (.) ten,. As he articulates this aloud for all participants to hear, Taylor, who is

listening, sarcastically elicits a response from Emory in line 8 by simply asking *is.*, to which

Emory responds in line 9 with the correct answer *twenty-eight*. Taylor then overtly elucidates

the humorous nature of such a rudimentary question in line 11 as he begins to respond with

laughter tokens. This is then reacted to similarly by Emory in line 12, with the addition of an

expression of gratitude through his utterance *Tha(h)nk y(h)ou(h)*, wording that is further colored

with laughter tokens throughout. In lines 14 and 15 Emory then explicitly plays upon the

sarcastic remark made by Taylor by saying *don't put me on the spot,* which emerges as a

humorous reaction to the play on his lack of mathematical talent. The sexualization of this

sequence then arises in lines 16 and 17, as Taylor offers a follow-up sarcastic remark in response

to Emory's previous troubles and utterances.

EXAMPLE 6: ATLANTA

```
1.  Emo:  Oh, so do I have to add?=

2.  Bai:  =Ye[ah add up the numbers and then you get ten extra for having=

3.  Hea:     [you nee somp'in now gu:hl

4.  Bai:  =the longest word, so add ten to what[ever you got,

5.  Emo:                                       [okay so:: (0.2) eighteen=

6.        P[lus (.) ten, (.) =

7.  Pet:   [hang on a minute, so::

8.  Tay:  =is,

9.  Emo:  twenty-eight.

10. Hea:  I [have n[ine. (But minus::)

11. Tay:    [hhhhh [heh heh heh

12. Emo:           [heh Tha(h)nk y(h)ou(h)

13. Tay:  Sevente[en

14. Emo:         [don't put me on the spot like that okay heh heh=

15.       =Do(h)n't put me on the spo::(h)t(h) heh *h[hh,

16. Tay:                                             [I figured you could=

17.       probly add ten to something. Huh huh

18. Hea:  You can um,(.) [deal up (____[_____)

19. Bai:                 [um huhm huhm [heh heh hhhh heh heh heh heh

20. Tay:                               [(because) you've been adding- you've been=

21.       =Adding- you've been adding four to something for a lo::ng [ti::me heh heh

22. Bai:                                                             [uh heh heh heh
```

In lines 16 and 17, Taylor initiates a transformation of imagery whereby the neutral

process of adding scores is reframed into an allusion to penis size. Here Taylor states, *I figured*

you could probly add ten to something. Huh huh, which is then followed by a more direct

connection to male genitalia in lines 20 and 21, when he states *(because) you've been adding-* *you've been adding- you've been adding <u>four</u> to something for a lo::ng ti::me heh heh.*

The implication from Taylor's utterance is that Emory should have no trouble adding points because he has been adding additional numbers to his penis size for some time. This statement concludes in laughter by Taylor, and additional responsive laughter by Bailey in line 22, marking the utterance as an instance of camp-based aesthetic humor through both the (homo)sexual nature of the joke and the sarcastic, biting wit through which it is produced. We see this instance as sexual through the invocation of male genitalia, and as (homo)sexual through such invocations between male social actors who share same-sex male desire as a defining factor in their sexual personhood. Admittedly, making such a statement implies that the penis, and its size, is shared knowledge (whether it is or not). Through the omni-present lens of hegemonic masculinity, this would be indicative of a potential sexual relationship between males, which would then potentially stigmatize males who make such assertions as queer. Sexual joking of this nature thus emerges as a dispreferred action among heterosexual male social actors. While such talk does sometimes occur among heterosexual men, often through playful, banter-like exchanges, it opens them up to the potential of being labeled 'queer' (or more pejorative versions of that label)—labels that would be undesirable from a social perspective. The fact that such considerations are unnecessary for the talk at hand, talk constituted through gay male social actors, thus serves to establish the humorous display as normative to this friendship group, and by extension to the gay male identities that constitute the group in the sense of it being within the bounds of discursive acceptability for queer interactional talk. The instance of talk therefore emerges as an instance of (homo)sexual joking through its marked positioning as appropriate for gay male social actors. Further, the (homo)sexual nature of the interaction firmly roots the talk,

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and by extension the humorous display, as stemming from camp imagery that stands in differentiation to heteronormative expectations (through the implied same-sex object of desire). It is through this pragmatic understanding that the segment, as a whole, takes on a queer coloring, marking it as different to the joking practices of heterosexual men, and as a voice more readily accessible to queer social actors.

Camping Non-Queer Public Spaces

The final example in this subsection, example 7, drawn from the New York data, involves three participants: Lloyd, Emory, and Dave. Importantly, this interaction moves the discursive establishment of friendship, as well as the invocation of camp imagery, from the public and private queer spaces of the past into the public sphere more generally. This demonstrates, by virtue of the shifting nature of the interactional setting, how queer friendship, partially constituted through shared camp aestheticism, has become more acceptable within a larger sociocultural domain (though it continues to be marginal for all intents and purposes, as witnessed by continued acts of aggression towards queer social actors initiated largely through outward projections perceived by hetero social actors as queer, or as sexually other).

The scene in this example occurs while sitting in a food court in a public mall in New Jersey (a day trip outing for the New York participants). The three participants, up to this point, had been shopping for various items. Lloyd had been examining sheet sets earlier, which led to an extended discussion on which sheet colors made the best choices for purchases. This discussion stemmed in part from both Lloyd's and Emory's sharing of the fact that their partners, who gave less importance to such decisions, had both respectively played major roles in the need to buy new sheets in the first place (i.e., the partners are implicated as the reason for needing to make such purchases, as they were the primary culprits in the wearing out of the sheets). In line

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1 below, Lloyd is concluding this segment of the talk, and specifically the discussion of color choice, stating *I don't really like dark sheets, but I'll buy medium colors that way u:m,.* Yet before Lloyd can finish his rationalization, Emory, in line 3, poses a humorous question in response, stating *cuz you can see the cum on em, right?.* Through this utterance the sequence becomes transformed into an instance of (homo)sexual joking, as Emory reframes the seemingly innocuous talk on household management into a moment of sexual explicitness.

EXAMPLE 7: NEW YORK

```
1.  Llo:  because I don't really like dark sheets, but I'll buy medium colors

2.        that way u:m,

3.  Emo:  cuz you can see the cum on em, right?

4.        (1.0)

5.  Emo:  huh heh °heh heh° ha=

6.  Llo:  =Ri[ght,

7.  Dav:     [You:'re so: cla:ssy,

8.  Llo:  Well, you know, if someone's a bad aim an stuff, well like it's not

9.        my fa[ult,

10. Emo:       [°heh heh° *hh (.) hhh

11.       (3.0)

12. Emo:  No evidence when Paul ge(hh)ts ho(hh)me. ^Loo::k the sheets are

13.       cle(h)an, heh heh *heh heh [huh

14. Dav:                            [That's why I use rubber sheets,

15.       °jus° wipe it o::ff,

16. Llo:  heh heh=

17. Dav:  =Gla- Glass Plus, Win[de:x,

18. Emo:                       [*hhh heh heh *hhh Windex cures everything,=

19.       huh [heh[heh heh heh hah hah

20. Dav:      [Yea[h,

21. Llo:          [yeah.

22.       (2.0)

23. Llo:  tsk it's ca::lled swa:llo:wi::ng? (0.8)
```

```
24. Dav:  kugh[heh ((choking on drink))
25. Emo:      [No I- heh heh heh
26. Llo:  *HHHHHHH heh heh *hhh
27. Dav:  Lemme write that do:wn. Wait a m-, >how do you< sp^ell that.
```

In line 5 Emory follows his own sexual shift in talk with laughter tokens, marking his words as humorous in nature. This is then followed in line 6 by a casual, non-surprised response by Lloyd, where he affirms Emory's remark through his use of the response token *Right*. As Lloyd responds, Dave enters into the conversation in line 7 with a sarcastic assessment of Emory's sexual shift, stating *You:'re so: cla:ssy.* In lines 8 and 9, Lloyd then joins in on the humorous transformation of talk, offering an equally absurd response to Emory's (homo)sexual reframing while simultaneously commenting on the sarcastic nature of Dave's contribution in line 7 by stating, *Well, you know, if someone's a bad aim an stuff, well like it's not my fault.* In lines 12 and 13 Emory then acts upon Lloyd's continuation of the play frame by stating, *No evidence when Paul ge(hh)ts ho(hh)me. ^Loo::k the sheets are cle(h)an, heh heh *heh heh [huh*, (Paul is Lloyd's partner). As the sequence continues, Dave then enters into the joint construction of humor through his commentary in lines 14, 15, and 17, *That's why I use rubber sheets, °jus° wipe it o::ff Gla- Glass Plus, Winde:x.* In line 18 Emory welcomes Dave's entry into the talk first through laughter tokens, then through a direct humorous transformation on Dave's talk, stating that *Windex cures everything*, which is a polyphonous reference to the 2002 film *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, in which the Greek father of the bride is known to use Windex (uttering these exact words) as a 'cure' for everything. These words are recognized as stemming from the film in lines 20 and 21, when Dave and Lloyd (respectively) both offer recognition through their acknowledgement tokens *yeah*. It is at this moment, in line 23, that Lloyd further escalates the sexual nature of the sequence by referring back to the notion of 'cum on the sheets', while offering an alternate solution more graphic in nature than Dave's humorous addition. Here he

states, *tsk it's ca::lled swa:llo:wi::ng?*, which is then responded to in line 24 by Dave through choking laughter (i.e., *kugh heh*) and by Emory through regular laughter tokens in line 25. The sequence concludes with Lloyd, in line 26, offering laughter to the preceding responses, and in line 27 where Dave responds with a sarcastic question in response to the notion of swallowing, asking *Lemme write that do:wn. Wait a m-, >how do you< sp^ell that.*

The sexual nature of this example requires little to no explicit explanation, as the graphic references to sexual acts speak for themselves. In addition, this instance overtly manifests as (homo)sexual in nature given its reliance on gay male social actors talking unmistakably about (homo)sexual intimate practices. What does require further deconstruction is how this scene emerges as camp aesthetic in nature. It is through the sexualization of the mundane act of sheet shopping, an innocuous activity unto itself, that this sequence of talk is marked as camp imagery. Again we see irony production, through the juxtaposition of seemingly incongruous scripts, where the act of shopping is transformed into the most explicit talk on sexual intercourse possible. It is in this juxtaposition that the talk is queered, not only through the overt connection of the talk to (homo)sexual acts of intimacy (i.e., male ejaculation in the company of other males), but also through witty, sarcastic remarks, all of which rely on camp aesthetics of inversion (here the inversion of normative sexuality) in their interactive construction of meaning. The entirety of the scene is thus positioned as different from heteronormative expectations of talk among men through both the campy ironic framing and the inversion of sexuality in relation to heterocentric expectations.

As the examples within this subsection have shown, sexual joking, or more specifically (homo)sexual joking, is intrinsically connected to the camp aesthetic through the act of highlighting, or objectifying, queer desire and same-sex sex intimate practice. In its

differentiation from heteronormative expectations of masculine speech, (homo)sexual joking thus becomes a locus for the discursive construction of U.S. gay men's identities, and thus a tool through which queer otherness can be articulated, witnessed, and understood for its sociocultural and sociopolitical relevancies. It is here, in this understanding of U.S. gay men's talk as deviant to dominant masculine expectations, that agency is found. Through such forms of expression, U.S. gay men position such joking instances as a counter to dominant societal expectations and norms for men, thereby constructing their own agency within discursive practice (i.e., direct language, sexual language, explicit language) more readily associated with American maleness more generally. As with the previous section on bitter-wit, sarcasm, and irony, this is in part achieved through the associative field of imagery generated by the talk itself, which relies heavily on camp-based content in its generation of interactional meaning, and which constitutes the crux of the next section.

Understanding Pop Camp Culture

The second core section of this chapter, which relies on the notion of associative fields, addresses the role of pop culture in the talk of U.S. gay men. But it is not pop culture as consumed by larger mainstream audiences that is of concern. Rather, it is the visual representation of camp-based referents through what could be conceptualized as a queer associative field of imagery, which is of interest. Specifically, this section examines the resulting deviation in normative conceptualizations of masculine imagery, through camp-based invocation. By this I mean to say that the examples within the section coalesce to provide a referent schema that not only differs from normative masculine expectations in talk, but also markedly positions the referent schema as unique to U.S. gay male experience through its heavy reliance on female and queer iconic content matter. Indeed, an overwhelming percentage of

conversations in the four-city corpus revolve specifically around contemporary pop cultural figures that are not normatively recognized as content of importance for heterosexual men. With this understanding in mind, the analyses within this section will explore pop cultural content first for its saliency as an object of talk, and second for its marked differentiation with regard to U.S. gendered norms and expectations for male social actors, all of which emerges through the sustained invocation of camp aesthetic imagery.

From Lesbian Lovers Lost to Marginal Men…Imagery for the Queer

To begin, example 8 below revolves primarily around two forms of imagery that would not constitute normative content matter for hetero male social actors: 1) the non-sexual drama of a lesbian relationship, and 2) the invocation of an 'othered,' or subordinate masculinity as a source of interactional agency. The analyses that follow shed light on these assertions and demonstrate how this field of imagery coalesces to form a particularly queer-male world-view.

To begin, the participants are discussing American actress Anne Heche, who is the former significant other of daytime talk show host and comedian Ellen DeGeneres. Though not as popular today as she once was in her career, Heche recently (at the time of these recordings) resurfaced on the pop cultural scene in the HBO television series, *Hung*, in which she played the ex-wife of a high school physical education instructor who was also a male prostitute. In this example, Taylor, in line 1, professes how he used to *love Anne Heche back in the day*. This statement, in truth, is an understatement. Taylor was actually known amongst group members for his enduring positioning of Heche as an iconic queer figure. Having this characterization, Taylor frequently used images of Heche to invoke camp aesthetics within daily interactions, depicting Heche in a comical camp light through his use of her tabloid images in the creation of dance-mix CDs for all of the other members in the group. Each CD in turn had a custom made

cover to accompany it, always revolving around some new conceptualization of Heche. This meant that, for Taylor, Heche constituted a sort of campy "muse" for the dance mixes, in which her persona provided fodder for campy covers. For example, one CD was titled *Anne Heche's Cock*, in which an image of Heche was used with a superimposed penis. Another CD was titled *Corned Beef Heche*, in which Heche was depicted with a side of Corned Beef, with a punning effect on the word *hash* through the surname *Heche*.

Also notable here is the fact that, in the subsequent lines, all of the remaining participants pick up on the theme of Anne Heche as a salient topic worthy of discussion. In line 2 Bailey shows his agreement with Rich by saying *You right on that baby*. Then in line 3, Emory explicitly links Heche to the contemporary television show that she is currently on, whereby not only recognition of Heche is made salient, but also specific information regarding her career that would not be possible were participant members not actively following her career to some degree. In line 6, Taylor confirms the show's name before it is completely uttered by Emory in line 5. This demonstrates that multiple participants are, in essence, keeping up with pop culture in ways that constitute a pop cultural following, one that is aware of Heche's career even as it has become less relevant in contemporary film and television. Pop culture personas and themes, particularly within this group of gay men, are highly salient as multiple social actors seem to be keying in to similar content and ways of invoking said content within interactive practices.

EXAMPLE 8: ATLANTA

```
1.  Tay:  I loved Anne Heche back in the day,
2.  Bai:  [You right on that baby.
3.  Emo:  [She's like back on TV, too,
4.  Bai:  But I'm sorry, Elle[n's new  [girlfriend-
5.  Emo:                    [She's on [Hung,
6.  Tay:                             [On Hung, yeah [exactly.
```

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```
7.  Emo:                                          [I lo:ve Hu:ng=
8.  Bai:  =I think Anne's new girlfriend might be
9.        even better than Anne Heche though,
10.       [cuz I lo:ve me some Portia de Rossi.
11. Hea:  [Uh, Ellen's- Ellen's new girlfriend.=
12. Bai:  =Uh yes, that's what I meant, (.) Um, (.)
13.       That's what I ^said, ^booby traps. Um,
14. Hea:  Um hmm,
```

The most important piece of evidence, however, in demonstrating both the role of pop culture as a salient interactional theme and as a queer associative field of imagery specific to this sociocultural group, comes in line 8, in which Bailey misspeaks by positioning Heche into oppositional roles (i.e., *I think **Anne's** new girlfriend might be even better than **Anne Heche** though*). This misspoken utterance is then quickly acted upon by Heath in line 11, in which Heath repairs Bailey's words by stating, *Uh Ellen's- Ellen's new girlfriend*. This in turn constitutes a type of face-threatening act in that Heath has just corrected Bailey in midstream of talk (see Brown & Levinson 2004 [1987] for an extended talk on politeness variables). The fact that these two participants, Bailey and Heath, are highly competitive when it comes to who has a better command over pop culture, only serves to substantiate the face-threatening nature of the exchange. Indeed, these two participants are noted within the group for their constant attempts to one-up one another. In response to Heath's attempts to correct him, Bailey responds in lines 12 and 13 with a polyphonous reference (i.e., *That's what I said, booby traps*), which is a line from the film *The Goonies*, and thus a subsequent means of making pop culture a salient theme within the conversation. Here, a reference from a film is used to transform the seriousness of the face-threatening act into something humorous, something to be taken as less serious, which echoes previously mentioned assertions on how camp manifests as a queer aesthetic within interactional content. Heath then responds to this in line 14 with, *um hmm*, rather than with a question for

clarification. What this response demonstrates is that Heath understands the quote, and understands how to interpret it as a functional camp-based aspect of the discourse. This receipt token renders the previous utterance acceptable as a sequentially next utterance within the larger stream of talk, which in turn substantiates the notion that all parties not only understand the words (as a reference from a pop cultural film), but they also recognize their viability as interactional resources. In essence, Bailey has upped his game by producing an utterance that is completely dependent upon epistemic access to various pop culture referents for its proper interpretation. This elucidates the complexity of pop as a functional tool, and the extent to which it may in turn correspond to issues of interactive power dynamics, as Bailey has, essentially, out-witted the challenge to his epistemic knowledge by showing his command of pop cultural epistemic access, and by extension by showing his command over camp aesthetics, which here emerges as normative to discursive practice.

From this example it becomes evident that pop culture, as a normative discursive feature of gay male interactions, exists not only as a salient communicative theme through an associative field that relies on shared queer iconic imagery, but also as a highly functional aspect of gay men's interactive practices themselves. And as this example has shown, gay men are expected, to *varying degrees*, to be familiar with, or at least up to speed on, pop culture (and more specifically, on pop culture that works nicely within the specific associative field relevant to their lived experiences…camp). Lack of access to these themes thus implies less interactive power, which would be dispreferred within this interactional setting. The camp aesthetics invoked through these associative fields thus become high stakes in nature, with communicative and sociocultural ramifications for those who do not, or cannot, use them appropriately within the stream of discourse.

Mocking the Hetero-Male through Regional Stereotypes of Imagery

But how is it that we see the visual boundaries of constituent parts within this associative field of imagery? By this, I pose the question of how we know what belongs to a campy aesthetic orientation of pop culture, and how we know what does not belong. The imagery invoked within example 9 below sheds light on this question. Specifically, the participants draw upon a field of imagery more readily (and recognizably) identified as belonging to 'straight' U.S. male social actors. The totality of the imagery created in the group to depict what could be conceptualized as the epitome of the rural, backwoods, red-blooded American man, becomes an image that stands in stark contrast to the imagery associated with queer cultural expressivity. And it is through this play, where this foreign imagery undergoes mockery that queer subjectivity begins to take shape through talk.

Example 9 below offers some specific insight into how the boundaries of appropriate pop cultural schema may be recognized. In this example, which also stems from the Atlanta data, Taylor, Heath, Bailey, Pete, and Emory have been playing a drinking game called Categories. The rules of the game link certain card suites to drinking rules (e.g., if a person draws a diamond the person to his left must drink), while face cards require that the drawing participant create a category that all participants must respond to in rapid circular turn-taking sequences (with the member that fails to do so being liable to take a more substantial drink). For example, in the talk leading up to the following example, the category, which had been selected by Emory, was 'gay friendly cities in the U.S.' This led to an extended, rapid response sequence in which one player after the next offered city names, circling the table approximately thirteen times before Taylor emerged as unable to locate a next possible response, ending the round by taking a drink in concession. As the course of action reverts back to the card drawing stage, Taylor immediately

draws another face card, giving him the right to select the next category's content. In line 1 we

see that Taylor is having some difficulty selecting the content for the category round through his

reflective pause *U:::m:::,* followed by a more than six second pause in line 2. What ensues from

this pause is a sequence in which the associative field of queer imagery is explicitly brought into

light through a demonstration of what the field is not.

EXAMPLE 9: ATLANTA

```
1.  Tay:  U:::m:::,

2.        (6.3)

3.  Emo:  Flavors of Skoal, uh he[h [heh

4.  Tay:                        [°h[eh   heh   heh   (0.3)  N^a::scaer Drih::ver::s

5.  Bai:                        [tuh °heehh° °heehh° °heehh°  uhh heh heh heh heh=

6.        =h[eh [heh heh heh

7.  Emo:   [*hh[ heh heh *hhh heh heh heh

8.  Hea:       [Ohhh ho:ne:y.

9.        (0.8)

10. Tay:  U::mmm::, (0.8) °shut up°,

11.       (0.4)

12. Hea:  All I'd be able to do is go ^Number [three, (.) number eight, those are=

13. Bai:                                     [that's right, uh heh heh heh heh

14. Hea:  =the only ones I know cuz they're the only ones on the back- on=

15.       =the back of a p[ickup truck's (coffre)
```

In line 3 Emory interjects into Taylor's painfully long search for a relevant next content

topic by offering a hypothetical category of his own, *Flavors of Skoal, uh heh heh*. The term

Skoal, which is a type of dipping tobacco commonly used by hypermasculine men in the

Southern United States, is subsequently commented upon by Emory himself through laughter

tokens, and by both Taylor (in line 4) and Bailey (in line 5) in a similar manner, marking the

term as a humorous if not absurd next content topic for the group. The absurdity arises through

the knowledge that Skoal would be highly frowned upon in queer social circles, particularly

given its associations with being rural, being stereotypically masculine, and thus being

heterosexual (i.e., whereby, in this instance, the stereotypical notion of a redneck or hillbilly

comes to mind). The humorous reaction by participants is thus understood as a recognition of the

term Skoal as a state of playfulness, as not constituting a serious next category. This is

confirmed in line 4 by Taylor, after his laughter token responses, when he performs a subsequent

transformation on queer imagery through his use of a similarly absurd next category, *N^a::scaer

Dri̱h::ver::s*, which is uttered in a regional dialect reminiscent of the invoked redneck persona.

The use of Nascar drivers as a viable next category thus becomes a second instance of playful

transformation in that Nascar is not a valued sport within queer social settings. Indeed, where it

is valued is among rural Southern heterosexual social actors, marking the topic as in a continued

state of play as the category initiated previously through the use of the term Skoal. The

extension of laughter tokens by Bailey (in lines 5 and 6) and Emory (in line 7) demonstrate

participant recognition of this state of play, as multiple members continue to recognize the

absurdity of the categories being posited. Finally, in lines 8, 12, 14, and 15 Heath explicitly

sanctions these categorical usages by overtly articulating his lack of epistemic access to the

associative field of imagery which they generate, stating *Ohhh ho:ne:y. All I'd be able to do is

go ^Nu̱mbe̱r thre̱e, (.) number ei̱ght, those are the only ones I know cuz they're the only ones on

the back- on the back of a pickup truck's (coffre)*. In essence, Heath's contribution to the talk

demonstrates that Nascar Drivers, as a category for this group, is not within legitimate epistemic

reach, thus marking its use as outside the limits of a relevant next interactional move. We

understand this primarily through Heath's characterization of possible responses within this

category, using numbers associated with drivers' cars rather than through any true recognition of

the drivers themselves. His response to the category thus demonstrates that he would only be

able to participant in invalid ways that would violate the rules of the game.

The importance of this example lies not in what is selected per se, but rather in what is shown to be invalid schematic categories for this social setting. Indeed, both Skoal and Nascar, especially within the American south, firmly reside within a schematic field of heteronormativity. By this I mean that these fields of imagery constitute the epitome of otherness, or compulsory heterosexuality, and more importantly of non-queer-normative social action. The popular culture activated through their use emerges as foreign to the bounds of U.S. gay men's social interaction, marking these categories as invalid and as absurd as possible next categories within the confines of the game.

So what constitutes a viable next category? I would argue that in order for the category to be valid for these socioculturally queer participants, the associative field of imagery must draw from camp aesthetics. This is not to say that the category must rely on stereotypical camp knowledge, but rather on the imagery which stems from queer positionings of differentiation from heteronormative expectations. By this I mean to say that a valid next category must be composed of content that fits the existence of these queer social actors, which moves away from normative masculine expectations, and which reflects the value systems of their lived experiences. It is in this inverted, ironic, and incongruous field of imagery, which emerges as camp aesthetic orientation, that relevant next action takes shape.

Showing What's on Their Minds…Campy though It May Be!

An example of the type of pop cultural imagery that can be drawn upon at a moment's notice, while adhering to the group's interactional expectations, is shown in example 10 below. The field of imagery, in this example, emerges as content that is ever present and ready for activation at a moments notice, particularly given the game-like constraints of the talk at hand.

That said, the imagery in this example is thus positioned as cognitively close, as what is on these participants' minds, and as reflective of the imagery that helps to constitute their social interactional worlds. As the example is lengthy (comprised of over 50 lines of dialog), I will limit the analysis to an understanding of the type of imagery generated as opposed to a sequential deconstruction of the talk itself.

In this example, which represents a continued extract from the aforementioned drinking game, the category has shifted to 'teen divas'. Participants are therefore expected to swiftly offer a relevant next 'teen diva' response that can continue the fast-paced and epistemically taxing nature of the game at hand. What becomes apparent in this extract is that the members of the group have little to no difficulty in adhering to the category's content constraints. Indeed, the category extends over approximately twenty circles around the table before ending (though shortened below, this constitutes the longest category round of the game by far). Of particular note is that the ending of the round never actually stems from a participant not identifying a relevant next contribution; rather, it occurs in line 47 when Taylor plays upon Heath's contribution in line 44 (i.e., *Vitamin C,* a singer), by shifting into a reenactment of one of Vitamin C's songs (i.e., *^As we:: go::::: o::n, (with:: each o::the::r:)*).

```
EXAMPLE 10:  ATLANTA
1.  Hea:  Lindsey Lohan,
2.        (0.5)
3.  Emo:  Belinda Carlisle.
4.        (0.4)
5.  Tay:  Micha Barton *hhh °heh [heh heh heh°
6.  Bai:                      [Um (0.4) Nicole Richie.
7.  Joh:  uuuummmm[mmm.
8.  Tay:          [if we're gonna be topical, I'll say Mic[ha Barton,
9.  Bai:                                                  [Do you remember (.)
```

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10.   [Do y'all ever watch [that   (0.8)   [cartoon?

11. Emo: [heh hah hah hah

12. Tay: [gotta break it out.

13. Joh: [Dana Plato.

14. Hea: Dana Pla[to (.) >An I's like< ^Glu::::e.=

15. ALL: [((laughter by multiple participants))

16. Hea: Lisa Welchel.

17. Bai: Oooo,

18. Hea: haw haw,

19. Emo: Tara Reid (0.2) pre tit mass[ac[re.

20. Tay: [he[h heh hah ha ha ha ha ha ha hah ha=

21. Bai: [right,

22. Tay: [ha ha [ha

23. Hea: [PTM.

24. Bai: [heh he [he[he he

25. Tay: [*h[hhhhh °heh heh°

26. Emo: [Exa(h)ctl(h) *heh heh heh

27. Bai: That's so: the name of my next album, [Pre tit massacre.

28. ALL: [((Laughter by multiple participants))

29. Emo: Cuz yeh kno:w that shi:t's fu::c[ked,

30. Tay: [Janet Jacks[on[,

31. Emo: [ye[ah.

32. Bai: [um hum, (0.3) u::m,

33.   (2.0)

34. Emo: You gonna go- give out LaToya? Tuh heh hah hah

35. Tay: La^Toya's fabu[lous now.

36. Emo: [SHE is fabulous, I lo[ve LaToya, I still swear by LaToya.

37. Tay: [Did you see her in the- (.) at the

38.   (.) fuckin' mem[orial service with that giant big rimmed=

39. Bai: [(_____)

40. Tay: =ha[t on?

41. Joh: [^Justine ^Batema[n.

```
42. Tay:                          [uh heh [hah hah hah hah
42. Emo:                                  [Justine Bateman, uh I haven't thought uh her=
43.         =uhh[hhh.
44. Hea:        [Vitamin C,
45.         (0.2)
46. ALL:    ((Laughter by multiple participants))
47. Tay:    ^As we:: go:::: o::n, [(with:: each o::the::r:)
48. Hea:                          [All I was trying to think of was like- okay what-=
49.         =what'[s- what Barbie Dolls did we [buy- (.) do you remember, [we saw-
50. Bai:         [me ((draws card))              [right,                   [*hhhhhh=
51.         =Mo^Esha, ^I shoul[da said ^BrAndy, GO::d (.) bless America.
52. Hea:                      [ooooohhhhhh
```

The associative field generated in this example, in contrary fashion to the one generated in the previous example, relies upon content that is anything but associated with heteronormative content expectations for U.S. men (or more specifically, heterosexual men). What this means is that the collective imagery that emerges from the associative field constitutes a subcultural orientation that goes against social expectations of masculine interactional talk. This occurs primarily through the imagery's reliance on both feminine iconic imagery and the queer iconicity associated with such feminine invocations (i.e., Lindsey Lohan, Belinda Carlisle, Micha Barton, Dana Plato, Lisa Welchel, Tara Reid, Janet Jackson, LaToya Jackson, Justine Bateman, Vitamin C, and Moesha/Brandy). In essence, through the names invoked within the talk, what we see is a collection of icons more commonly associated with women's interests. Specifically, we see the world of the tabloid come into focus, which stereotypically belongs within the social interactions of women as opposed to men.

What emerges from this analysis of pop culture is that, for U.S. gay men, the type of pop culture invoked must be differentiated from stereotypical expectations for masculine uses of imagery. This is not to say that all U.S. gay men will cohesively avoid such imagery as, for

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example, sports heroes; rather, it is to say that sports heroes constitute a field of imagery indexical of the non-queer, or rather of the hetero in nature. Consistently, through the usage of camp aesthetics and pop cultural imagery, these men *can* and *do* collaboratively work together towards the construction of shared queer culture and identity through the linguistic choices they make within interactional encounters. The imagery projected through the language choices in turn indexes what is most prized, resulting in a pop cultural schema that draws heavily upon feminine imagery and stereotypically queer iconicity rather than imagery more readily associated with the typical heterosexual man. This in turn marks such usages as camp aesthetic in nature through the explicit inversion of dominant cultural norms and expectations. It is this camp-based understanding that rationalizes the importance of pop culture within U.S. gay men's interactions, while also demonstrating how it differs from heteronormative consumption. In this way pop culture, which here encompasses a very particular subset of larger conceptualizations of pop, becomes intrinsically linked to the queering effects of camp aestheticism, marking such usages as in-group, distinct, and ultimately as queer in nature.

Discussion

When viewed cohesively, both humor and pop culture draw upon cognitive scripts in their generation of interactional meaning. These scripts, in the case of humor, are breached through deviations to heteronormative expectations through the use of bitter-wit, sarcasm, and irony, specifically designed to invoke camp aesthetic schemata.

As was previously conceded, such humorous devices in and of themselves have no intrinsic connection to queer discursive practices, as they can be used by anyone from any sociocultural background. But how these instances differ from larger humorous interactions is that, for them to project queer meaning, they must be likened and linked to relevant features of

the queer lifeworld. In this way, the humorous talk of U.S. gay men emerges as divergent from heteronormative expectations of talk among male social actors. And this differentiation, in part, is constituted through a reliance on camp aesthetics. The resulting humorous scripts, cohesively constructed through both this queer lifeworld orientation and through the use of camp aesthetics, marks the humor as camp-based, and thus as subcultural in nature. Similarly, the scripts generated within the section on pop culture act in much the same way. To borrow Yokoyama's (1999) term, when viewed collectively the imagery generated through U.S. gay men's pop cultural invocations generates an associative field that is in direct contradiction to heteronormative expectations for masculine interactional behavior. The resulting schematic field generated through the associations of imagery draws upon both feminine and queer iconicity as opposed to stereotypically masculine iconicity to generate a visual complex unique to this sociocultural population. By unique, I do not mean to say that it cannot be invoked by others, as there are obvious similarities with content matter that women orient to within talk; rather, it is to say that when viewed within the social expectations of men, U.S. gay men's talk becomes a unique category within the larger field of masculine imagery. And this uniqueness, in part, results from the camp aesthetic orientations that position such imagery as in opposition to heteronormativity.

Importantly, this chapter has also shown how external factors such as time, space, and imagery from the world around them, become contributors in the active constitution of queer personhood, namely in that the carry with them the ability to situate friendship within a temporal and spatial context, a necessary component in the establishment of shared experience. This demonstrates how the construction of friendship, as an interactional feature, implies more than recognition of mutual felicitous feelings towards one another, and instead positions friendship,

and its active construction, as a pragmatically conceived construct that is achieved in part through the talk and social organization at hand. As such, the analyses of this chapter shed new light on the concept of friendship formation, and contribute to this underexplored area of research by demonstrating how such formations may be analyzed and understood through interactive practices.

In the next chapter, which explores the intertextual notion of media-based referencing, the notion of pop culture, and of media as an interactional tool in its own right, is explored. In doing this, the camp based links between the pop cultural referents and queer subjectivities will be further developed, demonstrating them to yield high stakes interactional and social ramifications.

CHAPTER 6

POP CULTURE, MEDIA, & THE PRACTICE OF CAMP REFERENCING

This chapter explores the notion of media as a contributor within discursive practice, specifically examining the role that invoked pop cultural media-based referents play in the sequential organization and functionality of everyday talk. Over the last two decades, since Debra Spitulnik's (1993) call for renewed interest in media as an anthropological object of inquiry, media consumption has increasingly taken on a more high profile position within language-centered research (Beaulieu 2004; Bird 2003; Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff, and Cui 2009; Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod & Larkin 2002; Hakken 1999; Hughes-Freeland 1998; Kozinets 2010; Marcus 1995; Miller & Slater 2000; Peterson 2003; Postill 2010; Rothenbuhler & Coman 2005). Originally envisioning consumers as passive recipients (see also Dickey 1997), explorations have since turned their gaze towards media's viability as a meaningful and productive aspect of talk within a varied range of discursive settings, including language learning contexts (Duff 2001, 2002, 2007; Blackledge and Creese 2010), everyday talk-in-interaction (Goodwin 2003a; Hill 2007, 2008; Higgins 2009; Kiesling 2004; Spitulnik 1997), and through written texts which interact with audiences of consumption through extended contexts of space and time (Fairclough 1992a, 1992b, Talbot 2007, 2010).

Beyond its relevance to contextual settings, media has also been shown to manifest within and be constituent of linguistic utterances themselves, often times with high stakes social ramifications. For example, recent work on constructional frames (Rasulic 2010) has demonstrated the flexibility of media-based invocations within online texts, in which recognizable structures from media sources are playfully manipulated to convey novel meanings

which derive their understanding through a shared point of epistemic reference (e.g., *Frankly my dear, I don't give a fuck* in place of a famous quote from the film Gone with the Wind, *Frankly my dear, I don't give a damn*). Hill's (1999) examination of Anglophone codeswitching into mock Spanish through the referencing of pop cultural elements elucidates how specific collocations, recognized as stemming from a preexisting media-based source, can be utilized within talk to convey racially discriminatory sociocultural perspectives (e.g., *Hasta la vista, baby* from the film Terminator 2: Judgment Day, where it is classed with insults such as Dickwad). Blackledge and Creese (2010) demonstrate how playful manipulations of voice and content, into what Bakhtin (1984) characterizes as the carnivalesque, allow youth identities to coalesce towards shared pop cultural aesthetics, often with the explicit objective of unifying themselves and peers against the authority of the classroom (e.g., shifting into sportscaster voice as a form of subversion). Goodwin (2003b) demonstrates how culturally embedded nominal invocations (e.g., Honda Accord, Cord, thirty-two olds), which are often objects lodged within pop cultural forms of media, function as 'practical resource[s] for parties involved in the interaction,' in which said participants are able to display cultural membership through "particular ways of talking about these items, [and] appropriate alignment displays to them" (p. 160). As Allen (1982) points out, "media content, as it enters the personal networks of everyday conversation, becomes 'play' and often the stuff of subcultures, if enough people participate in the process" (p. 107). Media-based invocations thus provide a useful locus from which we might gain understanding of the everyday lived experiences and identity constructions of particular subcultural groupings within extended notions of society.

Building upon these initial studies, this chapter examines the media-based sociolinguistic invocations of U.S. gay men in their day-to-day interactions. As Bronski (1984) asserts, for U.S.

gay men, popular culture, which is often seen as synonymous with mass-media within the U.S. context (Fabian 1998; Strinati 2004), plays an integral role in U.S. gay men's identity constructions. He notes that, "because movies are an accessible art form, films provide a common bond […] between diverse gay men" (p. 108), establishing a key link between American popular culture consumption through film media and the notion of gay personhood. When viewed in unison, the aforementioned research demonstrates not only a need for further research on authentic instances of U.S. gay men's talk-in-interaction, but also a need for further developing our understanding of the role of media within this sociocultural group, particularly given its saliency in establishing shared sociocultural commonality.

Through such invocations, the media-based invocations present in these analyses result in what I, as well as many of the participants in my data, have come to term referencing, a sociolinguistic practice in which recognizable lines of media-based dialog are inserted into unfolding talk, performing communicative functions relevant to the current interactive frame. Through my analyses I argue that referencing, within the context of this particular sociocultural group, accomplishes three functional goals (though future research and social groups may yield additional insights): 1) acting as a mitigator for communicative contexts of a delicate nature — i.e., taboos, faux-pas, culturally sensitive topics, bad manners, uncomfortable situations; 2) acting as a lens through which to view the active construction and performance of U.S. gay men's (inter)subjectivities; and 3) acting as a construct through which notions of community and belonging are established through shared aesthetic orientations.

Locating Referencing As Sociolinguistic Practice

The following example, which was treated in extensive detail in the opening chapters of this larger study, involves the example taken from *RuPaul's Drag Race*. As one might recall,

moments after the announcement of Pandora's win for Fan Favorite, Pandora stood and approached RuPaul, the host(ess), in order to receive his award, saying *Thank you, thank you everybody*. This was then followed by a second phrase: *You like me, you really like me*. As was previously mentioned, this second utterance was in fact that of American actress Sally Field, used during her 1984 Best Actress Academy Award acceptance speech for her role in the film *Places in the Heart*.

From a sociolinguistic perspective, instances of referencing, such as *You like me, you really like me*, arise as the result of a lamination of interactive scenes through what has traditionally been conceptualized as reported speech. As Clark and Gerrig (1990) note, the two most commonly analyzed forms of reported speech are quotative/direct structures (e.g., *Sally Field said, 'You like me, you really like me.'*) and descriptive/indirect structures (e.g., *Sally Field said that you like her, you really like her.*). Yet it is Hickmann's (1993) analysis of reported speech that offers the most fruitful avenue for understanding referencing as a reporting structure. For Hickmann, reenacted reported speech consists of the quotative form devoid of its projector sequence (e.g., '*You like me, you really like me.',* here originating from Field, but articulated through a subsequent speaker). According to Goffman's (1981) production format, the speaker would embody the position of animator, while the reenacted segment would stem from some preexisting author position; the current speaker thus appropriates the words of another by reenacting (i.e., repeating the actual words of the original speaker, while utilizing their semantic capacities within the present interactive frame under the guise of the current speaker's authorship).

The hybridized outcome of reenacted reported speech structures positions referencing as a fruitful construct for examining forms of intertextuality. Bauman and Briggs (1990) and

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Briggs and Bauman (1992), through their explorations of genre, demonstrate how texts are created through processes of entextualization (i.e., forming a text), and are then capable of being decontextualized and recontextualized within subsequent interactive frames. These intertextual displays, formed from both current and preceding discourse, dialogically generate meaning with characteristics of the individual contributors, as well as new characteristics intrinsic to their combined construction. As Vološinov (1973) states with regard to the relationship between reported speech and reporting contexts, "the two actually do exist, function, and take shape only in their interrelatedness, and not on their own" (p. 119). This intertextuality results in what Bakhtin (1984) describes as polyphony, or "overlays of voices" wherein a "plurality of consciousnesses" (p. 6) emerges. The ramifications of such displays are that they are then capable of performing functional duties within unfolding interactive frames. As Günthner (1999) illustrates, reported dialogue can construct an intertextual link between the reporting world and the story world, allowing a reported character's affective stance to be utilized within the real-time frame. Similarly, Barrett's (1999) ethnographic account of African American drag queens (AADQs) demonstrates how polyphonous intertextuality (here through the indexing of dialectic varieties) can be used to forge unique sociocultural identities, composed of traces of identities from the intertextual sources, but which take on new meaning through their hybrid form.

As Irvine's (1990) work on intertextual displays of register and affect affirms, in which prosodic manipulations play a key role, "verbal performances do not simply represent our own social identity, our own feelings, and the social occasion here and now," but rather "they are full of allusions to the behaviors of others and to other times and places" (p. 130). Such allusions result in a juxtaposition of meaning wherein the invoked scene becomes salient to the current

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real-time interactive frame, where full comprehension of the here-and-now relies heavily upon understanding the then-and-there. Referencing, as a form of intertextuality derived from media-based sources, thus allows a merger of interactive scenes, where pragmatic meaning is dialogically colored by the natural and social contexts of both referent source and unfolding interaction. What this means is that, in order for us to understand Pandora's previous reference as humorous, we must first envision the context of its original usage. This original context then becomes a lens through which we assess the real-time interactive frame (i.e., through the connections they share, here acceptance speeches). As interlocutors interpret the utterance *You like me, you really like me* as a product of dual voices, the intertextual associations between scenes allow for joint contextual points of reference which result in a multilayered matrix of meaning. It is through this joint understanding of scenes, as well as through their processes of mutual elaboration, that meaning truly takes shape and provides grounds for the interpretation of media-based instances of referencing.

The following analyses therefore explore highly contextualized examples of linguistic camp referencing in action, offering explanation as to how camp emerges as a discursive product derived from media-based influence, while simultaneously positioning its use as a shared, cultural-signifying aesthetic orientation (in this case towards the aesthetics of camp). In doing this, I analyze the camp invocations in part through a linguistic analysis of sequential organization, and in part through an extended delving into of the interactional context itself (as it is through these contexts that the scenes are understood and the functionality of camp referencing as a practice becomes visible and identifiable).[5] I then explore the notion of referencing as a

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[5] Note that referencing sequences are marked in the transcripts in **bold** print, followed by the name of the referent source in double parentheses. This is to set apart the specific line of interest within the larger segment of talk.

larger discursive practice, more generally speaking, through an exploration of what this practice means to U.S. gay men when backlight as a practice present in other communities of practice.

Data Analyses

Referencing as a Mitigator of Delicate Matters

According to Goffman (1955), as was stated earlier in the theoretical review of Chapter 2, face-threatening acts may have serious consequences for one's social standing within interaction. Indeed, such acts may result from a variety of interactional behaviors, such as committing a faux-pas, venturing into the taboo, not following etiquette, or simply interacting in ways that stand in opposition to socially/culturally acceptable behaviors. The occurrence of face-threatening acts thus results in an interactive frame becoming somewhat of a delicate matter. Such delicate matters, and by extension their face-threatening qualities, in turn warrant mitigating.

In example 1 below, a group of four gay men were sitting together at a public coffee house talking about current issues in their lives. Two of the participants, Drake and Ryan (who are partners in a romantic relationship), have just finished co-telling a story about searching for a new home. The other participants then began to provide second stories (Sacks 1995) by talking at length about their personal domestic activities, with one person's contribution, Emory's, emerging as a central focal point. Emory had temporarily been living with friends before moving to his new home. However, the friends with whom he was living were in fact going through a rather difficult transition in that the mother figure of the household had decided to divorce the father figure, leaving him and their young adult children behind in order to begin a new life elsewhere. Through this story the participants began to see that Emory was caught in a very volatile living environment. Emory continues his story by expressing his own situational

disapproval, as he himself felt a growing need to take on the responsibility of helping the young adults with vital life issues (e.g., college financial aid applications). As the story unfolds, Ryan, who has been half listening and half talking on his cell phone (guiding others to meet the group at the coffee house), reenters the conversation and seeks clarification on the matters involving the young adults.

EXAMPLE 1: NEW YORK

```
1.  Rya:  Is he gonna take custody of the kids then?.

2.  Llo:  They're okay- they're adult kids. They have adult kids.

3.  Rya:  Oh, so there's no-

4.  Dra:  Huh heh heh [heh, huh heh heh heh.

5.  Emo:              [°Actual[ly°,

6.  Rya:                     [And you're helping him in school?

7.  Llo:  The y[oungest child is like twenty-one.

8.  Dra:       [It's like Ste[pmom,

9.  Emo:                     [That's my chi(h)ldr(h)en.((jokingly))

10. Rya:  Oh, [so that's not a problem.

11. Dra:      [Stepmonster, (.) Uh huh heh heh heh,

12. Rya:  Okay.

13. Emo:  Sh[e called en she was like, what er you doin, and I was like-

14. Dra: >  [^Christina, bring me the axe. ((Crawford))
```

After Ryan finishes asking for clarification in lines 1, 3 and 6, his partner Drake begins a process of media-based invocation which extends through multiple turns, and which culminates in an instance of referencing. In line 8 Drake refers to the 1998 film *Stepmom*[1], starring Susan Sarandon and Julia Roberts, in which Roberts plays the stepmother of Sarandon's on-screen children, and who is thus faced with authority issues stemming from both personas' claims to motherhood. In line 11 Drake continues this course of action by adding a second film name, 1993's *Stepmonster*, in which a young boy discovers that his soon to be stepmother is in fact a

monster, resulting in a comedy-horror scenario in which the boy must stop the wedding from taking place at all costs. What is interesting about this transformation in content is that it does not represent an act of polyphonous referencing as has been outlined within this research, but rather acts as a media-based transitional device designed to steer the severity of the discussion into a new, less serious route by paralleling Emory with the identities of these female characters, an act which could be termed synonymous referencing given that referencing through parallel naming occurs. By choosing these two films as synonymous transition devices, Drake inadvertently highlights the severity of Emory's situation from two perspectives, first from Emory's (through the content of the film *Stepmom*) and second through the young adults (through the content of the film *Stepmonster*), which in turn creates a multilayered scenario that simultaneously accounts for the real world issues of domestic drama and converts the situation into a humorous scenario through relevant juxtapositions of identity. As a result, negative affective reactions that might result from Emory's serious narrative are diffused through the intertextual connection of his situation with two films that semantically reshape the interpretive frame into a humorous event.

In line 13 Emory begins to elaborate on a confrontational phone conversation that transpired between him and the departed mother (concerning her recent departure). Just as this escalation in seriousness begins to occur, Drake reenters with an overlapping instance of referencing in line 14: *Christina, bring me the axe*. This sequence comes from the 1981 film *Mommie Dearest*, starring Faye Dunaway as Hollywood's legendary actress Joan Crawford. The scene in question portrays Crawford, just after she has been fired from her movie studio position, entering her rose garden after dark. She then enters into a manic rage, and in a demented voice turns to her adopted daughter and screams *Christina, bring me the axe*, after which she furiously

begins chopping down her roses before the eyes of her terrified children.   This selection from

Mommie Dearest is an appropriate polyphonous reference to insert at this point because the

storyline bears close resemblance to Emory's situation, only in an over-the-top, darkly humorous

manner. Through his reference, Drake selects a referent that parallels the absent mother, or rather

the frowned upon actions of the absent mother, by relating her to an equally frowned upon

persona: Joan Crawford (as portrayed in *Mommie Dearest*). This positions the reference at a

point of delicacy (in this case, a socially unacceptable life scenario), and substantiates its use as a

strategic structure for mitigating an escalation in severity. The utterance is understood as

polyphonous, and in fact as Faye Dunaway's character depiction of Joan Crawford, through the

marked pitch increase and stereotypically feminine articulation. Figure 1 below captures the

pitch changes, as the participants' normal pitch range (i.e., pitch consistent with their non-

polyphonous speech) is markedly increased with the advent of the referencing display.

Polyphony is further achieved through the naming of the character *Christina*, which situates the

words as belonging to Dunaway's character portrayal.
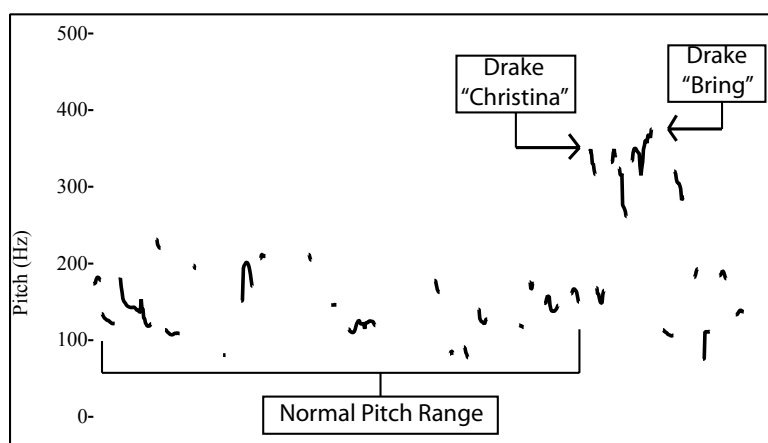

Figure 1. Prosodic reference to *Mommie Dearest.*

Just as example 1 dealt with a delicate conversational issue, so does example 2 below: the

repercussions of a conversational faux pas. In this example, which has been explored previously

within the dissertation, and which is here explored a subsequent time to demonstrate the diverse

nature of camp invocation within talk, involves four participants who are discussing American actress Anne Heche, the former lesbian romantic partner of U.S. based comedian and daytime talk show host Ellen DeGeneres, at an informal gathering at the apartment of one of the participants. As the conversation progresses, the participants begin to discuss Heche's then new role in the 2009 HBO comedy series *Hung*, a show in which Heche plays the ex-wife of a male prostitute. In lines 8, 9, and 10, Bailey begins to comment on his feelings about the Heche-DeGeneres breakup, exhibiting agreement towards the relationship's early demise. However, a lexical repairable is posited within his utterance, resulting in a potential misunderstanding in the general content. The repairable arises through a shift in names in which Bailey attempts to speak of Ellen DeGeneres (in lines 8 and 9), but instead supplants her name with that of Heche by stating *I think Anne's new girlfriend might be even better than Anne Heche though*, which clearly stands out as a repairable item in that the name *Anne* has been mentioned twice, but in oppositional roles. The repairable thus stands out as a potential delicate situation, as Bailey has just opened himself up to other-initiated repair (Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks 1977).

EXAMPLE 2: ATLANTA

```
1.  Ric:  I loved Anne Heche back in the day,

2.  Bai:  [You right on that baby.

3.  Emo:  [She's like back on TV too,

4.  Bai:  But I'm sorry, Elle[n's new  [girlfriend-

5.  Emo:                    [She's on [Hung,

6.  Ric:                             [On Hung, yeah [exactly.

7.  Emo:                                            [I l^o:ve Hu:ng.=

8.  Bai:  =I think Anne's new girlfriend might be

9.        even better than Anne Heche though,

10.       [cuz I lo:ve me some Portia de Rossi.

11. Hea:  [Uh, Ellen's- Ellen's new girlfriend.=

12. Bai:  =Uh yes, that's what I meant, (.) Um, (.)
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13.         >That's what I ^said, ^booby traps. ((Data))
14. Hea:  um humm,
```

As Bailey comes to the end of his turn in line 9, Heath initiates repair with the appropriate lexical item (in line 11), resulting in an overlap sequence between Bailey (line 10) and Heath (line 11), in which conversational face value has now been highlighted and brought into question. In Goffman's (1955) terms, Heath's actions position Bailey as "in wrong face or out of face" in that "he is likely to feel ashamed or inferior because of what has happened" (p. 226). An understanding of the participants' background helps to substantiate this claim. In fact, Bailey and Heath, within this group, are recognized as experts on pop culture. Often times their command of pop cultural references leads to competition, in which each tries to outdo the other. This implies that such repairables indeed become face-threatening events within the parameters of this sociocultural group.

To address the delicate matter (i.e., the faux-pas of overtly correcting another adult speaker), Bailey, in line 12, first acknowledges the repairable and reacts to the potential face threat by stating *that's what I meant*. He then continues in an attempt to mitigate, in a comedic manner, the severity of the face-threatening act by stating, in line 13, *That's what I ^said, ^booby traps*. This utterance is a reference from the 1985 film *The Goonies*, in which one of the main characters, Data, a young Asian American immigrant who has trouble with his English, is seen to systematically misspeak. In the film Data counters repair attempts by restating the misspoken item correctly. The current film reference stems from a scene in which Data mispronounces *booby traps* as *boody traps*. He is then repaired by Mikey, another character, after which he responds in a higher pitch and more frustrated tone, *That's what I ^said, ^booby traps*. Bailey, in this real-time interaction, not only uses the exact words of Data, but also mimics, through polyphony, Data's near exact phonological performance. Figure 2 below demonstrates the

marked change in pitch Bailey utilizes in producing his referencing sequence, which both

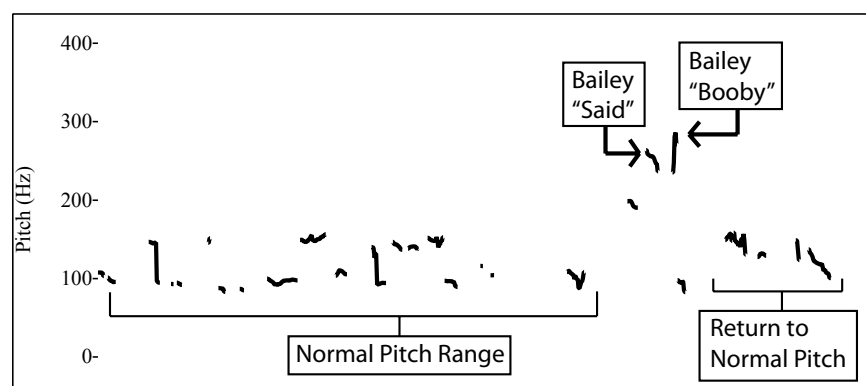lexically and prosodically links his utterance to the original film scene.

Figure 2. Prosodic reference to *The Goonies*.

Consequently, the face-threatening act loses its strength as Bailey's misspeak is

reconceptualized as a simple slip of the tongue. Like Data's slip, Bailey's therefore should be

seen as cute rather than as a gauge for any real cognitive deficiencies. Given this, the severity of

the face-threatening act is lessened as Bailey's polyphonous invocation laminates a scene of

naïveté onto the current interactive frame, and in turn reframes the delicate matter into something

humorous, and by extension into something that should be interpreted as less severe.

Referencing as a Tool for Constructing and Performing Identity

In the previous section, referencing's capacity to mitigate delicate conversational matters

was explored. Yet referencing also serves an important role in reflecting the lived experience

and identities of the U.S. queer community. In example 1 the referencing sequence was based on

an invocation of feminine identity (i.e., Joan Crawford). Whereas in example 2 the sequence was

based on an invocation of a non-hegemonically masculine identity, a young Asian American

male who is also a nonnative speaker of English. In the broader spectrum of sociocultural

dominance and subjugation within the U.S. context, referencing in gay men's interactions seems

to reflect an intertextual alignment with identities that traditionally have not held sociopolitical

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power. So just as acts of referencing perform mitigating functions that address conversationally

delicate issues, they also offer perspective on how these men both relate to the world around

them and construct their identities in relation to that existence.

Example 3 below offers a complex view of identity alignment through acts of referencing.

In the talk leading up to this example, seven participants were catching up on each other's lives

at an informal dinner party being held at the apartment of one of the participants. Three of the

participants in the living area began talking about the idiosyncratic behaviors of their partners,

with one of the partners, Ryan, being just slightly out of range, but close enough to overhear.

This resulted in Ryan commenting on the ensuing discussion upon his return by stating *I am*

divine, in defense against the lighthearted allegations being made. Though this statement was

humorously intended as a positive self-description, the partner of Ryan, Drake, took the

opportunity to playfully transform the meaning of the adjective *divine* into the name Divine, a

synonymous reference to a famous American drag queen played by actor Harris Glenn Milstead,

who starred in several John Waters films, including 1972's Pink Flamingos, 1974's Female

Trouble, and 1988's Hairspray, among others. Through this act of synonymous referencing, a

physically present male participant becomes paralleled with a gender ambiguous persona (i.e., a

drag queen), which is an identity that has traditionally shared in the sociocultural marginality

common to U.S. gay men.

 As the discussion continued, the focus shifted to the topic of Divine's untimely death at

age 42, which, given its morbid nature, would indeed represent a delicate conversational matter

in that it would be highly inappropriate, or taboo, within Western society to speak for extended

amounts of time about such an unpleasant topic. Despite this, the discussion of death ensues

with multiple participants offering speculative reasons. In actuality Divine's death was the result

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of heart related issues; however, the participants within the current example were uncertain of this, as is shown below.

```
1.  Dav:  I think it was heart disease.

2.  Rya:  That would (0.5) easily be [like, ((incomprehensible))

3.  Emo:                              [That [would be lo:gical.

4.  Dav:                                   [(He was) a bit obESE.

5.  Jam:  Yeah, I kno:w, you- he's good wi(h)th percentages(hhh).

6.  Emo:  (1.0) Fe(h)male, (1.0) it was Female Trouble.

7.  Dra:  >(2.0) °O:va:rian [cancer° ((effeminate voice))

8.  Jam:  >             [Pseudo(ut),(0.5)pseudo uterine [cancer.

9.  Emo:  >                                            [his o:varies.

10. Dra:  >^Ca:nce:r [heh heh heh, ((feminine high pitch)) ((J.Blank))

11. Emo:  >          [Hila::rious.  ((J.Blank))

12. Llo:  >^You don't have to worry bout bi:rth contro:l, ((J.Blank))

13.       >MY: O:VARIES A:RE DI:SEA:::SED. ((deep pitch)) ((J.Blank))

14. All:  ((Laughter))

15. Dav:  >The works fell out yea::rs ago. ((casual manner)) ((J.Blank))

16. All:  ((Laughter))

17. Dra:  W(h)ha(h)t?

18. Llo:  >[The works fell out. ((J.Blank))

19. Dav:  >[The works.  ((J.Blank))

20. Emo:  >    [The works fell out [yea::rs ago. ((J.Blank))

21. Rya:  >    [The works,       [That was Female Trouble?((J.Blank))

22. Emo:  Jerri Bla:nk.
```

In line 1, Dave suggests that he believes that the cause of Divine's death was in fact *heart disease*. Ryan (line 2) and Emory (line 3) both seem to agree with Dave on this issue, and in line 4 Dave strengthens his belief by adding that Divine *was a bit obESE*, which would in fact contribute to heart-related health complications. Following this, James (Dave's romantic

partner), in line 5 attempts to substantiate Dave's potential cause by jokingly stating that he (Dave) is *good wi(h)th percentages(hhh)*, adding a lighthearted quality to the essentially morbid discussion of death. Building upon this lighthearted shift, Emory, in line 6, then selects the title of one of Divine's aesthetically camp-based films and offers it as a possible cause of death (i.e., 1974's *Female Trouble*), which in turn marks a synonymous reference transformation point in which the delicate matter of death is indeed reshaped into a humorous event, mitigating the seriousness of the subject matter.

In lines 7, 8, and 9, the participants use prosodic manipulations to signal that the words being spoken are divergent from their normative prosodic patterns. The manipulations here act to color the utterances in a stereotypically feminine manner, resulting in the referencing of a feminine identity. Indeed, in line 7 the words °*o:va:rian cancer*°, is not any known referential utterance, but it is understood as polyphonous through its feminized quality. This is confirmed through the subsequent sequences offered by James in line 8, who lexically plays on this feminization, and Emory in line 9, who prosodically plays on this feminization. Together these intertextual displays contribute, through a range of linguistic strategies, to the reframing of imagery through a lamination of feminine personification. This in turn demonstrates that not only are established character voices used in referencing sequences (as in previous examples), but also the voices of personas who may or may not recognizably exist, but that are identified as instances of referencing through paralinguistic adjustments which mark the utterances as distinct from normative prosodic speech patterns. Through this polyphonous invocation of feminine identity, referencing permits the participants to establish connections of identity with those who have traditionally not been in a position of sociocultural power within the U.S. context. This in

turn supports the notion that gay men are actively affiliating with identities that typically share a common sense of sociocultural subordination in relation to hegemonic masculinity.

In line 10, the conceived feminine referencing voice gives way to a new persona. Here, a specific character emerges, that of Jerri Blank, the principle character of the Comedy Central Network's risqué television series *Strangers with Candy* (lines 10 through 21 all derive from the polyphonous invocation of the character Jerri Blank). The show is premised upon Jerri Blank's return to high school as a middle aged woman, where she is humorously confronted with a range of peer pressure issues (as she comically attempts to fit in and be popular). It is interesting that Jerri Blank should be introduced at this point in that no superficial connection exists within this character that links her to the pre-established delicate matter of death; however, Jerri Blank does share a unique quality with the drag queen Divine that could explain why her voice would be selected, namely the fact that her character is gender ambiguous. Indeed, though the character Jerri Blank is superficially recognized as a woman in the series, she is repeatedly seen to make sexual passes at both men and women, as well as to perform such acts as urinating while standing at a men's urinal. From this we see a biological female that has been rendered ambiguous through the juxtaposition of stereotypical 'male' activities. Further, in episodes in which parental roles must be assumed in school parenting projects, Jerri Blank consistently assumes a masculine paternal persona, often humorously threatening her 'wife' counterparts with physical violence if they do not do as they are told. As such, Jerri Blank is not only sex ambiguous, but gender ambiguous. When viewed in relation to Divine, and in particular Divine's death, Jerri Blank's voice becomes highly appropriate given that it embodies a similar frame of gender ambiguity to that of the character Divine (who, as a drag performer, is commonly seen to assume matriarchal roles). Thus, it is no coincidence that the participants in this group would

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select her as a potential authoritative voice in addressing the delicate matter of sustained talk on death, as well as the more specific death of a drag queen, particularly given the transition from heart problems/obesity to issues of female anatomy (i.e., the play on ovarian cancer which arises in line 11). Through the invocation of this contextually relevant character the physically present male interactants are able to appropriate her voice as an ambiguous gendered identity. As a result of this fluidity in identities, the participants are able to better address the range of invoked gender identities in play, in turn enabling them to speak authoritatively, and without repercussion, about the biologically foreign cause of death underway (i.e., diseased female organs).

Figure 3 below graphically portrays the paralinguistic laminations used in establishing the intertextual identities within this example, from breathy softness (e.g., °*o:va:rian cancer*°), to high-pitched spikes (e.g., ^*ca:nce:r*), to deep guttural lows (e.g., *Hila::rious; ^You don't…DI:SEA:::SED; the works…ago*). As the pitch tracks indicate, all instances either mimic precise depictions of known character voices, or manifest through altered breathiness and pitch levels in order to achieve a polyphonous effect that differentiates the stream of talk from normative prosodic features.
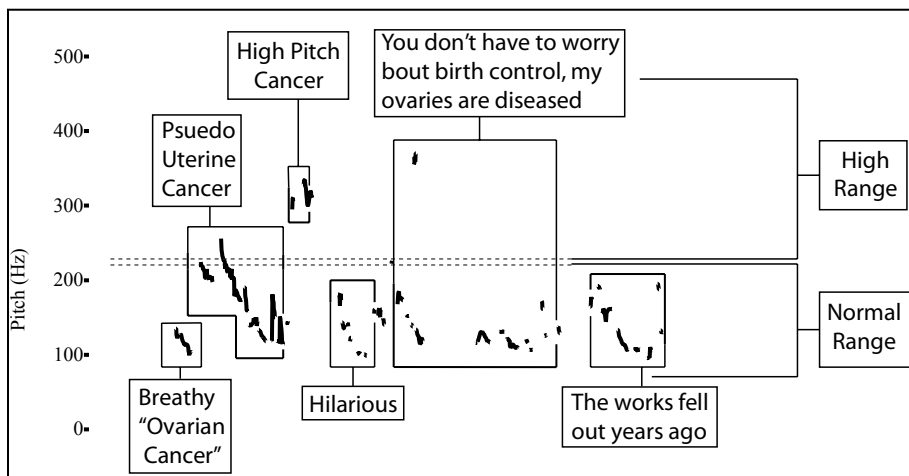

Figure 3. Prosodic reference to feminine voice and Jerry Blank.

What the sequences of example 3 illustrate is that, predominately, U.S. gay men's referencing revolves around alignments with identities that are in opposition to representations of hegemonic masculinity. This is certainly understandable given that, within a broader sociocultural account of modernity, gay men are berated in terms of their masculinity, and are often stereotyped as hyper-feminine or less than a man. It is not surprising then that they would polyphonously draw from identities that, to some degree, share in their plight of subordination. Worth note, Kiesling (2006) argues that hegemonic masculinity is constructed as an invisible construct, erased from overt view through its dominant sociocultural position within society (see also, Connell 2005, for a discussion on dominant and subordinate forms of masculinity). However, through U.S. gay men's use of referencing we see the invisible rendered visible in that the act of referencing non-hegemonic identities backlights the invisible position of hegemony. In short, U.S. gay men's referencing alignments with other non-hegemonically masculine identities highlights what hegemonic masculinity is not, which in turn allows it to be seen and critiqued.

Indeed, throughout the larger corpus of data from which these examples were drawn, referencing sequences consistently originate from traditionally subordinate sociocultural groups. The range of identities invoked within the larger corpus shows alignment with feminine, non-hegemonically masculine, and gender ambiguous identities. Other instances include openly gay personas, transgendered personas, and even de-masculinized heterosexual personas (see example 4, next section). The underlying thread amongst these references is that there seems to be a preference, at least among U.S. gay men, for utilizing referenced identities that share in their sense of subordinate sociocultural positionality. Referencing thus offers insightful perspective on how these gay men see themselves, and more importantly how they see themselves in relation to the world around them.

Referencing as a Means of Establishing Community & Belonging

The notion of competence seems to play a key role in instances of referencing. Even when the voice quality has been altered to portray a particular invoked persona, a certain awareness of the identifying characteristics of said persona must be in existence. This becomes crucial when no particular voice quality alteration has been made in that interactants must interpret subtle nuances that do not superficially index a recognizable source. As a result, interactants who partake in this practice must be ever aware that any potential next utterance could very well be an instance of referencing, and that the repertoire, so to speak, of cultural referents available to each member must remain cognitively close and ready for activation.

It would be perfectly within reason to, at this point, assert that referencing represents a functional sociolinguistic means of establishing communities of practice (see Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003). Indeed, participants within the current data produce and accept instances of referencing as something natural, marking them as a mutually acknowledged aspect of the communicatively constructed U.S. gay male life world, and by extension of discursively constructed displays of U.S. gay men's sociocultural identities. As Queen (1998) notes, shared knowledge is one of the key determinants in understanding how U.S. queer social actors establish their communities of practice, and referencing, as a shared practice, serves just that purpose, providing a sociolinguistic strategy through which members display belonging in the form of epistemic commonality.

Example 4 below helps to better explain what is meant by this notion of belonging. This example comes from a conversation that involved four gay men and one lesbian at a casual gathering for drinks and conversation, and diverges from the aforementioned examples in that only two of the participants (one of the gay men and the lesbian participant) knew each other

well. This is relevant because, as will be demonstrated, the general lack of familiarity does not

seem to hinder the occurrence of referencing. This example begins with one of the participants,

Emory, telling his interlocutors about a recent trip that he made to a rural location. His narrative

transitions first from the joy of seeing his family, to the uneasiness of being in a location that is

not at all gay friendly. Emory then speaks about the fact that his cell phone would not work,

situating his speech as an issue of personal safety (i.e., a delicate matter) as he was outside of his

comfort zone.

EXAMPLE 4: LOS ANGELES

```
1.   Emo:   Are you kidding me, like (.) one phone works here,
2.          (0.4)
3.   Kar:   ^But like you're a ^gay man out in like
4.          deliverance ^coun[try.
5.   Emo:                    [I kno::w,
6.   Kar:   [uh  huh  huh  huh  huh  huh  *hhhhh.
7.   Bil:   >[>Duh duh ^ding °ding ^ding °ding ^ding °ding ^ding<. ((Banjo))
8.   Kar:   ex<u>act</u>[ly,  huh  huh  huh ,
9.   Bil:        [huh huh huh huh huh,
10.  Kar:   [*hhhh, exactly heh heh heh,
11.  Emo:   >[It's all, ^<u>He::</u>yulp, [^<u>He::</u>yulp,((Penelope Pitstop))
12.  Bil:                      [uh huh huh huh huh,
```

In line 1, Emory speaks disbelievingly of the fact that his cell phone would not work in

the rural location in which he found himself. Karen then, in lines 3 and 4, comments on this

uneasiness by positing a synonymous reference, *deliverance country*. This serves to parallel

Emory's predicament with that of another fear-invoking situation, alluding to the 1972 film

Deliverance, in which four city-dwelling men take a hunting and boating trip into rural

mountainous territory, and as a result are faced with extreme personal safety issues as they

encounter rural locals intent on causing them physical harm through acts of rape and other forms of violence. Building upon Karen's use of *Deliverance*, Billy, in line 7, polyphonously invokes the notably recognizable dueling banjos music associated with the film, *>Duh duh ^ding ding ^ding ding ^ding ding ^ding<*, which has become a most memorable sound bite associated with the film. Figure 4 below graphically depicts these prosodic patterns.
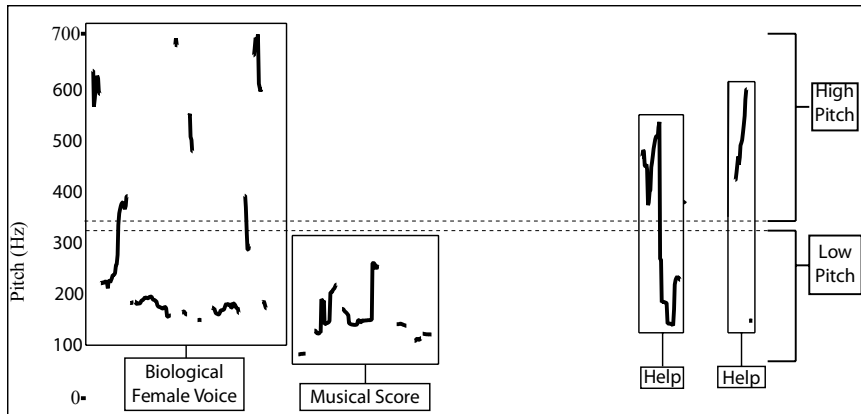

Figure 4. Prosodic reference to Deliverance and Penelope Pitstop.

Though not actual words, Billy's use of the dueling banjos serves as an instance of referencing in that it occasions an immediate awareness of its origins, and in turn of its negative connotations (i.e., a person being in a location that might cause her or him harm). By invoking *Deliverance*, Billy intertextually laminates the current delicate matter of personal safety with an overly dramatic (and darkly comedic) film scene, lessening the severity of Emory's situation through humorous reframing. Notably, Emory responds to this move to humor by adding a second reference in line 11, *^He::yulp, ^He::yulp*, which, through its high, feminine pitch and Southern American English articulation, marks it as the polyphonous words of the fictitious cartoon character Penelope Pitstop, from the Hanna-Barbera cartoon *Wacky Races*. Pitstop was known to viewers to systematically yell for help in tricky situations, often epitomizing the stereotypical damsel in distress. The reference is thus a very appropriate voice to mitigate the severity of the situation of a gay man in a non-gay-friendly location, particularly when coupled

with the notions of violence associated with *Deliverance*, as both instances of referencing reinforce conceptions of hetero male violence committed towards less powerful recipients (i.e., city-dwellers outside of their environment and objectified as potential victims of male rape and murder, and a female heroine who is pursued by male aggressors).

From this example it becomes strikingly apparent that participants are actively orienting to these referencing structures as a means of building sociolinguistic commonality, but they are also able to do so with little acquaintanceship. Indeed, among these participants, the closest relationship was between Emory and Karen, with the other four participants in attendance being acquaintances of Karen. The remaining male participants could likewise be described as acquaintances amongst themselves, as their relations primarily revolved around an annual charitable event, only occasionally socializing beyond this relationship parameter. Referencing is therefore strengthened as a means by which U.S. gay men coalesce and establish a common sense of being, as the above mentioned sequence presents itself as the first in a continued string of sequences to follow. Further, Karen, who was one of two lesbian participants in attendance, was able to show an awareness of this practice through her use of a synonymous referencing device (though she never performs polyphonous referencing in the data). What this implies is that commonality may be established, even when preexisting relationships are not strong, through sociolinguistic practices that participants mutually recognize as salient in developing in-group rapport. With that practice, here, arising through the shared use of referencing as a communicative strategy for establishing commonality, and thus a sense of belonging.

I would therefore make the case that these instances are no mere coincidence, but rather that they serve as a reflection of the realities of the sociolinguistic communities of practice and participants involved. What this implies then is that, in order to partake, participants must belong.

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And in the case of U.S. gay men, certain referents would be preferred over others to accomplish such belonging. Indeed, throughout the larger corpus, instances of referencing consistently stem from subcultural media-based sources that are commonly discussed and viewed time and again by U.S. gay male social actors. So, a line such as *Christina, bring me the axe* flows naturally within conversation, whereas a quote from a more mainstream media-based source might seem out of place. Referencing thus becomes a means by which participants display their in-group status, and in turn indicate who belongs to the group and who does not through the establishment of epistemic commonality derived from shared media-based and aesthetic orientations.

Discussion: Reflecting on Queer Referencing through Extended Notions of Practice

When discussing this research with colleagues, they frequently present me with movie quotes to demonstrate that they too partake in this practice. Yet I am often astounded with how many of 'their' references escape me. A line that I have heard countless times is, *What about the toe?*, from the 1998 action film *The Big Lebowski*. This referent, for me, does not carry the same salience as, for example, a line from *Mommie Dearest*, a stereotypical U.S. gay male cultural favorite. In fact, when I encounter such foreign referents in conversation I usually have no idea as to how to interpret them, instead laughing along so as to convey the appearance of belonging. But often times, as conversation unfolds, my lack of epistemic access is forcibly revealed, usually through a subsequent reference and an emerging sense of confusion on my part. With a simple quote I become marginalized, marked as an out-group member and positioned as other, where my lack of access to a repertoire of referents reveals divergent communities of practice.

Interestingly, this line of dialog from *The Big Lebowski* never seems to emerge amongst my gay male subject groups; rather, it seems to emerge within predominately heterosexual groups external to my research's data pool (at least those that I am familiar with). This implies

that different groups are orienting towards different referents, each with the capacity to yield insight into the lives of those members that select and apply the references within discursive interchanges. That is not to say that heterosexual men who quote *The Big Lebowski* have an identity aligned with acts of physical violence or kidnapping, which are common themes within the film. Rather, it is to say that *The Big Lebowski* is a heterosexually targeted storyline in which gendered identities do not reflect ambiguities, but rather stereotypical portrayals of masculinity and femininity, along with stereotypically heterosexual relationships and plot lines. As such, *The Big Lebowski* does not carry the same saliency for gay men's groups, and, in turn, is less likely to be selected as a part of their repertoire (though surely there are some that would orient to this film depending on their lived experiences).

The same holds true for other communities of practice. In a recent posting from an online social media forum, a relative, who is a protestant minister in the U.S., posted for his friends to see: *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you…John 14:16* (a direct quote from the Christian Bible). A friend then responded, first in her own reactionary words, then with a quote from a Christian song: *Isn't that awesome! 'My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness.'* Her response was then '*liked'* by the original poster (to 'like', on this social media site, means to click a 'like' button which allows readers to acknowledge the comment without actually having to express this acknowledgment in words). What this interchange suggests is that her response was understood for its underlying sociocultural importance to their shared religious identities, displaying that the original poster recognized it as a polyphonous phrase of religious significance that they have shared access to and in which they both find religious saliency. Their actions thus align both interactants as members of a religious sociocultural group (here protestant Christian worshipers)

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through their use of referencing. Their interaction in turn presents itself to be a linguistic strategy for constructing and performing the commonality of their protestant lived experiences, and positions referencing as a practice with the capacity to yield insight into a range of identities, each with their own motivations and applications specific to their lived sociocultural life worlds and orientations.

In returning to the gay men of the current data, we see that similar processes of orientation are underway. Though the claim could be made that it is popular culture that acts as an overarching referent source for media-based invocations within U.S. gay men's interactions, a more detailed explanation of the orientations is in order to comprehend the commonalities that exist among the various referents selected. Popular culture, as a media product transferred to consumers through exposure, becomes a notably visible construct around which individuals may coalesce and endeavor to establish group identity. Yet as Meyer (1994) contends, it is not popular culture as a whole that has come to be an intrinsic aspect of U.S. gay men's identities, but rather a particular variety, kin to yet distinct from popular culture, known as camp. Babuscio (1993: 19), drawing upon a range of gay identified films, stars, and directors, defines camp as "a perception of the world which is colored, shaped, directed, and defined by the fact of one's gayness" (p. 19). Sontag (1999) demonstrated how camp, as an aesthetic, resides in object (e.g., baroque art; the excessive dramatization of the opera), person (e.g., a camp; a person is him/herself excessive), and performance (e.g., *The Maltese Falcon*; the theatricality of Greta Garbo or Bette Davis), thriving on artifice and exaggeration in its derivation of meaning. Through these conceptualizations Sontag posited a straightforward working definition, which seemed to unify camp into a single, cohesive mode of expression, stating that camp represents 'a sensibility that, among other things, converts the serious into the frivolous.'

As Bronski (1984) notes, "camp is the re-imagining of the material world into ways and forms which transform and comment upon the original. It changes the 'natural' and 'normal' into style and artifice" (p. 42). He goes on to add that, "ultimately, camp changes the real, hostile world into a new one which is controllable and safe." This transformative rationalization indeed served to compliment Sontag's earlier characterizations. However, Bronski's work differed in that it envisioned the effects of camp's transformative properties not as a mere transformation of seriousness into frivolity, but rather of seriousness into a humorous event, which in turn critically ironizes and treats the transformed original.

When the examples explored within the current research are viewed through this camp-based lens, the specific selections made by the participants take on new meaning. Indeed, the film *Mommie Dearest* has been heralded as a quintessential piece of camp performativity. Likewise, the television series *Strangers with Candy* equals this film in its camp-based orientation. What such invocations indicate is that it is not a linguistic variety per se that is of interest in gay men's interactive practices, but rather how these interactive practices are constituted and shaped by shared aesthetic orientations.

Concluding Thoughts on Referencing as Practice

As Kulick (2000) asserts, the future of queer linguistics is not through the search for a distinct variety, available only to queer subjectivities. He then goes on to make the claim that the future of queer linguistics resides in the interface between language and desire (see also Harvey and Shalom, 1997; Cameron and Kulick, 2003). But as Bucholtz and Hall (2004) contend, a strict focus on language and desire, to the exclusion of other lines of inquiry, would have devastating effects on the progress of language and sexuality research in that it not only "threatens artificially to narrow the scope of the field but also it undermines the already

marginalized study of sexual minorities" (p, 472). The analyses I have presented here support

the claims made by Bucholtz and Hall in that a narrow understanding of queer interactions, as

dependent upon desire, masks other practices with the potential to expand our understanding of

queer (inter)subjectivities. That is not to say that desire does not play an important role; rather, it

is to say that, as Bucholtz and Hall illustrate, queer linguistics requires further reflexivity and

development. The work here thus demonstrates how audio/visual recorded interactions, as well

as aesthetic orientations, may further contribute in this ongoing process of epistemic growth.

Queer linguistics may therefore, as a result of these findings, be seen as a language partially

grounded in shared aesthetic orientations, where linguistic interactions derive meaning from

referent sources commonly oriented to by constituent participants. And it is only through

analyses of real-time unfolding interactions that such instances can be located, analyzed, and

seen as informative in expanding our knowledge of queer sociocultural practices and identities.

As I have attempted to demonstrate, referencing exhibits characteristics that allow it to

perform strategic communicative functions specific to U.S. gay male subjectivities, and when

viewed within other groups, it may exhibit a range of various other functions. Further research

on additional social groups will undoubtedly prove this through subsequent ethnographic

research. That said, I do assert that referencing, as a sociolinguistic practice embedded within a

media-saturated modern culture, has the potential to yield a wealth of information on the daily

lives of people who make use of it, especially U.S. gay men.

CHAPTER 7

REFERENCING AS INTERTEXTUAL STANCE

This chapter expands upon the idea of referencing by exploring its potential as an intertextually derived stance marker. Since Goffman's (1974) early work on footing, which examined the various participant alignments that speakers/hearers assume, as well as how those alignments ultimately affect interactive outcomes, stance as a term of communicative interest has played a key role in language-centered research. In more recent years, researchers have expanded upon Goffman's foundational reflections on footing by examining many subsets of stance-taking practices. From this trend, the notion of stance as it pertains to the epistemic states of participants has become a central concern for scholars of social interaction (C. Goodwin, 1986, 2007; Biber & Finegan, 1989; Heritage & Raymond, 2005; Heritage 2012). As C. Goodwin (2007) notes, epistemic stance reflects how participants "appropriately experience, properly perceive, grasp and understand relevant features of the event they are engaged in" (p. 70). Thus it is through the use of epistemic faculties, orientations, actions, and cognitive decoding capacities that stance displays take shape and are subsequently understood by social actors.

As U.S. gay men's referencing sequences draw primarily from external camp-based schema and referent sources, an epistemic stance towards camp aesthetics as salient and preferred within their interactions must be in effect for proper encoding and decoding. Indeed, to know the reference, one has to first view, read, perceive, or absorb the referential context, whereby camp knowledge is appropriated. Without this initial stance of viability and acceptance towards camp aesthetics as salient and meaningful, accompanied by a stance of openness to learning and appropriation of this camp knowledge, U.S. gay men would not be able to use the

wide repertoire of camp referents that we see in the current data. The usage and interpretations of camp aesthetics embedded within referencing sequences, by both speakers and hearers, therefore imply that a preexisting stance towards the camp genre is of significant importance in understanding its functions within interaction.

In addition to epistemic stance, it is equally important to note that the stance more generally is always lodged within interactive practices, making it a collaborative communicative event. C. Goodwin (2007) and Matoesian (2005) note that interactional displays of stance are highly interconnected with issues of *uptake* by interlocutors. DuBois (2007) characterizes the conversational uptake of stance displays as what he terms the *stance follow*, where subsequent courses of interactional action derive their sense of meaning from and are produced as a result of the previously established stance display. M.H. Goodwin (2006) shows how stance within girls' playground interactions can even constitute the primary component of the interaction itself, wherein stance displays comprise the nucleus of communicative interchanges, and social actors enter into interactive frames with the explicit goal of accomplishing such displays. M. H. Goodwin's ethnography of inner city schoolgirls thus implies that for stance to be understood in its entirety our understanding of context must include both the sequential organization of talk-in-interaction and the social domain in which said interaction occurs. As such, stance must be envisioned as an ever-present component of interaction, and interaction must be understood as the primary locus in which stance displays occur.

As Jaffe (2009) notes, through her characterization of stance as sociolinguistic practice, stance displays result in "performances through which speakers may align or disalign themselves with and/or ironize stereotypical associations with particular linguistic forms; stances may thus express multiple or ambiguous meanings" (p. 4). Given that referencing sequences draw

primarily from camp-based invocations and imagery, which themselves are produced through processes of incongruity stemming from irony, the notion of ambiguity in stance is of central concern to my work. Indeed, any interpretation of camp referencing sequences within U.S. gay men's interactions can only be understood through two key courses of action: 1) the epistemic activation of preexisting camp knowledge and linguistic repertoires, and 2) the application of this knowledge and these repertoires to the real time context and interactive frame. As camp is both intertextual and ambiguous in nature, the intertextual stance displays produced through camp referencing become loci for, as Jaffe terms, such multiple or ambiguous meanings. When viewed in relation to the aforementioned research, the intertextual stance displays associated with camp referencing are thus epistemically and contextually driven, and accessible only through an understanding of the joint interaction of the aesthetic field with the real time participant members and contexts.

In the analyses that follow, I build upon Jaffe's assertions of multiplicity and ambiguity in stance displays by demonstrating how the use of camp aesthetics leads to complex and simultaneous displays of affiliation and disaffiliation among participant members. The first section examines closely the local interactional ramifications of intertextual stance through referencing, and shows that stance displays function on multiple levels of communication, but with very different outcomes. The second and third sections expand upon two of the additional levels of communication explored in section one, specifically addressing the social ramifications of such usages from both local and non-local (i.e., macro) perspectives. The chapter concludes in section four with a brief summation of the importance of the findings.

Intertextual stance and its impact on interaction

In order to understand the micro-level interactional stance displays that result from referencing sequences, the sequential organization of the reference's occurrence must be jointly analyzed alongside the contextual parameters of the interaction itself.

In example 1 below, which has been developed previously in earlier chapters, four participants are discussing actress Anne Heche, the former significant other of comedian and daytime talk show host Ellen DeGeneres. As the conversation progresses, the participants begin to discuss Heche's then new role on the 2009 HBO comedy series *Hung*, a show in which Heche plays the ex-wife of a male prostitute. In lines 8, 9, and 10, Bailey begins to comment on his feelings about the Heche-DeGeneres breakup, exhibiting agreement towards the relationship's early demise. However, a communicative "trouble source" (Schegloff, Jefferson, & Sacks, 1977) is made within his utterance, resulting in a potential misunderstanding in the general content. The trouble source arises through a shift in names in which Bailey attempts to speak of Ellen DeGeneres (in lines 8 and 9), but instead supplants her name with that of Heche by stating *I think **Anne's** new girlfriend might be even better than **Anne Heche** though*, which clearly stands out as semantically problematic in that the name *Anne* has been mentioned twice, but in oppositional roles.

Trouble sources, in conversation, are quite common, but become trouble sources when they are identified as such either by self or other (Kitzinger 2013). From performing word searches to explain something out of epistemic reach, to the utilization of ungrammatical verb tenses which may impact message temporality, interactants are seen to function within a constant domain of linguistic risk-taking, where a single communicative misstep may mean the difference in how one is perceived by his or her interlocutors. To misspeak is to create a potential locus for semantic trouble within conversation. As Schegloff, Jefferson, and Sacks (1977) demonstrate,

such trouble sources may either be self-repaired (which has a low face value risk factor), repaired

by another (which has a higher face value risk factor), or, as is the obvious third alternate, left as

unrepaired (which has little to no face value risk). However, when the trouble source involves a

notable deviation from the general content, which could in turn lead to misunderstandings, repair

usually serves to render the trouble source accessible, in turn allowing for mutual understanding.

Nevertheless, the act of repair committed by another has the potential to be seen as a face-

threatening act (here in the form of a social faux-pas), which in turn relegates such occurrences

into the category of delicate matters, and marks them as a prime locus for a potential display of

polyphonous referencing. Example 1 below deals with just such a trouble source.

EXAMPLE 1: ATLANTA

```
1.   Tay:  I loved Anne Heche back in the day,
2.   Bai:  [You right on that baby.
3.   Emo:  [She's like back on TV too,
4.   Bai:  But I'm sorry, Elle[n's new  [girlfriend-
5.   Emo:                    [She's on [Hung,
6.   Tay:                              [On Hung, yeah [exactly.
7.   Emo:                                            [I l^o:ve Hu:ng.=
8.   Bai:  =I think Anne's new girlfriend might be
9.         even better than Anne Heche though,
10.        [cuz I lo:ve me some Portia de Rossi.
11.  Hea:  [Uh, Ellen's- Ellen's new girlfriend.=
12.  Bai:  =Uh yes, that's what I meant, (.) Um, (.)
13.        >That's what I ^said, ^booby traps. ((Data))
14.  Hea:  um humm,
```

Bailey's polyphonous reference in lines 12 and 13 indicates that he is indeed attempting

to transform a serious face-threatening situation into a somewhat humorous situation by

comically utilizing the persona of a character from the 1985 film *The Goonies*, in which a band

of children set off after long lost pirate treasure. The character that Bailey draws upon is named Data, a young non-native English speaker who frequently misspeaks within the film, and who is, as a result, constantly having his trouble sources repaired by the other children. Importantly, Heath and Bailey are highly competitive when it comes to pop culture. Between these two participants in particular, to one-up the other participant by displaying greater epistemic authority over pop knowledge is considered a social faux-pas, a no-no of sorts. By repairing Bailey's utterance the situation becomes quite serious based on in-group dynamics, thus warranting mitigation. This is due not only to the fact that Heath is repairing a trouble source, but in the manner that he chooses to do so. Indeed, Heath not only initiates repair, he also posits an outcome to the trouble source. As Jefferson (1987) demonstrates, repair initiations by other which are accompanied by repair outcomes by other, carry the semantic weight of a correction, which is more face-threatening than a mere act of repair due to the fact that the corrector, in this case Heath, has not only challenged epistemic authority, but has made an overt display of epistemic authority over the intended meaning. This definitively marks the words as a locus of delicacy. In response, Bailey's use of the character Data, who was frequently seen as comical in the film, thus creates a humorous intertextual overlay upon a situation that is indeed internally face-threatening, particularly since his epistemic access to in-group knowledge has been placed into question.

When examined from a localized interactional stance perspective, Bailey's words can superficially be interpreted as both affiliative and disaffiliative within the same moment in space and time. In regards to affiliation, the mere act of mitigation through referencing would be seen as a way of smoothing over the face-threat. This reduces the negative connotation of Heath's other-initiated repair sequence. In regards to disaffiliation, the reference acts as a critique of

Heath's repair, acknowledging that what he did in fact merited conversational repair work in order to smooth over the face-treat, which also serves to highlight the act of a social faux-pas.

When examined from a non-localized stance perspective, Bailey's words superficially act as a reification of the camp aesthetic through linguistic practice. This reification serves to allow gay male interactants to handle such situations in ways that deviate from normative interactional courses of action. What is meant by normative courses of action in this case, is that from an action-based perspective, whereby repair is envisioned as adjacent and sequential to its reception or refusal in the stream of talk, Bailey would normatively be constrained to act or react in a limited number of ways. First, Bailey could accept the other-initiated repair as is, without contradicting it, resulting in either Bailey's own corrected speech or his acceptance of the correction through silence. Or, Bailey could choose to not accept the correction as valid by openly responding in a manner that directly addresses the content of the repair as invalid (e.g., by addressing Heath directly, stating that he either misspoke or that there was no need for such repair, which could be interpreted as rude; or, by demonstrating disapproving silence accompanied by paralinguistic cues that mark the utterance as unacceptable, which in this case did not occur). Instead, by using a camp reference in place of these normative next sequential actions, Bailey treats the face threat of other-initiated repair in a manner that is, in essence, queer. This treatment subversively serves to undermine the normative system of sequential courses of action, which are reproduced as normative through a heteronormative lifeworld perspective. This is achieved by the reference's ability to carve out discursive space that is deviant, that constitutes its own rules, that carries with it its own courses of action where meaning stems from an alternate mode of expressivity, in this case queer. As such, the non-localized stance that is being projected, through an act of camp referencing, reflects the queer subject's position as other

in a heterocentric existence, and seeks to construct notions of internal normalcy to counterbalance this positioning as other, which is in itself a form of macro-level stance display.

However, the internal processes involved in such a stance display cannot be so easily explained without understanding the epistemic values and contextual constraints associated with both the invoked and the real time frame. To draw upon the persona and words of another is to also take into account the stance display of the original source. In the example above, Data takes a stance position against another character, Mikey, when he is repaired by him. This stance display is not meant as a means of transforming a serious situation into a humorous situation, as is camp, because in the film it is a constant issue for Data, one that audiences should see throughout as humorous given that the film is in fact a comedy-drama. The original interchange is as follows:

Mikey:	Data, where are you going?
Data:	I'm setting booty traps. ((error))
Mikey:	Booby traps. ((repair))
Data:	That's what I said, said I'm setting booby traps in case of anybody's following us ((reaction))

Data's reaction is, for all intents and purposes, not meant to be mitigative. In the film Data is constantly having his words repaired by others. The tone of his voice in this particular scene is one of frustration, of the reification of his inability to speak like a native speaker. Thus, to simply say that the stance display invoked through this intertextual display is meant as lighthearted and comical is to ignore certain aspects of its original usage. Figure 5 below offers a graphic representation of the intertextual processes at work in this act of referencing. As can be seen, using DuBois' (2007) notion of the stance triangle, in which there is an object and multiple participants, Figure 5 illustrates how there must in fact be other, deeper connections taking place between the intertextual scene and the real-time scene. These deeper connections imply that a

simple gloss of the reference as affiliative or disaffiliative does not fully capture the essence of the stance display, as we must also account for the intertextual link between complimentary components.
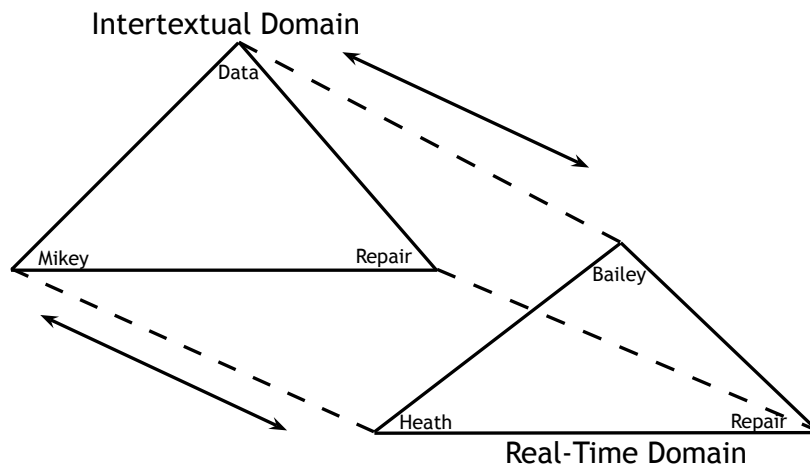

Figure 5. Diagram depicting parallel stance displays between intertextual and real-time components.

As Figure 5 demonstrates, Heath is in a parallel position with the intertextual persona Mikey (as the repairing party). Similarly, Bailey is in a parallel position with Data (as the repaired party). The two instances of repair on talk thus become parallel in the object position. This parallel between the repair displays is not surprising as it was the saliency of context between the two domains that occasioned the use of referencing in the first place.

These more in-depth parallel connections between the personas indicate that the stance display within the micro level interaction cannot be taken at face value as simply affiliative. By intertextually drawing upon the words of Data, Bailey also invokes the stance display of the original persona (Günthner, 1999). This implies that the stance, though seemingly mitigative as a camp display, is to some degree disaffiliative in that the utterance draws upon a scene in which the original persona, Data, responds in a displeased manner to Mikey, who repaired Data's talk. Likewise, in using this scene, Bailey parallels Heath with the original character Mikey. In the

scene from the film, Mikey does not posit any sort of comeback to Data's short and heated retort to the repair. Thus, through the parallel connection stemming from the intertextual juxtaposition of Heath and Mikey, Heath is in turn instructed, so to speak, as to how he is to respond to Bailey's use of a polyphonous reference. Heath's response, *um hmm*, seems to functions as a type of minimal response in the form of an acknowledgement receipt token. What is striking is the fact that Heath, knowing the context of the original film excerpt, seems to accept it rather than to attempt counter one-up. Though it could just as easily be stated that the acknowledgment token in this case acts as a form of sanction, taking on the semantic equivalence of the phrase 'yeah right', the lack of continued or sustained contest inadvertently serves to shut down further interactional negotiation, leaving Bailey's referencing response unchallenged on any meaningful level that could result in sustained conflict or challenge. This is important because these two participants are not known within this friendship circle for allowing each other to outdo one another in their usage of pop culture. By providing a minimal response that does not function beyond acknowledgement, Heath ambiguously concedes to Bailey, in a manner that allows Bailey to save face. This is much like the original display from the film in which Mikey also concedes to Data, not pushing the trouble source further even though Mikey clearly understands that an error was committed (which seems to be the case here as well, if the words of Heath are understood as sanction). Given this, the micro-level interactional stance display seems to carry more semantically negative weight than positive. This would make disalignment the more reasonable interpretation, as the interaction, as viewed through this intertextual connection, acts more so as a form of sanction by both parties (from Bailey as a means to one-up Heath's correction, and by Heath as a means to covertly indicate that the misspoken component did not

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go unnoticed, and was not, albeit not articulated, fully permitted from an interactional perspective).

Yet there seems to be, given this interpretation, another level of camp functionality. As the above exploration demonstrates, the interactional stance seems to be more heavily disaffiliative. But, I would argue that there is a mid-level stance display, in between the micro and the macro, which acts as a local social mitigator. In this example, the general issue of the delicate matter is in fact being mitigated in order to maintain the social stability of the interaction itself. Evidence for this claim resides in the fact that the reference, in being responded to through a calm, non-confrontational manner through the acknowledgement token *um hmm*, leaves the confrontational component of the interaction without further advance, positioning the matter as settled, as requiring no further action or counter face-threat. This positions the local social level as affiliative. Indeed, all of this transpires as the interactional level, based on the above analyses, seems to be functioning in a disaffiliative manner, taking the form of a covert 'slap-in-the-face'. This is important when we examine this instance as a form of camp aestheticism in that camp relies heavily upon notions of double-entendre and ironic incongruities in its derivation of meaning. By using such a reference, in such a complex and multifaceted way, participants are able to utilize aesthetics strategically within interaction to create contextually ambiguous interchanges that must then be decoded through a camp-based lens for comprehension. This substantiates camp's potential as a linguistic resource within micro-level interactions, and demonstrates how, for outsiders to understand the inner workings of this friendship group, an understanding of the functionality of camp aesthetics must also be in play and cognitively accessible.

Finally, from a non-local social level the reference seems to be functioning in a disaffiliative manner as camp, by its very nature as a marker of counter culture experience, acts in a subversive manner to traditional forms of comportment derived from heteronormative-dominant lifeworld experience and interactional influence. The delicate matter is thus treated in a way that is unexpected, divergent from the normative, and as a result queer in constitution. In essence, by utilizing a non-normative mode of interaction, the gay men involved in such interchanges mark the discourse as in-group, non-heteronormative, and more importantly as derived from a shared sense of camp aesthetics.

Though the functionality of such usages, from the perspective of a larger social level (i.e., the non-local) might seem intangible or forced, it is equally important to keep in mind that interactions, at all levels, are framed within larger discourses that influence and constrain their occurrences. With this in mind, the seemingly intangible ramifications of an immediate interaction are ever present, though at times less apparent than in some instances. To neglect this connection of the local to its non-local framing would thus be to silently concede that the day-to-day interactions of our world carry little import beyond the here-and-now, a concession few critical scholars would readily consent to without substantial evidence that indicates otherwise. This reasoning serves to place the action, within the current interaction, in contrast to normative courses of sequential organization in talk, and substantiates the interaction, from a non-local perspective and framing, as markedly different from the norm. The result of such displays is then that, with regard to its non-local social standing, intertextual referencing provides discursive space for interactants to display differentiation from normative discursive practices. Essentially, by making use of alternative conventions in addressing such interactional matters, the

interchange is marked as subversive through its indexical co-referencing of counter discursive

practices that are inherently non-mainstream in nature.

From these assertions it becomes clear that referencing, within these friendship groups,

yields stance displays that are not merely functioning on any one level, but rather at varying

levels. Table 1 below graphically depicts the varying levels of stance display that emerge within

this single conversational excerpt.

	Stance Associations		
Levels	Micro-Level	Mid-Level	Macro-Level
Contexts	Interactional	Local Social	Non-Local Social
Stance Display	Disaffiliative	Affiliative	Disaffiliative

Table 1. Stance impact levels, and their correlation to varieties of contact and stance displays when individual components of each context are paralleled.

Figure 6 below offers another possible explanation regarding the intertextual stance

display. In this depiction, the equal parallels between the individual components are not

conceptualized as direct links. Rather, it is the result of the stance display as a whole that is

taken into account. In this variety of interpretation, the scene from the film acts as a whole. As

the scene's intention within the film was originally meant for humorous reaction from the

audience, the intertextual display within the real-time domain also becomes one of humor.
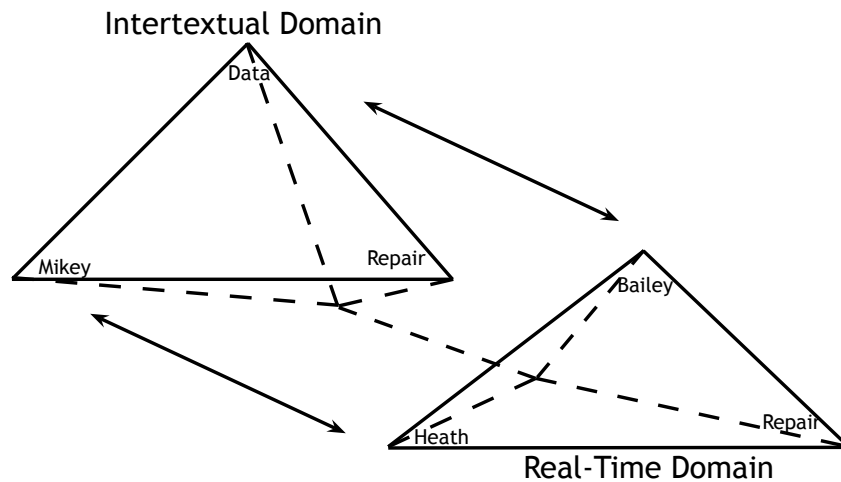

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Figure 6. Diagram depicting parallel stance displays between intertextual and real-time scenes as a whole.

In this depiction, the individual parallels are not accounted for. Rather, it is the stance display as a whole that is taken into account. The result of this intertextual stance display would read differently from that in Figure 5 in that individual bonds are established. Given that the overarching aim of the original scene was to initiate laugher, changes in the impact level interpretations occur. Table 2 below illustrates this alternate interpretation.

	Stance Associations		
Levels	Micro-Level	Mid-Level	Macro-Level
Contexts	Interactional	Local Social	Non-Local Social
Stance Display	Affiliative	Affiliative	Disaffiliative

Table 2. Stance impact levels, and their correlation to varieties of contact and stance displays when contexts as a whole are paralleled.

The micro-level stance display, following this more holistic analysis, shifts from disaffiliative to affiliative. This is primarily due to the fact that the larger scene becomes viewed as a comedic episode in and of itself, where overall aesthetic effect supersedes the individual parallels of its component constituents. In other words, in this interpretation it is the scene in general that becomes the locus of cognitive reflexivity for the interactants. And given that the film scene's motives were to incite a humorous response from spectators, the logical interpretation would be one of affiliation rather than disaffiliation. Indeed, the sole level to remain disaffiliative would in fact be the macro-level, primarily due to camp's subversive nature in relation to commonplace heteronormative discursive practices. This is because, as in the previous explanation, the use of such camp-based invocations continues, despite its holistic envisioning as comedic and humorous, to mark the interaction as queer through a strong reliance on camp aesthetics, which in turn positions it as a counter discourse to normative interactional expectations.

Based on these two analytic possibilities for decontextualizing sequences of referencing, intertextual stance is thus shown to be much more complex than superficial impressions can account for. The aforementioned explorations show such sequences to be operating in multifaceted and often covert ways, which result in an interpretation of meaning that is derived not only from the interdependency of the dual scenes, but also on a social actor's cognitive deconstruction of said scenes upon his encountering them within unfolding interactions. This is important because sequences of referencing, following this logic, become communicative loci for possible points of misinterpretation, or at the very least for moments of disjointedness within interpersonal stance convergences. Yet in virtually all instances of camp referencing within the interactions of these gay men, across cities, the interpretation results in a positive, and thereby affiliative outcome for the delicate contexts, where they are transformed into humorous moments within the interaction in an attempt to mitigate potential face-threatening possibilities.

But it is in our understanding of such instances as camp events that such interpretations find their grounding. Indeed, the nature of camp, as a sensibility, is what allows for such interpretations to transpire. For just as camp is humorous, comedic, over-the-top, frivolous, and eccentric, so too is it biting, cutting, sarcastic, witty, and ironic. With regard to the interactional level, wherein resides the sequential organization of talk, camp reconciles these seemingly affiliative and disaffiliative characteristics through processes of irony production, wherein incongruent frames of reference are juxtaposed against one another, resulting in outcomes that can only be understood through an ironic lens. This ironic lens of interpretation, situated within queer discursive space, in turn yields camp aesthetic interactional effect, which is by its very nature a double edged sword (on the one hand humorous, and on the other biting). What this tells us then is that referencing not only draws upon referent sources for effect, but also

simultaneously produces interactional meaning through its pragmatic reliance on irony, a trademark characteristic of the camp sensibility.

In recognizing and drawing meaning from camp aesthetics, the above analyses elucidate how referencing sequences, and by extension the intertextual stance displays associated with said sequences, result in ambiguity at the local interactional level. In order to navigate this ambiguity, participant members must activate previously acquired camp-based knowledge and logic, as well as in-group conventions for handling such instances within the sequential organization. It is through the mutual elaboration of aesthetic and action, and U.S. gay men's ability to interpret this elaboration, that the affiliative/disaffiliative ambiguity lodged within the intertextual stance display is at once recognized as dichotomous and subsequently incorporated as non-interruptive to the unfolding discourse. The result is a complex web at the interactional level that requires in-group membership for understanding, and in turn for maintaining the system and flow of talk-in-interaction.

Intertextual Stance and Local Social Affiliation

As the analysis so far has shown, micro-level interactional stance emerges as dual, where referencing sequences exhibit characteristics that are simultaneously affiliative and disaffiliative. At the same time, as the communicative outcome of such interchanges consistently results in mitigated situations of delicacy, where seriousness is transformed into humor through irony, mid-level social stance maintains affiliative status, despite the complexities found at the interactional level, in order to facilitate the maintenance of social solidarity (Heritage, 1984; Clayman, 2002). Example 2 below, taken from the New York data, offers insight into how referencing sequences at the local social level maintain their affiliative functionality.

In the following example, four participants are enjoying one another's company at a local

café that they frequent. The general conversation preceding this segment had involved extensive

talk about other friends who were supposed to meet them at the café. After this subject matter

had been in focus for a few minutes, one of the participants, Ryan, began to pay notice to the

recording device. Steve, Drake, and Emory then appropriated this transition in talk, where the

recording device (i.e., an audio recorder positioned upon a flexible-leg mini tabletop tripod)

became the primary object of the discourse.

EXAMPLE 2: NEW YORK

```
1.  Ste:  they had the living area [(tha[t they-) for the humans=,

2.  Rya:                           [Y^e:[ah,

3.  Dra:                               [Ex:a::ctly,

4.  Ste:  =an [thuh- the le:gs,

5.  Dra:      [an it had those weird le[gs,

6.  Rya:                               [right there- the little cage,

7.  Ste:  O^oh it i:[s,

8.  Rya:           [It looks ^like (>it<) could also mo:w: thuh

9.        l[a:wn,

10. Emo:   [Yeah it's [uh (_____)

11. Rya:             [ (if you programmed it)=

12. Dra:  =an like it looks like it cou- it could give me a lot

13.       of pleasu::re. as [well,

14. Rya:                    [uhn eh ^h[a ha ha ha ha

15. Ste:                             [eh ha ha ha ha

16. Emo:  When you put it on vibra:t[e,

17. Dra:                           [ruh hEH heh heh=

18.       *hhh Ooh call me, call me.

19. ???:  (_____[__)

20. Rya:                       [uhn ha h[a ha,

21. Dra:                                huhn (0.4) huhn

22.       (0.2)

23. Rya:  (Me) love you long ti[me. ((Prostitute from Full Metal Jacket))
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24. Dra: [right?

In line 1 Steve likens the recording device to the imagery from the 2005 film *War of the*
Worlds, in which alien invaders are seen to carry out their plans for Earth's colonization in
machines that bare striking resemblance to the tripod being used for the recorder. In lines 2 and
3, Ryan and Drake respectively show agreement for this invocation of imagery through their
agreement tokens *Y^e:ah* and *Ex:a::ctly*. In line 4 Steve further elucidates the physical
connections between the two objects by explicitly pinpointing *the legs* as the definitive
characteristic in support of his assertion, a parallel which is affirmed in line 5 by Drake as he
posits agreement through his statement *an it had those weird legs*.

After further associations with the imagery of the film in lines 6 and 7, Ryan then shifts
the description to a frame of reference that draws heavily upon incongruities of object and
context, thus producing an ironic effect in relation to the discussion of the recording device. This
is achieved in lines 8 and 9 where he states that the object *looks ^like (>it<) could also mo:w:*
thuh l[a:wn, whereby the recording device is re-envisioned through what Harvey (2000)
identifies as processes of camp inversion. This inversion results in a "reversal of an expected
order of or relation between signs" (p. 245), here through the bestowal of an inanimate object
with lifelike, animated capacities. This is important because Drake then pinpoints the animated
capacities of the object as salient in lines 12 and 13 when he in turn transforms the device into a
sexual stimulant by stating, *an like it looks like it cou- it could give me a lot of pleasu::re. as*
[well. Thus it is through the appropriation of and reconfiguration of the object's newly acquired
animation/agency that Drake performs an act of word play whereby the object acquires sexual
capabilities. In Harvey's (2000) terms, the object is transformed through processes of ludicrism,
which he identifies as a key component for camp talk. Specifically, he notes:

> *Ludicrism groups together linguistic features that are all determined by a playful*

attitude to language form and meaning. The ludicrist is a speaker who not only

delights in intentionally exploiting the proliferating possibilities of the

signifier/signified relationship, but also opens himself or herself – passively, we

might say – to the processes of instability, indeterminacy and multiplication (of

senses and sounds) that are inherent in language (p. 247).

It is through the incongruent envisioning of the object in question, lodged within a context that

undermines the given sign/signifier relationship, that a ludicrous aesthetic effect takes shape,

allowing the sequence of events to be interpreted as linguistic structure derived from camp

sensibility.

The sexualization of a non-sexual, inanimate object, further serves to render the discourse

queer in that a play on gender normative values transpires, where the object assumes sex toy

characteristics associated with female pleasure through the use of the term *vibrate* by Emory in

line 16. In a similar move, Drake, in line 18, furthers the play on gender normative values by

then stating directly to the object, in a comical manner, *Ooh call me, call me*, which appropriates

the notion of vibrating as a result of ringing, and implies a desire for sexual pleasure through the

insistence that the device ring, so to speak. From this he personifies an imagined sexually

pleased recipient, and thus inadvertently indexes femaleness through the aforementioned

connotations of the transformed object. Finally, in line 23, Ryan concludes the camp aesthetic

invocation through his polyphonous referencing sequence, *(Me) love you long ti[me*, which

originates from the 1987 film *Full Metal Jacket*. In this film, the line of dialog used here stems

from a scene in which a Vietnamese prostitute attempts to solicit two American soldiers for sex.

While negotiating price, the prostitute inserts, multiple times, the above referenced dialog in an

attempt to convince the soldiers to take her up on her offer.

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What does this mean for local social stance displays within interaction? To answer this we look to the dynamics of the real time context, in which four longtime friends are casually interacting, while also understanding and acknowledging that the sanctity of the interaction is overshadowed by the presence of a fifth member: the recording device. Indeed, the device's presence is in itself an unnatural component of the interaction, where the traditionally private sphere is inadvertently expanded beyond the bounds of the group, permitting unidentified social actors who will eventually hear (or read transcripts of) and react to the discourse underway. This positions the interactional frame as a delicate, as has been previously explained, and marks the discourse as a potential locus for communicative mitigation. And mitigation is exactly what occurs, through the use of camp aesthetics more generally, but also through the specific camp referencing sequence of the film *Full Metal Jacket*. The serious nature of the invasive recording device, lodged within private discursive space, is thus mitigated through the humorous transformational effects of camp-based invocation practices.

In understanding how this camp events results in local social affiliation (to return to the terms previously established in this chapter), the mitigative invocation of camp humor and aesthetics serve to downplay the recording device's presence through re-envisioning the device as something comical and humorous. As all participants partake in this transformation at one point or another within the interaction, all inadvertently acknowledge its presence as unnatural, and make use of this unnaturalness by performing systematic transformations on the object to lessen its invasiveness. By acting in unison through camp aesthetic orientations, all members in turn partake in the transformation of the object, and thus partake in the process of mitigation to lessen the threat of private in-group discourse made public. The end result of such collaborative dialogic action elucidates how constituent members share in their identification of the object as

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invasive, and also in how camp aesthetic orientations through linguistic practice can be used to subvert such invasiveness. Simultaneously, joint effort and applications of such orientations on the part of constituent members marks the discourse as bounded by in-group membership, where displays of shared lived experiences and aesthetic strategies permits enjoyment in the shared stance taken against the invasive other. In short, this sequence, which culminates in camp referencing, allows participants pleasurable shared interaction, through which sameness is reinforced and differentness is marked and critiqued for its non-member properties. It is through these courses of action that results a shared stance of local social affiliation, premised entirely upon intertextuality in its derivation of meaning, where members reinforce the bounds of the friendship group through linguistic camp strategies, and thereby reinforce the primacy of maintaining social cohesion.

Intertextual Stance and Non-Local Social Disaffiliation

Just as intertextual stance through referencing has been shown to function in complex affiliative/disaffiliative ways at the interactional level, as well as affiliative ways at the local social level, so too does it maintain a disaffiliative nature when understood through the non-local social level in which it is always situated. What is meant by the term *non-local social* is essentially the larger sociocultural domain in which interactions are always lodged and take place (e.g., U.S. interactions within the home are always situated within an 'American' sociocultural context, which is itself a product of Western social, political, religious, and economic thinking). As the work of Meyers (1994a) and Case (1998 [1988]) remind us, camp does not function as aesthetic alone. It is, at the same time, a mode of queer sociopolitical contestation and subversion, positioned in opposition against an ever-present backdrop of heteronormativity. This dual nature of camp must therefore be accounted for with regard to its

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impact on social interaction. To understand how camp referencing sequences simultaneously maintain affiliative and disaffiliative qualities at various levels, the analyses in the following example explore the non-local social implications of such usages.

In the following example, which comprises a multiple utterance referencing sequence, five participants are playing a drinking game based upon various moves associated with a deck of cards. The rules of the game are such that, if a number card is played, depending on its value, suit, and color, the remaining participants must drink the corresponding amount that the combination of characteristics prescribes. Further, if a face card or ace is played, the player who issues the card selects a category that contains many potential answers and as a result a rapid sequence of responses ensues around the playing area, with drinking penalties for the participant who fails to answer appropriately. The category that was selected for the current answer round was 'gay friendly U.S. cities'. This round resulted in a very long sequence, where responses circled the playing field approximately six times. Eventually, one participant, Taylor, began to have trouble selecting his responses, upon which he paused slightly and sought clarification as to the exact responses that might possibly be offered. After several more turns Taylor essentially ends the round by simply taking a drink, rather than continuing to search for answers that he is having difficulties in offering. The sequence is as follows.

Example 3 - ATLANTA

```
1.  Tay:  Goddammit, are we just- U.S. [cities?

2.  Emo:                                [yeah

3.  Bai:                                [um hum

4.        ((Irrelevant lines omitted))

5.        ((Taylor, without a response, drinks, ending the round))

6.  Emo:  Uh heh heh heh

7.  Hea:  I was (.) down to like Ogunquit, Maine, cause

8.        I know it's a huge gay (.) town, so-
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9.  Tay:   ^Oh:::::::::::::. (0.2) ((Cher; high pitch then deep fall))
10.         ^OH:- H:- H:- H:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:-. ((Cher))
11. Emo:   Chasti[ty, ((Cher))
12. Bai:          [which one you want, left or right?
13. Emo:   You better cu(h)lea::n yo heh roo(h)m heh heh. ((Cher))
14. Tay:   Chastity you git in here right now, ((Cher))
15.        young lady- er:: I mean young man, ((Cher))
```

In lines 7 and 8, Heath expresses his disappointment with Taylor's decision to end the round, by stating that he *was (.) down to like Ogunquit, Maine,* thus revealing that he in fact had an appropriate next response for his upcoming turn, and that by ending the round his opportunity was in fact ended before it had even begun. Heath, among this group, is known for his competitive edge in quick-witted conversational sequences, usually performing quite well in games of this sort. It can thus be deduced through his statement establishing his preparedness that he was essentially stripped of his turn, a turn that his contribution positions as relevant and successful, resulting in the delicate matter of displeasure or disappointment.

To mitigate the delicate situation, Taylor quickly responds to Heath's disappointment through a camp-based referencing sequence in line 9, by adding *^Oh:::::::::::::,* followed by a similar, but more distinct addition in line 10 of *^OH:- H:- H:- H:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:- h:-* (with the dash symbol representing rapid breaks in the sequence). What is interesting about this contribution is that it mimics the perceived voice of actress/singer, Cher, an American celebrity of iconic status within U.S. gay culture. The perception of Cher's voice lies not simply in the polyphonously manipulated quality, consisting of high-low pitch contours that bear similarity to sounds produced by Cher in several of her songs, or through the deep but effeminate voice being portrayed (which bears close resemblance to Cher's simultaneously deep and effeminate voice), but rather through the collaborative perception that the voice being portrayed is in fact that of

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Cher, as seen through subsequent turns. Indeed, in lines 11 and 13, Emory acknowledges

Taylor's utterances as intertextually connected to the identity of Cher through his response,

Chastity… You better cu(h)lea::n yo heh roo:(h)m heh heh, which, though not an exact reference

of any known words produced by Cher, act as her words through a continuation in polyphonous

voice quality as well as the a) lexical naming of Cher's daughter, Chastity Bono, and b) position

of the speaker as someone in the role of someone who would tell her (i.e., Chastity) to clean her

room (i.e., her mother). This is important as a referencing mitigator in that, as the story goes,

Cher was highly disappointed and angered with her daughter upon discovering that she was gay,

resulting in her being thrown out of Cher's home. Thus, this sequence, though fictitious, acts as

a reconstruction of the strained relationship that at one time existed between Cher and her

daughter, demonstrating Cher's perceived level of frustration, while also displaying a 'too bad'

attitude, which in turn would parallel the unsympathetic actions taken by Cher in forcing her

daughter to leave her home. This claim that the fictitious words being depicted are in fact in

relation to the strained relationship resulting from Chastity's sexuality is confirmed in Taylor's

response to Emory, in lines 14 and 15, in which Taylor adds, *Chastity you git in here right now*

young lady- er:: I mean young man, alluding to both the sexuality issues stemming from

Chastity's homosexuality, and more importantly alluding to gender identity issues surrounding

Chastity's more recent decision to undergo a sex change operation, becoming a biological male.

Through this simultaneously comical, yet serious, sequence of referencing, the potential

threat of disappointment, experienced by Heath, is thus mitigated through the invocation of both

the voice and the identity of an experienced other (i.e., experienced in that Cher, or this acoustic

portrayal of Cher, has dealt with much more intense instances of disappointment, and as a result

has gotten over them). From this it can be deduced that multiple utterance referencing sequences

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not only have the capacity to juxtapose a single present identity with that of an external other, but multiple present identities with that of an external other, resulting in an elaborate system of fluid identities in which more than one participants might experience fluctuations (as here both Taylor and Emory are attempting to invoke the identity of Cher through reenactment).

In returning to the non-local social level, and in developing the notion of intertextual stance displays through camp referencing as disaffiliative within this larger social domain, the above sequence must be envisioned as situated within a larger sociocultural sphere of heteronormative discourse. The feminine imagery generated through the invocation of Cher, by biologically male social actors within the U.S. context, would thereby be constructed as different to stereotypical expectations of the type of content U.S. men *should* draw from and utilize within interactional space (at least from a masculine-normative perspective). But for U.S. gay men, part of indexing one's membership in gay culture is to draw upon iconography and imagery that defies stereotypical expectations. By drawing upon what is essentially queer iconography, U.S. gay men discursively position themselves as divergent from and non-compliant to heteronormative expectations, and thus to stereotypical associations that prescribe abidance to heteronormative courses of human action within the U.S. cultural context. The use of camp referencing sequences by U.S. gay men thus emerges as a form of counter-discourse, where heteronormative interactional expectations are subverted through the use of alternative iconography and imagery.

With regard to stance, the interactants within example 3 above can thus be seen to challenge prescribed interactional forms and content, albeit subtly, and in effect undermine heteronormativity's presence and authority within the communicative interchange. From this results a complex stance display that is directly associated with larger social strata, more

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removed from the internal interactional moves, instead critiquing the supraordinate discourse in which it is lodged. The intertextual stance display, jointly constructed across multiple social actors, results in an act of disaffiliation towards dominant discourses that seek to constrain U.S. gay men's linguistic practices. The non-local social stance thus becomes a stance of disaffiliation, not matter how the example is analyzed, through its reliance on both camp as aesthetic and camp as sociopolitical contester.

Discussion: Intertextual Stance through Camp Referencing

As the analyses in this chapter have shown, the relationship between stance as an interactional product of social action and camp referencing is a complex sociolinguistic structure requires layers of contextualization to generate meaning. Superficially, camp transforms the discourse from seriousness into humor (Sontag 1999 [1964]), yet when viewed through an array of intertextual parallel connections with external scenes, in conjunction with differentiations in discursive levels of interaction, such camp usages result in multifaceted stance displays that yield a range of different, yet simultaneous interactional effects. At the local interactional level, intertextual stance displays may be both affiliative and disaffiliative in the same breath, while at the local social level such displays are more constricted in their interactional influence, acting primarily to maintain social stability, and resulting in sustained affiliation. At the same time, from a non-local social perspective, linguistic usages of camp emerge as counter-discourses to heteronormative prescriptions. The end result of camp referencing is thus a complex in-group interactional practice that relies upon camp epistemic knowledge and awareness for accessing and decoding meaning.

The analyses of this chapter are further substantiated as lodged within camp aestheticism and sociopolitical counter-discursive contestation through our understanding of the pragmatic

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nature of camp more generally. Indeed, the above examples have in common the trademark ironic incongruities of object and context, from which camp aesthetics derives its stylistic meaning. Likewise, the camp effect of non-normativity intrinsically positions it in opposition towards normative practices and expectations, from which is produced camp's sociopolitical capacity to critique and comment upon the so called normative. Referencing sequences thus result in displays of stance that are, for this social identity group, intrinsically connected to camp as a discursive strategy that derives meaning from intertextual connections to external camp-based content sources. It is thus through such strategies that U.S. gay men index queer-normative lived experience and practice, and demonstrate camp to be a powerful linguistic tool for constructing and maintaining the bounds of in-group interactions.

The notion of intertextual stance, as explained in this chapter, adds to what we know about stance as a product of interaction. By looking at contexts external to real time interaction, invoked for their semantic and pragmatic relevancies to the context at hand, this analysis of camp referencing as a means for establishing interactional stance broadens our understanding of stance more generally as a meaningful and resourceful component of talk-in-interaction. These analyses thus expand not only on what we know about U.S. gay men's discursive practices, but also on what we know about stance as an interactional feature which continues to yield new levels of complexity and insight for linguistic studies, with particular relevant for previously studied stance variables such as epistemics and context.

CHAPTER 8

CAMP AS COMMUNITY

This chapter explores the functionality of camp within the talk of U.S. gay men from the perspective of the participants themselves. The reason for taking such an approach should at this point be apparent: my own status as an active participant-observer within the research. This creates a conundrum on the part of the researcher, from a traditionalist perspective, in that readers who see this as a dispreferred approach in qualitative research can always call objectivity into question. Yet as various research has demonstrated, in-group status on the part of the researcher is generally acknowledged as insightful in yielding interesting and vital information in relation to the cultural composition of sociocultural participant interactions (Cameron, Fraser, Harvey, Rampton, & Richardson, 1992).

Fishman (1993, 1997), as well as Connor (1997), assert that insider perspective, on the part of the researcher, has the potential to result in more culturally sensitive analyses and writing, whereby understandings transcend the more clinical conceptualizations that have accompanied outsider observation throughout the history of ethnographic observational writing. The underlying assertion is that lack of connection with a cultural setting or social grouping can result in analyses that are detached from what participants actually realize, envision, and value within their own groupings and interactions. Yet as Edwards (2009) cautions, methodological standards and rigor exist for these very reasons, acting as a counterbalance to such claims, and providing standard approaches to offset issues that accompany outsider status. Importantly, he warns,

Minority-group members and apologists clearly have biased positions and

particular axes to grind when treating their own (or similar) communities. More

culturally removed observers, on the other hand, may lack a necessary awareness;

they may also be accused of an unfeeling objectification of matters of immediate

and compelling concern (p. 45).

It is thus no wonder that enduring debate exists with regard to the benefits and/or handicaps of

insider versus outsider researcher status. In part, insider status provides what could be termed 'a

feeling' that is inaccessible to the outsider, that emerges as a result of having shared in the

experience of being a part of the group itself. Yet outsider status ideally brings with it

objectivity that is able to look beyond affective reactions, with the thought being that such

perspectives allow for an unreactionary characterization of what actually transpires within the

social setting. Admittedly, both perspectives come with baggage, as both remain unavoidably

lodged within larger discourses that shape their respective viewpoints, for better or for worse.

As a researcher who is a participating member, I can attest that objectivity remains a

central concern, despite the many measures that might be taken. This is the primary reason why

I have presented systematic analyses in the previous chapters through the use of methodologies

designed to increase my objective positioning (e.g., CA transcription conventions), in order to

focus my descriptions on the talk itself while grounding my analytic assertions in genuine

participant production. But given the above-mentioned issues and concerns, such positioning

begs the following questions: 1) how valid are my own in-group characterizations and

assertions?; and 2) have my own views and in-group status shaped my understandings of camp in

a biased way?

Given my concerns, the use of participant perspectives and ideologies presented itself as a fruitful avenue for both testing my work and giving agency to the participants themselves. This is important because, as an in-group member, I run the risk that my own personal opinions and biases will influence the analyses. Likewise, my participation, it could be argued, could have influenced the talk itself. Earlier in my work I made the decision to reveal my identity as Emory within the recorded data, for this very reason. My purpose was to leave it to the reader to decide if and how my role as participant-observer might have influenced my work. This is also why I made the decision to allow the participants themselves to inform my work through their own understandings of camp's role within talk. Conversely, giving voice to the participants themselves allows for lay understanding devoid of analytic conceptualizations, where understanding resides solely in the affective domain of feeling. My goal in collecting such thoughts was therefore two-fold: 1) to substantiate or refute my analytic points through the voices of those who actually use camp within interaction, and 2) to see what insight might be of central importance to in-group members, but which might have been overlooked throughout my more 'clinical' analyses.

In the remainder of this chapter I therefore explore camp as a feature of talk-in-interaction through the voices of members themselves. As was previously stated, the data set in this chapter stems from interview/survey data (based on accessibility to participants two years after the interactional data was collected), and was designed as a follow up component to my initial interactional data collection and analyses. No mention of camp as the object of inquiry had been made to this point. Participants were only aware of the fact that I, as a researcher, was interested in understanding the daily talk of U.S. gay men in its most natural, casual-conversational form. In essence, they knew that they had been recorded, and they knew that talk

had been the object of inquiry within these recordings; however, they were unaware that camp aesthetics, and by extension the use of camp as a linguistic strategy, had been the primary focus of my research (see chapter on Methodology for extensive detail). The following ideological perspectives thus represent the participants' first exposure to and understanding of camp talk as the primary object of inquiry for the many recordings that they had participated in.

In the remainder of this chapter, I use direct quotes from the participants themselves to illustrate how they themselves perceive camp and see it as functioning within the talk of U.S. gay men. Though nuances presented themselves throughout these interactions, the analytic orientations below represent the most general and common orientations displayed by members. In essence, what emerged from this query essentially demonstrated that camp is seen as important to understanding queer subjectivity for a diverse range of reasons, which more often than not support the analyses of the previous chapters (e.g., transforming the mundane, providing humor, representing a form of sociopolitical contestation, etc.). To begin, I explore the notion of participants' overall reactionary stance towards camp as a feature of U.S. gay men's lived experiences. I then explore that various functional capacities that participants associate with camp usage. Finally, I conclude with thoughts on what this data tells us about larger notions of queer community through camp aesthetic orientation.

Reactionary Stance to Camp Aesthetics in Talk-in-interaction

As was previously stated, the specific knowledge that participants were asked to share was: 1) an explanation of what camp is, 2) a working definition of camp, 3) the role that camp plays in the U.S. queer community, and 4) how camp might be used from the point of view of language and interaction. From these prompts a range of responses emerged, with some being positive and others negative, and with some inhabiting a type of middle ground with regard to

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such polarities.   As excerpts (1) through (5) below illustrate, camp is often seen as positive. In (1) camp is envisioned as the reflective lens of the *stereotypes that make us the people we are*, which is in turn positioned as a means through which queer social actors have gained both visibility and progressive acceptance in relation to mainstream society. As (2) and (3) note, this acceptance through camp is in part the result of taking *life a little less serious*, wherein laughter in the face of adversity allows for the successful navigation of sociocultural marginality. In (4) such processes are noted for their ability to *empower* and *strengthen* resolve *against those who take issue with our community, making us stronger as a whole.* Finally, negativity towards camp is positioned as the reactionary stance of those who do not subscribe to its use, framing such stances as the result of *cultural bias, prejudice and hatred*.

> *(1) **Heath (Georgia)**: I think camp is a positive feature. It is the way we first gained acceptance by the mainstream. It may be playing up to stereotypes of the gay community, but it is those stereotypes that make us the people we are.*
>
> *(2) **Terrance (Georgia)**: Positive -- take life a little less serious*
>
> *(3) **Jackson (California)**: It's positive -- you laugh to keep from crying.*
>
> *(4) **Glen (Florida)**: Everybody loves laughter. Being able to laugh at our community and ourselves at times empowers us and strengthens our resolve against those who take issue with our community. Making us stronger as a whole.*
>
> *(5) **Nick (New York):** It's positive. The only negative aspect of camp comes from those who project negativity on to it because of cultural bias, prejudice and hatred.*

These perspectives illustrate that participant members themselves envision camp as a positive force within both queer lived experience and what constitutes queer differentness.

Yet as excerpt (5) demonstrates, biases towards camp are not atypical, particularly with regard to mainstream heteronormative society. Such reactionary stances can also be identified within the community itself, and thus among U.S. gay men. Excerpt (6) below identifies in-group negative stance as a potential ramification of camp usage (typically the result of camp when the conversational limits have been pushed too far, usually at the expense of a single member).

(6) Paxton (Florida): I can see where it may be offensive to some gays and be

seen as negative.

Negative affective reactions can also stem from one's ability to apply camp aesthetics within interaction. As excerpt (7) asserts, the inability to competently perform when camp aesthetics are in play can lead to an opposite reaction. Such assertions are echoed in excerpt (8) where one's inability to process camp-based imagery can in turn position members outside of the core interactive space, often resulting in negative sociocultural reactionary stances through perceived distancing.

(7) Sean (Florida): Not everyone feels comfortable or competent in using camp,

and this may cause an opposite reaction.

(8) Dean (California): A definite risk is that some people involved in the

conversation may not understand camp, or find it amusing. If they realize that

they do not understand what's being said, especially if others in the group DO

understand, it might actually serve as an exclusionary factor and make a person

feel distanced from others.

Importantly, however, the strongest negative perception of camp (reiterated constantly throughout participant responses) stems from the outside sociocultural world that surrounds U.S.

gay men's interactions. Though the excerpt below indicates individual dissociation from camp as a means of self-description (which is understandable given that individual agency is always present within any sociocultural grouping), what this participant's words illustrate is how, generally speaking, camp representation may be used as a benchmark through which a collective notion of queer identity may be judged by heteronormative social actors. As excerpt (9) illustrates:

> *(9) Thad (California): You are looked down upon by people who don't accept you, by other members of your larger community who wonder why you are acting like that when you have a penis between your legs. It's negative for the non gay community and it stereotypes the rest of us who aren't [campy] and gives a misperception to the rest of the world that we are all like that.*

As excerpt (9) asserts, the subversive nature of camp, as an ongoing dialog on the constraints of heteronormativity, positions its emergence as deviant in the eyes of mainstream society. Camp's ability to question the status quo is, ironically, one of the very reasons for continued judgment and scrutiny by non-members (i.e., heteronormative social actors). In excerpt (9), what we see is a clear construction of camp, in this participant's view, as associated with femininity, which would be a locus of judgment by heteronormative members of society. In this way, camp may be simultaneously positive and negative, for varied reasons and for various identities within and external to the U.S. queer community.

There are also those who envision camp as inhabiting a sort of middle ground, where both positive and negative aspects coexist simultaneously within its usage. As excerpt (10) below illustrates, camp provides, on the one hand, humorous relief and the ability to take ownership over de-masculinizing stereotypes imposed upon U.S. gay men by the constraints of

hegemonic masculinity, and on the other hand is seen as potentially exhausting and dispreferred when overused and abused as an interactional tool.

> **(10) Matt (New York)**: *It can be funny and humorous in small doses. It can also serve to take ownership of the stereotype that gay men are overly feminine. Used too often it can become tiresome.*

In excerpt (11), again the notion of camp as an internal form of amusement emerges as a positive aspects, but this amusing quality is juxtaposed with an awareness of camp's envisioning as foreign to larger cultural conceptions of aesthetic taste and acceptability, often becoming the tool of further marginalization of queer social actors by oppositional *right wing & religious zealots*. Excerpt (12) affirms this conceptualization in that camp usage is positioned as positive for in-group community building, while negative with regard to how the outside (i.e., heteronormative) world views U.S. gay men's comportment (i.e., *frivolous and shallow*).

> **(11) Jordan (California)**: *It's both positive and negative. I see it as positive for people to have fun and let their hair down, but negative when people take it and use it against us (usually the right wing and religious zealots…same thing usually).*

> **(12) Bailey (Georgia)**: *It's a little of both. It is positive in the humor it provides and the sense of community it builds. But to the outside world it can make the gay community look frivolous or shallow.*

Importantly, in excerpt (13) below, camp's dual nature is further explored for both its ability to allow for self-expression (a positive) and its ability to over-essentialize queer taste and behavior (a negative).

(13) Griffin (Georgia): I think that it is a positive feature in that it is just one more interesting way that people can express themselves. I don't like it as a stereotype or when anyone, inside or outside the community, thinks that it is mandatory or somehow a naturalized part of a gay identity.

Envisioning camp as natural to queer subjectivity thus runs the risk of reducing queer experience to a shared common denominator, one premised upon subversiveness in relation to heteronormative cultural constraints. The sentiments within excerpt (13) thus importantly point out that while camp is often envisioned as a positive aspect of the queer lifeworld, forced identification with its use can in turn mask individuality through characterizations which produce camp as a *naturalized part of gay identity*. This further serves to position camp as a constructed, rather than natural, lifeworld aspect, whereby the linguistic articulation discussed in earlier analyses are strengthened as a means of achieving this construction.

What each of these perspectives demonstrates is that camp can be conceived of as both positive and negative within the same breath. It has the ability to allow for an alternative vision of the world, though that vision should not be seen as representative of all U.S. gay men's lived experiences. Likewise, as a counter-discourse and aesthetic outlook, camp has the capacity to challenge normativity by unveiling, deconstructing, and contesting normative sociocultural structure through processes of inversion. Ironically, it is this very counter-discursive nature that simultaneously plays an active role in the processes of continued marginalization experienced by queer subjectivities, as out-group (and thus heteronormative mainstream society) is positioned as unaccepting of camp aesthetic orientations. Camp thus emerges, as the previous analyses in this dissertation have shown, as a type of dual-edged sword, on the one hand positive and on the other negative, with some room remaining for middle ground. Nevertheless, camp's importance,

as demonstrated through these participant ideologies, cannot be underestimated. There is something about the nature of camp within interaction that is, on the one hand, functional and, on the other, socio-politically motivated. As such, in the remainder of these analyses I attempt to deconstruct and better understand some of the specific functional capacities identified by participants themselves.

Functional Capacities of Camp in Talk-in-interaction

When queried about the functional capacities of camp as a feature of U.S. gay men's talk-in-interaction, a range of different responses was offered. The following represent dominant perspectives featured throughout the larger data set, and as such offer a cohesive image of camp as it is used as a communicative tool from the perspective of the interactants themselves.

Camp as a Discourse of Identification

Excerpt (14) explicitly marks camp aesthetic usages within interaction as a way of establishing *gay cultural identification*. Importantly, the contribution in (14) illustrates how camp's very usage indexes a sense of shared gayness, where social settings become sites of establishing commonality through shared camp-based interactional practice.

> *(14) Henry (Florida): It is gay cultural identification. In the social setting, it is*
>
> *used as a way of identification among gay males.*

Similarly, the information provided in the response offered in excerpt (15) positions camp within interaction as a means by which U.S. gay men display *a marker of our shared gay identity*. Importantly, excerpt (15) also illustrates how the simultaneous conveyance of identity is in turn accompanied by a corresponding sense of discourse through linguistic practice, where camp usage can be envisioned as a code through which interaction and displays of shared queer identity come into existence.

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(15) Griffin (Georgia): I think that we sometimes use it as a marker of our

shared gay identities. It's kind of like working with a metalanguage with several

layers of coding...you communicate identity and information at the same time, or

information and attitude/stance at the same time.

Expanding upon the notion of camp as a functional component of communicative interchange,

excerpts (16), (17), and (18) further explore camp for its practical linguistic usages.

(16) Jackson (California): It's how we interact ... the tone and word choices are

our language

(17) Heath (Georgia): Camp is a means of communication among gay men. It is a

"language" unique to our community.

(18) Bailey (Georgia): Camp and references to camp serve as an inside joke and

conversational shortcut for many gay men.

In (16), it is conceived of as, in essence, the way in which *we interact*, where *tone* and *word*

choice play an active role in how camp comes into interactionally being. This is important

because, as the previous chapter on camp humor argued, *word choice* plays an essential role in

the field of camp imagery that is invoked within interactive settings. Likewise, *tone*, and more

generally the prosodic features of camp invocation, have also been identified in the previous

analyses through the examination of camp referencing, where intertextual connections to camp-

based sources stem in large part from the prosodic connections, and thus ability to identify said

connections, as stemming from pretexting camp sources. In excerpt (17), camp is conceived of

specifically as a discourse unto itself through its conceptualization as a *means of communication*

that constitutes a *language unique to our community.* In excerpt (18), importantly, camp is

positioned as a type of *inside joke and conversational shortcut for many gay men*, which implies

that membership to and one's ability to apply within interaction camp aesthetic orientations produces a unifying effect with regard to identity. To 'get' it, so to speak, implies being a part of the 'inside' group. As such, camp is positioned as a means through which U.S. gay male social actors actively coalesce around shared linguistic practice derived from camp aesthetic orientations. Such coalescence in turn offers not only a shared sense of discursive practice, but also a means by which shared identity can be articulated through linguistic interchange.

As excerpt (19) below illustrates, such usages in turn allow individual social actors to notice, or recognize shared identity in others through the language choices made. Excerpt (19) pinpoints the act of using camp aesthetics *to show off and perform* as a way of identifying other gay men within interaction. From this identification through discourse, through a code that is *particular to them*, camp aesthetics emerges as an insightful form of linguistic interplay that both establishes shared linguistic practice and a shared sense of queer identity among U.S. gay men.

> *(19) Thad (California): It gives the "girls" a chance to show their stuff and*
>
> *perform; it makes gay men easier to identify and is a form of communication that*
>
> *is particular to them.*

It is thus in part through linguistic displays of camp that U.S. gay male social actors are able to assess and be assessed by others, where one's queerness can be displayed for other queers to perceive and act upon its presence. Through such conceptualizations, linguistic manifestations of camp therefore emerge as a type of discourse of identification, where one's ability to perceive campiness in others provides a means of perceiving shared commonality and lived experience.

Camp as a Covert Code

Though the previous section explored camp as a shared code that comprises, in part, a discourse of identification, it is equally important to note that U.S. gay men also envision camp

as a means of covert communication. Explorations of U.S. gay men's covert communication have been treated at length, most prominently in the work of Leap (1996, 1999), in which he eloquently illustrates queer talk to be a form of cooperative discourses, centered around shared understandings of the world through queer experience. However, with the exception of Barrett's (1999) work on drag performance, the notion of camp as an interactive practice has gone virtually unexplored as a discursive resource within unfolding, real-time interactions among gay men. With this understanding, the perspective that I mean to demonstrate is one in which camp can be utilized within interaction as a way for U.S. gay male social actors, particularly in the co-presence of heterosexuals, to carve out discursive space within discursive space, establishing commonality through one's ability to perceive what is unperceivable by all. Excerpt (20) below eloquently articulates this point.

> *(20) Glen (Florida): When we use camp in our community, it can be almost a*
>
> *secret code. It can bind us together. Example: 6 friends are out for an evening. 2*
>
> *happen to be gay men. Campy humor or references can act as the "inside jokes"*
>
> *for the minority gay men in a group of diverse friends, providing them with a link*
>
> *and a bond to one another, a sense of comfort.*

Similarly, the use of camp emerges as a way of announcing without announcing, of letting others know that you are different without actually saying that you are different. In essence, the use of camp imagery and aesthetics within interaction can covertly acts as an informal form of coming out to heterosexual co-participants. Excerpt (21) below illustrates how the covert function occurs within such settings.

> *(21) Heath (Georgia): Camp is a way to gain acceptance in uncomfortable*
>
> *situations by making people laugh. This is especially useful when gay men are in*

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within a group of heterosexuals, or a group of unknown people, because it is a

way of breaking the ice and outing yourself without having to come right out and

say it.

As with the talk of any sociocultural group, there are always distinctive features associated specifically with that group's interactions. What the contributions of the participants in (20) and (21) demonstrate is that for U.S. gay men the same processes are at work. However, for this group, as opposed to others, it is camp aesthetic orientations that are identified as salient (as opposed to say, African American Vernacular English amongst African American social actors). Camp, in this way, emerges as a covert code to be used for specific identification purposes, used at times as a means of secretly signaling one's gayness to other gays, and at other times as way of announcing one's gayness to non-gay groups.

Excerpt (22) below further develops the notion of camp as secret code, where insider information is transmitted through the composition and underlying semantic meaning of the camp-based imagery in question. As (22) demonstrates, the strategic use of subcultural schema carries with it underlying information that can only be processed if one understands the camp referent sources in play.

(22) Griffin (Georgia): Camp is kind of like a secret code, and it might allow for

covert transmission of information. Or possibly more efficient communication

between users since certain things might carry greater meaning than expected --

I'm thinking about using movie quotes or calling someone a character from a

movie. If I reference Steel Magnolias, I'm referencing a lot of cultural

information. If I call you "Ouiser," that's saying a lot.

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In this example, the use of the name "*Ousier*" (which will be elusive to some of my readers), implies a crotchety and unpleasant nature to one's disposition, where the recipient of such a name is framed in a negative light. In essence, the recipient of such a name, and the ramifications of such labeling, can only be understood through one's ability to process the character and imagery of the 1989 film *Steel Magnolias*, and in particular of the character portrayal of *Ousier* by actress Shirley MacLaine (who is heralded as an example of camp iconography within film). As such, camp-based linguistic practice becomes a covert manner in which in-group participants display information without overtly displaying what that information necessarily means; yet within queer social settings, such information would be more easily accessible and decoded.

Camp as Humor and Amusement

As was previously discussed in the chapter on camp humor, the humorous aspects of camp play an important role in its usage within interactive settings. As excerpt (23) illustrates, the mere use of camp injects humor into the interaction, allowing participants to partake in a shared sense of enjoyment. However, as excerpt (24) cautions, this humor may be adequately described as a preference for those who are more into the 'scene', meaning the typified example of gay life. Nevertheless, camp is still seen as playing a *significant role since it's a source of humor and amusement,* through which U.S. gay men share in their experiences of the world around them. This is affirmed in excerpt (25) where camp is positioned as a form of humor that, in essence, plays an active role in the erasure of sociocultural difference, thereby positioning itself as a form of aesthetic convergence amongst individuals who are simultaneously diverse from within (whereas they are characterized as a cohesive other through the lens of heteronormativity). As excerpt (26) asserts, camp humor provides amusement in life to those

that coalesce around camp aesthetics to form an *inner circle*, demonstrating the humorous effects of camp's usage as an important aspect for queer aesthetic expression, and as a functional linguistic component that plays an active role in the establishment of sociocultural commonality.

> *(23) Dave (New York): By using camp, humor will be interjected into the interactions and the group will enjoy the experience.*

> *(24) Dean (California): For groups that are more into the "scene", camp plays a more significant role since it's a source of humor and amusement.*

> *(25) James (New York): Camp makes everyone laugh and come together regardless of personal differences.*

> *(26) Sean (Florida): I believe camp humor helps us to see amusement in life and gives us our own inner circle.*

It is equally important to keep in mind, however, that the use of camp humor, as a functional aspect of U.S. gay men's talk, is always framed within a larger sociocultural context of heteronormativity. Though this aspect will be explored in more depth below (in its own functional subsection), it is worthy of mention at this point because participants explicitly link such framings to their role in the constitution of interactional humor. As excerpt (27) below illustrates, camp in the form of humor allows gay men to *pass the time* and to *forget about the world's prejudices*. Likewise, as excerpt (28) notes, queer social actors are different and distinct from heteronormative social actors, often through how the world is filtered, perceived, and received. Camp humor represents a way of perceiving the world that is *private* to U.S. queer populations, and thus which constitutes a specific way of seeing the world that is queer through its ability to *build a sense of community* out of a particular aesthetic outlook on life. In essence, as excerpt (28) so eloquently puts it, camp humor *provides a needed release through humor in a*

world that humors us little, referring implicitly to the notion of seeing humor in one's positioning as marginal and subjugated within dominate sociocultural frameworks.

> *(27) Taylor (Georgia): Being campy is always a good and funny way to pass the time, and forget about the world's prejudices.*

> *(28) Bailey (Georgia): Camp humor provides several things to the gay community. It is something we "get" that mainstream world often does not so it is private to us and helps build a sense of community. It provides a needed release through humor in a world that humors us little.*

In short, camp humor represents not only a way of establishing commonality through aesthetic preference, but also a way of reflexively seeing oneself in relation to normative social settings and constraints.

Camp as a Mitigator of Seriousness

A commonly accepted feature within existing literature on camp aesthetics resides in camp's capacity to mitigate degrees of seriousness. This is seen to result from camp's over-the-top, excessive nature, which in turn flips seriousness on its head through processes of inversion resulting from camp's underlying reliance on irony. Importantly, as the excerpts below illustrate, it is not simply within the confines of academia that such assertions hold weight; rather, it is also in the minds of individual social actors within interactive scenes. This is important because it demonstrates how camp inversion through irony, and its resulting capacity to transform the serious into the humorous through mitigation, is cognitively recognized within lay perspectives as a functional capacity of camp within interaction. As excerpts (29), (30), (31), and (32) all illustrate, camp within interaction echoes the analytic findings of Sontag (1999 [1964]) in that its

use has the ability to *lighten up a tense atmosphere*, *defuse an argument*, *defuse a serious conversation*, or *avoid or circumvent a serious issue*.

> **(29) Paul (New York)**: *Camp lightens up a tense atmosphere.*

> **(30) Barrett (New York)**: *Camp defuses an argument or punctuates a point.*

> **(31) Lloyd (New York)**: *Camp helps defuse serious conversations so they can be easier to talk about.*

> **(32) Raymond (California)**: *Camp is a way of avoiding or circumventing a serious issue.*

As excerpt (33) below adds, camp provides a means through which *heavy* or *awkward* situations may be more successfully navigated within talk-in-interaction. But more importantly, the contribution in (33) explicitly positions this mitigating property of camp as *a very good tool in communication*, marking its use as a practical strategy that can be drawn upon in discourse to perform specific interactional objectives.

> **(33) Glen (Florida)**: *Camp can be used to keep a heavy situation light or to cut through an awkward moment. Camp, correctly used, can be a very good tool in communication.*

From these participant perspectives, camp's capacity to act as a mitigator for serious content matter within conversational interchanges is substantiated. Moreover, these contributions demonstrate how previous findings on camp, stemming from academic explorations, are not so far removed from how lay perspectives envision camp aesthetics as actually functioning within real-world experiences. The issue of mitigation, and of camps ability to actively function in such a capacity, thus becomes a site of theoretical and practical convergence.

Camp as a Regulator of Internal Power

Though the analyses to this point have presented camp as a harmonious aspect of U.S. gay men's talk, it is equally important to understand that its use also carries with it hierarchical asymmetries. What this statement means is that there will always be someone who is better than the rest at invoking campiness and applying it within interaction, and this skill does not go unnoticed by participant members. Indeed, as excerpt (34) below illustrates, camp marks the *quick thinking and witty* within the social setting. This is important because being marked as proficient with regard to camp often results in prolonged talk time, and thus in domination of group interactions. Further, as excerpt (35) points out, one's ability to perform with regard to camp also facilitates and supports one's capacity to be *bitchy* with others. It thus stands to reason that the more adept one is at utilizing camp within interaction, the more one dominates the talk, and in turn carries the authority to act in a domineering manner towards others (often through, as stated, one's capacity to be *bitchy*, which may be challenged when others are equally adept at being *bitchy*, but which may go unchallenged by those who are less adept, thus yielding a complex array of power dynamics based on camp use). We saw a prime example of this earlier in the conversation concerning actress Ann Heche, where Bailey outwits Heath's attempt to correct his pop culture knowledge after misspeaking. More covert forms of bitchiness might also be identified in instances such as the one within the chapter on referencing, in which multiple participants collaborate in producing an extended referencing turn using the voice of Jerry Blank from the *Comedy Central* show *Strangers with Candy*. In this example, however, various participants are in essence silenced through their lack of ability to participate in such a quick-natured bout of linguistic play, one that is completely dependent upon one's ability to access

camp aesthetic knowledge at a moment's notice. Bitchiness, in this case, is done in a much more subtle manner, through nuanced forms of exclusion.

> **(34) Barrett (New York)**: *It identifies the quick thinking and witty.*

> **(35) Drake (New York)**: *It is used to be funny, and more importantly, bitchy.*

As excerpt (36) below asserts, the usage of camp within interaction is overtly linked to displays of power for participants, where less *competent* members yield interactive power to more competent members through their inability to perform at equal standards.

> **(36) James (New York)**: *Camp often leads to a presumed assertion of power over others in the same group. Mostly in the "it's going to be a bumpy night" aspect you feel when you aren't as competent.*

Finally, in excerpt (37), we see that participants actively recognize camp as potentially constitutive of in-group *hierarchy*, where the participant himself overtly identifies such asymmetrical positioning as a resulting effect of camp usage.

> **(37) Nick (New York)**: *Camp can ebb and flow as needed to validate one's point in a conversation or even one's position in the group's hierarchy (and all gatherings will have a hierarchy).*

From these excerpts it becomes clear that camp usage within interaction is not always seen as a positive aspect with regard to social standing. Indeed, the ability that a participant has to adequately select and apply camp aesthetic orientations within interaction has a direct result on one's social standing and resulting talk time, not to mention one's face when one falls prey to 'bitchiness'. Camp thus emerges as a functional component that can shape the talk in ways that both facilitate and constrain individual contributions, positioning its use as an interactional feature with potentially long-ranging and long-standing social ramifications participant members.

Camp as a Means for Bonding

Though camp may be seen as potentially divisive given its ability to produce in-group hierarchical structure, often at the expense of less competent members, it is also simultaneously envisioned as a strategy for building closeness through bonding. As excerpts (38), (39), and (40) below explicitly state, camp is envisioned as a way of creating bonds and of performing the work of bonding within interaction.

> *(38) Dave (New York): It's used as a common interest that serves to bond the LGBTQ community.*
>
> *(39) Sean (Florida): I think it helps people to bond as it drives laughter and a sense of ease.*
>
> *(40) Dean (California): As with humor, camp might serve as an element in conversation that can bring people together; a common factor that otherwise unfamiliar parties might use as a method of relating to one another. A common bond, so to speak.*

As excerpt (40) above illustrates, camp becomes a way in which *otherwise unfamiliar parties* can relate to one another. It thereby becomes a tool for the establishment of commonality, which in turn generates discursive opportunities for experiences of bonding through commonality. This sentiment is echoed in excerpt (41) below, one's ability to perform using camp within interaction, through one's ability to *camp it up in some way, shape or form*, is linked to one's ability to connect with others on some level.

> *(41) Griffin (Georgia): One idea that comes to mind is bonding. It is really a big thing to be able to camp it up in some way, shape or form.*

In excerpt (42) below, camp is further marked as an aesthetic that is to some degree or another shared within U.S. gay men's experience, thus constituting a lifeworld feature around which similarity may be derived. Interestingly, excerpt (42) also establishes camp as a way of building a shared sense of history. It is in this way, where commonality is formed through a shared aesthetic outlook on life, around which participant members are thus able to coalesce in their interests and values, building commonality where none superficially exists with the exception of sexual identity. Camp thus provides a means for disparate social actors to recognize in each other similarity, and for that similarity to in turn be utilized as a means for bonding through common experience.

> *(42) Bailey (Georgia): I think camp often helps create a sense of bonding*
>
> *amongst members of the gay community since it is something we share. It brings*
>
> *disparate people together which helps build the community. It facilitates getting*
>
> *to know new people and conversation. It builds a shared "history" for a*
>
> *community whose history is often hidden.*

Camp, through the perspectives offered in these examples, is thus positioned as one of the many means by which individual U.S. gay men enter into bonding with one another. Camp is thus situated as a practical, and highly functional, means through which queer notions of community come into being.

Camp as a Means of Belonging

Just as camp provides a locus for participant bonding, so too does it require continued maintenance of group constitution and identity. What this means is that once members bond over their commonality (which is in part achieved by shared camp aesthetic orientations), so too do they have to maintain their common bonds. This maintenance is in part achieved through the

sense of ongoing belonging that results from continued camp usage. As excerpt (43) illustrates, camp provides an ongoing outlet for queer social actors to see and experience the world in a manner that diverges from heteronormative identities. In this way, queer social actors experience the world in a way that, as excerpt (44) asserts, *strengthens commonality* as a sociocultural group unto itself, a group that has and continues to experience the world in different ways from mainstream social actors. The continued use of camp aesthetics, and their positioning as important to social interaction, is thus a way in which participant members continually reaffirm and reinforce their belonging to this divergent lived experience.

> *(43) Jackson (California): Camp brings individuals together through*
>
> *understanding - we relate by seeing the world in a way that heterosexuals don't.*
>
> *(44) Bailey (Georgia): It [camp] builds a sense of connection amongst a group. It*
>
> *strengthens commonalities.*

As excerpt (45) affirms, camp becomes a means by which U.S. gay men are brought closer together through time and space, resulting in a feeling of belonging in that participant members envision themselves as *part of a group*.

> *(45) Joe (NY): Camp's a way to bring people closer together by providing a*
>
> *common ground for interaction and fun. It helps them feel like they are part of a*
>
> *group.*

In essence, as excerpt (46) overtly argues, camp explicitly performs a functional role in the ongoing constitution of community in that it provides a means by which participant members can continuously display belonging.

> *(46) Henry (Florida): Camp provides a gay man with a feeling of being part of a*
>
> *group. It provides a feeling of belonging.*

Taken as a cohesive portrait, excerpts (43) through (46) show that camp functions not only as a means for establishing bonds (as the previous subsection contends), but also as a means by which members who have already sought out and established in-group membership might actively display their ongoing affiliation with, and thus their sense of belonging to, a sense of U.S. gay male community.

Camp as a Counter Discourse

U.S. gay men actively envision camp aesthetics as performing larger sociopolitical critiques. This is important because the political nature of camp-based expression can easily be lost or overlooked as a byproduct of academic pursuits and agendas, where one might question the actual relevance of such assertions as they pertain to the day-to-day interactions of social actors themselves. Yet the excerpts included below demonstrate that, across social group settings, participants commonly recognize and make sense of camp's potential as an ongoing discursive feature which challenges heteronormative society and the resulting social constraints that accompany it. As excerpt (47) asserts, the use of camp, or more importantly the process of inversion and contestation of societal norms, is linked to other groups seen as divergent from social norms, here with the example being the hipster/urban community.

> *(47) Dean (California): To me, camp isn't really unique to the LGBTQ*
>
> *community. While it certainly exists there, I would argue that it is equally extant*
>
> *in the hipster/urban community, at least as far as fashion and 'being alternative'*
>
> *is concerned. Here it's a rejection of the mainstream and of the establishment.*

While openly associating camp with LGBTQ lived experience, this excerpt also serves to remind us that camp aesthetics, though commonly associated with queer subjectivity, are not the sole property of LGBTQ people. But more importantly, what this excerpt demonstrates is that camp

aesthetics in and of themselves represent an ongoing discourse in contestation to heteronormative expectations, as can also be seen in various other marginal communities, such as the hipster community, which also rejects a host of mainstream societal values.

In except (48) below, the sentiment of a form of contestation against dominant societal constraints is overtly reiterated, in that camp is envisioned as a means by which queer social actors *laugh at the very topics that have suppressed us*, whereby it becomes a *coping mechanism* for lived experience that is seen as marginal, as less than, and as soundly subjugated.

> *(48) Jackson (California): It allows us to laugh at the very topics that have suppressed us. It's a way to soften the blow of adversity. Very important – it's a coping mechanism.*

The notion of camp as a coping mechanism against the sociocultural domination of heteronormativity is further alluded to in excerpt (49) below, where camp usage is seen as a way of *basically laughing at ourselves before they [straight people] have a chance to laugh at us.* In this way camp is again positioned as a *defense mechanism* for *deflecting the negativity around us*, which is in essence the result of heteronormativity's unwillingness to allow for divergent sexual (among others) experiences.

> *(49) Heath (Georgia): Camp is like the native language of the LGBTQ community. It is a way of communicating that is uniquely our own. It is also one of the "defense mechanisms" we developed as a means of coping in a straight world. Acting flamboyant and using our humor is a way of deflecting the negativity around us… basically laughing at ourselves before they have a chance to laugh at us.*

Finally, in excerpt (50) below, camp is overtly recognized for its ongoing capacity to challenge the status quo, which is the sociocultural agenda of restrictive compulsory heterosexuality. As this excerpt contents, camp *continues a dialogue* with regard to gendered, and by extension sexual, identities as they pertain to normative expectations.

> **(50) Matt (New York):** *it continues a dialogue of the contrast between masculinity and femininity.*

As these examples demonstrate, camp is equally recognized for its sociopolitical implications amongst laypeople themselves. This functional capacity in turn supports ongoing theoretical assertions of camp as a socio-politically motivated construct, and in turn brings the sociopolitical fight back to its roots as everyday men maintain within them a sense of camp's long-ranging political and cultural importance.

Discussion

What is most important from these participant perspectives is that the analyses from the previous chapters are, for the most part, substantiated not only from an analytic perspective, but also from a layperson's perspective. This is crucial to the importance of this work in that it demonstrates that there is an underlying knowledge base that is more or less shared among members both within and across sites, and that this shared knowledge in turn yields common understandings with regard to camp's functionality within the everyday lives and lived experiences of U.S. gay men.

The emic perspectives presented in this chapter truly convey that camp is a very real, though materially intangible, construct within processes of queer identity formation and social organization. One's ability to recognize and produce camp within interaction has very real implications for one social standing within the group itself, while also showing social

implications towards dominant sociocultural constructs which perpetuate queer subjugation (in this case heteronormativity). In essence, what we understand from these perspectives is not simply what participant members think with regards to camp, but also how they see camp as functioning within interactive practices. In short, the ideological perspectives presented in this chapter serve to place analytic agency within the hands of those who actively use camp within their day-to-day lives. Camp, in this way, is envisioned as a functional tool within interaction, one which carries with it both micro and macro level implications relevant to the social standing of U.S. gay men at all interaction stages.

To conclude, the findings of this chapter serve to demonstrate how camp, in essence, becomes a means for establishing and maintaining a sense of community. It provides interactants with humor, with a way of dealing with serious subject matter, with a means for identification, for bonding, and for belonging, all the while allowing queer subjectivities a voice in opposition to dominant sociocultural constraints that seek to regulate queer agency. In essence, camp is both reflective and constitutive of a larger notion of queer community, not only for its ability to bind seemingly diverse identities and populations, but also in its capacity to act as a sociolinguistic strategy with functional properties that work towards collective benefit.

CHAPTER 9

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

Discussion: A Role for Camp as Linguistic Practice

As I began to explore the conversations of U.S. gay men in their casual friendship groupings across the United States, I entered my work knowing that camp aesthetics played a role within talk, but that the specifics of that role were as of yet elusive and underexplored within existing research. Indeed, most of what had been said with regard to camp, was constructed through explorations of literature, film, and theater, portraying camp as a counter-cultural voice with respect to heteronormativity, and positioning it more or less as a cultural artifact with little overt relation to everyday lived experiences and practices. What the data and analyses of this dissertation show, conversely, is that camp, for U.S. gay men, is much more than a purely aesthetic way of seeing the world and one's positioning within it. In fact, camp, through the various explorations that have been presented in the previous five data chapters, becomes an aspect of talk itself, pragmatically impacting the unfolding sequence of talk and as a result the meaning generated within queer discursive space. In essence, what these analyses demonstrate is that camp aesthetics and pop camp culture are in fact a means through which aspects of interactional functionality are achieved among U.S. gay males in their casual friendship groups. Camp thus presents itself as an important aspect of the linguistic practices and cultural representations of queer subjectivity within the United States.

Conversely, camp and pop-camp culture, as an interactional accomplishment within social engagement, should not be understood as an intrinsic property of all U.S. gay male interactions. Rather, it should be viewed as a *normative process* through which speakers and

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hearers coalesce, and whereby aspects of queer subjectivity may be expressed and understood. But what exactly does it mean to state that the usage of camp and pop-camp cultural schema results in normative interactional practices? The following example sheds some light on this question.

Recently, *People Magazine*'s online exploration of the contestants of *RuPaul's Drag Race*, an American LGBTQ-oriented reality show premised upon the search for America's next drag superstar, spoke of Pandora Boxx's witty style and repertoire (one of the drag queen contestants who was very much adept at utilizing camp aesthetics within her own interactional style) as "a part of old world drag esthetic," stating that "she's very smart and knows her pop culture." We can deduce two major implications from this assessment: a) that there is a concept and recognition of camp aesthetics as a possible feature of U.S. queer interactive practices, and b) that Pandora Boxx is up to speed on those aesthetics, and by extension the culture transmitted through their usage, here linking his appeal to queer social actors to a larger knowledge that he carries of pop culture, which he overtly projects through his self-expression. Though this is evidence in favor of camp aesthetics and pop culture as meaningful aspects of queer lived experiences, it would, still at this point, be highly presumptuous to assume that simply being gay means that one must affiliate with and participate in the use of camp aesthetics and popular culture within interaction. This is especially true given that the abovementioned example stems from an assessment of a drag performer, an identity commonly associated with camp aestheticism. And yet, despite this statement, there does seem to be something salient regarding its presence within U.S. gay culture, and by extension the interactions which occur within this culture. For example, in a testimonial style excerpt from a documentary on gay men and

masculinity entitled *The Butch Factor*,[6] one stereotypically hetero-normatively-appearing masculine gay man of blue-collar means professes that he does not affiliate with pop culture (and the implied camp aesthetics that accompany pop culture) as most gay men do. Yet, in doing so he simultaneously demonstrates both a recognition of, and a stance of opposition to, camp's hegemony within a broader U.S. gay life world. Though he does not actively affiliate with its usage, what his words show is that he recognizes pop-culture as a prominent aspect of the American gay male experience, and as a result supports its inclusion as an important aspect of gay identity, including those gay identities that are more dissociated from its usage in everyday life. With this understanding, we see that there is something about the nature of camp aesthetics, and in particular camp aesthetics as they pertain to contemporary popular culture, which is widely recognized as a facet of both the broader U.S. gay male experience and of U.S. gay men's identities. We can therefore make the claim that what camp represents, for U.S. gay men, is a normative process of communicative coalescence, meaning that from a queer-normative perspective, the use of camp aesthetics and pop-camp culture would be seen as a default means of achieving interactional like-mindedness, shared experience, commonality, and ultimately communicative meaning.

Ironically, and importantly given camp's ironizing capacities, the very act of situating camp as normative in turn results in camp's positioning as a hegemonic queer interactional construct in and of itself. In holding such a position sociocultural interactions are not only influenced by camp, but become interpreted through its presence or absence. What this means is that using camp within U.S. gay men's interactions (i.e., presence) essentially indexes an affiliation with both homonormative in-group identities and sociocultural practices. Conversely,

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[6] From Christopher Hines' (2009) documentary, *The Butch Factor*.

non-use of camp (i.e., absence) marks the discourse in ways that deviate from homonormative expectations, where an implied disalignment is constructed in part through what is absent in the talk of social actors. Referring back to the aforementioned documentary, what we see is that this man, the one who openly disaffiliates with the dominance of camp aesthetics and pop-camp culture, represents a voice of absence. In positioning himself this way, he goes counter current to homonormative practice, and thus to what it means to be queer in the U.S. context, at least with regard to his outward appearance and projection. This is an interesting statement because it is this man, in the film, that superficially represents the least gay archetype within the documentary, being presented as an electrician who works outdoors and a gay man who is an avid American football player. At the same time, the polar opposite participants in this documentary (e.g., those that dress and comport themselves in a less hegemonically masculine manner) are those that seemingly represent the archetype of the stereotypical gay man (e.g., those who are more stereotypically effeminate in their outward appearance and projection). The man who disaffiliates, in today's queer lifeworld, still represents a minority with respect to larger heteronormative perceptions of what it means to be a gay man, but this perception is changing, as the documentary clearly shows. The more queer people are understood by hetero social actors, the more their perceptions of gay men as "flaming queens" fades into the background. With understanding there indeed comes new insight, but traditional perceptions of what it means to be gay have existed and been perpetuated for multiple reasons. On the one hand it was a way for heterosexuals to other queer subjectivities, but from a queer perspective it was a way of unifying a subversive sexual minority into a cohesive sociocultural community, one partially constituted through shared aesthetic orientations. This is important when we think of camp as a hegemonic normative process within queer interactive practices because, while representing a counter-

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hegemonic voice in relation to heteronormative discourses and discursive practices, camp and pop-camp culture unwittingly, and counter-intuitively, reproduce the very processes of hegemony they in part challenge with regard to dominant cultural traditions. In other words, the very discourse that was created to challenge dominant discourses becomes itself a dominant discourse within the sphere of queer lived experience, where non-use within interaction becomes itself a means of challenging the subcultural status quo, so to speak. As perceptions change, and as queer archetypes expand through further acceptance, it is worth pondering whether camp aesthetics, and in turn the linguistic practices that draw from such imagery, will as a result fade into the background as their ironizing functionality is no longer necessary or needed. But this is a question for a future that has not yet arrived. As for today it seems as though camp, even within the community itself, can never escape the ironizing ramifications of its own irony, and this may be to the sociocultural detriment of participant members who do not readily fit the queer mold.

The analyses provided within this larger project, as a result, further what we know about camp and its role within queer lived experience because we see in the analyses that camp's presence or absence carries with it certain sociocultural implications, both within the friendship groups themselves and in how they are viewed by those exterior to them. With regard to how queer social actors are depicted by mainstream society, we are seen as abnormal, as aberrations, as in defiance of the social order. Camp aesthetics, as an irony producing form of reality that makes its way into interactional settings viewed by others, thus plays a role in how dominant views of U.S. queer subjectivities are constructed. For example, a traditional argument against queer public spaces, for example gay pride celebrations, has been that there is overt and explicit depictions of sexuality, depictions of gender non-conformity, and general inappropriate behavior

(to name a few) that in turn will have a negative impact and influence on society's youth. In essence, what is ridiculed by heteronormative society is in fact the presence of a camp aesthetic that seeks to undermine and directly challenge conceptualizations of what it means to be a 'normal' member of American society. Camp and campiness thus become one of the many means through which queer social actors challenge the status quo, all the while being used by heteronormative social actors in turn to point out that queer people are indeed deviant, and not like themselves. From this thus ensues a circular cycle, at once beneficial and detrimental, through which queer voices are heard, be it for better or worse. But even more important is the fact that these sociopolitical implications, of camp as a counter voice to dominant discourses, do not stop when the gay pride parade ends. They carry with us into everyday life, into how we interact both with one another and with others outside of our group. It is through this understanding, of camp's functional role within moment-to-moment lifeworld scenes, that scholars must begin to envision camp as an important concept in understanding everyday lived experiences and interactional practices, because just as it acts as a voice against oppression for the community as a whole, so too does it seep into the spoken word of talk-in-interaction, and thus into the day-to-day interactions with both in-group and out-group members. These micro level interactions thus become loci for continued challenges towards dominant discourses, even in the most mundane of situations and scenarios, where the seemingly innocuous is in fact anything but.

What do we stand to lose as U.S. queer subjectivities become more accepted by dominant heteronormative society? As the research in this dissertation shows, the use of camp within interaction generates rich talk that is unique in both its produced form and in its interactional implications. As U.S. queer identities become more and more integrated with mainstream

society (in ways that move beyond the closet), it stands to reason that the need for camp may in turn diminish. This would in fact be a shame given its richness. But just as it stands a chance of diminishing, so too does it stand a chance of growing beyond the bounds of queer subjectivity. Indeed, in today's pop cultural society, the notion of camp and of campy films has become more recognizable and salient to non-queer groups. Recent work on film criticism (Feil 2005) even goes so far as to suggest that the horror genre, as well as the 'end-of-the-world-catastrophe' genre, can be read as camp, encompassing major blockbuster films, and thus encompassing elements of mainstream lived experience and aesthetic orientations. What becomes clear is that, camp, as an aesthetic, has been evolving, and continues to do so. And as society continues shifting, to a place where queer subjectivities are more readily accepted, it will indeed be interesting to see where this will lead us and where it will lead queer interactional practices.

As we ponder the future of camp, both as a salient feature of U.S. queer experientiality, and as a meaningful aspect of U.S. gay men's talk-in-interaction, we are thus left to wonder how the community will be shaped in the years to come. Camp, through processes of socialization, has been and continues to be learned and passed along from queer generation to generation through transmittance from those more established in the community to newcomers as they enter U.S. queer life (see Leap 1999 for an examination of how camp aesthetics have been articulated in gay men's monologic recollections, and the role that these articulations have played in U.S. gay men's socialization processes). Indeed, when we think of socialization in the traditional sense, we envision young children learning how to be active and productive members of their society, all the while following the behavioral norms set forth through their home culture. The work of Ochs (1988), which examined Samoan children's socialization into gendered ways of interacting, as well as Goodwin (1990), which examined how young African American children

create social organization through particular sociocultural ways of interacting, are both prime examples of how children are socialized into ways of being, and thus into ways of being 'legitimate' members of a given culture and society. Yet for U.S. gay men, this socialization process takes place later in life. In fact, for most gay men in the U.S., there is no existing queer social network or cultural structure in the early developmental years. It is through adulthood, and thus through the opportunity to find and explore one's own identity, that queer sociality is encountered and in most cases appropriated. A vital part of the sociohistorical framework shaping this appropriation has consisted of young gay men leaving and joining new communities, where other queer social actors are present. Once in these communities interaction occurs, where novice members are taught what is considered aesthetically pleasing and what is acceptable. That is not to say that U.S. gay men do not have a sense of this beforehand. Rather, it is to say that once they become a part of these social networks, a new and deeper understanding is often constructed. This deeper understanding is the result of socialization at a later life stage, where queer subjectivity is in part formed through the subsequent interactions with queer social actors (not that there is not already queer subjectivity in development, but that it takes on new meaning and new means of developing that would be impossible in isolation). Part of this socialization process involves the exploration of camp aesthetics, of what is hot and what is not, of what makes up the repertoire and what is passé, of what is a do and what is a don't, and of what can be drawn upon within interactions with other queer social actors. This process of socialization is in essence a stage in U.S. queer subjectivity formation. Even for those identities that seemingly do not align with campy and pop cultural schema (such as the aforementioned man in the documentary), the interaction with queer others plays a role in the ongoing development of queer personhood, be it through learning camp repertoires, or be it through learning how to perform

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sexual roles, learning how to be butch or femme, leaning how to be a jock gay man, leaning how to be a drag queen, and so on. The possibilities are endless, as are the identities represented within the community itself, and it is in part through these interactions with others, with those that have already gone through to some degree this process of socialization that new social actors are socialized in and accepted as members. As such, with changes in society emerges the risk of losing aspects of the queer socialization process, and of this rich history of mentorship accomplished between existing and new community members.

Of the participants in my data, it is interesting that those participants that are less affiliated with a U.S. sociohistorical identity express less enthusiasm for the role of camp and camp aesthetics within interaction. Of the four members who were not raised in the United States, each of them exhibited less interactional ability with regard to camp, often becoming quiet as campy moments arose. This aspect is also visible in the follow up interview and survey responses provided by these participants. When asked, and also when shown specific examples, they were less likely to process the underlying camp aesthetic meaning within instances of camp talk, often feigning understanding as talk unfolded. When asked why, most responded that they simply wanted to fit in, and not knowing what was being talked about meant that they would be seen as less than full-fledged members. This notion in turn serves to support both the role of socialization practices in passing along such knowledge, and in the role of socialization in producing competent social actors that can themselves partake in camp-based interactional discourse (and thus become future potentials for passing along this information to subsequent generations). Here, for these gay men who bypassed this socialization, or who encountered aspects of it later in life, the command wielded by more competent gay men (in the sense of language and cultural knowledge) becomes a symbol of interactional power, where such acts as

feigning comprehension become a means of coping with a culture that at times can be exclusive through the language and imagery invoked.

Just as the aforementioned nonnative speakers (of both English and of the camp aesthetic that accompanied English socialization) were seen to recognize camp's value within interactive practices, while not always being able to partake in camp-based discursive interchanges, so too did native speakers overtly place value on camp usages. In several instances, botching the punch line, for example of a camp-based invocation, resulted in open sanctions by members. To be a native speaker of English in this case, and to knowingly have passed through some form of socialization at one point or another, becomes, as a result, grounds for sanction when camp aesthetics are misused. This in turn further demonstrates how sociocultural ramifications are an ever-present reality with regard to camp usage. Indeed, in 'botching the punch line' so to speak, U.S. gay men are opened up to scrutiny among peers, where one false move can mean the difference between dominating the conversation and becoming a marginal, or peripheral participant. Camp aesthetics as a result become a strategic commodity within interactional spaces, where knowing one's referents can make the difference between praise and sanction.

It is therefore through such novel approaches to understanding the role of camp within interactive spaces, such as has been shown through the work in this dissertation, that new light will be shed on the importance of this construct within the daily lives of social actors. Future studies should aim to expand on the ideas contained within this discussion, exploring specifically the notion of queer socialization, of nonnative speaker dynamics, and in further exploring interactional features that might as of yet have remained elusive in my own work.

Concluding Thoughts

The analyses within this ethnographic project have shown how camp arises as a meaningful aspect of everyday talk-in-interaction for U.S. gay men. In chapter four, the data has demonstrated how the mundane is transformed into scenes that are anything but mundane, drawing upon queer camp imagery in reframing the everyday into queer sociocultural space. In chapter five, camp humor and pop-camp culture are explored for their use as interactional tools of subversiveness, both within the groups themselves and with implications beyond the immediate interactional space. In chapter six, camp-based referent sources are shown to be selected and applied within moment-to-moment interaction, performing a range of interactional objectives and transferring what is arguably uniquely queer sociocultural information both to in-group participants and to dominant heteronormative identities which seek their erasure. In chapter seven, the notion of stance is explored, through a continuation of camp referential use, showing how stance emerges through camp usage as a multilevel construct with immediate and widespread sociocultural and sociopolitical implications. And finally, in chapter eight, camp as an interactional component is explored through the voices of the participants themselves, where academic assertions made in the previous chapters are substantiated through the lay perspectives of social actors themselves, making them perhaps the most compelling voices heard within this larger project, as it is through the social actors themselves that a recognition of, and an understanding towards camp aesthetics, is portrayed.

But as with any research endeavor, this dissertation represents a fraction of what might be awaiting future research and researchers. It is my sincere hope that this work will result in an opening up and expansion of the discourse on camp aesthetics, where recognition of their far-reaching capabilities may become the subject matter of continued and extended studies. As this work shows, there is more than meets the eye when it comes to camp, and it is only through a

continued development of our understanding of camp's role within interactive practices that a

true history of U.S. queer lived experiences and interactional practices will be achieved.

APPENDIX

Jefferson Transcription Conventions (see Atkinson & Heritage 1999)

?	Rising intonation contour.
.	Falling intonation contour.
,	Continued intonation contour.
-	Speech that is cut off.
=	Latched speech.
hhh / *hhh	Noticeable outbreath / Noticeable inbreath.
[	Overlap (coincides with same symbol in overlapping line).
huh heh (h)	Laughter tokens — stand alone and within words.
((…))	Researcher commentary not represented in talk itself.
^	Pitch increase.
>	Indicates a line of focus within the analyses.
WOrd	Volume increase.
°word°	Low/breathy speech.
Word	Marked emphasis.
Wo:::rd	Elongated sound.
Word	Indicates an instance of referencing.
(.) / (0.5)	Micropause / Pause counted in seconds — here as ½ second.

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