World Englishes, Vol 17, No. 2, pp. 203–214, 1998. 0883–2919

'Stay queer!' 'Never fear!': building queer social networks[1]

ROBIN M. QUEEN*

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I present evidence in support of the hypothesis that gay men and lesbians may use similar linguistics strategies in order to build and maintain queer social networks. Such social networks rely on an assumption of shared queerness that goes beyond gender-exclusive groups. The primary strategies discussed here are the incorporation of cultural understandings that are assumed to be shared, the appropriation of gender stereotypes for humorous effect, the use of covert communication strategies, and the use of co-narration. Taken together, these strategies help index both unique social networks as well as a broader sense of queer community.

INTRODUCTION

Although Maltz and Borker (1982) state that examining the language of lesbians and gay men is critical to the study of language and gender, the relationships between language and gender in mixed-sex conversations have continued to be discussed based primarily on data from heterosexual (or presumed heterosexual) speakers (e.g., Tannen, 1990; Coates, 1993). Further, those studies that examine the language use of lesbian and gay male speakers tend to look at gender-exclusive rather than gender-inclusive conversations in their analyses (Barrett, 1995, 1997; Queen, 1997; Moonwomon, 1985; Gaudio, 1994; Leap, 1996; Morgan and Wood, 1995).[2] Barrett *et al.* (1996) problematized this position for *queer linguistics*, noting that making gender segregation an a priori criterion is a potentially critical stance that should not go unquestioned (see Livia and Hall (1997) for additional discussion of this point). We further claimed that queer people might use linguistic strategies to index, build, and maintain queer social networks that extend beyond gender-based boundaries. In particular, we noted a number of strategies that had been identified independently for gay men (Leap, 1996; Hayes, 1981; Barrett, 1996, 1997) and for lesbians (Moonwomon, 1985, 1995; Morgan and Wood, 1996; Painter, 1981; Queen, 1997). These strategies include the rhetorical use of assumed 'shared' cultural understanding, parodic appropriation of stereotyped, gendered language use, *covert communication*, and *co-narration* among others.[3] Although co-narration may occur in many different kinds of communities, assumptions about shared understandings are presumed to differ widely for different communities.[4] Moreover, while both covert communication and the humorous appropriation of gendered stereotypes are certainly found in many communities (e.g., Halliday (1978) and Cameron (1996) respectively), community-specific differences in each of these strategies certainly exist. Thus, the specifics of the linguistic strategies used by queers may be considered largely unique to queer communities. In this paper, I examine data that support the hypothesis that queer people may use linguistic strategies to help index broad queer communities.

While I am using the term 'queer' in this paper to refer to lesbians and gay men, I understand queer to refer potentially to any gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered people who see themselves as having their sexual orientation in common and who see that commonality as influential for their sense of culture and identity.[5] I am using the term

* English Department, Kent State University, Kent, OH, 44242-0001, USA. E-mail: rqueen@kent.edu.

community in the sense of a 'community of practice' as discussed in Eckert and McConnel-Ginet (1992). The model for communities of practice is useful for studying queer communities precisely because it is defined not in terms of geographical location or specific acquaintanceship as are traditional notions of the speech community (e.g., Gumperz, 1971; Milroy, 1987), but rather in terms of assumptions about shared knowledge, cultural stances and the ideological expressions of those stances (see also Moonwomon, 1995). Additionally, the community of practice model allows much more flexibility in specifying the particulars of any given community or social network (see Nichols, 1980).[6] In the remainder of this paper, I will show how the assumptions about membership in the queer community of practice help the participants in this conversation forge and strengthen social networks based on those assumptions.

DATA

The data are drawn from two hours of taped conversation recorded on Thanksgiving Day, 1996. The primary participants in the conversation were Ruth, Tom, Jacques, Steele, Robin, Liz, and Mei. The participants range in age from 31–45 and have a varied ethnic make-up. Robin, Liz, Tom, Steele, and Ruth are all European Americans; Jacques is French Canadian; and Mei is of mixed heritage but identifies herself as primarily Indonesian. Neither Jacques nor Mei speak English as their first language; however, both of them have been bilingual since early childhood. Robin, Liz, Jacques, and Tom all live in the same area of Ohio, while Ruth and Mei live in Massachusetts. At the time of the recording, Steele was completing his seminary work at a university on the East Coast and therefore lived there when the university was in session and lived with Jacques at other times. At the time of the recording, Robin, Liz, and Jacques had only been in the area for approximately three months, while Tom had lived in the area for many years.

The recording took place at Jacques and Steele's home. Robin and Liz arrived in time for dessert, but after everyone had retired from the dinner table. Ruth, Mei, Robin, and Liz were unacquainted with Tom prior to this Thanksgiving Day event. Ruth and Mei had met Robin and Liz briefly two weeks prior to this conversation. Jacques and Steele knew all the other participants to varying degrees. Figure 1 illustrates the relationships between the various participants in the conversation.

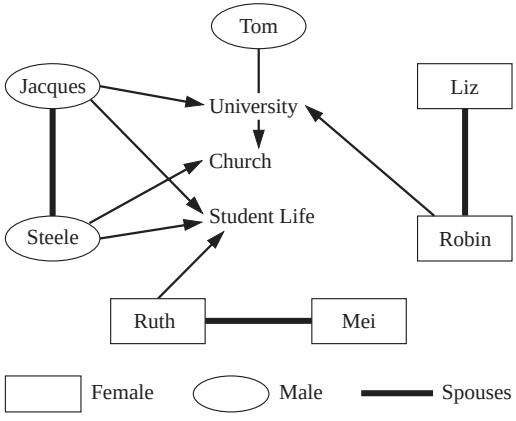

Figure 1. Connections between conversational participants.

As Figure 1 demonstrates, Jacques and Steele are the most densely connected participants, though by conventional standards, their degree of density in this particular group is not high.[7] Jacques knows Robin from work, while he and Ruth are long term friends. Steele and Ruth are connected via their student days; however, their connection does not go back as long as that between Jacques and Ruth. Steele knows Tom from their involvement with a particular religious tradition, in which Tom serves as an ordained minister, and in which Steele was completing his training at the seminary at the time of the recording. Jacques and Steele know both Mei and Liz because they are in committed relationships with Ruth and Robin respectively.

The majority of the data surround discussions about playing 'The Rainbow Game,' a board game which resembles the game, 'Trivial Pursuit.' 'The Rainbow Game' consists of various questions concerning queer trivia and includes a number of different types of performative categories. Although the seven participants never formally played the game, they had various discussions about the game itself and about particular questions, and played rounds in which a particular category was performed by each of the seven participants.[8]

Because this group of participants does not represent a pre-existing social network, their language use provides an excellent source of data for testing the hypothesis that queer people may use shared linguistic strategies to help build queer social networks. Additionally, the common strategies the seven participants use cannot be interpreted in terms of the speakers' familiarity with one another, but rather must be seen (at least in part) in terms of the participants' sense of shared community (Grice, 1990). In the analysis which follows, I present evidence that these seven speakers relied on assumptions about shared knowledge, the humorous positioning of gendered stereotypes (including stereotypes about gay men and lesbians), covert communication, and co-narration in order to construct a new social network largely built on the participants' sense of their shared queerness.

LANGUAGE AND QUEER COMMUNITY

Shared cultural understanding

The participants in this conversation incorporated different types of shared cultural understandings, not all of them queer. For instance, all of the participants hold post-graduate degrees from elite academic institutions and appear to share assumptions about the nature of academics and higher education in general. However, the knowledge and understanding of issues assumed to be specific to queers played a relatively large role (compared with other areas that might have been shared between the participants) in the context of this conversation.[9] For instance, overt reference to the shared educational status of the group occurred only once (see example 1 below), while overt references to shared queerness were abundant.[10]

In example 1 below, the issue of queer history is discussed in reference to a multi-choice question from the game. The question concerned the name of a film about African-American lesbian mothers. The card suggests that *In the best interests of the children* is the correct answer, but Tom disagrees, saying that there were no African-Americans in that film. After discussing the film, Jacques mentions that it might not be prudent to play the game with Tom because Tom knows too much about queer trivia. Tom responds by making an appeal to the ideological necessity for queer people to know their history.

Example 1
1 TOM: no, now, no, I think our, I think history is very very important
2 JACQUES: yeah [laugh]
3 TOM: and it is troubling that people don't do their homework
4 STEELE: yeah
5 RUTH: This is true, I agree
6 TOM: I mean, in an academic room like this, we should all agree to that, don't you
7 think?
8 ALL: [voice agreement]

Here, Tom makes explicit reference to the fact that knowing queer history is paramount (line 1) and that all the participants in the room should agree (line 6). None of the participants appear to see the need to explain why queer history is important because the reasoning itself is assumed to be shared, and Tom has indexed that shared knowledge. Tom also uses pronominal strategies to indicate a sense of inclusiveness, using first person plural pronouns in lines 1 and 6. In line 3, however, he simultaneously distances the group from the makers of the game (people don't do *their* homework) and makes a generalized statement that may be seen as a truism for which he elicits support in line 6.

The importance of queer history is again invoked in example 2. At this point in the conversation, the group decided to read questions at random from the game. In line 11, Tom says that everyone in the room should know the answer to the particular question he has pulled from the box (again, because it is an important matter of queer history). The question concerned the name of the first lesbian news publication, *The Ladder*.

Example 2
8 TOM: Right, will pull a matter of choice here. I'll just pick one at random
9 RUTH: oh, racy
10 [laughter]
11 TOM: If no one in this room knows the answer to this question, we're in real trouble
12 MEI: I could not know
13 TOM: You probably know
14 MEI: And I have a good excuse

In line 12, Mei says that she might not know the answer, thus challenging the hegemonic nature of Tom's proclamation. In line 13 Tom adds a supportive remark to Mei, saying that she probably does know the answer. In so doing, he not only demonstrates his assumptions about shared knowledge but also that he sees Mei as fundamentally included in the group. Mei then offers her own defense against possibly not knowing the answer by saying that she has 'a good excuse' (i.e., because she is not a native-born American citizen). This comment further underscores the role of assumptions about shared knowledge. There must be a good reason for not knowing some piece of queer history – it is not sufficient simply not to 'know.'

Example 3 provides further evidence that the assumptions about shared knowledge are critical to the formation of a new social network among these seven people. Here, the group has moved to a 'group grope.'

Example 3
15 RUTH: OK someone at work is telling a homophobic joke
16 TOM: Oh, back to the homophobes
17 RUTH: Really. Do you A say that you find the joke offensive B pretend that you did not

18 hear the joke or C laugh along with the group
19 ALL: A
20 RUTH: gee, I'm so famous
21 [laughter]
22 RUTH: It's really not quite that simple. I probably would, but then I might also talk to
23 the person privately. It depends on the setting
24 MEI: yeah
25 LIZ: yeah, because you don't want to shame them
26 RUTH and MEI: right
27 TOM: oh, heavens, no, can't shame homophobes
28 [laughter]
29 RUTH: Well, if they're redeemable

In this exchange, there is an overt recognition of the problem of homophobia – no one suggests that they don't know what homophobia is or how it might manifest itself. The main discussion revolves around how one specifically responds to homophobes. While the participants do not necessarily agree on the specifics for dealing with homophobes (see lines 22 and 27), it is clear that the participants assume common understanding of the phenomenon of homophobia, that all participants find homophobia something that must be 'dealt with,' and that all participants find homophobia wrong and unfounded. This example is interesting because it shows that these assumptions of shared understanding are not only important for building the sense of connectedness among these seven speakers, but also that the makers of the 'Rainbow Game' relied on many of the same assumptions about the queer community in order to develop the game itself.

Playing with gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes present another site through which to examine the construction and reinforcement of queer social networks. Speakers may playfully assert their own use or non-use of stereotypical characteristics. This playful usage of stereotypes is only possible because each participant can assume that the other participants share an understanding of the stereotypes as well as an understanding of the ways in which the stereotypes may be realized (see also Queen, 1997; Barrett, 1997; Pastre, 1997; McElhinny, 1995).

The social differentiation of gender differs significantly between queer and non-queer speakers in that the social categories *masculine* and *feminine* map on to queer experiences differently than on to non-queer experiences (if they can be said to map on to queer experiences at all). Queer people alternatively appropriate or distance themselves from the stereotypes associated with men and women generally. However, they may also do the same with stereotypes associated with queer people specifically.[11] One of the most salient aspects of the use of gender stereotypes in this particular conversation revolves around the construction (primarily through linguistic means) of the men as trivial and vain and of the women as competent, responsible, and fair. These are characteristics that may be stereotypically associated with gay men and lesbians respectively.[12]

In the exchange below, the conversation turned to a discussion of the sales which normally occur on the day after Thanksgiving. In this interaction, Tom and Ruth present their own positions on shopping.

Example 4
30 TOM: I have a lot of money to spend tomorrow and it takes me effort. Need to rest up.
31 RUTH: It does take effort, I do admit that

32 ROBIN: [laugh]
33 TOM: You admit what?
34 RUTH: It takes a lot of work to spend money. It's exhausting to me
35 TOM: Yeah handing that card over is like real tough

In this exchange, Tom contradicts his humorous positioning of shopping as a traumatic event (line 30) in order to present himself as frivolous with money (line 35). In line 30 he notes that spending money is hard work; however, when Ruth agrees with him (line 31), he reverses himself to say that spending money is not really that tough. Ruth acknowledges that shopping and spending money are generally exhausting (a stereotypical characteristic of lesbians). Moreover, in agreeing with Tom, Ruth also offers a serious response to Tom's humorous presentation of shopping. Tom then distances himself from the position that shopping is hard work and suggests instead that it is not hard work at all, thus reincorporating the playful nature of his original comment and also evoking a stereotype about gay men.

In the exchange in example 5, the conversation again revolves around a 'group grope' question, this time for Steele. The question, as in example 3 above, involves a response to homophobia.

Example 5
36 MEI: if you knew the neighbour. If you knew your neighbor what would, what might you
37 do?
38 STEELE: If I knew the neighbor? um
39 JACQUES: Well, you wouldn't talk to the neighbor
40 STEELE: Well, yeah, I don't tend to know my neighbors
41 MEI: Well, then you do
42 TOM: Is the neighbor cute?
43 STEELE: Yeah, right, that was a good question. Does he need a spanking?
44 Ruth: Another question now

In line 42, Tom essentially minimizes the problems of homophobia by suggesting that Steele's response to the neighbor might depend on whether or not the neighbor was cute. This comment highlights a general stereotype about men, that they may be swayed by 'cuteness.'[13] Then, in asking whether the neighbor might need a spanking, Steele further trivializes the homophobia. Essentially, then, the more serious attempts by Mei to have Steele commit to a course of action are humorously turned around through explicit reference to queer stereotypes of sexuality.

Example 6 revolves around another group grope question, this time directed to me. In this example, the question is whether or not I would try and strike out my girlfriend if she were playing softball on an opposing team. The group was split as to whether or not I would try to strike my girlfriend out. Jacques, in particular, contested strongly that I would not do so because it would be 'mean.'

Example 6
45 TOM: If she were playing baseball, she'd strike 'em out. It wouldn't be an
46 overcompensation. I mean in a softball game, right
47 MEI: yeah
48 ROBIN: I mean that's a particular context
49 MEI: You're a good sport too
50 TOM: I mean if you were on a softball team, you'd have a responsibility to your team

51 MEI: That's right
52 TOM: and you're a very responsible kind of person and you're there to win the
53 ROBIN: that's right
54 game. That's why you're on the team
55 ROBIN: and to prove that I could strike my lover out
56 TOM: and if she was stupid enough to be on the other team
57 RUTH: { }
58 TOM: First of all, you would never. Listen, you would never allow her to be on the
59 [laughter]
60 other team to begin with

In line 50, Tom suggests that in the context of the softball game, my feelings of responsibility to my team would outweigh my feelings for my girlfriend. In line 49, Mei concurs, saying that I am a good sport. Finally, in line 58, Tom plays with the idea of dominance and who has it – suggesting that I would be able to insist that my lover not be a member of a different team. An important aspect of this exchange is that the other participants are able to use gendered stereotypes in conjunction with other assumptions about shared cultural understanding to create me in a particular way despite the fact that they have only known me for a few hours.

Covert communication

Another feature regularly reported for gay male or lesbian discourse is the use of covert communication (Leap, 1996; Painter, 1981). Covert communication has often been noted as a strategy that gay men and lesbians can use to identify themselves in situations where it is not clear that their queerness will be accepted. Painter (1981), in fact, notes that covert communication is one of the most common identification strategies found among lesbians wishing to identify themselves to other lesbians. Like the humorous appropriation of gender stereotypes, the use of covert communication strategies involves an implicit assumption about shared cultural understanding and knowledge. While covert communication may include a number of strategies, one of the most ritualized is the use of certain expressions that have multiple meanings, but that may be indexical of queerness when used by queer speakers. For instance, the question 'are you family' is an expression often used to covertly ask 'are you gay.' Many of the expressions not only rely on assumptions about shared knowledge, but also on the assumption of the inclusiveness of queerness.

Each of the participants in this conversation is generally out in both his/her public and private lives; thus, it was unnecessary for them to use covert communication strategies with one another. However, it is clear that they have an understanding of the use of covert communication, that they know many of the routinized expressions, and that they know how to use covert communication to humorous ends, as seen in example 7 below.

Here, the participants are once again involved with a 'group grope' question. Mei has been placed in the hypothetical situation where she believes that someone she knows is gay and she is trying to figure out if she is correct. The question concerns whether or not she would confront the person directly.

Example 7
61 RUTH: No, you'd be more subtle. You'd say are you family? [giggle]
62 LIZ: no
63 ROBIN: Do you have comfortable shoes?
64 STEELE: Where do you like to go out?

65 JACQUES: Are you on the bus
66 [laughter]
67 TOM: What team do you play for?
68 RUTH: Are you a nurse?
69 JACQUES: Are you a friend of John Waters?
70 STEELE: friend of Dorothy?
71 RUTH: That's right.

Notice that each of the other participants offers a 'covert' trope for figuring out if someone is queer. Here the speakers make use of stereotypical characteristics for gay men (lines 69 and 70), of lesbians (lines 63 and 68), and of a more general sense of community (lines 61, 64, 65, and 67). Although the general idioms account for the most cases, the tropes which appear to be specific to lesbians or gay males are nonetheless positioned in a general sense as well. In other words, for these speakers in this particular context, any one of those tropes might be appropriate for Mei to use.[14] Thus, these speakers humorously use their knowledge both of the strategy of covert communication as well as their knowledge of specific tropes in order to index their own rightful inclusion in the community of queers. Further, at the level of this particular conversation, the seven participants jointly reinforce a sense of social network that rests in large part on their shared queerness.

Co-narration

The example discussed above (as well as examples 3 and 5) provides evidence of one of the more regular features discussed in analyses of gay men and lesbians (e.g., Leap, 1996; Morgan and Wood, 1995), the use of co-narration as a strategy for the creation of gay male or lesbian communities. While it may not be the case that co-narration is a strategy used exclusively by queer people, co-narration may nonetheless serve to reinforce a strong sense of community among queer speakers. Thus, queer speakers, in using a linguistic strategy often associated with community-building, reinforce the idea that they consider themselves to be part of a broader, queer community.

Co-narration generally involves the actual co-construction of a given sentence or utterance or of a larger narrative event (see Coates, 1996). What appear to be potential cases of interruption often function instead to present a unified narrative or thought that is produced by multiple speakers. Further, it is often the performance of the form, rather than the actual content of the utterance that is crucial to the community-building function. In the cases discussed below, for example, the co-narrative function often occurred between participants who were not the primary narrators in the interaction.

For instance, in example 8 Steele and Ruth are commenting on a story that Mei told about witnessing two heterosexuals having public sex. Mei was telling the story as part of a longer bit of discussion on the generally illicit nature of much heterosexual sexual practice.

Example 8
72 STEELE: real, live
73 RUTH: heterosexual sex

In example 9, the group is discussing nude beaches in various cities. I mention that in a particular city there is also a gay section (line 74), to which Tom responds that he knows where that section of the beach is. Then, Steele, Tom, Ruther and I co-narrate a sentence about the typical location of queer areas.

Example 9
74 ROBIN: There's a gay section, sort of
75 TOM: Oh, I know where that is
76 STEELE: The gay section is always
77 ROBIN: way, way past
78 TOM: way past
79 RUTH: everybody else

Both this example and example 8 are interesting because the intonational contours conform to would be characteristic for a single speaker (Bolinger, 1989). In other words, there are rising contours on my utterance (line 77) and on Tom's (line 78), but Ruth implements a falling contour, signaling the end of the utterance. In example 8, Ruth also implements a falling contour at the end of the utterance. These examples are quite similar to the narrative discussed in Morgan and Wood (1995) in which four lesbians describe what to take to a picnic.

Example 10 provides an example of a co-narrated narrative. In this example, Mei, Ruth, and Jacques do not co-construct a single utterance (as is the cases discussed above) but co-construct the narrative itself. They are discussing the first time they played the Rainbow Game.

Example 10
80 MEI: And then there was this fourth heterosexual couple who joined, who was curious and kind
81 of like joined us
82 RUTH: we were in the living room sort of area. The common area
83 JACQUES: That's right, they thought we were playing Trivial Pursuit.
84 MEI: We were having fun, oh, oh, oh. They were absolutely stupefied. And, uh, so
85 then, we decided to proceed with the game. And one of um, one of the charades was
86 bulldyke. and it was like one after the other, like really obvious without and like slowly
87 you can see the transformations of the expression

In each of the first three turns, the speaker 'latches' onto the utterance of the previous speaker, making it clear that this is not a 'hostile' interruption (see James and Clarke, 1992). Through this particular co-narration, the three speakers make it clear that all of them were involved in the event being narrated. However, after co-narrating the beginning the story, Mei (the person who actually initiated the narrative) goes on to finish it. Thus, Jacques and Ruth are able to reconfirm not only their own presence at the narrated event itself, but also, by using the co-narrative strategy, are able to reinforce their current sense of inclusion.

CONCLUSION

In the conversation analyzed here, I have examined the linguistics means through which seven speakers, who were largely unacquainted with on another prior to this event, forged a new social network built principally on their shared sense of queerness. Further, I have demonstrated that the hypothesis set forth in Barrett *et al.* (1996) is largely verifiable using data from gay men and lesbians talking together. While the analysis offered in this paper is not intended to be predictive, it offers an account of the linguistic strategies used for building queer social networks and suggests that queer people may choose to use the same linguistic means for establishing gender-inclusive queer ties as are used for maintaining gender-exclusive queer ties.

As Tannen (1992) writes, all linguistic strategies are potentially ambiguous in that the same linguistic means may be used to create a number of different (and often disparate) effects. Further, we may not assume that any individual linguistic strategy will directly index a particular identity or community (Ochs, 1992). The point of analysis, then, is to understand the ways in which speakers may use existing linguistic elements in order to achieve particular ends. Because linguistic strategies may be polysemous, and because ideas about gendered language use may 'change through history and [be] systematically related to other areas of cultural discourse such as the nature of persons, power, and of a desirable moral order' (Gal, 1995), examining queer language use from a gender-inclusive perspective can help deconstruct the essentialist dichotomy of masculine and feminine forms of language. Such examinations also illuminate the important role of language for indexing queerness and for building queer social networks that go beyond gender-based boundaries.

NOTES

1. This paper is a revised version of a paper presented at the Lavender Linguistics V conference. This paper has benefited from helpful comments from Rusty Barrett, Patricia Dunmire, Kira Hall, Anna Livia, Kathleen Wood, and especially Susan Garrett. Any errors in fact or interpretation remain entirely my own. The title quotation comes from a leave-taking exchange between one gay male and one lesbian participant in the conversation analyzed here. It was this exchange that inspired me to write this paper.
2. Certainly, many of the studies of heterosexual language use, particularly those working within the 'difference' paradigm, have also centered on same-sex interactions and then extrapolated the data to account for mixed-sex communication (Tannen, 1990; Lakoff, 1975). As Uchida (1992) and Freed (1992) point out, there is no empirical reason to believe that the conversational styles and linguistic features used in same-sex interactions will automatically transfer to mixed-sex interactions.
3. Additional strategies include the use of marked prosodic patterns and the use of lexical items stereotypically associated with gay men (for example, 'fabulous') as well as some lexical items stereotypically associated with lesbians and with queers more generally. See Queen and Barrett (in preparation) for a detailed discussion of these additional patterns.
4. Co-narration has been noted in same-sex conversations for both women (Coates, 1996) and men (Cameron, 1997).
5. I do not intend my use of queer to reflect a trans-historical consciousness. In other words, queer is not being used to recast historical divisions of various groups (such as lesbians or gay men) as irrelevant or false. Thus, although I am taking an inclusive cultural stance with respect to the term queer, I do not understand queer to be an umbrella term. I do not intend to imply that all lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, or transgendered people will consider themselves queer. In fact, many people in these groups may strongly contest the use of the term queer just as they may contest the notion of a broader queer community.
6. Social networks and communities of practice are not intended to be construed as identical constructs. A social network is largely conceptualized around particular individuals and the domains in which they interact, while the community of practice is conceptualized based on shared practices and ideologies. In this conversation, the social network is the realization of the shared sense of membership in a broader queer community.
7. 'Density' is drawn primarily from Milroy's (1987) work on social networks that measures the number of different connections an individual speaker has to a network (density) as well as the number of different ways speakers in a network know one another (multiplexity). Milroy has found that speakers who are densely connected in multiplex networks will be significantly more likely to use linguistic features that are indicative of that network (and in her work those features are often 'non-standard').
8. The rounds included multiple choice; charades; he said/she said, in which a particular quotation relevant to queer culture must be properly attributed; and finally, group grope, in which each player draws a card that describes a particular situation and all the other players have to come to a consensus about what the player will do in the situation.
9. Anecdotally, assumptions about knowledge of queer politics, queer history, and queer life often underlie conversations between queer people of varied genders; however, it is not clear to me that such assumptions necessarily hold for gender-exclusive queer conversations. In fact, the lack of discussion of such matters may be one of the distinguishing characteristics of gender-exclusive conversations (Rusty Barrett and Susan Garrett, p.c.).
10. While it is likely true that the nature of the 'Rainbow Game' dictated queerness as a subject matter, the

foregrounding of queerness was evidenced independently of the game itself. If language may be seen as partially indexical (see LePage and Tabouret-Keller, 1985), then the linguistic strategies under investigation must be considered independently of any given subject matter.

11. Many of the stereotypes associated with gay men and lesbians appear to be built on the stereotypes associated with men and women more generally. In informal survey in undergraduate linguistics courses, the stereotypes of gay male and lesbian language use are often the inverse of stereotypes about (heterosexual) men and women.
12. I am leaving unspecified why such stereotypes arise and who exactly holds them. For instance, it is unclear to me that a large number of people outside of queer communities actually hold stereotypes about gay men's and lesbian's speech patterns.
13. Certainly, this stereotype is based largely on anecdotal evidence; however, men's rhetorical appropriation of sexuality has been noted in a wide array of writings (both feminist and otherwise). For example, see Penelope (1992).
14. The recitation of this list of tropes is also performative in ways that transcend their referential content.

REFERENCES

Barrett, Rusty, Queen, Robin and Walters, Keith (1996) Butches and bis, fats and femmes: The linguistic construction of shared queerness. Paper presented at Lavender Languages and Linguistics IV. Washington, D.C.

Barrett, Rusty (1997) The 'homo-genius' speech community. In Livia and Hall (1997: 181–201).

Barrett, Rusty (1995) Supermodels of the world, unite!: Political economy and the language of performance among African American drag queens. In Leap (1995: 207–226).

Bland, Lisa (1996) The humorous side of butch and femme. Paper presented at the 4th Berkeley Women and Language Conference.

Bolinger, Dwight (1989) *Intonation and its Uses*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Cameron, Deborah (1997) Performing gender identity: young men's talk and the construction of heterosexual masculinity. In *Language and Masculinity*. Edited by Sally Johnson and Ulrike Meinhof. Cambridge: Blackwell. pp. 47–64.

Chesbro, James W. (1981) *Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication.* New York: Pilgrim's Press.

Coates, Jennifer (1993) *Women, Men and Language*. London: Longman.

Coates, Jennifer (1996) *Women talk – conversation between Women Friends.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Eckert, Penelope and McConnel-Ginet, Sally (1992) Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as a community-based practice. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, **21,** 461–490.

Freed, Alice (1992) We understand perfectly: A critique of Tannen's view of cross-sex communication. In *Locating power: Proceedings of the Second Berkeley Women and Language Conference.* Edited by Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz and Birch Moonwomon. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Women and Language Group. pp. 144–152.

Gal, Susan (1995) Language, gender, and power: An anthropological review. In Hall and Bucholz (1995: 169–182).

Gaudio, Rudolf P. (1994) Sounding gay: Pitch properties in the speech of gay and straight men. *American Speech* **69**(1), 30–37.

Grice, H. P. (1990) Meaning. In *The Philosophy of Language.* 2nd edition. Edited by A. P. Martinich. New York: Oxford University Press. pp. 72–78.

Gumperz, John J. (1971 [1968]) Speech communities. In *Language and Social Context*. Edited by Paul Giglioli. New York: Penguin Press. pp. 219–231.

Hall, Kira and Bucholz, Mary (1995) *Gender Articulated.* New York. Routledge.

Halliday, M. A. K. (1978) *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning.* London: E. Arnold.

Hayes, Joseph J. (1981) Gayspeak. In Chesbro (1981: 45–57).

James, Deborah and Clarke, Sandra (1993) Women, men and interruptions: A critical review. In Tannen (1993: 231–279).

Lakoff, Robin (1975) *Language and Woman's Place.* New York: Harper & Row.

Leap, William (ed.) (1995) *Beyond the Lavender Lexicon.* New York: Gordon and Breach Publishers.

Leap, William L. (1993) Gay men's English: Cooperative discourse in a language of risk. Prejudice and pride: Lesbian and gay traditions in America. Edited by Deborah Blincoe and John Forrest. *New York Folklore* (Special issue), **19**(1–2), 45–70.

Leap, William L. (1996) *Word's Out: Gay Men's English.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

LePage, Robert B. and Tabouret-Keller, André (1985) *Acts of identity: Creole-based Approaches to Language and Ethnicity.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Livia, Anna and Hall, Kira (1997) 'It's a girl': Bringing performativity back to linguistics. In Livia and Hall (1997: 3–18).

Livia, Anna and Hall, Kira (eds.) (1997) *Queerly Phrased.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Maltz, Daniel and Borker, Ruth (1982) A cultural approach to male-female miscommunication. In *Language and Social Identity.* Edited by John Gumperz. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp. 196–216.
McElhinny, Bonnie S. (1995) Challenging hegemonic masculinities: Female and male police officers handling domestic violence. In Hall and Bucholz (1995: 217–244).
Milroy, Leslie (1987) *Language and Social Networks.* Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
Moonwomon, Birch (1985) Toward the study of lesbian speech. Reprinted in Livia and Hall (1997: 202–213).
Moonwomon, Birch (1995) Lesbian discourse, lesbian knowledge. In Leap (1995: 45–64).
Moran, John (1991) Language use and social function in the gay community. Paper presented at NWAVE 20.
Morgan, Ruth and Wood, Kathleen (1995) Lesbians in the living room: collusion, co-construction, and co-narration in conversation. In Leap (1995: 235–248).
Nichols, Patricia (1980) Women in their speech communities. In *Women and Language in Literature and Society.* Edited by Sally McConnel-Ginet, Ruth Borker, and Nelly Fuhrman. New York: Praeger. pp. 140–149.
Ochs, Elinor (1992) Indexing gender. In *Rethinking Context.* Edited by Alessandro Duranti and Charles Goodwin. pp. 335–358.
Painter, Dorothy S. (1981) Recognition among lesbians in straight settings. In Chesbro (1981: 68–79).
Pastre, Geneviève (1997) Linguistic gender play. In Livia and Hall (1997: 369–379).
Penelope, Julia P. (1990) *Speaking Freely.* New York: Pergamon Press.
Queen, Robin (1997) 'I don't speak Spritch': Locating Lesbian language. In Livia and Hall (1997: 233–256).
Queen, Robin and Rusty Barrett (in preparation) Indexing queer communities of practice.
Tannen, Deborah (1990) *You Just Don't Understand.* New York: Morrow.
Tannen, Deborah (1993) *Gender and Conversational Interaction.* New York: Oxford.
Tannen, Deborah (1993) The relativity of linguistic strategies: Rethinking power and solidarity in gender and dominance. In Tannen (1993: 165–188).
Uchida, Aki (1992) When 'difference' is 'dominance': A critique of the 'anti-power-based' cultural approach to sex differences. *Language in Society*, **21,** 547–568.

(*Received* 15 *November* 1997.)