

Conversation and Gender

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12 Engendering children's play: Person reference in children's conflictual interaction

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Introduction

This chapter examines how children employ gendered membership categories in the midst of their everyday talk. Feminist conversation analysts have devoted considerable attention to explicating the issues entailed in providing grounded analyses of how gender is invoked, negotiated and oriented to in conversational exchanges,¹ how it 'creeps into talk' (Hopper & LeBaron, 1998: 32–3). Making use of work by Harvey Sacks (1972; 1992, I) on membership categorization analysis,² Stokoe (2008a) has recently called for a close examination of the kinds of actions being done with membership categories in close association with analysis of the sequential environments in which such categories repetitively occur. Stokoe (2009) argues that the particular categories that are selected from an array of possibilities³ are significant because through their choices⁴ people orchestrate social actions (Hester & Eglin, 1997); for example, accusation, justification, praise, etc.

Work on children's language and gender for some time was dominated by the notion of contrastive male and female personalities, an idea put forward by Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) in the 1970s, revitalized by Maltz and Borker (1982) with their separate-world hypothesis in 1982 (for a thoughtful review of the controversy see Kyratzis, 2001a), and buttressed by Gilligan's

¹ For a review of the debates between Schegloff, Wetherell and Billig regarding how gender relevance in interaction must be demonstrated in the participants' orientations, see Stokoe and Weatherall (2002a). See also Speer (2005a), Kitzinger (2000a; 2006) and Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 84–5).

² Explicating the distinction between membership categorization analysis (MCA) and conversation analysis (CA), Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 38) argue, 'Whereas CA focuses on the turn by turn sequencing and organisation of talk, MCA also pays attention to the situated and reflexive use of categories in everyday and institutional interaction, as well as in interview media and other textual data.'

³ Early work by cognitive anthropologist Ward Goodenough (1965) argued for the relevance of identity selection from a set of possibilities. Goodenough used the term 'identity' to refer to an aspect of self that makes a difference in how one's rights and duties distribute to specific others. Goodenough's work was read and cited by Sacks in his thesis (1966).

⁴ Work which examines membership categorization from an ethnomethodological perspective among children includes C. D. Baker (2000) and Danby (1998).

(1982) notion of a different female voice (for critiques see M. H. Goodwin, 2003; Tavis, 1994). Several researchers (Farris, 2000; M. H. Goodwin, 2006; Kyratzis, 2001a; Kyratzis & Guo, 1996; Nakamura, 2001) have challenged the notion that separate worlds exist or that they are as gender-segregated (Cook-Gumperz & Szymanski, 2001; M. H. Goodwin, 1990; Streeck, 1986; Thorne, 1993) as Maltz and Borker (1982) initially proposed. C. W. Butler and Weatherall (2006) have recently examined practices of membership categorization during children's play in two inner-city schools, to look at how children do and recognize descriptions of themselves and others. This work is important among studies of children's conversations, in that relatively few studies have taken as an explicit focus the study of practices that are utilized by children to produce gendered categories in talk.⁵

The present study investigates the activities that children's formulations of persons accomplish within a specific conversational environment: adversarial interactions, such as disputes (M. H. Goodwin, 1990), complaint sequences (Stokoe & Edwards, 2007) and insult sequences (Evaldsson, 2005), as well as activities entailing assessments (C. Goodwin & Goodwin, 1987). Examining the turn-by-turn interactional and sequential organization of turns permits us not only to come to terms with how categories that invoke particular identities are deployed; in addition we can investigate how participants come to establish and produce their own particular understandings and ways of viewing events in the world.⁶ Person formulations can constitute critical features in the activity of taking up particular alignments (Goffman, 1979) or stances (M. H. Goodwin, 1998; 2006; Haddington, 2004; Karkkainen, 2006), articulated through prosody and embodied action as well as talk. Through examining stance-taking we can come to grips with the concerns that deeply animate participants.

As Evaldsson (2005: 764) has argued, by combining analysis of members' social categories with an examination of talk-in-interaction, we can explore 'the constitutive role of talk for local social organization, and how issues associated with wider social structures and discourses can be located, observed and described within situated action'. Like Evaldsson, I will argue in this chapter that the study of membership categorization is enhanced by an ethnographic understanding of children's social life.

Studying children's person formulations

While most previous studies of members' categories in gender and language research informed by conversation analysis have largely focused on

⁵ However, see Kyratzis (1999).

⁶ On the achievement of intersubjectivity see Heritage (1984b: 259).

communicative situations involving adults,⁷ this study contributes to our understanding of the interactive resources that children deploy in their day-to-day dealings with one another. Making use of ethnographic materials from a range of fieldwork experiences among children's groups (M. H. Goodwin, 1990; 2006), this chapter examines what have variously been termed person formulations (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), relationship categories (Pomerantz & Mandelbaum, 2005: 152–3) or person reference forms (Sacks & Schegloff, 1979) that members of children's groups make use of in orchestrating locally relevant activities. As Pomerantz and Mandelbaum (2005: 150) note, members do not typically make their identity relationships explicit with formulations such as 'I'm your friend.' In this chapter I look at the particular contexts in which gendered identity categories are invoked and investigate what is being accomplished by their use within particular local activities. I examine how person formulations are articulated in concert with what Zimmerman (1998: 90–1) has discussed as situated identities⁸ that emerge out of the particular action at hand.⁹ Gendered terms such as 'girl' and 'boy', for example, can be mobilized both in the midst of disputes (as a component of a turn taking up an oppositional stance to a prior move interpreted as argumentative – in essence, an epithet) and in mutual congratulatory exclamations during assessment sequences (where a stance of affiliation is being performed). The data used are drawn from my ethnographic investigation of three preadolescent children's peer groups: (1) working-class African American children in Philadelphia (studied 1970–1), (2) working-class Latino children in Los Angeles (studied in the 1990s) and (3) a popular, primarily middle-class girls' peer group from Los Angeles (studied 1997–9).

In this chapter I first provide some ethnographic background to the present study, arguing that the children work to maintain a social order that is implicitly hetero-normal. I then examine 'girl' and 'boy' as terms of reference used in comparison sequences that are explicitly gendered, in the context of disputes over rights and justifications. After examining how person formulations are used in adversarial sequences, I then look at two examples of how the term 'girl' is used as what I will call a '*stance carrier*'. In the final section I examine how gendered terms creep into children's talk.

⁷ However, see Evaldsson (2005).

⁸ Zimmerman (1998: 90–1) examines the situated identities of citizen-complainant and call-taker in the case of emergency telephone calls.

⁹ Zimmerman (1998: 90–1) further distinguishes two other types of identities: (1) discourse identities (those important to the moment-to-moment interaction) and (2) transportable identities (those which 'travel with individuals across situations and are potentially relevant in and for any situation and in and for any spate of interaction', p. 90). For further discussion of discourse identities such as knowing and unknowing recipient and spouse see C. Goodwin (1981); see M. H. Goodwin (2006) for a discussion of the 'transportable' identity 'tag-along' girl.

Ethnographic background: An implicit hetero-normative social order

The neighbourhood and school settings I have observed differed with respect to the social arrangements of participants. The Maple Street neighbourhood in Philadelphia provided a very rich setting for interaction; there a range of different categories of children – younger and older, girls and boys – are co-present while participating in a number of diverse activities, for example chores and babysitting, that intersect with play. During such caretaking activities girls display their authority with respect to younger children. In North American schools, by way of contrast, children generally play in same-age and same-sex groups (an arrangement that is atypical of peer groups worldwide; Harkness & Super, 1985). Gender separation is influenced by children's own preferences as well as by teachers' notions of appropriate group divisions (Thorne, 1993).

The children I studied on Maple Street in Philadelphia in 1970–1 (M. H. Goodwin, 1990), as well as those I studied in Los Angeles during the late 1990s (M. H. Goodwin, 2006), displayed an orientation towards an implicit heterosexual social order (Kitzinger, 2005a: 222; 2006: 165) in their folklore and play.¹⁰ In his *Lectures on Conversation* Sacks (1992, I: 249) describes the nature of *category-bound activities* by stating, 'Many activities are taken by Members to be done by some particular or several particular categories of Members where the categories are categories from membership categorization devices.' While playing jump rope (skipping) in same-sex groups, the popular rhymes in both girls' and boys' groups¹¹ at the middle-class Hanley School, Los Angeles, depicted the category-bound activities (Sacks, 1992) of male/female romantic relationships; for example, 'Cinderella, dressed in yella, went upstairs to kiss a fella. Made a mistake and kissed a snake. How many doctors did it take?' Category-bound activities entailing heterosexual relations were also featured in the rhyme 'Ice Cream Soda, Vanilla Berry Punch. Tell me the name of your Honey Bunch.' Following this rhyme, spectators recited the alphabet from A to Z until the jumper missed. When this occurred, the spectators in the girls' group would yell, 'Oh, you marry Tommy (a boy's name)!' while, in the boys' group, jumpers 'married' girls: 'You marry Carrie (a girl's name)!' At Hanley School among fourth grade girls, the text of a favorite underground song called 'The Bedroom Song' made reference to heterosexual relationships with the

¹⁰ J. Butler (1990a: 140) considers folklore a 'ritual social drama' and discusses it as the 'stylized repetition of acts'.

¹¹ Lanclos (2003: 84) reports that in Belfast clapping and skipping games are chanted or sung almost exclusively by girls. On Maple Street in Philadelphia (M. H. Goodwin, 1990) this was true as well. However, at Hanley School boys enjoyed playing jump rope, as it was part of the school sports curriculum.

refrain 'It felt like heaven', and 'Let's do it again.' The pro-terms used specified 'he' taking off 'her' shoe and 'he' kissing 'her' knee.¹²

While playing house, a hetero-normal social order was oriented towards in the depiction of role relations as well. Though boys seldom played house with girls at Hanley School, girls constituted heterosexual role relationships as primary to their 'house' identity. In the midst of organizing play both Lisa and Janis competed for the same boy (Jason, a classmate) to be the partner they were 'married to' or their 'boyfriend'.¹³

Extract 1

- 1 Lisa: Yeah. I'm married to him.
- 2 You're married to his brother.
- 3 Janis: They're exactly the same.
- 4 Nichole: YOU GUYS!
- 5 Janis: Jason's my boyfriend. ((chanting))

Henley (1995) and Cameron (1998b) have argued that we need to consider how gender interacts with other kinds of identity categories; for example, class and age. As playing house got under way the girls all wanted to be teenagers with boyfriends. Class as well as gender proved to be relevant to the development of roles in category-bound activities. When Janis specified that the girls would have to 'say your life, your future', Ruth interpreted Janis's directive as requiring both a specification of what type of car she drove and who her boyfriend was.

Extract 2

- 1 Janis: Okay. I point to you, you guys have to say your name,
- 2 Your life, your future, and junk like that.
- 3 Okay. Ruth. Go. Shh. Silence. Go Ruth.
- 4 Ruth: My name's Monique,
- 5 No actually- what's my name.
- 6 Janis: Just use Monique.
- 7 Just use Monique.
- 8 Ruth: Okay fine. My name's Monique,
- 9 And I have a black Corvet,
- 10 A:nd, my boyfriend is, you know who.

Heterosexual relationships were also oriented to features in the talk of fourth grade boys at Hanley School; they discussed girls as people they liked to 'flirt with' in paired relationships.

¹² The full text of the song is given in the appendix to this chapter.

¹³ Data are transcribed according to the system developed by Gail Jefferson, outlined in Sacks *et al.* (1974: 731-3).

Extract 3

- 1 Alan: Eh. What else.
- 2 Dan: Oh Denzel- Denzel flirts with Aretha,
((pats Denzel on back))
- 3
- 4 Denzel: ((play hits Dan))
- 5 Dan: Okay. I flirt with Emi, ((puts arm around Denzel's
6 shoulder))
- 7 Denzel: Here comes Melissa.
- 8 Dan: And Alan flirts- I mean Bruce flirts with Melissa.
- 9 And we usually like-
- 10 Walk around, sayin' like- funny stuff.

Thus boys as well as the girls displayed in their talk an orientation to a taken-for-granted heterosexual world (Kitzinger, 2005a; Stokoe & Smithson, 2002), one in which boys 'flirt with' girls, and individuals kiss, marry and 'do it again' with members of the opposite sex.

'Girl' and 'boy' as terms of reference in comparison sequences

The terms 'girl' and 'boy' constituted a major set of identity categories in terms of which children differentiated group members. While Maple Street boys were sitting together on the front steps they would compare the activities of girls with those of boys (rather than, for example, using age or neighbourhood as a feature of differentiation).

Extract 4

- 1 Malcolm: The girls do the same thing all the time.
- 2 Play rope.
- 3 Ossie: That's why Bea always go in the-
4 my house and wanna play with my top.
- 5 Malcolm: Different times of year
6 we do different things.
- 7 Ossie: Boys' games better than girls'.

Speer and Potter (2002: 159) argue that one of the ways that participants 'do gender' is observable 'in the way they present it (and certain behaviours or "category bound activities" (Sacks, 1992)) as normative'. In Extract 5, boys attempt to 'make non-normative or "transgressive" behaviours *morally accountable*' (Speer, 2005a: 119) by attempting to lay claim to particular activities as exclusive to their gendered cohort. When girls returned from turtle hunting and began to describe their adventures falling in the creek, boys were quick to critique girls, arguing that girls were doing 'boys' stuff'. In response, girls produced counters, challenging the boys' categorization.

Extract 5

((Bea has just returned from hunting for turtles in a city creek))

- 1 Bea: Ruby felled in the water.=
 2 Her sneakers flew way over there!
 3 Eh heh-heh!
 4 Chopper: Girls doin' boys' stuff.
 5 Sister: Girls doin' // boys' stuff.
 6 Bea: Like what.
 7 Chopper: Goin' down the park.
 8 Getting in that water.
 9 Collectin' rocks!

Competition between girls and boys was also evident in the practices girls used actively to conceal what they were doing from boys, and prevent them from entering into their activities. In Extract 6, Martha (age 10) discusses how she wanted to prevent boys from finding out about a secret activity of the girls, making rings from glass bottle tops.

Extract 6

((Girls planning strategy to keep ring making secret from boys))

- 1 Martha: If the boys try to follow us here,
 2 Let's tell 'em-
 3 Let's act just like we don't even know.
 4 *h Just say "No." You know.

In the Hanley School group I studied, the terms 'girl' and 'boy' were also used to make reference to categories of person who were positioned in adversarial arrangements. Explicit mention of the division of competing teams by gender, for example, occurred in the talk about play among third graders (children age 8–9) at Hanley School. As Sandra and Vanessa were talking about basketball teams that were being organized in opposing teams ('girls against boys'), girls were formulated as agents and boys as the recipients of the girls' victorious actions.

Extract 7

- 1 Sandra: Am I gonna be on your team? ((to Vanessa))
 2 Vanessa: And Kathy and Madison. In other words it's girls a-
 3 Girls against boys.
 4 Sandra: Oh great. We smoosh boys.
 5 Girls smoosh boys.

In the neighbourhood of Philadelphia as well as the playgrounds of Los Angeles, and across various age groups I have studied, the terms 'girl' and 'boy' were used to designate members of groups situated in oppositional arrangements.

Borderwork, power and the collaborative construction of gendered oppositional groups

With respect to how social space is defended in a Guyanese rumshop, Sidnell (2003: 330) argues, 'It is clear that the "all-male" or "all-female" character of an interactive setting is not something that simply happens – rather, it is an accountable and contingent accomplishment requiring several different kinds of interactional work.' As a feature of their competitive play, the girls I studied organized their groups in terms of same-sex divisions, and actively worked to defend their space from boys.¹⁴ Thorne (1993) reports that boys in the playground frequently interrupt girls' games or violate their social space; I found that Latina girls in downtown LA actively worked to keep boys from intruding into their hopscotch grid (M. H. Goodwin, 1998: 25), using direct commands such as 'Get out of the way!' or 'Go back! Go back!' With respect to forms of 'borderwork' (Thorne, 1993: 64–88) among the peer group at Hanley School, while the girls were jumping rope, boys made use of mitigated requests to enter into the girls' arena; these were answered by flat refusals from the girls:

Extract 8

- 1 Stephen: ((makes a nonverbal bid to join the group))
 2 Janis: Stephen we're having a contest.
 3 [We're having a contest.
 4 Stephen: [Can I try it?
 5 Janis: Well not really because-
 6 Melissa: Because there's three against- one.

An asymmetry of power developed with respect to boys attempting to enter the girls' game, and girls rejecting them. In Extract 9, occurring 20 seconds later, the boys were momentarily permitted into the girls' play space (lines 3–5). However, when one of the group members argued that the game should be exclusively 'us', Janis revised her granting of permission and stated 'Oh yeah. =You're not part of our gang. So you can't.' (lines 10–11), and the boys were excluded.

Extract 9

- 1 Denzel: Can you guys just- turn the rope?
 2 eh beh-heh!
 3 Janis: Okay fine. You can play.
 4 You can play.
 5 [You can play.
 6 Stephen: [Hey. Can I play if I-
 7 Emi: No:: us. ((shaking head))

¹⁴ Sidnell (2003) discusses how social space is defended as exclusively male in a Guyanese rumshop.

- 8 Denzel: I don't want to do that
 9 Mexi[co thing
 10 Janis: [Oh yeah. =You're not part of our gang.
 11 So you can't.
 12 Boys: ((remain silent in the play space, then move))

With respect to the operative situational identities (Zimmerman, 1998)¹⁵ in this example, Stephen (line 6) makes use of a request, a highly mitigated (Labov & Fanshel, 1977) way of asking to play, as it constitutes an action which seeks permission rather than demanding the right to play. What he gets in response is a flat defiant refusal, with Emi's utterance 'No: us' accompanied by a lateral head-shake (line 7). A form of asymmetry of role relations unfolds, with boys making use of polite actions that request, and girls (as initiators of the play and more skilful players), with their ability to grant or refuse admission to the game, displaying a position of power vis-à-vis the boys. In her account for refusing permission – 'You're not part of our gang. So you can't.' – Janis formulates the operative identity categories as 'our gang' and outsiders to her gang. In response, the boys remain silenced on the sidelines for a while, and eventually move away. The responses to the account prohibiting access to the game provide a way to investigate the emergent local identities of requesting party-denying party.

Asymmetrical relationships of power are thus observable in the way the game is played (though not the types of asymmetry generally assumed by proponents of dominance theory (Lakoff, 1973), with boys responding to their being excluded by becoming silent and later leaving the scene). In this example the right to control the game is not exclusively based on gender, but rather is largely dependent on skill in the game; in fact, a month later, after the boys practised hard and became skilled players as well as competent organizers of the group, both boys and girls delivered bald imperatives to one another in the course of a game.

Later during the lunchtime period when the girls permitted boys to play with them, they once again made use of bald imperatives to tell boys how they should locate themselves in space, and what they needed to do with the rope. In the process of orchestrating this activity the terms 'girl' and 'boy' were used to differentiate teams, tell who was required to hold the end of a rope, and indicate how team members were to be positioned spatially.

Extract 10

((Organizing the game))

- 1 Sarah: KAY! GIRLS ON THIS SIDE,
 2 Girls on this side,

¹⁵ See Sacks (1992, II: 327) and Benwell and Stokoe (2006: 74–8) for a discussion of 'operative identities' in the midst of an offer sequence.

- 3 Janis: Here. Get it!
 4 ((referring to the end of the rope))
 5 Denzel: What the heck is it.
 6 Janis: ONE BOY! // HERE! Hold the end.
 7 Hold it! ((throwing rope to Denzel and pointing))
 8 Melissa: BOYS ON THAT SIDE!
 9 Get on the other side.
 10 Boys: ((Move to the side Melissa directs them))

In Extracts 9 and 10, girls displayed a clear ability to tell the boys what to do; this in part was because girls, as more skilled players, controlled access to the game. However, after a month's intensive practice the boys became almost as competent as the girls in jumping rope. One lunch period the boys and girls agreed to compete to see who could jump the longest. On this occasion the terms 'girl' and 'boy' were used to differentiate specific team groupings. In Extract 11, Angela constructs the participants who are 'racing against' one another as 'we' and 'you two'. Malcolm subsequently transforms this utterance into 'two girls versus two of the boys' and makes explicit the categories the pronouns reference in his proposal for how opposing teams should be constituted.

Extract 11

- 1 Angela: Okay, We'll racing against you two.
 2 Malcolm: Okay. Me and Ron versus two- (.) girls.
 3 Two girls versus two of the boys.

As the boys organized practice for the contest Malcolm used the terms 'girl' and 'boy' to orchestrate relevant spatial divisions in the group. More explicitly, Malcolm gave instructions that designated boys and girls as distinct groups, tied to separate territories, producing a form of gender exclusivity.

Extract 12

((The girls have practiced several minutes))

- 1 Malcolm: All the girls have to go bye bye.
 2 Girls: ((Girls start to move to another area))
 3 Malcolm: Okay. Now the boys get to practice.
 4 Ron: This is our home field.

By complying with the instructions that Malcolm gave them, the girls demonstrated their shared orientation to gender as a relevant feature of the local scene. Later that day girls celebrated their victories in the jump rope contest with elaborate high-five handslaps, while exclaiming 'Yeah the girls are winning!' Teams of girls against boys were clearly oriented towards in the children's talk during the activity of competitive jump rope.

Gender in disputes over rights and justifications

The previous examples demonstrate how girls and boys may explicitly differentiate their groups along gendered lines in the midst of competitive exchanges, disputes between teams or talk about competition. Gender categories were also invoked to lay claim to certain (naturalized) rights that adhered to particular types of activities, in attempts to exert positions of power. By examining such practices we can take stock of how cohorts of individuals attempt to achieve domination over others.

J. Butler (1990a: 140), discussing the playground as a site for the performance of gender, proposes that the 'stylized repetition of acts' in an exterior space can inform us about local notions of gender. As Speer (2005a: 63–5) cautions, though Butler talks about discourse and iterability, she does not analyse actual features of interaction in specific contexts to examine how participants constitute their gendered social worlds. Sociologist Thorne (1993: 82–3), investigating the play patterns of boys in the USA, has documented how in school playgrounds boys control as much as ten times more space than girls, if one considers large playing fields and basketball courts.

Example 13 provides a striking example of how both fifth grade boys and girls at Hanley School orient to gendered categories as relevant features differentiating groups in the midst of a dispute on the soccer field. The sequence occurs during school lunchtime as a group of eight fifth grade girls decide they will forgo their usual thirty minutes of eating and talking in favour of securing a soccer ball and beating the boys onto the field. As they begin to organize their teams on the soccer field, boys arrive, and the following debate occurs. In a move arguing his position that the soccer playing field rightfully belongs to an exclusive category of persons, boys, Miguel provides his justification with the account, 'It's more boys than girls.' (line 3).

Extract 13

((Ron, Miguel and Manuel approach the girls on the field.))

- 1 Emi: We have it today.
- 2 Ron: We play soccer every day.= okay?
- 3 Miguel: It's more boys than girls.
- 4 Emi: So? Your point?
- 5 Ron: This is our field.
- 6 Emi: It's not your field. Did you pay for it? No.
- 7 Your name is not written on this land.
- 8 Kathy: Mine is. K-A-T-H-Y! *((writing in the dirt))*

The players who are in contention for the field are identified with respect to their gender (line 3); Miguel argues that the difference in number of participants of his gender cohort playing soccer legitimates use rights to the field. His

account affiliates with Ron's immediately prior statement. Ron's account for why the field belongs to the boys formulates gender as associated with habitual activity, in what might loosely be considered a form of 'adverse possession', keeping out others and physically occupying it exclusively and openly as if it were their own for an extended period of time: 'We [the boys] play soccer every day.=okay?'

An alternative type of justification for rights to play occurs in what follows in Emi's talk. The 'so?' in the initial part of Emi's next turn (line 4) provides a dismissive stance, what Halliday and Hasan (1976: 207–17) describe as a "disclaimer" (an action that denies the relevance of a prior action rather than disagreeing with it) towards the previous utterance; here the 'so' treats the prior act as irrelevant. Emi in line 6 refutes Ron's statement that 'This is our [the boys'] field.' Emi's move interprets the boys' arguments as ill founded, as lacking legitimacy or a 'point'. In her response countering Ron and Miguel, Emi invokes another possible criterion legitimating use of the field when in line 6 she argues, 'Did you pay for it?' Here, in opposition to Miguel and Ron, who argue that the power to control adheres in a category that is gendered and legitimated through continuous possession, Emi counters, undermining this justification, by arguing that this matter should be determined with respect to whose parents have paid for the field, indexing access to wealth as the relevant criterion.

To understand better the types of explanations given here we need to examine the cultural underpinnings of certain types of accounts and categorizations. Evaldsson (2005), for example, in her analysis of categorizations among a multi-ethnic peer group in Sweden, finds it essential to make use of ethnographic knowledge of children and school settings to understand children's insults. She argues that 'categorizations are bound up with particular actions (category-bound activities) or characteristics (natural predicates) that both constitute and reflect conventional expectations of normative behaviours within a specific group and setting' (p. 768). Evaldsson found that in making negative assessments, possessions, clothing, limited language proficiency in Swedish, ethnicity and sexuality were all-important topical concerns relevant within the frame of insults. In order to understand why particular aspects of self were viewed in a negative light – for example, why Swedish-language proficiency was evaluated in a particular way – she found it important to make use of her ethnographic knowledge of the language ideology in the school setting. Indeed, Stokoe and Smithson (2002: 84) argue that despite claims to an 'unmotivated "analytic mentality"' researchers working within the conversation analysis framework 'use their background knowledge, either acknowledged or unacknowledged, in the process of doing analysis'.

The particular trope the boys utilize is one regularly invoked by those in authority in the playground. On the day of the soccer dispute, gender

differences were clearly oriented towards in the explanations that the male aide, the authority figure on the scene, gave to the girls for why they should vacate the field. The male college-aged playground assistant took the side of the boys, and addressed the girls explicitly with statements such as 'GIRLS! LET THE BOYS HAVE THEIR FIELD!' In Extract 14, we see that the playground assistant formulates the activity of the girls' standing up for their rights as 'giving me an attitude'.

Extract 14

- 1 Aide: Listen to me. And stop giving me an attitude.
- 2 Do you understand? (0.4) Do you understand?
- 3 Listen. I'm not gonna take this attitude.
- 4 You girls came out here on Monday and left the field.
- 5 The boys couldn't play soccer.

In Extract 15, the male playground assistant addressed the groups of protagonists as 'girls' (lines 1, 28) and 'boys' (line 2) and provided an account (indexing a category-bound activity) that affiliated with the reason provided by the boys: 'The boys are always here playing soccer' (line 25).

Extract 15

- 1 Aide: GIRLS! Go somewhere else.
 - 2 The boys are coming to play
 - 3 and you took over their field.
 - 4 That's not cool.
 - 5 Girls: NO!! (*traucous screaming for several seconds*)
 - 6 Melissa: Miss Harper said we could!!
- [30 seconds omitted]
- 25 Aide: The boys are always here playing soccer.
 - 26 You can go over there and play soccer?
 - 27 They can't go on the black top.
 - 28 You girls can go anywhere.
 - 29 And do what you're doing.
 - 30 Am I right or am I wrong.
 - 31 Melissa: Why can't they go anywhere.
 - 32 Aide: They can't go anywhere.
 - 33 They can't go onto the blacktop and play soccer.
 - 34 Somebody's gonna fall and
 - 35 [break their knee.
 - 36 Sandra: [Well that means [we-
 - 37 Kathy: [Well neither can we!

The aide provided descriptions of the two groups that differ with respect to routine category-bound activities as well as spaces; boys require a particular kind of space (because of the potential danger of falling), whereas girls can go 'anywhere'. The girls, however, do not go along with these depictions; Kathy

(line 37) explicitly challenges the aide, stating that girls as a group are subject to the same sorts of potential dangers of falling as are the boys.

Equally important with respect to the forms of justifications that are given are the types of sequencings that occur in the dispute. Emi (Extract 13) did not let stand the account that Miguel and Ron put forward regarding the boys' entitlement to space; instead she provided her own counter-explanation. Kathy (Extracts 13, 15) also took up an oppositional stance to the account justifying boys' rights to the soccer field. The girls' ability to deliver a return volley (Extracts 13, 15), and negotiate a definition of the situation, demonstrates that female participants to this interaction do not envision themselves as occupying an inferior status. Instead they demonstrate they can challenge hegemonic claims to social space, thus countering many gender stereotypes.

'Girl' as an epithet or stance carrier during conflict talk

Gendered address forms may occur in counter-moves during conflict talk. For example, during a game of hopscotch among African American migrant children, when a player attempted to usurp another's turn, the term '*woman*' was used in the counter-move by the complainant/referee: 'My go woman!' In the terminal position of a counter-move, the gendered address term does not function as a summons or a vocative, and neither is it required. Instead, it appears to function as a form of intensifier or a 'post-completion stance marker' (Schegloff, 1996b: 90–2) (an added segment that displays a 'retrospective or retroactive alignment toward' the completed utterance). Thus, when among Latina children playing hopscotch a jumper took exceptionally large steps rather than the small baby steps that are permitted when one's token is located at the far end of the hopscotch grid, a referee used the term '*niña*' as she yelled, 'QUÉ TIENES QUE METERTE EN LA RAYA DE AQUÍ LOS DOS JUNTOS AL OTHER PIE NIÑA!' ('You have to put yourself on this line with both feet very close together to the other foot girl!'). Here '*woman*' and '*niña*', used in terminal position during adversarial interaction in hopscotch, accompany actions that display a strong stance, functioning as intensifiers.

The term '*girl*' can be used to mark an oppositional stance in cross-sex adversarial interaction as well. In Extract 16, '*girl*' appears near the beginning rather than at the end of the turn. In line 11 the term '*girl*' is used as an epithet while locating a prior action as an infraction in a dispute resulting from a co-ed basketball game among third graders. At the end of the game Ken complained that Kathy had fouled him a number of times (lines 1–4). Sandra subsequently initiated a counter with 'You know what Ken?' Before she could complete her turn, Ken opposed her: 'Just shut up please.' Paul's next move, allying with Ken, made use of features of opposition turns within children's games

(M. H. Goodwin, 1998) – response cry + person descriptor + formulation of the offence: ‘oh’ + ‘girl’ + ‘big talker’ (lines 11–13). Following these moves the dispute developed into a series of insult/insult return sequences (M. H. Goodwin, 1990: 185–8) in lines 21–46.

Extract 16

((Kids are seated on the curb of basketball court after a game discussing fouls))

- 1 Ken: *((looking pained))*
 2 I know that I got fouled by Kathy, (0.4)
 3 almost ten *((hand gestures emphasizing beats))* (.)
 4 or eleven times
 5 [in this one game.
 6 Sandra: [You know what Ken?
 7 Sandra: [It's-
 8 Ken: [°Just shut up please.
 9 Donna: Heh heh heh!
 10 Sandra: *((smiles and gazes at Donna))*
 11 Paul: Oh girl you=-
 12 Ken: =Just shut up.=
 13 Paul: =Big talker. Man you-
 14 Paul: What size mouth do you wear.=
 15 Ken: =Is it any of your business? No::.
 16 Ken: Was I talking to you?
 17 Ken: Is this any of your business? No:::
 18 I [wasn't-
 19 Sandra: [I wasn't saying (more.)
 20 Paul: *((leaning into Sandra's face))*
 21 Come on Sandra. What size mouth do you wear.
 22 (1.0)
 23 Sandra: *((turns to Paul))* You know-
 24 You don't have a size mouth.
 25 *((dramatic head movements punctuate talk))*
 26 You come with- *((dramatic hand movements))*
 27 What you (.) were born with.=
 28 Paul: Batteries not included- eh heh-heh! *((looks at Ken))*
 29 (2.0)
 30 Vanessa: Oh. Please! Come on, Pau::l,
 31 Ken: Can I take your batteries out (of this thing)?
 32 *((Moves to Vanessa and makes movements on her back))*
 33 Vanessa: What kind of- what size- NOSE do you wear.
 34 Ken: Nose?
 35 Vanessa: You have a big nose.
 36 Ken: Do I have a big nose? *((said turning to Paul))*
 37 Paul: (Kind of)
 38 Vanessa: Eh heh-heh hah-hah hah-heh!

- 39 Isaac: You were shooting that three per cent nose.
 40 Vanessa: Do you buy your ponytail at Thrifty? *((to Ken))*
 41 Paul: You should see her Mom's nose boy.
 42 *((does large motion with hands))* Dnh dnh!
 43 Vanessa: My mom's nose,
 44 Paul: Looks like a sow's nose to me.
 45 Vanessa: No it's YOUR nose that's the mouth
 46 (mouse) was just stickin' out of the sky.

Here the person formulation ‘girl’ introduces a sequence that subsequently becomes a series of insult/insult return moves that entail not only gender, but also loquaciousness (indexed by size of mouth), size of nose and hairstyle. Sandra's initial move of objection (‘You know what Ken?’) is responded to with another question – itself an insult: ‘What size mouth do you wear’ (line 21). In her reply to Paul, Sandra counters with ‘You know- You don't have a size mouth. You come with- what you (.) were born with.’ (lines 23–7). Sandra treats Paul's move as serious and animatedly corrects him. With his phrase ‘Batteries not included’ Paul appends talk to Sandra's; his added segment (C. Goodwin, 1981) both reinstates the topic of Sandra's mouth, and (jokingly) provides a characterization of it as battery-operated (line 28).

In ritual insult sequences (Labov, 1972b) insults are responded to with counter-insults, in ‘exchange and return’ (Pomerantz, 1975: 16) paired moves. The recipient of an initial ritual insult (an insult about an attribute of the target known not to be literally true) must utilize the scene described in the prior speaker's talk to produce a second description which turns the initial insult on its head and is even more outrageous.¹⁶ The most artfully done insult sequences make minimal semantic shifts using the format of the prior utterance (M. H. Goodwin, 1990: 185–8). Here Paul and Ken act as a team (Goffman, 1959: 77–105) in the production of moves answered by the team of Vanessa and Sandra. Vanessa (in contrast to Sandra) plays the language game of ritual insult. Making use of the format provided in Paul's insult (‘What size mouth do you wear?’), Vanessa ties her utterance to Paul's; she replaces ‘mouth’ with ‘nose’, asking, ‘What size nose do you wear’ (line 33). Introducing a second insult she asks Ken ‘Do you buy your ponytail at Thrifty?’ (line 40). Paul (not Ken) responds and insults Vanessa's mom by comparing her nose with a sow's (lines 41, 44). Vanessa's next turn transforms Paul's move and makes him rather than her mother the target of the insult (line 45) about big noses.

Though typically described as an all-male genre (Kochman, 1981; Labov, 1972b), the ritual insult sparring that occurs between third graders Vanessa and Paul demonstrates a form of language game in which both female and male

¹⁶ For a critique of this formulation of sequencing in ritual insult sequences see Kochman (1981).

players participate on an equal footing. The type of competitive interaction developed here has resonances with the ways in which fifth grade girls at the same school took up opposition to the boys' claims to symbols of power, and eventually succeeded in restructuring the use of the soccer field from an exclusively male domain to one that was shared by both girls and boys (Extracts 13–15). Girls display their ability to provide adversarial moves that run counter to many stereotypical notions about the nature of girls' same-sex interactions as essentially cooperative.¹⁷ Typically cross-sex interactions are viewed in the context of male power and female subordination (Henley & Kramarae, 1991).¹⁸ Girls here, as in other contexts (see M. H. Goodwin, 1990; 2006), demonstrate an orientation towards pursuing rather than inhibiting moves expressing oppositional stances. With respect to the interaction at hand, girls hold their own in cross-sex interaction.

'Girl' as an intensifier in an assessment sequence

In Extract 16, we saw that the term 'girl' displayed a negative valence when used in adversarial interaction. However, the term 'girl' can also display a positive alignment with one's interlocutor. In Extract 17, the terms 'girl' and 'girlfriend' (used in the USA as a friendly or intimate form of address between women¹⁹) are used by co-participants as intensifiers or 'post-completion stance markers' (Schegloff, 1996b: 90–2). The terms occur in self-congratulatory celebratory commentaries by girls on their negative assessment of Sean and Janis, who have excluded everyone but Janis's best friends from the softball game. Girls consider the activity of talking about other people, particularly those who offend them, as enjoyable. In fact when girls have nothing in particular to do and activities such as playing a game or sport are proposed, girls opt for the activity of complaining about others, with utterances such as 'I like sitting here and being mad and talking about people.'

In the following extended example, Aretha, Sarah and Angela are upset because Janis's boyfriend Sean excluded them from a game of softball; in addition they are mad at Janis for her attitude of superiority, for example thinking she's better than others because she wears the latest fads. After explicating their complaints to each other about Sean and Janis, and contrasting their own perspective on Janis's need to be trendy, the excluded girls yell insults about

¹⁷ See Maltz and Borker (1982) and Coates (1996; 1997; 1998b).

¹⁸ While researchers concerned with dominance relations seek to avoid the essentialist explanations often present in deficit and difference views, Stokoe (2000: 554) notes they can unwittingly perpetuate dichotomized notions of male and female practices, 'blending a constructionist stance with cultural (essentialist) feminism'.

¹⁹ See http://encarta.msn.com/dictionary/_girlfriend.html.

the ugliness of Janis's clothes in her direction (lines 13–15), though they are not demonstrably attended.

Extract 17

- 1 Angela: Tell me naturally
 2 [Do you really like Janis?
 3 Aretha: [Janis does everything that's trendy.
 4 She thinks that she's so popular
 5 [Cause she stays up to date.
 6 Sarah: [Look at her now.
 7 (2.0)
 8 Sarah: I don't like being trendy.
 9 Angela: She's not even matching
 10 To tell [you the truth.
 11 Sarah: [I got this three years ago.
 12 Sarah: Trust [me.
 13 Aretha: [I HATE THOSE PANTS!
 14 (0.8)
 15 Aretha: THEY'RE UGLY!
 16 (0.8)
 17 Sarah: Ooooo! Girlfrie::nd!
 18 Aretha: They are! Look at 'em!
 19 They look like some boys' shorts.
 20 Angela: They look-
 21 Angela: Okay.
 22 Angela: They [look like- Shaka Zulu.
 23 Aretha: [You know how boys wear their shorts?
 24 They look like she's trying to be like-
 25 She wants to- *h match Sean! ((*eyeball roll*))
 26 (0.8)
 27 Aretha: So she's wearing some tren[dy-
 28 Sarah: ((*chanting*)) [Sean has a
 29 shirt like that! Sean has a shirt like that!
 30 ((*high fives Aretha*)) Girl Girl Girl!
 31 (0.4)
 32 Sarah: Girl! Girl! (0.3) Girl! eh heh-heh!
 33 Sarah: Gi(hh)rl^ofrien-! ((*continuing to clap hands*))

In response to the insults Aretha yells towards Janis (lines 13–15), Sarah produces a response cry 'Ooooo!' and the person formulation 'Girlfrie::nd!' (line 17). The 'Ooooo!' response cry in the initial part of the turn takes up a stance of joyful disbelief about Aretha's boldness in delivering such a direct insult. Sarah treats Aretha's insult as something unbelievable and risky to have said (as evidenced by Aretha's subsequent reaffirmation of her own talk in line 18). A second component of the turn, the address term 'Girlfrie::nd!', is

produced with heightened affect, and displays a close alignment with Aretha and her commentary about Janis and Sean. As the girls continue with their negative assessment, saying that Janis's shorts look like boys' shorts, and that she is attempting to match Sean's clothing (lines 19, 24–5), Sarah produces the address term 'girl' (lines 30–2), a shortened version of 'Girlfriend' (line 33), six times. In association with their talk, Sarah and Aretha execute elaborate high-five handclaps to celebrate their common worldview about someone they are gossiping about. In the midst of the clapping Angela raises her arms over Sarah's body to co-participate in the activity (see Figure 12.1).

In both Extracts 16 and 17 the address term 'girl' that is used functions as a *stance carrier*. Different forms of affect can be conveyed through the intonation and the gestures performed with the term, as well as through rhythm and repetition. The gestures that accompany the exclamation 'girl' in Extract 17 provide a way to say 'Bravo' or 'Good job' by slapping hands together in the air.²⁰ The activity of physically clapping, resembling girls' handclapping games (Gaunt, 2006), seals the pact that the girls have against the absent parties who offend them. Repetition provides further intensification of the action.

The girls' congruent view of events, expressed through the embodied way in which they joyfully produce the word 'girl', differs dramatically from the way in which the word 'girl' is produced in Extract 16; there 'girl' prefaces a turn in which opposition and insult are achieved while taking up a stance of derision with respect to co-present rather than absent parties. We see from Extracts 16 and 17 that the meaning of a term such as 'girl' depends very much on the actions in which it is embedded and the context in which it is used. While it has a pejorative valence when used in complaining directly about something done in someone's presence, the term can also have a positive connotation when congratulating someone about what she has said (in the present case, in response to a complaint about an absent offending party). The same person formulation can have very different meanings depending on the interactive context in which it emerges, as it takes its meaning from the activity-in-progress being produced through its utterance.

Discussion

This chapter has investigated some of the ways in which gender becomes observably oriented towards in the midst of children's spontaneous talk. We have examined the ways in which children take for granted, in both their folklore and dramatic play, a heterosexual ordering of females and males. Gender constitutes one of the important dimensions that is used for person formulations during adversarial talk that accompanies 'borderwork', maintaining the

²⁰ See www.englishdaily626.com/slang.php?063 for a definition of 'high five'.

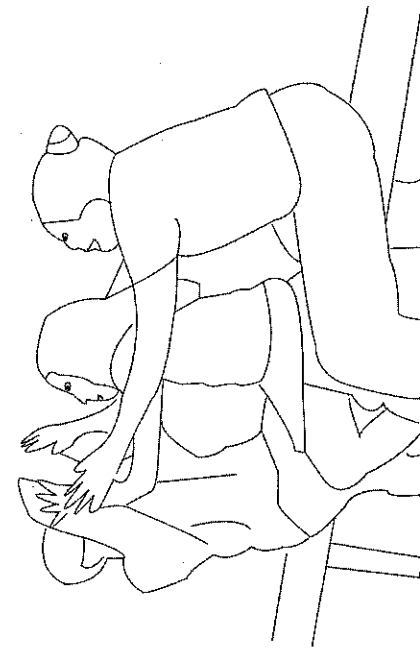


Figure 12.2

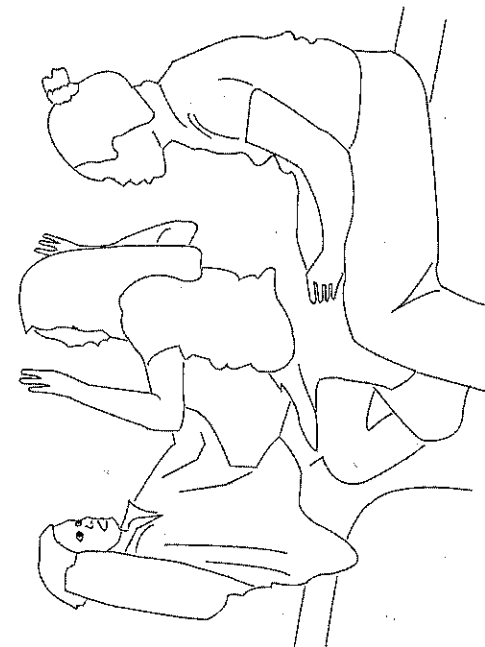


Figure 12.1

boundaries of their group. When boys intrude on girls' spaces, they go to considerable lengths to defend their social groups and spaces they occupy from others who differ with respect to gender. Girls and boys position themselves on opposing teams of 'girls versus boys' or 'girls against boys' in contests such as basketball and jump rope. Person references that are used as intensifiers obtain their meanings from the activity in progress, as well as the position of the term in the turn. The very same term ('girl') can be used to produce a stance that displays either heightened affiliation or derision.

Two different trajectories in dealing with disputes were observable in the younger and older mixed gender groups. Younger boys and girls enjoyed competitive co-ed sports such as basketball, and their disputes led to playful ritual insult sequences as a way of elaborating (and dissipating) complaints about sportsmanship. Older children, by way of contrast, competed for a place on the soccer field in heated, serious disputes. When boys produced accounts that made claims to exclusive entitlement based on gendered habitual use, girls countered such claims and argued about entitlement based on their parents' monetary contributions to the school. The different trajectories that develop from disputes related to sports are arguably related to how play and the 'other' are viewed at different points in the life cycle, with younger children maintaining more 'easeful'²¹ relations with each other, permitting playful rather than antagonistic argumentation.

An ethnographic approach combined with a close investigation of language in use permits us to examine the ways that cultural concerns enter into the accounts and genres through which dispute is performed and conduct is sanctioned. Social anthropologist Sigurd Berentzen (1984), investigating the social organization of a Norwegian nursery school (children ages 5–7), found that a girl who was thought to 'act so smart all the time' by bragging about the praise she had received from a teacher was eventually ostracized. This negative sanctioning demonstrates a clear orientation to a behaviour deemed inappropriate, though it is not specifically labelled as a gendered form of behaviour by the children themselves. Similarly, with respect to male groups Berentzen (1984: 32–3) found that by attending to how boys comment on their own and others' behaviour, he could locate particular classifications that the children themselves attend to; for example, 'tough' and 'dull' were used as assessment adjectives by males with respect to male persons. Ranking with respect to these attributes was observable in how queues were formed, who had to make offers of gifts (objects) in order to gain access to a playgroup, etc. Though the boys did not themselves explicitly locate these activities as distinctively 'male',

²¹ According to Schofield (1981: 72), 'boys' and girls' awareness of each other as possible romantic and sexual partners, concern about rejection in such relationships, and strong sex-typing of interests and activities result in a great deal of informal segregation of the sexes and rather ritualized and constricted types of behavior when cross-sex interaction does occur'.

their behaviour displayed a clear orientation to them as relevant phenomena in their social world.

In this chapter I have investigated how one aspect of person formulation, gender, is explicitly oriented towards by participants of a peer group. Indeed, both gender and age²² constitute important dimensions of borderwork. Yet while these dimensions of identity are significant, by far the most ubiquitous forms of comparison (and ones that are consequential for girls) are those conducted among same-age, same-sex members of the group. In the midst of their talk with each other, girls vigilantly monitor the actions of their peers and patrol their moral behaviour (M. H. Goodwin, 2002a; 2002b; 2006). However, they do not explicitly label their activities as 'girls' activities. Ethnographic description is important because it allows us to examine how forms of interaction not only vary with context (Danby & Baker, 1998; M. H. Goodwin, 1990) and may change over time (M. H. Goodwin, 2001; Kyratzis, 2001b), but, most importantly, matter for the participants.

Appendix

The full text of the song is as follows:

One by one, the *fun* has just begun.
 In the *bedroom*, dah dah, *dah-dah dah-dah*
 Two by two, he *took* off her shoe. [Refrain]
 Three by three, he *kissed* her knee. [Refrain]
 Four by four, we *knocked* on the door. [Refrain]
 Five by five, we *saw* a beehive. [Refrain]
 Six by six, we *picked* up sticks. [Refrain]
 Seven by seven, it *felt* like heaven. [Refrain]
 Eight by eight, we *closed* the gate. [Refrain]
 Nine by nine, the *twins* were fine. [Refrain]
 Ten by ten, let's *do* it again. [Refrain]

²² For example, blocking the intrusive and insulting actions of older girls (sixth graders) constitutes a critical concern of fourth grade girls at lunchtime, made explicit in complaints such as, 'You guys prove a lot of things to make fun of- kids who are *younger* than you.'