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“Whatever (Neck Roll, Eye Roll, Teeth Suck)": The Situated Coproduction of Social Categories and Identities through Stancetaking and Transmodal Stylization

This article examines the argumentative talk of a preadolescent girls' peer group demonstrating both the co-construction of microinteractional identities as well as the coproduction of macro-social identity categories, such as race, class, and gender. Activities of social aggression are performed through embodied styling and stancetaking in the midst of oppositional moves towards a "tagalong" girl. Through transmodal stylization girls openly mock an African American working-class girl using talk associated with wealthy white "Valley Girls," while simultaneously producing gestures associated with working-class black "Ghetto Girls." Through the use of different communicative modalities girls simultaneously index multiple culturally salient representations. [stance, style, peer group, conflict talk, identity]

Introduction

This article examines the argumentative talk of a preadolescent girls' peer group in order to demonstrate both the co-construction of microinteractional identities as well as the coproduction of macro-social identity categories, such as race, class, and gender. Specifically, we analyze activities of social aggression through embodied forms of styling and stancetaking occurring in the midst of oppositional moves toward a "tagalong" girl, someone who attempts to affiliate with a clique of girls but is never fully accepted by them. Contributing to the literature on styling the Other (Rampton 1999) and the more recent work on the sociolinguistics of stance (Jaffe 2009), we focus in particular on the *transmodal stylizations* of Sarah (a European American working-class member of the clique). Sarah constructs moves that openly mock Angela (an African American working-class girl) by using features of talk associated with wealthy white "Valley Girls," while simultaneously producing gestures associated with working-class black "Ghetto Girls." On an interactional level of analysis, we identify these performative acts as forms of transmodal stylization to refer to the ways that speakers can produce styles indexing multiple culturally salient representations simultaneously through the use of different yet mutually elaborating communicative modalities (C. Goodwin 2000; Pennycook 2007), rather than bringing them together into a neat, readily recognizable package, as is often the case in work

focusing on multimodal identity construction. Other participants ratify the depictions made by Sarah, by laughing at them and producing similar characterizations, thus co-participating in the activity of constructing Angela as marginal to the group.

These acts of transmodal stylization and stancetaking not only accomplish a great deal of interactional work that is consequential in the group's immediate face-to-face interactions. On a broader sociostructural level of analysis the repeated performance of these acts, in concurrence with their broader circulation in popular culture, may also have longer lasting consequences, helping to create and reify social categories beyond the peer group. As argued by Jaffe (2009:8), in taking up stances speakers "project, assign, propose, constrain, define, or otherwise shape the subject positions of their interlocutors." By connecting these levels of analysis, we demonstrate how moment-to-moment interactional identities are linked to the production of more lasting social categories. In our specific example, Angela is both marginal in the local social order and positioned as a poor, black, "Ghetto Girl," with no likelihood of success in the broader social order.

Ethnographic Background

The forms of face-threatening sequences we will examine occur among a particular clique of six preadolescent girls (M.H. Goodwin 2006), who had been friends since kindergarten, on the playground at a progressive school in Southern California, which we call Hanley School. The forms of microaggression we examine target the tagalong girl, Angela. Children of diverse ethnicities and social classes attend the school, whose mission is to promote interethnic understanding (at which, as evidenced by the data below, they have not yet fully succeeded).

In the fifth grade, members of the clique included mostly upper-middle-class girls of differing ethnicities, including Aretha (African American), Janis and Brittany (European American), Emi and Melissa (Japanese American), and Sarah (European American), the only working-class member of the group. All of the girls were petite. In their talk among each other, the girls often openly discussed upper-middle-class activities. This often left Sarah unable to fully participate, or chastised for not understanding relative symbols of wealth (i.e., selecting a Miata as the car she drove during a game of "house"). The other girls in the clique compared how many houses their families owned, what kinds of cars their families had, how many airplane trips to foreign countries or ski resorts they had taken during a year, what brands of clothing they bought, what Cotillion dance school they were attending, or their participation in elite sports. The girls fully embraced the values of consumerism of their local, upper-middle-class Los Angeles consumer culture, heavily influenced by Hollywood values, where people are ranked in terms of wealth and prestige.

While it is possible to specify the race and ethnicity of the girls in this study, this feature of the girls' identity was rarely ever directly articulated in their interaction with each other. This could be due in part to the prevailing ideology of "colorblindness" (Bonilla-Silva 2006) or "colormuteness," as Pollock (2005) refers to it, in which students in American schools are taught not to see color and not to talk about it. It is also important to note that race and ethnicity can be constructed through repeated category-bound activities (Sacks 1972), rather than simply through explicit labeling. In other words, race is highly visible and need not be mentioned if repeated acts of discrimination, for example, focus on one racialized target over others. Below we demonstrate how race and class, which are consistently bound together in the figure of Angela, and how the intersectionality of multiple identity categories (race, class, gender) is created and sustained in talk.

With regard to race, it is well known that schools provide one of the principal institutions where "people acquire some version of the rules of racial classification and of their own racial identity" (Lewis 2004:4). In their ethnographic study of how preschool children use racial-ethnic awareness and knowledge in their social relationships Van Ausdale and Feagin (2001:1) report on the overtly racist comments

white preschoolers make about their African American peers. When a teacher asked a three-year-old child why she moved her cot to the other side of the classroom she was told "Because I can't sleep next to a nigger." Scott (2003) describes similar forms of "racial positioning" among black and white first graders at two mixed elementary schools in the eastern United States.

In order to differentiate in-group from out-group members of the group, girls at Hanley School constantly evaluated one another in terms of their access to the symbols of upper-middle-class status. Forms of negative commentary, rude behavior, ridicule, degradation, and exclusion developed as girls positioned Angela, an African American working-class speaker of African American English (Alim 2004), who followed the clique of girls and desperately wanted to play with them, as outside the clique (M.H. Goodwin 2006:210–240). For example, on one occasion Sarah made Angela confess her tagalong status. Angela mentioned her marginal position in the clique, saying "You guys know, that like I just, you know, follow you guys wherever you guys go." Sarah then prompted Angela, "Say it. "You:: (.) are:: (.) I: am a (.)" Angela responded with "I'M A TAGALONG °girl°!" Another day when Angela attempted to join the group she was asked directly by Janis, "Angela do you have to follow us, everywhere we go?" One lunch period in fourth grade when she made a bid to play jump rope, she was told "You're not even here." Numerous similar examples occurred in the over 80 hours of videotaped and 20 hours of audiotaped conversation collected as the children ate lunch and played during recess. (For a more complete discussion of methodology see M.H. Goodwin 2006:3–5). The methodology of extended ethnographic fieldwork, coupled with close analysis of children's talk, allowed for the explication of the dynamics of interaction within children's groups in particular contexts of use.

Stancetaking and Stylization

Recent literature in sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology has attempted to bring together the analytical frames of stance and stancetaking in face-to-face interaction with the sociolinguistic focus on style and stylization in relation to social categories such as race or gender. Jaffe, for example, argues that "the concept of stance is a uniquely productive way to conceptualize the processes of indexicalization that are the link between individual performance and social meaning" (2009:4). In a similar manner, but focused on sociolinguistic variation and social meaning, Eckert (2001) has argued that stylization involves the creative agency of speakers and their abilities to disassemble and reassemble indexical "bundles" or packages. The ability of speakers to pull apart and put back together aspects of speech and the body suggests that speakers are often aware of the indexical meanings associated with particular ways of communicating, and more importantly, that they manipulate them in order to create meaning, as seen, for example, in Barrett's (1999) analysis of drag queen performances.

As Irvine (2001) and Jaffe (2009) have noted, taking a stance or selecting a style can only be relevant in a broader system of distinction in which speakers' choices are always significant (because they could have very well made others). Importantly for our analysis of the performative acts of transmodal stylization and stancetaking in this article, Jaffe notes that styling is not only always a form of stancetaking, but "speaker stance in styling is operationalized through processes of selection (of socio-linguistic variants) and elements of performance that deploy a range of semiotic resources" (2009:14). In our examples below, not only do we demonstrate the interactional work done by styling, that is, that stylization is a form of stancetaking and positioning of self and other, but we also examine how speakers can manipulate the voice and the body, transmodally, to create local and broader social meaning. These performances are relevant both to the interaction at hand as well as to the continuing production of race, class, and gender beyond the girls' peer group.

The face-threatening activities we examine are performed by displaying stance, examined here as affective alignment, and styling the Other (Rampton 1999). *Affective stances* “refer to a mood, attitude, feeling and disposition, as well as degrees of emotional intensity vis-à-vis some focus of concern” (Ochs 1996:410). Rampton, linking stylization with stancetaking, argues that when someone stylizes a voice they “evoke a particular field of connotations . . . and invite the recipient(s) to construe it as a meta-level representation that is somehow relevant to the interaction on hand” (2006:304). The job of the recipient is to link the new voice to a particular indexical valence or connotational field. Rampton (2006:305) cautions that stylization can vary in the clarity of its imagery, for both participants and analysts. While sometimes it can evoke a rather particular social type, on other occasions “Bakhtin’s famous dictum about words ‘tasting’ of the contexts in which they have lived their socially-charged lives (1981:293) points to the kind of subtle social coloration or tincture that it can bring to an activity” (Rampton 2006:305).

Work on stance in sociolinguistics examines the sociolinguistic resources and repertoires, or “forms of variation that have established social indexicalities” used to signal positionality (Jaffe 2009:10). Sociolinguistic researchers have examined linguistic features such as the phonology (Bucholtz 1999; Eckert 2001; Kiesling 2009) morphology, prosody, and lexis (Bucholtz 1999, 2009; Johnstone 2009; Kiesling 2004) used to display stance. Work on stance from the ethnomethodological perspective of talk-in-interaction has been concerned with how structurally different types of signs—talk and gesture—mutually elaborate each other in the course of ongoing conversation, producing contextual configurations (C. Goodwin 2000). As speakers and hearers collaborate in the production of talk they monitor one another’s bodily alignments, gestures, and talk from moment-to-moment (C. Goodwin 1981).

In this article we explore forms of stancetaking or positioning toward a present participant, a tagalong girl, as well as stylization across modalities—looking at the convergence of style and stance in everyday interaction. We examine practices of keying (Goffman 1974) talk through transmodal stylization, the creative, agentive, and strategic performing of two different communicative styles simultaneously across verbal and nonvocal modalities. Whereas much of the work on dialogic syntax and stance (Dubois 2007) as well as assessment from a conversation analytic perspective (Pomerantz 1984) examines forms of explicit evaluation in verbal interaction (“That’s horrible,” “I’m amazed”), we want to examine more indirect forms of stancetaking toward a present participant, made possible through stylization across modalities.

Work on style and stylization (Alim 2004; Eckert and Rickford 2001; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Rampton 1999) has made productive use of Bakhtin’s (1981) notion of stylization—“an artistic representation of another’s linguistic style, an artistic image of another’s language”—with many focusing on “styling the Other,” using language and discursive practice “to appropriate, explore, reproduce or challenge influential images and stereotypes of groups that they *don’t* themselves (straightforwardly) belong to” (Rampton 1999:421). As Bell (1999) suggests, it can sometimes be extremely difficult for the analyst to distinguish between self and other. Rampton captures this difficulty by noting, “Within single stretches of speech, stereotypic elements from elsewhere mingle with habitual speech patterns, and in the process, they generate symbolically condensed dialogues between self and other” (1999:422).

In most of this work the focus is almost entirely on speech, that is, the central concern is the unimodal analyses of linguistic structure. However, in the case that we analyze here, the stylist is making use of speech and embodied gesture that seem to be indexing different personas in the context of ongoing interaction. What we have is not the neat package of multimodality. Instead, this stylistic disjunction is something that upon first viewing leads to a cognitive dissonance of sorts, where the stylist is styling not the self, and not just one other, but two, distinct others . . . and doing so simultaneously and across communicative channels. At the time of the filming the

girls in our study often appropriated speech similar to that of the upper-middle-class character Cher, that Alicia Silverstone played in the 1995 comedy film *Clueless*, which they identified as "Valley Girl." In Sarah's stylization of "named group styles" (Eckert 2001), which are often extremely salient, she, a young white working-class girl, manages to vocally produce a California "Valley Girl" (MacNeil and Cran 2005) while gesturally producing a "Ghetto Girl" (Pough 2004:128). In doing so, she simultaneously indexes the bipolar racial narrative in the United States, specifically of stereotypical white and black femininities, and at the same time indexes the opposite poles of social class stratification: the extreme wealth of places like "Beverly Hills"¹ (a neighborhood with the largest homes in Los Angeles and the nation) and the tragic poverty of others like "South Central L. A.," (an area associated with urban decay and street crime). As Ochs writes, in relation to Bakhtin's notion of *ventriloquation* (articulating meanings through the performance of others' voices) "accounts of whose message and whose intentions are being communicated become highly textured, incorporating not only the speaker/writer but a range of social identities and relations" (1988:20). These would include indexes of social relations, where class and race are foregrounded. Despite the fact that race was never directly "articulated" (through speech) in the recorded conversations, our analysis of transmodal stylization and stance display shows how participants can certainly "articulate" (with and beyond speech) race, particularly in conjunction with class, through coded stylized performances.

Conflict Talk

Within studies of everyday conversation, considerably more attention has been devoted to analysis of cooperative talk and politeness phenomena than to argumentative talk (Briggs 1996; M.H. Goodwin 1990). Indeed, much of the research in conversation analysis is dominated by the notion that speakers organize talk in ways that preserve social solidarity while avoiding conflict (Heritage 1984). Such notions persist despite numerous studies of conflict talk by sociologists and anthropologists.² Importantly, studies of children's talk³ have shown that conflict is ubiquitous in children's conversations, and opposition moves are built in ways that clearly demonstrate an orientation towards displaying disagreement rather than deference, and, moreover, can be blatantly face threatening.

Children's opposition moves provide the opportunity to register one's affective alignment toward the other, and in so doing to engage in what Goffman has defined as "character contests" (1967: 237–238)—"moments of action [during which] the individual has the risk and opportunity of displaying to himself and sometimes to others his style of conduct" (1967:237). In insult sequences, as in genres such as the Italian *Contrasto* (Pagliai this issue), French-Algerian parental name calling (Tetreault this issue) or Tzotzil civilized arguments (Haviland this issue), participants must collaborate to sequence their talk, providing next moves closely tied to prior moves. However, at points the clique members piled on (Haviland 1977) a series of insulting commentaries in response to an oppositional move by Angela, rather than allowing her equal turn space.

Gender and Language

In sharp contrast to the paradigm that asserts that females are socialized to be nonconfrontational, ethnographic work and recent studies in psychology of adolescent girls have documented forms of social aggression (Underwood 2003) in girls' interactions. According to Currie and Kelly, "the beginning of the new millennium witnessed a virtual explosion of mainstream books and movies portraying girls as schoolyard bullies and backstabbing competitors for popularity" (2008:426). Our ethnographic perspective asserts that in order to understand the complexity of girls' groups we need to examine the ecology of girls' activities and look at the detailed

structuring and articulation of both cooperative as well as competitive activities (M.H. Goodwin 1990, 2006).

Psychologists studying bullying frequently distinguish direct or overt acts of verbal and physical aggression, associated with males, from forms of social exclusion, associated with females (Archer and Coyne 2005). A more nuanced position is taken by Galen and Underwood, who state that "social aggression is directed towards damaging another's self-esteem, social status, or both, and may take such direct forms as a verbal rejection, negative facial expressions or body movements, or more indirect forms such as slanderous rumors or social exclusion" (1997:589). In our research we find quite direct forms of social aggression and examine ways of openly mocking and insulting someone in a girls' peer group.

In order to situate the particular instances of mocking transmodal stance display and stylization we are investigating, we will first provide a brief ethnographic sketch of the peer group within which these interactions are situated. We describe forms of microaggressions that the tagalong girl Angela dealt with on a daily basis, and were unique to her experience with the clique. Over a 3-year period of ethnographic research no similar moves of mockery were observed toward any other participant in the peer group. In this article, we not only show how stance and style converge in the marginalization of a child, but also demonstrate how the convergence of stance and style, as modes of analyses, contributes to our understanding of conflict in interaction. In countering prior talk, the speaker provides a caricature of the target; she provides a stereotypical gesture associated with the figure she is styling, "Ghetto Girl," which has a negative valence.

Transmodal Stylization and Stancetaking in Action

We now examine three instances of transmodal stylization and stancetaking occurring in close succession in the interactions between members of the clique and Angela. In the following data occurring during lunch when the girls were in fifth grade, Sarah is admonishing her (upper-middle-class) friends to not try to rip her lunch bag open because she must take it home to recycle. Angela, the tagalong girl, responds to this report with a counter move, "Who cares." In response Sarah dismisses what Angela says, with "Whatever! I don't waste my things," and "Don't tell me anything Angela:: Oh my go:d!" Both "Whatever" and "Oh my god" are language forms appropriated from the film *Clueless*. Such expressions are found in what Carmen Fought describes as a "California dialect," which circulates among youth she terms California "Valley Girls" (MacNeil and Cran 2005). Girls at Hanley School used this term to refer negatively to hyperfeminine white girls. For example, on seeing a teenage white girl strutting around the playground in a short skirt, Angela commented, "Like-totally, Valley Girl."

Simultaneously with the Valley Girl talk Sarah produces Ghetto Girl gestures, sucking her teeth, rolling her eyes, (Rickford and Rickford 1976), and producing a marked neck roll (see Figure 1), a gesture used by some black women across class lines, but generally stigmatized by dominant culture and used as a gesture to index black working-class women. All the other girls laugh at the caricature that is produced, thus displaying their alignment toward the stance taken by Sarah toward Angela. As we see in Angela's response below (line 26), she interprets their action as "nasty."

Example 1⁴

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---|
| 1 | Sarah: | Oh my god Emi! ((looking at lunch bag)) |
| 2 | Brittany: | eh huh huh huh! |
| 3 | Sarah: | My lu(h)nch box! |
| 4 | Brittany: | eh heh heh! |
| 5 | Sarah: | I have to recycle it. °eh heh-heh! |
| 6 | Brittany: | eh heh-heh heh! |

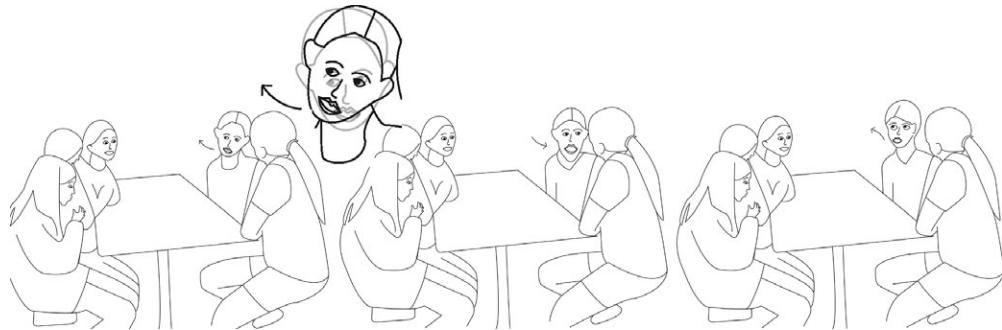


Figure 1
Neck Roll

- 7 Melissa: (You don't like this.)
 8 Sarah: Oh- stop it! ((to Melissa))
 9 Nobody rip my lunch again.
 10 Brittany: ((reaches for Sarah's lunch))
 11 Sarah: No::! I- Seriously I have to like-
 12 You know- ((scrunches up bag))
 13 Emi: Reuse it. Eh heh heh!
 14 Brittany: Hih-hih hih-hih-hih
 15 Sarah: No. No. Seriously I have to like-
 16 You know-
 17 °There's food in there.
 18 So I- I have to take it back home.
 19 Angela: Who ca:res.
 20 → Sarah: ((neck roll, teeth suck)) Whatever.=
 21 Melissa: Emi.
 22 Sarah: [I don't waste my things.
 23 Melissa: [Emi! Emi!
 24 → Sarah: ((teeth suck and eye roll))
 25 Emi: [eh heh hah hah!
 26 Brittany: [eh heh hah hah! Eh Hih hih!
 27 → Sarah: ((neck roll)) ((teeth suck))
 28 Sarah: Don't tell me anything Angela::
 29 → ((teeth suck, neck roll and eye roll))
 30 [Oh my go::d!
 31 Brittany: [eh heh hih-hih!
 32 Melissa: Eh heh [hah hah hah hah
 33 Brittany: [eh hih-hih-hih-hih
 34 Melissa: eh! Ah hah hah hah hah!
 35 Emi: heh heh heh heh heh!
 36 Angela: You guys are nasty. You guys are just ()
 37 Melissa: Like- you're not nasty,

An important indicator of class identity is consumption style. In Lines 17–18 Sarah expresses concern about her lunch bag being ripped because she has to recycle uneaten food the next day. Her concern with being thrifty contrasts with the stance taken by the other clique members, upper-middle-class girls who think nothing of throwing away unwanted food. In Line 19 Angela expresses indifference to Sarah's complaint that she has to recycle her lunch tomorrow. Sarah responds by using *Clueless Valley Girl* talk with "Whatever" (Line 20) and "oh my god" (Line 30) while

producing Ghetto Girl gestures with her teeth suck, eye roll, and neck roll (Lines 20, 24, 27, 29). Though they make use of different resources, both the Valley Girl talk and the Ghetto Girl gesture index Angela's inappropriate "attitude," despite the fact that Angela does not in fact use the neck roll. Three of the girls who are present laugh at the keying of Sara's embodied talk. Angela, in contrast, remains quite solemn, and critiques them, saying "You guys are nasty," (Line 36), showing that her interpretation of their actions is not humorous.

As named group styles discussed in the literature on popular youth culture and the public sphere, they are important to consider in some detail. Pough (2004) in *Check It While I Wreck It* discusses the "Ghetto Girl" as the extremely reductive, but all too pervasive, mass-mediated representation of working-class, black femininity, seen in everything from Hollywood movies, TV commercials, to comedy routines. A brief examination of African American comedian/actor Martin Lawrence's character, "Sheneneh," provides an exemplar of the gestures we find in Sarah's talk, occurring in a similar sequential position: framing oppositional talk. In media depictions, the black women who perform the neck roll (like Sheneneh below) are usually also portrayed as loud, tough, argumentative, and even combative.

The example below is the first episode in season one of Martin Lawrence's popular television show *Martin* to introduce the character "Sheneneh" (played by Martin Lawrence himself). In this scene, working-class Sheneneh confronts Pam and Gina, African American neighbors, in the hallway of their apartment complex by calling out to them, "Look at the little business women." Sheneneh proceeds to mock Gina by claiming that she can "tame" Gina's man better than Gina herself can, as she produces wildly exaggerated sexual gestures (to which the audience laughs hysterically). Gina's friend, Pam, defends Gina by telling Sheneneh, "Girl, mind yo ugly business and get back into yo apartment, okay?" Sheneneh then threatens to "bust" Pam in her head and the confrontation turns physical.

As Pam begins to get her shoe to hit Sheneneh, Gina tells Pam that Sheneneh is not worth hitting. In response, Sheneneh produces a counter action, prefaced with a neck roll:

Example 2

- 1 Gina: ((*to Pam*)) Put your shoe back on.
- 2 She is not worth it.
- 3 Sheneneh: Ah: ((*neck roll*))
- 4 Not worth it,
- 5 Oh: my goodness.
- 6 That ain't what your ma:n think!
- 7 Let me tell you something Miss Elvis.
- 8 You ain't heard the last of me, all right?
- 9 Girl I should bust you in your head right now!

The gesture produced here by a fictional Ghetto Girl is similar to the gesture that Sarah adopts in connection with her Valley Girl talk. While Valley Girl talk produces a reductive representation of wealthy, white femininity, the class-dimension and sociohistorical oppression of working-class Black women—living under "the triple threat" of subjugated class, race, and gender positions—has very different social valences. We return to these ideas in the conclusion, as we discuss the array of face-threatening acts produced toward Angela on this occasion.

A second example of the exaggerated neck roll and eye roll occurs in the midst of disagreement between Angela and Sarah, 5 seconds after the last example. Angela (Line 4) produces a negative assessment of Sarah: "She's a little bit of psy:cho." and "You're a psychopath." (Line 8) Rather than responding with a next action in kind, a return insult, however, Sarah reprimands her with commands: "Don't- don't tell me

I'm a psycho Angela." (Line 6) and "Don't tell me anything ((teeth suck)) Angela." (Line 10).

Example 3

- 1 Angela: They're filming here,
 2 Sarah: Yeah like- I don't even care.
 3 Brittany: Ha ha hah!
 4 Angela: She's a little bit of psy:cho.
 5 Brittany: eh heh heh heh!
 6 Sarah: Don't- don't tell me I'm a psycho Angela.
 7 You have a proble:m.
 8 Angela: You're a psychopath.
 9 Sarah: [((exaggerated neck roll, eye roll while standing))
 10 [Don't- don't tell me anything ((teeth suck)) Angela.
 11 Brittany: Eh heh-heh!
 12 Angela: Get out of [my face. Because- ((lightly play hits Sarah))
 13 Sarah: [At least I didn't- ((smiles and lightly
 14 play hits Angela's arm))
 15 Angela: [Stinky breath.
 16 Sarah: [put a- ((light hit on Angela's arm))
 17 Sarah: At least I didn't put a marker ink in my fa:ce.
 18 ((play hits))
 19 Kathy: [eh [heh! heh heh heh!
 20 Brittany: [eh heh-heh heh heh heh
 21 Melissa: eh heh heh! Heh-heh!
 22 Angela: Well at least I can color much better than you.
 23 Or draw much better than you.
 24 Sarah: I'm offended.
 25 Angela: WRITE much better than you.
 26 Sarah: I'm offended.
 27 That's really gonna get me somewhere in life.
 28 Emi: eh heh heh!
 29 Melissa: eh hah hah-heh!

This neck roll (Line 9) functions as a form of intensifier, with Sarah standing up and producing ever more exaggerated neck roll movements while producing her bald imperative, "Don't tell me anything." And indeed, the neck roll is treated as confrontational and argumentative by Angela, as she states in no uncertain terms, "Get out of my face. Because—" (Line 12). Angela's talk is produced without laughter while directly facing Sarah, and lightly hitting her. Sarah initiates a next move with a reciprocal playful hitting of Angela's arm as she says, "At least I didn't—" which is expanded in Line 17 with "At least I didn't put a marker ink in my fa:ce".

The phrase "at least I don't do X" is a language resource that is used to make comparisons between current speaker and hearer and provide negative assessments of the target, as in utterances such as "At least I don't get my shoes at Payless." In other insult sequences later on during the same lunch period Angela provided depictions of hypothetical events; these were sequenced with responses by clique members with descriptions of Angela's actual situation, not being able to afford braces and being friendless.

Example 4

- Angela: Well at least when I sit on the tree
 The branch doesn't break.

Kathy: Well at least all our teeth are gonna be straight
 When we grow up because we all had braces.

Melissa: Yeah. Or we have them now.

Example 5

Angela: At least I don't wear holey underwear.

Kathy: At least- at least we have friends.

Angela responds to the initiation of Sarah's "At least I didn't—" (Line 13) utterance with a description carrying a negative valence, though not one that was actual: "Stinky breath" (Line 15). In response to Angela, Sarah in Line 17 provides a depiction of something that Angela actually did (writing with a magic marker on her face).

The audience to insult sequences plays an important role through their evaluations of the contest under way (Labov 1972). Laughter keys the ways girls who are not principal participants receive the unfolding moves, and align in shifting coalitions.⁵ While in Line 4 Brittany laughs at Angela's generic insult to Sarah (positively assessing her move), in Lines 11, 19–21 Brittany, Kathy, and Melissa align with Sarah's moves to insult Angela. Angela introduces a new comparison comparing her coloring, drawing, and writing skills (Lines 22–23, 25), which are responded to in an ironic way by Sarah with "I'm offended. That's really gonna get me somewhere in life." (Lines 26–27) Sarah undercuts Angela's comparison by arguing that such abilities are of little value for future career goals.

A final, revealing example of the neck roll in action occurs as an indexical sign referring to Angela, in Sarah's keying or styling of Angela herself in response to an insult. The evaluative commentary constitutes a form of characterization and positioning of the target. By looking at the pragmatic force of transmodal stylization within extended sequences of talk we can investigate how such actions are framing the talk. To understand this keying we must first look at the larger sequence in which it is embedded.

In the language game of ritual insult (Labov 1972) the recipient of an initial insult about an attribute of the target known not to be literally true should utilize the scene described in prior speaker's talk to produce a second description which turns the initial insult on its head and is even more outrageous. Each of the two players in the contest of wit gets a turn to respond (much as the sequencing between Angela and Sarah in Examples 1 and 3). While at Hanley School ritual insult sequences were quite common among boys, this is the only instance of insult bouts I observed among girls. Some girls explicitly commented on their excitement of participating in the activity. In response to a hypothetical description by Angela referring to bra sizes, "At least I don't wear a size eighty five," Melissa responded with "Rrr! This is funny!"

The sequence in Example 6 opens with a chant-like cadence from Angela, with four beats to each intonation unit. Building directly on Sarah's talk about "getting somewhere in life" in Lines 26–27 of Example 3, Angela depicts Sarah in a hypothetical future job scenario working at a discount store, Pick and Save (Lines 1–2). In response, the five girls who are audience to the contest of wit participate by evaluating Angela's move positively through laughter. The sequence, however, does not lead to further regular ABAB rotations of turns between the two players. Rather than providing a reciprocal action that describes a parallel scene, in next turns, Sarah, Emi, and Brittany counter her: "So? Are you going to be working? You're not even going to be working!" and "You can't find a job anywhere." (Lines 4–10) Melissa chimes in, arguing that Angela will have the low-status job of cleaning out the gutters (Line 14), a job associated with dirt and debris. These multiple negative depictions of Angela occur in quick succession, aligning with Sarah's initial negative portrayal of Angela. While Angela retorts that such a job would be preferable to working another place, (Lines 19–20), others counter with degraded images of

her, describing her as rejected by all (Line 21), occupying the status of a chimney sweep (Line 22), a job associated with black soot, and not even being accepted by the gutters (Line 23).

Example 6

- 1 Angela: When you grow up,
 2 you gonna be working
 3 at Pick and Sa:ve.
 3 E, M, B, K: ah hah hah ha [HAH HAH HAH HAH! Huh-huh
 4 Sarah: [So? Are you going to be working?
 5 Emi: You're not [even going to be working!
 6 Brittany: [At Sears.
 7 Sarah: I know!
 8 Angela: [So: you gonna be-=
 9 Brittany: [eh-heh heh-heh.
 10 Brittany: [You can't find a job anywhere.
 11 Melissa: [Angela you'(hh) gonna be-
 12 Melissa: You're gonna-
 13 Emi: heh-heh-heh.
 14 Melissa: You'll be cleaning out [the gutters.
 15 Emi: [Everywhere will-
 16 eh heh-heh!
 17 M, E, B: eh heh hih hih hih!
 18 Sarah: ah hah hah!
 19 Angela: Well that's better than working
 20 [^at the
 21 Emi: [Everywhere will reject you.
 22 Kathy: Chimeny Woman.
 23 Melissa: *h As if the gutters [are going to accept her.
 24 [eh heh!
 25 Angela: At least I don't eat jello!
 26 B,M,E,K, S: eh hah hah hah hah!
 27 Brittany: Heh heh heh huh huh!
 28 Sarah; At least I don't-
 29 ((neck roll movement)) °do like this!

Angela introduces her depiction of Sarah with an intonation contour inviting a playful exchange. Here the insults from other girls concern attributes of the target assumed to index her future life trajectory (what the girls assume to be true). During the activity of playing house the roles that the clique members design for themselves are famous actresses or models owning luxury cars (M.H. Goodwin 2006:84–91). Girls during the insult sequences highlight their access to wealth that enables them to have straight teeth (Example 5). While middle-class girls of the group compare themselves with reference to access to material wealth, they depict Angela as poor and unemployable in insult sequences with her. They define her as either sweeping chimneys, cleaning the gutters, or without a job (Lines 14–23). The girls' depictions of her resonate all too well with the actual statistics of black poverty and higher rates of unemployment between their respective groups.⁶

As seen in previous examples, with the phrase “at least I don't do X” the speaker makes herself the subject of an utterance initiated with “at least” which compares herself favorably with the degraded situation of the target or hearer. In Lines 23–24 in response to Angela's “At least I don't eat jello!” (Line 25)⁷ Sarah responds, “At least I don't—” and then performs the neck roll to reduce Angela to a version of the stereotypical mass mediated “Ghetto Girl,” styling the black working-class Other to define herself in opposition. This occurs despite the fact that Angela herself does not

use those stereotypical gestures and that Sarah is relatively working class compared to all other girls in the peer group. Both are situated at the margins of the clique. Brittany and Emi laugh at Sarah for having to recycle her lunch, thus indexing her lower social class. Extrapolating again to the sociostructural level, one could say that Angela is twice removed from the center (due to her marginal race and class positions) while Sarah, who is only once removed (due to her marginal class status), works hard to negotiate her position by continually pointing out Angela's double difference. In doing so, she simultaneously pushes Angela further out and preserves her own position closer to the center.

Further, the convergence of stance and style, as modes of analyses, allowed us to see the everyday interactional instantiation of the "systemic and intersecting oppressions" (Pough 2004:128) faced by many black girls and women. The specific context is a liberal school in southern California with an explicit mission to help children become sensitive to everyday racism, while completely ignoring class difference.⁸ It may not come as a surprise, therefore, to hear children indexing class affiliation in their talk, while hearing nothing explicit about race. However, moving beyond just hearing, and looking transmodally at the various ways girls produce difference, we found that stancetaking and styling can operate as both verbal and embodied tools in the production of a form of covert denigration.

Conclusion

While generally in ritual insult sequences interlocutors take turns exchanging insults, each building from the prior in reciprocal moves, in Example 6 clique members pile on a number of derogatory descriptions of Angela, addressing her working-class status, and laughing together about these depictions. Certainly in these data, there is the simultaneous conflict and cooperation that others in this issue, such as Haviland, Pagliai, and Tetreault have found. However, conflict also works in concert with serious and hurtful practices of person description when there is an imbalance of exchanges. These stylizations work, as do other regularly occurring face-threatening acts, to position Angela as someone who is a member of a very different social class/racial category from the other girls.

Looking closely at girls' talk allows us not only to move beyond typifications of girls as fundamentally concerned with cooperative discourse. More broadly, the convergence of stance and style, as analytic modes of investigating talk, contributes to our understanding of argumentative talk in daily interaction. While laughable by audience members in the peer group viewing the performance, these stylized actions are not so treated by the target, who interprets them as "nasty" (Example 1) confrontational acts, and tells the girls to "Get out of my face." (Example 3). In this particular context, style and stance converge in consequential, hurtful forms of identity work, casting Angela as a degraded participant of the group.

Further, not only do these mocking transmodal stylizations and stance displays accomplish a great deal of interactional work that is consequential in the group's immediate, face-to-face interactions (Sarah's indexing of an oppositional stance and negative positioning of Angela in relation to the peer group), but the performance and repetition of these acts, in conjunction with their broader circulation in popular culture and media, may also have longer lasting consequences, helping to create and reify social identities beyond the peer group. As Bucholtz has argued, "the study of stance needs to consider not only the interactional subjectivities of interlocutors but also the more enduring subject positions and social categories they take up or have thrust upon them" (2009:166) In the insult sequences we have examined, clique members draw on racial stereotypes to characterize Angela in a way that has racist consequences: as a poor, black, "Ghetto Girl," with no likelihood of upward mobility or broader social acceptance. Across a range of circumstances (M.H. Goodwin 2006) Angela was positioned as a marginal group member, or even

excluded from participating in activities. In fifth grade, after having organized a competition of co-ed jump rope she was told she had no standing to participate. In the sixth grade she often ate alone.

In this article we are proposing the term *transmodal stylization* to refer to the ways that a stylist can produce a style that cuts across various modalities, rather than bringing these modalities together into a neat, readily recognizable package. In concert with C. Goodwin's (2000) work, we view it as imperative to study meaning-making in interaction with respect to an ecology of sign systems, including not only language, but gesture, the face, posture, prosody, and the material environment. And as Pennycook (2007: 49) argues with respect to transmodality language "cannot be viewed as discrete items, cannot be treated as autonomous systems outside the other meaning-making practices of the bodies, texts, contexts, and histories in which they are embedded." Close sequential analysis of the conflict talk in this article shows how, through talk and gesture, speakers propose and hearers align with pejorative, hurtful characterizations that mock the target. Such mocking transmodal stylizations, and stance display in particular, is embedded within larger discourses and histories of class, gender, race, and oppression.

Notes

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1. The speech that Amy Heckerling, writer and director of the film *Clueless*, satirized was the speech of wealthy students at Beverly Hills High School (MacNeil and Cran 2005:156).
2. See, for example, Briggs (1996) and Grimshaw (1990).
3. See, for example, Evaldsson (2005) and M.H. Goodwin (1990).
4. Data are transcribed according to the system developed by Jefferson and described in Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974:731–733).
5. With respect to shifting coalitions in girls' groups see M.H. Goodwin (1990).
6. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics black unemployment rose to 13.5% in April 2009; this compares with a nationwide unemployment rate of 8.9% (Price 2009). Poverty among African American children is expected to reach 52.3% as a result of continued job loss, according to Economic Policy Institute (2009) President Lawrence Mishel.
7. Unfortunately the meaning of this puzzling utterance is not known by the authors.
8. In the late 1990s at Hanley School 9.2% of the children's families made an income between \$7,500 and \$14,999, 13.8% made between \$15,000 and \$34,999; 26.4% made between \$35,000 and \$59,999; 28% made between \$60,000 and \$249,999, while 22% made over \$250,000.

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