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Homosocial desire in men's talk: Balancing and re-creating cultural discourses of masculinity

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ABSTRACT

This article is an exploration of how a group of men in the United States create homosocial (as opposed to homosexual) desire through language. In a society in which dominant discourses of masculinity provide competing scripts of male solidarity and heterosexuality, the achievement of closeness among men is not straightforward but must be negotiated through "indirect" means. It is shown how men actively negotiate dominant cultural discourses in their everyday interactions. In addition, a broadened view of indirectness, based on social function as much as denotation, is argued for. (Masculinity, men, language and gender, indirectness, desire, homosociality, fraternities.)*

INTRODUCTION

There is a popular view that men are unemotional, inexpressive, and impersonal. Yet men clearly form friendships and larger friendship groups, and must therefore manage to "connect" with one another personally and emotionally. In fact, male solidarity – the "old boys club" – plays a role in the maintenance of men's power. However, beyond the claim that men connect with one another in the context of competition (see, e.g., Labov 1972, Tannen 1990, 1998), little work has been done that shows how men operating in a masculine cultural discourse[1] of dominance create and display homosocial (as opposed to homosexual) desire. How do men use language to "do friendship" in a heterosexist atmosphere? How do they talk in a way to make themselves attractive to other men? How do cultural discourses of masculinity structure the men's desires, and thus who they find most attractive, or "cool"? Ultimately, how does the way men create their relationships re-create patterns of dominance – how do their everyday conversations re-create wider cultural discourses? These are the questions I address in this article, using ethnographic talk-in-interaction data from a men's social club, a fraternity, at an American university. I argue that the men's talk – and the existence of the fraternity itself – responds to and re-creates four American cultural

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discourses of masculinity. These cultural discourses describe the idealized forms of masculinity that men in American society should display (even though few if any actually succeed). These discourses are reflected in, and created by, these men's performances, and in widely shared cultural performances such as literature and film. The discourses are an unpacking of what "hegemonic masculinity" was in North America in the late twentieth century, when the observations in this article were made.

Cultural discourses refer to widely shared "background" assumptions, or "truths," about how the world works. Cultural discourses of masculinity thus refer to the ways that men are assumed by the majority of society to act, talk, and feel. In the dominant social group in North America,[2] these cultural discourses of masculinity include gender difference, heterosexism, dominance, and male solidarity. GENDER DIFFERENCE is a discourse that sees men and women as naturally and categorically different in biology and behavior.[3] HETEROSEXISM is the definition of masculinity as heterosexual; to be masculine in this discourse is to desire women and not men sexually. DOMINANCE is the identification of masculinity with dominance or authority; to be a man is to be strong, authoritative, and in control, especially when compared to women, and also when compared to other men. MALE SOLIDARITY is a discourse that takes as given a bond among men; men are understood normatively to want (and need) to do things with groups of other men, excluding women.

These four cultural discourses are inherently contradictory, however, because male solidarity and gender difference clash in many ways with heterosexism and dominance. If men are to form close friendship groups, how are they to do this without expressing desire for one another? And how can all the men in such groups maintain a dominant position? This "balancing act" is the focus of the analysis to follow. I show that the men use linguistic and social indirectness to create and display homosocial desire. These men never in my corpus express homosocial desire individually to the object of their desire, nor do they claim to do so in interviews. Nevertheless, such desire is effectively created and communicated.

These findings are significant in two main ways. First, while I argue that men are using indirectness in their creation of desire, this indirectness is a SOCIAL one. I suggest that the definition of indirectness should be expanded to include social, addressee, and topic indirectness. Second, the analyses presented here show the importance of connecting dominant cultural discourses with everyday talk-in-interaction, and how cultural discourses are produced on different social scales. This analysis provides a model that shows some ways that this connection is accomplished. Such a connection is especially important when issues of men and masculinity are under consideration, because in the United States it is these cultural discourses that legitimize men's privilege and dominance as a class. Even when individual men actively dominate women (or other men), their actions are often justified, both explicitly and covertly, using these discourses (e.g.,

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"she/he threatened my masculinity"). These discourses allow men to participate in relations of gender that privilege their gender class without the need to believe that they are producing this privilege. Thus, it is important to understand how men are able to take dominant, powerful stances that re-create the cultural discourses of masculinity. In the widest application, then, this article shows how hegemony works, and how structure and practice are intertwined in everyday talk.

PRELIMINARIES TO ANALYSIS

Men, masculinities, discourses, and desire

In this section, I outline a view that draws on the notion of cultural discourses and performance as a means of understanding and explaining social practices of masculinity and gender. This discussion will take us through a short theoretical discussion of desire as well, and it will finish with the motivations for the hegemonic discourses outlined above.

Cultural discourses, a notion that owes its genesis to the work of Michel Foucault (see Foucault 1972), are culturally shared ways of thinking, doing, making, evaluating, and speaking. These discourses are similar to ideologies in that they describe unquestioned background assumptions that people of a culture share. However, discourses are more than ideology, even though they encompass it; discourses include social practices, artifacts, processes, and even desires. Most importantly, they are not controlled by one person or group but instead arise through the social practices, talk, thoughts, and desires of the people using them. They are therefore ever-changing and, most importantly, contestable. It is the use of discourses that distinguishes the current trend of feminist research increasingly referred to as "third wave feminism," a perspective cogently outlined by Whitehead 2002.

Third-wave feminism incorporates a performative view of identity (Butler 1990, 1993; cf. Cameron & Kulick 2003), but it also adopts the poststructuralist view that gender is composed of cultural discourses. This view sees people as subjects who are acted upon by such discourses, but at the same time these subjects are active participants in the discourses' development and reinscription. The use of performativity and cultural discourses has far-reaching consequences for understanding language, gender, and social identity categories more generally. Performances take place in the context of cultural discourses, and the meaning of performances can be understood only through a decoding of the social semiotic significance of these performances. Many of the analytical categories and dichotomies often seen in gender studies are thus products of cultural discourses themselves, and we must understand how speakers understand and relate to those discourses (which include, of course, their own performances). Importantly, while there may be one DOMINANT cultural discourse, there are always COMPETING discourses which people may adopt, refer to, and so on. As

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Foucault 1980 argues, social power works through these discourses. Cultural discourses thus leave open the possibility of radical social change and subtle mutation. Likewise, the dominant discourses of masculinity are not without challenge, and there are many who ignore, disbelieve, or resist them. We shall see that the fraternity men's language use and other social practices tend toward adopting, reinforcing, and re-creating these dominant discourses. However, by using the concept of cultural discourses we can recognize the dominance of these beliefs and practices of masculinity without having to argue that all men follow them. In fact, these discourses affect ALL men in American society; men who resist or ignore these discourses are nevertheless in a milieu in which their practices are evaluated against the discourses, positively or negatively depending on the evaluator's stance with respect to these discourses. Cultural discourses are thus a valuable part of a theory of how social practices, structures, and beliefs structure language use, and how that language use as a social practice is interpreted. Finally, the concept has the added benefit that it allows sociolinguists to theorize not just how cultural discourses shape language use and interpretation, but also how language in turn affects other social practices, beliefs, and structures.

In connection with the central concepts of discourse and performativity, Whitehead 2002 argues for the use of three other important concepts for understanding masculinities: the masculine subject, masculine ontology, and (ontological) desire. Whitehead uses the concept of the MASCULINE SUBJECT to capture the fact that a man perceives and reacts to a set of cultural discourses. The subject emerges into the world "to take his/her place as an individual. He/she must take up an identity/identities, but cannot do this with absolute choice; they must take up those ways that are readily available" through cultural discourses (Whitehead 2002:207–8) There are thus two sides to the masculine subject: the SUBJECTIVITY of the individual, and the fact that a person is a SUBJECT who is acted upon by cultural discourses. Seeing a man as a masculine subject thus acknowledges his subjectivity, while also realizing that he must negotiate the cultural discourses in which he finds himself. It also places a focus on practices, or ways of doing: "What is put under scrutiny is the material and power consequences arising from the practices of gender signification undertaken by discursive subjects" (Whitehead 2002:210). Or, as Cameron & Kulick put it: "What does saying it – or not saying it – produce?" (2003:123).

The second notion Whitehead discusses is that of MASCULINE ONTOLOGY, which is closely related to the third, DESIRE. Masculine ontology for Whitehead is "the pursuit of being and becoming masculine by the masculine subject" (2002:210). In this pursuit, the masculine subject searches for an authentic self (sometimes referred to as "ontological security," following Giddens 1991). But since the self is contingent and unstable, the masculine subject must achieve masculine ontology only through a "constant engagement in those discursive practices of signification that suggest masculinity" (2002:210). In other words, the psychological sense of identity is gained from performing acts recognized in

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cultural discourses as being associated with the self. The desire discussed by Whitehead is then the desire to have a self, and especially the desire to construct this self relationally and in full view of other subjects, who will validate the self and contribute to its ontological security. This conception of self and identity assumes that the psychological is at root a social phenomenon: The sense of identity is not simply something passively believed by the subject but must be enacted by the subject. We can thus view subjects' desires by viewing their social practices. In understanding language and gender identity, then, it is essential to understand how acts are recognized as masculine. Because this understanding is done in the context of dominant discourses, the desire of the masculine subject for a masculine self thus becomes the desire to perform successfully the discourses of masculinity.

Here we need to take a short detour to discuss several ways of thinking about desire. Most commonly, desire is thought of in terms of sexual desire. But the term as used by Whitehead is much broader, and this reminds us that desire is a central motivating concept in psychology (although there too it tends to associated ultimately with the sexual). Desire is most simply defined, in the spirit of Freud and Lacan, as that which we lack but want.

Cameron & Kulick (2003:106–32) provide a detailed account of what desire is and the role language plays in its creation. In their review of literature on desire spanning psychoanalysis, discursive psychology, language socialization, and poststructuralist views on power and identity, Cameron & Kulick show that although desire may be felt by social subjects, it is structured by – and learned in – language and interaction. One way language organizes desire, they argue, is by showing subjects what is socially prohibited, absent, and thus desired. The talk analyzed below not only creates homosociality but also creates desire; through talk, men show each other what to desire and how to desire it. Cameron & Kulick suggest several ways in which language creates and displays desire. Two are particularly relevant here. First, they note that "intimacy is often achieved, at least in part, through the transgression of public taboos" (2003:115). Assuming that we can have a homosocial as well as a sexual intimacy, the practices (including language) in the fraternity clearly work by transgressing some public taboos: talking explicitly about sex, engaging in unsafe, dangerous, and prohibited behavior, and using taboo lexis in public situations. Of course, the kinds of transgressions are limited by other cultural discourses, particularly heterosexuality. Such a limitation on what is transgressed points out the other way that Cameron & Kulick suggest desire can be found in language, which is to analyze what is not, or cannot, be said. One example they give is from Cameron's (1997) analysis of a group of fraternity men who "gossip" about the bodies of men whom they portray as homosexual. Cameron & Kulick argue that this dislocation of possible homosexual desire outside the friendship group is an "unsaid" that shows how this desire should be located. The processes of homosociality I will analyze below are similar. For example, direct expressions of homosocial desire are

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located away from individual members to the group/institution. The fraternity thus provides an entity which acts as a kind of tunnel through which homosocial desire can be expressed, but expressed outside of the group of real people. This fidelity to the institution is characteristic of most if not all men's homosocial groups. In addition, in focusing below on the indirectness used by the men in the speech events, we find what is unsaid: Why do the men say it the way they do, rather than another way?

Desire, then, is something that is performed though social practice, as is gender. A view of performance as outlined above, however, sees performances not as unconstrained but as organized and even motivated by certain cultural discourses. One component of cultural discourses in every society is gender. Although gender takes different forms and different importance across cultures, it is a bundle of discourses that in some way help to organize every culture. In most cultures, these discourses are organized by two main archetypes of gender: femininity and masculinity. If we understand this engagement in social practices to be accomplished through performances, then we arrive at a definition of masculinity as SOCIAL PERFORMANCES SEMIOTICALLY LINKING THE PERFORMING SUBJECT TO MEN, AND NOT TO WOMEN, THROUGH CULTURAL DISCOURSES. This definition separates masculinity from men, who may not all be necessarily masculine. It also allows women to be masculine, because masculinity is not dependent on the actual performances of men. Furthermore, while "woman" and "man" are also discursive categories, they are categories that seem to be universal throughout human cultures (there is variation in these "biological" categories as well; see Bing & Bergvall 1996). The definition is thus categorically dichotomous and relational, because that is the way cultural discourses organize gender: Feminine performances are categorically opposed to masculine ones, and men are categorically opposed to women. Masculinity presupposes femininity, and vice versa. Masculinity is thus not just about what performances are stereotypically linked to men, but also what performances are specifically not linked to women.

I deliberately make no specific claims about whether properties like sexuality or power must be linked to men in the definition. Rather, these specifics flow from the surrounding discourses of gender. The definition is thus wide enough to encompass something like sexuality, and flexible enough to see the interconnectedness in cultural discourses between, for example, physical power and heterosexuality. This view is different from, but compatible with, the theoretical perspective on masculinities of Robert Connell, which has dominated masculinities research for the past decade (Carrigan et al. 1985; Connell 1987, 1995, 2000). Although Connell does not use the terminology of poststructuralist discourses, his work has been very important in explicating discourses of gender and masculinity. Central to his theory is the notion of HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY. This term is defined by Connell (1995:77) as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem

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of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women." In other words, hegemonic masculinity is composed of the specific social practices and structures that give men privilege. Like the definition of masculinity above, "hegemonic masculinity" is not meant to specify a universal hegemonic masculinity, but is "the most honored or desired IN A PARTICULAR CONTEXT" (Connell 1995:77; emphasis added). We can therefore understand the cultural discourses described above as part of the "particular context" that defines the "most honored or desired." "Hegemonic masculinity" has become so dominant a notion in the study of men and masculinities that it has lost many of the aspects that made it valuable in the first place. That is, rather than using "hegemonic masculinity" to represent the fluidity, contestability, and variety of masculinities, many researchers have begun to use it simply as a replacement for "masculinity" or "patriarchy," without specifying exactly what hegemonic masculinity entails in the specific context they are analyzing (Whitehead 2002:88–94). I will resist the use of the term as shorthand for the cultural discourses of masculinity, because I do not want to lose sight of the diversity and potential contradiction of the discourses that make up a hegemonic masculinity.

Discourses of masculinity

I have distilled the four dominant, or hegemonic, discourses of masculinity – gender difference, heterosexism, dominance, and male solidarity – from a number of sources. First is participant observation in the fraternity. I elaborate some of this work below, and more detailed analyses can be found in previous reports on this research. In an analysis of the fraternity's institutional organization of sexuality (Kiesling 2002), I show how pervasive the discourses of heterosexism and difference are in the men's talk-in-interaction. In several reports (Kiesling 1996, 1997, 2001a), I focus on how the men create power and dominance in interaction. I have also shown how the men display and police heterosexuality in fraternity interactions (Kiesling 2002, in press). Finally, I have shown how the address term *dude* is one solution to the clash between discourses of heterosexuality and masculine solidarity, and that this clash along with other cultural forces in the 1980s accounts for the term's rise in use in that decade and later (Kiesling 2004).

In addition, one can discern these discourses from two other shared cultural sources, and one idiosyncratic, but I believe valid, source. The latter is my lifetime positionality as a man in American society: These experiences have shaped my understanding of masculinity in America, and I acknowledge this subjectivity but attempt to view it critically. This personal perspective, however, is bolstered by discourses of masculinity evident in American literature and film, and also in the rapidly expanding field of masculinities research. To the extent that these four sources agree on what these cultural discourses are, with the caveat that such discourses are ever-changing, we can find validity by triangulation.

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That is, we can be certain that these discourses are shared by American society and help shape the ways that men perform masculinities in America.

Some of the most powerful sources for finding and understanding these cultural discourses are films that men find compelling and somehow "truthful." One of these is the 1986 film *Stand by me*, about four 12-year-old boys in a rural Oregon town who go on a two-day trek to find a dead body. Along the way they both test and revel in their friendships; it is a representation of "pure" homosociality (without the interference of heterosexual attraction). During the night, the boys sit around a campfire and talk, as described wistfully by the narrator (one of the boys who is now an adult): "We talked into the night. The kind of talk that seemed important, until you discover girls." The film ends with emphasis on the glorious, lost quality of the homosocial bond: "I never had any friends later on like the ones I had when I was twelve. Jesus, does anyone?" This film thus artistically recreates a "golden age" of male friendships that resonates with many men.[4] The discourse of homosociality is a desire to return to that golden age.

Such homosociality has been represented artistically throughout Western literature, drama, poetry, and more recent media. There is not space here to discuss all such work, but other authors have discussed homosociality as being exalted in *Star trek* (Geraghty 2003), Tolkien (Craig 2001), medieval French literature (Adams 2004), Chaucer (Mitchell 2000), and Japanese "gastronomic quest literature" (Aoyama 2003), among others. The best-known discussion of homosociality is probably Sedgwick's (1985) *Between men*, in which she argues that men's heterosexual rivalries produce a homosociality among men that marginalizes women. Such rivalry is similar to the bantering and "male bonding" we will see below. Sedgwick basically identifies another form of the discourse of men's solidarity as a way in which men's dominance is maintained: Nonsexual love between men is superior to any sexual love, heterosexual or homosexual (and superior as well to love between women). This argument is similar to that regarding *Stand by me* above, in that there is a desire in men for a love "higher" and more "pure" than sexual love. That men's homosociality appears in so many works in so many different times and places suggests that it is a particularly powerful and widely shared discourse. The majority of this work on men's homosociality shows that the discourse of men's solidarity is widespread (especially in Western civilization), and that it is a powerful, almost mystical state that many men are drawn to.

We are thus back to desire: These discourses do not limit the fraternity men's behavior only as something by which men are passively constrained. These discourses motivate the men's desires as something the men actively seek. They organize the men's perceptions of what is lacking in their identity, and how the men wish to achieve masculine ontology. These cultural discourses are what these men need to "Be Men" (the motto of the fraternity). However, while some of the discourses such as difference and heterosexuality reinforce one another, others such as masculine solidarity and heterosexuality are in some respects incompat-

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ible. The men who desire a masculinity such as that outlined by these discourses must therefore find ways of not performing homosexuality even while they create and pursue homosocial desire. I will show below that in the fraternity these performances rely heavily on indirectness. Because my understanding of indirectness is much broader than the standard pragmatic view, I turn now to a discussion of how this view of indirectness is different from – but compatible with – the traditional definition of indirectness, why it is useful, and where it has been used before in sociolinguistics.

Indirectness

In the pragmatics literature (e.g., Grice 1975, Levinson 1982, Brown & Levinson 1987), "indirectness" has a narrowly focused linguistic definition, based on a mismatch between the intention of the speaker and the conventional illocutionary force of the utterance form. That is, the conventional meaning of an utterance is not what the speaker "means." Students first learning the concept, however, often assume a broader interpretation for indirectness, believing that it includes vagueness, irrelevancy, and so on. Although I have always managed to narrow their conceptions to be more in line with the field, the consistency of this naive understanding of indirectness suggests that perhaps there is more to indirectness than illocutionary force and a linguistic device for indicating it.

This illocutionary indirectness is, in fact, only one way in which a linguistic form does not match its canonical use. We should recognize at least three further types of indirectness that speakers use in interactions: social indirectness (e.g., conflict rather than connection), addressee indirectness (e.g., addressing a different person with a ratified overhearer as the "real" addressee), and topic indirectness (e.g., a different topic or domain is used, such as a connection through sports rather than directly interpersonal). All kinds of indirectness refer to the fact that the linguistic form is not used as it is canonically expected to be. For example, in social indirectness, we find speakers taking a stance that has a different or added effect than the canonical one has. The example below will be of men who use oppositional stances to create stances of solidarity, a phenomenon also discussed by Schiffrin 1984. Social indirectness will also be shown below in the boasting and "cool" stances the men take. In addressee indirectness, the addressee is a stand-in for the intended primary recipient of the utterance, who is technically an overhearer (in the format outlined by Goffman 1981). Morgan (2002:44–53) shows how such addressee indirectness works in the African American community. Finally, below we will see how sport is used as a domain in which men "gossip": The canonical topics of gossip – personal details of those known to the participants – are not used, but the effect is similar (see also Cameron 1997). In sum, I advocate expanding indirectness to include interactional strategies in which a social or discourse effect is achieved by means other than the most canonical. Note that this broadening does not weaken the power of linguistic indirectness, although it does weaken the role

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played by intention, because I focus on the effect as much as the intention of the speaker.

I have so far addressed some theoretical issues surrounding masculinity, desire, and indirectness. In the final section of preliminaries, I provide some background about fraternities in the United States, as well as some information about the fraternity that was the focus of my research.

Fraternity

Fraternities are social and service clubs which select their members from among male undergraduates at universities in the United States.[5] Most were started in the nineteenth century or early twentieth century as literary societies and eventually became social clubs and philanthropic organizations, especially around the turn of the twentieth century. For many members, the fraternity becomes the center of social life in college. Members live with each other, take classes together, compete on the same athletic teams, and organize social functions together. Most fraternities are organized around fictive sibling relationships; members are known as "brothers," and the collective members of the fraternity are often referred to collectively as the "brotherhood." Most local fraternity chapters are related to one another through a national fraternity; I investigated one chapter, here referred to as "Gamma Chi Phi," of a national fraternity. As discussed more fully in Kiesling 2001b, fraternities tend to be racially homogeneous. Gamma Chi Phi was mostly White, with several Asian American and Middle Eastern American men.

Although most men join the fraternity for social reasons, the fraternity's stated reason for existence is public service, such as raising funds for national charities, hosting blood drives, or providing volunteer labor at fundraising events for charities. In the year that I was researching, Gamma Chi Phi began an adopt-a-school program, in which the members tutored children at a local school. Without the philanthropic aspect of the fraternity, university administrations would probably look on a fraternity as merely another social group, and one whose costs generally outweigh its benefits. During the time I spent at Gamma Chi Phi, however, the administration and fraternities in general had a good relationship.

Some school administrations in the United States are (or have been characterized as) anti-fraternity, and some schools have closed their fraternity systems down altogether, although this is usually an unattractive option when many potential donors are alumni of fraternities and sororities. Much of this animosity can be attributed to the reputation fraternities have for engaging in unwise, irresponsible, demeaning, and criminal activities. Even though well-publicized incidents and films have created this perception, everyday life in a fraternity is usually much like that of nonmembers. One possible reason for fraternities' reputation is the role that alcohol and drinking have historically played in much of fraternity life across the United States. Although the practice has waned significantly in the past two decades because of liability concerns on the part of uni-

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versities and national fraternities, fraternities have often had parties which focus on "binge" drinking (drinking many alcoholic drinks in a short time). Party attendees at some universities have died as a direct result of alcohol poisoning and also because of accidents that can be traced to unsafe behavior while under the influence of alcohol. Fraternity members have also raped and gang-raped women (cf. Sanday 1990). The combination of the structure of the pledge period (described below) and alcohol can easily lead to unsafe behavior. Thus, the often-earned reputation of fraternities among non-fraternity members on many, if not most, campuses, is negative. As with all things that are stereotyped, however, all fraternities are not the same, nor do most fraternities have the problems associated with the stereotype.

Of course, it may be that the reputation of the institution itself attracts people who are predisposed to these sorts of practices. I cannot say why every fraternity member joins, but there are indications about who is likely to become a fraternity member, and I am familiar with how men are recruited and enticed to do so. My own experience turns out to be fairly typical. I went to college in 1985 believing I was not going to be in a fraternity. But by the end of my first year I was "wearing letters," and in a class the next year I even defended the joy of being in the fraternity. I joined simply because I had made friends in the fraternity before I joined, and many of my current friends joined the fraternity, so it seemed like a natural thing to do. Why did I put up with hazing? For one thing, I was used to it. Hazing or hazing-like activities were part of life growing up for me (on sports teams in high school, for example), and I simply saw it as another challenge; my masculine identity was very much tied to not failing at such challenges, given the discourse of power and dominance. But my primary motivation was a wish for "benign" (I thought) masculine solidarity, which, when I was 18, I did not see could be easily found in other ways. In interviewing the members of Gamma Chi Phi, I found that this path to the fraternity to be most common: A fraternity reaches out to men in their first year of college and makes friends with them, and then when it is time to invite people to join, it is "natural" for those men to follow their friends. Other fraternity men may join for other reasons, such as status or access to powerful networks gained by joining, but in my experience they are the minority.

Fraternity members tend already to have a more traditional orientation to society; although I have found no survey studies about this topic, the majority of fraternity men whom I have known have tended to be politically and socially conservative; there are usually one or two men in a fraternity who revel in goading the rest of the group with their liberal views. Fraternities are seen by many as part of a power establishment. Given this perception, the membership is likely to be drawn from those who orient to the established hierarchies of society. Fraternities thus to some degree "self-select" a population that is more comfortable with "traditional" American cultural discourses of masculinity. This view is supported by Bird's (1996) finding that men who desired homosocial bonds were

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more likely to agree with discourses of hegemonic masculinity. See DeSantis (in press) for an excellent analysis of "greek culture" more generally.

I was able to gain entree into this fraternity because of my membership in the same national fraternity.[6] I eventually taped approximately 37 hours of interaction. I recorded 15 hours of meetings (11 different meetings), 11 hours of interviews (nine different interviews), and 11 hours of socializing, although much of that is blank because I would leave the recorder running even when no interaction was occurring.

Members generally lived with other members. On campus, they shared dorm rooms or apartments. Off campus, they found houses or apartments together. "The townhouse" was the center of much of the fraternity activity that I observed, from informal meetings and parties to the rush event analyzed below. The residents were all older members, including the president (Hotdog) and former vice president (Pete).

The fraternity distinguishes among men primarily based on their membership status, with the most exalted members composing an inner circle and less powerful members ever more distant from this group. At the outside of the circle are nonmembers who want to become members, or whom the fraternity wants to convince to become members. During the university-sanctioned "rush period," these men become "rushes." Once the rushes have been invited to join the fraternity, they are "pinned," and they become "pledges." They are not yet members, but if they successfully pass through the initiation period of "pledging," they will become members. While rushes are usually treated well in order to attract them to the fraternity, pledges are paradoxically treated as badly as possible. Pledging is thus a period of testing to determine whether the pledge has the desire and the stamina to become a member. At the end of pledging, members are formally initiated, although they are still seen informally as "neophytes" or "nibs" ("newly initiated brothers"), and are seen has having little knowledge or ability to do any but the most mundane jobs for the fraternity. In becoming members they have moved closer to the center, but they are still not at the core. After being in the fraternity for at least a year, and perhaps serving in a few minor offices, they are regarded as full members, and by the time members are about to graduate they have the most privileges and the fewest responsibilities.

The fraternity social sphere was the background against which non-fraternity events – such as classwork and other university clubs – took place. The fraternity was not a club which was "added on" to most of the men's lives, but the context and background against which life was constructed and evaluated. As such, the interactions in the fraternity took a central role in how the men viewed and understood the world. But while the fraternity permeated the lives of many of its members, it also allowed for diversity. The men did not all wear their hair the same way or wear the same clothes. Some of the men were fashionable by the standards of their peers, while others were more conservative. Most wore the loose or baggy jeans and shirts fashionable at the time. One common practice in

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dress was "wearing letters" (shirts that had the Greek letters of the fraternity on the front, a privilege reserved for full members) and the lanyard, a long rope with a key chain that was worn in the front pants pocket with the ends hanging out. These commonalities were of course also symbolic of membership in the fraternity, so it is not surprising that they were a common denominator for the men. But not all fraternities engaged in these practices to the extent of Gamma Chi Phi; in several speeches in meetings men referred to the pride of wearing letters and showing the world that they were members of the fraternity. These comments made it clear that for many of the men the fraternity has a status, and the wearing of letters and lanyard is a way of claiming that status in public.

From these practices and structures, we can discern a number of institutional discourses which are recursive of – and provide evidence for – the cultural discourses outlined above. Dominance is manifested locally as a hierarchical world view that values competitiveness. Masculine solidarity is evidenced by the high value the men placed on loyalty to the fraternity, and heterosexuality is seen in many of their practices, including mixers, parties held with sororities so that the men could meet, flirt, and often eventually be intimate sexually with women (see Kiesling 2002[7]). Related to these values are hard work for the fraternity, which is needed for success in competition in a hierarchy, and responsibility, or working for the common good of the fraternity. The discourse of power and dominance is clearly evident in the stages of membership: Only certain men may join, and some members, notably those who have been members longer, are more valued than others, thus replicating the societal ordering of masculinities.

The importance of solidarity is evidenced less by what was said in meetings than by what was said in interviews, and by how men acted during rush. In interviews and even before I began my research, members told me that their chapter was very "tight," or very close-knit socially. Perhaps the most important aspect of this "tightness" is the acceptance a member feels in the group. Thus "solidarity" here refers more to acceptance than to connectedness, although members do share important events in their lives with each other. Solidarity in the fraternity context means the freedom to "be men." This camaraderie is the most common factor the men cited in explaining why they joined.

The men must create a sense of close homosociality not only for themselves but also for the prospective members who come to their rush events (parties held to attract new members), and this process can be a balancing act which includes the prospective members just enough for them to want to be fully admitted. The creation of this desire and these connections must be accomplished in an overt environment in which SEXUAL relationships among men are nonmasculine, while SOCIAL ones are masculine. Although physically this is a fairly straightforward distinction, socially it is not, because some kinds of interaction have sexual overtones (e.g., showing the wrong kind of interest in another man's body or looks, as discussed by Cameron 1997). The expression and creation of such desire is thus a tricky proposition, and it is accomplished by engaging in speech events

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that sanction such descriptions, as well as certain topics and speech act forms that are understood to be social rather than sexual. The bulk of this article will describe these "ratified" contexts and forms for the display homosocial desire. I will begin with an analysis of the strategies the men use to express homosocial desire with seemingly direct expressions of homosocial feelings. I will then move on to investigate the myriad strategies these men use to negotiate the tension among the discourses of masculinity. I want to be clear that these are not the strategies of all men; some men use other strategies such as resistance to, or rejection of, the hegemonic discourses. These linguistic strategies are solutions (or attempted solutions) to the problem of masculine ontology: How does a man negotiate these discourses and the desires they create, and "feel" masculine?

"BROADCASTING" OVERT EXPRESSIONS OF HOMOSOCIAL FEELINGS

In the pledge period, the pledges are severely tested and dominated. In order to pass the tests of the period they must unquestioningly follow the members' orders, just as they do in their first pledge activity: drinking, as fast as possible, an entire bottle of fortified wine (wine with more than the usual alcohol content).[8] This is not a pleasurable or safe activity, but when I observed it, every pledge did it unquestioningly, some with enthusiasm. There is thus a kind of paradox to membership in the fraternity, in which each member must first be entirely dominated and powerless before he can be accepted into what the fraternity sees as a privileged and select group of men. What do the men want from this organization? Is homosocial desire so important that they will sacrifice their autonomy (and power) for months in order to become accepted into this group of men? What is the nature of the homosocial desire that motivates their sacrifice?

The following excerpt gives voice to that desire and allows us to hear what might motivate men to join. This excerpt is from an "emergency meeting" called to discuss solutions to flagging participation by much of the membership. Jean, a recent graduate, gives this passionate speech in which he articulates clearly the homosocial desire that underlies the fraternity.

(1)[9]

1	Jean:	The second thing I wanna talk about . .
2		kinda-maybe it's not-
3		yknow the solution to all these problems is not cut and dry
4		but I can tell you one thing that made all the problems
5		go away
6		at one point
7		uh
8	??:	Alcohol?
9	Jean:	?? it wasn't alcohol.
10		It's unity.
11		I mean that's another thing that you learn when you're a pledge that gets just totally ingrained into you

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12 is unity
13 all this fuckin' shit things that you do together
14 sit around the table and eat the fuckin' shit
15 ((laughter))
16 yknow
17 the reason you do it is 'cause there's strength in numbers
18 yknow
19 the best
20 I can tell you the *best* times I ever had as a brother
21 were when all the brothers were together
22 and it didn't matter if you were at a party,
23 if you drove to New York for [Gamma] Bowl,[10]
24 or if you were shoveling shit at the [basketball arena],[11]
25 the fact that everybody was *together*. .
26 made it cool
27 yknow?
28 and you could be doin' the most strenuous labor
29 the stupidest fuckin' job
30 or you could be doin' something really difficult goin'-
31 whatever.
32 yknow s- **when we're together**
33 i- i- **it didn't matter**
34 it was *cool*
35 like when we did greek sing
36 now I would never say to myself
37 yeah I'll get up in front of the whole fuckin' greek community and and sing and look like a fuckin' idiot
38 but the fact that all the brothers were doin' it
39 I was wearin' my letters
40 **I felt safe**
41 **I felt comfortable** yknow
42 and th- hey I'm in-
43 **I'm Gamma Chi Phi here I'm surrounded by all these people**
44 **I feel OK**
45 **those were the *best* feelings *ever***
46 ((he finishes with a discussion of how unity can help current problems))
47 ((applause))

What attracted Jean to the fraternity, therefore, is the sense of belonging it gives him, a "place" socially speaking, where he feels safe (line 40), even doing the silliest things. Because his speech was followed by vigorous applause, we can infer that a large portion of those present agreed with him. The men's desire to join the fraternity is largely the desire to be unconditionally accepted and PROTECTED by other men, and this togetherness in some ways captures the golden age of homosociality. This speech articulates the discourse of masculine solidarity: *the fact that everybody was together made it cool* (lines 25–26). In interviews I asked men why they wanted to be in a fraternity, and only one said that it had to do with status and the experience of being part of an organization. While several joked that it was to "get more chicks," (i.e., attract women for sex) the overwhelming majority said that it was precisely this kind of homosocial interaction that attracted them to the fraternity.

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The fraternity is a product as well as a producer of hegemonic cultural discourses of masculinity. It is a product in that without the gender order that supports such discourses, there would be no need for some men to seek such safety. Consider Jean's example of singing, certainly not an activity that displays the ideal of dominance, either through physical strength, rationality, or singing ability. It is thus not something these men would do on their own. However, in the context of the fraternity they actually feel "liberated" for a while from this hegemonic ideal. In a sense, then, the men can break taboos when they are together. As Cameron & Kulick 2003 point out, one of the ways intimacy is performed is through the breaking of taboos together with one's intimates. In this case, the collective breaking of taboos builds homosocial intimacy among the men.

This notion that the fraternity allows the men to shift the identities they perform is exemplified as well by the restriction that the men make such declarations in fraternity-only settings – in the meetings and in interviews with me. For example, at one point in an election meeting Hotdog simply says, without sarcasm, *I love you all*:

(2)

1	Hotdog:	Jus- just cause you guys don't get elected to positions doesn't mean yknow
		doesn't mean doesn't mean that that people don't think that you're capable
3		it's just that things didn't work that way
4		and it doesn't mean you can't do any work
5		so keep the faith
6		and I love you all
7		and congratulations to the nine new guys

In fact, the homosociality of the fraternity is sometimes more intimate than that between the men and their long-term heterosexual partners. One member, Mack, told me in an interview, "I know that I am more comfortable than I can ever be when I'm with my fraternity brothers. The things that I can tell my fraternity brothers I can't tell my girlfriend." Some men were openly criticized when they began to spend more time with a girlfriend than with the fraternity. This closeness was even something that attracted status; in Mack's interview, he told an imaginary member of another fraternity, "You're not in love with your brothers as much as we are in love with our brothers." Here the tension between the cultural discourses of masculine solidarity and competition have become intertwined, as the closeness of each fraternity is being used by Mack as a field of competition.

But these declarations are made in restricted speech activities and production formats; as such, they are a form of addressee indirectness. They are limited to meetings in which the declarations are "broadcast" to the membership (with no nonmembers present), and to very private situations with a third party (one-on-one ethnographic interviews with no ratified overhearers). These restrictions can be generalized by saying that the speaker is addressing not a single person but the institution itself. This conclusion is supported by comments in interviews, in which several members told me that they might talk about how close they feel to

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another member openly if that closeness had been violated by some argument. Based on these interviews, it appears that there is no two-person situation in this community in which declarations of brotherly love take place, except when it explicitly needs to be "patched up." Homosocial desire is abstractly expressed only to the group and the institution.

The speech situations that license declarations of brotherly love are one way of solving what I will call the "male homosocial double bind" (cf. Lakoff 1975), which arises out of two clashing cultural discourses: male solidarity and heterosexuality. In the former men are supposed to form a close bond, but in the latter they are supposed to refrain from intimacy. Because the speech situations defuse or distribute the desire to the institution and group, they are not construed as homosexual. Because heterosexuality is such a strong discourse, the men must present their emotional intimacy as clearly nonsexual, since sexual and emotional intimacy are often bound up with each other.

These expressions of homosocial desire have allowed us to hear the voices of the men tell us what this desire is like, and to understand its connection with cultural discourses of masculinity. We have also seen that such expressions are instances of addressee indirectness, because they are addressed to the group or institution rather than to an individual. In the following section we will explore more of this indirect expression by focusing on how homosocial desire is created to attract men to the fraternity, and what kind of interaction is commented on favorably.

DRAMATIZING AND INDIRECTNESS: THE CONSTRUCTION OF HOMOSOCIAL DESIRE IN RUSH

One of the most important activities the fraternity engages in is the attraction of new members. This attraction takes place formally in a period known as "rush"; prospective members are known as "rushes" or "rushees." It is a time agreed on by all fraternities of the university to hold meetings, parties, and other events so that rushes can "shop around." The process is therefore basically a courtship, or a "homosocial flirting," with each side testing the other, each gauging their desire for the other and trying to build the other party's desire for them. Such functions are thus ideal places in which to investigate how men create homosocial desirability.

One way homosocial desirability is created is through heterosexuality and heterosexual prowess; a man attractive to women and a fraternity that attracts desirable women are thus mutually desirable in greek society. But there were several other, more common (and, I argue, more persuasive) strategies used in the fraternity. One was topic indirectness in which desirability was deflected to a nonpersonal domain, which in Gamma Chi Phi was sports. Another strategy was a kind of addressee indirectness in which a desirable camaraderie was displayed among the members of the fraternity but excluded a rush. Similarly, the men

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would create a status for themselves or the fraternity which would be attractive to the rush by a kind of "status transitivity" in which the status of one member of a group flows to other members of that group; one way of gaining status is to therefore become a member of the group. These strategies can be characterized as "homosociality by alliance": The men are desirable as friends because (i) they have status and therefore confer status on their friends (allies), and (ii) the fraternity makes the need for competition less important because one knows that one is accepted. By making an alliance (i.e., friendship) with these men, a man thus moves closer to two different cultural discourses of masculinity – male solidarity and dominance.

Let us consider how homosociality is created in two excerpts from talk at a rush event. The event, the sports-focused "College Hoops Night," was held during the university's official rush week in the spring semester and was organized around watching college basketball on television. It was held in the living room of a townhouse where several members lived, with couches and extra chairs arranged around a television tuned to a college basketball game. Watching sports, a common activity for the men, was rarely a quiet, noninteractive activity but included talk about the games as well as talk about other topics during the game. Much of the time the games served simply as a conversation starter and faded into the background as conversations moved to other topics.[12]

For 45 minutes of College Hoops Night, a wireless lapel microphone was worn by Saul, the rush chairman at the time. He was in charge of organizing all the rush events and making sure they ran smoothly and all rushes were welcomed. The excerpts below focus on his interactions. The men he talked to were aware of the microphone; Saul explained its general purpose whenever he started a new conversation. In the first excerpt, Saul has just met a new rush and is getting to know him. The rush has previously told Saul that he is from Manassas, Virginia.

(3)

1	Saul:	Manassas so what high school did you go to?
2	Rush:	Stowell
3	Saul:	Wait is Osborne around there ?
4	Rush:	Yeah right right next door.
5	Saul:	OK cause we got this guy
6		I used to live with this guy Sigma Chi his name is Mike Benson?
7	Rush:	Oh really
8	Saul:	We used to play basketball he's really good
9	Rush:	Played for Stowell?
10	Saul:	Yeah
11	??:	Ozzie
12	Saul:	Yeah (.)
13		Good hoops player no?
14	(.)	
15	??:	My roommates uh my roommate's dad is the main football baseball coach there
16	Saul:	Oh OK. I didn't realize that holy shit.
17	??:	Runs everything over there.

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There are two strategies being used to create homosocial desire here, both of which are a kind of topic indirectness: finding common ground and creating a desirable status. Finding common ground is skillfully performed by Saul as he takes an innocent demographic question in line 1 (*so what high school did you go to?*) and finds a common connection to that school through a former roommate. The connection is tenuous in that the person embodying the connection is unlikely to have been known by the rush, but it is the attempt to make this connection and to display some knowledge of the rush's home region that functions as a positive politeness strategy (Brown & Levinson 1987:103ff.).

Saul is even more skillful in the way that he creates status for the person who is the common link, and then appropriates this person as one of the fraternity's own, followed by the status displays of the other fraternity member. Saul initially does not explicitly point to the connection between the man he knows and the rushee. Using a conversation principle of relevance (Grice 1975, Sperber & Wilson 1995), though, this connection is easily made. Such principles claim that people try to make utterances connect in a relevant way to preceding statements, with the assumption that their interlocutor is cooperating with them. Thus, the only way to make Saul's statement relevant is to assume the rush's statements are related to those that Saul is making. However, Saul includes Mike Benson in his friendship group by using the first person plural in line 5 (*OK cause **we** got this guy*), then identifies him as a former roommate and a member of another fraternity before getting to his name. He then also includes Mike Benson in the *we* who played basketball, thus making further connections. These strategies focus on Saul's connections with the man, and he only incidentally implies that this man is actually a member of another fraternity (*Sigma Chi*). He thus does his best to create connections with the rush through his former roommate and basketball buddy, using pronouns and the principle of relevance.

Saul introduces the status of Mike Benson as a good basketball player almost as an afterthought in line 8 (*We used to play basketball **he's really good***). The rush cooperates in this endeavor by asking if Mike Benson played for the local high school as well. The participation framework (Goffman 1981) of the conversation then shifts as another fraternity member, who must have been acting as a ratified overhearer, enters in a dialogue with Saul by saying Mike Benson's nickname (*Ozzie*), and Saul responds by asking him to confirm Benson's skill at basketball in line 13 (*Good hoops player no?*). This exchange sets up a confirmation of Benson's status as well as the fraternity's connection with him. One aspect of the creation of this status is its nonchalance: Saul mentions Benson's skill as an extraneous comment in line 8, and in line 13 he asks for confirmation from the other fraternity member by using a very short grammatical form (Adjective-Noun-Tag question), as if this fact were common knowledge. *Hoops*, as a colloquial name for basketball, adds to the nonchalant stance in evaluating this man.

The second fraternity member and Saul then collaborate in a dialogue that creates status for the second member even as the rush moves out of center stage

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to a ratified overhearer position. The second member makes another connection to the same high school through his roommate's father, whom he says *runs everything over there*. Saul's response adds to the implied status of being the main football and baseball coach through his incredulous response in line 16 (*I didn't realize that holy shit*). The last phrase (*holy shit*), in fact, significantly upgrades Saul's reaction here from the initial *Oh, OK*. The two members thus work together to create a statusful personal connection to the rush, and the participation framework which excludes the rush in fact works to enhance the genuineness of this status.

Saul thus finds common ground, but it is a common ground that displays status. The questions Saul asks lead him to talk about a person who has status in basketball, and he receives support from the second fraternity member in this regard. The connection displayed is more about "connections" in the sense of knowing someone with status than making a PERSONAL connection. The questions in this segment allow Saul to display status rather than necessarily supporting and expanding the rush's answers. There is a subtle form of social indirectness at work here, one in which Saul creates connection and common ground while also creating status. Both work to create homosocial desire.

It is not accidental that the topic indirectness in this short exchange revolves around sports. This domain of life was pervasive in the fraternity and was used as a way of creating connections with other men, as well as a domain in which to create status. While the men took their sports very seriously (both as participants and as spectators), it was used as a domain for binding them together in a less serious way and creating a common status. Indeed, one of the accomplishments that was repeatedly pointed out to me was the fraternity's all-sports intramural championship the year before my participant observation began. Of course, I am not claiming that ALL men create connections through sports, although the display of sports "gossip" is a speech event exalted in the media through sports talk shows, as shown by Johnson & Finlay 1997 (see also Bird 1996). This fraternity was particularly sports-focused, but I know from other experiences that not all male groups find sports so central to their communities. However, I would like to suggest, along with Tannen 1990, that one general property of male groups in North American and other European-based societies is the use of common "nonpersonal" interests as a metaphor or conduit for creating both connection and status, and sometimes a shared status of a group. These interests are often groups formed around professions, objects, or technology (cars, computers). This prediction needs confirmation, but Coates 2003 finds a similar pattern for the stories told by the English men in her study.

This indirect use of a topic about a domain not overtly focused on personal relationships is a result of the competing cultural discourses of male solidarity and heterosexuality; it is one way out of the male homosocial double bind. It is similar to the gossiping about purportedly gay men by the young men analyzed by Cameron 1997. But rather than gossiping about the appearance of men, men also gossip about sports, cars, or technology, and so on. At the same time, these

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topics often allow men to perform their expertise in a given topic, thus displaying status through their knowledge at the same time as they make connections to their interlocutors.

So the previous excerpt has shown us that one strategy Saul uses in the rush event to create homosocial desire is the creation of connection COMBINED WITH status. The next excerpt shows some other strategies in the same vein as those just discussed. The talk still revolves around sports, but connection and status are created through common interest and narratives about exciting sports events witnessed by the participants. The same participants are still talking, although the topic has moved to professional basketball and shifts further to ice hockey during the excerpt. The Bullets are the Washington, D.C., professional basketball team (the name has since been changed to the Wizards), and the Caps are the Washington Capitals, the local ice hockey team.

(4)

1	Saul:	You never been to a Bullets game?
2	Rush:	No::
3	Saul:	We'll get you out man
4		(0.8)
5	Saul:	See I've never been to a Caps game.
6	Waterson:	I've never been to a Caps game either I ????
7	Saul:	The thing is I'm not from here so yknow
8		I'm ha-
9	Rush:	I really like but they're they're playing ??
10		(and they got into this big braw:l)
11	Saul:	Tha- that's the best man.
12	Rush:	Yeah it was funny cause like
13		Guy in the stands got real-
14		This guy spilled beer on this guy
15	Saul:	mm hmm
16	Rush:	so there's was two fights goin'
17		they go in the stands it was great
18	Saul:	See I'm from I'm from [city] New York it's funny that you said that
19		because in [city] we have the [team] they're an AHL team?
20		(0.6)
21		and fuckin like this guy s- poured beer on this hockey player?
22		(0.6)
23		motherfucker climbed OVER the glass
24		into the crowd just started BAM BAM just started fightin' that was the greatest man a::

Let us focus on two aspects of this excerpt. First, Saul's statement in line 3, *We'll get you out man*, pulls the rush into the fraternity and includes him in a future activity with other fraternity members. Saul does not explicitly invite the rush; however, he uses an ambiguous first person plural pronoun (*we*) to do this work. The referents to this pronoun are unclear, as Saul could be talking about himself in the plural, the fraternity in general, or some subset of the fraternity. However, given the context of the situation, where Saul is speaking not only as his own principal but also for the fraternity in his role as rush chairman, the

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implication is that the fraternity as a whole will take him to a Bullets game someday – if he joins the fraternity.

The second aspect on which we should focus is the symmetry and the sharing of experiences.[13] After the pause in line 4, Saul matches the rush's experience of not having been to a professional sports match by admitting he himself hasn't been to a game played by the local ice hockey team, and that admission is in turn matched by Waterson, who is peripherally participating in the conversation (he is sitting on the couch watching television, while Saul and the rush are standing behind the couch). This prompts the rush to begin a narrative about a game that he attended, encouraged by Saul in line 11 (*That's the best man*). Saul's statement both encourages and validates the story the rush is telling by suggesting that the story is a token of a type of event that Saul approves of and in fact has witnessed. This interpretation derived mainly from his use of *that*, which refers immediately to the events told by the rush but must also be something known by Saul as old or presupposed knowledge. *That* thus refers not just to the token as related by the rush but also to the general type of events which are the best.

The matching and sharing of experience is completed as Saul mirrors the rush's story with his own story about a fight at an ice hockey game, which was *the greatest*. (It is of course stereotypical of a certain kind of masculinity to glorify this violence as the "greatest" aspect of this sport, but I will not elaborate on this aspect of the excerpt; see Deby 2002.) There is thus an adjacency pair-like structure (see Sacks 1995:554–60, Johnstone 2002:72–75) which is symmetrical in this excerpt (beginning with line 5, after the pause):

Admission: *I've never been…*

Admission: *I've never been…*

Narrative: Hockey fight

Narrative: Hockey fight

Of course, there is also reciprocity in the agreement on the evaluation of the hockey fights, and on the desirability of going to sports events, but this content and approval is supported by the adjacency pair structure, which shows a symmetry that implicitly creates connections among the participants, itself a kind of indirectness. Notice, however, that while these are shared values, the storytelling could also be viewed as competitive: Who saw the most outrageous fight? Although this competitive aspect is discernible, it does not negate the sharing aspect of the speech event, because the participants share the values on which they evaluate the stories, and they cooperate to allow each to tell his story. Coates 2003 finds similar patterns of story-chains used for competition and solidarity among men. The men are again building homosociality even as they compete for status.[14]

The next excerpt shows a similar balance between displaying status and finding common ground, this time in talk revolving around basketball and basketball

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players. This discussion begins after Saul introduces the topic with a question, which is relevant because the ostensible reason for the rush event is to watch college basketball on television, and indeed such a game is playing as these discussions take place.

(5)

```
Saul:   Follow college hoops?
Rush:   What?
Saul:   D'you follow college hoops?
Rush:   Yeah
Saul:   Who's your team?
Rush:   I like Virginia?
Saul:   Do you?
Rush:   Yeah.
Saul:   I ha- I tell you what I hate (Virginia) cause I dated this girl for four years,
Rush:   uh huh
Saul:   and now she goes there
Rush:   yeah
Saul:   and every time I talk to her man
        she |he he he he she lets me know
Rush:   |???
Saul:   Yeah but they're good
        I love- what is it they got like Corey Alexander
Rush:   He's hurt now he's got a broken leg so
Saul:   That's right
Rush:   He's comin' back
Saul:   But they got like Junior Burroughs
Rush:   Yeah he's he's tough he's goin' pro
Saul:   Oh yeah dude
Rush:   |If he goes (Carolina) I was goin' ???
Saul:   |                    No shit     he he he he
        I bet you were man
        (4.8)
Rush:   Junior Burroughs is tough he's gonna be (tough to beat)
Saul:   Oh hell yeah dude
        I don't remember if it was Junior or if was Corey
        But I worked at Paul Westhead basketball camp here this summer?
Rush:   I didn't know- You play ball?
Saul:   Yeah I play ba- I'm all right but I'm not … great
        I did a lot of reffing yknow mostly for that
        He he
        Unlike .. Mr. Waterson here look at him man
        he tries to tell me he's a rebounding machine he's like a toothpick
        Na he's feisty but um-
        He did- he came over
        I didn't do that session but they're tellin' me that either Junior or both
        were there this summer just kickin' a::ss
        Sam Cassell, remember the guy from Florida State?
        He plays for Houston now?
        He's in the backcourt with Charlie Ward?
        (1.4)
Rush:   Sam Cassell that sounds familiar
Saul:   Sam Cassell yeah.
Waterson:   Sam Cassell he plays for uh |                |yeah
Saul:                                   |Houston now|
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There are no strategies in this segment that have not appeared in other excerpts, but this excerpt shows another way such strategies are employed, thus establishing a pattern. All are uses of social indirectness. Saul finds an interest of the rush for a domain in which Saul has considerable knowledge in lines 1–8, then shows he knows something about the rush's concern in that domain – a personal connection, who the players are, and what they are doing – in lines 15–28, then adds status through his association with the basketball camp. Saul thus again creates common ground and then status. We can also find a display of homosociality through the playful insult that Saul levels at Waterson; the fact that Waterson does not respond negatively points out the friendly nature of the insult being used to display the solidarity between Waterson and Saul, a strategy we see employed in a members-only interaction below. Status is also created through the display of knowledge about basketball players: Notice Waterson jumping in when the status of Sam Cassell is in question. Finally, note that Saul takes an oppositional stance at first to the rush when he informs him that he *hates Virginia*. This is another instance of social indirectness in which an oppositional stance actually creates connection. Note too, though, that this is done through the commonality of the ex-girlfriend who taunts him about the talent of the Virginia basketball team. This strategy again connects the two as assumed heterosexual men.

So there is a recurring pattern in these excerpts of a search for common ground and tacit agreement on values, a display of camaraderie from the members, and a display of status, that gives us an idea of how homosociality is accomplished by the fraternity members and the rush. In addition, we have seen how sports talk can be used as a domain in which to accomplish homosociality.

One question remains is whether this talk was successful. Did Saul like the rush? Did the rush join? In fact, the rush did become a member of the fraternity. And it is clear that Saul liked the rush, because later in the evening he talked to some other members arriving late in the kitchen and said the following about the rush (pseudonym Tom) to whom he was talking:

(6)

1	Saul:	And f- that boy I was talkin' to Tom:?
2		coo::l motherfucker man
3		I I I could talk to him all fuckin' night
4	Sutton:	??? he plays ?? too
5	Saul:	Ye:::::ah uh he he he he he he
6		No what I'm sayin'-
7		Can we drin' at your place man?
8	Sutton:	Yeah I don't care
9		|???
10	Saul:	|I'm gonna tak- I'm definitely takin' Tom out
11	Sutton:	I already told ?? come by tonight=
12	Saul:	I'm takin' Tom

Although drinking with rushes was forbidden by the rush rules of the university, it was common practice to have "after rush" activities with favored rushes that

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included alcoholic beverages. We can thus see that these strategies, on the part of both the rush and Saul, were successful in creating homosociality.[15]

We saw above a small view of the camaraderie that was displayed between members in rush settings. Below is another example of such a display. Saul is talking to a rush (not Tom) about the fact that the rush plays baseball (but not for the university's varsity team), and has asked him what position he plays. Saul then shouts across the room to ask Alex what position he plays in softball. (It is useful to know that a "dip" is a certain kind of chewing tobacco which comes in a small can shaped like an ice-hockey puck; the men often "pack" it by slapping the can to make it more dense before they put it in their mouths.)

(7)

1	Saul:	Hey Alex
2		What position you gon' play in softball bro?
3		(.) ((presumably Alex responds "first base"))
4		Easy now! We got a first baseman right here man!
5		That's all right Alex will get the water for us, in between innings?
6	Rush:	Laugh
7	Saul:	We'll have, yknow, in case we need another dip Alex'll just pack it up for us?
8		You'll get it packed up for us right Alex?
9		Laughter
10	Rush:	Right get it ready.
11		(.)
12	Al:	What are you playing
13	Saul:	Well you give me a little something and I'll tell you wh-
14	Al:	What are you playin'.
15	Saul:	See how you are man
16	Al:	What are you playin'.
17		(.)
18	Saul:	Wherever the fraternity needs me man.
19		Yknow I'm just one of those utility players.
20	Al:	Wh- Wh-
21	Saul:	I played third base but fuckin' we got Scooter to play third base now
22		I'll probably play- I'll probably outfield or shortfield ((meaning 'shortstop'))
23	Al:	??
24	Saul:	Well he's short I don't know if he can stop much
25		Laughter

Saul and Alex have a recurrent sports-boast competition that forms much of their relationship with each other (see the exchange in Kiesling in press), so it is not pretense that causes Saul to yell to Alex; he may also have known that Alex plays first base. But they are creating a camaraderie here with their verbal sparring, as they do it constantly interspersed with laughter. Not only do they display the camaraderie of the fraternity, but Saul momentarily includes the rush in that camaraderie, and in fact includes him as a member of the fraternity through his proposed place on the softball team. In lines 5 (*Alex will get the water for us*) and 7 (*in case we need another dip Alex'll just pack it up for us?*) he constructs Alex as a servant for an *us* comprising Saul and the rush, in which Saul and the rush share a footing (in Goffman's 1981 terms), with Saul as animator and author for the two, who together form the principal. Saul thus includes the rush on

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the softball team in a status above Alex, and he inserts the rush into the competitive but friendly exchange. If one of the attractions of the fraternity is a sense of belonging and inclusiveness in a competitive world, as suggested by Jean's speech, then Saul is in a sense giving the rush a sample of it, showing him what camaraderie there is and thus creating desire in the rush to join the fraternity. Here the boasting, usually a confrontational speech act, has the effect of creating homosociality and is thus socially indirect. It is not, however, linguistically indirect: It still functions as, and has the effect of, a boast.

Despite the performance and creation of homosociality in these excerpts, the cultural discourse of power is pervasive. In fact, part of how desire is created in these interactions is to display the status that the fraternity holds and to show how it flows to the members. Homosocial desire is created partially by creating a status for fraternity members as somehow more masculine – a better example of the cultural discourses of masculinity – than are the nonmembers in whom the desire is created. The fraternity membership symbolizes power. A man is attracted to the fraternity men in these conversations partly through the possibility of an alliance with something powerful, and that will also make him more powerful: *I'm Gamma Chi Phi here I'm surrounded by all these people, I feel OK. Those were the best feelings ever* (Jean in ex. 1).

THE ANATOMY OF MASCULINE HOMOSOCIALITY

Homosociality puts men in a double bind of their own: To be a man is to be powerful, and to be powerful in the current gender order is, in part, to be heterosexual. But affiliation is often equated with dependence, so homosociality is almost by definition not masculine.[16] To create a masculine identity along the lines of dominant cultural discourses of masculinity, a man must not create love, dependency, nor sexual desire with his "fellow" men, but at the same time he must create solidarity with them. The men therefore find ratified indirect ways of taking up homosocial stances that are not homosexual stances. Most importantly, they take such stances powerfully, redefining homosociality as a powerful concept, as Jean does in his speech about the power of unity, which echoes cultural discourses of male solidarity. In this article we have seen a number of strategies that can accomplish this "powerful homosociality," strategies which invite other men into a powerful alliance. One strategy is to create privileged speech events where the expression of homosocial desire is ratified (even powerful), such as in ritual, where it is prescribed, and in group meetings. These speech events are distinguished by the foregrounding of the fraternity *qua* institution or group as almost another interlocutor; speakers tend to be ceding some of their footing as the individual principal of the talk, in Goffman's (1981) terms, to the fraternity. In other words, it is clear they are speaking for, or to, the fraternity as an entity (addressee indirectness). Fidelity and friendship are thus pledged to a group, and this loyalty is evaluated quite differently from individual homosociality vis-à-

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vis masculinity: Loyalty, as can be seen in the powerful masculinities associated with patriotism, is a powerful trait. Thus, Jean focused his love on the unity of the collective. These speech events are therefore not arbitrary connections that license the expression of homosociality; they are events that facilitate the indirect expression of homosociality through prescribed speech or through participation frameworks in which there is no single addressee.

Saul's rush conversations also show a deflection, or indirection, of homosociality. In these conversations he either creates status for the fraternity (social indirectness) or associates the interactants with the sports teams they support or with their abilities in sports (topic indirectness). This deflection to a ratified, less personal topic, as opposed to more directly personal topics such as love relationships and even homosocial friendships, is thus another strategy for creating homosociality.

The men also rely on socially indirect speech genres, acts, and stances, such as insults, boasts, and other competitive linguistic forms, to create homosociality. They use these genres, acts, and stances within homosocial interactions, as well as competitive (speech) activities such a drinking games, betting, and board games (see also Kiesling 2001b). Finally, all of the men, to greater or lesser degrees depending on the situation, employ a "cool" stance. This stance allows for the expression of homosocial desire without the speaker's coming across as "too earnest" in his desire. This stance is encapsulated in the pervasive use of *dude* within the fraternity and by men in general (see Kiesling 2004), as well as the greater use of "casual" pronunciations such as [In] for *-ing* among men (see Chambers 1995:109–13; Kiesling 1998). This "cool" stance is thus another example of social indirectness, because while it continues to function to signal a man's lack of effort or enthusiasm, it is nevertheless socially connecting the man to his addressees.

While most homosociality is thus performed "indirectly" or with "disclaimers," it is nevertheless central to the men's social identities, especially as fraternity members. Although their identity as heterosexual is central, their interactions with women are not evaluated as frequently, or monitored in the same way, as their interactions with men. In many ways, the men's heterosexuality is performed to help create their homosociality, and if this heterosexual desire overrides the homosocial desire (i.e., a man becomes "pussy whipped" by spending too much time with a girlfriend to the exclusion of his fraternity friends) it can threaten the status of his homosocial connections.[17] The status of men with respect to other men, then, is central to their identities.

This discussion has implications for both sociolinguistics and gender studies. The data here suggest a reconsideration of what is meant by "indirect." They suggest that indirectness is more than simply the substitution of one type of speech act for another (as in Brown & Levinson 1987). Such a view privileges the "denotational" function of language. These data show that the substitution of one strategy, such as competition, for another, such as desire, is another kind of

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indirectness. An insult is still an insult, and still competitive, but it is SOCIALLY indirect in that it is serving not only competition but solidarity as well. These findings also support Tannen's (1993) claims regarding the relativity of linguistic strategies: Linguistic features and strategies rarely have a deterministic meaning but can ALWAYS be interpreted differently in actual interaction. Much of such interpretation depends on the cultural discourses dominant in a group of people, and on the norms of the speech activity in which the strategy is situated. Finally, as Freed & Greenwood 1996 show and Ochs 1992 suggests, speakers are as likely to use strategies based on the kind of speech event they are engaged in (and the roles taken up in particular speech events; see Ochs & Taylor 1995) as they are to use those based on the gender of the speakers in the activity. We might find, for example, that women engage in more symmetrical sharing strategies because they interact more in speech activities of this kind than men do. It does not mean that men do not and cannot engage in these kinds of strategies, just that they usually do not; for example, Goodwin 1990 finds that girls can take confrontational stances in the right situations. The task for researchers is then to find out if, and then explain why, men and women tend to engage in different kinds of speech activities: Cultural discourses are such that women are more likely to choose one activity and men another. Drawing on the notion of cultural discourses can thus truly explain why a certain bundle of behaviors tends to be used more by women or by men.

The discussion above also has lessons for gender studies. The first is that a "hegemonic masculinity" – the most dominant or desired form of masculinity in a society – is composed of multiple, sometimes conflicting cultural discourses, and that these multiple cultural discourses and the conflicts between them might explain the patterns of behavior we find much more clearly than can an appeal to a single discourse. For example, Kimmel 2001 appeals to homophobia in his explanation of men's behavior, arguing that men are afraid of other men because they are afraid of being "unmasked" as homosexual. While I don't dispute that this cultural discourse is important, I have shown here that it explains behavior only if it is understood in the context of other cultural discourses of masculinity which proscribe the limits of unmarked male behavior.

Finally, this analysis shows how we can balance the macro, cultural discourse explanations of gendered language use with micro, interactionally focused data and explanations. We have seen here how the dominant discourses present choices for the men in interaction, and how the men negotiate these choices depending on the constraints of the speech events and their goals for the conversation. Such micro-focus strengthens the generalized argument from cultural discourses by showing that there is a way that cultural discourses of masculinity are translated by men into interaction in their everyday lives. In this way, we also balance an analysis that takes into account the wider, "objective" view of the analysts, as well as the subjective understandings the participants have of the speech events in question. We thus come upon an explanation that does not need to buy into the

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dominant cultural discourses but can nevertheless use them to explain gendered patterns of language use – the difference gender makes.

NOTES

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[1] I use "cultural discourse" here in the poststructural sense of discourse, as opposed to discourse which is talk-in-interaction. Such cultural discourses include culturally patterned ideologies, practices, and figured worlds (Holland et al. 1998). See Kiesling 2003, in press, and below, for a discussion.

[2] Here I refer to White, Anglo, middle-class heterosexuals, but I believe many of these discourses are shared by other groups, although they may manifest in different kinds of practice.

[3] This discourse is one in which "gender" (a term used to talk about social behavior) and "sex" (a term referring to biological differences) are conflated. In this discourse, gender arises "naturally" from sex. I believe this discourse is so strong (as seen in the results of Curtin & Kiesling 2003) that it is useless even to use the term "sex," because most characteristics that are attributed to sex are in fact gender-based. Certainly, the actual gestation of a fetus and giving birth are restricted to women, but the social practices and significance of this event affect it so much that it is hard to see how it is not gender as well. See also Bing & Bergvall 1996 and Connell 1987, 2002.

[4] That the film somehow strikes a chord of "truth" can be seen in the comments posted at this web site: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092005/board/threads/. The thread about this movie is still active even though the film is approaching 20 years old.

[5] There are some mixed-gender fraternities and some women's organizations at universities and colleges that call themselves fraternities (Kappa Alpha Theta, for example). However, the vast majority of fraternities require members to be men, and the primary connotation of the term is of a men-only organization.

[6] Fraternities generally consider a member to be a member for life unless he is specifically ejected. Although I have not talked to most of my fraternity brothers for many years, I am nevertheless still considered to be a member, as I am regularly reminded through appeals for donations.

[7] Note the similarity to rush here, although with mixers the men were individually attempting to create sexual desire in women, whereas we will see for rush that the desire being created is for the fraternity as a whole. Nevertheless, this parallel points out the fine distinction between the creation of sexual and social desire.

[8] This activity would be considered hazing and is no longer practiced in the fraternity, and it is forbidden by the national fraternity, the university, and most likely Virginia state law.

[9] Transcription conventions:

((text))	Description of actions that are not talk
??	Speech or speaker identity that was not comprehensible to transcriber
(text)	Speech that was uncertain to the transcriber
wor-	Dash indicates a word that was stopped short before being completed
wor:d	Colon indicates the preceding segment is lengthened
[word]	The actual word has been replaced for anonymity reasons
(0.2)	Time in seconds in which the participants do not speak
|text |text	Lines spoken simultaneously are denoted by vertical lines at the point of overlap
TEXT	Words spoken with much greater intensity than surrounding speech
text	Bold typeface indicates an important section for analysis

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[10] This "bowl" is a football tournament in which chapters of the national fraternity compete with each other every year in touch football.

[11] The fraternity often cleaned up the basketball arena after events in order to raise money.

[12] There is a common research finding that men get together to do things, but women get together to talk (Cameron 1997; Coates 1996, 2003). This rush event (like others) suggests that this finding is true only in part for the fraternity members: The "doing" is an excuse to get together, but the activity is quickly abandoned for the sake of talk itself.

[13] Something, we might note, that has been said to characterize women's talk, even quite recently; Coates 1996:78ff.

[14] The men also use other strategies identified as "women's strategies," such as finding agreement and consensus, but these are often in order to create a pair or group against another speaker, as Saul does with the rush in contrast with Alex, which sets up a display of the fraternity and the benefits of creating an alliance with its members. The men thus do not necessarily use formal linguistic features associated with men to create desirability and attractiveness in rush, but they use many features associated with women and the creation of connection. This suggests that men in fact may use these linguistic features as much as women do, especially when they are in same-sex groups that focus on homosociality (cf. Goodwin 1980, 1990 on girls using boys' strategies). However, we have seen the men use these formal features in a strategic way that more often than not builds status for the speaker. The men thus use these features in a way that supports cultural discourses of masculinity, suggesting that men and women deploy linguistic features and focus on different possible meanings because they are "said" and "heard" within these very cultural discourses. Such claims about how gender affects language use (and vice versa) therefore must take into account the topic or domain of the speech situation as well as the speech situation itself. If we still want to see this interaction as "masculine," then we also must claim that it is not the formal features such as questions, floors, and even minimal responses that make a speech style index masculinity or femininity, but rather these features in combination with content, other forms such as phonology and lexical choice (cursing), speech event context, and each other that lead to an impression that talk is "masculine" or "feminine." The impression we get is rooted not so much in the language but in the cultural discourses we connect to that language.

[15] Note also that Saul talks of "taking him out," a construction similar to that used to describe a man taking a woman out on a date, showing the parallels of rush and courtship.

[16] Michael Silverstein (p.c.) notes that this tension is similar to the more universal tension between so-called symmetrical T-T address term relationships and asymmetrical T-V relationships (Brown & Gilman 1960), suggesting that the double binds discussed here and by Lakoff are gender- and culture-specific realization of a more universal tension in human language.

[17] I recently came across a striking illustration of this antagonistic relationship between men's solidarity and heterosexuality in the Disney film *The lion king*, showing just how basic and pervasive this is. At one point, the lion Simba's male friends Pumbaa and Timon weep over the fact that Simba is falling in love with the lioness Nala. In fact, these two events happen simultaneously and even comprise a single song in the film.

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