

## **“She’s the only dykey one”: intersubjective constructions of authentic identity in a lesbian community of practice**

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The research presented here applies sociocultural linguistic frameworks presented by Bucholtz and Hall (2004) to conversational data acquired from a lesbian community of practice (cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992) during a large-scale ethnographic fieldwork project. This approach views identity as primarily social and contextually-specific, but also accounts for the macro-level ideologies which underpin and constrain the behaviour of individuals and groups. It will be shown how the broader sociocultural structures surrounding gender and sexuality directly inform this community’s access to a meaningful shared identity, specifically in terms of their reworking of binary gender. Through discourse analysis of a range of recorded interactions, it will be shown that the women’s language allows them to mutually position themselves in line with group-constructed, oppositional identity categories. It will be shown that these identity categories are constructed via mutually-negotiated stance-taking (Du Bois 2007) towards gender ideologies, with styles positioned by the women as *girly* being classed as inauthentic and antithetical to their concept of a lesbian – the authentic *dyke*. The indexical relationship between the women’s notion of inauthenticity and authenticity and heteronormative ideologies of femininity and masculinity will be outlined and illustrated through this analysis. The women’s identity construction will be shown to be fluid and temporal, changing in different discursive moments whilst crucially linked to a jointly constructed sense of group normativity and broader notions of lesbian culture.

### **References:**

- Bucholtz, M. & Hall, K. (2004) “Theorizing Identity in Language and Sexuality Research.” *Language in Society* 33: 469-515.
- Du Bois, J. (2007) “The Stance Triangle.” In Englebretson, Robert (Ed.) *Stancetaking in discourse: Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction*. 139-182. Benjamins, Amsterdam.
- Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992) “Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as community-based practice.” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 21: 461-90.