3 "What's in a Name?" Social Labeling and Gender Practices

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1 Categorizing Labels

What do we call one another? How do we identify ourselves? When and how do we label ourselves and others? What is the significance of rejecting labels for ourselves or others? Of adopting new labels? Social labeling practices offer a window on the construction of gendered identities and social relations in social practice.

To get the flavor of some ways that labeling can enter into gender practice, consider the English nominal labels italicized in (1), which are being used to describe or to evaluate, to sort people into *kinds*. These predicative labels characterize and *categorize* people.

(1) a. He's *a real dork*.
    b. She's *a total airhead.*
    c. I'm not *a feminist*, but . . .
    d. You are a *fierce faggot*, and I love you.
    e. We're not just *soccer moms*.
    f. What *a slut* (s/he is)!
    g. You're *a dear*.
    h. That blood is the sign that you're now *a woman*.

(1a) and (1b) are both negative characterizations, but they are gendered and they are different: (1a) alleges male social incompetence, (1b) attributes female brainlessness. (See James 1996 for these and other different semantic categories predominating in insulting labels applied to males and females in her study with Toronto students.) In (1c), the *but* signals that the speaker's rejection of the label is probably linked to acceptance of a negative evaluation that others have placed on those who openly identify with change-oriented gender agendas, often by misrepresenting their actions and attitudes (e.g. presenting feminists as humorless and unattractive man-haters). Another speaker might embrace

the alternative label *womanist* as a way of criticizing self-described feminists who have ignored issues of race and class, effectively equating "women" with "well-to-do White women." (This particular example is discussed at some length in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, forthcoming, ch. 7.) In (1d), "faggot," a label that is standardly only applied derogatorily to others by those not so labeled, is being proudly and defiantly reappropriated and joined to a modifier ("fierce") that completely subverts the weak, wishy-washy image so often associated with the nominal label. The speaker, an "out" gay man inter-viewed by one of my students, directly challenges the homophobic attitudes and assumptions that give the label its more usual negative value. A group's appropriation of labels that have been derogatorily applied by outsiders is often a powerful strategy: the word *queer* has been (almost) rehabilitated through this process and can now be used without suggesting prejudice against sexual minorities within certain groups (e.g. academic-based communities of practice) even by those who don't apply the label to themselves. (See McConnell-Ginet 2002 for further discussion.) And in (1e), there is an implicit criticism of the gendered political assumptions that are carried by the label, a media invention that marries gender and class privilege. (1f) attributes sexual promiscuity to the person so labeled, and, although it is sometimes applied to males these days, it overwhelmingly evokes a female image (see James 1996). Used jokingly, it may mock sexual double standards; in another context, it may reinforce them. The speaker in (1g) is gently stroking the addressee with kind words; to offer this particular form of appreciation is generally to "do" a certain kind of femininity. And in (1h), the addressee is pushed along a trajectory of gender identity, and a strong link is forged between her menarche and her new status as "woman."

As *feminist* in (1c) illustrates, labels often identify social, political, and attitudinal groupings into which people quite self-consciously do or do not enter. Others may, of course, monitor their suitability by refusing to accord them a claimed label: *Well, she's no feminist* can serve in a group defining itself as feminist to criticize the intellectual or political credentials of the person in question, and perhaps to exclude her from membership in the group. Of course, uttering that same sentence in some other group might function as a prelude to welcoming in a new member. In May 2001, the potential potency of em-bracing or rejecting certain labels was brought home dramatically in US news by the defection of Vermont Senator James Jeffords from the Republican Party. "I have changed my party label," he noted, "but I have not changed my beliefs" (*New York Times*, May 25, 2001: A20). Jeffords' rejection of the label *Republican*, while it may not have been associated with any change in his beliefs and values, nonetheless set into motion a quite significant chain of events with enormous political repercussions. And as news analysts pointed out, all that was required by the laws of Vermont and the rules of the US Senate for Jeffords to cease being a Republican was for him to reject the label, to say "I am no longer a Republican."

It was reportedly very wrenching for Jeffords to change his party label: being a Republican was not only an important part of how he thought of himself but of his friendships and alliances. It would be even harder for the addressee in (1h) to change or reject the gender label being attached to her. Yet, as we will see, labeling (including relabeling and label rejection) is deeply implicated not only in ascribing gender but in giving content to and helping shape gender identities and in challenging gender dichotomies.

2 Social Practice: Local Communities of Practice and Global Connections

Although I have offered a sketch of what is probably going on when each of the sentences in (1) is uttered, precisely what each labeling does will depend on how the utterance fits into the other aspects of ongoing social practice. As Penelope Eckert and I have argued in our joint work on language and gender (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992a, 1992b, 1995, 1999, forthcoming), social identities, including gendered identities, arise primarily from articulating memberships in different communities of practice. A community of practice (CofP) is a group of people brought together by some mutual endeavor, some common enterprise in which they are engaged and to which they bring a shared repertoire of resources, including linguistic resources, and for which they are mutually accountable. Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) introduced the notion in their work on learning as an ongoing and thoroughly social process, and Wenger (1998) further develops the analytic framework.

Gender is a global social category that cuts across communities of practice, but much of the real substance of gendered experience arises as people participate in the endeavors of the local communities of practice to which they belong and as they move between such communities. The special June 1999 issue of *Language in Society*, edited by Janet Holmes and Miriam Meyerhoff, contains a number of interesting discussions and applications of the idea to language and gender research, and the editors' contribution (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999) discusses its theoretical and methodological implications for language and gender research. Meyerhoff (2001) details the implications of the CofP framework more generally for the study of language variation and change, comparing the CofP to related constructs and frameworks: the speech community, social networks, and intergroup theory. As Meyerhoff makes clear, much sociolinguistic work that has not used the terminology "community of practice" has nonetheless drawn on similar ideas in attempting to gain insight into the connection between individual speech and broader general social and linguistic patterns. Penelope Eckert (2000) has developed a sustained argument for viewing linguistic variation as social practice, drawing on her extensive sociolinguistic investigations in a Detroit area high school.

Communities of practice are not free-floating but are linked to one another and to various institutions. They draw on resources with a more general history – languages as well as various kinds of technologies and artefacts. Their members align themselves not only with one another but with others whom they imagine have shared values and interests. It is not only those we directly encounter who have significant impact on our sense of possibilities for social practice and identity. Benedict Anderson (1983) introduced the notion of an "imagined community" to talk about national identity, and Andrew Wong and Qing Zhang (2000) talk about sexual minorities developing a sense of themselves as members of an imagined community in which they align themselves with others and thereby affirm and shape their sexual identities. Media, including books as well as newer communicative technologies, feed the imagination and offer glimpses of social practices that may be possible alternatives to those found in one's local communities of practice. Religious, political, and educational institutions also offer more global perspectives and resources, although they often have their main impact on individuals through their participation in connected local communities of practice (particular church groups, political action groups, classroom-based teams).

3   "Empty" Labels: Reference and Address

The idea that there might be nothing (or very little) in a name arises most naturally when labels are not used predicatively to characterize, as in (1) above, but are used to refer to or address someone. In (2) and (3), the italicized labels are being used to refer and to address respectively:

(2)   a. *That bastard* didn't even say hello!
      b. When are *you guys* going to supper?
      c. Have *you* seen *my sister*?
      d. *Jill* said *she*'d talked with *the professors in the department*.
      e. It's *the welfare queens* who undermine the system.
      f. *I*'d like *you* to meet *my partner*, *Chris*.

(3)   a. Hey, *lady* – watch where you're going!
      b. Why're you in such a rush, *stuck-up bitch*?
      c. Go, *girl*!
      d. How're you doing, *tiger*?
      e. Frankly, *my dear*, I don't give a damn.
      f. I'll try, *mom*, to make you proud of me.
      g. Be good, *Joanie*.
      h. Wait for me, *you guys*.

Referring is basic to conveying information: we refer to the people we talk about (and also, of course, to other things we talk about). Referring expressions play

grammatical roles such as *subject* or *object*. Typically, they identify the participants in the eventuality designated by the verb: they are what linguists call *arguments* of the verb (or sometimes of another expression, for example a preposition). Addressing, on the other hand, exists only because of the social nature of linguistic interaction. Address forms tag an utterance with some label for the addressee, the target to whom an utterance is directed. Unlike referring expressions (and the predicative use of labels we saw in (1)), they are not grammatically related to other expressions in the utterance; in English, they are often set off intonationally much as other "parenthetical" expressions. The expression *you guys* is used to refer in (2b), to address in (3h).

The idea that names don't (or shouldn't) matter – "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" – is linked to the idea that labeling for referential or address purposes does not characterize an individual or group but simply identifies them: points to the proper entity about whom something is said in the referring case, or indicates to whom an utterance is directed in the addressing case. Indeed, the standard analysis of what referring proper names and pronouns contribute in the way of informational content to sentences like those in (2) fits with this view of things. If my sister is named Alison (and I assume that you know that) then I could ask *Have you seen Alison?* and achieve much the same effect as if (2c) is uttered. Of course, (2c) does attribute the property of being my sister to the individual about whose whereabouts I'm inquiring. If you have some other way to identify the individual in question (perhaps you've recently seen the two of us together and note that I'm carrying and looking at the hat she was then wearing), my utterance might indeed inform you that the individual in question is my sister though that might not have been my intent (I might have been assuming that you already knew she was my sister).

In general, when a referring expression uses a nominal that can be used to characterize or categorize, the speaker is assuming that the referent is indeed categorized by that nominal. But the content of the nominal label – its potential characterizing value – is very often just a way to get attention focused on the particular individual, and other ways might in many cases do equally well. (Not in all cases, however: a matter to which we will return below.) Address forms too can include contentful nominals, and that content is often presupposed applicable to the addressee.

Of course, proper names and pronouns do not standardly have content in the same way as ordinary common nouns do. Their relative semantic emptiness precludes their occurring as predicate expressions like those in (1): rather than characterizing, they indicate a person or group. English does, of course, sometimes allow what look like characterizing uses of names and pronouns. In the case of proper names, an ordinary "common" noun – a category label – can be derived from a proper name, where the content of the noun usually derives from some specially notable characteristics of some particular person bearing that name, as in the first three examples in (4). (The person may be a fictional character as in (4c), where the expression *Lolita* serves to cast young girls as

seductive and thus responsible for men's sexual interest in them.) Sometimes, though, a proper name is used just to help personify a typical member of some group or a person with some particular personal qualities; in these cases, the capital letter associated with proper names often disappears, as in the last five examples (but the original gendering of the names contributes to their significance):

(4) a. Kim's *no Mother Teresa*.
     b. Lee's *a regular Einstein*.
     c. Some of those fourth-graders are already *little Lolitas*.
     d. She's *your typical sorority sue*. [1980s slang at University of North Carolina: Eble 1996]
     e. He's *a nervous nellie*.
     f. She's just *a sheila I met in Sydney*. [Australian English]
     g. He's just *a guy I know*.
     h. The legislators quickest to criminalize prostitutes are often *johns* themselves.

Notice also that some proper names are formally equivalent to labels that do have descriptive content: *Faith*, *Hope*, *Rose*, *Pearl*, *Iris*, and *Joy* are examples of English names (not coincidentally, all female names) that evoke content. A given girl named *Rose* is not, of course, literally a flower, but her name may suggest the beauty of those fragrant blossoms. I don't mean to suggest that men's given names are immune from content associations; the widely increased prevalence of *dick* as a vulgar term for "penis" and also as an insult has virtually killed off *Dick* as a shortened form of *Richard* among Americans under the age of 40. Here, of course, the content is seen as far more problematic than that associated with the female names mentioned above. Overall, content-bearing names are no longer the norm in English, but they certainly are in many other cultures. Even non-contentful names often link a child to a family history, to someone else who bore the same name in the family or in the family's cultural heritage. Whether that person must be of the same sex as that to which the child is assigned varies. Some languages have devices that can feminize an originally masculine name (e.g. we find English *Georgina*, *Paulette*, and *Roberta* alongside *George, Paul*, and *Robert*), and there are languages where there are masculine/feminine pairs of names (e.g. Italian *Mario* and *Maria*), neither of which is derivationally more basic. (There may be cases of masculinizing processes, but I have not uncovered them.) In some cultural traditions, given names are generally contentful, and those naming a child try to pick something auspicious.

How names work varies significantly in different cultural settings. Catholic children, for example, acquire a confirmation name, generally with some special significance. Felly Nkweto Simmonds (1995) discusses this and other features of the place of her own different names in her life history. The custom (and one-time legal requirement) in many Western societies of a woman's adopting her husband's surname has meant that women were more likely than men to

face name changes during their lives, at least "official" name changes. Many men leave behind childhood diminutive forms of their given names (*Bobby* becomes *Bob*, *Willie* becomes *Will* or *William*), but many also acquire new nick-names on sports teams or in fraternities or the military, new names that some-times persist over the rest of the life-course. And some men are changing their surnames upon marriage nowadays, hyphenating names or choosing with their partner a name that ties into the heritage of both (e.g. my local paper reported on a couple, one named *Hill* and one with an Italian surname and heritage, who chose *Collina*, "hill" in Italian, as their common new surname).

Some cultures institutionalize an array of different personal names, others do not use family names as most Europeans understand them, and still others tie names very tightly to life-stages. Among the Tamang in Nepal, people of both sexes bear a variety of different names during their lives. Babies are given a name selected by a religious expert to contain appropriate sounds, but those names are seldom used and are generally known only to close family. Young children are typically given rather derogatory labels ("little pock-marked one"), designed to deflect unwanted attention from evil spirits. And adolescents take for themselves joyful sounding names ("Bright Flower") that they use during courtship song festivals and similar occasions in the period between childhood and (relatively late) marriage. Adults, on the other hand, are often labeled in terms of their parental roles ("Maya's mother" or "father of Mohan") or other kinship relations ("grandfather" or "youngest daughter-in-law"), seldom being addressed or referred to by what Westerners would count as a name (though close friends from youth may continue to use the courtship-period names, at least in some contexts). (See March, forthcoming, for discussion of Tamang naming.)

Labels for people that identify them only through their relation to someone else – teknonyms – do occur in some English-speaking communities (I was addressed as *Alan's mom* or *Lisa's mother* on many occasions when my children were young), but they are pervasive in some cultures. During some historical periods, Chinese women in certain regions often received nothing but such relational forms, moving from designations such as *second daughter* and *oldest sister* to *Lee's wife* and the like; men, in contrast, were far more often named as individuals (Naran Bilik, personal communication, May 2001; see Blum 1997 for a very useful discussion of naming and other features of address and reference practices among speakers of Chinese). Bernsten (1994) discusses Shona address practices, which construct adult women mainly via their relationships to others. After marriage (when a woman moves to her husband's locale) but before having children, a young woman is generally not called (at least pub-licly) by her principal childhood name but *amain'ini* (lit. "little mother"), the term for a young aunt, or, to show respect and recognition of her ancestral ties to another place, by the totem name associated with her natal family or clan. But once she has children the principal form of address to a woman is *amai* ("mother") + the name of her eldest child. Or at least such teknonymy was the predominant pattern before European colonizers and missionaries came and began to promote Western-style naming practices.

Labeling practices that de-emphasize women's status as very particular individuals can be found closer to home. For example, in American and British history, tombstones have often named male children (*James*, *Richard*, *Kenneth*, *and Thomas*) but not female (*and three daughters*). And *Mrs. John Doe* names a station, whoever the occupant may be, whereas *Mr. John Doe* picks out an individual. This point was brought home to me early in my married life when I came across a box of stationery made for my husband's first wife, bearing what I had until then thought of as "my" new name. (Stannard 1977 remains a fascinating account of "Mrs. Man"; the epigraph she chooses from a letter Henry James wrote to a friend in 1884 is eloquent: "we talk of you and Mrs you.")

The many ways in which proper names may enter into gender practice is itself the topic for a book. The two critical points for present purposes are that (1) although proper names are not fundamentally characterizing, they nonetheless have considerable significance beyond their picking out particular individuals, and (2) the significance of proper names lies in how they are bestowed and deployed in particular cultures and communities of practice.

There are also occasional characterizing uses of forms identical to pronouns. These are analogous to the occasional transformation of a proper name into a characterizing expression that we saw in (4):

(5) a. Max thinks he's a real *he*-man.
     b. Bernadette's a *she*-wolf.
     c. I really hope their baby is a *she*.
     d. This *me*-generation has forgotten what it means to care about others.

In (5a–c), *he* and *she* draw on the background gender assumptions they carry in their ordinary referring uses. But they are otherwise lacking in content.

Neither proper names nor pronouns are what people generally have in mind when they speak of *name-calling*. Name-calling is like address in being specifically targeted, but unlike address in that the label itself constitutes a full utterance whose explicit function is to characterize (more particularly, to evaluate) its target. Popular usage speaks of name-calling only when the content of the label applied is overtly disparaging, but I include approving labels in this category as well. In (6) there are some examples. The first two might be hurled at a target by someone intending to hurt, the third is more likely to be used jokingly, whereas the last three might well function as expressions of affection or thanks or appreciative positive evaluation. (Interestingly, it seems significantly harder to omit the pronominal *you* with the positive than with the negative.)

(6) a. (You) *jerk*.   cf. What *a jerk* (you are)!
     b. *Fatso*.
     c. (You) *klutz*.
     d. You *sweetheart*.   cf. You are such a *sweetheart*!
     e. You *angel*.
     f. You *genius*.

Name-calling is directed toward a particular target and ascribes the content of the nominal to that target. What characterizing content amounts to in these cases is evaluation, which can be either (overtly) negative or positive. The strongly evaluative element is why (in English) name-calling is much like uttering a special *wh*-exclamative form – "what a(n)——(you are)" – or an exclamatory declarative – "you are such a(n)——," where the blank is filled in with some noun phrase. It is the negative cases, of course, that invoke the old playground mantra "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me," chanted by the target of some name in a desperate attempt to prevent further assault by denying its (obvious) power. We can think of name-calling as an utterance of a characterizing expression directed at an addressee, where the whole point of such an utterance is to paste the evaluative label on the addressee.

Address forms are often used in calls (where the address form may constitute the whole utterance) or greetings or on other occasions to get the attention of the person or persons to whom an utterance is directed: such uses have been called *summons*. By analogy with the lines on an envelope that direct the message inside to a particular location, the term *address* suggests the primacy of this attention-getting or "finding" function of address forms, even though some analysts (see, for example, Schegloff 1972) want to reserve the term for non-summoning uses. In general, address forms can be parenthetically interjected at almost any point in an ongoing exchange although they are particularly common in greetings or other openings. Many address forms can also be used to refer, and I will sometimes mention differences between address and referring uses of a particular form. And second-person reference, though grammatically distinct from address, raises many of the same social issues. Ide (1990) uses "terms of address" to include both address forms and second-person reference.

4   Address Options: Beyond Power and Solidarity

Address forms are always grammatically optional, but they are often socially required and they are always socially loaded. There are many different ways that analysts have divided the field, but the following two displays give some order to the range of available options in English. Display (7) gives a typology for forms that are individualized in the sense that speaker and addressee consider them names or nicknames that have been specifically attached to this particular addressee. Of course, any given individual may get very different forms from different addressers, and some addressers may use multiple forms. Imagine these preceded by *hey* or *hi* or *hello* or a similar greeting (*yo* is increasingly common among younger Americans):

(7)   Surname plus social title: *Mr./Ms./Miss/Mrs. Robinson*
       Surname plus professional title: *Dr./Prof./Judge/Sen./Capt. Robinson*
       Surname only: *Robinson*
       Title or kinterm plus given name: *Ms. Blanche/Auntie Blanche/Granny Rose/
       Papa John*
       Bare kinterm: *mother/mom/mommy/mama, dad/daddy/papa/pop(s)/father, sis(ter),
       bro(ther), son, daughter, aunt(ie), uncle, grandma, grandpa*
       Given name: *Christine/Christopher*
       Standard short form of name: *Chris*
       Special "nicknames": *Crisco* (for *Chris*), *Teddy Bear/Ace/Batgirl*

In general, the choices at the top are used reciprocally between those socially
quite separated or non-reciprocally up a hierarchy, whereas the choices at the
bottom are used reciprocally between people who are close to one another or
non-reciprocally down a hierarchy. But the rankings of the choices may be
shifted or other individualized options may be developed in particular com-
munities of practice. Indeed, members of a particular CofP may develop their
own practices that do not readily slot into this model. I will discuss some
examples of other options and alternative interpretations below. English-
speaking children are often instructed as to how they should address (and also
refer to) various people. (Blum 1997 observes that address and reference norms
are explicitly conveyed for adults as well in many Chinese communities of
practice.)

   The group of address options given in (8) is more general. Again, it may
help to think of them as following some greeting:

(8)   Bare title: *coach, professor, doc(tor), judge, councilor, teach(er)*
       Respect terms: *sir, ma'am, miss*
       Stranger generic names: *Mac, Bud, Buster, Toots*
       General: *man, you (guys), girl(friend), dude, lady, ladies, gentlemen, folks, babe, sexy*;
       (esp. for children) *tiger, chief, princess, beautiful*
       Epithets/insults: *bitch, ho, slut, prick, bastard, slimeball, nerd, dyke, faggot*
       Endearments (sometimes preceded by *my*): *honey, dear, sweetie, love, darling,
       baby, cutie*

Although bare kinterms appear in display (7), the category of forms used for
addressing particular others (those in the designated relation to the speaker)
can also be used more generally, and could have been included in display (8).
In the southern United States in the mid-twentieth century (and even more
recently), it was very common for White people to use *auntie* or *uncle* to (con-
descendingly) address Black people whom they did not know. The form *Pops*
has been hurled by young toughs at old men whom they are hassling, but
the form is now dying out. There are other cultural settings where kinterms
equivalent to *aunt* and *uncle* are used to address elderly strangers as respectful
forms. And *brother* and *sister* are sometimes used positively among African
Americans, often to emphasize shared histories, and in church service contexts

among some other groups of Americans. The moral: the significance of par-
ticular forms of address lies in the history of patterns of usage within and across
particular communities of practice and in the connection between addressing
and other aspects of social practice that build social relations and mark them
with respect and affection or with contempt, condescension, or dislike.

In neither list is it sufficient to think of a cline from more to less respectful or
less to more intimate. This is not to deny that respect and power, on the one
hand, and intimacy and solidarity, on the other, are indeed crucial components
of interactional meaning. This point was made by Roger Brown and Albert
Gilman (1960), in an account of address and addressee reference in European
languages with a familiar and a more formal second-person pronoun. Their
classic paper, "Pronouns of Power and Solidarity," focused on what they called
the T/V distinction of second-person pronouns found in many Indo-European
languages, though absent for centuries now from English. The "T" form (as in
French *tu* or German *du*), which is grammatically singular, is generally described
as the more familiar. The "V" form (as in French *vous* or German *Sie*), gram-
matically plural (and historically semantically plural as well), is described as
the more formal. Canonically, the V form is used reciprocally between distant
(non-solidary) peers and upwards in a (power-laden) hierarchical relation,
whereas the T form is used reciprocally between close peers and downwards
in a hierarchical relation. Is the V respectful or deferential? Is the T friendly or
condescending? This particular polysemy, produced by the interactional ten-
sion and connection between power and solidarity, is pervasive, as Deborah
Tannen (1994, this volume) has argued.

In the T/V languages, it is not just the pronominal forms themselves that
carry the power/solidarity values, but also verb forms. The verbal form of an
imperative, for example, agrees in number with the unexpressed second-
person pronominal subject, and thus obligatorily indicates a T (*Sors!* "leave")
versus V (*Sortez!*) choice even if there is no overt form referring to the addressee.
In contrast, English has only one form for imperatives and even if one has to
refer explicitly to the addressee, the second-person pronoun *you* does not make
social distinctions. Offering a historical as well as synchronic account, Brown
and Gilman observed a progression in the European T/V languages toward
increased reliance on the solidarity semantic – increased use of the T form.
That progression has certainly continued in the decades since their paper was
published, but the distinctions have not vanished, and there are almost cer-
tainly still possibilities in some communities of practice using T/V languages
for subtle interactions with gender practice in choice of second-person pro-
nouns and verbal form of second-person utterances. Even for the binary T/V
split, matters are more complex than the simple split into the power and the
solidarity semantic might indicate, especially if our interest is in gender and
sexuality.

Historically, in many contexts where heterosexuality was presumed, it was
important to preserve pronominal markings of "distance" – i.e. non-intimacy –
between women and men during the years when they were presumed to be

potential sexual partners. For example, children who used mutual T in their prepubescent years might switch as they matured. Paul Friedrich (1972) offered the Russian example "Petya's grown-up now. He says *vy* to the girls." And a man and a woman whose family relations forbade their intimacy – standardly presumed to be at least potentially sexual – were especially careful to stick with mutual V: for example, within families Brown and Gilman report mutual V most common between a married woman and her husband's brother. Because it was women who were expected to police and control intimacy, it was they who were normatively expected to "give permission" for a move from mutual V-address to mutual T-address. Given the general principle that Brown and Gilman enunciate, that the more powerful member of a dyad is the one able to initiate a move from either mutual V or asymmetric address to mutual T, it is surprising that they do not comment at all on their claim that in cross-sex dyads, it is women who decide whether mutual T is to be permitted. This is, of course, an instance of women's "power" to dispense or withhold sexual favors, a "power" often more symbolic than real. Increased egalitarian ideologies with their emphasis on mutual T-relations have undoubtedly eroded these distinctions, but there are still certainly some gender components of T/V usage. Brown and Gilman do note, however, another instance where the gender and the sexual order introduce some disturbances in their account of the general functioning of the T/V distinction. There is, they say, one particularly "chilling example" that runs counter to their general principle that mutual T, once established, is never withdrawn. German men visiting prostitutes engage in mutual T-address until the "business" is completed, when they revert to mutual V. Here too, practices may well have changed in the decades since their research, but notice that what address did in such cases was to construct the commercial relationship between customer and sex worker as one of temporary intimacy.

What is important to note is that there are many different "flavors" of power – of status differentials – and of solidarity – of connections between peers. These flavors are the product of the character of social practice in different communities of practice. They are often linked to gender or to race or ethnicity or class, but they ultimately derive from social practice. As a consequence, address forms from one individual to another often vary significantly, depending on such factors as the CofP in which the two are encountering one another and the nature of the particular interaction in which they are engaged.

To appreciate the different flavors of power and solidarity, consider a few cases of English address that do not really fit on the lists in (7) and (8). For example, there are people who receive a shortened form of their given name from most acquaintances but the full form, generally considered more distant, from a spouse or some other intimate. Presumably, the full form can construct intimacy precisely because most mere acquaintances do not use it. It marks the specialness of the couple's own intimate CofP. Or, consider Leeds-Hurwitz's (1980) report of a woman promoted in a company and creating address distinctions that subtly constructed her new position of ascendancy over former

colleagues and (near) equality with former superiors. For her former colleagues, she developed multiple names (signaling more "familiarity"), whereas they continued simply to use her given name. Her former (male) superiors continued to use her given name, but she dropped the title plus surname forms she had once used to them. She moved to the unusual combination of given name plus surname, perhaps avoiding given name alone either because she had not been explicitly invited to use it, the norm in such changes, or because she found it difficult to break the old taboo. This woman drew on familiar resources but put them together in somewhat novel patterns to help sustain the social challenges of her new form of participation in the workplace CofP.

There are also a number of "off-the-list" ways to combine intimacy with deference to age. In some communities of practice in the southeastern USA, for example, it is still relatively common for young people to use a social title plus given name for an older woman (*Miz Anne*), a form that combines the "respect" of the title with the closeness and familiarity implied by the given name. Although the same formula can be used to address an older man, it is somewhat more common to get social title plus some shortened form of the surname. For example, my father, Charles McConnell, was called *Mr. Mac* by college-age friends when he was in his forties and living in North Carolina. This pattern of title plus shortened surname is much less restricted regionally and is frequently used by children to their teachers of both sexes; the initial of the surname is a frequent "shortening": *Ms. G* (or *Miss G* or *Mrs. G*) or *Mr. G*. Similarly, in some communities of practice, children use *Aunt* or *Uncle* plus first name not only for kin but also for close family friends of their parents' generation or older. A young friend of mine, who's been taught to use respectful titles to adults, recently sent me an e-mail that began "Dear Dr. Sally."

Even when we stay "on the list," it is obvious that many address forms are canonically gendered but that matters are seldom so simple as restricting application or use of a form to a single sex. In English, first names are often (though not always) gendered, social titles and kinterms are gendered, and there is considerable gendered differentiation in the use of other forms. Here we will focus on cases that seem to indicate something about ongoing changes in the gender order.

Bare surname, for example, is still far more common among men and boys than among women and girls, but there are changes afoot. (The still prevalent expectation that women will change surnames when they marry probably helps sustain the sense that surnames are more firmly attached to men than to women. But that expectation is certainly weakening, as more women retain birth names or join with partners willing to effect a common change to a new name for the new family unit.) Surnames are not part of address within the nuclear family (not these days, when women no longer use title plus surnames in addressing their husbands as was the custom in some English-speaking circles in the nineteenth century), and the surname is associated with the move from the nuclear family to other communities of practice and with leaving babyhood behind. It is often used reciprocally as a form of address (and of

reference) in communities of practice where relationships focus on camaraderie and collective performance under pressure rather than emotional intimacy. (Non-reciprocal bare surname use is also associated with such communities of practice when they are hierarchically organized. In the military, for example, the higher-ranking individual may use surname to those below and receive title plus surname. Hicks Kennard (2001) offers examples from women in the US Marine Corps.) Reciprocal bare surname address is certainly increasingly used among women; what is noteworthy is that such usage is especially common in communities of practice such as sports teams (or the military) where the relationships called for are those for which such address is especially apt, where there is a friendship of equals and "sentimentality" is excluded. That this pattern of address is increasing among women, for whom its main provenance in earlier generations seems to have been nursing units, testifies to the increase in women's participation in communities of practice of the sort that promote mutual dependence and teamwork but eschew anything that might suggest vulnerability.

Of course, bare surname address and reference are not completely confined to arenas such as playing fields and hospital floors. A friend of mine refers to her now dead husband this way, and apparently that was how she and almost everyone other than his family of origin addressed and referred to him most frequently. Such cases, however, are exceptional; a young woman whose relationship with a young man moves from simple comradeship to heterosexual romance often finds herself also moving away from initial bare surname address to given name and/or special names and endearments. Bare surname, then, is not simply gendered; the gender differentiation in its use follows from its relation to kinds of social practice and social relations, and changes in the gender patterns of its use are part and parcel of changes in the content of gender practice.

The jocular use of epithets in address – "It's great to see you, you old sonofabitch!" – is in some ways similar to the use of bare surname, especially when the usage is reciprocal. It is, however, more age-sensitive, with peak use among young men, and more situationally restricted, being paradigmatically associated with male locker-room or fraternity registers and at least normatively censored in mixed-sex and general public settings (like swearing in general). Like bare surnames (and swearing), however, jocular epithets are becoming more and more commonly used by young women to their close friends and siblings (see, for example, Hinton 1992).

Less jocular (and non-reciprocal) usage of the epithets that are standardly thought of as applied to females is associated with such contexts as male construction workers yelling at female strangers walking by (on street calls generally, see Gardner 1981; Kissling 1991; Kissling and Kramarae 1991). The only instances reported by Leanne Hinton's students surveyed in 1991 of a man's calling a woman *bitch* were from strangers (see also (3b), an example reported to me by a young woman I know) – i.e. the addresser and addressee are not within a common community of practice. Address from strangers to

women often also uses "complimenting" general terms referring to appearance, such as *beautiful* or *sexy*. Just as "insults" are often really positive marks of intimacy, such "compliments" are often really negative marks of objectification and condescension. Sometimes hostile "feminine" as well as specifically homophobic epithets are used in name-calling as well as in reference by men to harass other men. (See Cameron 1997 for use of epithets with homophobic content in reference to absent men to enforce heterosexual gender conformity.)

Epithets, often quite overtly sexual and classified as obscene, are frequently used for reference in certain communities of practice by men talking among themselves about women. On many all-male sports teams, for example, such references to women are extremely common and may serve both to display a kind of superiority to women and to effect "bonding" via shared "othering" and denigration of women. In some such communities of practice, the men using these terms routinely for reference to women would never think of using them in address or in reference in the mixed-sex communities of practice to which they belong. But men are not the only insulters. Abusive referential terms are sometimes used in communities of practice by women talking about other women who are not there to defend themselves. In the woman–woman uses, however, the forms tend to be personally directed, whereas in a number of all-male groups the forms are used to refer to virtually any woman (at least, any female age-mate). Of course, women do sometimes "bond" by speaking negatively of men; a brilliant cartoon in a recent *New Yorker* magazine shows some women gathered around a water cooler, with one saying: "I'd love to join you in saying nasty things about men but I used to be one."

The reports I have gotten of this kind of anti-male "bonding" phenomenon among women speak primarily of labelings that characterize men in general or particular men, many of these characterizations being focused on the men's (alleged) sexual mistreatment of women or their general inconsiderateness. These contrasts point to the somewhat different place of cross-sex hostility in the social practices of all-female and of all-male communities of practice. The negative labeling of women that some groups of men are using to bond tends to be backgrounded, a matter of the default forms of reference some of them use for female individuals of whom they are implicitly dismissive. For women, the negative labeling tends to be more explicitly descriptive or evaluative: they are characterizing the men in a disapproving way, taking men as their topic rather than relegating cross-sex derogation to the background. (These comments are based on reports from my own and others' students as well as on other kinds of informal observations. Systematic study of actual usage in this arena is not easy to undertake, given the relatively "private" nature of such exchanges.)

In the past several decades there have been a number of studies of abusive terms referring to or used to address women (Schultz 1975 and Penelope [Stanley] 1977 are classic references; Sutton 1995 is a more recent study), many of which note the predominance of words that have sexual allusions. Some studies also look at abusive terms designating men (e.g. Baker 1975; Risch

1987; James 1996). Interestingly, some terms (e.g. *bitch*, *slut*, *bastard*) are becoming less strongly gendered in two ways: they can now apply to both sexes, and women use them far more than they once did, both seriously and in joking contexts among themselves. In spite of this, James (1996) still found strong gendered stereotypes for referents and for users of most such epithets, which suggests they still convey gendered meanings, though perhaps more complex and somewhat different ones than they once did. According to Sutton (1995), a significant number of young women report using *ho* affirmatively to one another (a smaller number have also reclaimed *bitch*) – and in jocular contexts, also forms like *slut* and *dork*. These reports fit with the accounts my own students offer of the evolving scene. Most studies have relied on self-reports of usage and interpretation. Just how well such accounts reflect the range of actual practices remains unclear.

Nicknaming can be important in certain communities of practice. Many all-male sports teams or living units such as fraternities bestow special nicknames on new members, names that are virtually always used in the CofP and are often used in encounters between members in other contexts. Some all-female and some mixed communities of practice have such naming practices as well. Some evidence suggests, however, both that the practices are more common in all-male groups and that group-bestowed nicknames are much more frequently used among male teammates or fraternity members than they are in the parallel female or mixed communities of practice. Nicknames are often based on a person's "real" name (like *Crisco* for *Chris* in display (7)) but can come from other sources, often with a special meaning for a particular CofP.

The general terms in display (8) are often used reciprocally among intimates as well as with strangers. They are much more common from and to men but are beginning to be used among women; *dude*, for example, is by no means any longer confined to male addressees or male addressers, and even *man* is now occasionally addressed to young women (see Hinton 1992). Such forms, most of which began with males as their only referents, seem now to signal casual good will. In the plural *you guys* is now widely used for group address and second-person reference, no matter what the composition of the group. My mother (in her late eighties) and I (in my sixties) were recently so addressed by a young male server in a restaurant. (The singular *guy* is still pretty strongly male-gendered.) The formality of *ladies* and the frequent condescension of age-inappropriate *girls* help explain why *guys* has become so popular even for female-only referents.

But women are beginning to turn not only to originally male forms for such casual but friendly, though impersonal, address. For example, in some communities of practice, especially those whose members are mainly African American, *girl* can readily be used to adult female addressees by both other women and men to express a supportive and friendly connection. This use is spreading, probably because of its occurrence in such contexts as US advertisements featuring women basketball stars and popular music lyrics. The form *girlfriend* as a term of address is even more restricted to communities of

practice in which African Americans predominate. Among women, it can express affection and ongoing co-membership in some emotionally important community of practice. So used, the form is warm but casual. Importantly, the affection being expressed is that of a non-sexual friendship, which depends on the general referential properties of *girlfriend* in American English. Unlike *boyfriend*, which must mean a male romantic interest (and can be so used by both straight women and gay men), *girlfriend* in reference or description can mean either romantic/sexual object (this use is common to straight men and lesbians) or important close friend. This latter use is only open to women – a man who speaks of *my girlfriend* thereby indicates a romantic interest, perhaps because of heterosexual assumptions that relations of men and women are always erotically charged. Although many European American women do use *girlfriend* to refer to their close women friends, they seldom draw on it as an address form. There are attested uses of *girlfriend* by a White lesbian to address her lover, but this use is not the same as the asexual friendship use among African American women. Will this friendship use of *girlfriend* in address spread to other American women, as so many other social and linguistic practices originating in African American communities have? (Note, for example, the appropriation of *yo* and *dude*.) We may eventually see such a spread, but at the moment, the address signals not only warm woman-to-woman friendship but also underscores shared racial heritage. African American men also sometimes use the bare term *girlfriend* in addressing women who may be relative strangers to express good will and to underscore shared heritage; of course, its particular significance depends very much on other features of the setting in which the exchange occurs. It is not surprising, however, that African American men do not use *boyfriend* as a casually friendly form of address to one another; its erotic charge in male–male referential usage spills over to address.

Forms like *honey* and *dear*, classified as endearments in (8), have been widely discussed. Just as epithets do not always insult, so endearments do not always express affection. They can do so, of course, when used in a CofP between intimates, but they can also condescend or be otherwise problematic (see, for example, Wolfson and Manes 1980), especially from a man to a woman he does not know well (or perhaps not at all). Most of them are widely used from adults (especially women) to children, even children they don't know. And older women sometimes use them to much younger men who are strangers to them, in what is often described as a "maternal" way. But their condescension potential, especially in address from men to women, has been widely noted and thus many men now avoid them outside of genuinely intimate contexts. (Except to very young boys, American men very seldom use them to other males.) There are, however, still English-using communities of practice in Britain where some of these endearments apparently function in much the same way as general terms like *guys* or *dude* or *folks*. They can come from strangers of either sex to addressees of either sex with no suggestion of anything other than light-hearted friendliness (and the absence of "stuffiness" or undue reserve).

The respect terms *sir* and *ma'am* show considerable local variation in their use. In the American southeast, they are frequently used by children to parents, a very intimate relation. As respect forms, the terms are not equivalent; not only does *ma'am* compete with *miss*, but neither of these feminine variants has the same authoritative impact that *sir* carries (and *ma'am* is far more restricted than *sir* regionally). The need to mark deference to authority held by females has led to some interesting usages, with women police officers (McElhinny 1995), for example, occasionally receiving the normally masculine *sir*, presumably because the femaleness of the more standard *ma'am* tends to limit its ability to confer real authority on the addressee.

Of course, a taxonomy of the kind given for English, already strained as we have seen in organizing English speakers' address practices, will be even less adequate for other languages. For example, Japanese has the respectful affix *-san*, which can be added to various terms of address (e.g. names, kinterms). It also seems more common in Japan than in English-speaking countries for adults in a family to call each other by the terms designating their parental roles (though one certainly can find in the USA many couples who call each other "mom" and "dad" or something equivalent). In addition, Japanese has a number of second-person pronouns, a couple of which (*anata* and *anta*) are used by both women and men, and several that are rather brusque or "rough" in flavor and used primarily by men. Among married couples, wives are apparently more respectful to husbands than vice versa. Women seem to be avoiding very informal forms such as a plain first name and, as they do generally, the second-person pronouns *kimi* and *omae*. A wife's first name + *san* to her husband may be matched by his plain first name or even nickname to her, and use of forms like *kimi* and *omae*, which he would be unlikely to use to a peer. Both often use parental terms (*otosan* "father" and *okasan* "mother" are most common, but *papa* and *mama* are also used). (Ogawa and Shibamoto Smith 1997 discuss these purported patterns, drawing on Lee 1976, a study based on self-reports by Japanese couples living in the USA, and Kanemura 1993, a survey of Japanese women students reporting on their parents' practices.) Do such gender asymmetries persist among younger married couples in Japan? How do different address choices function in constructing different kinds of marital relationships? Such questions have not yet been addressed, at least not in English-language reports. What Ogawa and Shibamoto Smith demonstrate is that the patterns can be called on outside heterosexual marriage. They examined address (and also first- and third-person references) used in a documentary film by two gay men in a committed relationship, finding that in many ways the two men labeled themselves and the other in much the same ways as do the canonical husband and wife.

Families, including non-traditional families, are of course very important kinds of communities of practice. For many children, they are initially the only community of practice in which the child participates. Hinton (1992) asked entering college students at the University of California, Berkeley, to report on

their address to parents and to siblings. The informal but not especially intimate *mom* and *dad* were the overwhelming favorites for addressing parents reported by both sexes (83 per cent of women and 89 per cent of men reported *mom*, 79 per cent of women and 90 per cent of men reported *dad*), but the women used both more diminutives (*mommy*, *daddy*) and more of the formal terms (*mother* and *father*, with *father* a vanishingly small usage from both sexes as an address form but *mother* used by about 14 per cent of the women as compared to only 4 per cent of the men). Both sexes were somewhat more likely to report use of a diminutive form to the opposite-sex parent, but the striking contrast was sex of user. Of the women, 33 per cent and 45 per cent reported using *mommy* and *daddy* respectively, whereas only 16 per cent and 12 per cent of the men admitted to these uses (they were, of course, reporting their current patterns, not recalling earlier uses). Many of the students reported multiple usages; it could be illuminating to see under what conditions a particular form was chosen. There is also an "other" category, but it is not broken down by sex of speaker or by type of form (first name? endearment?). Hinton did not ask about address from parents, but there certainly are consequences for learning gender practice in a household where a male child is addressed as *son* or *big guy* and his sister is called *honey* or *beautiful*. Given name or a shortened form thereof is the most common form of address to children from adults, including their parents, but other options exist and can enter into social practice within the family in many interesting ways: for example, the full name is sometimes used for "disciplining" a child who is not doing what the parent wants.

As children move beyond their natal families into other communities of practice, they encounter new address options, but they may also bring with them expectations and interpretations built on their own family's practices. A child who uses *mom* or *mommy* may be shocked by a playmate's use of first name, apparently assuming a kind of egalitarian relation, or of *mother*, apparently rather "stiff" or formal. Boys especially may get mocked for *mommy* or *daddy*, learning that *mom* and *dad* are considered more adult and appropriately masculine choices. There can be problems articulating address choices with other family members in a community of practice other than the family itself. A sibling may (unwittingly or deliberately) reveal a family pet name that a kid has left at home as too "childish" for school contexts. And one of my students reported that her mother and father work in the same office, where he uses endearments to her whereas she uses his first name only as the fitting choice for the workplace (and finds his endearments somewhat annoying – not surprisingly he is above her in the office hierarchy).

Because address forms are optional and generally admit some variation from a particular addresser to a particular addressee, their occurrence is always potentially significant. Address and addressee-reference options not only very frequently signal gendered identities and relations of interlocutors, but they often do considerable work in giving content to gender performance.

5   "Enough About You, Let's Talk About Me": Self-reference and Gender

In English there are no distinctions of gender or other social relations conveyed by the first person (*I*, *me*, *my*), but this is not always the case. Japanese, for example, provides examples of first- and second-person pronouns that are differently used by women and men and are interpreted as gendered. As Ogawa and Smith (1997) observe, Japanese speakers using first-person pronouns have a number of options, only some of which are gender-neutral. The forms *watakushi* and *watashi* are used by both sexes but the abbreviated *atakushi* and *atashi* are interpreted as feminine, whereas the abbreviated *washi*, now relatively seldom used (and mainly from older men), is interpreted as masculine (and overbearing). The forms *boku* and *ore* are listed as used by male speakers, and *atai* as a "lower-class, vulgar" women's form of self-reference. The form *jibun*, often translated as English *self* and used as a reflexive, is also sometimes used for self-reference by men and is, according to Ogawa and Smith, associated with military and other strongly hierarchical workplaces. Once again, it is apparent that the real significance of these varied forms of self-reference emerges only from their use in particular communities of practice and their association with particular kinds of social practice. And once again, there is evidence that gender norms are being challenged and changed in various ways. For example, *boku* is increasingly used for self-reference by adolescent girls, who are rejecting certain features of traditional normative girlhood, including even competing with boys in school. Reynolds (1990) reports that *boku* has spread to college-age girls and even to adult women in certain contexts. Interestingly, the speakers themselves seem quite aware that their *boku* usage is associated with certain kinds of social practice. Citing Jugaku (1979), she reports: "Girls who were interviewed in a TV program explain that they cannot compete with boys in classes, in games or in fights with *watashi*" (Reynolds 1990: 140).

   As Ide (1990) observes, however, the fact that Japanese often dispenses with pronominal forms altogether (it is what syntacticians call a "pro-drop" language) means that interactions conducted in Japanese often proceed with rather fewer explicit labelings of people than would be found in comparable interactions conducted in English. In addition to imperatives, casual questions in English can omit a second-person subject (*Going to lunch soon?*) and "post-card register" allows missing first-person pronouns (*Having a wonderful time!*), which are sometimes also omitted by some speakers in casual speech (I've encountered this in phone conversations with certain people). Third-person references are omitted only in severely limited contexts such as answers to questions in which the third-person reference has been explicitly given, a fact about English that is of some importance in considering gendering of person references, discussed briefly in the following section. Languages with no gender distinction in the first-person pronoun but with grammatical gender agreement

patterns may produce the effect of gendered self-reference through gender concord: French speakers who want to utter the equivalent of the English *I am happy* must say either *je suis heureuse* (feminine) or *je suis heureux* (masculine), thus making it as hard (or perhaps even harder) to speak gender-neutrally of the self in French as it is to speak gender-neutrally of another in English.

Even when pronouns are not themselves gendered, the question of who is "included" with the speaker by a first-person plural reference can have gender implications. Languages that grammatically mark the distinction between first person inclusive and exclusive interpretations allow for tracking of affiliations. Meyerhoff (1996) discusses Bislama, a language spoken on the Melanesian islands of Vanuatu, and argues that the choice of the inclusive *yumi* rather than the exclusive form at least sometimes is made to emphasize shared gender identity. Pronominal choice also maps boundary-drawing between Melanesian and non-Melanesian and among various family groups within the Melanesian communities.

It is possible to talk about me and you without using explicitly first- or second-person forms. Although third-person expressions generally are used to refer to people (or things) distinct from the speaker or addressee of the utterance, they can sometimes be used for speaker reference, as in (9), or addressee reference, as in (10):

(9) a. *Mommy* wants you to go to sleep now. [uttered by mother to child]
   b. Remember that *Mrs. Robinson* wants you all to send *her* postcards this summer. [uttered by teacher to kindergarten students]

(10) a. Does *my little darling* want some more spinach? [caretaker to child]
   b. *Joanie* had better be a good girl at school. [caretaker to child]
   c. *His royal highness* will have to make *his* own coffee today. [disgruntled wife to husband]

In most Anglophone communities, such uses occur mainly from adults (especially parents or other primary caretakers and teachers) to children, although they can also occur in jocular contexts between adults (as suggested by (10c)). Since the parent–child model is often called on for romance by English speakers, such usages are also sometimes encountered in the very specialized communities of practice constituted by an intimate couple (straight or gay). They are not unrelated to the playful use of alter personalities in love relations discussed in Langford (1997), who comments "on the secrecy and 'childishness' which characterizes these private cultures of love . . . and their relations to 'adult' love and the 'public' world of 'adulthood'." In Japanese, however, the use of third-person forms for self- or addressee-reference is apparently much less marked (see discussion below). English speakers too can use third-person forms for self- and addressee-reference without the "childish" flavor of the above examples. For example, Hicks Kennard (2001) reports female marine recruits being constrained to use third person for both self- and addressee-reference

when speaking to their drill instructor, along with the respectful *ma'am* as an address form. In sharp contrast, the senior drill instructor uses the canonical pronominal forms for first- and second-person reference and a (non-reciprocal) surname as an address form:

(11)   R: Recruit Moore [self] requests to know if she [self] can speak with Senior Drill Instructor Staff Sergeant Mason [addressee ref] when she [addressee ref] has time, ma'am [address form]

SDI: What if I tell you I'm gonna go home, Moore?

In this case, the practice seems to be functioning to depersonalize and subjugate the recruit, to wash her of her own sense of agency.

6   Gendering

Even where the nominal content might seem purely descriptive, there can be much riding on whether or not a particular gendered label is attached to a particular individual. Thirty or more years ago linguists discussed the possibility of understanding a sentence like (12a) as equivalent to either (12b) or (12c); in that era, few people entertained (12c) as a serious possibility:

(12)   a.   My cousin is no longer a boy.
        b.   My cousin is now a man [having become an adult].
        c.   My cousin is now a girl [having changed sexes].

Although the possibility of sex changes is far more salient now than it was then, most people still fail to entertain (12c) as a possible interpretation of (12a). Judith Butler points out that the gendering process often starts with a doctor's uttering a sentence like (13a), a process that "shifts the infant from an 'it' to a 'she' or a 'he'" (Butler 1993: 7). Either (13a) or (13b) is expected as an answer from new parents to that common question, (13c):

(13)   a.   It's a girl.
        b.   It's a boy.
        c.   What is it?

The expected answers to (13c) strongly suggest that a baby's gender label is taken to be of primary importance in characterizing it: answers like those in (14) are virtually unthinkable in most social contexts:

(14)   a.   It's a baby who scored 10 on the Apgar test.
        b.   It's my child.
        c.   It's a two-month old.

In English and in many other languages, the first labels applied to a child attribute gender to it. Thus begins the ongoing process of "girling" (or "boying"), with relatively little space for creating just "kids." There is some resistance, however. A recent birth announcement card has "It's a" and a picture of a baby on the front with a marker covering its genitals; inside the card continues with "baby."

English, of course, enforces a gender distinction in third-person singular pronouns. One thing this means is that use of a singular personal pronoun carries a presumption of sex attribution. I say to a colleague: "One of my students missed the final because of a sick kid and no babysitter available." The colleague responds: "Well, did you tell her that is not acceptable?" My colleague is assuming that the student is female. If I ascribe maleness to the student and want to make that clear I might say "It's a he, actually," perhaps implying a rebuke to my colleague for the apparent assumption that anyone responsible for childcare is female. On the other hand, if there is no conflict between my colleague's presumption of sex and my assessment of the situation, I may well fail to point out that there was a presumptive leap made and thus may contribute in some measure to sustaining the gendered division of labor that supports that leap.

It is actually very difficult in English and other languages with gendered third-person pronouns to talk about a third person without ascribing sex to them – and virtually impossible to do so over an extended period. This is why Sarah Caudwell's wonderful mystery series featuring Professor Hilary Tamar, to whom sex cannot be attributed, had to be written with Hilary as a first-person narrator. (See Livia 2001 for discussion of this and many other interesting literary cases where gender attribution is an issue.) Many proper names and nominals ascribe sex, but it is the pronouns that really cause trouble because continued repetition of a name such as *Hilary* or a full nominal such as *my professor* generally seems odd. Linguists have suggested that such repetition often suggests a second individual, which is one reason why people standardly use pronouns for at least most later references. There is some use of *they* as a singular pronoun; it is quite common in generic or similar contexts, as in (15a, b), and is increasing its use in reference to specific individuals, as in (15c, d):

(15) a. If anyone calls, tell *them* I'll be back by noon and get *their* name.
      b. Every kid who turned in *their* paper on time got a gold star.
      c. Someone with a funny accent called, but *they* didn't leave *their* name.
      d. A friend of Kim's got *their* parents to buy *them* a Miata.

It is still unlikely to be used for a specific individual in many circumstances: if, for example, both interlocutors are likely to have attributed (the same) sex to that individual.

The choice of referring expressions plays an important role in gender construction. For example, kinterms in English (and many other languages) are

mostly very gendered. *Wife* and *husband* are much more often used in the course of everyday practice than *spouse*, *brother* and *sister* are far ahead of *sib(ling)*. The gender-neutral *kid*, *child*, and *baby* are pretty common and can be used with a possessive to refer to someone's offspring (*Lee's kid* or *my baby*), but *daughter* and *son* are probably more common, especially since they can be freely used for adults, unlike the colloquial gender-neutral forms, which tend to suggest youth. *Mother/mom* and *father/dad* are much more common for singular reference than *parent*, and *aunt*, *uncle*, *niece*, and *nephew* have no gender-neutral alternatives; *cousin* names the only kin relation for which English offers only a gender-neutral form. There are, of course, languages that have much more richly elaborated kinship terminology. Distinctions of relative age may be marked in sibling terminology, and there may be different expressions for mother's sister and father's sister or mother's brother and father's brother. And, as is well known, it is the social relations and not the strictly biological that count most in some languages: an expression more or less equivalent to English *aunt*, for example, might designate not only sisters of one's parents but other women tied to the family in some way and construed as having somewhat similar kinds of rights and responsibilities for one. Even in English the social relations typically prevail in families in which children are adopted or in which children come from different marriages. (We noted above some uses of kinterms in English address.)

   There are not many systematic studies of how often references to people are gendered and what difference this makes, but there is some relevant research. Barrie Thorne (1993) observed that "boys and girls" was far and away the most common general group form of address in the two elementary schools where she conducted ethnographic research, and that many of the teachers made heavy use of the gendered labels. She also cites research by Spencer Cahill (1987) that suggests that the gendered terms are used by school staff in opposition to the gender-neutral (and disapproving) *baby*: "you're a big girl/ boy now, not a baby." Thus Cahill argues that children learn to claim the gendered identities as part of claiming their new relative maturity. Thorne herself observed that "[b]y fourth grade the terms 'big girl' and 'big boy' have largely disappeared, but teachers continue to equate mature behavior with grown-up gendered identities by using more formal and ironic terms of address, like 'ladies and gentlemen'" (Thorne 1993: 35). Of course, the sex-neutral *kid* is fairly common and may in some communities of practice outpace *girl* and *boy* for referring to children or young adults. For adults, however, *woman* and *man* are much more commonplace than *person* (which, unlike *kid*, is not only gender-neutral but also age-neutral) for referring to particular individuals.

   In the 1970s there was considerable discussion of the use of *girl* for mature females and the condescension it frequently conveyed (as in *I'll have my girl call your girl*). There are many common practices that conspire to link femaleness with childishness (e.g. Goffmann 1976 argued that the male–female relation

was modeled on the parent–child in media depictions), and it is probably no accident that the word *girl* once simply meant "child." Nonetheless the use of the label *girl* to refer to adult females (and, as we saw above, to address them) is by no means always inappropriately juvenilizing. In some communities of practice, *gal*, originating from a variant pronunciation of *girl*, is being used to try to provide a female equivalent of *guy*, a form appropriate for casual conversation that can happily apply to a teenager but can equally well be used to refer to a middle-aged or older man. Says science writer Natalie Angier, obviously not wanting to choose between the more serious-sounding *woman* and the sometimes too youthful *girl*, "I write with the assumption that my average reader is a gal, a word, by the way that I use liberally throughout the book [on women's biology], because I like it and because I keep thinking, against all evidence, that it is on the verge of coming back into style" (Angier 1999: xv). In spite of Angier's hopefulness, *gal* still tends to be regionally and stylistically restricted, and some readers (including me!) found her liberal use of it rather jarring. Of course the fact that the plural *guys* may be widely used for female referents and addressees complicates the picture. Even in the plural *guys* is restricted: someone who asks *how many guys were there?* is not inquiring about the number of people in general but about the number of men.

The bottom line is that it is still somewhat easier to be relatively age-neutral and informal when speaking of or to males than when speaking of or to females. Will *guys* become more completely sex-indefinite, and bring counting and singular uses under a sex-indefinite umbrella? Or will some label like *gal* widen its range?

The issue of sex attribution that pronominal choice forces in English can become particularly charged when there are challenges to conventional binary gender dichotomies. Transgendered and transsexual people generally want to be referred to by the pronoun consistent with the identity which they currently claim. Those resisting moves from initial gender attributions (former friends or colleagues, unsympathetic family members) may do so by persisting in the pronominal choice consistent with the early attribution. Stories that others tell of such lives must make choices: to use the pronoun consistent with the person's publicly claimed identity at a particular time may well lead to use of different pronouns at different stages, thus visibly/audibly fracturing personal identity. When the identity an individual claims is not the identity others are willing to recognize, pronouns are one turf on which such conflicts get played out. Even those who simply resist gender conformity in their dress or behavior may find others commenting critically on that resistance by derisively using *it* in reference to them. Of course, people who are resisting gender norms can themselves use pronouns creatively as part of constructing alternative identities. Some years ago, Esther Newton (1972) noted that male drag queens often spoke of one another using *she* and *her*, the pronoun fitting the performed identity. Like the Hindi-speaking *hijras* studied by Kira Hall and Veronica O'Donovan

(1996), they could also insult one another by using male forms of address and reference.

Hindi is a language with grammatical gender, which offers further gendering possibilities that go beyond the pronominal and nominal labels on which this paper has focused. Livia (1997) offers a compelling account of the importance of grammatical gender as a resource for transsexuals who face a dilemma in articulating new identities within the communities of practice to which they belong (or aspire to belong). Drawing on several autobiographies of French-speaking male to female transsexuals, Livia notes that each of the authors, although maintaining lifelong femaleness, "alternates between masculine and feminine gender concord with regard to herself, indicating that the situation was in fact far more complex" (Livia 1997: 352). In the original French edition of Herculine Barbin's (1978) memoir, grammatical concord in the first person is predominantly feminine in the earlier sections and progressively becomes more masculine over the course of the "discovery" of Herculine's "true" identity.

7   Conclusion

Labeling enters into gender construction within and across communities of practice in a host of different and complex ways, and no single paper (or even book) could possibly really cover this topic. I have tried, however, to point to some of the possibilities that should be kept in mind in investigating the linguistic texture of gender construction by specific individuals or in particular communities of practice or institutions. As we have seen, the particularities of the linguistic resources and practices readily available to speakers are critical for how labeling connects to gender. At the same time, the function of particular labels depends on how they are deployed in social practice generally and their connection to gender practice in particular.

Of course, speakers do many creative things. The following exchange comes from an interview conducted by an undergraduate student of mine with a gay male friend of his in the spring of 2001 (used with permission of both parties):

Interviewer: Do you realize that you call me and other gay friends *girl* a lot?
Interviewee: Yes, but it is special for a few of you guys. And it's spelled differently.
Interviewer: Yeah?
Interviewee: With a "U." G-U-R-L. [clapping hands happily]
Interviewer: Awesome.
Interviewee: And whatever, because it doesn't mean you are like a female. It's for someone who is a fierce faggot.
Interviewer: "Fierce faggot?" [Laughing hysterically]
Interviewee: Hell yeah. You know what I mean. A fierce faggot. Someone who is that fabulous and fucking knows it.

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