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Girls and guys, ghetto and bougie: Metapragmatics, ideology and the management of social identities[1]

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This case study explores the metapragmatic awareness of a young, academically successful, African American, female speaker. It describes some of the identities and orientations that the speaker performs through language and the perceived role of linguistic style in such performances. This study suggests that these linguistic performances are a complex negotiation of ethnicity, gender and class that both draw from and resist the macrosocial indexing of social categories. Further, the understood role of language in the social negotiations of the speaker serves as an illustration of the relationship among metapragmatics, ideology and identity and also highlights the dynamism of identity management as individuals position themselves in allegiance with, or opposition to, various groups that populate their social landscape.

KEYWORDS: Metapragmatic awareness, metalanguage, African American English, language style, youth culture

In theorizing the processes whereby language use comes to stand in for groups of people (or moral, psychological and intellectual evaluations of those people), Silverstein proposes that 'ideology construes indexicality by constituting its metapragmatics' (1998: 128). In other words, there is an influential relationship among 'commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world' (Rumsey 1990: 346), the functioning of language as a socio-cultural indicator in the context of the speech situation (Silverstein 1979), and the understanding of language's appropriateness for certain socio-cultural speech situations (Silverstein 1979, 1993, 1998, 2001). For example, English standard language ideology marks multiple negation as uneducated, careless, etc. In turn, that ideological framing shapes the social saliencies accorded multiple negation: in a more formalized speaking situation, using multiple negation might indicate a lack of education and out-grouping; in a less formal one it might indicate a lack of pretension and in-grouping, both indices being construed by the dominant ideology. The indexical potential of multiple negation, then, structures how a

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speaker understands her or his own use of the feature as well as the use of the feature by others.

Ultimately, the relationship between ideology and metapragmatics gives rise to interlocutors substituting evaluations of the use of a feature, style or code for evaluations of a person or groups of people who use such a feature, style or code (i.e. perceiving people who use multiple negation to be uneducated or, conversely, unpretentious). Or as Irvine and Gal (2000: 37) observe, '[P]eople have, and act in relation to, ideologically constructed representations of linguistic differences.' Simply put, language comes to be a proxy for identity, individual or collective. One characteristic of this relationship that is, perhaps, easy to overlook is its dialectical nature; ideology does not just work upon metapragmatics from the top down. As McIntosh (2005: 152) demonstrates in her study of Giriama code-switching, it is not just that the ideology inscribes the chosen code, but also that the very choice of code rearticulates and 'reinvigorates' the ideology. The case study presented here suggests a similar dynamic relationship between ideology and metapragmatics.

The speaker in this study, Jackie, is a young, female, African American university student. Her metapragmatic awareness – her understanding of using stylistic variation in order to negotiate her social landscape – reveals a complex interaction between the perceived microsocial exigencies of the speech situation (local conditions like friendship groups, familial relationships, etc.) and the macrosocial indexing of language varieties in the U.S. (particularly as such indexing is articulated by ideologies at the intersection of language and race). These dominant ideologies construe the use of African American English (AAE) as an unambiguous act of ethnic identity – an extension of 'ethnic absolutism' (Gilroy 1987) – and constitute AAE as indexically opposed to Standard American English (SAE). The cultural and political power of these ideologies is often evidenced in debates over language education like the Oakland Ebonics controversy in 1997 (see, e.g., Baugh 2000; Rickford and Rickford 2000; Smitherman 1998). Perhaps that power should not be surprising given that these language ideologies are part of a cultural history of slavery, segregation and racial oppression. It is also worth noting that the racialization of AAE is not simply a folk phenomenon. The very naming of the variety by linguists has a history paralleling the history of racial politics in the U.S. (Green 2002).

Some recent studies have interrogated the ethnic indexicality of language and its constitutive effects on identity, examining the use of AAE by white speakers (Bucholtz 1999; Cutler 1999; Sweetland 2002). These studies have built upon Rampton's (1995) foundational work on linguistic 'crossing' by adolescents in England. While Rampton analyzed brief moments of linguistic appropriation, these recent studies have looked at more sustained use of an ethnically marked code (i.e. AAE). Rampton concluded that the 'liminal' events he observed had the potential to enact cross-racial affiliation and new identities, though this potential was not generalizable across all instances of crossing. Sweetland substantiates this potential in her portrayal of a white woman, Delilah, whose use of AAE is largely perceived as authentic by her African American interlocutors. In contrast,

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Bucholtz and Cutler found the crossing practices they analyzed to largely affirm racial and ethnic boundaries. Such distinctions are, perhaps, attributable to differences in the participants' gender, class, age and the specifics of the language-contact context (both Bucholtz's and Cutler's participants were male, suburban, adolescents who had little contact with AAE-speakers, while Delilah was working class, in her early twenties and with many AAE-speaking friends). Although these studies focus on the deployment of specific features by speakers and this one on the metapragmatic awareness of a speaker, they bear mentioning because they explore how people negotiate ethnosocial boundaries, which is salient to Jackie's own experience. Furthermore, they illustrate the ways in which the dominant ideology construes the racial indexing of AAE, as well as how such indexing can be both challenged and reified by unconventional or unexpected uses of an ethnically or racially marked code.

As Jackie, herself, says, 'I know that like the way you talk doesn't *define* your race. But like it kind of does.' Jackie's construal of language confirms the reciprocal dynamic of influence between ideology and metapragmatics proposed by Silverstein and McIntosh. Furthermore, it suggests that when the logic of influence works from the bottom up, rather than the top down, the metapragmatic rearticulation of an ideology need not be affirmative or consistent; that it can, in fact, also be resistant.

THE PARTICIPANT AND THE METALINGUISTIC INTERVIEW

Data for this study were collected from a single one-on-one interview lasting about an hour. The study's participant, Jackie, is a nineteen-year-old, African American student at a competitive public university. While I have known Jackie for more than a year, we do not have a relationship that extends outside the university, and this was the first time we had engaged in an extended conversation on the topics of language and social mobility.

The tapes were transcribed according to the conventions developed by Jefferson and adapted by Coates (1998).[2] The analysis focuses on Jackie's metapragmatic awareness, particularly her perceptions of the social work that linguistic style does as she navigates among different groups of friends and acquaintances. It is important to emphasize that this study focuses on Jackie's perception of language and on her language attitudes, more than on performance. This analysis of perceptions generates useful results because, as Labov (1966) and Trudgill (1983) observe, the norms at which speakers aim reveal much about the prestige or capital associated with those norms – whether they be standard or non-standard. In addition, in as much as linguistic study is interested in language variation as a semiotic resource in the performance of identity, assessing people's awareness of their communicative practices can yield valuable insight into how language use functions in the social economy, what identities are seen to be advertised by what varieties in what contexts, and how language is understood as availing or restricting group membership. Furthermore, the construal of language's

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appropriateness for certain socio-cultural speech situations (its metapragmatics) has been theorized as interactional with its use (its pragmatics) (Silverstein 1979, 1993, 1998, 2001). Thus, as language use and the perceived social saliencies of certain linguistic features are mutually influential, the investigation of metalanguage is not just an insightful, but an essential component in understanding the users and uses of language (Verschueren 2004).

This study was designed to examine the intersection of metalanguage and ethnicity. Specifically, it was intended to look at how a speaker whose social network includes groups of various ethnic orientations construes her language use and the use of her interlocutors as she negotiates those groups. Does she perceive language to be ethnically inviolate? Or does she perceive it as an available and manipulable resource? To what extent is she even aware of, or attentive to, her language use in her social negotiations? The semi-structured interview used for this study is a productive tool for engaging such questions because it allows emic social categories, understandings and orientations – those categories, understandings and orientations voiced by the participant, herself – to emerge in the discourse. To further minimize the intrusion of my own social and linguistic biases in the interview, the participant was asked largely descriptive questions (e.g. 'Describe the different groups of people you hang out with' 'What sorts of things do you talk about?' 'Do you think you talk about different things with different friends?' 'Describe conversations you might have with two different groups').

In undertaking the analysis, I have made a similar effort to concentrate on emic categories in Jackie's discourse. While some of the categories that were relevant to the performance of her identity include macrosocial constructs like ethnicity, gender and class, such categories were not elicited or engineered through questions directly referencing them and are salient, in part, because Jackie, herself, perceives them to be socially and linguistically salient. For example, in response to the first question that generically asks her to describe her groups of friends, Jackie distinguishes these along ethnic and gender lines as well as according to their relative level of intimacy:

Excerpt 1

1 Jackie: Okay (#) well, in terms of my good friends, I have like (#) one good black
2 girlfriend and one good white girlfriend. And then like everybody else is kind of
3 just like, all my other girlfriends are kind of just like (#) kind of just like associates.
4 Like I'm not really good friends with them, but I'll say hi to them and have
5 conversations with them and whatever. (#) And then in terms of like, I have a
6 big group of like (#) black guy friends and then a big group of white guy friends.
7 (#) And yeah, those are like my different groups of friends. And like I used to have
8 an Indian best friend who was kind of like, I don't know, like (#) I don't know.
9 She was, ((laughs)) she was Indian but like, sh- I don't know, she had the tendency
10 to assimilate to (1.0) more to white people than to anybody else. So it was kind
11 of like, I don't know. (#) Yeah. (#)

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Jackie distinguishes between 'girlfriends' and 'guy friends.' Her male friends are further differentiated according to ethnicity – either black or white – and both groups are described as ethnically homogeneous. With her groups of male friends there appears to be a somewhat more casual level of intimacy as they are represented only collectively as 'big groups.' On the other hand, her 'good' girlfriends (those with whom she shares a more intimate relationship) are individuated, but like the guy friends, they are identified by their ethnicity. Ethnicity and gender appear, therefore, as important sites of negotiation for Jackie. Class also becomes significant, particularly the suburban/urban distinction, as she later discusses the tensions between being raised in a working-class town, going to an upper middle-class high school and having friends and relatives from a large city.

In order to negotiate these categories, as will become evident in the following section, Jackie understands linguistic style to be a key semiotic resource. The construed situational deployment of style – her metapragmatic awareness – is contingent on various ideological orientations. These ideological warrants, what Preston (2004: 87) calls presumed 'shared folk knowledge about language' or *Metalanguage 3*, then emerge in the data from the articulated relationships between language, social context and identity.

There are, however, limitations to what can be claimed based on the available data. First, this study examines Jackie's attitudes toward her language-in-use. I can, therefore, make only limited claims about her linguistic repertoire. Further, because I am a white, adult, middle-class male and the interview was conducted in an institutional setting, the context was not one conducive to style- or code-switching (see Rickford and McNair-Knox 1994). It is, thus, impossible to know from the data the precise nature of Jackie's communicative competence – whether it goes to the level of lexicon, prosody or grammar – in AAE. The interview context as a metalinguistic event also raises questions as to the kinds of categories Jackie articulates and emphasizes. For example, the prominence she gives to 'proper' speech may well be influenced by my understood role as a teacher, an expectation that teachers value highly formalized language and a desire to impress her interviewer.

Additionally, it would be problematic to generalize this analysis because this is a case study of a single speaker. It is not possible to claim from this study that Jackie's management of her language use is the prototype for some larger group. However, a single case study like Jackie's can be valuable in confirming or complicating our understanding of the relationship between language and social identity for adolescents. Similar to the ways in which Sweetland's study challenges the notion that AAE is a stable and uniform index for ethnic identity, Jackie's construal of her use of stylistic variation suggests a complex and ongoing negotiation between metapragmatics and the construction of a social self that variously asserts ethnicity, gender and other identities.

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METAPRAGMATIC AWARENESS AND THE MANAGEMENT OF IDENTITY

The following segment of Jackie's narrative, Excerpt 2, occurs early in the interview. It was selected to anchor the analysis because most of the themes that she elaborates throughout the rest of the interview are established here. She begins to characterize her different friendship groups and the role of linguistic styles in marking in-group status. She also introduces her conception of 'talking properly' and its significance to her linguistic repertoire. This segment immediately follows the one presented in the preceding section and was a response to a prompt asking her to elaborate on her interactions with her female friends.

Excerpt 2

1 Jackie: (It's actually) It's actually really weird because my white girlfriend is a little
2 bit more like ghetto and my black girlfriend is a really like bougie ((laughs)) so it's
3 like definitely like (#) like the stereotypes are completely reversed. But like when
4 I'm talking to either of them I have a tendency to just talk normally. Like my mom
5 taught me from a young age that I need to talk properly so: (#) generally the first
6 thing that comes to my mind is to talk really properly. Sometimes like I'll be in
7 certain settings where it'll kind of like rub off on me more to talk differently, and
8 that'll happen (#) but for the most part like I talk really proper. So when I'm with
9 my close friends and people I feel comfortable with generally, like unless I find
10 myself sounding really like (#) I don't know I don't want to (#) sounding really
11 like (#) like (1.0) like I'm from Oakmont ((laughs)). But I'm like, I tend to tone it
12 down a bit. But, um, yeah, with my black girlfriend generally like we talk pretty
13 much the same way. So: (#) we have a tendency to just talk- we talk (#) very like
14 proper for the most part. Like we definitely (1.1) use certain words more than
15 others but we (#) we don't use very much slang. It's very- it tends to be very
16 proper. With my white girlfriend it tends to be li::ke ((laughs)) it tends to get a
17 little bit more li:ke, like I don't know like hey girl ((laughs)). Just like stuff like that.
18 But, um, for the most part like when I'm around white girls and black girls that
19 are not my close friends like (#) definitely I have a tendency to talk a little bit less
20 proper around black girls than I do around black guys because (#) black girls
21 tend to be more judgmental towards me about that kind of thing and in the past
22 I've had black girls who have thought that like I was too good for them or I thought
23 I was (1.0) like (#) like the shit or something ((laughs)). Excuse my language. But
24 yeah, like they thought that because I talk this way and because like I used to
25 hang out with a whole bunch of white girls and stuff like that, so in that setting
26 it was like I kind of like (#) I felt like I needed to like pro::ve myself (#). And so I
27 was, I tried to like tone it down a little bit and like you know. But, um, around
28 black guys like it's generally not the case. Like around (#) black guys like (#) I'm
29 generally a lot more just like co:mfortable and you know. But when I'm around
30 white girls like (#) it generally depends on my mood. Like sometimes I'll be like,
31 sometimes I'll be like, you know, talk like them or whatever. And sometimes I'll
32 just like, I just won't feel like ((laughs)). I don't know. It's really weird ((laughs)).

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33 Like I change up the way I talk a lot but (#) but like sometimes I just won't feel
34 like talking like them and I'll just be like (#) I don't know, I just feel like being like
35 hey girl. Wha:t's up? Just like ((laughs)). I don't know=

Talking properly is a particularly important linguistic construct for Jackie. It is a collocation that occurs fourteen times during the course of the interview. When she first introduces the concept (Excerpt 2, line 5), it is equated with talking 'normally' (Excerpt 2, line 4). This, then, is how Jackie names what she perceives to be her fundamental linguistic style. Both her understanding of what constitutes that style as well as the attitudes that were part of her socialization into that style affect her use of language in managing her identities.

Talking properly is explained as a skill that Jackie learned from her mother. Her mother grew up in the South and moved to the upper Midwest as an adolescent. It was her mother's entrance into a prestigious, northern college that precipitated a change in her language use.

Excerpt 3

1 Jackie: And she never had a problem there with the way she talked or anything.
2 But, um, she ended up coming to the University (#) and she felt that she knew a
3 lot, but she felt like she was stupid whenever she talked. Like she *hated* it. So she
4 never wanted her children to go through that. Like, it's like something she gets
5 like really upset, like she used to get *so*:: upset about it when I used to like be like
6 I'm *so:* mad at you for teaching me how to talk properly. I just want to talk like
7 everybody else. Cause she would correct *e::very* single thing. Like I would say I
8 don't know (([a^{i}d^{ə}no])) and she'd be like I don't know (([a^{i} dont no])). ((laughs))
9 Like, just like, the *littlest* thing. And you can't even hear her southern accent,
10 like (#) *at all*.

Jackie gives an indication of both what *talking properly* is and what it does. Implicit in Jackie's discourse is evidence that *talking properly* is partially exhibited through command of prescriptive grammatical forms. For example, Jackie twice introduces *talking properly* using the *-ly* inflectional ending (Excerpt 2, lines 5–6; Excerpt 3, line 6). Elsewhere (Excerpt 2, lines 8, 14, 20; Excerpt 6, line 10), there are examples of the same phrase but with -ly leveling (i.e. 'talking proper'). Thus, she shows that she knows this convention is part of *talking properly* (which may be a particularly important demonstration given her interlocutor), but she also shows that this is an adaptable element of her style. *Talking properly* also encompasses phonology and enunciation. The example that Jackie provides (Excerpt 3, lines 6–7) suggests that *talking properly* is evidenced not simply by speaking a SAE variety or in a Midwestern accent. One striking feature of her example is the full realization of a consonant cluster (the alveolar stop between two alveolar nasals) that is routinely reduced in the spontaneous speech of most English speakers. In this way, *talking properly* is not just formal or standard, but hyper-standard.

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Even more important than the features of *talking properly* are its indexicalities. *Talking properly* is construed as a marker of intelligence and an instrument of economic advancement. It allows one to bridge the gap between the self-perception that one 'knows a lot' and the perception of others that one is 'stupid' because of how one speaks. In bridging that gap, Jackie's mother experiences an extreme form of linguistic accommodation. Hers is not a case of situational code- or style-switching. Rather, she changes her own language to such an extent that 'you can't even hear her southern accent' (Excerpt 3, line 9). And her mother mediates the experience of accommodation for her children. Part of this mediation is the construction of *talking properly* in non-racialized terms.

The ideologies that sustain the indexicalities for 'proper' speech are, of course, longstanding and deeply rooted. The linking of certain phonological, lexical and grammatical features to intelligence and decorum is well documented (e.g. Cameron 1995; Lippi-Green 1997; Milroy and Milroy 1985; Mugglestone 2003). So in this regard, Jackie's metapragmatic awareness is not remarkable. However, the construal of *talking properly* as ethnically unmarked is a contested position. On the one hand, such indexing (or *non*-indexing) is clearly compatible with dominant ideologies, linguistic and otherwise, that idealize assimilation in the U.S. On the other, counter-ideologies, particularly among adolescents, constitute linguistic accommodation as an act of ethnic displacement (Fordham 1988, 1999; Fordham and Ogbu 1986). Jackie's metapragmatic awareness demonstrates not only an interaction with both ideological positions, but also a willingness to make strategic use of those positions in some contexts to promote particular identities. Furthermore, her metapragmatic awareness suggests that *talking properly* is constituted by other indexicalities – some construed by class and gender, for example – in other speech situations.

Because competing ideologies constitute the ethnic indexicality of *talking properly* differently, the positive indexicality that is constructed in the home is open to challenge elsewhere. In an example of her awareness of this contestation, Jackie discusses how her ethnic identity was questioned when she was younger.

Excerpt 4

1 Jackie: But like I talk to a lot of other black people from Oakmont and (#) they just
2 like- black people from the suburbs I feel have so::: many like identity issues during
3 high school. Just cause like they go to high school, like most of the black people
4 are really bougie there so it's not like as big of a deal to talk certain ways to them.
5 But then when you like have your cousins or whoever else that you know from
6 like urban areas (#) they'll, they'll talk to you like, they'll be like are you an Oreo?
7 Like are you a valley girl? Like you know?

Oakmont is a predominantly white, upper middle-class suburb, and going to high school there partly mitigates potential disputes over what it means to *talk properly*. In that context, *talking properly* is not a 'big deal' (Excerpt 4, line 4) because *talking properly* is not generally equated with 'talking white.' This perception

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conforms to the limited available analyses on *bougie* identity. *Bougie* is part of the AAE lexicon and is not commonly available to SAE speakers. It is most often meant to signify class (i.e. bourgeoisie). Neal-Barnett (2001) specifies *bougie* as an extreme on the continuum of ethnic identities for African American adolescents (the other extreme being *ghetto*, which Jackie uses later to describe another one of her friends). Neal-Barnett (2001: 82) states, 'Being bougie was seen [by the adolescents she observed] as thinking you were better than everyone else and appeared to stem from a materialistic-economic base. Adolescents agreed that one can be seen as bougie, but not necessarily be labeled as acting white.' However, being bougie can be a contested identity when individuals or communities with different language ideologies are in contact. In situations where Jackie's ethnic identity is contested by her African American peers, sounding like she is a 'valley girl,' sounding suburban, is the same thing as sounding like 'an Oreo' (Excerpt 4, lines 6–7).[3] In other words, an index of class is construed as an index of ethnicity, or ethnic inauthenticity. Jackie perceives that such contestation can be negotiated metapragmatically. She suggests she 'tone[s] it down a bit,' style-shifts away from *talking properly*, in order to sound like she is not from Oakmont (Excerpt 2, lines 9–12) when sounding like she is from Oakmont is construed as sounding white.

Jackie's social interactions with white girls provide additional speech situations where disputed ethnic indexicalities influence her metapragmatic awareness. In interactions with white girls, Jackie has occasion to advertise distinctiveness, which she explains in this excerpt that immediately follows Excerpt 2:

Excerpt 5

1 Jackie: Like I know that I can talk to certain people and they can think a certain
2 way about me. But at one point like (#) my white girlfriends would be like, like
3 after I hung out with them for like a long time, they'd just be like oh yeah, we
4 don't even see you as black anymore. And like, I was like ((laughs)) I *am* black.
5 What do you mean you don't see me as black anymore? ((laughs)) And it just like
6 got offensive so I'm just like maybe I just need to remind them every once in a
7 while ((laughs)) that I'm still black.

Here again, Jackie's ethnic identity is a contested one, and she understands language to be a resource. She negotiates her identity by performing difference, by being 'Hey, girl' (Excerpt 2, lines 34–35). Her explanation of 'Hey, girl' in this latter instance suggests that it is a trope for AAE or AAE stylizing, and that she understands she can draw on the macrosocial racial indexicality of AAE to dramatize an identity that is being erased by her peers. Here, as in the previous instance wherein she recounts being called an 'Oreo,' the indexicality of *talking properly* is contested. In the first instance, *talking properly* is understood as indexing whiteness. In this one, it is understood as racelessness. In either case, the ideologies that construe the import of language use and other signifiers of her identity supersede those that construe skin color. Thus, the construction of ethnic identity becomes understood by Jackie as an ongoing process that necessitates the

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continual negotiation and renegotiation of semiotics (like language, dress, etc.) as representations of self.

As Jackie finds that 'Hey, girl' can be used metapragmatically to mark ethnic allegiance or differentiation, so too she perceives that it can be used to bridge class boundaries. An example of this latter construal is evident in her descriptions of her white girlfriend. As observed in Excerpt 1, for Jackie, gender is one of the most salient categorical markers. Gender, however, is not salient in and of itself. It is part of an intersection of categories that also includes ethnicity, class and level of intimacy. Her 'good' girlfriends are particularly important to her. In describing them, Jackie notes that one is white and the other black, and further that her white friend is 'ghetto' and her black friend is 'bougie' (Excerpt 2, lines 1–2). As previously noted, these descriptors have both ethnic and class implications.

As an adjective, ghetto is part of the hip-hop lexicon and is generally used pejoratively (e.g. 'That car is ghetto'), but it can also be used ironically as a term of valorization (as one contributor to an online dictionary puts it, 'Man, his shit is ghetto!' (Rader 2003)). In describing her friend, however, Jackie does not seem to be drawing on either of these meanings. In the context of Jackie's narrative, *ghetto* is meant to illustrate something of the ethnic and class identity of her friend. Although her girlfriend is white, she performs an identity that is partly working class and African American. This is confirmed later in the interview when Jackie discusses the town where her friend grew up:

Excerpt 6

1 Jackie: =Well, she's, okay. (#) This soun- it sounds so bad to kind of talk about
2 Oakmont in this way. (#) There's Oakmont, then there's Riverton. Riverton is
3 kind of like the rougher side of the tracks. It's not *bad*, by a:ny means, like by any
4 means. Just right next to Oakmont it seems kind of like (#) like, a little bit like (#)
5 I mean it is a little bit lower sa- socio-economic status. (#) But (#) it definitely
6 seems like a lot more so because it's next to Oakmont. (1.0) And, um, I think
7 that that kind of mentality (#) kind of- and the way her parents talk is not like-
8 her mother works in the city and (#) I don't know where her dad works. But the
9 way her parents talk, I think that that just kind of rubbed off on her, and she never
10 like (#) talked that properly. And when she tries she can still talk proper. She
11 doesn't talk like full out ghetto:. She still sounds like (#) she still sounds like a
12 white girl. But like she just (#) her speech is a little, tends to be a little bit more
13 li:ke, you know she'll be a little bit more slang and like. And she's had a lot of
14 black boyfriends, so (#) it comes from that too. So she- she like (#) she's confessed
15 to me that she wishes she was black. ((laughs)) That she doesn't want to be white.
16 ((laughs)) Like on a real (°xxx). So::: she like, yeah. ((laughs)) She, that's just, it
17 has a tendency to rub off on her a lot because she doesn't (#) I don't know. °She
18 likes being different, I guess=

Like Oakmont, Riverton is also predominantly white, but it is a working-class town with a median household income less than half that of Oakmont. Part of

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this friend's 'ghetto' performance, then, is an expression of her working-class background. Thus, Jackie's use of 'Hey, girl' is, at least partially, perceived as a metapragmatic bridging of class with her girlfriend and as an index of solidarity. With that same friend, however, other elements of linguistic style are being negotiated. Jackie initially states that with either of her friends she has 'a tendency to just talk normally' (Excerpt 2, line 4), but she later observes, 'With my white girlfriend it tends to be like, it tends to get a little bit more like, like I don't know like, "Hey, girl"' (Excerpt 2, lines 16–17). Talking 'Hey, girl' is clearly perceived as a move away from *talking properly* – it includes 'a little bit more slang' (Excerpt 6, line 13). In this instance, however, the 'Hey, girl' trope does not imply unambiguously that her friend speaks AAE: 'She doesn't talk like full out ghetto,' and 'she still sounds like a white girl' (Excerpt 6, lines 10–12). On the one hand, being 'Hey, girl' in this context is a style-shift that, for Jackie, bridges class rather than ethnic distinctions. On the other hand, for Jackie's friend, linguistic style is construed as an instrument in her negotiation of ethnic identities and boundaries.

Once again, metapragmatics are being constituted by competing indexicalities and competing ideologies. From one ideological orientation, AAE stylizing is understood to signify ethnicity or race: Jackie believes that her friend 'wishes she was black,' and 'doesn't want to be white' (Excerpt 6, lines 14–15). Yet, from another orientation, her friend's speech is just a natural outcome of her upbringing, regardless of ethnicity: she 'never like talked that properly' because her parents' speech 'just kind of rubbed off on her' (Excerpt 6, lines 9–10). Ultimately, Jackie finds her friend's identity performance to be authentic, even as it challenges some of her notions about ethnicity. This acceptance conforms to Sweetland's (2002) assessment of Delilah's 'authenticity.' Furthermore, Jackie's acceptance informs the metapragmatics of their communicative practices and pushes against dominant ideologies that construe the use of AAE in unambiguously racial terms.

Excerpt 7

1 Jackie: And like I have- tend to have a problem with white girls dating black men.
2 It just is really upsetting ((laughs)) to me sometimes. But like I always talk to her
3 like she's the exception. (#) So: I don't know, she's jus- I know that like she's being
4 real (#) about like how she is. And she's not like (1.2) even though she doesn't
5 want to be white she's not trying to be something that she's not. She's not like (#)
6 she- she's not like, like I've known people (#) who've been like that. Like I have
7 this white guy friend who I'm like please like *stop*. ((laughs)) Like you're too much
8 for me right now. You're white. ((laughs)) But (#) I mean like in terms of her, like
9 you can just see that it's not like fake.

Jackie's metapragmatics are negotiated at the intersection of ethnicity, gender and class. In this last excerpt, Jackie contests 'Hey, girl' as a macrosocial index of race with her female friend. This metapragmatic contestation instantiates

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transgressive indexicalities (i.e. class transcending race or perhaps even 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1996)) and, in turn, new ideological orientations. Yet, her male friend's AAE stylizing is construed as almost comically inauthentic. In this case, then, the metapragmatics reinvigorate macrosocial indexicalities and dominant ideologies.

CONCLUSION

The dominant ideologies that construe metapragmatics are undoubtedly powerful and durable. In light of this fact, I would in no way suggest that Jackie's metapragmatic awareness somehow stands apart from those ideologies or is a fully conscious response to them. Indeed, the very idea of what linguistic behavior counts as 'conscious' and what does not is vexing, and it can be tempting to overstate the linguistic repertoires available to individual speakers as well as the consciousness with which speakers can selectively deploy such repertoires in identity performances. Jackie's interview offers ample evidence of the limits on selective deployment. For example, she emphasizes *talking properly*, which indicates an adherence to prescriptive usage norms. Yet, she makes frequent and productive use of like as a quotative and discourse marker, which (given that her interviewer was older and a teacher) could easily have been perceived as non-normative and a counter-index to 'proper' speech. Clearly, there are limits to both pragmatic usage and metapragmatic awareness. I have, however, claimed that Jackie's awareness is 'strategic,' and I want to be careful not to conflate strategic awareness with conscious manipulation.

By describing her metapragmatic awareness as strategic, I want to indicate that Jackie understands her stylistic choices to have social meaning. In addition, her descriptions of her stylistic choices suggest that she engages in 'creative selection' of those styles in order to advertise or emphasize various identities (Coupland and Jaworski 2004: 34). The various styles or codes that Jackie perceives to be available to her and her friends in exercising that 'creative selection,' furthermore, seem to be consistent with the widening of 'normal repertoires' that Coupland and Jaworski (2004: 34) hypothesize might be seen as increasingly accessible to many speakers in the post-modern, post-industrial world. One might take their speculation even a step further. Given the dialectical relationship between metapragmatics and ideology, the metapragmatics of a speaker like Jackie both reinvigorate and contest dominant ideologies. If her experience is at all indicative of a more general widening among adolescents, how might such practices eventually impact long-enduring ideologies?

NOTES

1. I would like to thank Leslie Rex and Anne Curzan, as well as the editors and reviewers at the *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, for their help and guidance in developing this paper. All remaining mistakes are my own.

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2. Transcription conventions:

(It's actually)	Brackets indicate overlap
=Well, she's, okay.	Equals sign indicates latching
°She likes being different	Degree sign indicates quieter speech
It's not *bad*	Italics indicates emphasis
.,	Period or comma indicates falling intonation
?	Question mark indicates rising intonation
(#)	Number sign indicates a pause of less than a second
(1.3)	Numbers in parentheses indicate length of pause longer than a second
pro::ve	Colon(s) indicates lengthening of the previous sound
This soun- it sounds	Hyphen indicates the abrupt cut-off of a sound or word
(xxx)	Parentheses around x's indicates untranscribable material
((laughs))	Double parentheses indicate transcriber's comments

3. An Oreo is a cookie made up of two chocolate wafers sandwiching a cream center. In the vernacular, it is used pejoratively to refer to African Americans who act white (i.e. who are perceived as black on the outside and white on the inside).

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