

# The VIIth American University Conference Lavender Languages and Linguistics

## ABSTRACTS: 1999 Conference Papers

### **Abrams, Brett (American University)**

*Gender Highjinks and Ribald Humor:*

*Female Impersonators and the Hollywood Nightlife, 1917-1940*

Most scholarship asserts that historically the mainstream motion picture industry reflects and creates images that promote traditional gender roles and idealized versions of heterosexual romantic and sexual behavior. Gaylyn Studlar argues that the star images, which emerged from both filmic and extrafilmic texts, generally promote patriarchal values and family discourses. However, when one examines filmic and extra-filmic representations of the motion picture industry in novels, motion pictures, and newspaper stories focused on Hollywood between 1917 and 1941, numerous representations of sexual ambiguity, especially homosexuality, appear.

This paper examines the representations of female impersonators within the motion picture world. Although popular in vaudeville during the early twentieth century many people within the boarder culture perceived female impersonation as linked with male homosexuality. Top female impersonators Julian Eltinge and Bothwell Browne became two of the first of performers who established a following within another entertainment field to receive contracts and starring roles in motion pictures. They brought their humor and style into several of the star circles within the motion picture community in the 1910s. During the 1930s, female impersonators owned and entertained in Hollywood night clubs and the stars came to see their friends' gender highjinks and ribald humor, enhancing the Hollywood mystique by making its night life seem unique and glamorous. Because of their friendships, the female impersonators and their star friends who attended the clubs disrupted the slumming relationship between performing 'others' and the audience members. By 1940, legislation and appeals to two long-time themes of cultural crisis in U.S. history: the city as corrupter of culture and the threat to American masculinity ended the longest lasting pansy craze in American cities during the decade.

### **Fernandez-Aleman, Manuel (University of Southern California)**

*'Speaking the unspeakable'*

In this paper I discuss how narratives about sexuality have been traditionally kept out of public discourses in Latin America, finding their way to public forms of discourse only through joking speech or *picardia*. I also show how a quasi impossibility for talking openly and seriously about sex has had a dramatic impact on the development of a homosexual identity among subjects of a masculine gender identification, as their gender identity cannot be separated from their sexual identity. It is analyzed to what extent this lack of homosexual identity in masculine identified males is a matter of denial, role playing, or cultural impossibility due to regimes of linguistic signification. In this context, homosexual jargon is brought into consideration as a cultural practice especially meaningful among gender nonconforming homosexual males who intend to downplay their homosexuality in public settings. Finally, this paper deals with 'drama,' a sophisticated speech interaction between *locas* where dialogue is made outrageous and campy to ease tensions in situations of competitiveness and envy.

### **Amory, Deborah (SUNY - Purchase)**

*Kuchu Culture: Local/Global Gay Identity in Nairobi, Kenya*

This paper, for better for worse, focuses on an exception to the rule: an individual - Miss Shantay Sashay of Nairobi, Kenya - who has made an art form out of appropriating both black American straight and gay slang and identity. Ever mindful of the limits of the exception to the rule, the paper argues that 'gay' identity (and the term 'gay' is being used in Swahili language

contexts in East Africa) is both, and simultaneously, local and global. That is, local 'gay' identities are indebted both to transnational popular culture and fundamentally formed by local cultural and political contexts. Indeed, the paper focuses on the socio-economic and political structures that influence language and identity choices in this particular case study. The paper also explores the role of the 'exception to the rule' in terms of fashioning new identities through language.

**Beemyn, Brett (Western Illinois University)**

*The Development of Black Gay Community Institutions in Washington, D.C.*

In most large and medium-sized U.S. cities, white lesbians and gay men have laid claim to specific geographical areas through residential and/or social occupancy and developed cultural and political spaces for themselves through organizing and prolonged visibility. The same has historically not been true for Black lesbians and gay men, and even today, explicitly Black gay places and institutions often have trouble sustaining themselves for any length of time and are far from common in most U.S. cities. Arguably the most notable exception to the lack of Black gay space is the case of Washington, D.C., where lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered African Americans have created a wide variety of institutions that articulate and speak to their racial, sexual, and gender identities.

In this paper, I will discuss the history and significance of three local institutions which are among the most enduring in the U.S.: Faith Temple (the country's oldest continuing Black gay church), Black Pride Week (the first such celebration in the U.S.), and the D.C. Coalition of Black Lesbians, Gay Men, and Bisexuals (the longest existing Black gay activist group). Although each has a different focus - ranging from the spiritual, to the social, to the political - and a somewhat different audience, all provide a level of support and a sense of community that has contributed to their longevity and made them important spaces for the affirmation of the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered African Americans.

**Busbee, Elizabeth (Yale)**

*'What Kind of Faggot Are You, Then?': Gender, Sexuality, and Power in Conversation*

This paper examines an interaction between two gay men and two lesbians, with particular attention to how power dynamics are constructed through topic uptake and maintenance, overlaps and interruptions, and length of turns. The roles of gender, sexual orientation, personality, and relationship status vis-a-vis other speakers are discussed.

Cahill, Sean (NGLTF) *Language Struggles in Gay Rights Controversies: Anti-Gay Discourse and Queer Subjectivity in Contemporary U.S. Politics*

Political successes of the anti-gay right, including the resonance of its claims in mainstream media and political discourse, have produced 'truths' about gay and lesbian people and gay rights controversies: Gay rights are special rights, threatening individual freedoms. Gays are ravenous pedophiles; a crafty, inscrutable minority pulling the strings of power from behind the scenes; bullies who intimidate and threaten violence. Gays are bearers of disease and death; hypersexed, criminal sodomites. Gays are active, aggressive; straights are passive, unwillingly dragged into divisive controversies. Gays threaten national security and Western civilization.

These statements about gay people are 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak,' in Foucault's phrase, constructing individual subjectivity. They are also performative statements, citing Butler's term, in that they 'exercise a binding power' by enabling the construction of laws and policies that ascribe sanctions to homosexuality which limit the ability of queers to live autonomous and free lives.

To fully understand the impact of anti-gay politics in the U.S., one must address the following questions: 1) to what extent is anti-gay discourse peripheral and marginalized, and to what extent is it reflected in mainstream political discourse and media coverage of lesbian and gay people and 'gay rights' controversies? 2) How does anti-gay politics shape the subjectivity of queer people? 3) What are the limits of the pluralist paradigm in understanding these impacts, and

how might critiques of pluralism and contemporary language theory elucidate these processes? 4) Cognizant of the limits of pluralist and liberal theory, how might social scientists learn from critical language theory and queer theory to better describe the impact of anti-gay representations on the ability of queer people to obtain equitable and responsive political representation?

**Chamberland, Line (Maisonneuve College)**

*Elsa Gidlow: Letters from Montreal (1917-1940)*

As a testimony of a young girl raised in Montreal at the beginning of this century, who identified herself clearly as a lesbian at an early age, who actively looked for and found people of her kind, Elsa Gidlow's autobiography, *I Come with my Songs*, is a rare and precious source of information for gay and lesbian history in Montreal. After she left Canada in 1920 to live in New York and, a few years later, San Francisco, Elsa kept corresponding with a few friends from this period of her life. In this paper, I will examine the letters she received (deposited at the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society of Northern California) from two women who, although not-identifying as lesbians themselves, have played a key role in Elsa's first experiences with other women: Louise Estelle Cox, a married woman who didn't reciprocate Elsa's passionate love for her and Marguerite Desmarais who initiated Elsa to a joyful sexuality. More precisely, I will analyze these letters focusing on certain questions such as : how do these women perceive and relate to Elsa's lesbian identity? What terms and sexual categories are used to refer to Elsa's sexual attraction to other women? How are her sexual and gender-identity constructed and made congruent? How do they respond to Elsa's interest for sexual variance in literature and other written material? How do they relate to other 'inverted' or 'queer' people?

**Convey, Mark (Central Connecticut State)**

*Queer public sphere: Eastern European queer identities on the internet*

This paper explores the 'presentation of 'queer' self' on the world wide web using email correspondences along with the text, images, symbols and links from homepages created by gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people from three Eastern European countries: Romania, Slovenia and the Ukraine. The internet has created a new domain for the exploration of culture and identity that reaches beyond ethnic and geographical boundaries. By viewing the internet as a 'public sphere', computer technology has created a new arena for communities to express themselves and generate change. Habermas describes a 'public sphere' where social life is accessible to all citizens and public opinion can be formed. This paper presents the pattern observed in self-presentations and analyzes the influence of local culture, political conditions, and a growing global queer community on these expressions of identity.

**Craven, Christa (American University)**

*The Self in Community: Narratives of Lesbian Community*

In this paper, I explore ways in which speakers establish particular text-based visions of a (or The) lesbian community. Each narrative suggests a sense of self as 'separate and related, a self which is neither autonomous nor dissolved' (Hoagland 1988:12). The notion of 'imagined community' (Andersen 1991:6) allows each speaker to establish her own particular notion of lesbian community, while at the same time maintaining individual membership within the constructed collective.

**Fletcher, John (University of Minnesota)**

*'I am out, therefore I am': Some Queer thoughts on the Speech Act of Coming Out*

I begin with a discussion of what I see as a conflict between modern lesbian/gay/queer/etc. activism and Queer Theory. Given the philosophic rigor behind Queer Theory, why is it that identity politics has - not only remained standing, but - gained ground in the public consciousness? Perhaps one of the causes lies in the empower inherent in the act of claiming an identity, the act of 'coming out.' While coming out (and, in a sense, identity activism itself) is understood by many to be a process (or processes) of reconciliation between 'self' and 'desire' and 'world,' all of these tactics and processes crystallize in the linguistic utterance, 'I'm gay [or lesbian or bi or trans].' What is it about this act that makes it so appealing? What forces are at work when someone 'comes out?'

To find out, I use the tools offered by Speech Act Theory. What I find is that 'coming out' involves much more than merely describing an outside reality. Coming out instead represents the speaker's attempt to dictate the terms of his/her own existence by assertively, explicitly (re)defining 'self' as a particular label ('Y'). Doing so simultaneously gives the speaker a sense of 'self' and a sense of possession/control of his/her immediate 'reality.' An 'out' identity therefore acts as both a bridge between and a definer of self and world.

Yet is this act really as empowering as it feels? The basic proposition of coming out is 'Speaker S=label Y.' This equation allows speakers a comforting sense that 'self exists and that they know exactly what that entails. The Mutual Contextual Beliefs that define Y, however, (re)define S into a set of discursive shackles in which it becomes difficult to maneuver. 'Self,' instead of 'coming out' of closeted repression, rather finds itself collapsed into a new set of restrictions.

### **Fu, Chong-Hao (Yale)**

*Coming out Stories: Reflexivity of the Self*

I discuss the coming-out stories of several Yale University undergraduates. These coming-out stories were personally collected through a series of interviews and represent a cross-section of the Yale queer community. While some speakers construct clear-cut identities through their narratives, others hesitate at calling themselves anything other than 'not straight.'

My paper will focus on what Charlotte Linde (1933) terms the 'reflexivity of the self.'

Linde notes that 'the act of narration itself creates a split between narrator and protagonist.' I argue that it is through this separation that re-evaluation of a life story can occur and a positive queer identity can be constructed.

### **Gaudio, Rudolf (University of Arizona)**

*Homos like us: Anglo-gay influence (& its limits) in a Nigerian Hausa subculture*

This paper examines the sociocultural ramifications of language contact in a male homosexual subculture in northern Nigeria, paying particular attention to English lexical items that have been appropriated by Hausa-speaking men who self-identify as 'homos' (or, more rarely, 'gays'). Empirical foci of the paper include: (1) the semantic domains of the English words that have been incorporated into what I call the Hausa gay argot; (2) the likely or apparent sociolinguistic process whereby (some) Hausa gay male speakers became aware of these terms and began to use them in local contexts; (3) socioeconomic, generational, geographic and situational variation in the knowledge and use of these terms (assessed ethnographically, not statistically).

My participation in and observation of Hausa gay men's conversational practices (based on ethnographic fieldwork undertaken in 1993, 1994 and 1997) indicate that the lexical influence exerted by English is, on the whole, quite limited, except among elites who engage in frequent Hausa-English codeswitching generally (i.e. not just in 'homo'-social contexts). The social, geographical and situational distribution of English loanwords in the Hausa gay argot (only a few

of which can be characterized as derived from a specifically 'gay English') reflect broader cultural and socioeconomic asymmetries in postcolonial Nigerian society, e.g. modern/traditional, urban/rural, literate/illiterate. If anything is being 'globalized' in this context, therefore, it is not simply Anglo-American language and culture ('gay' or otherwise), but the systemic inequalities that accompany and support the hegemony of global capitalism.

**Grimard, Marcel and Labrie, Normand (OISE)**

*Silence, Taboos and Hegemony, or How French-Speaking Gays and Lesbians Produce Discourse on Identity*

Based on 40 interviews conducted in 1999 with French-Speaking gays and lesbians living in Toronto, we will explore the intersection between language and sexual identity as expressed in their discourse. This paper will explore the following questions: How are French-Speaking gays and lesbians living in Toronto negotiating their identity using their membership within two marginalized groups? Do they produce an autonomous discourse integrating sexuality and linguistic identity? Which communication strategies fulfill the production of such an autonomous discourse? Can silence, implicitness, taboos, avoidance, and/or social class? Finally, should these communication strategies be considered as the embodiment by the individual of the mainstream discourse on sexuality produced by the Francophone community, or are they the result of the absence in the French language of a terminology linking sexuality and linguistic identity?

**Hall, Kira (Yale)**

*'Lambdas, ranis and beards, oh my!': Gay English in Queer India*

The language that characterizes the new gay urban scene in India contrasts sharply with that used by the hijras, a transgendered community that claims an indigenous dating back to the time-period of the Mahabharata. While English has become a distinctive marker of gayness in educated urban India, it is rarely used in the predominately illiterate hijra community, a discrepancy that parallels that between the Indian middle and lower classes in general.

In this paper, I tease out some of the political and social dimensions regarding the use (or not-use) of English in queer India, drawing from discussions in gay publications like *Bombay Dost* (the first gay magazine in India), *Gay Delhi* (a gay website), as well as my own fieldwork among hijras in northern India.

**Hawkins, Joseph (University of Southern California)**

*Japan, The Popular Press and Globalizing Homophobia*

Japan has enjoyed over a thousand years of rich pansexual interaction. Although marriage has been compulsory for most Japanese throughout much of this history, heterosexuality has not been. With the advent of westernization beginning just prior to the Meiji period (1868-1912) and with subsequent changes brought about by the American Occupation (1945-1952), the project of adaptation to occidental moral and aesthetic values with regard to sexual behavior underwent radical changes. This paper explores changes in language, ideology and writing style from the pre World War II period to the present by examining essays and articles about sexuality that appear in Japanese publications. By paying specific attention to 'gay' magazines published at the end of the interregnum the most radical shift in self-consciousness with regard to globalizing concepts of sexuality will be chronicled. Borrowed words and the commodification of the American gay movement have effectively contributed to increases in Japanese cultural perceptions of gayness as outside, imported and foreign. This examination, in formal scientific contexts and within argot, reflects the adaptation of a society to the strictures of external power, cultural imperialism and discrimination through language.

**Hersker, Alan (American)**

*Mapping the landscape*

Mindful that our ability to negotiate the urban terrain precedes our ability to map that terrain, I use composite maps (drawn from interview data) to illustrate the different ways that

queer and straight individuals imagine and then construct the space of the city. These maps are glimpses of micro-spatiality that reveal how we construct neighborhood rather than how we construct the city writ large. They are more about the neighborhood as a 'collection of traversable sites' than about the city as a collection of traversal spaces. But these composite maps can only be a starting point for analysis, a rapid assessment technique that shows us, by presence and absence, by what is marked and left unmarked, the directions we need to take' whether we use interview, archival or other sources of data ' for an in-depth and comprehensive inquiry into urban space and place.

### **Higgins, Ross (Concordia )**

*'Love me a little, Sappho, for I am utterly desolate': Lesbian and Gay Friendship in Early Twentieth-Century Montreal*

The Sappho of the title, Elsa Gidlow, and Roswell George Mills, author of the letter which ends with this plea, were at the centre of a Montreal artistic friendship group in the closing years of World War I. Gidlow, then about 17, had placed a newspaper ad seeking like-minded people to begin a literary discussion group. As a result, she met a number of sympathetic poets, artists and musicians, among whom, just as she had hoped was one gay man, Mills, with whom she became friends for life. Gidlow later moved from to New York before settling in San Francisco in the 1930s. There she gained a reputation as a lesbian warrior poet, finally writing her autobiography in the mid-1980s. After her death, Gidlow's meticulously preserved personal papers were deposited in the archives of the Northern California Gay and Lesbian Historical Society. These include a remarkable set of letters from her Montreal period, including many from Mills. In this paper, I will examine these records, looking at both the language used, the social relationships recorded and the self-concepts encoded by these remarkable individuals in order to gain insight into the patterns of private sociability and cultural interests which they shared.

### **Junge, Benjamin (Emory)**

*'Sex, Risk and the Internet: A Discourse Analysis of Websites Used by Gay Men to Arrange Unsafe Sex'*

'Barebacking' - condomless anal intercourse among men-who-have-sex-with-men (MSM) - has emerged in recent years as a politicized and highly controversial social and sexual phenomenon. A variety of computer-mediated communication (CMC) genres have emerged to bring together MSM interested in barebacking, among them websites structured in a conventional personal-ad format. Using discourse analysis techniques from linguistic anthropology, this paper will focus on selections from these websites. Using techniques developed by Fairclough, this analysis will examine the dialectical relationship between ideologies of condom promotion, monogamy and risk reduction, and emergent barebacking discourse. This discourse analysis will be set in the context of a broader reconfiguration of sexual values and practices among MSM.

### **Kennedy, Kieran (Columbia University)**

*Gay English and (Gay) Gaelic*

How has gay English had an impact on a Gaelic writer? What are some possible points of comparison and differentiation from other cultures and languages? How does British imperialism give us a common point of reference?

I will tease out some differences in how Gaeilge and English represent desire and subjectivity. How does a Gaelic writer enter Anglophone culture? What does he choose to give up in order to have a dialogue with a larger audience? What does he gain? What is at stake in notions of purity and difference when it comes to gay men? An identifiable subculture of gay men can be found in Western metropolitan cities.

What are the rewards of paying more attention to Gaelic? Can an erotics and an aesthetics develop in Gaelic that remains unscathed by the negatively charged treatment of homosexuality in British writing and culture?

### **Leap, Bill (American)**

" Gay City, revisited"

I report here on 5 years of studying *gay city* in Washington DC, and discuss some of the connections between

urban gay experience, race and class positions, and urban political economy which have emerged from this analysis.

**Minning, Heidi (Syracuse University)**

*Qwir-English and Code-Mixing in Germany: Constructing a Rainbow of Identities*

This paper compares print and spoken uses of Lavender-English as they participate in the construction of playful, political and consumer identities for people challenging hegemonic heterosexual discourses in Berlin, Germany. From the ubiquitous use of the term 'coming out' to 'Christopher Street Day' as the name for 'gay pride' celebrations, people participating in various queer communities of practice make wide-spread but selective use of code-mixing, loan words, and loan shifters to create gay, lesbian, queer, trans- and bi-sexual meanings. In strange or uncomfortable settings, they may also use the same language as part of a strategy of indirectness. In addition, these words and expressions are used by advertisers to index products and services as "community friendly." The most common areas of social experience for mixing and borrowing seem to be sex and the gay and lesbian social and political movements, with 'queer' and 'queering' becoming increasingly visible fixtures in language use and social assessment.

**McKeown, Frank (American University)**

*Reading XY: Semiotic socialization in a gay mag*

This paper presents a semiotic reading of several sections of XY, a sleek new magazine that targets a young, hip, gay audience. The function of the magazine is one, I contend, of socialization. XY portrays young men in situations where they are learning the ropes in the gay community. Often this socialization is portrayed as a process of becoming literate in a gay idiom. XY is a site in which the reader is linguistically and semiotically socialized as a member of a real or imagined 'gay' community. While the existence of the magazine may benefit the gay youth community by validating the experiences of young men who are coming out in their teens and encouraging those youth to be proud of their sexuality, the magazine also runs the risk of being insensitive to the diversity of gay youth, both by focusing primarily on the experiences of upper class white boys and by effectively promoting the 'gay' community as a club to which only the beautiful and socially privileged are allowed access.

**Mendenhall, Christian (American)**

*Thee holy sexual self: An interactive mediation and investigation of sex as a mediator of the presence of God*

This interactive session will present a bit of spiritual radicalism in which HOMO-sexuality is seen as a powerful way of dealing with the sexual self as an active icon for spiritual experience. The participants will both engage in discussion and pursue various forms of body-meditation.

**Moriel, Liora (University of Maryland)**

*Dancing on the needle's edge: Gay lingo in an Israeli disco*

Since coming out of the closet and into the street and the mainstream in 1991, the Israeli LGBT community has been grappling with the issue of how best to translate Gay English the language, the culture, the style into Hebrew. The results have been mixed. On the whole, while Gay English has been embraced on the dance floor and in the corridors of academe, a vibrant hybrid polyglot lingo that is unabashedly feminine has emerged in the gay male subcultures subculture. Moreover, because Hebrew is a wholly gendered language while English is not, Gay English has a unisex allure for same sex discourse in Israel but then again, deconstructing and restructuring ancient grammar has turned out to be an equal turn-on!

**Mustanski, Brian (Northwestern University)**

*Defining Sexual Activity for Gay Men: Researchers vs their subjects vs dominant culture*

Recently there has been a surge in interest in how to define 'having sex.' Beyond pop cultural interests, an investigation of how people classify sexual activity is important to know for clinical and research purposes, but unfortunately little research has been performed clarifying this question, especially amongst sexual minority populations. This study attempts to answer three main questions: how do gay men define 'having sex?', how do researchers who study the sexual behavior of gay men define 'having sex?', and how do heterosexuals define gay men 'having sex?' Both sex researchers, gay men, and the heterosexual participants were given a questionnaire asking about sexual activities, and if they would consider these activities to be 'having sex' when speaking professionally or with their friends, respectively. Preliminary data have provided the following results: laying naked in bed together: 0% Gay Men (GM), 10% Sex Researchers (SR), no data heterosexuals (Het); naked genital-genital rubbing: 10% GM, 80%SR, no data Het; manual-genital stimulation: 30% GM, 80% SR, 13% Het; Oral-genital stimulation: 80% GM, 80% SR, 22% Het; Anal intercourse: 100% GM, 100% ST, 87% Het. These data suggest that there is a mismatch between the definitions used by researchers and their subjects of study-gay men. It also suggests that sex researchers as a group are more likely to include any activity as 'having sex.' In addition, the data are broken down to demonstrate sex differences in responses by heterosexuals and the decreased likelihood of heterosexuals to include an activity as 'having sex.' Suggestions are made as to how to avoid problems that may result from the mismatch between researchers and subjects.

**Nader, Nicholas (American University)**

*Lesbian and Gay Movements Beyond Borders: Transnational Diffusion of Rhetoric, Symbols and Issues in Comparative Perspectives*

This study attempts to explain both the cross-national similarities and the differences in the development of lesbian and gay movements. Selected countries share social, political, economic and geographic characteristics. By comparing countries that are comparable in many aspects but divergent in others, I am able to present an 'opportunity model' of movement emergence and development. More specifically, by distinguishing between essential prerequisites and rhetoric and symbols used by the movements in various countries, I deduce some fundamental principles underpinning the development of lesbian and gay movements.

**Nakamura, Karen (Yale)**

*Signing 'Queer' in Japan: LGBT Identities and Sexual Politics in Japanese Sign Language*

Japanese Sign Language (JSL) embeds gender as a critical component of its morphology. From this develops a vocabulary on gender and sexuality. This paper analyzes these sign forms and embeds them within a larger social discourse on gender and sexuality in Japan. Why are there many out gay men and transgendered drag queens in Japan, but hardly any lesbian women?

**Padilla, Mark (Emory) and Leonardo Sanchez**

*'Defining our Terms': The Construction of the Dominican Gay Dictionary*

This paper presents a preliminary analysis of ongoing focus group discussions with Dominican men who have sex with other men, and focuses on two aspects of Dominican gay male language that were explored in these groups: (1) ways of identifying other persons *del ambiente* in Dominican society; and (2) the perceived etymology and geographic movement of gay terms within and beyond the country's borders. Focus groups were implemented because of the enthusiasm with which local gay men responded to casual jokes about writing *el diccionario gay de la República Dominicana*, and the apparent desire to use language to stake a claim for the complexity and importance of Dominican gay culture. This paper summarizes themes from the focus group data and places these themes within the large context of MP's ongoing fieldwork in Santo Domingo. LS, the executive director of the only specifically gay organization in the country, provides local perspective on the data and on the larger cultural themes to which they refer.

**Peterson, David J. (Auburn)**

*Apologia pro sua vita sexualis: Walt Whitman's "Children of Adam"*

Most critics read Whitman's "Children of Adam" cluster as an aggressively heteroerotic counterbalance to the openly homoerotic "Calamus" cluster. Speculation for Whitman's motivation in producing "Children" run the gamut from it being a repudiation of the sexual implications of "Calamus", to Whitman using it as a means of masking his sexual identity, to it being a sign that Whitman has succumbed to internalized homophobia. While the poems of "Children of Adam" certainly appear heteroerotic, sometimes forcefully so, this presentation analyzes the cluster as being completely within keeping with Whitman's agenda for celebrating erotic love between men. Given the cluster's placement in the text -- before "Calamus" -- and given its presentation of the failure of heteroerotic love, "Children of Adam" prepares the ground of "Calamus's" explorative homoeroticism. "Children" is thus not Whitman's failed/inauthentic attempt to pass as a heterosexual, but is, rather, Whitman's *apologia pro sua vita sexualis*.

**Provencher, Denis (University of Wisconsin - La Crosse)**

*Vague English Creole: (Gay English) Text-Making in the French Gay Press*

In this paper, I examine the use of Gay English text-making in France's national gay magazine *Tetu*. In *Word's Out: Gay Men's English*, William Leap defines text-making as the rules of grammar and discourse practices that are shaped and agreed upon by members of the same speech community. Gay English utilizes cooperative discourse which calls upon shared knowledge and gay-centered cultural themes within an English-speaking context. Like (Gay) English texts, however, (Gay) French texts also utilize cooperative discourse. *Tetu* offers examples of exaggeration, gay-oriented metaphor and innuendo, misogynist remarks as well as references to many prominent characters and events in gay history. For example, the magazine includes American and British figures and events such as Madonna, Jimmy Somerville and Stonewall alongside Edith Piaf, Brigitte Bardot and Paris's Gay Pride Marches. Moreover, many of these references belong to a consumer and mass media culture and are situated within a larger international context. *Tetu* therefore illustrates a transnational gay culture which borrows linguistic elements from Anglophone cultures.

**Provencher, Denis (U Wisconsin-La Crosse)**

*Where's the gay language in Tetu?*

The goal of this presentation is to unite theory with practical application. First, I will present my approach to the analysis of lavender text. Because my research draws largely from Leap's work on gay-text making in *Word's Out*, I will briefly discuss his notion of cooperative discourse. This linguistic orientation includes elements such as exaggeration, gay-oriented metaphor and innuendo, as well as references to prominent gay characters in gay history. As group, we will then explore both visual and linguistic examples (in translation) from France's national gay magazine, *Tetu*, looking for evidence of lavender French language. Because this workshop is intended to be dialogic, I will ask participants to analyze short passages from *Tetu* to illustrate or refute evidence of cooperative elements. Participants are welcome to bring their own lavender texts to use as points of comparison during this discussion.

**Sivori, Horacio (Universidad de Buenos Aires)**

*Que es un 'verdadero' chongo: Gay Authority in Language Practice*

In this paper I study the contemporary economy of use of certain categories from Argentine gay speech, particularly sex and gender appellatives which are either re-signified standard voices or gender-twisted neologisms. I analyze the sorts of speakers, listeners and contexts that are generated when a gay voice is performed by uttering/authoring those names. In the local gay ambiente of urban Argentina, the enactment of a gay voice conveys specific claims to authenticity, legitimacy and authority over 'proper' gender behavior. I contend that the

production of gay names creates an economy of subject-object relations which openly contests both hetero-normative and gay-assimilationist authority.

**Ullman, Char (University of Arizona)**

*'He's a Guy for Sure, But...': Queer Collaborations and the pedagogical implications of one teacher's coming out in class*

Within many queer communities in the U.S., coming out is a pivotal political strategy which serves to mobilize diverse groups around issues of sexuality and to create visibility for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people. Although I am critical of the hegemonic implications of coming out, I still find that studying its linguistic instantiations can offer insights into queer lives and the contexts in which we function. And one of the most contested sites at which coming out might occur is the classroom. The mainstream media, along with some queer scholars have expressed dismay at the prospect of teachers coming out in class, assuming that a declarative statement is inappropriate, necessarily decontextualized, and pedagogically questionable (Khayatt, 1997). This paper focuses on classroom discourse which occurred on the day in which a European-American gay male professor came out to undergraduate students in the context of a class entitled 'Language and Gender' at a large university in the American southwest. By exploring the discursive framing techniques that were part of his coming out speech event, I will argue that a teacher's sexuality can affect classroom discourse, whether it is addressed explicitly or not. Through analysis of the teacher's lectures, informal interviews with him, and interviews with students, a portrait of what one instance of coming out can be like is painted. This paper urges educators to consider the complexity of coming out in ways that might have positive pedagogical implication.

**Van Helden, Caspar (University of Amsterdam)**

*Boy Power: Language, Identity, and Gay Youth Media*

In this presentation. I take a piece of text from XY that I have not completely 'processed' myself, and work through it with the help of the workshop participants. Word choice, word origin, style, shift of meaning, genre and uses of visual imagery are possible choices for investigation. I hope to show the various way the text points at different values, controversies and erotic elements within gay youth culture. The larger aim of the presentation is to show participants the direct link between critical thought and textual proof, which is essential in discourse analysis.

**Van Helden, Caspar (University of Amsterdam)**

*Language and the Dialectical Evolution of Gay Youth Culture*

The paper talks about the dialectical evolution of gay youth culture, in particular about empowering popular counter culture. By performing critical discourse analysis on gay youth magazines and interviews with boys I will try to show that the newest generation is both uncomfortably caught between main stream and aging gay culture (liberation movement style), as well as a fruitful area for finding typical subcultural solutions for a masculinity crisis which has hit all of the teenage world. A magazine like XY which both displays 'values' as well as 'controversy' and 'sexual content', is an excellent presentation of this new movement in the subculture. I will try to show the possible (political) meanings and implications of its body copy and imagery by applying discourse analysis and theories.

**Weinberg, Jessica and Robert Whitman (University of Arizona)**

*'Getting a Grip': Learning Masculinity in the Movies*

The recent popular films - *In and Out* - and - *The Birdcage* - both feature scenes in which a biological male is being taught to be 'a real man.' In - *Birdcage* - (a remake of the 1970s French

film - *La Cage aux Folles* -) the 'student' and the 'teacher', both males, are lovers. In - In and Out -, the 'student' (though the character is actually a teacher by profession in the movie) has just been outed (as a gay man) and the 'teacher' is a tape called 'Exploring Your Masculinity, part 1: Getting a Grip.' In this paper, we explore the use of linguistic and other semiotic features in the construction of masculinity and non masculinity in these two scenes. In addition, we discuss the ways in which class and ethnic stereotypes are combined with stereotypes of gender and sexuality to construct a dichotomy of masculine and nonmasculine. Unlike public discourses among gay men cannot be masculine. These movies are part of the ongoing production and reproduction of heterosexual norms of masculinity in middle class white American culture, norms to which viewers are expected to adhere, though they may respond to these norms in complex ways which include adherence, avoidance, and resistance, among other strategies.

### **Wright, Jashua (Yale)**

#### *Queer Gossip*

I present a study of queer gossip. My corpus comes from the discussions of the 'Not-Straight Frosh Group' at Yale University, a small undergraduate discussion group for freshpersons who identify themselves as anything other than 'absolutely straight.' One of the salient features of their gossip is a focus on sexual orientation and outness/closetedness as primary aspects of one's persona. The Frosh discuss and evaluate themselves and other students based on their (perceived) sexual orientations and the degree to which and the means by which they have incorporated them into their various social relationships.

This queer gossip differs from conventional models in at least two ways. Unlike the gossip described by Cameron (1997), it often constructs absent third parties as in-group, rather than out-group, by discussing or speculating on others' deviations from heteronormative models.

Another innovation is queer gossip's tendency to weaken group boundaries, not solidify them. Certainty is replaced with ambiguity when potential discrepancies among sexual identity, sexual practice, and sexual reputation(s) are highlighted. A typical example would be that one person may consider himself straight, and his friends may concur, but the No-Straight Frosh group classifies him as queer.

This points to two major facets of queer experience. One is queers' affinity for rethinking sexual ideologies in various forms, and another is the queer search for visibility. By constructing others as in-group, queers increase their population, challenging heteronormativity and fulfilling the prophecy 'We are everywhere.'