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Bitch, You're Such a Slut!: How College Women use *Bitch* and *Slut* for Identity and
Relationship Work

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Abstract

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By Alex Lopez

Language is often engaged in creating or conveying identities. One can use various linguistic features to demonstrate an independent or a shared identity, which is to employ linguistic characteristics that are associated with a specific identity. For example, one can utilize language for their gender identity to convey and to tend to relationships with individuals who share the same gender identity. Gendered linguistic markers, like *dude*, can emit a message, create a tone, and index a specific relationship to the interlocutor. However, *dude* is more commonly associated with men. Informed by the speech community theory, this project intends to explore whether or not *bitch* and *slut* are being used among a sample college women, specifically at Emory University, to convey or create an identity for themselves and to index a message or a relationship to other women through shared expectations of the two words.

The purpose of this study is to 1) identify if Emory college women are using *bitch* and *slut* in their interactions 2) investigate how they are using the words and 3) identify what their motivation is for using the words, specifically if *bitch* and *slut* are used for identity and relationship work. Through qualitative and quantitative approaches, this paper explores how *bitch* and *slut* manifest in interactions and contribute to identity and relationships. Surveys and interviews were conducted in order to gather empirical evidence about perceptions and self-reported use of *bitch* and *slut* among college women in the Emory University community. Collected data supports the prediction of *bitch* and *slut* used for identity construction and for indexing a close relationship to other women. *Bitch* functions as a way to index a close relationship to established friends, while *slut* is used to construct a negative identity of women.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

When walking across a college campus, students are constantly faced with short interactions or brief greetings with peers as they pass by. Depending on the individual's relationship with the passerby, they may address or refer—either speak directly to the individual or speak about the individual—by name, by nickname, or by another casual address. An intentional use of address or reference can serve a purpose, especially in composing or expressing a particular identity or conveying a certain relationship. For example, young men and, increasingly so, young women will use *dude* in their interactions.

Dude, for men, was found to serve as a marker of homosocial relationships (Kiesling 2004). For men, the use of *dude* as an address was intentional in conveying a certain relationship: close without appearing too close, and an avoidance of expressing a message that could be perceived as homosexual. However, though women were also found to use *dude*, *dude* was primarily associated with men and use between men. Further, though *dude* is neither considered in direct contrast nor is considered as a direct influence on the development of words for women, it calls into question words used index a close relationship or unified identity among women. When considering gendered address and reference terms, there are no neutral equivalents of *dude* for use between women. However, as the use of *dude* indexes a relationship between men, recent linguistic observation has shown that *bitch* and *slut* are used in similar ways among women. This observation will be explored in a specific population by this study and it will be argued that the words *bitch* and *slut* are used among sampled college women for creating a cohesive identity and indexing a close relationship among one another.

The words *bitch* and *slut* are both strong words with variant histories. Originally a reference to a female dog, *bitch* has evolved to be used as an insult, either alluding to or directed

towards women who are perceived to be angry and malicious. Additionally, though the initial etymology is unknown, *slut* also functions as an insult, used for its possession of negative, sexual overtones reserved solely for women. With this, the etymology and history of both *bitch* and *slut* give insight into the present use and function of the two words as well as the effort to reclaim the words for women to use in and for their own speech communities.

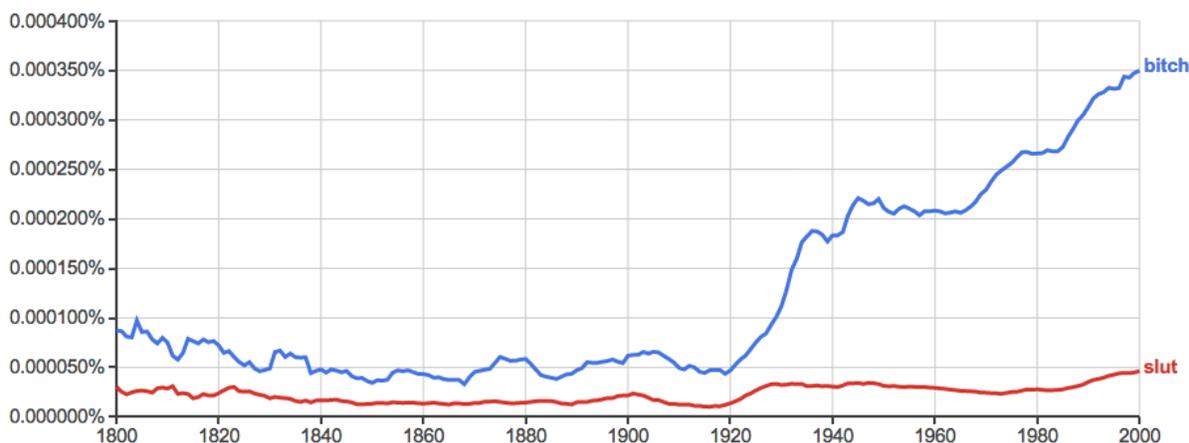


Table 1: Use of *bitch* and *slut*, 1800-2008 (Google Ngram)

Bitch: A History

The etymology of *bitch*, from the Old English term *bicce* or from the Norse *bikkje*, explains that the word began as a name for a female dog, dating back to approximately 1200 (Online Etymology Dictionary, Bayley 2011: n.p.). However, near the time of its origin—around 1400—to present day, the word has evolved to negatively address or reference a perceivably outgoing, out of control, malicious, and irritating woman, thereby comparing the woman to a dog in heat (Bayley 2011: n.p.). As displayed in Table 1¹, the use of *bitch* increased

¹ Table 1 is an **ngram**. An ngram is an online phrase-usage graphing tool originally developed by Jon Orwant and Will Brockman of Google, inspired by a prototype (called "Bookworm") created by Jean-Baptiste Michel and Erez Aiden from Harvard and Yuan Shen from MIT. It charts the yearly count of selected n-grams (letter combinations) or words and phrases, as found in over 5.2 million books digitized by Google Inc (up to 2008). The words, phrases, or ngrams

significantly following the first women's suffrage success: voting rights. With this win, woman became more public and vocal; however, so did their critics (Bayley 2011: n.p.). *Bitch* was hurled at outspoken women, and the word was used in hopes to silence activists and maintain the quiet, suppressed female role. The use steadily projected upward between 1920-1940. Though the use of *bitch* then leveled for twenty years, the use increased shortly after 1960. This increase is evidence of and reaction to the efforts by women of the third wave of feminism. Specifically, when women were perceived to be acting inappropriately independent or unruly, they were often called a *bitch*. However, during the 1960s, following the publication of *Feminine Mystique*, active feminists began to feel a sense of pride and tried to harness the negativity of *bitch* and utilize the power to represent their efforts (Bayley 2011: n.p.). Feminists wanted to revel in their independence and felt that their aggression, strength and independence were all points of celebration. Therefore, by taking back the word and labeling themselves as *bitches*, they hoped to transform an insult into an inspiration. Various mediums were enlisted, and publications such as *BITCH magazine* embodied this process. The name was chosen intentionally: one of the magazine's founders, Andi Ziesler, released this quote, explaining the name:

When we chose the name, we were thinking, well, it would be great to reclaim the word 'bitch' for strong, outspoken women, much the same way that "queer" has been reclaimed by the gay community. That was very much on our minds, the positive power of language reclamation.

-Andi Ziesler, *BITCH magazine* (2006)

are matched and plotted on a graph. (See http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/17/google-ngram-database-tran_798150.html ; <http://www.cnet.com/news/googles-ngram-viewer-a-time-machine-for-wordplay/> ; <https://books.google.com/ngrams/info>)

By calling themselves and other women *bitches*, women tried to create a unified identity and index a relative closeness. Advancing the agenda of the third wave feminists, other mediums, including music, popularized the use of *bitch* outside of its taboo definition. Though *bitch* is sometimes still understood as an insult, through its history, it was given an identity, attempted to be reclaimed, and popularized in use among women.

Slut: A History

Though both considered insults exclusive to women, *slut* experienced a different history than *bitch*. In regards to *slut*, though the origin of the word is unknown, use has circulated since 1400 to refer to a “slovenly woman” (Online Etymology Dictionary). Since 1966, the more modern definition of *slut* has evolved to refer to or describe a sexually promiscuous woman. Despite the fact that *slut* has been recorded and used since the 15th century, not much research or information exists on the history of the word itself.

As displayed in Table 1, the use of *slut* rose near the 1920s, around the same time the use of *bitch* escalated. This rise could be presumably explained by the 1920s or the “Roaring Twenties”, a time of economic prosperity. This increase in financial security fostered a sense of freedom, which resulted in breaking previously held social constraints, especially on sex and sexuality. In response to this, the use of *slut* could have increased to keep women sexually and socially repressed. By calling a woman a *slut*, individuals were reprimanding them for engaging in sex, dressing promiscuously, or being intimate with too many partners. Addressing or referring to a woman as a *slut* is an effort to discourage such women from being overly sexual. Poet Jaclyn Friedman recognized the definition and oppressive power of *slut*, saying:

A slut is someone, usually a woman, who's stepped outside of the very narrow lane that good girls are supposed to stay within. Sluts are loud. We're messy. We don't behave. In

fact, the original definition of “slut” meant “untidy woman.” But since we live in a world that relies on women to be tidy in all ways, to be quiet and obedient and agreeable and available (but never aggressive), those of us who color outside of the lines get called sluts. And that word is meant to keep us in line.

-Jaclyn Friedman (n.d.)

The use of *slut* has slowly, though steadily, risen since the ‘20s, possibly due to weaker constraints on sexuality, as experienced in the 20s and especially in the 60s, in response to the availability of birth control. The negative connotation of *slut* persisted through the years, and remained a pejorative term used against women who are sexually promiscuous and to shame women for excessive expressions and indulgences in their sexuality. Nevertheless, women in the third wave of feminism tried to reclaim *slut* similar to *bitch*. In the 1960s, after the legalization and commercialization of birth control, women were given more agency over their sexuality and sexual experiences, for they could control the possible biological outcomes. Additionally, I believe this increased the conversation about sex and gendered perceptions of sex. The availability of birth control surfaced awareness of a long-standing double standard between male sexuality and female sexuality, for men were celebrated for their sexual conquests and women were suppressed in engaging in their sexuality. Therefore, work to reclaim *slut* allowed women to celebrate their sexuality. Variations on the phrase *the slut vote* began to circulate, in order to demonstrate that women were entitled to their sexuality and should have their voices heard, especially about matters of reproductive rights and legislation that directly impacts them as women (Baker 2012: n.p.).

Women in the third wave of feminism worked to reclaim *bitch* and *slut* for their own empowering means. Such work could possibly explain an adaptation in the use of the two words.

Presently, describing other women as *my bitch* or *my best bitch*, and events like SlutWalk are all part of a “growing trend to ‘reclaim’ words that have been given a negative connotation” in order to affirm a group identity (Westcott 2011). With the history and the possible trend in mind, the objectives of this research are to identify how *bitch* and *slut* are used and perceived by a specific population of women today.



Figure 1 (left): Slutwalk NYC October 2011 Shankbone 25 by: David Shankbone (Link to license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>)

Figure 2 (right): Slutwalk NYC October 2011 Shankbone 4 by: David Shankbone (Link to license: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/legalcode>)

Past Study and Present Study

My present study of *bitch* and *slut* was inspired by a specific observation of how a population of women expressed using *bitch* in a past study. Namely, in her article *Bitches and Skankly Hobags* (1995), researcher Laurel Sutton noted a difference in the way the word *bitch* (and *ho*) was being used by some women in her study. Among her study population of college students, a few female subjects explained that *bitch* served as a term of endearment or was said as a joke between friends. Thereby, Sutton reasoned that the women could be using *bitch* (and *ho*) to search for identity and to emulate other women that they may admire (1995: 289).

In an effort to further investigate her findings and search for a replication or increase in the pattern of use, a speech community of Emory University undergraduate women will be investigated. To be clear, a speech community is defined as a group of people that share norms and expectations for language use. Looking at a specific aggregate of people who are aligned by some similarity can demonstrate how people develop and share ways of doing things, beliefs, values, and ways of talking (Eckert 2000: 35). Specifically, even though *bitch* and *slut* are commonly considered negative in meaning and use, some of the college women may be suspending the understood taboo categorization of *bitch* and *slut* and use it for their purposes. That is, the women may be using *bitch* and *slut* to demonstrate a close relationship, create an identity for themselves or exude an identity to align themselves with a broader group, among other possible motivations. I hypothesize that Emory college women are using *bitch* among one another in an effort to convey a friendly, close relationship to another woman. Further, though I do not believe that *slut* is being utilized in the same manner or to the same degree, I suspect that *slut* is following a similar path as *bitch*. I believe that *bitch* is being used more than *slut*, and that *bitch* is more likely to be used as a friendly marker than *slut*, though friendly use of *slut* may be occurring or increasing. Specifically, to investigate these hypotheses, I will respond to the following research questions:

Research Question(s):

1. Are *bitch* and *slut* being used among undergraduate women at Emory University?
2. How are *bitch* and *slut* used among a sample of college women? Are the words used to construct an identity or to demonstrate an intimate relationship?

I investigated these queries through two techniques: surveys and group interviews. The surveys ask participants to state their use and opinions about the words. Specifically, survey respondents

recorded how they themselves use *bitch* and *slut*, how they believe others use them, how their opinions of *bitch* and *slut* informs their use, their opinions of how other people who use the words, and whether or not they would use the words with certain people based on the other person's relationship to them. Additionally, I conducted group interviews in order to evaluate self-reported use and attitudes about the two words. During the interviews, opinions about the two words and how individuals perceive their use among their peers were collected. Both of the techniques measured the perception and self-reported use of *bitch* and *slut* among the sample of Emory college women, specifically to investigate if the words function as a relationship or identity index among these collegiate women.

Though *bitch* and *slut* have had primarily negative meanings in the past, whether referring to a woman's character or sexual promiscuity, it is possible that *bitch* and *slut* are being adopted for use within the sampled women's respective speech communities. This study will measure if this sample of Emory University² women is using the words as relationship or identity indexes among themselves and indexing close relationships between one another.

The theoretical background, chapter two, will provide an overview of information necessary to understand the study. The overview of various topics, including language as it relates and influences identity, gender, age, and sexuality as well as discussions of speech community and reclamation will provide a foundation and will survey background of linguistic areas that are applicable to and that inform this present study.

Chapter three details the techniques used to gather the information for this study. The chapter outlines why the particular techniques were chosen, how the techniques were organized and how the techniques were executed. Data analysis is also explained, providing information for

² Emory University will be referenced as 'EU' or simply as 'Emory' from this page further.

how the results in the following chapter were analyzed. Demographics are reported, giving insight into the participant's information and establishing foundation for the results.

Following the description of the methodology, chapter four discusses the results of the study. The results of each technique are separated and reported between *bitch* and *slut*. Following the survey results, the interview results are reported. As with the survey, the information includes both *bitch* and *slut*. Quotations and passages are reported and analyzed as data. After the results, the explanation of the data are explored and discussed.

Chapter five, the discussion, explains the implications of the results. The data is explored for depth and explanations are provided to give insight into the numbers and the quotations. The discussion is organized around four of the primary themes in the data and the theoretical implications of focus for the study: age, speech community, identity, and reclamation.

Chapter six concludes the study. The purpose of the study, the study measures, and the outcomes are summarized. Additionally, in the concluding abstract, the theoretical implications are briefly outlined. Finally, study limitations are reported and the paper concludes with directions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In this section, I discuss theoretical works and concepts as well as past studies by highlighting relevant topics that informed this project. I begin by discussing my foundational theoretical concept—the speech community model—for the study. I then explain how language interacts and contributes to identity work. After, I delve into demographic influences, specifically how language informs and is affected by gender and how language varies by use based on age. Finally, I discuss how individuals can attempt to reclaim language or adapt it for the purposes of a speaker or speech community.

Through the work of identity, language and gender, age as it relates to gender, taboos, slang, expletives and reclamation, the study will investigate the current climate of the words at Emory and how the sample of Emory college women are currently using the words, whether for their own purposes—that is, to construct and convey a specific identity or relationship—or in line with past negative definitions of the words.

Speech Community

The speech community model has been incredibly influential to sociolinguistic studies, primarily for its social analysis and social consideration of language. To be clear, a speech community is defined as a group of people who share a set of norms and expectations regarding the use of language, though its exact definition has been debated (Gumperz 1964: 42, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464). Since my study wishes to investigate general use among a sample of EU women, the speech community model is an ideal fit. Specifically, the speech community theory as motivated primarily by the focus on general language use rather than language for practice—that is, how communities use language rather than how those united in practice use language—is adapted as the foundation of this study.

Through the speech community model, many linguistic phenomena previously relegated to free variation are now understood as structured and informed by social characteristics (Bucholtz 1999: 207). Speaker's linguistic choices were previously understood to be variant and without structure. However, since the speech community model placed so much emphasis on the social aspect to language, patterns of use became clear. Speakers utilized shared expectations of language and could use it for their interactions and relationships, thereby creating patterns of use and social motivations for engaging certain linguistic features. Additionally, social categories were found to bear an influence on one's language use, like class, gender, and age, among many social characteristics.

After uncovering more patterns and conclusions, more speech community models were proposed. The different definitions placed more emphasis on membership or more on shared linguistic communication. However, each of the different definitions informed the speech community model for my study. In order to further elaborate on the speech community theory and to convey the applicability of it to this study, a background and evolution of the theory is necessary to understand.

Though the definition has evolved over time, every definition of speech community positions language as a primary criterion of community (Bucholtz 1999: 207). The variation in definition stems from what each theorist considers as 'shared'. The shared aspect of language in speech communities ranges from the linguistic system (Bloomfield 1933: 42-56), shared linguistic norms (Labov 1972, Guy 1988), the pattern of variation (Milroy 1992), or a set of sociolinguistic norms (Romaine 1982, Bucholtz 1999: 203). However, each of these shared emphases present their own limitations. It is argued that associating language use to practice versus language use for membership grants the speaker more agency, because they are

consciously utilizing language for their interactions. Below is a list of limitations composed by Mary Bucholtz (1999) in her work *Why be normal?*. In order to elaborate on the discussion and to provide additional explanation of the speech community model, I wish to address a few of these limitations in a discussion of speech community as it relates to my study.

Speech Community Limitations (Bucholtz 1999: 207)

1. Centralizing language: Its tendency to take language as central
2. Consensus: Its emphasis on consensus as the organizing principle of community
3. Central versus Marginal Members: Its preference for studying central members of the community over those at the margins
4. Group versus Individuals: Its focus on the group at the expense of individuals
5. Identity categories versus practices: Its view of identity as a set of static categories
6. Top-down versus bottom-up: Its valorization of researchers' interpretations over participants' own understandings of their practices.

I define speech community as a community united by shared linguistic features or shared linguistic expectations. Basically, I emphasize that individuals are using language for their own purposes, those purposes including creating an identity, establishing relationships, indexing a message to other members, etc. For my study, language is the primary focus and I am investigating how a sample of Emory college women uses language in their respective speech community. Further, I believe that the speech community preceded the language use, meaning the formation of the community contributes to shared expectations of language. However, I am utilizing the speech community model to understand the use of language in context, including non-linguistic behavior, environment, and interaction. I understand that the sampled individuals may be using language to compose their speech community, to reaffirm their speech community,

or to belong to their speech community. However, it is possible that behavior rather than language is motivating interaction, so—in order to avoid assumption of the influencing factor, either language or behavior—I first intend to investigate how the sampled Emory college women are using the words and then identify if their use is motivated by any specific practice.

I intend to compose a diverse sampling of Emory undergraduate women ranging between ages 18-24 through random selection for survey participation and intentional organization of the group interviews (Bucholtz 1999: 208). The random sampling measure is in place to ensure that any representatives of members that comprise the broader Emory community and smaller speech communities will be considered and thereby no members will be intentionally marginalized (Labov 1972, Rickford 1986, Milroy 1992, Morgan 1999). This is not to say that the broad college population is a cohesive speech community. The college community is riddled with differences in speech, in language use and in how they use language in their interactions. Nevertheless, outside of the control on age, no specific group of women will be foregrounded based on their characteristics. Therefore, many diverse experiences will be collected and differences among the groups will be investigated for influence on language use.

Further, my speech community model does not assume homogeneity and will not expunge differences. As stated above, I intend to sample from a broader community of Emory college women in order to encounter diversity and differences in demographics, practice, identities in the larger community and investigate the influence of those differences on patterns of language use. I intend to gather individual, self-reported accounts through the surveys and interviews and analyze if individual's language use reflects linguistic influences from above or if individuals are using language for the purposes or the practices of their own speech community. Acknowledging the individual in this way maintains agency and does not impose forces on

individuals from above, for I acknowledge that individuals may be consciously utilizing language for their purposes (Johnstone 1995, 1996, Johnstone & Bean 1997). I intend to investigate how the sampled speakers are using the target words for their own purposes. Therefore, the interaction of language and identity is imperative to explore in order to understand the speech community theory in terms of my study focus of identity work.

Identity and Language

Through interaction, individuals socially position themselves to others, and attempt to inform and create their own identity based on these relations (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Language is utilized in order to communicate the characteristics that comprise one's identity and in order to establish social positioning. These measures in identity conveyance and establishment are known as identity work. Identity work is defined as methods an individual engages in order to create a specific identity. In a thorough summary of different principles of identity work, Bucholtz and Hall (2005) discuss five principles of identity work: the principles of the emergence, positionality, indexicality, relationality, and partialness. Each principle represents a different method that individuals engage in order to comprise a certain identity.

The emergence principle states that language precedes identity, and identity is thereby viewed as an emergent product rather than a pre-existing source of linguistic practices, making identity, fundamentally, a social phenomenon. Speakers then attempt to establish identities through social acts and may use various mechanisms to communicate and demonstrate a specific identity (Ochs 1993). Simply said, language is what creates identity. However, this particular principle is relatively controversial in its claim, for claiming that language creates identity omits any other opportunity or outlet for creating identity. So, rather than the identity of a speaker being created by the language that they use, it should be considered that the speaker may choose

their language to convey a particular identity. Intentional use of language rather than language constructing an identity for a speaker grants the speaker more agency, more awareness over their own efforts. Nevertheless, the theory of linguistic stance, that is, the contextualization of one's position and thereby identity to an utterance, is elaborated on in the emergence principle and another principle, the positionality principle.

According to positionality, an identity emerges based on roles that individuals assume in a conversation and that identity encompasses macro demographic categories, culturally specific categories, and interactionally specific stances and roles. One example of positionality is evident in investigating subordination that occurs based on gendered roles and how language is utilized to combat such subordination. In order to combat gender and power inequalities in many realms of life, women attempt to level the inequality by relying on symbolic resources, such as language (Eckert 1989). Women are likely to use language to position themselves alongside men by demonstrating power through language.

Additionally, women may use those linguistic resources among one another, either to assert or relate their social roles among one another. A specific example of this work is investigated in Penelope Eckert's work at Belton High school (1995). As part of her study, Eckert interviewed middle-class European American 17-year-old girls and found that, due to the close community created through their school environment, the girls had access to very similar kinds of linguistic resources—that is, similar sayings, similar manners of pronunciation—to choose from and which they used in establishing identities for themselves and for establishing relations with other girls. However, by pronouncing a word that is different than the common pronunciation spoken by most of the girls, those girls (whom Eckert refers to as the most Burned of the Burnout girls) were able to position themselves as powerful and creative relative to other

women. This example serves to demonstrate that multiple positions may be linguistically demonstrated in a single interaction, whether it is through innovative structure or adapting a word or linguistic feature to participate in and establish their own practices.

The indexicality principle states that identity relations emerge in interaction through several related indexical processes, including: overt mention of identity categories and labels; implicatures and presuppositions regarding one's own or others' identity position; displayed evaluative and epistemic orientations to ongoing talk, as well as interactional footings and participant's roles; and the use of linguistic structures and systems that are ideologically associated with specific personas and groups (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 594). An index is a linguistic form that depends on an interactional context for its meaning, which may be associated with particular social categories, such as gender (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 594). Indexicality is a semiotic operation of juxtaposition, meaning one entity or event points to another (Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 378). The use of the word points to another item or relation, a relation different than what the word may be generally understood to mean. By saying or by using a word in a certain context, an individual could mean something different than the word is commonly understood to mean. For example, Connie C. Eble (1983: 59) found that using *slut* among women served as a term of affection, rather than the negative badge of promiscuity that is typically understood. This observation and this principle of identity work relates most directly to my present study, for I hypothesized that the sample of women would report using *bitch* and *slut* to index a close relationship, which departs from the typical understanding of the two as taboo epithets. Despite the fact that *bitch* and *slut* are commonly understood and primarily defined as negative, Emory college women could be using these negative words to index a close relationship with individuals that they consider friends. In this way, identify work is achieved through indexicality, for one

can use a certain word in a given situation in order to index a certain relationship or index a certain identity to those present.

This extends to how identity is a relationship phenomenon. Identities are intersubjectively constructed through several, often overlapping, complementary relations, including: similarity/difference, genuineness/artifice, and authority/delegitimacy (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 598-599). Individuals construct their own identity relative to the identity of those around them or relative to the relationship the individual has with others. One of the relational tactics utilized is adequation, focusing on similarities for interactional purposes. Similarities that are salient to or supportive of the relationship work or agenda of individuals are accentuated in order to create a cohesive individual and group identity. As interpreted in the context of my study, using a particular word as address or reference could function as that similarity and contribute to a group identity. With *bitch* and *slut*, EU women could try to suppress differences among themselves by adopting a word to refer to one another and index their relational perception to one another. Additionally, the use of *bitch* or *slut* could also qualify as distinction, especially since use of *bitch* and *slut* outside of their taboo understanding could set the speakers apart from broader society that understands the two words as taboo and inappropriate to use.

Further, adequation and distinction relate to covert and overt identity work. Borrowing from covert and overt prestige, labels for a phenomenon observed by William Labov and Peter Trudgill, covert identity work describes practices that are enacted to create solidarity in a particular group by using a non-standard form (ie. a taboo epithet). Overt identity work describes practices that involve linguistic norms to appeal to the larger society, to appeal to high class and well educated, respected individuals—respect as derived from or assigned to them based on their age, occupation, socioeconomic status, etc. In this way, the use of *bitch* and *slut* for covert

identity work could help concentrate Emory college women into a smaller group within the broader college community where the use in a specific manner is permitted. A group could use it for their purposes, purposes not allowed by those outside of the group, thereby distinguishing themselves from the rest of society. They are adequating themselves to achieve solidarity, a unified identity, that departs from upholding of understandings and norms of the words as malicious terms for women or to chide someone for their weaknesses.

All of the relational identity principles demonstrate how identities are constituted by context, as explained by the partialness principle. The principle states that any given construction of identity may be in part deliberate and intentional, in part habitual and hence often less than fully conscious, in part an outcome of interactional negotiation and contestation, in part an outcome of others' perceptions and representations, and in part an effect of larger ideological processes and material structures that may become relevant to interaction. It is therefore constantly shifting both as interaction unfolds and across discourse contexts (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 605). Because identity work is relational, it will always be partial—that is, one's identity is one part of a larger repository of identities or part of the identity evolves from the interaction—and produced through contextually situated and ideologically informed configurations of self and others (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 605). One can have agency, or the capacity to conduct identity work, and, with language, individuals create relationships and a coherent, communal identity through joint activities; individuals co-construct their environment and their relationships through their address forms, among other techniques (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 605).

In general, identity is anchored in interaction (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 607). Individuals compose their identities with others. Thereby, specific words may be utilized to index a certain relationship among all present. In consideration of each of the principles for identity work, *bitch*

and *slut* could be used by Emory college women to convey a certain kind of relationship, to index a degree of their relationship, and to fulfill their partial identity in the interaction.

However, in order to better understand this claim, it is important to explore how men and women use language and how gender can influence and can motivate language use.

Gender and Language

Studies of language and gender have uncovered many instances of gender influence on language use. Through language, individuals indicate different social group occupancies and thereby identities, including their gender identity (Holmes 1997). From initial sex assignment before birth through gender socialization, men and women are taught to use language in different ways (Graddol & Swann 1989). Robin Lakoff's work on *Language and Woman's Place* found defining characteristics in woman's language (1973). Lakoff found that women were likely to use more empty adjectives (e.g. *divine, adorable, gorgeous*), use tag questions (e.g. "you don't mind going to the movies, do you?"), apologize more, use more super polite forms (e.g. "would you mind...") and speak with hyper-correct grammar and pronunciation (e.g. "are you going to go to the /stɔr/?" versus "are you gonna go to the /stow/?").

Though Lakoff's work was criticized for its anecdotal evidence, for it was collected based on her observations at work, some of the findings and conclusions hold true. Through socialization, women are raised to behave in ways that are understood as prototypically feminine, which extends to language. Through the way they are spoken to, the feedback they may receive, and through interacting with their peers, women are raised to use stereotypically feminine forms of languages. Because women and men are socialized differently, these differences evolve into differences in opportunity. Women are not often given the same opportunities as men and thereby do not have access to as much social or financial capital. In order to combat this, women

utilize language to gain respect and demonstrate power, otherwise engaging language as symbolic capital, to achieve similar opportunities available to men. Indeed, women use language to symbolize different social identities and draw on its symbolic power to construct particular identities and to express conformity with or rejection of mainstream norms and values (Holmes 1997: 195, Eckert 1989, Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 378).

Language as symbolic capital and authority in the area of linguistic use is an avenue available to women to assert their influence in society (Holmes 1997: 199). Consequently, women may accommodate to the speech of others or, in some communities, women may be linguistically creative and have opportunities to subvert and challenge social norms (Holmes 1997: 199). Indeed, in many speech communities, women have been found to be more style sensitive and style shift more than men (Holmes 1997: 198, Bucholtz & Hall 2004: 278). This style adaptability is a way to appeal to the linguistic market-place, and serve as a reflection of the wide range of social identities women can index and hold (Holmes 1997: 198). In the typical roles reserved for them, women interact with many different types of people and women learn from and adapt to different encountered language uses and styles. In these various encounters, women may use standard forms to demonstrate authority or may use nonstandard forms to demonstrate mastery over trends and variant styles. Indeed, though past research—like Lakoff’s work—found that women used more formal forms to exert power, some attempts have been made to adopt more deviant forms of language to demonstrate power and control over their male counterparts. This speaks to linguistic creativity, a tactic that is also noticed in adolescents and their use of language.

Based on my hypothesis, linguistic creativity and linguistic capital are key concepts at play. If the sampled Emory college women are using *bitch* and *slut* outside of their common

negative meanings, they could be engaging a different approach to using the word, particularly if they are motivated to use *bitch* or *slut* to achieve specific identity or relational work. Further, *bitch* or *slut* could be functioning as linguistic capital in their interactions. If female participants report using *bitch* or *slut* in their speech communities, it could be regarded as modern or trendy. Using a typically taboo word could function as a power move, for engaging *bitch* or *slut* outside of their understood meanings conveys that no negative perception will influence the sample of Emory college women from using it for their own purposes.

In this way, similar to how women have been observed to use language, adolescents in particular use language to assert and explore new identities while navigating away from authority relative to them, particularly or including their parents.

Adolescence and Language

Just as gender can influence language use, age can bear influence on how an individual uses language. Children quickly learn to speak like their peers rather than their elders shortly after their childhood and begin style-shifting in response to social contexts at an early age (Chambers 2003: 175). Through increased contact with peers, children begin forming their own identity independent from their parents, and they do so by modeling their speech after individuals close to them. Due to their concentrated school environment, subcultures or peer groups form through the confined environment of school. Therefore, young individuals from fairly different backgrounds and different social spheres must find ways to identify with one another and create relationships through communication. They could use adequation identity work to foreground similarities and oppress differences that arise in their diversity. Their similarities help contribute and uphold their concentrated environment, a context that they continually use for identity work. With adequation, individuals work to demonstrate that they

belong, as members of a group whose habits and values are different than anything they otherwise know. Conversely, with distinction, individuals work to establish themselves as different.

Additionally, adolescents are especially susceptible to trends in the media, consuming linguistic patterns in popular music and on their favorite TV shows, entertainment that is created to appeal to individuals in their specific age groups. For example, the use of the term *YOLO* is a trend among young individuals. *YOLO*—which is an acronym meaning ‘you only live once’—was popularized after it was used in a rap song sung by Drake. Young individuals use this term around their friends and peers, who are likely to consume the same entertainment. If someone were to say *YOLO* in their conversation, and their interlocutor understands, that creates a general understanding which can contribute to a familiar, friendly tone and relationship. Further, using slang can reflect informality and modernity, ensuring that the individual is cool, creative, and up to date on linguistic trends and fashion. All of these techniques, those picked up from the media and those learned from their peers, are used to collect cultural capital within their networks and establish boundaries between their new adolescent groups, ‘us’, from parents and non-group members, ‘them’ (Williams & Thurlow 2005: 112).

To further create an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ relationship, young people break the rules of convention and (adult) society through use of slang as well as use of expletives. Slang, in particular, often finds its roots in small, group settings and accommodates the needs of the speakers in the group. Expletives are defined as obscene, exclamatory words and are categories of words that adolescents adopt in their speech for their interactions (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). Additionally, slang and expletives are considered prime symbolic assets in the

linguistic market-place and carry higher value during adolescent years. A more detailed discussion of slang, expletives, and taboo language is given below.

Since much of the cultural capital a young individual strives to earn is controlled by their peers, they must work hard to demonstrate a relationship or index similarity with their peers. Thereby, they adopt forms or manners of communication that best suit their needs, whether it be gaining access into a group or maintaining membership in a particular group. Further, when working to gain or achieve membership, covert prestige of words arises. Meaning of specific words measure very valuable to a respective group, and these words contrive covert prestige for being exclusive to the group, and helps in distinguishing the group from others. Additionally, the group, while set apart from the rest, is concentrated and connected through their use of a particular form. These inclusive and exclusive forms contribute to identity formation of the individuals involved and the individuals excluded. Using specific address and reference terms for in-group individuals and towards out-group individuals helps establish and bolster concentration of the group by indexing solidarity among those considered in the group and thereby excluding others.

Taboo, Slang, and Expletives

Though adolescents often employ slang in their idiolects and in their interactions, slang is an arsenal of lexicon and utterances that can be used by and among many speakers. Therefore, it is important to understand slang independent of age. Additionally, it is important to understand the difference and overlap of slang with other established categories, such as taboos and expletives. These categories and the fluidity of the categories are relevant to the study because it informs how the represented Emory college women are using and perceiving *bitch* and *slut*. Though recognized for their negative meanings, if *bitch* or *slut* cross their negative boundaries

into consideration as slang, which could speak to informality. Thereby, categorizing *bitch* and *slut* as slang could represent a larger trend, either in use or in perception of the words. However, in order to understand the ramifications of transitioning between slang, expletive, and taboo categories, it is important to understand the meaning of the categories themselves.

In the discussion above, of how adolescents use language, slang is explained as a form of language that is considered very informal. Slang is susceptible to creativity and is often used as a marker of distinction between individuals. As explained above, teenagers often utilize slang to create boundaries between themselves and their parents (Williams & Thurlow 2005: 116). However, slang is commonly utilized in identity work outside of adolescents to create a more informal identity in the midst of formal constraints or to create covert prestige—identifying a group apart from others and creating a united identity in the respective group. Slang is commonly preferred for its informality and is void of an overt negative charge associated with expletives. However, like slang, expletives can be utilized for identity work.

Expletives, otherwise referred to as profanity or swear words, is a subset of a language's lexicon that is considered offensive (Jay 1992: 2-3, Allan & Burrige 2009: 75-79). Expletives can be verbally communicated or expressed through body language (eg. in American English, gesturing one's middle finger towards someone). Additionally, profanity can be used in all forms, such as a reference or as an address, and is very emotionally charged. Because of the emotional charge of the words, expectations of use evolved, especially in relation to use by gender. Specifically, men are more likely to use curse words more than women (Wajnryb 2005: 133). Since women are more often encouraged and expected to exhibit emotions, men are implicitly forced to suppress any emotional expression. Instead of exhibiting physical signs of emotion, like crying, men are likely to use language to exhibit emotions. Therefore, men will

engage expletives to express their emotions, explaining a curse word out of anger, sadness, etc. However, most expletives are at women's expense, even if not directed to women (Wajnryb 2005: 148). The severity of curse words varies, and the severity could be knowingly engaged in order to demonstrate a point. The severity relates to intentionality, for the use of *bitch* or *slut* could be intentional, a point that will be explored in this study. Specifically, the sampled EU women could be using *bitch* and *slut* precisely for the severity of the word; they could be engaging the power of the word to convey a message in their interactions, either a message of power, of friendship, etc. Despite the fact that *bitch* and *slut* are commonly understood as negative words, hurled at women or weak men—thereby comparing them to women—the study participants could be claiming the power of the expletive for their own interactions.

Taboo words are words that deal with variable taboo topics, including references to body fluids, sex, organs, naming or addressing sacred beings, and names used for animals, all topics that are considered inappropriate to discuss in public (Allan & Burrige 2006). Taboo words are often marked as inappropriate or offensive and maintain their offensiveness through generations. For example, *bitch* and *slut* are taboo words that have evolved over time. *Bitch* is a word that referenced a female dog. The term evolved as a word to describe and degrade women who were perceived to be malicious and outspoken, thereby likening women to an animal. The use of the word has increased over the years, but possibly for different reasons, as will be discussed in following sections. The term *slut* has an unknown origin, but it dates back as early as the fifteenth century, meaning a “dirty, untidy woman” (Online Etymology Dictionary). The word has been hurled at women who are perceived to have low sexual morals and are considered promiscuous. As with *bitch* and *slut*, each taboo word has its own history, and these words motivate language change.

In order to best understand the tokens of research in my study, it is necessary to acknowledge the categories that *bitch* and *slut* occupy. The categorization informs the word, its common use, and may inform why women are using it. *Bitch* fits the category of taboo and expletive. As with many taboos and expletives, *bitch* exists as a taboo in nature, but functions as an expletive, for it demeans an advanced person to an animal and, at the same time, is emotionally charged. A man can call another man a *bitch*, trying to degrade the interlocutor and putting them down as weak by utilizing a word that references a female entity, thereby assuming the weakness of a woman to describe and police the weakness of a man. *Slut* is reserved for women, and used in an effort to suppress a woman's sexuality. The two words, given their taboo nature, are overwhelmingly negative and not often utilized for daily interaction between women.

Despite their negative tones, speakers may attempt to reclaim the words. Additionally, if *bitch* or *slut* were to cross categories and qualify as slang, this consideration could speak to informality. Therefore, the concept of reclamation is important to consider in order to see how words like expletives or taboos, despite their negative history, can be used for and best serve the speaker's purposes and possibly transform into informal slang.

Reclamation

Reclamation is an effort to adopt words for a speaker or speech community's own purposes. Especially if the meaning of a word is considered negative and demeans a group through its use, the group may attempt to change the power of the word in their favor. Many efforts have been made to reclaim certain words used against certain groups in favor of the respective group. The present study explores the relationship of *bitch* and *slut* with reclamation, specifically if the sampled population is accessing reclaimed forms of *bitch* and *slut*. However,

reclamation is a broad theory that has been engaged by various groups for various words, which are necessary to explore in order to understand the complexity of reclamation as a process.

One example of reclamation is found in *queer*. Once used to degrade gay men and lesbians, the word *queer* has been adopted by gay men and lesbians to reconceptualize sexual identities, avoid the exclusionary effects of *gay* and *lesbian* as well as change the binary view of sexuality (Brontsema 2004: 4). *Queer* creates a broader outlet that essentialized categories like *gay* and *lesbian* do not, since such categories are bound to marginalize those who do not identify with the categories. However, by recognizing its use for identity in the gay community, it can be recognized as a more inclusive term for sexual identities (Brontsema 2004:4). Identifying as *queer* avoids stringent categories and allows one's sexuality to be their own. Therefore, using *queer* in this way acts as a unifying mechanism for gay men and lesbians, or anyone that identifies with the community.

However, *queer* is still both opposed and supported for its pejoration. Though *queer* still faces opposition, if gay men and lesbians continue to convert the negative power to a point of pride, reclamation may be more successful in the future. Further, reclamation attempts of *queer* have persisted due to generational experiences. Presently, many youth, especially though who identify as *queer*, have not experienced *queer* as a homophobic epithet and therefore can use it with pride (Brontsema 2004: 8). This pride can help extinguish the negativity of *queer*, neutralize its potency, and function as a neutral term, forgotten of its past, painful use (Brontsema 2004: 8).

Another example of reclamation attempts is *nigger*. *Nigger*, derived from and often interchangeable with *negro*, became semantically distinguished around the twentieth century (Brontsema 2004: 7). *Nigger* further evolved into a racial epithet hurled specifically at African Americans. However, regard for *nigger* as anything but a racial epithet disregards its complex

history and African American's relationship with the word (Brontsema 2004: 7). Such a relationship has altered *nigger* to *nigga*, which is used for in-group relations. Altering *nigger* to *nigga* in the African American community has made *nigger* an out-group term, thereby disassociating *nigger* from overt negativity directed towards African Americans. As an in-group term, *nigga* can function as index of solidarity and closeness between African Americans.

Taking linguistic ownership of *nigger* can attempt to defy racial subordination and rather achieve racial unity (Kennedy 2002: 47; Brontsema 2004: 7). However, even though transformed to *nigga* for their communities, *nigger* still maintains its negative meaning outside of an African American speaker and their speech communities. However, this demonstrates one of the broader issues with reclamation: it is incredibly context dependent. Though achieving adoption in certain contexts, reclamation is a broad term and a represents a broader process.

The reclamation process is a difficult one to achieve, and incurs much debate: what does it mean to be reclaimed? Is suspension of broad, understood negative meanings of the word for own use reclamation, or must there be wide acceptance and understanding of a different definition in order to be considered successfully reclaimed? With the examples of reclamation and these questions in mind, reclaimed forms of *bitch* and *slut* are possibly being observed. As referenced earlier, Sutton's study—where a few women regarded the use of *bitch* as friendly or joking—considered the use as a possible signal of solidarity, a search for identity among those of the same gender, or an attempt to imitate other women (Sutton 1995: 289). Women could be doing this in response to dominant, hegemonic cultural forms and to achieve a feeling of control and belonging among fellow women. In trying to construct a new societal identity that does not conform to traditional feminine practices, women are resisting norms in an effort to redefine them (Sutton 1995: 290).

The trends observed by Sutton (1995) show that women may be using stronger expletives and negative addresses, specifically *bitch* and *slut*, reserved for their gender to demonstrate a cohesive identity and liken themselves to other women, possibly to achieve a similar identity to other women. Further, while men have words to identify with one another, specifically *dude* and most recently *bro*, women lack words for their own addresses and own relationship work (Kiesling 2004). Women could utilize reclamation in order to create an arsenal of words that can be used to identify with one another and index a certain relationship with other women. The reclamation efforts could transform an insult into an index of familiarity.

As explained in the introduction, following the first wave of feminism, the use of *bitch* and *slut* grew exponentially. The words were hurled at women who, for the first time in American history, rose up together and overtly spoke their minds and fought for rights. Women were called *bitches* for speaking out, for appearing malicious and unruly, while *slut* remained a shameful badge of promiscuity (Bayley 2011, Wajnryb 2005: 136-137). The understanding of *bitch* and *slut* as insults continued, and functioned as efforts to shame and suppress women. However, near the 1960s, women began to use the word, but with a different purpose. If men and other adversaries of women's rights were going to accuse them and attempt to put them down for being powerful and independent, why not take pride in that accusation of acting powerful and independent? By calling themselves and other women *bitch* and *slut*, they were celebrating their power and unity as strong, independent women.

In my study, using the negative definition of *bitch* and *slut* could allow identity work for individuals and groups. The words could be used to index a close relationship, as found in indexicality and relational principles among other identity work efforts. Further, gender and age could contribute to this use of the words, and when the demographics intersect, individuals could

be trying to position themselves as close to one another. Finally, reclamation should be considered—especially in terms of adopting the words—for it is possible that, though college women may not be actively partaking in reclamation, *bitch* and *slut* may have already been reclaimed to a degree that is conducive to their use.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

In order to measure the use and perception of the terms *bitch* and *slut* by Emory college women, I designed an interdisciplinary, two-tiered methodology. In the first part of the study, 70 surveys were distributed, and in the second part, 5 group interviews were conducted. Both tasks solicited responses from undergraduate college women, aged 18-24. The rationale for collecting the specific demographic information is elaborated below. Following the sample population description, the specific methodology for each of the data collection techniques is described.

Sample Population

Because I am researching the use of *bitch* and *slut* for identity construction among college women, I targeted my population to Emory undergraduate women between the ages of 18-24. The breakdown of the participant's information by research technique is included in Table 2 and Table 3. The goal of the methodology and techniques described below is to identify if a pattern of *bitch* and *slut* use is occurring, specifically for individual and group identity construction. The methodology is designed to measure self-reported strategies of identity work through language, specifically through the use or lack of use of *bitch* and *slut*.

The survey measure collected the sample information, including age, class year, race, hometown and sorority affiliation, and ensured that each participant met the research requirements. The specified demographic information is considered as factors of influence on use. I posit that the use of *bitch* and *slut* is directly or indirectly proportional to age. Specifically, older individuals may not use the words as often as younger individuals. I believe that, as older individuals, those between the class years of 2014-2015, approach the end of their undergraduate and prepare for future aspirations, they eliminate any conceivable taboo word from their everyday language. Conversely, young individuals, those between class years of 2016-2017, may

use the term in order to demonstrate a certain type of identity or to act as an in-group term and contribute to a group identity (Williams & Thurlow 2005: 112, 118). Similarly, ethnicity was also suspected to act as a motivation for use of either *bitch* or *slut* (Johnson 2012). Different ethnicities could use it for different purposes or those of one race could attribute the use to another race, thereby enacting implicit identity construction and creating an us versus them relationship.

Further, like ethnicity, region of hometown could influence use of *bitch* or *slut* (Clooper & Pisoni 2008). The use of the two words occurs for identity work among women of the same region, for these words act as an in-group reference and conveys a close relationship. Conversely, the words could be attributed to people of certain regions based on an assumed identity or perceptions of certain regions and thereby residents of that region. I suspect that since some areas are more conservative or more liberal, that could influence the use of taboo terms for different means. Also, just as regions use different words to describe the same concept, individuals from various regions could use *bitch* and *slut* for different reasons.

Finally, among all of these cultural affiliations and demographic information, sorority affiliation was explored as a possible influence on the use of *bitch* or *slut*. Since my research is primarily investigating how the words *bitch* and *slut* are used by a sample of Emory college women for identity construction, sororities were ideal communities to investigate. Since they are united under similar Greek letters, I believe that Emory sorority women could be trying to convey a close relationship to their sisters by using the words *bitch* and *slut*. The words could be suspended of their taboo connotation in order to achieve a cohesive group identity or to convey a level of closeness. Further, this specific use among their sisters could eliminate any differences in demographics and could index a close relationship and strong trust. In order to investigate all

of these possible influences, I carried out two techniques, surveys and interviews, explained below.

20.8	Average Age
2015 (2014.8)	Average Class Year
Yes: 42% No: 58%	Average Sorority Affiliation

Table 2: Demographic breakdown of Survey Participants

20.4	Average Age
2014	Class Year (Median)
Group 1 (3)—100% Group 2 (3)—100% Group 3 (3)—33% Group 4 (2)—0% Group 5 (3)—0%	Sorority Affiliation

Table 3: Demographic Breakdown of Interview Participants

Survey

My survey on *bitch* and *slut* use was based on Kiesling's (2004) survey that measured the use of *dude*. Using Kiesling's prompts as a model, *bitch* or *slut* was introduced and various questions were asked to measure the participant's use and perception of the two words.

I conducted the surveys near and in a computing center adjacent to a dining hall. The space had high occupancy turn over and, since it was located near a dining location close to and

frequented by undergraduates, was primarily populated by undergraduate students. The surveys were administered through random selection. Specifically, I approached every third female student that was seen or walked into the computing center. After requesting participation and following the individual's agreement to complete the survey measure—after reading the informed consent document—the participant was given a paper copy of the instrument to complete (See Appendix A).

Following the participant's self-reported demographic information, the survey measure began with the word *bitch*. Eight questions were compiled in order to measure the self-reported use and perceptions of the word. The first two questions, detailed below, were a measure of personal frequency of *bitch* use, a report ranging from 'Many times a day' to 'Never'. The only difference between the first two questions was the form of use, either as an address or a reference. To be clear in terminology, an address means speaking directly to someone and a reference means speaking about someone. Question one inquired how frequently the respondent used the word as an address, which read, "How often do you use this term as an address term to other women?" Question two asked about instances when the term was used as a reference, saying, "How often do you use this term as a reference term to other women?" The third and fourth questions were formatted to record the frequency of use in regard to the speaker-addressee relationship and the gender of the addressee ("Using the table below, rate how often (if at all) you would use the specific term as an address/reference with each of the given types of conversation partner"). The likelihood of use based on relationship and gender could be ranked on a scale of one to five. The last four questions were free response and inquired about why the respondent used the words *bitch* or *slut*, whether the terms were positive or negative and if the words were associated with specific types of individuals or communities. Following these

questions, the same prompts were listed to measure the subject's use and perception of the word *slut*. In total, the subjects completed 16 questions (8 questions about each target word, *bitch* and *slut*), inquiring about if, how often, with whom, and why they use the words *bitch* and *slut* as well as their perception of other women's use of the two words (see Appendix A).

Following the completion of the survey administration and collection of 70 surveys, I compiled and entered survey responses into a data spreadsheet. The frequency scale included in the first question was coded based on the measure of the response (Many times a day, 5 to Never, 1) and the free response questions were coded for key words in the participant's response. For example, if a response to the question "Why do you use this term?" read "Depends on the context, either to joke with friends or to express dislike", the phrase was coded for CONTEXT DEPENDENT, JOKE and DISLIKE. In response to the question that inquired about the kind of person who uses it frequently, any mention of use among friends for affection was coded as ENDEARMENT. Further, the responses to the question inquiring whether *bitch* or *slut* was positive, negative or both, the codes were POSITIVE, NEGATIVE, BOTH, and ~BOTH. An additional code, ~BOTH, was added due to the amount of responses that reported both contingent on context. The codes grouped the various responses into similar categories and aided in organization of the data. The spreadsheet was used for analysis by averaging and investigating patterns for frequency and context of use as well as for the subjective opinions of the words *bitch* and *slut* detailed in the free response questions. After coded and cleaned for vacancies in responses, the corpus was uploaded into SPSS, a statistic calculation software. In the program, I conducted frequency tests to measure the count of responses, ranging from 5 (Many times a day) to 1 (Never). Additionally, I calculated crosstabs by comparing each of the demographics to the average frequency and to the responses based on a close relationship of *bitch* and *slut*.

Interviews

The other task I conducted for this study was group interviews. The two techniques, the survey and the interviews, were intentionally paired together. The survey gathered quantitative figures of self-reported frequency. The free response questions on the survey granted some insight into respondent's opinions and perceptions of motivations to use and associations with the words. Interviews gathered more in depth reported opinions, coded as data, about how *bitch* and *slut* materialized in interactions.

A group interview format was chosen in order to investigate how tokens could be used or perceived as terms of address or reference. Specifically, individuals could respond differently or could voice different opinions due to the presence of others. Further, since the units of analysis are terms that could be found offensive, pairing familiar participants creates a more comfortable environment conducive to conversation about *bitch* and *slut*. Finally, since I wanted to tap into speech communities, pairing individuals who identified as friends or were familiar with one another may compose one speech community and may offer insight into their shared expectations of *bitch* and *slut*.

To compose the interviews, individuals were contacted and recruited from a convenience sample of individuals previously known by the researcher. In total, four groups with three individuals each and one group with two individuals were organized. The subjects were female and current Emory undergraduates. The individuals that made up a single group were contacted in groups of three or two and, with their unanimous consent to participate, organized a date to meet and conduct the interview. Individuals in the groups were matched based on their relationship to one another, age, and sorority involvement in order to investigate those possible influences on the use of *bitch* or *slut*. Though additional demographic information was collected

in the survey, including race and hometown, such information did not influence the interview group organization.

As mentioned above, one of the factors of interest was sorority affiliation. One group was composed of sisters from the same sorority, another group was composed of women from different sororities, another group had only one sorority woman, and the two other groups were made up of non-Greek individuals. While various cultural or group affiliations could influence *bitch* and *slut* use, the researcher organized the groups by sorority affiliation in order to identify if sorority women communicated specific opinions of *bitch* and *slut* use when around their own sisters or when around sisters of other sororities as opposed to women who were not in sororities. If *bitch* and *slut* are used for creating group identities, sororities as groups of only women united by similar values could engage the two words to convey their close relationship. Further, organizing the groups by sorority affiliation could identify if one sorority comprised a speech community or if sampled sorority women in general shared an expectation of *bitch* and *slut* use, thereby identifying the sample sororities as a cohesive speech community.

I moderated every group interview by asking questions from the interview schedule and fielding questions and comments that occurred during the interview conversation (See Appendix B). I preceded each interview with an explanation of the study while the subjects read the informed consent documents. After the subjects were finished reading the informed consent materials, I collected verbal consent from all the participants. The interview then began by asking questions about general language use and attitudes, transitioned to comparison questions to instigate more informal conversation, and ended with specific questions about *bitch* and *slut* (see Appendix B).

The interview schedule contained questions that were designed to gather an idea of how

women perceive bitch and slut, how the women believe others use the words, and how the words function and exist among their peers. The initial, general questions inquired about how the individuals have experienced different languages or accents and any response they may have received in relation to their own accent or language. For example, subjects were asked to recall occurrences when they experienced a reaction to their language or when they noticed a linguistic feature that they had never encountered before and to explain their reaction and perception of the individual who used the feature. These questions were included in order to get the participants to think broadly about language. Since interviews about language inevitably cause the participants to be aware of their language, broad topics help distract attention from their own use and direct the conversation about language as a broader topic.

The comparison questions asked the subjects to consider the difference between related entities or to disambiguate specific topics. Comparison questions were included after the general prompts in order to encourage conversation and to distract from the interview setting. This is important because, if individuals are made aware of their language use, their opinions may be influenced and not entirely accurate. The first comparison question asked the participants to consider the difference between a *fight* and an *argument*. The last comparison question introduced the idea of gendered address and reference terms by asking about the difference between *dude* and *bro*. That question was then used to transition into a *bitch* and *slut* specific discussion by suggesting and elaborating on gendered words used exclusively between women. Overall, the interview inquired broadly about language and slang as well as about their opinions and use of *bitch* and *slut* for the study. Participants were asked about how they felt about the words, whether or not they used the words, how and when they used the words, their motivation for using the words, and their perception of other's use of the words.

The interviews took place in meeting rooms in the main library. The interviews were recorded on a laptop on Garageband as well as a phone through AudioMemos and took between 32-58 minutes with an average of 43 minutes to complete. Following the recording, the interviews were transcribed by the researcher for analysis of the participants' use and opinions of the terms. The transcription conventions can be referenced in Appendix B.

The qualitative data from transcriptions was uploaded and analyzed in the qualitative data analysis software MaxQDA. MaxQDA is a program that aided analysis allowing me to highlight specific comments recorded in the transcription and to organize them under tags, similar to the codes used for the surveys. Specific comments about the use of *bitch* or *slut* could be organized in these tags in order to consolidate similar statements of data. Additionally, demographic information and sorority affiliation was taken into account. The interview and demographic data were then compared to the survey corpus data in order to reveal comprehensive and broad observations of the terms. Interview comments about frequency and survey reported frequency were compared, as well as responses to the subject's perception of use detailed in the interviews and written on the surveys. Analysis will look for parallels in information between the two techniques that lend insight into how or if *bitch* and *slut* are being used for identity construction between college women. Below is a breakdown of the interview groups, with a total of 14 participants.

In the proceeding chapter, the results by the specific methodology are discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of the study. As described in the previous chapter, two techniques—surveys and interviews—were utilized in order to measure the perception and use of *bitch* and *slut* among the sample of Emory college women. As explained in the methodology, I ran the data through the program SPSS to investigate possible patterns in the survey data. For the interviews, I utilized the program MaxQDA and organized quotes to recognize patterns in participant's comments. Below is an overview of the findings.

The discussion of the findings is divided between survey and interviews. The survey results are reported first, organized by average report of address and reference use, by address and reference use based on relationship, then by an explanation of the short answer responses are explored. The interviews are divided between *bitch* and *slut* in order to fully discuss their respective reports. Further comparison and a more detailed discussion of all of these findings will be explored in the following chapter.

Survey

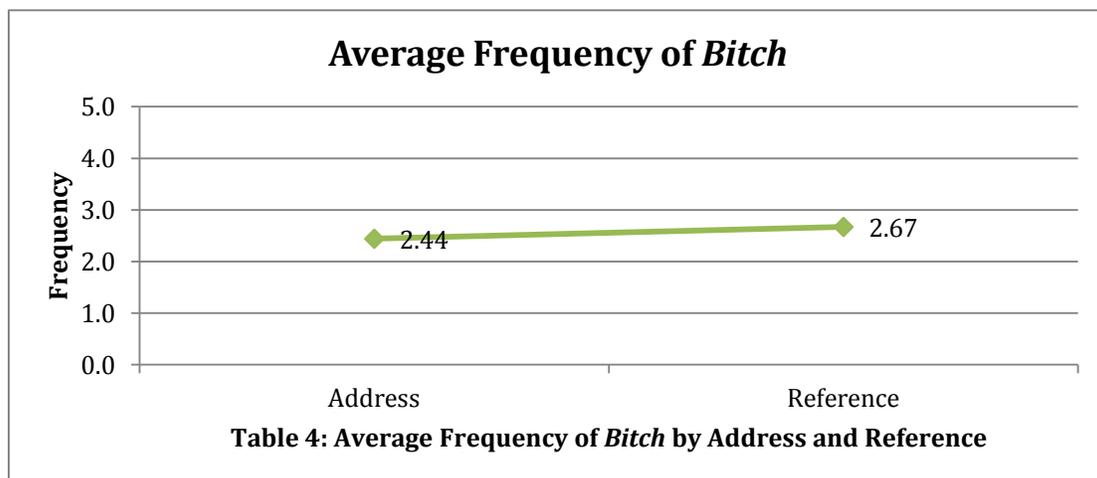
Overall, the reported use on the surveys was relatively low on the scale of use. The reports thus suggest that the sample of EU women is not using *bitch* and *slut* that often in interactions. However, the use of *bitch* and *slut* among close friends demonstrates an interesting trend, specifically that it consistently measures higher than use among any other relationship.

The survey measure requested specific demographic information from each participant, including age, class year, race/ethnicity, hometown, and sorority affiliation. When all of the demographic characteristics were statistically compared to the frequency of use, by address, reference, and by each relationship, none of the features were statistically significant. However, demographics may not have measured as significant because of the small sample size. Age,

gender, hometown, and race were all cited as influences on use of *bitch* and *slut* in the interviews. Further investigation into these cultural groups and a larger sample size is necessary in order to determine specific influence on use. However, based on the specific findings, *bitch* and *slut* were reported as used to some degree by most of the Emory college women represented in the study, regardless of demographics or sorority involvement, and their perceptions of *bitch* and *slut* are similar despite personal differences.

Further, when reviewing the frequency of use and use by relationship, slight patterns became apparent.

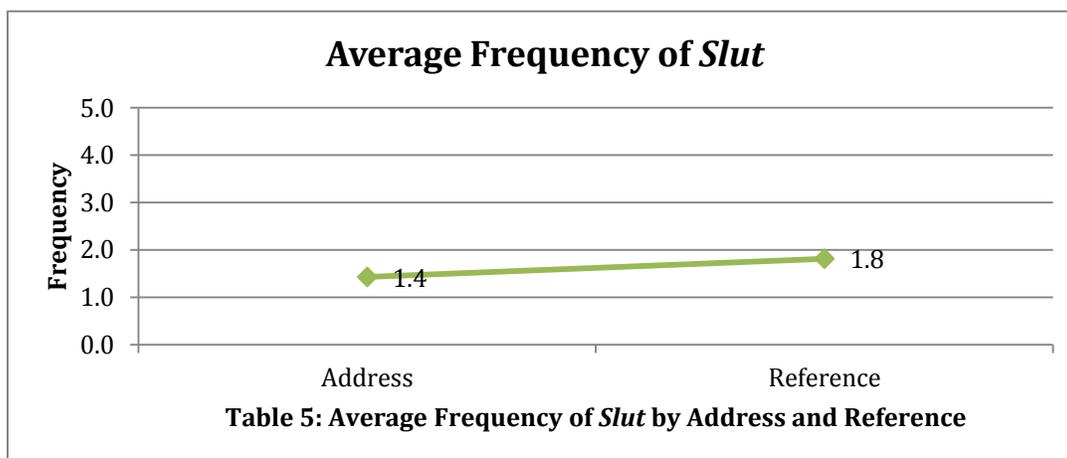
Frequency of Address and Reference



As displayed in Table 4, the responses to the first survey question—about the general frequency of *bitch* as an address and a reference—averaged at about 2.44 and 2.67, respectively. The graph demonstrates that, on average, the participants used *bitch* more as a reference than as an address. Using *bitch* more as a reference than an address indicates that *bitch* might not be engaged in direct address but rather by referring to someone as *bitch*. The address use, on the scalar measure of 1 to 5, measured as ‘hardly ever’ at 2 and reference use measured around ‘once a week’ at 3. Additionally, the median of use by address is 2, and the median by reference is 3,

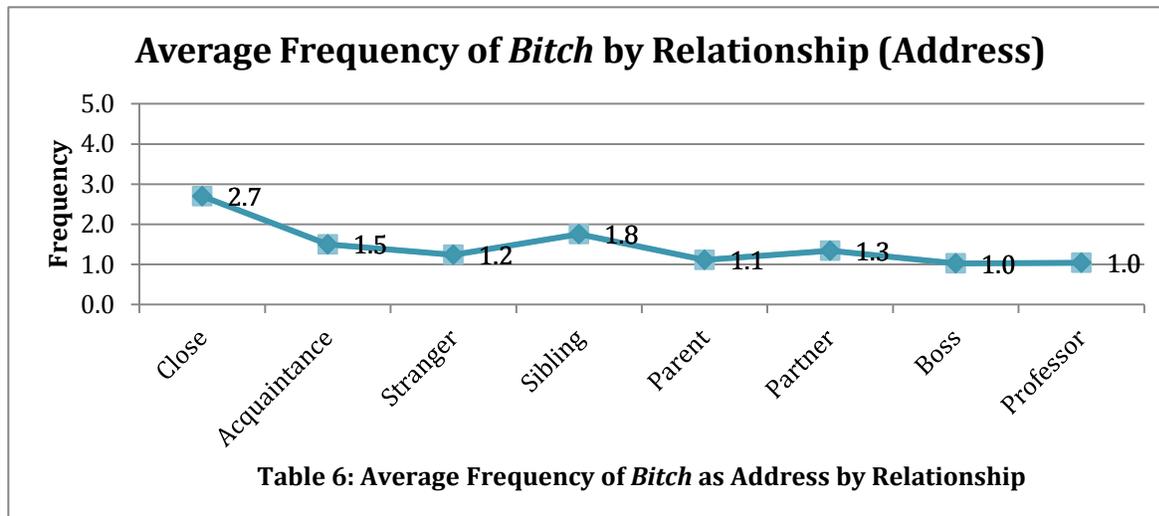
and the mode for both is 2. Though, overall, the statistics report the average use as minimal, the median for reference reports halfway on the scale, suggesting a moderate use in day-to-day interaction. However, in investigating use by relationship, it varies when the term is used as either an address or a reference.

As for *slut*, charted in Table 5, responses to the general frequency of *slut* as an address and a reference averaged at about 1.4 and 1.8, respectively. In other words, *slut* was reported, on average, to use more as a reference, though the general use measured between ‘never’ to ‘hardly ever’. When the survey participants do report using *slut*, they are more likely to use refer to a



fellow college woman as a *slut* than to address her as a *slut*. This could testify to the negative meaning of the word, and speak to the common function of the word, in observing a woman’s promiscuity. The negativity of the word could be so strong that the sample of women are likely not to address one another *slut*, but rather refer to promiscuity, if they use *slut* at all. This suggests that *slut* creates distance or requires distance to use, since it creates or conveys a negative identity. The median of use reaffirms the means, for by address is 1.0, and the median by reference is 2.0. The mode for address is 1.0, while the mode for reference measures 2.0.

Address and Relationship



The reported use of address by relationship varied depending on how close the speaker considered their addressee. As visible in Table 6, use with “close friends” is higher than any measure. Of all the relationships, “close” and “siblings” had the highest means, 2.7 and 1.8. “Acquaintance”, with a mean of 1.5, was the third highest, with all other relationships lower than 1.3. Further, the median of close relationships, 3.0, was higher than each other relationship frequency of use, at 1.0. Thereby, when the survey participants use *bitch* as an address, they are using it among their close friends. Due to how high the report with “close friends” is compared to use based on other relationships, this demonstrates that a close relationship may be conducive or necessary to using *bitch* or *slut*.

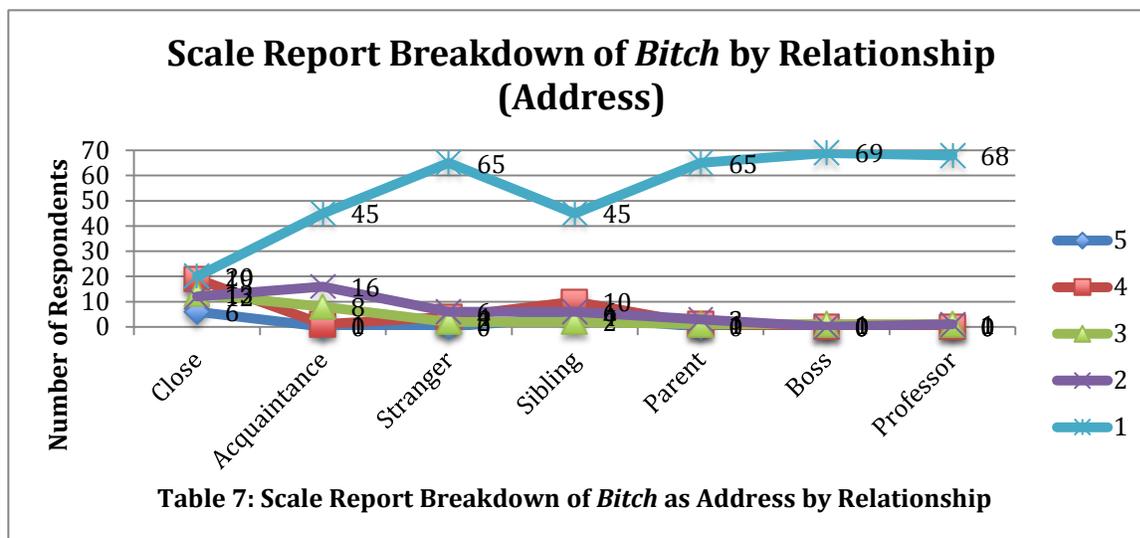
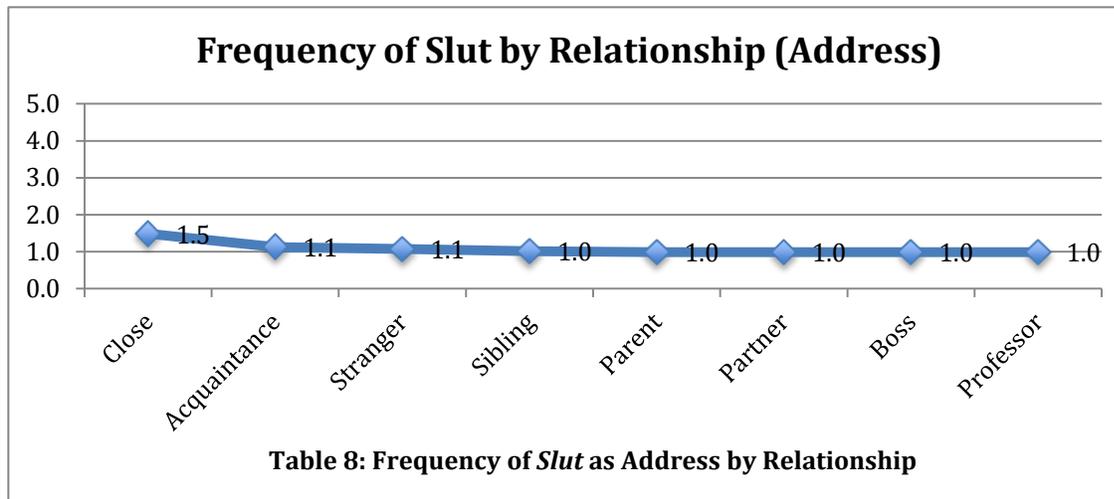
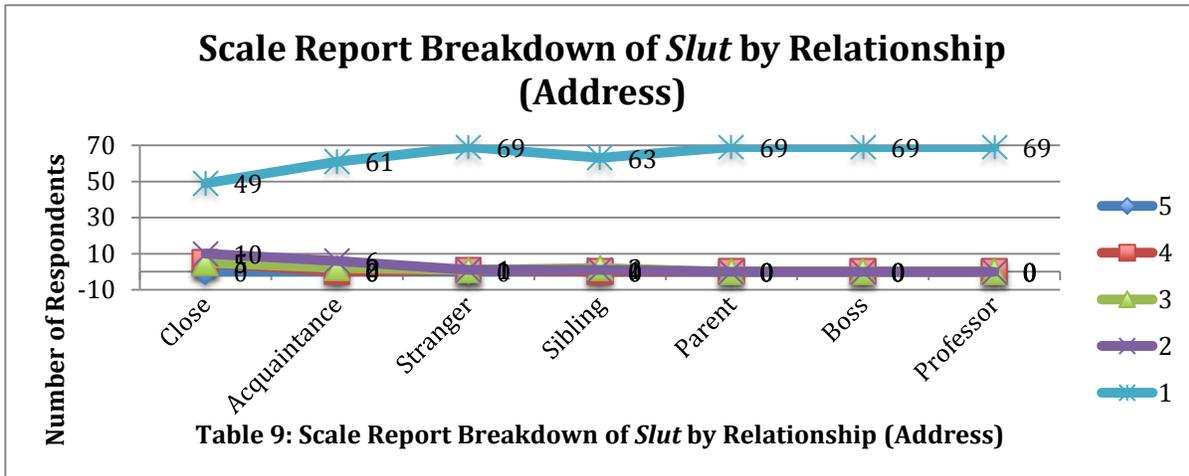


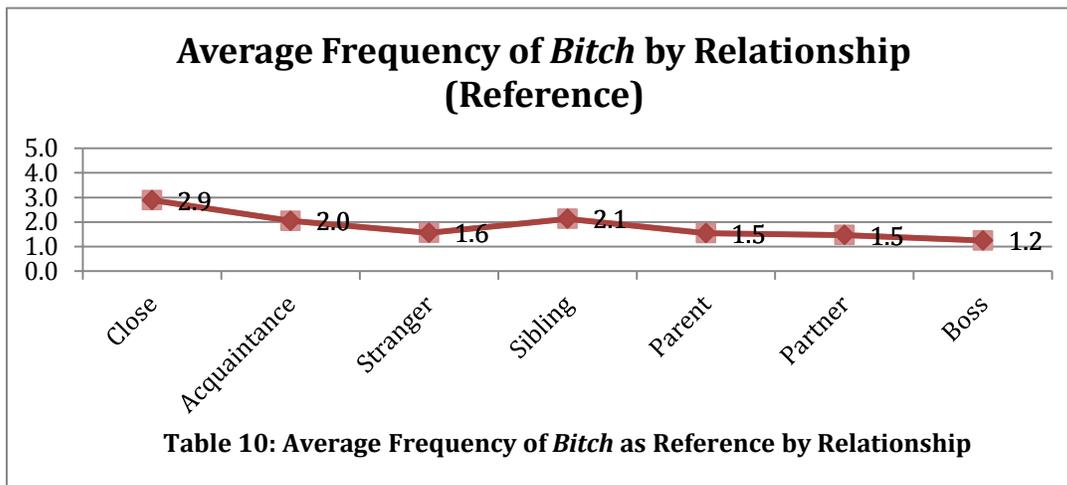
Table 7 further supports relationship as a requirement for use of *bitch*. Table 7 plots how often the survey codes for frequency or 5, 4, etc. was reported based on the relationship of the addressee to the speaker. When addressing someone whom the surveyed participant considers to have a “close relationship”, the highest frequency of use is 1.0 with 20, followed immediately by 4.0 at 19. This demonstrates that either the surveyed participants are using *bitch* in their daily interactions or they are hardly using it at all. In consideration of reclamation, it is often recognized that, when reclamation is in process, either use is opposed or supported by speakers (Brontsema 2004: 5-6). This pattern of support or opposition is evident in the pattern of use. Since the sample reported that *bitch* is either used in daily interactions or it is not used, this could demonstrate acceptance and positivity or maintenance of negativity and opposition. Further, based on the reports of use, reclamation is not actively on the minds of participants. Thereby, participants could be accessing an already reclaimed form of *bitch* to use for their identity work. Such a pattern is indicative of adoption and engagement for identity, though such reported use of *bitch* is limited to the sample. However, reclamation is not entirely in effect because *bitch* is still largely regarded or seen as negative in particular usage and it was often reported as ‘hardly ever’ used due to persistent negativity.



Survey responses for *slut* demonstrated similar patterns, though at an overall lower frequency. The reported use of address for *slut* by relationship demonstrated a slight pattern depending on how close the speaker considered their addressee. In Table 8, all of the relationships are plotted by address use. Of all the relationships, “close friends” have the highest mean, at 1.5. An “acquaintance”, with a mean of 1.1, was the second highest, with all other relationships lower than 1.0. The median of each relationship is 1.0. Therefore, a close relationship could be conducive to using the word as an address. The sample of EU women is more likely to address one another as *slut* if they already have rapport. The close relationship could indicate understanding, in that the address understands not to assume negativity in the address. However, the use still measures at ‘hardly ever’, suggesting that the population rarely uses *slut* in their interactions. Table 9 reinforces the reported pattern of minimal use, for the most frequent response was ‘never’; though in the “close” category, ‘never’ was followed by ‘hardly ever’ then ‘once a day’.

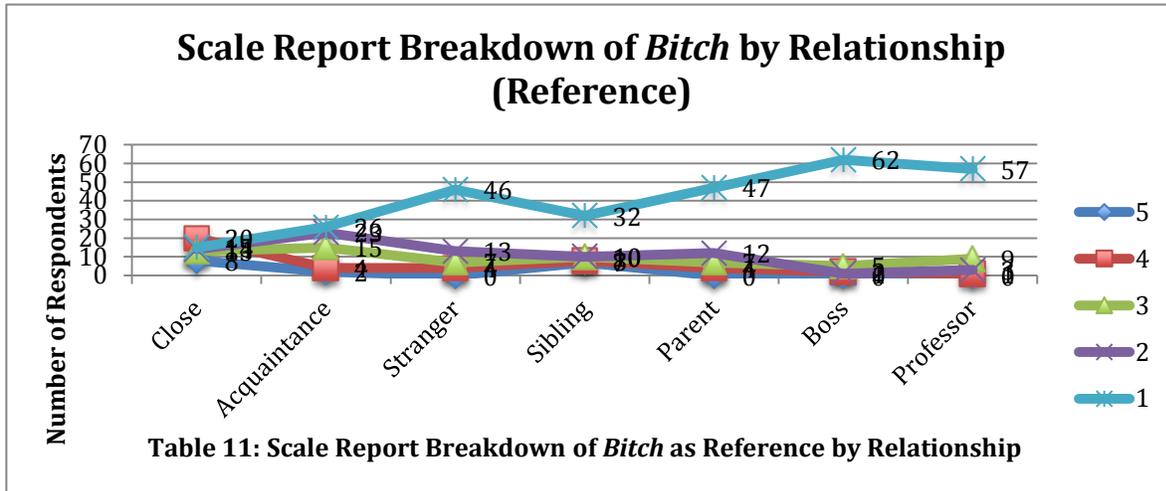


Reference and Relationship

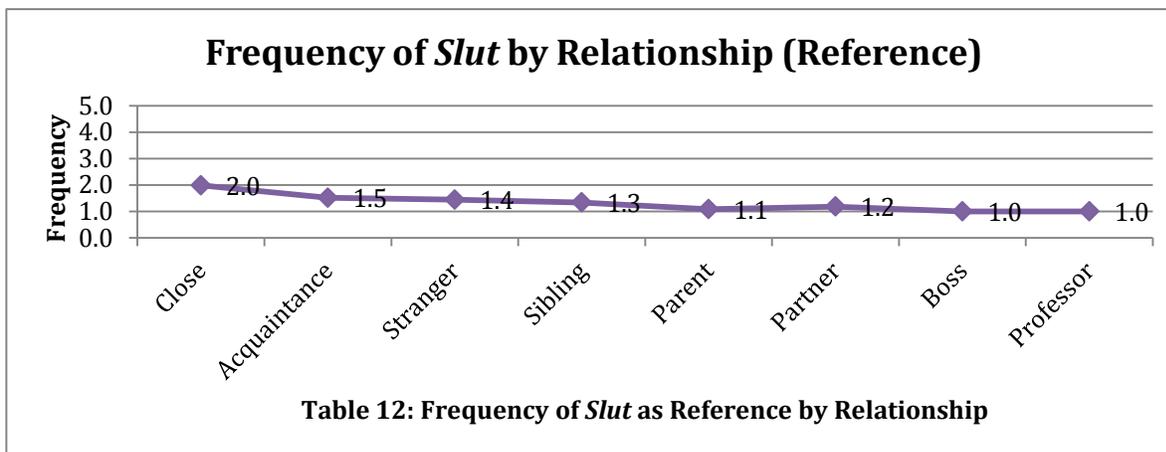


As observed in average frequency of use, *bitch* as a reference measured slightly higher than self-reported use as an address. The average, plotted in Table 10, by “close” relationships is 2.9, followed by in reference to a “sibling”, 2.1, then referring to an “acquaintance” at 2.0. Each other relationships averaged at under a 1.5. The median is highest by “close” relationships at 3.9, then “acquaintance” at 2.0 and “sibling” at 1.5. Thereby, participants used *bitch* as a reference among close friends at least once a day, almost two points higher than the second highest figure. When specifically investigating reference use by close relationship, the mode is 4.0 followed by 1.0, the opposite measure by address. In Table 11, it can be observed that 4, ‘many times a

week’, proceeds all other measures solely among close friends, while each other relationship is overwhelmingly reported as “never” used.

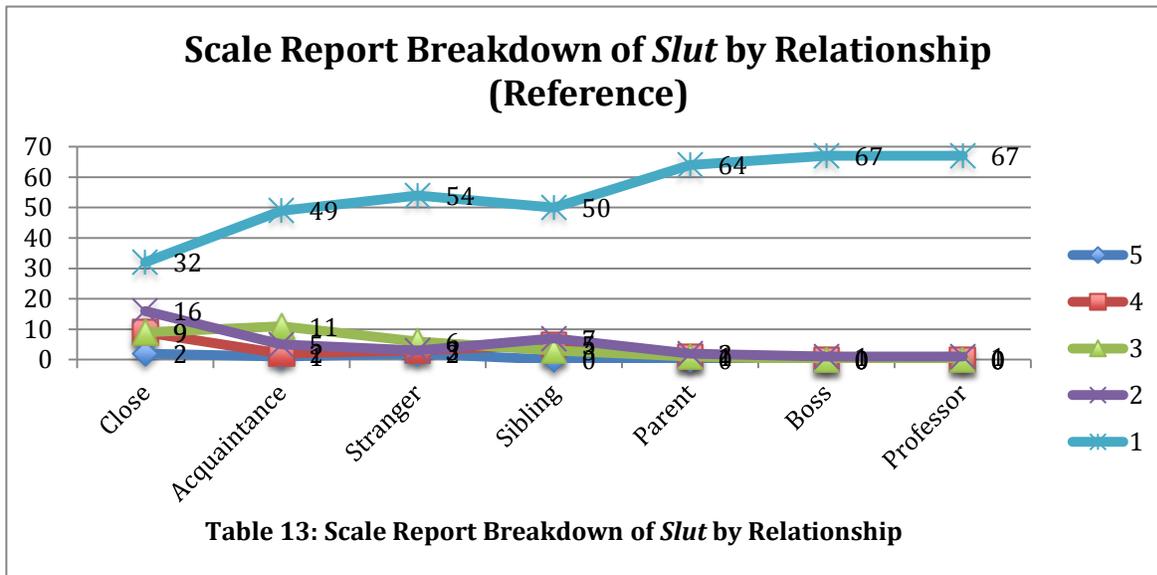


Slut as a reference measured slightly higher than use as an address, based on the data as displayed in Table 12. The average by “close relationships” is 2.0, followed by in reference to an “acquaintance”, 1.5, then referring to a “stranger” at 1.4. Each other relationship averaged at under a 1.3. Thereby, the self-reported use is highest at ‘hardly ever’ among friends than any other relationship, though still minimal. The median reflects this as well, for it is highest by “close” relationships at 2.0, while the rest of use and relationships measure at 1.0. The mode for each relationship by use is 1.0.



Further, the breakdown of frequency by relationship, in Table 13, was overwhelming

reported as “never”. However, use was still highest among “close friends”, at ‘hardly ever’, followed by ‘once a week/day’.



Short Answer Responses

Though the short answers varied, the participants either recorded that they feel *bitch* is an insult and a negative word, or *bitch* is incredibly context dependent and could be positive or negative. However, according to the responses, the only way in which it could be considered positive is when it is used among friends.

The short answer responses reflected similar patterns as the quantitative data while also offering more insight into the reported survey figures. In response to the question that inquired whether *bitch* was positive, negative, or both, the highest reported response was both, additionally reported as depending entirely on context, that is who is present and the environment. Of the 70 responses, 31 said both depending on context, followed by negative with 27. These self-reported responses inform the above pattern recognized in the address and “close” relationship pattern, in which participants reported that they either used *bitch* frequently or not at all. Specifically, the sampled speakers feel that *bitch* can either be positive or negative,

depending on the context, or they believe *bitch* to be entirely negative. This consideration is reflected in their use, meaning the surveyed sample of college women are either using *bitch* in their daily interactions—for they feel it to be either positive or negative, depending on how they use it—or they hardly use *bitch* because they believe it to be negative.

Further, in reporting why the participants used *bitch* in interactions, the most common coded responses was anger and as a behavior description, followed by as a joke. Many participants felt that, by using *bitch*, it demonstrated dislike or it demonstrated a close, comfortable relationship to their interlocutor. Finally, when considering general use, the average report was that participants used *bitch* more than men. Use among the survey participants was mostly recognized as positive, while use among men was always considered to be negative. The participants typically reported that women use it as an address and positively, while men were reported as commonly using it as a reference, and always negatively.

For *slut*, the overwhelming sentiment expressed in the short answer responses is that *slut* is always negative and is used among women to describe or judge a woman's sexuality. In response to whether they considered *slut* as positive, negative, or both, 55 participants said it was negative. Following that, though over half still regarded it as negative, the highest response with 11 was both depending on context, which measured higher than both and positive.

Many participants, at least 35 coded instances, reported that they 'did not' or 'rarely used' *slut*. A few participants explained that they did not use *slut* because they considered it shaming, derogatory, degrading and judgmental. Otherwise, if they did use it, participants used it when they observed promiscuity or wished to describe another woman's behavior. Following these motivations, the highest code for motivation was use as a 'joke' (5). The 'joke' code is minimal relative to the most reported reason, but notable as the highest reason among no use or

use based on promiscuity.

In relation to self-reported use motivation, participants felt that it communicated promiscuity or judgment when said to someone, though many, since they reported no use, felt that it said more about the speaker than it said to the addressee. To that point, respondents reported that, if a woman was using *slut*, the use spoke more to the speaker's insecurities rather than functioning as a marker of promiscuity against another woman. Further, when considering the kind of person who used it and how they used it, it was often reported, similar to *bitch*, that women used it more than men. Survey participants claimed that women could use it positively, though it was mostly regarded as negative, while men's use was also considered negative. A few participants cited specific groups as the kind of people to use it more often, including 4 counts of sororities or fraternities and 4 counts cited age as a factor determining use.

Group Interviews

In order to analyze possible patterns in the interviews, I organized similar comments and patterns based on the comments across groups through MaxQDA. As explained in the previous chapter, five group interviews were conducted. Specific quotes are extracted to demonstrate trends—all based on self-reported use—but full transcripts are included in Appendices for reference. In the transcripts, all subjects are assigned pseudonyms and referred by those names in the following report of results. Additionally, the groups are referenced numerically based on the order in which they were conducted. Below, I have summarized the comments of each group session.

BITCH

Each group admitted to using the word *bitch*, though not on a daily basis. There was also general consensus that *bitch* is very context dependent. For example, one group reported that

they most often used *bitch* when “juiced”, or inebriated. The first group referenced inebriation as a necessity to induce using *bitch* in a friendly way. Natalie, the participant who initially made the comment, explained using *bitch* the day prior to the interview to the fellow participants, including Melanie, who affirmed her comments:

Group #1--Allie, Melanie, Natalie*³

Natalie: I think I’ve definitely, like with a group of friends before, when I was juiced up or drunk or something, I’ve definitely, like, walked into a room and been like “what’s up bitches?!”

[laughs]

Melanie: I, yeah, I’ve done that.

Natalie: But, like, it was in a playful way. I think like when girls call each other it, it usually is in a playful way unless they really mean, like, unless they’re like—

Lack of inhibitions causes one to say many things, including words they may not use in daily conversation. For Natalie, the requirement for her context dependent use was intoxication. . Generally though, Natalie used the word to establish a playful environment. She conveyed her connection to fellow women, addressing them as *bitches*, and used the word to create a light hearted environment, so that the fellow women know not to understand *bitch* in a negative way. Further, outside of conversation about close relationships, *bitch* was spoken of in terms of setting a tone:

Group #2--Susie, Mary, Linda

Susie: But if someone were like hey bitch I would be like, in my head I would think that they want to be like friends but like I would assume that our next conversation was not

³ Hereafter, numbers will be used to identify the group’s quotes. The numbers reference the order in which the interviews were conducted.

going to be intellectual or bad. I would assume it would be about something, not very deep, just like a fun conversation.

Interviewer: So it's like setting the tone?

Susie: Yeah, it definitely sets the tone.

When Susie reported hearing *bitch* or was addressed with *hey bitch*, such comments set the stage for the conversation. Following that introduction, she knew that the conversation was going to be light and fun. Otherwise, she may have interpreted *bitch* as offensive. Thereby, the speaker is doing work their relationship with Susie as well as on their environment, conveying closeness and creating a comfortable environment. Additionally, Susie interpreted the cue and context, and knew how to proceed with the tone of the conversation.

Commonly, participants would say that they would use it around and to close friends. Each group emphasized the use among close friends and how a close relationship was required in order to understand and utilize *bitch* in a friendly manner. Below, a few comments were picked out of each interview in order to demonstrate the strong trend and consensus in regards to use among close friends.

In group #1, Allie, Melanie, and Natalie all agreed that a close relationship was required in order to use *bitch* among one another. They believed that the friendship set precedence, or allowed for understanding of the word as an index for their relationship. Using *bitch* among one another represented a deeper level of friendship. The women have power in using the word, and must be weary of the context when utilizing the power of the word itself.

#1

Natalie: There's like a precedence set—

[...]

Allie: It's like friend, but then...

Melanie: It's like a deeper level of friendship.

[...]

Natalie: So, like, it's the power that you hold in using that word—

In a later group, interview participants Melissa, Raleigh, and Jessica shared similar sentiments as group #1. They agreed that *bitch* is incredibly context dependent and that one must read cues and evaluate their relationship with the interlocutor before using it. Further, use of *bitch* was dependent on personal relationships. Friends would understand not to interpret the word as negative. Thereby, an established relationship represented established expectations and understandings of *bitch* and *slut*.

Group #3--Raleigh, Melissa, and Jessica

Melissa:--Like, you know, if you're in your group of friends, you're such a bitch, it doesn't mean the same thing as like if there's this girl you don't like. And you're like, she's a bitch. Or like oh what's up slut, you know, you're kidding around, but then if there's some girl that you're like, yeah she's a real slut, then like, then it's different meanings,

[...]

Melissa: [...] I mean I feel like sometimes, I definitely think it depends on how close your relationship is because there might be girls that I'm not as close to who use it jokingly and I don't like it. In that context. So I think it definitely depends on personal relationships.

Jessica:--Yeah. Yeah, if I would use it, If I was going to use it as like a replacement for dude or girl or whatever, it would be a friend.

Paula and Shannon made similar comments, though with an interesting addition. Though Shannon admitted to using *bitch*, especially *slut*, she acknowledged the underlying negativity of the word. She spoke of the context dependency in terms of her friendships, but explained more examples of context for use. Paula emphasized that the environment must be very comfortable in order to use *bitch* and *slut*, otherwise it would immediately be misunderstood as negative. They both emphasized the use of *bitch* and *slut* among close friends.

Group #4--Paula and Shannon

Paula: Yeah.

[...]

Shannon: Yeah, I use that sometimes, like a joke. Sup slut?

Paula: Friday night with my bitches.

Interviewer: So then, how would you say those words are used, is it more casually?

Playful?

Shannon: It's more used negatively than it is positively, there is some times when it is like, yeah like, with my bitches, or something like that, as like a photo caption. But no one will ever be like, when you're talking about a girl you don't like, you'd be like, oh my god, she's a bitch. Or yeah, and actually a lot of people would be like she's such a slut. But sometimes, I'll joke around a lot and if I'm wearing something a little revealing or whatever, my friends would be like oh you're such a slut, such a sloop. And I'd be like, oh, ok. You're being so slotty right now, wearing that. As a joke.

[...]

Paula: I think when it's used playfully, it definitely has to be in an environment that's very, very comfortable, like it's very very comfortable. Otherwise it's so easy to be

misconstrued and come across as very, very negative.

Interviewer: Well then who has to be in that environment?

Shannon: Friends, it has to be extremely—

Paula:--Yeah, your friends. It's not like—

Shannon:--Your close friends—

Paula:--People that you think are nice people, because that doesn't cut it, it's still like a derogatory term. It definitely is a personal friend thing.

Faith, Murray, and Lori—of the fifth group—emphasized the function of *bitch* and *slut* among friends. Murray and Faith explained that the use was primarily as a joke. Saying *bitch* was a way of joking around with best friends. They agreed that use around acquaintances would be strange, for they would understand it as offensive. The use must be among people that they already had a close, personal relationship.

Group #5--Faith, Murray, and Lori

Murray: I think, at least when I use it, it's always like you know that it's kidding though.

It's more of like a joke kind of thing—

Lori:--I think it's more like when I'm drunk, hey bitch, how's it going?

Murray: And I would only use that with like my best friends.

Faith: Yeah—

Murray:--Like, I would never go up to someone acquaintances with, yo bitch—

Lori:--They might think of it as offensive. It needs to be very personal people.

Murray: Yeah, I would only say it to like my best friends. And that would be it.

[...]

Murray: I would say to, for a close connection, it's more of just like a joke, I mean

obviously I don't think, I don't actually like mean the words [...]

Lori: Yeah, I think it's more like your immediate friend circle. Yeah.

Faith went so far as to say that, if a friend commonly said *bitch* to their friends, she would be upset if the friend did not say *bitch* to her. She recognized that the woman was using it around her closest friend and, if she considered herself a close friend to the woman, she would want to be called *bitch*. Being called a *bitch* would mean that they were very close and that she was a member of an in-group, of the respective woman's close friends or closest speech community, to be discussed more in the following section.

#5

Faith: [...] I think when someone uses it with an endearing tone or as an endearing phrase, or a phrase of endearment, I think that like if they don't use it, then you're thinking I must not be as close to you as, because then at that point it makes you uncomfortable, and you're like, oh, well I guess we're not that close, because if they're calling everybody else a bitch, it depends on the tone [...] So, yeah, so if I have a friend who uses it and smiles, or like says it with like an endearing tone, and they don't say it to me and they're like hey, and I'm like, oh, well, we must not be that close. Call me a bitch!

[*laughs*]

Faith: You get what I mean, though? If they don't call you a bitch, but they're call everybody else a bitch, I want to be called a bitch. Yeah, so that's my experience.

[...]

Murray: I agree, I feel like if you were to like call someone a bitch in an endearing way, I feel like it'd have to be someone who was like super close to you and I guess it does show that you're close enough that you can like joke about this and you know for sure

you're that you're kidding and you don't have to like second guess.

Any reported use outside of friends was referred to as cursing. A few groups spoke of the naturally negative nature to the word *bitch*. Linda, from group #2, felt that women did not call her a *bitch* because she did not curse. This equivocates using *bitch* with cursing, and implies that it is negative and more commonly understood as an expletive.

#2

Linda: I...I have never been colloquially called all those names. I think people assume..they don't really hear me cuss so they wouldn't like, call me by that word or they assume certain things about stuff I do and don't do. I guess I just seem maybe kind of..puritan.

Additionally, Murray alludes to the cutting nature of the words as well, enforcing that fact that a personal relationship is required in order to use *bitch* and *slut*. She would not use *bitch* to any acquaintance. For her, a relationship must precede using *bitch*, rather than using *bitch* to create a close relationship.

#5

Murray: I would like, I'd be a little like, just because like if you were a person who thought you could just like say like word, like that, cause they're not like everyday words, they're pretty cutting words, if you're going to say someone you don't know very well, I'm just going to assume, oh, that's weird. I would probably feel a little bit put off by that.

[...]

Murray: But I definitely wouldn't say, what up bitch, to like any acquaintance like ever, you have to be like at a certain level of friendship to say it and now feel like oh that was

kind of crude.

Each group agreed that they would not approach an acquaintance and address them as *bitch* and each group said that they would be uncomfortable by a stranger or an acquaintance addressing them in such a way. A similar exchange about self-reported use between acquaintances was shared between group three and four. When asked how they would react to an acquaintance saying *bitch* to them, Melissa, Raleigh, and Jessica all said that they would be taken aback. They would not get offended unless the speaker was acting aggressive, but they would not condone the use, unless they were already friends with the woman. Shannon felt very similar, though Paula recognized the acquaintance's attempt to strategically use *bitch* as a way of conveying a close relationship, or wanting to create a close relationship. Further comments in regards to reactions from acquaintance's use of *bitch* can be found in the Appendices.

#3

Melissa: I'm also pretty extroverted, so I feel like it wouldn't necessarily offend me unless they followed it up with something equally like rude. I feel like if they were just like hey bitch and then said something other like how are you or something, I'd be like ok, whatever, but if they're like hey bitch, you stole my man, I'd be like look, whoa, things are getting a little crazy.

Raleigh: I feel like I wouldn't get offended, but I'd be like why are you...

Melissa:--Yeah—

Raleigh:--I don't know you.

Jessica: I wouldn't get offended unless you were coming at me, attacking me, but if it was just a casual hey bitch, I'd be like, we're not that close, I don't know you.

Jessica: Yeah, maybe they're just trying to convey that maybe we are that close. Like, I

can call you bitch, you can call me bitch. I don't know if it like puts you on a different level of friendship, I don't know.

#4

Interviewer: What if it was someone who wasn't a close friend and they just came up—

Shannon:--I'd be like what the fuck are you doing? Hey bitch, like, what?

[...]

Paula:--I think they're trying to be really intimate, and like try to be friends with you or trying to be in with your friends and you're just not having it.

Shannon:--yeah.

According to the comments, the reported use of *bitch* as an address represents a deeper level of friendship. Additionally, each group made it known that such level of friendship that could engage the use of *bitch* in a positive way was between female friends. However, if *bitch* was used between men, it was considered derogatory or emasculating. Further, though each woman mentioned some specific groups that used or did not use *bitch* or *slut* (African Americans, Asian Americans, etc.), the groups agreed that the use was not exclusive to these groups or sororities, though sororities offered a social outlet that was conducive to such “fun, superficial” language. Susie, from the second group, explained it well when she said:

#2

Susie: The interesting thing I think about Greek life is when you enter a chapter room or go to a function, for some reason I feel like the tone of conversation just like doesn't it like stops at this level, we're not going to talk about anything really deep, nothing too emotional unless it's gossip, we're just going to talk about friendly things or funny things or unless it's like your really close friend but it's not a place where like it's more fun,

let's not be too serious. So, that's maybe when people at least in my sorority, all gather together and we're able to use that language because it's fun, it's friendly, it implies like, like this is my fun time, [...] Something about Greek life, maybe sometimes for some people I feel like it brings out the superficiality. It implies that it's just about friends.

Many of the participants also reported that the use of *bitch* positively among friends is a college trend. Age, around college age or younger, was commonly cited as a factor to use *bitch*, which will be further elaborated on in the discussion. Otherwise, the use of *bitch* is referred to as cursing. Such conversation in terms of cursing was noted by Jessica, from group #3, who referred to using *bitch* in terms of an expletive during this explanation.

#3

Jessica: I think it's probably, I mean because I think the reason you don't use the word bitch around people you don't know is because it's not a nice word.

[...]

Jessica: They'd probably be like please leave now. So like, it's slang, it's borderline, I feel like it's borderline cursing.

Jessica: Like you don't let your kid walk around saying—

Melissa: —Yeah—

Jessica: bitch, bitch bitch.

Melissa: Also, I feel like if it's like a group of like my close friends, I'm close to you, like, I have a—we feel secure in our relationship, you know that when I'm using bitch, I'm joking about it—

It was even mentioned in a comment that using *bitch*, in general, conveys a trendy persona and, thereby, separates individuals or groups from one another. Susie explained that

distinction when asked how she perceived individuals who used *bitch* in a friendly way. Susie believed that women who did use *bitch* in a friendly way were cooler than she was. Since Susie continually regarded *bitch* as negative, she considered any use outside of negativity to be innovative and creative, more so than herself. This comment alludes to an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ idea, in that those who do use *bitch* in a friendly way separate themselves from others who do not.

#2

Interviewer: So then, sort of in relation, just like to said, when someone might curse, you sort of then perceive them probably like a certain way. If someone were to say *bitch* or *slut* to you, would you perceive them a certain way?

Susie: I would perceive them as probably cooler than me.

[laughs]

Susie: You know, just a little more cool, hip—

Mary:--what what--

Susie:--more culturally relevant. Just another person who’s cool

The interview schedule also included a question *betch*. I assumed *betch* to be a derivative of *bitch* or rather an allusion to it, a way of saying *bitch* without actually saying the word. I included the question to measure whether *betch* was preferred over *bitch* and the implications of the use. I thought *betch* would be used in place of *bitch*. However, when asked about *betch*, which I assumed to be a replacement, most women did not report using *betch*, though they did agree that *betch* was “softer” and was always considered to be a joke.

SLUT

Every group reported that *slut* is very negative and rarely used in a positive manner.

Many of the interview participants agreed that it was judgmental to address or to refer to a woman as a *slut*. Often, during the interviews, the respondents would not comment on the use of *slut* but rather talk about *bitch*. Below, Melanie explains that she would not use *slut* in the same way as *bitch*. She observes that, if someone says *slut*, even if they are trying to say it in an endearing way, there is an element of authenticity to their comment, meaning that the speaker means to point out promiscuity, even if feigned as a joke.

Group #1--Allie, Natalie, Melanie

Interviewer: Interesting. We've been touching a lot on bitch, do you ever hear slut used like in kind of that same way?

Allie: Hmm...

Melanie: Not so much.

Allie: No.

Melanie: I wouldn't be like, hey slut!

[*laughs*]

Melanie: Like, I feel like that's, it's like, if you'd said it like that, it would be like..it could come across as joking but there's like an underlying tone that you actually mean it—

Melanie: Like, the other day, when we were going out, I was like, "let's go bitches!" but I wouldn't be like "let's go, sluts!"

[*laughs*]

Allie: But I've heard girls like, especially when they are, I quote Natalie here, 'juiced', that they're like really drunk or, when girls are dancing very provocative, they're like, oh my god, you're such a slut!

[...]

Allie: And they were like, saying it jokingly but then at the same time be like no, but really, you're kind of acting like a slut.

[...]

Allie: You're throwing shade when you say that.

Allie, Natalie, and Melanie considered *slut* to be shaming to use in daily conversation. They stated that, even when said endearingly, there was negative intention in using *slut*. Susie and Linda had a similar exchange in their interview, when Linda tried to give an example of *slut* as endearing. Linda explained that a friend of hers was known as “Slutty *name*”. It was considered endearing, but Susie pointed out that the “nickname” still tagged her as a flirty woman.

Group #2--Susie, Mary, Linda

Susie: That's probably cause she hooked up with...

Linda: Yeah, but it's still endearing.

Susie: But it's still...it tags her as a flirty girl.

Further, Susie explains an instance where someone tried to use *slut* endearingly. It was not well received. Susie explained that the context and age of the speaker was inappropriate for use. This indicates that, though demographics do not have a huge bearing on reported use, age was often regarded in interview participant's perception of use. The age of older individuals could create a dynamic of superiority, which inhibits friendly discourse, thereby *slut* would not be understood in a friendly manner.

#2

Susie: —I don't hear the word slut like used at all. Like, someone said it the other day,

and I was like...

Interviewer: Ehhhh. What was the context..of how they said it?

Susie: It was one person really awkwardly coming into a room and I wasn't even there, but someone was telling me about someone in res life who walked into a room and was like 'hey sluts' and everyone in the room was like [*gasp*] you can't say that!

Linda: —You DON'T say that around res life people!—

Susie: And she was like the director, and like, everyone had a fit about it. All the RAs were like, I can't believe she said that, like I wonder if she's getting in trouble. Cause like, the people I know in res life, language is a huge thing.

Faith, Murray, and Lori all explained that they heard *bitch* more than *slut*, especially since they felt that *slut* was more prone to be understood in a negative way. Though they acknowledged that *slut* could be made endearing for interactions, *slut* was generally regarded as negative.

Group #5--Faith, Murray, Lori

Faith: I hear both, I think I hear bitch more, but slut is more prone to be taken in a negative way. Because the same way that bitch can be used as a term of endearment, slut can be used as a term of endearment. Cause I do have friends who are like, slut, hey slut, that's how they like, I'm not necessarily a fan of it, but there are friends who show friendship or companionship in that way, but like slut, no. That's typically more prone to be taken negatively because it's associated with, bitch is just like your persona, but slut is talking about your lifestyle—

As briefly explained above, the use of *slut* was reported as associated with college students, because, in order to refer to a woman as a *slut*, one must be in a close network and

know about the woman's promiscuity. Raleigh and Melissa explained the necessity for this knowledge during their interview.

#3

Raleigh: I feel like slut is used in a more negat—at least on a college campus, it's like—

Melissa:—Yeah--

Interviewer:—Ok—

Raleigh:—being promiscuous.

Shannon, in group #4, did mention that *slut* could be mentioned among friends, but Shannon continually said *sloot* instead of *slut*. *Sloot* is said among friends, and always considered to be a joke (e.g. "You're such a sloot", etc.).

#4

Shannon: [...] when I'm joking about being a sloot or whatever, it's always in a joking context. Like my friend, just an example, one time I was wearing, it was cold outside, and I was wearing this tank with a cardigan, the tank was kind of see through and I was wearing a nude colored bra. So it didn't look like I was wearing a bra or whatever. She was like, oh my god, you're such a sloot, why are you wearing that, it's cold outside?

Further, *slut* was spoken by use in terms of Greek community involvement more so than *bitch*. However, it was often explained that the use was likely attributed to the environment and not the community in of itself. Jessica, who is in a sorority herself, explained that that they may use it, but Raleigh explained that such use in Greek communities was primarily founded in stereotypes.

#3

Jessica: Oh, bitch, yeah.

[laughs]

Interviewer: What would be the context?

Jessica: Probably negative. Negative about somebody else.

Melissa: I feel like they use slut more though—

Jessica: That too—

Melissa:--Yeah, they use slut more.

Raleigh: But also, the stereotypical view of Greek life is that it's very sexually promiscuous, there's people competing with like trying to be in relationships with people, not necessarily relationships—

Shannon and Paula shared similar comments. Shannon perceived the entire Greek community as a trend in of itself, something that offered an outlet to college students. The Greek community was conducive to letting loose, creating a casual and fun environment.

#4

Shannon: I don't know, I don't really notice it. Well...I guess you could say like, nah, I think I'd be...eh. I mean, I guess you could say that people in sororities would go more along with trends like that, you know what I mean? So I feel like you might find more people saying it there, but it's not like removed, anyone really uses it.

Interviewer: Why would they be motivated to go along with those trends a little bit more?

Shannon: Um...I just think the whole Greek system is kind of a trend in itself. No, it's something fun to do. And like, go out, bitches what? Throw those words around.

Paula: Yeah, I think on the flip side, no one uses that vindictively unless they're really upset. So, if anything, it'd be used in a more casual environment. Which is why it comes across as a college thing.

Otherwise, the interview participants did not mention any groups specifically using *slut*, nor did they think that men could or would use *slut* among one another. It was considered demeaning or degrading if a man used it towards a man but especially when used towards a woman.

When comparing the two words, *bitch* and *slut* were spoken of and used in different ways. *Bitch* was sometimes considered slang, or not as charged. *Slut*, however, was considered negative, pejorative, and not typical to use in general, and among friends was not often an exception.

#3

Jessica: And bitch is so...it can mean so many different things. Negatively, you know.

But with slut it's like, ok, she sleeps around.

Paula considered *slut* to be almost always negative, but *bitch* could vary. Shannon agreed, saying that *bitch* could be thrown into almost any sentence. The way Paula evaluated the severity of a word was whether or not it was still an "eyebrow raiser". *Slut*, to her and many participants, is still an eyebrow raiser".

#4

Paula: I definitely still react strongly to slut used in a bad connotation, like I know it's coming from the wrong place but I definitely, nobody reacts to bitch that way. It's just like, yeah.

[...]

Paula: Yeah, slut is definitely like more of a ohhh.

Shannon: Bitch is definitely, like, I don't know, you could just throw bitches into any sentence, really.

Paula: I guess the way I think about it is it still an eyebrow raiser.

Faith, Lori, and Murray considered *slut* to be more direct than *bitch*. *Slut* seemed like a more personal attack than *bitch*. Plus, *slut* was easier to take offense to than *bitch*, meaning that they perceived *slut* to be more negative than *bitch*, generally. Faith regarded *bitch* to be more neutral now than it was in the past. Either way, for Faith, Lori, Murray as well as all of the interview participants, use of *bitch* and *slut* was context dependent.

#5

Faith: Slut is more like direct.

Lori: Yeah, and it's easy for someone to take that as an offense rather than bitch, I think.

Interviewer: Outside of the comparison, if you just hear bitch, do you think it's still more negative or now because it's used sort of a little bit more in that friendly tone, has it become a little bit more neutral.

Murray: Yes, like, I mean—

Faith:--It's more neutral than it was before.

Faith: Yeah, it still depends on context you're using it in, but it's definitely more acceptable.

Through the analysis, patterns in use and in perceptions did become apparent. Various implications have surfaced through the survey codes and interview comments, all of which will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the results are synthesized and the theoretical implications are discussed in terms of identified patterns. Speech community, relationship work and identity conveyance are the key concepts that are discussed in terms of the data. Expectations for *bitch* and *slut* that are shared in speech communities is necessary for reported use and gives insight into how *bitch* and *slut* are used through the principles of identity work (Bucholtz & Hall 2005). Reclamation in terms of this study is briefly discussed in order to understand how the sample of Emory college women are accessing an adopted version of *bitch* and *slut* or adopting the two words for their relationship and identity work. Finally, the section ends with a brief overview of cultural affiliations and demographic information in relation to use. Of the demographic categories analyzed, age and gender play the most influential role, for age and gender affect how individuals use language for creating their relationships and conducting work on their own identity, age especially informed strongly by media.

Apparent Patterns and Overarching Observations

The survey and interviews gave strong insight into the perception of use by women. Further results and discussion are organized into use for community and relationships, identity, reclamation. The discussion concludes with an overview of how the demographic information was reported to influence *bitch* and *slut* use among the sample.

Reported Use—Implications

As reported in the survey results, the average frequency of *bitch* use was relatively low, measuring between ‘hardly ever’ to ‘once a week’. The highest rate of use, in address and reference, was reported among close friends, at about ‘once a week’. However, when investigating each survey report under the address to close friends category, the highest rate of

response was 1, 'never', followed immediately by 4, 'once a day'. This count represents that either the survey participants are not using *bitch* at all to address their friends or they are using *bitch* in their daily interactions.

Further, when referencing close friends, *bitch* was recorded as being used at least once a day. Since every other relationship, either address but especially reference, was most often responded with 'never', that shows that there may be a difference in what it means or how it is used among close friends versus other relationships. This indicates that the self-reported use requires an established relationship, a relative closeness with the addressee. The closeness grants an implicit understanding that, whether the word is being used as an address or reference, the other individual understands *bitch* as a joke or appreciates it as a term of endearment, despite their understanding of the word as negative. The negative nature of *bitch* is backgrounded and, rather, the word is received as a marker of friendship. Or, the negative meaning of *bitch* is not backgrounded but rather harnessed. Friends could be using the power of *bitch* to demonstrate the depth of their relationship. By saying a notably negative word amongst friends, it represents the fortitude of their friendship, indexing that the friends are so close that they know not to take the word *bitch* negatively.

Slut, by the survey results, is rarely used. It is used as a reference more than an address, however, it ranges from 'hardly ever' to 'never'. Even by relationship, the reported use did not exceed 'hardly ever'. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the highest use remains among close friends, which again suggests that the use of *slut* may require a certain relationship. A close relationship creates an understanding, for the friend knows not to interpret *slut* as negative.

Between use of *bitch* and *slut* as a reference or an address, different patterns and implications emerged. The surveys demonstrated that both words were used more often as

references than addresses in interactions. However, when discussed in the interviews, reported examples of use were often in the form of an address. The most examples given by interview participants and survey respondents when speaking of *bitch* or *slut* in friendly terms were as an address. Further, use as an address was often perceived as positive, while use as a reference depended on how the speaker used either *bitch* or *slut*. However, future study should further investigate the implications of use between address and reference of *bitch* and *slut*.

Bitch and Slut for Relationship Work

As iterated in the theoretical background, the speech community model was chosen for its emphasis on speech as a unifying factor. I propose that my study participants comprise their speech communities based on friendship which then influences their shared linguistic expectations. Based on the results, community as bound by friendship played a large factor on use of *bitch* and *slut* among the sample of college women.

Many of the participants cited that *bitch* is context and relationship dependent, because use among friends could differ from the widely understood negative use of *bitch*. The ideal context for *bitch* and *slut* use is small, informal, and surrounded by close friends. The use and understanding of *bitch* for friendship is best achieved in small, intimate groups, because a small group assures that the speaker knows all involved well and knows that all members involved understand their use of *bitch*. This is enforced by the fact that in every interview, the participants openly admitted to using *bitch*, sometimes *slut*, outside of a negative context, but solely among their closest friends. Their closest friends represent their most immediate speech community, formed by their friendship and an environment that shares the expectation of *bitch* as friendly.

Thereby, participants could use *bitch* for their own purposes, primarily group identity work, in small speech communities that are bound by friendship. Their concentrated speech

communities share the same expectations and understandings of *bitch*. Though *bitch* is defined as negative and was commonly regarded as negative based on the surveys, friends understand that, within their respective speech communities, it is always negative. However, since the minimal use reported in the surveys demonstrated that the term is still largely understood as negative, a larger pattern is occurring above my sample of college women speakers' awareness.

The majority of participants admitted to using *bitch* in a friendly way though, because their own use depends largely on context. By comparing the survey measure and interview reports, it seems that respondents are still informed by a negative definition of *bitch* and *slut* though admit to using it in a positive manner in their interactions. Therefore, the respondents assume and report that *bitch* and *slut* are negative, though they admit that it may be used positively or share stories of positive use in their interactions. This represents pluralistic ignorance, in a way; many small groups are using *bitch* in a friendly way, though each group assumes that others may not because it is still largely understood as negative. This is due to the fact that the reported meaning and use of *bitch* is largely context dependent: its use depends on who is present and whether they understand the expectations of use outside of *bitch*'s understood use, either due to a close relationship or belonging to the same speech community.

Due to this unawareness, there seems to be a tension. *Bitch* is typically considered negative on a macro scale, though—according to the self-reported use and perceptions—it is not always used in a negative way during micro interactions. However, even though many small speech communities, as represented in the study population, share the same expectation of *bitch*, it is anticipated that if the sampled Emory college women were to transition through the speech communities, they lose contact with the understood meaning of *bitch* in their respective speech community. Since the expectation of using *bitch* and *slut* in a friendly way is assured by their

friendships that form their speech community, they may be unaware of a similar understanding in the present speech community to which they have no relationship. This tension reinforces the understanding of *bitch* as negative among the study sample, and maintains the use of *bitch* for small scale identity work—meaning how they use *bitch* to condition a specific identity for themselves or how they use *bitch* to create a group identity among their friends. Further, a tension is reinforced when speech communities are using forms of *bitch* still informed by its negative definition as compared to a friendly version of *bitch*. As noted by Susie in group #2, she perceived those who used *bitch* in a friendly way to be cooler than she was. Based on this comment, it is possible that a tension arises when the use of *bitch* creates an us versus them relationship between speech communities. Covert prestige and tension between groups is contrived from using *bitch* in a friendly way, prestige ascribed by in-group use and, as reported by Susie, by out-group observation.

As for *slut*, few interview participants mentioned using it in their speech communities and reported that it was largely understood as negative. Even when they did acknowledge its use in a friendly way, a close relationship is required, but not in the same way as *bitch*. Based on participant's comments, since calling an individual a *slut* is pointing out their promiscuity, a close network is required. One must know of their promiscuity in order to use *slut* and, in such a case, it is more often used negatively. There is tension in using *slut* among the study participants, but a tension that exists outside of language and shared linguistic expectations. *Slut* was overwhelmingly understood as negative in the respective sample.

Even when interview participants were prompted to report their opinions about *slut*, they rarely mentioned its use. They would most often respond to the question in terms of *bitch*, even though each question inquired about both words. This demonstrates that *bitch* is more often used

than *slut*, and possibly that individuals are more comfortable discussing *bitch* versus *slut*. Further, it became clear that *slut* is not used in the same way as *bitch*, and is rarely engaged as a term of endearment among friends. This could be due to the fact that the respective college campus is very aware of sexual assault and slut shaming, (ridiculing someone for engaging in their sexuality to a point of promiscuity), so the term is not used as casually or colloquially as *bitch*. Thereby, the negativity of the word generally influences how it is used and understood, and informs how it can be used in the sample of college women's interactions.

Bitch and Slut for Identity Work

By addressing someone as *bitch*, there is either an established close relationship or the speaker is trying to convey closeness. So, either the speaker is working to maintain a friendship or trying to condition a close group identity. However, all participants explained that the close relationship must precede the use of *bitch* in a friendly way. When asked how they would react to an acquaintance calling them a *bitch*, all participants thought it would be awkward or strange. Thereby, though the use of *bitch* by an acquaintance could be strategic—that is, the acquaintance is trying to suggest that they are close with their addressee—it is recognized as strange. Though *bitch* can function as an index of closeness between friends, that friendship must pre-exist the use of *bitch* in a friendly manner.

Additionally, as found in respect to speech communities, since the acquaintance and addressee are not already close, it is not certain that they share the same expectations for *bitch*, therefore it is understood as negative rather than friendly. However, if *bitch* is used negatively towards a friend, the friend reverts to the typical negative understanding of *bitch* and acts accordingly. Based on the interview comments, either the friend would simply receive it as a comment on their current behavior, or they would be offended. Either way, using *bitch* in a

friendly way engages the relationality identity principle, tending to a relationship relative to themselves. Saying *bitch* to a friend does work on the speaker and addressees' relationship, reinforcing it and demonstrating their closeness. While *bitch* reaffirms relations, using *slut* involves negative identity work.

Bitch was not often reported as used negatively among friends, unless speaking about someone to a friend. A close relationship allowed insight into the use of *bitch* among friends and extended the use from its negative definition, primarily for work on or as an index of their relationship. Though *bitch* can still be used or perceived negatively—as demonstrated by the surveys—it was not often described as negative among friends. Outside of a close relationship though, *bitch* was largely considered negative. In contrast, *slut* was overwhelmingly considered negative. Only few reports included use of *slut* in a positive way, otherwise referred to as *sloot*.

One group did mention that *slut* could be used affectionately, among friends, but they kept saying *sloot* as opposed to *slut*. The individual explained that she and her friends would use *sloot* among one another when they perceived a friend to be dressed provocatively. The friends always understood it as a joke, yet it was still a way to point out promiscuity. Since the reported use of *sloot* is only instigated by a perception of promiscuity, it is used to create a negative identity. *Sloot* is used to create distance between the speaker and their friend, due to their promiscuity. *Slut*, or rather *sloot*, is relational in this way, but the relationality principle based on *sloot* is enacted to create a distance relative to the speaker. Generally, *slut* is too pejorative to talk about or to use for identity work. Using *slut* is a judgment, not an identity.

However, after first hearing about *sloot* in an interview, I drew a connection to *betch*. The words are supposed substitutions, words that allude to the actual words. Both *betch* and *sloot* offer the speaker the opportunity to say the original words *bitch* and *slut* without actually saying

them. By changing the sounds of the word, speakers are able to use a derivative of the *bitch* or *slut* and achieve a similar purpose—either in identity work or in conveying a close relationship—but without saying the explicit, negative word. However, though participants acknowledged *betch*, they reported that they rarely used it and admitted that they never really heard it or used it themselves. Nevertheless, the two words were always considered jokes, and can be used around anyone. There is not a necessary understood expectation of *betch* and *sloot*, so they are not special to specific, represented speech communities.

Further, since *betch* and *sloot* are derivatives of the true words, they are always understood as jokes. However, especially in considering *betch*, the derivative of the word is too diluted to use for identity work. Specifically, every time I inquired about *betch*, the interview participants mentioned that they had heard of it, but never used it. Therefore, the participants may not use or acknowledge *betch* because it is considered a joke and, because it does not have the negative power of *bitch*, it does not index the power of the relationship as *bitch* does. Based on the findings, the negative power of *bitch*, when used among friends, is used to represent the depth of their friendship, for they understand not to receive *bitch* as negative. If *betch* were used in the same way, it would be perceived as a joke rather than an index of their relationship. As for *slut*, since the only true anecdote of using *slut* in an endearing way was when said as *sloot*, it is clear that the word must be modified in order to understand it as a joke or a friendly gesture. As previously stated, *slut* is too pejorative to use so, and if women wish to engage it for relational work or for conveying closeness, they must adapt the word, hence *sloot*. *Sloot* achieves the relational index without explicitly using *slut*.

Additionally, as briefly discussed in a previous section and based on interview accounts, one can do individual identity work by using *bitch* with phrases like “bad bitch”. A few groups

mentioned the use of “bad bitch”, and they explained what it meant. Below is a quotation extracted from the third group. Raleigh identified herself as a “bad bitch”, and Jane and Melissa were quick to agree with Raleigh about the difference of “bad bitch”.

#3

Raleigh: I’m a bad bitch. That’s different.

Jessica: Bad bitch is so different.

Interviewer: Wait, how is it different?

Jessica: I think bad bitch is like, I’m a bad bitch, like—

[*inaudible comments—talking at once*]

Melissa: Yeah. That’s definitely become a thing.

Jessica: I make my own money, I don’t need no man. It’s supposed to be—

Melissa:—Like I look good, I know I look good. I’m gonna tell you I look good. You tryin’ to come at me, I know what I am

By calling oneself a “bad bitch”, an individual is conveying strength and independence. Additionally, in the second group, two of the women, Linda and Mary, explained that they spent the previous summer trying to become a “bad bitches”. A friend advised her that, to be considered a “bad bitch”, she must dress up for class and “put her face on”, meaning that she needed to wear make-up and look put together. In this way, “bad bitch” creates an individual identity, used in order to create an identity of strength and independence. These examples illustrate that *bitch* can be used for individual identity work as well as group identity work among the study population.

Based on all the comments and statistics, using *bitch* and *slut* entails identity work. The sample of Emory college women is utilizing indexicality, for *bitch* serves as an index of their

close relationship. As described above, the negative power of the word used among friends represents how close they truly are, for they know not to take the word negatively. However, *slut* remains too negative to use for identity work. Even engaging *sloot* does not achieve an endearing measure, but rather functions as negative identity work in creating distance between the speaker and the addressee. Further, *bitch* can be applied to groups more easily than *slut*, even if all of the represented speech communities are not aware of the relative universal use of *bitch* in a friendly way. As said in one of the interviews, Melanie said that she may say “What’s up bitches?” but not “What’s up sluts?”. *Slut* is more individualistic, for one must know the individual and know their network in order to refer to them as a *slut*.

Study Scope of Bitch and Slut Reclamation

Prior to delving into a brief discussion of reclamation, I wish to preface this portion of the discussion. Reclamation is not a focus of my analysis, and should be a framework for future study. However, I wish to briefly mention how reclamation relates to my study, for the theory could provide evidence for the represented college women using *bitch* and *slut* outside of their known negative connotations.

Based on past research and as explored in my research, there is a void of relational words for women. While men have *dude* and *bro*, women do not have words that belong to them, for them. Any words used among women, like *girl*, are demeaning, to a degree. Nevertheless, women wanting to conduct identity work for themselves and among each other utilize language to do so. The findings are significant because, though it is not as pervasive as I hypothesized, there is evidence that a sample of college women are using *bitch* for identity work, specifically to convey a close relationship. This involves participants adopting *bitch*, outside of its negative association, for their interactions. This could mean that *bitch* has already been reclaimed and

then employed by the women. Further, this sheds light on a possible pattern that could increase. Though I do not believe that reclamation is on the forefront of the participants' minds, it is possible that the selected population of college women is accessing a reclaimed form of *bitch* to use for their identity work. Or, it is possible that study participants are simply suspending the meaning for their interactions, which would suggest more awareness of removing the negativity from *bitch*. Generally, female speech community attempt to adopt a word for their purposes: to convey solidarity.

This research generally contributes to how genders use language as well as possible reappropriation trends. These specific findings can be used to compare how women use language to relate to one another, in various speech communities. However, though my sample of women may be adopting *bitch* and *slut* for their purposes, I do not believe that the words have been reclaimed. *Bitch* and *slut* were consistently regarded as negative, and are therefore not reclaimed. So long as the words are used or continually understood as negative, reclamation has not occurred, for the word has not been entirely disassociated from its negative definition. Further, the group and individual aspect of *bitch* and *slut* may impede reclamation efforts. As mentioned, *slut* is more individualistic, meaning it is more often used to refer to an individual rather than a group. For *slut*, that could prohibit reclamation, because you must reference what *slut* largely means before passing the judgment on the individual. Thereby, even if *slut* is reclaimed among a few individuals in small groups, its broader understanding must change in order for it to be reclaimed. However, *bitch* can be used in a group setting and is considerably communal, even without a broader awareness of its universality. If awareness were to spread and if the expectation expanded to broader speech communities, the spread could be conducive to reclamation. Nevertheless, due to the pervading negative understanding of *bitch* and *slut*, I do not

believe that the words have been reclaimed and I am skeptical of the reclamation capability and general process.

Reported Use of Bitch and Slut by Demographics

From the data presented above, an image of how the sample of college women uses *bitch* and *slut* becomes present. Based on the survey data, the pattern of reported use by address and reference, whether speaking directly to another woman or speaking about another woman, could have been statistically insignificant due to the small sample size. However, in some short answer responses and during the interviews, race, gender, and age were commonly cited as indications of use. These three characteristics were reported as influential and salient in the perceptions of use of these terms as given by the interview groups.

Sorority Affiliation

Though I suspected that sorority affiliation would influence the sample of women's use of *bitch* and *slut*, sorority involvement did not influence use. I suspected that the participants would report using *bitch* and *slut* to convey a close relationship to sisters or to demonstrate unity under similar letters. Not only was *bitch* and *slut* use by sorority affiliation found statistically insignificant, but also all of the interviews reported similar patterns of both *bitch* and *slut*, despite different sorority associations. Therefore, the use of *bitch* and *slut* was not used to strategically convey a close relationship or unity under letters, but was rather consistent with use based on a pre-existing friendship. Therefore, the represented individual sororities nor the sororities considered together were a speech community in of themselves.

Race

When asked if certain groups were more likely to use *bitch* and *slut*, race came up as a factor of reported use. Interview participants mentioned that, though the use of *bitch* for

endearment belonged to all women, they perceived that African American women used it more. These same participants (Paula) explained that they made this association because they connected African Americans with rap culture and rap songs (Interview 4). Many female rappers, like Nicki Minaj, use *bitch* very often in their lyrics, primarily negatively, but sometimes positively. Phrases like “boss bitch” and “bad bitch” have arisen from some of these popular rap songs. “Bad bitch” specifically was brought up during multiple interviews. It was first brought up by an African American participant, and was also mentioned when a participant explained that she learned “bad bitch” from a friend who studied at Morehouse, a historically black University. “Bad bitch” represents a persona and an individual identity, meaning an independent woman who does not need a partner (man) to depend on. This demonstrates a way in which individuals can create an identity for themselves by using *bitch*. By labeling oneself as a “bad bitch”, it conveys independence and strength.

However, though I think rap music contributed to the popularization of the use, most of these opinions are founded in stereotypes and use is thereby not dependent on race. For example, a few black women reported in the survey short answer responses that white women actually use *bitch* and *slut* more than black women. However, responses were not compared between white and black respondents, so future study could give more insight into use and perceptions of use based on race and ethnicity.

Gender

Further, though gender was controlled in the surveys, when asked about gender and the use of *bitch* and *slut*, the women in the interviews said that only women could use them in a mildly positive manner among one another. If men use *bitch* and *slut*, the meanings are always offensive, even when used between men. *Bitch* used between men is “feminizing”, putting the

addressed or referenced man down for being weak by comparing him to a female and thus putting women down as weak in the process. *Slut*, based on the interviews, is not perceived to be used among college-aged men, positively or negatively. The word was historically used for women, and now represents a judgment of female sexuality. The words *bitch* and *slut* have become gendered in use, and—based on the reported use—survey college women are using *bitch* and *slut* for their identity and relational work in their respective female speech community, for their use of *bitch* and *slut* is qualified by their gender. Thereby, if college men use *bitch* or *slut*, since they are outside of any female speech community, it is always considered offensive.

Further, I chose to interview and survey women only for a reason. I wanted to investigate how women perceived and used the words, specifically to identify if they were motivated to use it differently. The study was designed in order to investigate how a specific population of women used *bitch* and *slut* for their gender, either to convey or to reinforce relationships among fellow women. Though I hypothesized that the sample of women used *bitch* and *slut* for identity, I believed that their gender influenced how they would use it and that the gender of their interlocutor also informed how they used it. Indeed, gender bore a large influence on use. The sampled population of women used *bitch* a certain way with fellow women, specifically women who they were close with. They would typically use *bitch* in exclusively female groups, meaning that the relationship and gender of the other individuals were reasons that influenced the use. They would not use *bitch* or *slut* to men as they did with women, and were not receptive to college men using *bitch* or *slut*.

Age

Each interview mentioned that they believed using *bitch* colloquially and for affirmation is a college trend. Use in college was particularly important for *slut*, according to women in the

interview #3, for, in order to be able to refer to a woman as a *slut*, the social network must be small enough to know of and refer to one's promiscuity. Additionally, interviewees explained that, as one grows older and delves into the professional world, *bitch* and *slut* would no longer be appropriate terms for endearment. In interview group #3, it was reported that, as one ages, it is no longer considered appropriate to utilize *bitch* or *slut* for relational identity work. Jessica, in group #3, explained why or when she would not use *bitch*, in relation to age.

#3

Jessica: And it's not like, if you're trying to impress some—like an interviewer, you wouldn't be like, oh you a bad bitch

[LAUGHS]

Raleigh: You a bad bitch. I want you here.

Jessica: They'd probably be like please leave now.

Along the lines of this exchange, a professional setting could require different strategies for creating identity or conveying a close relationship. Use of *bitch* and *slut* are reported as used to create an informal environment and a close relationship, though with regard for the negativity of the word. Work environments are often void of negative words like *bitch* and *slut*, for their expletive and negative nature make them unprofessional. Further, work environments are considered more formal than other settings, which would make the use of *bitch* and *slut* inappropriate.

Since college is an opportunity for individuals to get to know themselves outside of their families, they are actively seeking out ways to create and work on their identity, independent from their families. They do so early in establishing their own identity by modeling their speech after individuals close to them, as discussed in the theoretical review. The specific college

population from which I sampled my participants is comprised of many diverse cultural groups and identities and unites individuals from many different backgrounds by proximity. Thereby, the selected participants could have grown close to other women either through a prior relationship, established before college, or by contact through their school environment. Young individuals from fairly diverse backgrounds and different social spheres must find ways to identify with one another and create relationships through communication. Therefore, the study participants report using *bitch* among one another after establishing their relationship and in order to convey a belonging and a relative closeness with others in the group. In tending to their relationships and getting to know themselves relative to others, *bitch* can help in indexing a close relationship and a unified identity. However, this practice is very age specific. Additionally, movies, namely *Mean Girls*, influence the use by age.

Media is a strong influence on adolescent and college aged individuals and one movie was often referenced in interviews as an impact on the use of *bitch* and *slut* by women, *Mean Girls*. The movie was popular during the current college student's generation. It was mentioned in most interviews, including the interview with Raleigh, Melissa, and Jane. Raleigh believed that the movie put *bitch* and *slut* into circulation, though they related the use back to age.

#3

Raleigh: I think Mean Girls also put all of those words back into, like, just like, I feel like it's an iconic movie for people our age that like we just referenced it earlier today, and things like *bitch* or *slut* are consistently in there.

[...]

Jessica: I think. Then you see it on Means Girls, it's pretty bad. Then I'm like—

Raleigh:--Yeah, she just used it so casually, like hey *bitch*.—

Jessica:--Yeah, so if you were to call me a bitch at 14 I would have been like, WHAT?

Oh my god, they think I'm a bitch?! But in college, it's kind of like, eh.

Raleigh: It has to do with maturity.

Melissa:--it has to be something in context. It has to be something you read in context.

You should be able to pick up on it in a certain setting.

Raleigh: But I feel like also, I'm thinking back, if someone wrote this person was a bitch on the bathroom stalls, that would be a big deal, they would find it very offensive, but like, for the most part, I'm a bitch, I'm a bitch, it's just more accepting now—

Melissa:--when you're older.

The use of *bitch*, *betch*, and *slut* in the dialogue of the movie were part of memorable quotes. Therefore, *Mean Girls* could have acted as both a license to use and a model of use. The popularity of the movie made the words seem more tangible and relatable. Specifically, if the women in the movie were using it, viewers may feel able to use it as well. Further, because the movie was set in high school, it is possible that young viewers would have wanted to emulate them, thereby using *bitch* and *slut* colloquially and as jokes. Additionally, since the movie was based in high school, female viewers could have assumed that using *bitch* and *slut* in this manner is an established expectation so, as they age, they use *bitch* and *slut* as used in the film.

This observation is founded in Raleigh and Melissa's comments about "maturity" and "when you're older". An individual needs to mature in order to understand the use of the words as either positive or negative, especially as used in *Mean Girls* or as used in a high school environment. Further, one must wait until they are older in order to use it, which means that age acts as the license and expectation, for they can use it, but only when they are older. Through

Mean Girls, age, media, and even identity within a speech community all intersect and serve as an example of an environment and patterns of use with *bitch* and *slut*.

The study population of college women said that they would only use it positively or endearingly with friends. Interviewees claimed that friends understand that they are joking or that they are close enough to understand that it's not negative when directed at the friend. Further, based on the way interviewees either explicitly or implicitly talked about *bitch*, it is still regarded as negative or referred to it in terms of cursing, making it context dependent. The self-reported use of *bitch* depends on the environment and the people present for use. When friends are present, the understood negative meaning of *bitch* is suspended; both parties understand that it is negative, but are using it as a joke and using it to express endearment.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study was to investigate how and if a sampled population of Emory college women uses *bitch* and *slut*. Further, the study was designed to investigate if the participants used the two words, as address or reference, for identity construction, specifically to index a close relationship between one another. In order to measure the research question, I used a survey measure and facilitated five group interviews. The survey—through the inquiries of average use and use based on relationship as well as personal perceptions of use—and the interviews—based on questions of personal and general perception of use—yielded conclusive results and answers to the research question.

The survey suggests that, though relatively low, the respondents used *bitch* and *slut*, while the interviews grant insight into when and how the participants utilized the two words. Based on information from both techniques, the sample of Emory college women are using *bitch* at least once a week amongst their close friends in order to achieve various relational works. *Bitch* is reported as being context dependent, meaning it is used based on who is around and where the interaction is taking place. Further, *bitch* is used among established close friends to demonstrate a close relationship, thereby conducting work on their relationship. Claiming the power of *bitch*, though often discerned as negative, and using it with a friend can demonstrate the depth of their relationship, for it requires a pre-existing understanding and rapport in order to use the word. The negative power of *bitch* is transformed to represent the power of their relationship. A reclaimed version of *bitch* is accessed, but only in order to demonstrate a close relationship among a fellow woman. However, even when used among fellow women, there requires a specific relationship, an established close relationship, for it to be used and understood as positive.

In addition to identity work, *bitch* establishes a tone and can create a superficial environment. It can set the tone or the perception of the situation. Specifically, by addressing a woman as *bitch*, she will understand the proceeding conversation to be fun and light or not serious in nature. Further, though various demographics were mentioned in regard to use of *bitch* specifically, the reported use of it belongs to all of the study participants in their respective speech communities, and all of them seem to use it for similar reasons, at least in a friendly context.

As for *slut*, the study participants rarely use the word. Based on the survey data and the interviews, *slut* is still considered pejorative and too negative to use in general. *Slut* is reported as used in the speech community, but not for close friend or relationship identity work, rather for negative identity work. Calling another woman a *slut*, even if said in a joking manner, is a judgment of their sexuality and is meant to identify them as promiscuous. This demonstrates that the power of *slut* is disregarded, for the negativity is too overwhelming to utilize among friends. Further, participants reported that the awareness of slut shaming, due to the close, concentrated college community, is high among women. Study participants use *slut* to judgmentally refer to other women, pointing out her sexual relations and shaming her for acting in such a way. Even mention of *slut* in a friendly manner was referred to as *sloot*, yet still described in use when a woman dresses or acts provocatively. The fact that the word has to be transformed and thereby eluded to rather than explicitly said for relational work demonstrates that the word is too negative to utilize among individuals.

Based on the results and analysis, the research questions were answered relatively close to the hypothesis. As for whether or not women use *bitch* or *slut*, generally, the answer is both yes and no. *Bitch* is used among the sample of college women, while *slut* is avoided. *Bitch* is

self-reportedly used, on average, once a week in address or reference, while *slut* is never or hardly ever used as an address or reference. According to the study population, *bitch* can be used to maliciously refer to a woman or to index a close relationship to a current friend, depending on the context (environment, who is present, the relationship to others present, etc.). *Slut* is rarely used, but when it is, it is almost always perceived as negative. It constructs a negative identity about the individual or when referring to another individual.

Theoretically, this study demonstrates that the represented speech communities can utilize words for their purposes. Thereby, if strongly motivated or if the sampled speech community recognizes a deficit for their communicative or indexing purposes, *bitch* and *slut* can be adopted to use for identity work. As that relates to reclamation, use of *bitch* in reports of daily interaction suggests that an already reclaimed version of *bitch* was being accessed for use. Conversely, the persistent negative meaning of *slut*, according to the study population, prohibits reclamation and use for identity work. Additionally, these findings support the idea that speech communities share expectations, not necessarily linguistic forms. Based on the interviews, the respective and represented speech communities understand the use of *bitch* or *slut* based on their context, but the forms are not recognized as consistent throughout the broader community, as measured through the surveys.

Despite theoretical implications, there are various limitations to the study. The survey did not specify whether the subject perceived *bitch* or *slut* as positive/negative in the relationship matrix or in the report of average frequency. This only allowed insight into one aspect of a possible context dependent use. Also, the short answer questions could be clarified even more in order to assure direct answers to questions. Additionally, though I intentionally organized the interviews with friends in order to provide a comfortable, familiar environment to talk about

words that could make people uncomfortable, that could have biased their responses.

Specifically, if they did not consider each other close friends, as close as is required to use *bitch* or *slut*, than they may not have reported entirely accurate results. Further, more attention should have been made to the use of address and reference and its affect on the use of *bitch* and *slut*.

Though the forms were quantitatively measured in the survey, the intention and rationale behind the use was unclear and the distinction was not consistently clarified during the interviews.

Future and more attention to the form and use could contribute to the findings. Finally, all of the findings are based on self-reported use and perceptions. Therefore, the information may not be indicative of how the use is spontaneously used in real interactions.

Future directions for study could be to further investigate use by various cultural groups, specifically age and race, and the use of *bitch* and *slut* in high schools or various other speech communities, like in the workplace. Further, the methodological control for gender could be removed and the study can include asking men about their perceptions of *bitch* and *slut* use among women and men. This could investigate whether or not male perceptions could influence female use or whether or not men use *bitch* or *slut* in their interactions. Additional methods could also be utilized, including collecting tokens of *bitch* and *slut* in order to measure their use in interactions. The study could also be extended to other mediums, like the use of the words over the Internet or in the media. Finally, the study could be conducted in 5-10 years to track patterns of use, which could show how the use of the words evolve in the next generation of speakers, either among this specific college campus or another community of speakers.

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APPENDIX A: SURVEY MEASURE

Demographic Information

Age: _____

Class Year: _____

Hometown: _____

Race/Ethnicity: _____

Involved in a sorority? (circle one): Yes or No

Directions:

Please complete this survey. Choose the answer that best applies to you if choices are given. If the question is open-ended, please detail your response in the space provided. The survey should take about 10 minutes to complete.

This survey asks you to answer questions about two words in English: *bitch* and *slut*. The following questions will ask how or if you use the terms as an address or reference, in what contexts you would use them, and other opinions you may have of the words. To clarify:

-Address terms are words used to try to get the attention of someone else or to speak directly to someone. For example: “**Bitch**, come on, we’re late!” or “Can you hand me that book, **slut**?”

-Reference terms are words used to reference or allude to someone. For example: “My best **bitch** Jordan said that.” or “This **slut** cut me off in traffic the other day.”

Bitch

1. How often do you use this term as an address term to other women (circle the best answer)?
(Example: “**Bitch**, please”)

Many times a day---About once a day---About once a week---Hardly ever---Never

2. How often do you use this term as a reference term to other women (circle the best answer)?
(Example: “She is a **bitch**...”)

Many times a day---About once a day---About once a week---Hardly ever---Never

3. Using the table below, rate how often (if at all) you would use the specific term as an **address** with each of the given types of conversation partner. (*Example: “**Bitch**, please”*)

Key: 1=Not likely at all, will never use it with someone like this

5=Very likely, use it all the time with people like this

	The person is also a woman					The person is a man				
Close friend	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Acquaintance	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Stranger	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Parent	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Partner	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Boss	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Professor	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

4. Using the table below, rate how often (if at all) you would use the specific term as a **reference** with each of the given types of conversation partner. (*Example: "She is a **bitch**..."*)

Key: 1=Not likely at all, will never use it with someone like this

5=Very likely, use it all the time with people like this

	The person is also a woman					The person is a man				
Close friend	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Acquaintance	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Stranger	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Parent	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Partner	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Boss	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Professor	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

5. Why do you use the term?

6. What do you think the term says to the person you are talking to?

7. Do you think the term is or can be positive and/or negative?

8. What kind of person do you think uses it frequently as either an address, a reference, or both? Do you perceive others using it positively and/or negatively (i.e. other women, men, etc.)? (Examples--address: "**Bitch** please"; reference: "She is a **bitch**...")

Slut

1. How often do you use this term as an address term to other women (circle the best answer)? (Example: "**Slut**, please")

Many times a day---About once a day---About once a week---Hardly ever---Never

2. How often do you use this term as a reference term to other women (circle the best answer)? (Example: "She is a **slut**...")

Many times a day---About once a day---About once a week---Hardly ever---Never

3. Using the table below, rate how often (if at all) you would use the specific term as an **address** with each of the given types of conversation partner. (*Example: “**Slut**, please”*)

Key: 1=Not likely at all, will never use it with someone like this
5=Very likely, use it all the time with people like this

	The person is also a woman					The person is a man				
Close friend	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Acquaintance	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Stranger	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Parent	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Partner	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Boss	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Professor	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

4. Using the table below, rate how often (if at all) you would use the specific term as a **reference** with each of the given types of conversation partner. (*Example: “She is a **slut**...”*)

Key: 1=Not likely at all, will never use it with someone like this
5=Very likely, use it all the time with people like this

	The person is also a woman					The person is a man				
Close friend	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Acquaintance	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Stranger	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Parent	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Partner	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Boss	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
Professor	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5

5. Why do you use the term? If you don't, why don't you use this term?

6. What do you think the term says to the person you are talking to?

7. Do you think the term is or can be positive and/or negative?

8. What kind of person do you think uses it frequently as either an address, a reference, or both? Do you perceive others using it positively and/or negatively (i.e. other women, men, etc.)? (Examples--address: "**Slut**, please"; reference: "She is a **slut**...")

If you would like to follow-up on your responses or you have questions about the study, please contact me (Alex Lopez, amlopez@emory.edu)

APPENDIX B: SURVEY CODES

Bitch

Why do you use the term? If you don't, why don't you use this term?

Common (7)
 Joke (10)
 Emotion (6)
 Endearment (6)
 Emphasis (3)
 Behavior description (18)
 Friends (9)
 Close (5)
 Anger (21)
 Mean (5)
 Address (3)
 Reference (0)
 Context Dependent (2)
 Humor (1)
 Dislike (2)

What do you think the term says to the person you are talking to?

Mean (7)
 Emotion (8)
 Affection (1)
 Behavior description (9)
 Friend (8)
 Rude (3)
 Casual (2)
 Context Dependent (8)
 Joke (8)
 Dislike (14)
 Jealous (2)
 Anger (6)
 Close/comfortable (8)
 Endearment (2)
 Insult (1)
 Offensive (4)

Do you think the term is or can be positive and/or negative?

Positive (0)
 Negative (27)
 Both (10)
 ~Both (31)

Slut

Why do you use the term? If you don't, why don't you use this term?

No use (35)
 --Shaming (4)
 --Derogatory (3)
 --Degrading (2)
 --Judgmental (2)
 Judgment (3)
 Promiscuous (15)
 Behavior description (10)
 Dislike (4)
 Joke (5)
 Common (1)
 Close (2)
 --Friends (3)
 Negative (2)
 Demeaning (2)

What do you think the term says to the person you are talking to?

Mean (1)
 Promiscuous (20)
 Negative (8)
 Condemn (1)
 Judgment (8)
 Disrespect (2)
 Behavior description (5)
 Close/comfortable (3)
 Joke/humor (5)
 --Friends (4)
 Dislike (5)
 Emotion expression (2)
 Endearment
 --Friends (1)
 Self issues (3)
 Offend (4)

Do you think the term is or can be positive and/or negative?

Positive (0)
 Negative (55)
 Both (2)
 ~Both (11)

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Start with free conversation—talk about anything. (Weekend plans, holiday plans, how the semester is going, etc.). Then move onto more general linguistic questions:

1. Have you ever received comments about your speech (things you say, how you pronounce something, etc.) since coming to school? Accent, any vocabulary you might use?
 - a. *Anecdote:* I use to say cozy—meant cool—never heard anyone else who was familiar with that.
2. Have you ever heard other people use phrases or words that you've never encountered before? How did you perceive that person? Or maybe heard something that was used in a different way than you were familiar with?
 - a. *Anecdote:* I'd never heard 'hella' until I came to school. When I learned it, I automatically assumed the person was from Cali; Shopping in NY and two young women telling me my shoes were "bad".

*“Alright, now we'll move on to questions that require you to kind of compare two things. There are **no** right or wrong answers to these questions; just want to get your opinions or thoughts on these topics”:*

3. What is the difference between a fight and an argument?
4. What do you think it means when one says 'hooking-up'?
5. What is the difference between calling someone a jerk, dork, or an asshole?
6. What is the difference between the words dude and bro?
7. Could a woman be a dude or bro? Do you notice if women use dude or bro among each other?--
If 'no' to the previous question (6a), playing off of the word(s) dude and bro...
8. Are there any equivalents to *dude* and *bro* that are used more among women? If so, which ones?
9. [Have you ever heard *bitch* or *slut* being used among women, like dude or bro?]*—In the event that they do not say or think about the tokens, should attempt to introduce the frame?*
10. How are the words *bitch* and *slut* used?
 - a. Playfully, to exhibit a connection? Negatively?
11. If you say *bitch* or *slut*, who would you say it to? Why?
12. Have you ever used *bitch* or *slut* among your friends?
 - a. Close friends, acquaintances, etc.?

13. If you don't use the words *bitch* or *slut*, is there another kind of term that you use that serves a similar purpose?
 - a. Words that convey a close relationship?
 - b. Words that you use to describe people you may not like or may not respect? (ie. loose with their sexuality, etc.)
14. Who uses the words *bitch* and *slut*? What's required in order to use the words *bitch* and *slut*? A certain relationship...?
 - a. Can women say it to women? Can men say it to men?
15. Has anyone ever used *bitch* or *slut* to you, outside of a derogatory meaning? Who used it? What was the situation?
16. How did you feel when the person used *bitch* or *slut* to you? How did you feel about or towards the person after?
17. Do you notice any groups of people that do not use *bitch* and *slut*?
18. Do you only notice it among certain people? What is the context/relationship? Close friends?
Ask if their close friends are in sororities, the same sororities, or not in Greek life
19. What would happen if you used it to a man? A woman? Your boss? A professor? Parents? Why?
20. Do you hear *bitch* more often than *slut*? Or vice versa? Or at all?
21. Have you heard *betch*? Is there a difference?
22. Do you know where the words come from?

Transcript Conventions

Wor--: Interruption

Word-- or *--Word*: Speaking immediately after someone

[]--additional information, sounds in interview

//: Two participants speaking at the same time, in parallel with one another.

...: Pauses

[...]: Skip/connect passages

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW #1

Group Profile

3 women

Same sorority

Melanie	Natalie	Allie
20	21	20
Asian	Indian	Black
Junior	Junior	Junior
TX	OR	TN

Transcription

I: Cool...so, it starts like really generally. So, have you ever received comments about your speech? Like, anything you say or the way you pronounce something since you've come to school?

M: Like an accent?

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, it could be an ac—

M:--I get that sometimes.

I: Really?

M: Yeah.

I: Interesting—

M: Well, one time, actually, we were in Schwartz and it was after rehearsal or something—

I: --Mhm—

M:--and everyone was leaving and I was, for some reason, really angry, and I was like, I asked them to wait for me, but they just took off. And I was like [*screams*] “YA’LLLLLL”

[*laughs*]

M:--and I was like “ohhhhhh, it came out...that was so weird”

[*mumbles, giggles*]

M:--ok...you can go. *You guys can go!*

[*laughs*]

M:--but yeah, I get that, ya’ll, I just throw it around and people point that out.

I: Yeah.

M: That’s really the only thing. I mean, [omit] makes fun of me all the time for—

N:--the way you say “that’s /sow/ cute”, the way you like...

[*laughs*]

N: ‘So’ is /sow/ Texas.

M: Really?

[inaudible; agreement]

N: Like, I noticed it and I was like, aw, that's so awesome. Like, you're like, "that's /sow/ cute!"

M: I don—I'm not even going to say that now.

[laughs]

N: NO, I love it, I love it so much! I really do, I love it, it's very cool—

A: I feel like, I don't know, I use a lot of words that most people don't use...

I: Really?

A: Yeah.

I: For instance?—

A: Ummm...let me think...um....[3 second pause]...I don't know, sometimes it just comes out. Because, I realized, I have a really good friend at home, and we make up words...but then it comes out here sometimes. Like, um [3second pause] like, I don't know, you know that tingly feeling that you get, like pins and needles?

I: Yeah—

A: Ok,

I: Like, when something's asleep?

A: Yeah!—

I: Mhm.

A: Well, sometimes, I get that feeling and I—we call it 'electromacution'. —[I: laughs]—yeah—I feel like I got electrocuted. And they're like, "you mean electrocuted?" and I'm like, well, not really, like that's our word for, like, the feeling—

[I: laughs]

N:--that's so funny.

[LAUGHS]

A: I mean, I was like, I know these people must think I'm not intelligent or anything cause, I'm like, I know, but—

N:--electromacuted—

A: Yeah, I'm not electrocuted, but—

N: Yeah, yeah, yeah—

A: --I get that feeling, so...I'm like, dang, electromacution, and they're like, "excuse me", and I'm like, don't worry about it, you didn't hear anything—[I: laughs]—I just like shut it down. So, I try not to use like inside jokes or, like, certain words...but sometimes it just comes out and I don't mean to and then people, I feel like afterwards, these people think I'm an idiot, like...I don't know how to use words [I: giggles], I promise I do.

N: I get made fun of a lot for saying dude

M: You DO say that a lot!—

N:--I say dude, ah/uh, it's a problem

N: It's because my brother, when he was in eighth grade, went through the 'dude' phase, obviously...who doesn't say 'dude' in eighth grade, as an eighth grade boy? And so, like...when we would talk, I'd say dude, dude, dude, dude, dude, guess what?! Oh my god, dude, that's

awesome, dude, dude...just, now I'm just always like [...]. I feel like I use it as a term of affection.

[*laughs*—A: A term of affection...]

N: But actually...I call my friends 'dude' so much.

I: It's just like a thing.

N: Yeah. I also say 'bud' a lot.

M: Dude, you do(ooo).

N: And—

A: --Bud—

N: I don't think I get made fun of, but people definitely [...]

[*skip*]

[10:15]

I: Um...ok, so what would you say is the difference between calling someone a jerk, a dork, or an asshole?

[*slight pause*]—

M: Asshole's the worst—

[*laughs*]

M:--then jerk, and then, dork was what the other one was?

I: Yeah

A: Some people see dork as like, uh, a playful, like flirtacious like—

M: --it can almost be a compliment—

A: Yeah, it's like, "haha, you're such a dork!", like...

I: Interesting...

A: Like you're trying to say [...] but then a jerk is kind of like, uhhhh...you've kind of crossed a line a little bit

I: Uh huh

A:...but we're still kind of friends. And, like, you're an asshole, like, I don't know, some people use it as if it's flirtacious, but I don't think it's, like, noo, you kind of really messed up right now.

N: I almost use...like, it depends on like if I'm joking, they always get kind of mixed up. If I really mean it then dork is still, like, usually playful. Um, asshole is still almost like funny, but if I call someone a jerk, then like, it's really an insult. I don't know, that's just like how we use it in my family. I think my dad would prefer to be called an asshole than a jerk. Dad you're being a serious...don't be such a jerk! He takes it really seriously--.

I: Interestingggg...

A:--I could see it that way too.

N: Being a jerk implies that you purposely are very much...you're doing something wrong.

Whereas like, I feel like asshole just falls into the like college cussing lingo—

I: Gotcha—

N: --And it just gets mixed in

I: Interesting—

N: For me, that's personally what I think.

I: Interesting. Hm. Ok, well, actually, Natalie, you might be the expert on this one, um, what would you say is the difference between the words dude and bro?

[LAUGHS]—

M: [to Natalie] This is your domain! [laughs]—take it away--

N: --Like, it's really hard because I use bro a lot also

M: You're like, 'dudebro'.

I: Dude bro, [laughs]

N: Yeah. Um, I don't think there's a difference in meaning. I think I say [...] bro more, or, I use bro less frequently because I use it more when...when there's a very slight [mutters]. It's like, If I want to be more like, it's like a closer term, I use it for people that I'm closer to. Dude, I call everyone dude.

I: We're all dudes.

N: You walk into the room, you're a dude; sitting, you're a dude;

M: [to Natalie] But WE ARE bros.

N: But, like, if I'm talking to someone [...] like, I won't say bro to people to people I don't know very well.

I: Interesting...

N: And I'd say dude to people I do know—

I: Interesting—

N:--But the meaning is generally the same.

I: Interesting.

N: Yeah.

I: So, I mean like, Natalie would be like, that dude, the one that's walking over....

N: Yeah—

I: --right over there—

N: I don't even say, I don't even say like 'that dude' or like 'that bro', I just, I address people [mutters/multiple voices]

M: This is also a therapy session, Natalie

[laughs]

I: [laughs] this is actually a hidden intervention.

N:[..] A necessary one!

I: Um...so what about you two? I mean, I know sometimes it might vary, some people are selective in how they use 'dude' and 'bro', like, for example, could a women be a dude or bro? Do you notice other women using it around one another? Outside of Nat?

[simultaneous, multiple responses]

A: I don't—

M:--I never use either. I'll use 'dude' occasionally, like, with my brothers, but...I say bro if I'm like kidding.

I: Oh, I see—

M: I never use it just, like....yeah bro.

[*sound off*—yeah bro]

I: I get you [*laughs*]

A: So have you heard [...] but, like, college campuses in general, if you're called like a bro, you're like a frat, douchebag?

I: Oh yeah. I've heard that.

A: Like, he's such a bro, like...I've never used it in like—

I: [*laughs*]—Natalie's like, yes, yes

N: It was my entire freshman year. Calling out bros. That's actually how I started saying the word bro so frequently.

A: But I feel like...girls could be called dude, I don't know, maybe because I play video games a lot. Like, DUDE stop...and I'm like, I'm totally a chick. But, um...I don't know, I feel like dude anybody can use, especially like even little kids. Like 'dude, that was so cool, did you see that?!'—

I: Oh my goodness, I know—

A: But bro, maybe it's just on college campuses, but I don't think I've ever heard anybody else like...adults just use bro.

I: So, it might be like an age specific thing?

N: I think so.

I: Interesting. Um, so then, like, I mean, like even you caught yourself kind of like, yeah, you hear dude and sometimes like sure it can be a little bit more general but you still kind of catch yourself like wait a minute...--

A: Yeah—

I: --I'm still a—

A:--I got a bra on, guys—

I: Exactly! Um, so then would you say are there any equivalents to dude and bro that are used like more among women or like are exclusive to women?

[*brief pause*]

M: Girl.

I: Girl. That's a good one.

A: I used to hear that all the time. Hey girl hey!

N:--Which is funny because I don't like it when guys go 'hey girl, what's up?' When I'm like, hey girl!,

M:--I do that A LOT.

N: Babe?

M:--I never use it—

N:--I don't use it but I hear it.

[...]

M: Oh, people say hey boo.

I: Aw yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

A: Yeah. Boo, or—

I: You got it, girl—

A:--like, babe, honey, or sweetpea. I don't know, my dad uses a lot of—

I:--pet names—

A: Yeah—

I:--I'm all about pet names—

A: My dad uses pet names all time [...]

I: Well, then [...] I'm kind of..that's interesting. A word just popped into my head and I'm curious if you guys have ever noticed this but have you ever heard, like, like...like either bitch or slut being used among women? Kind of like similar to dude and bro?

A: Yes

I: Yeah! Have you ever heard of that?

[*simultaneous responses*]

M: Yeah, I've heard of that. I mean, I don't think I do it—

N:--I did it last night.

I: Really? What was the context?

A: She's a bad bitch

N: I mean, like, yeah bitch, we're gonna do this! Like , waa!

I: Interesting.

N: Like, but it was like very, in front of my very close friends.

I: Interesting. So then, like—

A: Have you heard 'ho'.

I: Oh yeah—

A: Like hey, ho. Like—

N:--I have heard that before—

M: --What?—

I: That's interesting. Well then, sort of like as that as an example, then how are the words used, if you ever noticed it? Is it like playfully or, like, how is it used?

M: Generally...

A: It's kind of become a vernacular especially in like rap songs. The difference between if you just call a girl a bitch, like, that's offensive. But if you call her a bad bitch, apparently, it's like—

M: --it's a good--

A: Yeah!

I:--Oooh!

A: And I was like, wait, that's still not...you just put bad in front of it. Like, you think like, oh...or I'm a boss ass bitch. Like...you're still being called a bitch, though. And I've caught myself saying it sometimes, and I don't mean to—

I: --Yeah—

A: I usually apologize after...I don't want to make that a common thing to say.

I: Mhm—

A: Cause then you're like perpetrating it. But, like, she a bad bitch over there. No, no, no, don't call me a bitch.

I: Yeah.

N: I think I've definitely, like with a group of friends before, when I was juiced up or drunk or something, I've definitely, like, walked into a room and been like "what'sup bitches?!"

[laughs]

M: I, yeah, I've done that.

N: But, like, it was in a playful way. I think like when girls call each other it, it usually is in a playful way unless they really mean, like, unless they're like—

A: -- [side comment] you bitch—

N: jealous or something.

A: But then, if a guy says it—

N: I'm like, excuse me? Call me a bitch one more time.

[LAUGHS]

I: So then, I mean, you guys kind of touched on it, so, like, if you were to say the words or, like, when you do say the words, like, who would you say it around? Friends? That's kind of the consensus I'm getting—

A & M: --Yeah—

A: I know that—

M:--they wouldn't take it the wrong way—

A: Right!

I: Ok. So you kind of have to have, like, this certain kind of connection...?

M:--Yeah—

I:--beforehand....oh, ok. Interesting...

N: There's like a precedence set—

M: Like, I wouldn't go up to a random and be like "Hey bitch!"

[laughs] [mumbles]

N: I'd be like, I'm sorry!

M: Hey bitch!

A: Excuse me?

N: She'd be like [sound effects of a loading gun]

A: I'm a lady!

[giggles]

I: So, then, what do you think, like, what does it kind of like denote, then? I mean, so if, you have to have that precedence, sort of like, ok, like, we understand. And then when you say it, like, what does it denote?

[silence]

A: Hm...

[silence—5 seconds]

N: What exactly do you mean?

I: Sort of like, when you say it, what kind of like, like... what are you trying to say by saying it? Like, if I'm like "hey bitch, what's up?" Like, what it is that I'm try to convey by like using it..instead of just saying like "hey dude, what's up?"

A: It's just, it's kind of like you just interchanged 'hey girl' with that. Like...I don't know. I don't think I've ever just said 'hey bitch'.

M:--Yeah--

N: --I usually use it when I'm like pumped up or and talking about something very, like...like, it doesn't have to be something that, like, truly, like, that I'm passionate about or something.

I: Oh, ok—

N: Like, if I'm just like juiced—

M: It's like, lets get crazy—

N: --Yeah!

[*laughs*]

A: Juiced! Hah, I've heard that before! Oh my god!

N: I say that way too often. Another thing I should think about cutting out of my daily vernacular.

A: I'm juiced—

N: It's not going to happen, I just should do it...

I: I love it so much—

A: Or 'I'm turnt'.

I: Turnt—

A: Yes, turnt

N: All turnt up. That's all I heard last night at the concert. Let's get turnt up Atlanta!

[*laughs*]

N: Like...ok.

A: How about you turn it down?

N: Yeah. Turnt down.

A: It's not even turned. It's turnt

[...]

N: But yeah. I think the general difference for bitch is like, at least for me, I use it when I'm excited or joking around. Whenever I call it, I call women. And...it's different than dude because dude is just very like chill, it's almost like an affectionate term. But I would never be like 'aw, bitch'. [...] Unless I was like "but you're my bitch!" People have said that to me before--

I: Really? And how did you feel about that person afterwards? Or then, how did you just feel in general--

N: Well, it was mostly guys. At first I was like, don't call me bitch.

[*laughs*]

N:...but then thanks.

[*LAUGHS*]

I: So wait, then because it was a guy—

N: It was *name*! He was like, but you're my main bitch... And I was like, ugh.

M: But he really means you're a friend. Like, you know, best friends.

I: Interesting. But, it's still like, you know, kind of caught you off guard initially because it was a guy; so, like it a woman had said that though, then, like—

M:--then it's ok—

N:--I'd be like “aw yeah, you're my main bitch too!”

I: Oh, ok, I get it—

A: It's like friend, but then...

M: It's like a deeper level of friendship.

A: Yeah—

I: Interesting.

A: But then you're like the sassy part of my friends, that's why you get the term bitch—

I: Interesting...

A: --But, it's not in a negative way.

N: Well, I think the thing is when guys say it is that, I just immediately relate it to like [pause]...the whole system of patriarchy. Even if they don't mean it like that, I/s/...I guess like, we do like perpetuate that if we use the word also, so. But, like, and, like have you ever talked about how it's not like what you say but the way things are perceived?

I: Yeah—

N: So, like, it's the power that you hold in using that word—

I: --Mhm—

N: And, I don't want you to tap into that.

I: I see. And so, that's if a man says it to a woman?—

N: --Mhm.

I: Ok. Well, what about when guys say it to each other? Does it still do that same thing?--

N:--I think it's like the same as when girls say it too each other.

A: When guys say bitches to each other?

N: Yeah.

A: I feel like, yeah, when someone says it—when a guy says it to another guy..it's still kind of like that patriarchy thing—

M:--That's true—

N: It's kind of derogatory.—

A: They're...demasculating them.

N: 'You're being such a bitch right now!'—

A: Yeah...or, like, they use female terms [...] Like wait, explain that to me, break it down...how is he acting like that? How do you act like one? And then it's like you're basically saying don't be like such a woman. Well, what does that mean to you then? Then that's when they get heated.

I: So, then, I want to touch on two..you mentioned like, again if like women were saying it to each other, it kind of depends on that sort of like, established relationship but it also depends on context, did I understand that correctly?

A: Mhm—

I: Yeah, so you gotta be juiced? *[laughs]*

N: I gotta be juiced--

M: --Yeah—

A: Some people don't need to be, they're just like—

I: --that's just like—

A: --It's a higher or closer friendship kind of thing. And it's something that you can only say between each other. But then if you said it to somebody else, it'd be like derogatory. You save that, kind of...save bitch for like your best friends.

I: Interesting. We've been touching a lot on bitch, do you ever hear slut used like in kind of that same way?

A: Hmm...

M: Not so much.

I: No?

A: No.

[multiple responses]

M: I wouldn't be like, hey slut!

A: Yeah! You know...

I: That sounds so Mean Girls. Hey slut!

[laughs]

M: Like, I feel like that's, it's like, if you'd said it like that, it would be like..it could come across as joking but there's like an underlying tone that you actually mean it—

N: --yeah—

I: Ohhh...

M: So...I never use that...

[multiple voices, incomprehensible]

M: Like, the other day, when we were going out, I was like, "let's go bitches!" but I wouldn't be like "let's go, sluts!"

[laughs]

A: But I've heard girls like, especially when they are, I quote Natalie here, 'juiced', that they're like really drunk or, when girls are dancing very provocative, they're like, oh my god, you're such a slut!

I: And girls would be saying it to other girls?

A: Mhm.

I: Oh, ok. Interesting.

A: And they were like, saying it jokingly but then at the same time be like no, but really, you're kind of acting like a slut.

I: Interesting...

A: And that's..not—

I: So, even if it's like you're kind of coming across as a joke, like, it's still, even then, has like an

element of—

[*multiple responses*]

I:--shaming to it?--

N: --Yeah!—

M: Yeah.—

I: I see. Interesting...

N: Yeah—

A: You're throwing shade when you say that.

N: I, like, will not tolerate it when guys say it to a girl.

I: Ok. So, that was definitely one that guys can't—

A: No—

I: it—

M: --can't cross that line.

I: And they can't even say it to each other, either?

N: They can say it to each other, but they can't talk about girls like that.

I: I see what you're saying—

A: Have I ever heard guys say slut to each other? [*pause*] I've heard manwhore.

N: I've heard them say it.

I: So, then, I keep kind of relating it to men and women, but do you notice any groups of people then that don't use the words bitch or slut?

[*slight pause*]

A: Yeah...some people who I feel like...[*pause*]. I think it's granted to take offense to some things, but if you take offense to every little thing,

I: Mhm—

A: it's actually quite annoying, to me. You know..um...I feel like those kind of people wouldn't, like, dare say anything cause you feel like you're gonna; I think it's caring to not want to try and offend people, but, if you take it to such an extreme, people are like—

N:--it's not realistic.

A: It's not—

N: There's no way you can sensor what everybody [*mumbling*]

I: That's true.

N: I think it's more useful to learn how to take things to heart and to know which words do apply to you then to try and get...you can try to get other people to not say things, you know, like I tell other people to don't use the word retarded—

I: Oh, I see what you're saying...

N:--but, the truth is, I hear the word retard every day—

M:--you can't go around yelling at every body—

N: Yeah, you have to build up a skin but also [...]

A: --Yeah—

I: Yeah. Well, what about, I guess, kind of touching back on context, right when you're about to

go out and you're like, let's go bitches, I mean, it's close friends but was that like before going a mixer—

M: --yeah, like in that cont—

I: So, like everyone in the sorority? Yeah, I mean, I know that's kind of like close friends, I mean—

M: --Yeah—

I: --so they happen to be in the same sorority. That's interestinggg...Cause I was thinking like, I was wondering if like...because Greek life in itself is so concentrated, you know like how some words, yes you may be able to use it then, but you like absolutely can't use it out of that context—

N: I think they're words that exist only within the Greek system—

I: --Really?—

N: --particularly within like the frat party—

M:--zone—

N:--scene—

I: Intersting. Are bitch and slut, are those like—

N: I mean, they're-

I: --words that do that—

N: --I mean, they're frequented—

M: --yeah—

N: I feel like all these words are frequented—

A:--but I feel like you can say like...the phrase let's go bitch if you're gonna have any night out, you know?

I: Yeah—

A: --like a night on the town--

N: --That's true.

I: Interestin—

A: You're gonna go...like...let loose, and have fun--

N:--yeah—

A:--like, we're gonna party tonight, bitches.

N: Gonna get turnt up...

M: Yeah, I feel like you use those terms in a group..before you go out to have fun—

N: Yeah—

A: Yeah, you wouldn't just say that—

I: Interesting—

A: --like, you're at lunch [...] and you're getting up and you're like, alright let's go bitches.

Like, no, I don't think that's—

M:--that's not funny—

A:--even if you guys are like, we're friends—

M:--not appropriate—

A:--you wouldn't use it in that context. Nightlife brings out a different side of people.

N: Right. I think it's like the social, going out aspect of it. And in college, it's usually just thrown around.

I: Well, then, now I'm intrigued. Cause I mentioned Mean Girls too, I'm pretty sure they say it in this, have you guys ever heard betch?

N: Yeah—

M:--wait, what?—

A:--betch?—

I: Yeah, betch—

A:...I've heard fetch.

I: I always wondered, like, I mean, how is that diff, cause it sounds like bitch but how is it different

N: betchesss

[*LAUGHS—incomprehensible comments*]

A: It sounds like precious and [*chuckles*]

N: I have heard that I think more like only between girls or guys who are like mocking them.

Because it seems like it's a distorted way to say bitch. It *seems* like it hints at, like I'm not saying it but you're seriously a bitch.

[*incomprehensible comments*]

N: It's like, we're close enough that I can be like hey bitch but you know I don't mean it.

I: So, it's like, you're kind of saying the same thing without actually saying the word?

N: Right—

M: Mhm.

APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW #2

Group Profile

3 women

Three different sororities

Susie	Linda	Mary
21	21	22
White	White	White
Junior	Senior	Senior
OH	TN	TX

Skip to 18:52:

I: Now, what do you think, or is there, what is the difference between the words dude and bro?

[pause]

L: Dude is more gender neutral. Like, I could theoretically call you all dude—

[omit comment]

L: And it's more common to call someone a dude than a bro—

M: Like dude, I don't know.

L: Bro is more gendered.

I: Does it insinuate anything different? Like, by calling someone a dude as opposed to like calling someone a bro?

L: I hate being called dude or bro.

[laughs]

L: It assumes just like we're pals, we're buds.

I: Oh, ok. So assumes like a certain relationship—

M: Girls just don't use the word bro--

I: Really?—

M: --seriously. If you're kidding maybe, sure, I feel like.

S: I've never used it. I thought about, I was texting my brother, trying to be on his level, I wanted to call him something endearing, like bud, but the first thing was do I say bro? Because he's literally my brother. I would say bro to him. But only at certain times. But I've never—

L: It's an excuse between guys to like establish kinship.

I: So, and by used, do you mean both dude and bro? Like exclusively among guys to other men?

S: I don't see guys using them differently. Um...except maybe when guys are trying to be fratty or speaking fratty like in a fratty context. I've heard bro instead of dude. But, other than that, I think they're used completely interchangeably. I've heard brah...

L: Brah is more racial. There's a difference between bro and brah.

[...]

M: Dude, I'm not your brah!

I: So then, do you notice like, I know we sort of have our own sentiments about it but do you notice like other women saying dude like to one another? Or did they..or, if they were to use it, can they like only say it to men too? Or do men say it to women?—

M: I feel like California people use the word dude.

L: California girls. I wouldn't call a girl a bro really ever.

[laughs]

S: I've never heard a girl say bro to another girl.

I: Oh, ok.

M: Or they'll be like, he's such a bro.

S: Yeah, yeah.

I: Interesting...

S: Um. But I've heard girls say dude. Kind of like a cooler term.

L: For girls. It's gender neutral.

S: I've never heard anyone say dudette.

I: So then, Misha you mentioned this, like you kind of like don't notice that women use dude or bro and I kind of agree but do you feel like are there any equivalents to dude or bro that are used more among women?

L: Sista

M: What would it be. Girlfriend.

L: GF. Girl.

S: Chica.

M: I don't really use those words, but I've heard them.

L: Lady.

[...]

S: I use lots of terms of endearment. Darling, schnokums. But like only to my girlfriends. [...]

M:--Bebe.

S: Yeah, bebe.

M: Hey bebe—

S: Babe. But never, never in a serious way. If I was saying like more, if I was, even like someone I'd be like 'hey girl' but if it was one of my close friends, I'd be like 'herro'.

[laughs]

I: Um, so this, I just thought of this so I apologize if this sounds off base, have you ever heard, like, either like bitch or slut being used among women in a similar fashion as dude and bro?

[slight pause]

M: Hey slut.

I: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Hey slut!

S: There was a time in high school or in middle school. —

M: --It used to be more OK—

S: --Yeah. There was a time when I felt like it was used very liberally. I don't know if it was just my age or if it was worldwide—

M:--or like ho.

I: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

S: Yeah. I'm pretty sure I used to say those words. I've never, I haven't, like—

M:--I always felt weird using the word slut—

S:--Yeah—

I: Yeah?

M:...or bitch.

S:--maybe in middle school.

I: Middle school? Interesting.

S: [*incomprehensible comments*]...you know, Mean Girls.

I: Mean Girls, that's what it was, it inspired it.

S: But I, if I say the word bitch, it's usually in a very negative connotation—

M:--really negative—

I: Interesting. So then, sort of outside, thinking outside your own use then, um...sort of like in perception of other's use, like, how are the words bitch and slut used? Can they be used playfully, do you only perceive it negatively, like how?

S: I've seen it at my sorority conference...like, hey bitches—

M: Betches. I'll call people betches sometimes.

L: And those are like softer...it like softens it--

M: Betches, betches love this, bechelor pad...I used to call our the suite the bechelor pad—

S: Bi-yatch...

S: I don't see the words really used ever...not by anyone...

L: Definitely not casually.

I: Interesting. At a sorority conference or anything like that. Um, but playing that, so like if you were to say bitch or slut, if you were to say it or if you noticed it, like, who would it be said to? Would it be said to like friends, a certain type of friend, like a subset of friends, do they have to be like close friends...?

S: I actually see it used addressed to a large group of people when someone kind of wants a little bit of power, where it's like I need to tell you guys some information, listen up, where, I don't know if it's like used as a power thing. Hey bitches, we really need to clean up all of this.

Um...and sometimes, sometimes it's just more playful, sometimes I have seen it used like that, but I don't really see—

M: --we'll call each other biddies.

S: I guess I've seen it a little when I'm on social outings, but I don't have friends who call me that.

L: At Mberry, it has a really certain meaning there. It's attached to a stereotype of Mberry girls. Like, party and hang out with athletes. Yeah, and there's like a twitter account called Mberry Bitches. Other people from other regions use it, but it has a very specific meaning.

I: So, actually, to follow up on your comment, Susie, you know, it might be used to sort of address a large group. Um...with that, with that large group, would you have to be friends with them, close friends, do you kind of have to have a relationship in order to do it—

S: --yeah, my bitches—

I:--oh, ok—

M:--yeah, like I would address my birthday email, hello main betches...

L: Yeah, like my main betch.

I: So, would it be like—

M: --I sound so betchy—

[LAUGHS]

M: I'm so betchy—

I: So then, would it be like, going off that, would it be weird if you said it around or to an acquaintance? Like someone you maybe weren't as close to?

S: For...yeah. I feel like if it was someone I was kind of friends with, they'd be like [...], but if it was like me saying it, they'd be like...betch. Um..I don't know, I don't really see it as a term, of like, I do see it as like, they got my back, bitches. We're associated...

I: So then, and this one's kind of like getting at sort of, if certain people use it but like you know, who, do you like notice, who uses the words bitch and slut? What does it re, like what's required in order to be able to use that, in that context where it's sort of like positive? Is it solely a relationship or is there anything else?

S: Yeah, it's people like who would already be using more swearing language would probably use it or be like you bitch, knowing that or expecting that the person won't be offended by it. Maybe. Um...

M: They're rough—

S: --Yeah, a little rough, like...definitely not sweet.

L: Like, for other people—

M:--Or other cultures where it's like cool to be a bad bitch. Remember? Linda and I were trying to figure out how to be a bad bitch this summer.

I: Is there like criteria?

L: Yeah, ok, a bad bitch, she told me this, she did the Mellon Mayes program this summer, so she was with other students from Morehouse and Spellman. She said that at Spellman, it meant to be, you're a bad bitch if you dress up for class. And like, put your face on, put on make up and like look really nice for class. Since then, I've been trying to....do it.

M: Do it. Live it.

I: So then, and we've kind of touched on this, women can say it to other women so long as it's kind of understood, an established relationship—

S:--understood, yeah—

I:--Yeah. But what if, like, can men say it to men? And does it insinuate the same thing?

S: I don't think it means the same thing. It's more like a feminizing term that I feel like a guy would say to make fun of another guy—

M: --for humor—

L:--just for, like shock effect—

S:--yeah.

M: Or call ‘em like a lil, a lil b.

S: Yeah. Such a little bitch—

L: --You’re being such a little bitch

S: Yeahhh, like if you’re in like—

L: --*name* is being such a little bitch. Tell *name* he’s a bitch.

[*laughs*]

S: Like, yeah, if they don’t answer their texts or like if my boyfriend’s roommate doesn’t like clean out the dishes then he’d be like ‘he’s being such a bitch’ [...] if he’s like, if we’re like waiting on him, hurry up.

I: So like, can you ever think of an instance and maybe this even goes back to like what we were talking about all the way in the beginning kind of like when you first came to college, but has, has anyone ever said bitch or slut to you like outside of like the derogatory meaning? Sort of like when a friend might have said it to you or like anything like that...cause I know when I first came to college I heard it and it was kind of like, they definitely just said that to me. I almost didn’t understand, like that kind of thing. So I guess the question is more like has anyone done it who used it and sort of like what was the situation.

L: I...I have never been colloquially called all those names. I think people assume..they don’t really hear me cuss so they wouldn’t like, call me by that word or they assume certain things about stuff I do and don’t do. I guess I just seem maybe kind of..puritan.

[*laughs*]

S: I was talking to a guy today, um, just about his job, he graduated from Emory last year and he called me and he was like ‘oh, I’m walking home, sorry if I’m like, if you hear me shivering, it’s just so effin cold’ like in the first sentence and then he totally didn’t use any language for the rest of the conversation because I think he heard me I just like didn’t use it at all. Like, he definitely kind of changed tone to a little bit more formal because I think he was just trying to gauge if I was just like...he was in *fraternity* last year so I’m sure he like, it just came out very quick and naturally. It’s just more of a fratty [...]. But I didn’t notice until the end...But yeah, in that same way, just like you were saying. He said that one time, at the beginning and I was just like, I wonder if he thinks he wants to speak on like old college terms—

M:--in college—

S: Like, maybe he’s off work and he’s trying to just like let loose or something. I just don’t ever swear.

L: People apologize for cussing in front of me. I cuss more now though.

S: It feels weird for me still.

M: Yeah, it still feels a little strange. I’ll say it for humor affect to get people’s reactions...I can’t even say it quietly, I can’t.

[*laughs*]

I: I'm the total opposite. I curse all the time. All the time!

[...]

I: So then, sort of in relation, just like to said, when someone might curse, you sort of then perceive them probably like a certain way. If someone were to say bitch or slut to you, would you perceive them a certain way?

S: I would perceive them as probably cooler than me.

I [*laughs*]

S: You know, just a little more cool, hip—

M:--what what--

S:--more culturally relevant. Just another person who's cool. I really think that, maybe because in high school, like I was like a goody goody and everyone else used language and I just didn't. I wouldn't care, but it's like that same mentality. Like ok the cool kids were like cool whether they were higher in social status they're just like in my opinion cool.

M: I just felt like cursing a lot made you sound a lot less intelligent.....so I wanted to not sound..or I just didn't want people to overhear my conversations and think god, she sounds so annoying or like so stupid.

L: For me it's more like unfriendly to me. Like unapproachable or like maybe dramatic. Or just like testy. People use cussing a lot to let out emotions that it feels like an exaggeration.

S: But if someone were like hey bitch I would be like, in my head I would think that they want to be like friends but like I would assume that our next conversation was not going to be intellectual or bad. I would assume it would be about something, not very deep, just like a fun conversation.

I: So it's like setting the tone?

S: Yeah, it definitely sets the tone [...]

I: Well, then like, now I'm curious, cause you guys sort of mentioned, you might even be part of these groups, but do you notice any groups of people who do not use the words bitch and slut, like would not say them? Like, even in the context that we sort of mentioned...

L: Maybe my Christian friends don't use those words. Also I go to a feminist group every week and those are like no no words there too. And I went to an all girls school so we would call each other slut colloquially [...]. The only way I've only heard a lot of my good friends saying bitch is, I would never permanently call someone a bitch, like she is a bitch, I would say she's being a bitch or she was being bitchy. I feel like I've never heard anyone I'm close with say like she's a bitch.

S: But I have used and heard people say it, like—

M:--she's just being really bitchy today, or something like that.

S: But yeah...I think for the most part my friends don't use bitch and slut...even—

I:--And your friends, are they from like similar backgrounds or...is it just that they share similar sentiments about cursing or those two words?

S: Probably similar backgrounds in the sense of being like good children, but I don't necessarily have rebellious friends, I would say. But I don't have friends who really push the limits of language or...

[M & L joke, 'what about us'....laughs]

M: I'm so wild...

S: Exactly. But, really a lot of people, I've been friends with them because there's a level, I like to go out but it's on the low level of the spectrum, and so I don't push the limits...and I'm friends with have similar thoughts. I do have friends who curse more, but I think I've adapted to it.

I: Well, actually then, sort of like on the flip side of that, do you notice any groups who do use bitch or slut but sort of, again, in that like positive manner. Um, yeah? Like any groups of people or like sort of like entities or like that?

M: There were a lot of girls on my freshman hall that were.....just like not very nice. Or like rougher. Ended up going in certain sororities...and were from Northern regions of the countries. But generally...normally had straight hair, didn't smile...wore nice designer bags.

L: I've heard slutty used in positive ways.

I: Really?

L: Not slut, but like...slutty *name*, for instance. One of our good friends, she describes one of her best friends from home, she's from Connecticut, and she is like of high socioeconomic status, I don't know if that's relevant, but she calls one of her friends from back home slutty *name*. And that's like an endearing term.

S: That's probably cause she hooked up with...

L: Yeah, but it's still endearing.

S: But it's still...it tags her as a flirty girl.

L: Yeah. Where as like *name* hooks up with, like I have a close friend from home who goes to school in the South but like we would never be like slutty *name*

S: I think there are some girls that are in my sorority who I perceive to be more.....who would use that term. But I still, maybe rough is the right word, but just not quite as sensitive as...I don't know if that's sensitivity or kindness or like...they're definitely not people that are like, oh my god, she's just too nice. But, um, they're probably still nice people but they don't, that's like their image isn't nice, like, that's just not the sweet, like they just didn't decide to be like the sweet, nice person. It didn't really reflect them as a person but their image is more...

I: I got to thinking about this and I wondered if people like perceived these two words, based on the context again, just sort of referencing like the whole positive thing, if people perceived it as being like exclusive to like Greek life for instance or like a specific sect of people—

S:--I would say very few Greek people spend a lot of their time in Greek life or a lot of their friends are.

L: They'd be more likely to use it—

S:--they'd be more likely to use it. I wouldn't think that a lot of the people that I met in other circles like ever. People who are about campus life inclusivity don't use negative language at all.

L: And I'm friends with a lot of people who are involved in campus life so I don't hear it a lot...

I: If you do notice it in Greek life, what would it be about Greek life that would sort of, like, makes it seem like it'd be used more?

S: The interesting thing I think about Greek life is when you enter a chapter room or go to a function, for some reason I feel like the tone of conversation just like doesn't it like stops at this level, we're not going to talk about anything really deep, nothing tooo emotional unless it's gossip, we're just going to talk about friendly things or funny things or unless it's like your really close friend but it's not a place where like it's more fun, let's not be too serious. So, that's maybe when people at least in my sorority, all gather together and we're able to use that language because it's fun, it's friendly, it implies like, like this is my fun time, I was at my school, I left school there and now like, at least I think it is, we leave school here and like we're just going to go, this is my fun time. Something about Greek life, maybe sometimes for some people I feel like it brings out the superficiality. It implies that it's just about friends [*mumbling, incomprehensible speech*]. They try to act fratty—

M: I think it depends what context you're in with Greek people, like I lived with three people in the lodge and like we don't really, that's kind of like normal life, you get to see more than just the it's great.

L: Informal little functions like that, they're going to have more fun, frivolous conversation than like if they live together.

M: Same people, different context.

L: And I wouldn't say that deep conversation is like not ever a thing.

S: I can go to dinner with them and have great conversation. [...]

I: You'd possibly say it to like a sister or someone you were close with, but what would happen if you said it to like a man, I mean, I guess that also depends on the context. Like, you're my best bitch...I'm just trying to imagine how they would even react—

M:--we used to call one of our guy friends, well, not to his face, but like a bad slut. Um... [*laughs*]

M:--guy friends would call our other guy friends a bad slut. And...I think we called him to his face once. And it was like, I could tell it was like a little...it was not taken super well.

I: Mhm..

M: Obviously. For obvious reasons.

S: I feel like it would imply like you're...like my little bitch, or maybe a little feminizing.

But...like you'll stick with me.

[*mumbling—indiscernible speech*]

I: Interesting. And so, based on what I'm sort of like gathering, like it's sort of like, by saying that you're sort of like insinuating like superficiality, like very like casual, so it's like not even a word you could use with like a boss or like your parents?

M: No

S: No.—

I: --or even like a professor?

L: I could definitely use it with my mom.

I: Nice!

M: You call your mom a bitch?

L: What?—

M: --What?

L: I wouldn't call my mom a bitch. But my mom might call someone bitchy. Definitely—

I: --could your mom be your best bitch?

L:--more likely to say bitchy than a lot of my friends. I mean, my mom probably is my best bitch--

[LAUGHS]

L:--I wouldn't call her that, but—

S:--Mom, did you know you were my best bitch—

M:--you're my best bitch, mom.

[skip]

S: Yeah, I think I would use it, I would use the word if it was like a sisterly relationship with my mom.

M: Mhm..

S: You'd never say it at the dinner table, but if Mom and I are having—

M:--counter time. When I'm sitting at the counter.

S: Yeah, while you're cooking—

M: --Yeah, while you're making dinner—

S:--listen to me...

I: Well, than, this has kind of come up organically in our conversations, but do you hear like bitch more than slut, slut more than bitch, like really in either way, like in a positive way or a negative way—

S:--I don't hear the word slut like used at all. Like, someone said it the other day, and I was like...

I: Ehhhh. What was the context..of how they said it?

S: It was one person really awkwardly coming into a room and I wasn't even there, but someone was telling me about someone in res life who walked into a room and was like 'hey sluts' and everyone in the room was like [gasp] you can't say that!

L: --You DON'T say that around res life people!—

S: And she was like the director, and like, everyone had a fit about it. All the RAs were like, I can't believe she said that, like I wonder if she's getting in trouble. Cause like, the people I know in res life, language is a huge thing.

[skip]

S: It's all about avoiding inclusivity, so language is a big deal. That was the last time I'd heard that phrase.

I: Huh..

S: But it also sounded like this person is not...she's like a little bit older than us...not in our age group—

I: --Oh, ok—

S: Maybe a few years above. Also not implying that they're all friends but maybe trying to imply

that they're all friends? It's sort of like an awkward use of the word. It's like, 'hey sluts'—

I:--good try—

S: --and they everybody's like, 'huh'. That's the only time I've heard it.

I: Interesting. Um...I was thinking that too, because I was talking to someone the other day and they were just like, I don't even know how this came up, but they, it's almost like, either they didn't know or they didn't actively like think about it, but they were just like, they didn't realize where the word bitch came from. So, are you all familiar with where the, like, really where either word comes from?

[*pause—3 seconds*]

S: Like the word bitch and bastard are like—

M:--dog terms—

I: Oh, yeah yeah yeah—

S:--yeah, for like dogs.

M: It was so awkward, my neighbor one time was talking about her dogs and she was like “yeah, the bitch”, she was just using that word over and over and over again. And it was like an adult woman candidly using this word many times in a sentence and I was just like...frozen. That was all I could think about while she was talking.

S: I don't know where the word slut's from. I just think it means loose.

L: Like there are a lot of words for loose women.

I: Ugh, yeah

L: Harlot.

I: Harlot. It sounds so antiquated. You harlot!—

L: [...] Harlot shaming. Slut shaming is a thing of the past—

M: Hussy. Such a hussy, with your hoochie shorts on.

[*END OF INTERVIEW*]

APPENDIX F: INTERVIEW #3

Group Profile

3 women

Two non-Greek, one sorority

Raleigh	Jessica	Melissa
21	21	21
Black	White	Hispanic
Senior	Senior	Senior
TN	WV	NM

Transcription

I: What do you think is the difference between the words dude and bro?

[slight pause]

R: I think it depends on who says it. Cause I feel like if it's a guy, like, that's my bro. But I couldn't be like, yeah, that's my bro.

J: Yeah, yeah—

M—yeah, yeah—

R:--It doesn't sound the same—

M:--that's true, I'll be like, oh we're broing out if I'm like with some guys, I'll be like, oh, haha, bros, but like I'm not, I don't use it like, I'll be like dude..I feel like as a girl you would use dude—

R:--yeah, but also dude isn't used—

J:--a lot—

R:--well, I use dude like, dude guess what happened—

J:--yeah—

M:--yeah—

R: Like it's kind of like guys now—

J:--yeah—

M: Bro is definitely like—

J:--I use guys all the time. Hey guys, even if it's girls.

I: Yeah, same.

M: Ugh, story of my life.

[...]

I: [...] I was going to ask like a follow up question, if a woman could like, do they use dude or bro, um...or do you notice women saying it among each other?

M: I feel like amongst females, just females in general, I think dude is used more, I have never gone up to one my female friends and been like, bro!

R: Bro, guess what happened—

M:--bro! Yeah—

R:—Yo bro—

J:--Yo bro—

R:--Yo bro—

M:--I think I'm more likely to say dude, but I feel like I don't use either alot.

I: Uh huh—

M:--But if I'm talking to a girl I would definitely do that.

I: Is there a reason you find you don't use either a lot?

M: No, I just feel like, well, when I was in middle school they like, you know, you used to say dude in middle school and it was like, I don't know if this was a big deal at your school, but it was like elephant's butt hair [*laughs*]

[...]

M: Now I feel like I'll use it, but it's not like. I'll be more likely to be like girl or hey girl, you know—

I:--hey girl!—

M:--if I'm talking to other females. I would just definitely. Yeah. There's other words besides dude.

R: But dude is still in my vocabulary.

J: Like I said, I use guys. I just always use guys.

R: Yeah. I only use it in like, uh, like uh, guess what happened scenario. Like dude, guess what I did yesterday. Didn't study for my exam.

[*laughs*]

R: True story.

I: Well, then you kind of mentioned it, and this kind of popped in my head, but are there any other equivalents to dude or bro that are used more among women?

J: Girl.

M: Girl or ladies. I'll be like what's up ladies—

I:--Nice—

R:--You're the only person I know who says that, actually.

M: Ok well, then maybe it's just me then.

[*laughs*]

M: I also use it in conversation but like in texts I use love or something, that's like between my girlfriends, but I don't, yeah I don't normally say that to guys. Or boo.

R: Or babe.

[...]

R: Melissa goes up to a group of guys, hey ladies!

[*laughs*]

M: What's up girlies?!

[laughs]

I: So, this just popped in my head, so I don't know if this is like legit, but, have you ever heard like women using either bitch or slut kind of like dude and bro?

R: Yes—

M:--Oh yeah—

I:--like between women—

M: --Yeah

I: --Really?—

M:--Yeah. But I definitely feel like with those, it depends on, you have to really read social cues—

R:--Yeah—

M:--Like, you know, if you're in your group of friends, you're such a bitch, it doesn't mean the same thing as like if there's this girl you don't like. And you're like, she's a bitch. Or like oh what's up slut, you know, you're kidding around, but then if there's some girl that you're like, yeah she's a real slut, then like, then it's different meanings, I would say between that.

R: Yeah, I mean, my sisters and I, we read our text messages and it's like, slut, ho face [laughs] but that's typically our conversations.

I: You and your sister are tight, huh?

R: Yeah. I was like, we're going to go Black Friday shopping and my sister was like I don't have any money and she's like--I was like, what did I say, I was like oh well, sucks for you cause I'm not getting you anything. She was like stop being a slut and give me money. So...

J: Love.

R: Love right there.

M: That is so sweet—

I:--That's love right there—

R: But I don't think I'd do it with anyone else really.

M: Yeah, I don't do it that, so much with my group of friends but I mean I feel like sometimes, I definitely think it depends on how close your relationship is because there might be girls that I'm not as close to who use it jokingly and I don't like it. In that context. So I think it definitely depends on personal relationships.

I: So, we kind of touched on this, but how do you find the words bitch and slut are used most often? Is it positively, is it negatively, and when it is positive, does it exhibit some sort of connection? Why do you think people are motivated to do that?

R: I feel like slut is used in a more negat—at least on a college campus, it's like—

M:--Yeah--

I:--Ok—

R:--being promiscuous.

M:--Yeah.

R: Bitch...I feel like it could go either way.

M: I think it really depends on the group of friends. I know in our group of friends we don't, we don't really us—

J:--I feel like we used to more—

M:--Yeah—

J:--freshman year—

M:--Yeah, be like my bitches!

J: Cause I can remember we would call each other that sometimes and we would call our SA that because we were close with her. But she didn't like it—

M—Oh yeah, she hated it—

J:--she didn't like it in any form. So it's like, ok, you have to remember, don't use that with her because she didn't like it. I don't really feel like we use it that much any more—

M:--Yeah, we don't.

R: Darn growing up.

M: Yeah, I know.

I: Just the worst.

M: But yeah, I definitely feel like slut, cause we'll be like that girl is a sluuut!—

J:--Yeah—

M: Definitely said that a couple of times.

R: Let's be real Melissa.

[laughs]

M: Well, Ralieg's a little judgemental

[laughs]

M: I'm just calling it like I see it

[laughs]

I: So then, again, this is harping on it, but I want to make sure I understand. If you were to say bitch or slut, you'd say it like among friends and then I'm trying to figure out why, what is that motivation...

J: If I were to say it negatively, I would prob—I would maybe say somebody is a, like, if I'm trying to say she's a bitch, and negatively, I would probably say that in front of people that I'm not so close with. But I would not, if I am just acquaintances with you, I wouldn't be like hey bitch, what's up? I would maybe say, that person is a bitch.

M: Yeah, I agree with that.

J: If I feel really strongly about it, negatively, I'd say it in front of someone—

R:--only use it in a negative way, not in a casual, what's up.

J: Yeah.

M: I definitely think also though it like depends on age. So I know it's like an acquaintance who's maybe our age, I would not hesitate to be like she is such a bitch. But if they're a couple years older or younger, I don't, like younger, aka not in college, I probably wouldn't say that—you know what I mean?—say that. But I definitely think if it's like a peer and I feel comfortable with them at least, I would say it, jokingly yeah, like Jessica said.

I: Like among your friends, that's the consensus I'm gathering. It would be like among your friends—

J:--Yeah. Yeah, if I would use it, If I was going to use it as like a replacement for dude or girl or whatever, it would be a friend.

M: Amongst friends, yeah. And then, are we doing slut too?

I: Yeah, yeah—

J: Slut..I'm a little bit more hesitant to use slut. Um...around people, like people I don't know, because I don't know who knows who and I feel like—

R:--Yeah—

J:--You know...I don't know.

R: I feel like who am I to judge your sexual promiscuity.

J: Yeah, yeah.

R: If you want to—

J: With slut, it's like you're really putting their business out there—

R:--yeah—

J: With bitch, like—

R:--it's just your personality.

J: --you can usually tell—

M:--if they're nasty to you, they're probably nasty to everybody else.

J: Yeah. Like with a slut, you might not know the story. But now you're like, yeah.

M: I definitely feel like in a close group of friends, like, you know, with these guys right here, if I would just be like like she's a slut, I would not, yeah. But like Jessica said, I wouldn't be like. Although I feel like I'm a little more like loose, I would use it more often maybe.

J: I could see her using it—

M: I would definitely tell, not an acquaintance, but maybe if I consider you like a friend and I don't like this person or I think this person's a slut, I might say it.

R: I would just say like this person gets around, you know.

J: I like to use the word ho more than slut.

R: Yeah, I use ho.

M: Yo ho!

[laughs]

J: Fo sho.

R: I feel like people embrace like, like if you go on videos or anything, like on the comment, yeah like I'm a bad ho, or something, like they embrace being one. Like they embrace being a bitch and being a ho, but being a slut is not...not what people want.

J: People don't want to be...I'm a bad slut.

[laughs]

R: I'm a bad bitch. That's different.

J: Bad bitch is so different.

I: Wait, how is it different?

J: I think bad bitch is like, I'm a bad bitch, like—

[inaudible comments—talking at once]

M: Yeah. That's definitely become a thing.

J: I make my own money, I don't need no man. It's supposed to be—

M:--Like I look good, I know I look good. I'm gonna tell you I look good. You tryin' to come at me, I know what I am. So, you know what I mean?

R: I think it has a different definition probably. Cause like I've referred to myself as a bitch. I'm the *name omitted* bitch, that's what I tell people. So...

M: And I definitely feel like, if you're talking with guys, I feel like if they call someone a slut, it's definitely derogatory. Like she's a slut, like, you know what I mean? If you were in a conversation with some guys. But like, if he was just to be like she's a bitch, I feel like it would have, you know. I feel like with girls, it might vary as to what the severity of like me calling some girl a slut is, but I feel like if a guy is like, ugh, she is such a slut, it's like really bad.

J: Yeah, cause I know like my brother said this one time, my brother doesn't really talk about people at all, like he's very, he doesn't gossip. And I remember I said something about a girl in a picture. And he was like, yeah, she's a slut. And I was like, I took that as, well dang, she must be really bad because he never says anything like that. Yeah.

M: Yeah, and I just feel like, I feel like with guys like that in general. They'll be like oh she's hot, do you know what I mean, but like if they're like she's a, you know, they don't gossip as girls do. So I feel like if they're oh she's a slut, you're like oh. She must really be a slut.

I: Cool. Well then, so, we've mentioned, use it among friends, that's totally cool. Or at least you will kind of use it among friends but like is it because, you use it among friends because you're comfortable with them or are you trying to convey like a certain message, is it like yes we are close.

J: I think it's probably, I mean because I think the reason you don't use the word bitch around people you don't know is because it's not a nice word.

And it's not like, if you're trying to impress some—like an interviewer, you wouldn't be like, oh you a bad bitch

[LAUGHS]

R: You a bad bitch. I want you here.

J: They'd probably be like please leave now. So like, it's slang, it's borderline, I feel like it's borderline cursing.

R: Yeah

M: Mhm

J: Like you don't let your kid walk around saying—

M: --Yeah—

J: bitch, bitch bitch.

M: Also, I feel like if it's like a group of like my close friends, I'm close to you, like, I have a-- we feel secure in our relationship, you know that when I'm using bitch, I'm joking about it—

R:--Yeah—

M:--Or I'll be like, or even if I think she was being bitchy, and I'm like haha, you're such a bitch, like you know what I mean, she has already made that clear and comfortable in our relationships that that's something that we can like—

R:--use—

J:--point out to me when I'm being a bitch.

M: Right. But it's not so much like gosh you were being a real bitch but like haha you were being a, you know what I mean?

I: Yeah yeah yeah.

R: Like we know the definition among rather than—

M:--right, like amongst like the people you're close with.

J: It's so funny to me, I mean this is probably way off topic, but I can remember when I was a kid, when I was a kid like my older cousins, they didn't really curse around me, but, you know, you always overhear things, and I would hear them use the word bitch and I like I remember that being around, and this was probably when I was like five, but then bitch like went away from my vocabulary, I never used it, but like went away from my world until I was in middle school and saw Mean Girls.

R: Mhm

J: And they used bitch and I was like I remember that word—

M: --Yeah—

J: Like, but I went to a private school so like nobody cussed.

M: Yeah, speaking of that, I didn't know what the c word was for the longest time, in reference, I used to watch Dr. Phil with my mom when I was like you know, in--when I was a younger kid and yeah, they'd be like yeah, he used to call me the c word and I was like, what's the c word? When you're younger, you don't, yeah—

R: I think Mean Girls also put all of those words back into, like, just like, I feel like it's an iconic movie for people our age that like we just referenced it earlier today, and things like bitch/slut are consistently in there.

M: Yeah, I definitely feel like it's an age thing. Cause I don't think there are women who are like 40 who are like what's up bitch, I'm a bad bitch—

R:--well, there's some—

M: Well, I definitely feel like it's a lot more common amongst our, you know, and even I think levels of education don't matter as much at our age, we're like highly educated people like us still using the word bitch the same as low, people who aren't in college, you know what I mean? But I think the older you get, the more that education plays a role in using it because I can't imagine a 40 year old professional woman being like, I'm a bad bitch. But then, maybe someone who is a lot less educated and like, you know, might be like, oh I'm a bad—well, I mean, you can see that stuff online, so—

[laughs]

M: But yeah, I definitely think it's a lot more common in this age.

I: Makes sense. So, than, well, sort of just like you said, it's more common among this age, so

then would you say, like, I guess I'm just kind of curious, who, I'm trying to figure out who uses the words bitch and slut and trying to pinpoint what's required in order to use the words. We already said a certain relationship, but outside of age, is there any other factor that sort of influences who uses the word?

M: I'd say gender. I feel like when guys say it, it's definitely almost always derogatory, unless you're really close to them and some of them are joking like hey bitch, but I feel like that's very rare. It's mostly like, if a man uses it, it's mostly derogatory. And then we mentioned relationships, we mentioned age, and than also I think personality. You know what I mean? Someone who is a lot more serious of a person maybe all the time and they used the word, I would take it in a different way versus someone who, like you know, me, I'm just joking around all the time. Versus I think different personality types, maybe when they use it, it might have different meaning.

I: So then, it would be derogatory if a man said it to a woman, but what about men saying it to men? Does it mean like the same thing as if women were saying it to women?—

M:--I feel like it's dero—

J: I feel like it's still derogatory because like bitch—

M:--you're a little bitch—

J:--it's like, it's very like feminine. And so like if a boy, if a guy's calling another guy a bitch, it's like—

R:--they're belittling them—

J:--degrading you to a woman, which isn't right—

M:--Yeah—

R:--Or like they use it like that's my bitch—

M: --Yeah—

J:--Oh yeah—

M: With men, it's definitely derogatory. I feel like slut with men, I don't feel like they call each other sluts.

J: I feel like they call each other hoes

M: Haha, you're a hoe. But I definitely think that's a lot different—

J: Or a manwhore—

R:--Yeah—

M:--than if you were to call a woman a slut. Right? If a man calls a woman a slut, it's definitely derogatory. But if a man is implying that another man is a slut, it's fine, yo, that's cool—

R:--you a hoe—

[LAUGHS]

J: You probably are idolized.

M: Um, also, another way I've heard men use it a lot is like, oh he pulls bitches. Like, I've heard that a lot, like oh he get's with a lot of girls but they don't say it like oh he gets with a lot of girls, they're like, oh that dude pulled a lot of bitches.

I: Sort of serves the purpose of slut, but saying bitch. Good gosh.

R: Slut is clearly only used for rare occasions. Those very special ones.

I: So then, can you ever think of an instance where someone, let's say, if a woman, like if a woman came up to you maybe that you weren't necessarily friends with and they were just like hey bitch, or hey slut, like, how would you feel towards that person? How would you perceive them?—

J: When you say this, this girl in my sorority comes to my mind. I'm not, she's in a pledge class lower than me, I'm not close to her, but because I've seen her personality with other people and she came up to me, and she said hey bitch, I won't take it offensively because that's her personality.

I: Oh, it goes back to personality—

J:--She's very out there and very much like, I mean if you look at her Twitter feed, I follow her on Twitter, she's [...] funny, but that's how she is. But if somebody in the same pledge class, same relationship, don't really know her, and didn't speak ever, I'd be like, excuse me—

R:--Yeah, who do you think you is—

M:--I'd definitely just be like, excuse me? But I also like—

J:--I'd be like, look, are you talking to me?

M: I'm also pretty extroverted, so I feel like it wouldn't necessarily offend me unless they followed it up with something equally like rude. I feel like if they were just like hey bitch and then said something other like how are you or something, I'd be like ok, whatever, but if they're like hey bitch, you stole my man, I'd be like look, whoah, things are getting a little crazy.

R: I feel like I wouldn't get offended, but I'd be like why are you...

M:--Yeah—

R:--I don't know you.

J: I wouldn't get offended unless you were coming at me, attacking me, but if it was just a casual hey bitch, I'd be like, we're not that close, I don't know you.

I: I guess, that's what I was going to ask, like why do you, if someone's doing it and maybe, hopefully they're self aware enough to know that you guys probably aren't that close, but what do you think they're trying to do by saying that, hey bitch, what do you think they're trying to convey to you?

J: Yeah, maybe they're just trying to convey that maybe we are that close. Like, I can call you bitch, you can call me bitch. I don't know if it like puts you on a different level of friendship, I don't know.

M: Maybe they're trying to convey that that's just how they live their life. They loosely use the terms bitch and slut and that's just how they, that's what they do.

I: Well then, do you notice any groups of people that do not use the words bitch or slut, negatively, especially positively?

J: My friend, I've never heard her use the word bitch.

I: Why do you think that is?

J: She's just more like...reserved. Like, she's not extremel—she'll talk to you, she's very motivated and gets things done. But like, she's not...do you know who I'm talking about? How

would you describe her?

M: She's definitely proper—

R: --She's very reserved—

M:--very proper—

R:--Like southern belle sort of.

I: South maybe? Not trying to draw assumptions, like Baptist?

M: Oh, religion. I don't know--

J: Yes—

M: I feel like in college you find a lot more people who are liberal, it's like a time in your life to be liberal, in all senses of the word, like in all senses of your life, but I feel like there are some people, there are a few people who are a lot more conservative, and even though they're being more relaxed, they're not being totally relaxed and then I also feel like, international people, people who just come here and like this is their first experience in college, especially they're freshman, sophomore year in college, they might not use it at all. It depends on what social setting, you know, if they join a fraternity or sorority, maybe they will, but I think that's an American culture thing.

R: My sisters and I use trick [...] I feel like trick is kind of the equivalent but it doesn't mean the same thing, but it's more causal.

J: It's not as bad as bitch even though I think it's supposed to be a substitute. But to me, it's not on the same level, because [...] I've never taken trick as seriously.

M: I feel like in our friend group, we use tricks a lot. And like, I have never, never do I associate trick with anything negative. I don't know why, it's fun.

J: Yeah, it's never been as serious to me as bitch, even though I do use bitch casually, I would use trick more.

[...]

J: But I feel like it was supposed to be a clear substitute. You can get away with putting trick on the radio but not necessarily bitch.

M: I always took trick to mean more equivalently to slut or ho, like she's a trick, she's like a mix between bitch and slut.

R: I kind of got it like you're a bitch, you're slutty, but you're good with your ways. You're—

J:--a high class bitch—

M:--a high class bad bitch—

J: I feel like that's what they were going for, but that's not how I associate it—

R: I guess when I think of a trick, she's a trick, she's messing around, but she's also like smart about it—

J:--She's playing the game—

R:--Yes—

J:--She's being played, but she's also playing the game.

M: I never think about it that in depth. I felt like it was a friendly word.

I: So then, outside of groups that don't use it, do you notice any groups that do use it, maybe not,

maybe it's not exclusive to them but one thing that just popped into my mind was like Greek communities, do they use it...

J: I don't think I've ever noticed them say trick—

I: What about bitch and slut?

J: Oh, bitch, yeah.

[*laughs*]

I: What would be the context?

J: Probably negative. Negative about somebody else.

M: I feel like they use slut more though—

J: That too—

M:--Yeah, they use slut more.

R: But also, the stereotypical view of Greek life is that it's very sexually promiscuous, there's people competing with like trying to be in relationships with people, not necessarily relationships—

M: --Hook up? [*laughs*]—

R:--Hook up with other guys—

M:--whatever that means—

R:--Yeah, so when someone else, for example, Melissa, is with someone I'm attracted too, I would think that she was slutty—

M:--I'd be like she's a slut, cause she's trying to get with my man—

R:--she's ruining my motives.

J: But he's not really my man.

R: Cause we're just hooking up.

M: At a frat .

R: He's a bro

J: He's a bro!

I: Bringing it all back there. We just tied it all together with a bow.

I: Could you use bitch or slut with parent, your boss—

ALL:--No—

I:--your professor—

M: Absolutely not. I even feel like sometimes at work I catch myself being like hey girl, and I don't feel like, and then I'm like, I need to stop doing that, it's not professional. So it's like, like, I would never use bitch, slut, trick to any of them.

R: I have used it. But the only reason why is because I used it the administrative assistant and he's the same age as my sister, so he's like 23-24, and I told him, cause we were talking about someone who works there who is my roommate, I was like no I don't like her, I think she's a bitch. And like he asked me why and that was the reason. The word bitch holds so many definitions that he knew exactly why I didn't like her as opposed to being like she did this, this, this, this and this.

[...]

M: I feel like it can get murky like I think when you're working with people who are your age versus working with people who are your seniors, people who are your bosses, people who are not necessarily your equal in the work force but are your superior. So, I would never use any of that with a superior—

R:--definitely—

M:--I would never use it in a joking term I don't think with someone of my level in the work force, but I might use it in a serious way and be like oh she's a bitch. I wouldn't be like hey bitch, but I'd be like oh, she's kind of a bitch, you know what I mean? But I would only use that with people I'm on an equal playing field—

R:--That's interesting because not like I don't use it, but where I work at it's mostly woman and they gossip like so much and they use, oh yeah she's a bitch, oh this student, ohhh, they use those terms. And they have no shame whatsoever. And their ages range from like... I would say the oldest one is maybe 50 something, she doesn't really gossip with them, but the rest of them are like between the ages of like 30-45, and they—

J:--So we don't outgrow it—

[laughs]

I: So then, do you think you hear bitch or slut more often? In general?

M: I would say bitch...

J: Bitch...

R: Really? I was going to say slut—

M: --No—I feel like in college you might hear slut more, amongst peers in college, you're going to hear slut more, but I think in general, in the world, bitch is a lot more common. I feel like outside the college setting, you're not really like, that girl is such a slut—

R:--You wouldn't—

J:--You're not in the network to know—

M: Yeah, you're not livin with all of these people and seeing them at the same parties. So it's a different setting.

J: And bitch is so...it can mean so many different things. Negatively, you know. But with slut it's like, ok, she sleeps around.

I: Did you ever go through phase when at least bitch used to be negative and now it's up in the air?

J: Yeah, I can remember, like I said, when I was a kid, when I heard my cousins using it, I was like clearly I'm not supposed to be saying that word. They're not, because every time they say it, they're like, they catch themselves—

R:--it's just a female dog—

I: Oh yeah, so you know where the words come from—

J: I think. Then you see it on Means Girls, it's pretty bad. Then I'm like—

R:--Yeah, she just used it so casually, like hey bitch.—

J:--Yeah, so if you were to call me a bitch at 14 I would have been like, WHAT? Oh my god, they think I'm a bitch?! But in college, it's kind of like, eh.

R: It has to do with maturity.

M:--it has to be something in context. It has to be something you read in context. You should be able to pick up on it in a certain setting.

R: But I feel like also, I'm thinking back, if someone wrote this person was a bitch on the bathroom stalls, that would be a big deal, they would find it very offensive, but like, for the most part, I'm a bitch, I'm a bitch, it's just more accepting now—

M:--when you're older.

I: So then, you guys mentioned trick, have you heard betch? B-e-t-c-h?

M: Oh, I don't know anyone who uses that.

J: I've heard people who use it--

R: I don't hear people saying it, I see people writing it.

I: Is there supposed to be a difference?

M: I think betch is just more jokey. [...] It just sounds like, you know—

R:--it sounds like betch. You betch...I don't think it will catch on.

J: I hope not.

END OF INTERVIEW

M: Is there any specific reason you chose like in particular, I feel like bitch, there's not a lot of equivalents but slut, like there's ho, or whore.

I: Yeah, so, that's a fantastic question. [...] there was a third wave of feminism in which they tried to reappropriate the word. Slut they tried. [...]

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW #4

Group Profile

2 women

Two non-Greek

Shannon	Paula
20	21
Indian	Indian
Junior	Senior
NJ	India

Transcription

I: Well then, are there any equivalents for women like bro? Are there any equivalents for women to say?

P: I think it's like so direct, like girl, what are you doing? It's just, yeah, just girl.

S: I could be just like girl, hey girl.

P: A lot of my responses are yeah girl.

I: This is a very specific example, but have you ever heard bitch or slut being used among women like dude or bro?

P: Yeah.

[...]

S: Yeah, I use that sometimes, like a joke. Sup slut?

P: Friday night with my bitches.

I: So then, how would you say those words are used, is it more casually? Playful?

S: It's more used negatively than it is positively, there is some times when it is like, yeah like, with my bitches, or something like that, as like a photo caption. But no one will ever be like, when you're talking about a girl you don't like, you'd be like, oh my god, she's a bitch. Or yeah, and actually a lot of people would be like she's such a slut. But sometimes, I'll joke around a lot and if I'm wearing something a little revealing or whatever, my friends would be like oh you're such a slut, such a sloop. And I'd be like, oh, ok. You're being so slotty right now, wearing that. As a joke.

I: Slooty, I've never of that—

P:--I've never heard of slooty—

S: You've never heard of slooty? I use sloop a lot.

P: Is a lot of people your friends, because I don't think that counts as a lot of people.

[laughs]

P: If five people in your group are like sloop and it hasn't reached the general population it's not a thing. You're trying to make sloop happen.

S: You're such a sloot, heh heh heh.

P: I feel like such a mom around you. What does this mean, Shannon? Shannon, what does this mean? Shannon, what do people say these days?

I: Ok well then, mom, how do you notice bitch or slut being used?

[...]

I: Do you notice it kind of being used playfully or is it mostly negative to?

P: I think when it's used playfully, it definitely has to be in an environment that's very, very comfortable, like it's very very comfortable. Otherwise it's so easy to be misconstrued and come across as very, very negative.

I: Well then who has to be in that environment?

S: Friends, it has to be extremely—

P:--Yeah, your friends. It's not like—

S:--Your close friends—

P:--People that you think are nice people, because that doesn't cut it, it's still like a derogatory term. It definitely is a personal friend thing.

I: So then if you were to say it, than you were to say it to friends—

P:--Yeah—

I:--but like close friends, so a subset kind of. So then, I'm curious, would you more often say it to like, cause it's like close friends, so then would the close friend have to be like a woman?

P: Yeah. I think it comes out...if you were to just tell a guy you are one of my bitches. I think that in itself is not only ridiculous, it is also—

S:--You know what's something interesting, I feel like if you were to use, um, like call a guy a slut or a bitch. I don't know, it's weird, but it...it's more...it's kind of a way of implying that they're kind of feminine.

I: So that's why it's almost like inherent, naturally like, oh my female friends?

S: Yeah.

I: Well then, do you notice it pretty frequently or is it just kind of like a thing? In a positive way?

S: I think it's like a thing.

P: Yeah.

S: I think it's just like a thing.

P: I mean, it's not the best thing to do, but it's like whatever—

S:--Yeah, it's whatever.

P: I definitely still react strongly to slut used in a bad connotation, like I know it's coming from the wrong place but I definitely, nobody reacts to bitch that way. It's just like, yeah.

I: So then, like for example—

P:--like you hear slut and that may have been an unnecessary comment if it was used vindictively, but you'd never say that, if she's a bitch, she's probably just a bitch.

I: I was thinking that the other day, one of my friends always says bitch please.

P: Yeah, that's another example of how it is being used all the time. Like, nobody ever goes like, whoa, what is that language.

S: No one would ever say that. Bitch please—

P: --Also, like the number of memes and gifs associated with it, I think it's like funnier.

[...]

S: Bitch please, it's /yif/.

I: We were talking in terms of whether or not it was used frequently, but do you notice any specific groups of people that would not use either of those words.

S: I know groups of people...no, I'm going to start getting racist, I need to stop.

I: No, no, no, I'm just kind of curious. Something I've noticed too.

S: I've noticed it more often, well, I've noticed groups that use it more often, than not. I feel like...I don't know...I don't want to say it. I feel like I hear more like, like just groups of like, African Americans—

P:--Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I hear that to.

I: That's totally fine. Yeah, bad bitch has come up a number of times—

P:--I sort of link it to hip hop music. Not to be super like, oh it's African American, but I also think just to be politically correct about this, the number of artists associated with hip hop can to be more African American and that's where the language stems from. So I would say there is a direct correlation.

S: You made that so great.

P: Like Nicki Minaj, there.

S: She says bitch like fifty times.

P: Yeah, in like two minutes. But really.

I: Well, that's fair, well, based on demographics, are there any other groups that don't use those words?

P: Asians—

S:--I feel like Asians don't.

P: Lawl.

S: I'm talking about more FOBs.

I: That makes sense. This could very much be a Western thing—

S:--yeah, yeah.

I: Well then, concentrated groups that use it more frequently, so like in my mind, I was thinking like sororities or Greek communities? Do you notice it in the sororities?

S: Um, yeah—

I:--But it's not exclusive to sororities?

P: No, I think it's everybody.

S: I don't know, I don't really notice it. Well...I guess you could say like, nah, I think I'd be...eh. I mean, I guess you could say that people in sororities would go more along with trends like that, you know what I mean? So I feel like you might find more people saying it there, but it's not like removed, anyone really uses it.

I: Why would they be motivated to go along with those trends a little bit more?

S: Um...I just think the whole Greek system is kind of a trend in itself. No, it's something fun to

do. And like, go out, bitches what? Throw those words around.

P: Yeah, I think on the flip side, no one uses that vindictively unless they're really upset. So, if anything, it'd be used in a more casual environment. Which is why it comes across as a college thing.

I: That makes sense. I guess the other thing to that I thought at least with sororities is that it's exclusively women—

S:--Yeah—

I:--it's kind of like if you say it among women and among close friends, your sisters—

S:--yeah—

I:--I was wondering if it was frequently in that or if that was an environment that was conducive to that.

[...]

S: You'll always be my *organization name omitted* bitch.

P: No girl, what the hell? Like me girl! Bitch.

S: Why don't you use bitch and slut? I'm just throwing those words around.

I: Ok, well, I keep drawing parallels with bro because men say bro to one another, but is it the same meaning like we were just talking about between bitch and slut being used among women, would it be the same meaning if men used it among each other—

S:--No, I don't think so.

P: No. That's when you consider it derogatory. At least I would. Even if they were throwing it around in casual conversation.

S: I feel like, yeah, when guys use bitch and slut, it's always derogatory.

I: Now, can you ever think of an instance where someone used bitch and slut to you outside of a derogatory term, like in a specific encounter?

S: Outside of a derogatory term? Oh, yeah.

I: Who used it? Slash what was the situation?

[...]

P: [...] And they were like, look at you getting all these bitches. I was like, yes, look at me getting all these bitches.

S: Ohhh, that's another thing. Like, when guys take pictures with a lot of girls, they'll be like—

P:--Me and my bitches—

S:--bitches. Yeah—

P:--Yeah, but a girl wouldn't take a picture and be like, me and my bros.

I: [...] I can think of an instance when someone came up to me and said 'hey bitch' and it didn't even phase me.

S: Yeah.

I: What if it was someone who wasn't a close friend and they just came up—

S:--I'd be like what the fuck are you doing? Hey bitch, like, what?

I: What's their motivation for doing that? What are they trying to communicate to you?

S: I think it's just—

P:--I think they're trying to be really intimate, and like try to be friends with you or trying to be in with your friends and you're just not having it.

S:--yeah.

S: I feel like that's something that Paula would have done to me when she first met me.

P: Come up and been like hey bitch? Dude, I'm the most straight edged person on the planet—

S:--Ok, no, something like—

[...]

S: Literally, the day after I met her, she approached me from behind and hugged me [...] I was like, what was going on, who is this bitch—

[*laughs*]

S: I do that all the time, I'm always like who is this bitch.

P: She called a club a bitch. Who is this bitch? What? I was like well they are

S: I also say bitties a lot.

P: Bitties is the new nice bitches.

S: I've used bitties before it was the new bitches. I'm telling you, language is all just trends.

I: Outside of the close friends thing I keep mentioning, what would happen if you used it to a man, your boss, your professor, parents?

S: I don't know why anyone would ever—

P:--why is this a question. My family is so straight edged. They'd be like, are you on drugs?

S: I feel like my mom would just be confused.

[...]

I: So then, again, we've already covered this, but is bitch used more than slut? Or vice versa?

S: Yeah.

P: Yeah, slut is definitely like more of a ohhh.

S: Bitch is definitely, like, I don't know, you could just throw bitches into any sentence, really.

P: I guess the way I think about it is is it still an eyebrow raiser. Like, I'd still be like, was there a need to call her that? Like if you're really like, oh, you're such a slut, with a straight face, like then it's like, was that necessary. I don't think bitch has that effect.

I: So, I can't stop thinking about sloop, but have you ever heard betch?

S: I've never really heard betch, I just use, hear betch when I'm like talking, when I'm like joking about it or like just being really sarcastic. I don't know anyone who would just ever be like hey betch, like, I'll say it, but I'm kind of saying it to make fun of it being said or like betches love this.

P: Betches love. Yes. No. Yes.

S: I don't know anyone personally who uses it.

I: But it's the same right? Betch is the same as bitch?—

S:--Betch is the same the same as bitch, it's just a Mean Girls way of saying it.

P: Oh, I never thought of Mean Girls way of saying it, I just thought it was a more kosher way of saying it.

S: Eh, no.

P: Like, you wouldn't say, if a bitch was said to be negative, than this betch is almost like a position of womanly power. Did you ever feel that?

S: I guess I just don't hear it often enough.

I: So then like, with sloop, like if you're saying, sloop is the same thing as slut, but what exactly is the difference between saying sloop as opposed to slut?

S: Um, nothing. Just the sounds.

P: That's the same thing with betch and bitch. Like you're trying to, there's no difference really.

S: It's really what you prefer to say. Except, oh, hm. Ok. Betch will always be used in a joking context. Bitch can be used both ways—

I:--and then sloop/slut, kind of the same thing—

S:--You'd be like, she's such a betch. You'd be like, unless you were like a valley girl. You'll just be like, she's kind of a bitch, you wouldn't be like, yeah she's kind of a betch, like, what.

P: You kind of tell it like it is.

S: And if you're trying to call someone a slut too, you wouldn't be like she's such a sloop. Like, I'd always be like, she's a slut. I'm always, like when I'm saying, when I'm joking about being a sloop or whatever, it's always in a joking context. Like my friend, just an example, one time I was wearing, it was cold outside, and I was wearing this tank with a cardigan, the tank was kind of see through and I was wearing a nude colored bra. So it didn't look like I was wearing a bra or whatever. She was like, oh my god, you're such a sloop, why are you wearing that, it's cold outside?

I: Now I'm just going back to the ethomology, but do you guys know, where did slut come from? Like that word? Slash bitch, do we still know where that comes from?

S: The mystery of the English language.

P: Um...slut has Shakespearan roots.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

S: I think it's really, my person opinion is that it's like trend that has caught on. A lot of things end up, like turn up. No one would have said that if it wasn't in music, if it wasn't like, you know? And even websites have capitalized on it, like betcheslovethis. All that stuff.

[...]

I: Most people remember where bitch came from, some don't. Which I find interesting because that means that it's so far separated from where it came from, which was incredibly negative, it was a female dog—

S:--Oh yeah, I knew that.

I: So it's degrading the individual you're using it to to a female dog. Like a female in general, like you're trying to say that's a bad thing. But now, know one really recalls that when they're saying it, so that could mean that it's much more detached from it's negative connotation.

S: Yeah.

S: I also feel like...um...people like switching out, they get tired of just saying, using the same words for like the same things, so when something, when a trend comes up, or when people start saying something that may not have originally been, it may be so far removed from it's origin

that's it's taken on a new meaning, but when that comes out, a lot of people will start using it because it's just fun to incorporate new words.

I: They'll capitalize on it?

S: Exactly. Like, I don't know, it's nice to discover a new way to say something.

I: Is this a recent trend or has it been going on for a while?

S: //I think it's more recent—

P://I think it's been going on for a while—

S: Mm. I think it's like—

P: Oh, like the words? Oh, I was like, I'm pretty sure they've been around a while.

S: No, I think it's been, it's definitely like a this century type thing.

P: I think comfort with the words has been a this century thing.

I: Do you notice it more of people our age?

P: //Yeah

S://Yeah, it's more people our age.

P: I mean, I guess that's a good way of kind of think about it, if someone who is like in their 30s or something was like this bitch, you'd be like what?

S: You know, I was talking to my sister, trends really do, it starts off, this is the age, when we're in college, in high school. Because my sister, she's 24 now, every time I use slang, words, and then she starts using them, I feel like such, she's like, I can't use words like this anymore. I'm too old for them. And she can't be like, yolo, that's weird.

[END]

APPENDIX H: INTERVIEW #5

Group Profile

3 women

3 non-Greek

Sandra	Murray	Faith
18	18	18
Indian	Asian	African
Freshman	Freshman	Freshman
Dubai	NJ	GA

Transcription

I: Now I'm just really curious then, are there any equivalents for like, like dude and bro, that women use among each other?

F: Girl

[noises, girlll]

F: Honey! I don't know

[laughs]

L: Hey doll.

I: That's a good one.

M: I'll say like, she's my girl—

S:--Yeah, I use girl a lot,

F: That's my shawty.

M: She's like, oh she's my girl, she's my doll, she's my shawty! So weird.

[laughs]

S: She's my boo—girl.

F: She's my boo!

S: Yeah, I say boo sometimes.

[...]

I: Well, this just popped in my head, but do women use the words bitch and slut like dude and bro among one another?

F: BITCH! Yeah! I've heard people do that. Come here bitch. And you're like what?!

S: Wait, girl to girl?

F: Let's go bitch, let's go shopping bitch, I've heard this before.

M: I think, at least when I use it, it's always like you know that it's kidding though. It's more of like a joke kind of thing—

L:--I think it's more like when I'm drunk, hey bitch, how's it going?

M: And I would only use that with like my best friends.

F: Yeah—

M:--Like, I would never go up to someone acquaintances with, yo bitch—

L:--They might think of it as offensive. It needs to be very personal people.

M: Yeah, I would only say it to like my best friends. And that would be it.

F: Or it might be like something one of my friends does is like, not like douchey on a level that it's like negatively impacting me, but I was like ok, shut up bitch, like you know, we're just kidding, or like what a bitch, oh, you know they're kidding. Bitch, stone face.

M:--Yeah, yeah.

I: Well, then how do you find the words are more commonly used? Are they more commonly used negative, or like playfully? And then when you do say it, you said it's like, you're trying to be playful, that's like the message you're trying to send.

F: Bitch versus bitchy.

I: What's the difference?

F: Like, if somebody has a bitchy demenaour, but you don't really know them, like bitch is more of a judgement, you're placing a label on someone, you're just a bitch. There is no other words to describe you, you're just a bitch. But then bitchy, it's like more surface level—

S:--yeah, their attitude in that moment, yeah—

F: --it's like the persona, or demeanor, but you don't really know them well enough to like label them as like a bitch, but then once you know them.

I: Ok, you gave an example of using it with a close friend, are you using it to exhibit a close connection or like what's your motivation for using it?

M: I would say to, for a close connection, it's more of just like a joke, I mean obviously I don't think, I don't actually like mean the words, but it's like, it'll be like, something like if I'm texting my friend, she'll like text me back then I'll like say something and she won't text me back for like five minutes, and I'm like alright bitch, but it's just like a joke, I don't know.

I: That makes sense. Ok, so then, can you guys think of like instances where you guys have used it among friends, does it depend on a certain environment?

M: The word bitch?

I: Yeah, or slut, either or.

M: Either or. So, what do you mean?

I: Like, does it have to be in a certain environment, do you have to be around just with your close friend, or can it be around girls, or can guys be present and it mean the same thing?

M: Yeah, but like, yeah, yeah, I would say so.

F: Typically in a private setting. People aren't in my close group of friends probably when say it. Not saying never.

M: I think it depends who I'm talking about. I wouldn't talk about someone else, I wouldn't say that someone who wasn't my, I wouldn't say that about someone else in front of a group of people, but if I was joking about someone I knew really closely with a group of people, yeah.

I: So you wouldn't be like, hey bitches?

M: Yeah, I wouldn't, like, I wouldn't say that to people I wasn't really close with.

L: Yeah, I think it's more like your immediate friend circle. Yeah.

[...]

I: Are there any groups of people who don't use those words? Can you think of any specific kind of person that doesn't use that word?

M: I c—I don't know.

F: Ethnicity wise, or...

I: Yeah, anything you might observe.

F: Typically older people wouldn't use it—

L:--Like parents—

M:--Oh yeah—

F: My mom has best friends that she talks to all the time but I would never—

M:--that'd be weird—

S:--Like my mom's two girl friends, if she'd been like hey bitches, how's it going, I was like mom, no...

F: Wait, this happened or you're saying that'd be weird?

S: No, like my mom has used the word bitch in front of me, but like I don't think she would refer to people as like, hey bitches, she wouldn't do that.

M: Yeah, that would be weird.

F: Men typically don't use it. Well, it depends, I have guy friends that will use it in reference but they don't say it like in an endearing manner, so like if I'm doing something bitchy, well no, typically guy friends don't even say that to their girl friends, but if they're talking about somebody else, she is such a bitch.

L: I think boys use it a lot in that context.

F: Boys use it maybe maybe more than girls do, calling girls bitches—

M: --Yeee [*unsure, disagreeing?*]

L:--I don't know—

F:--They don't call, I don't know, it depends I guess.

M: I don't know, it might feel that way because of the people I know, as a whole, I don't think I could say.

I: To turn that question on it's head, do you notice any groups that it's not exclusive to but you do notice it that they use it that way and they use it that way more frequently?

F: I know the stereotype is that typically among African Americans, they call each other bitches a lot more often and a lot more openly and typically among white girls, and this is just like the stereotype, like white girls will call each other bitches behind each other's backs but not openly, they'd be like, she is such a bitch, but not like BITCH! They don't just say it to each other directly, typically. That's the stereotype, that's not even really what I've observed, really, I don't know. I don't... Indian girls, Asians, I typically don't. But then in foreign cultures, most of the time in foreign cultures, cause I'm East African.

[...]

F:--um, yeah, so in our culture, there's not open confrontation, so I think like, my roommate's Korean, I know Indian girls and people from around the world, typically people from Eastern cultures, would say it, if they do say it at all, they would say it like in reference to that person describing them to someone later on, not in the person's face.

M: Yeah, more or less, I guess.

[...]

I: Can you even think of an instance when someone said like hey bitch or said bitch or slut outside of a derogatory term? Can you think of a specific instance?

M: Wait, outside—and they meant it?

I: Outside of a derogatory meaning.

S: Yeah, I have a friend who says it all the time to me.

I: How do you perceive that person? Like, I mean, it's your friend...

S: She has this personality, like, she uses these slang words a lot, so I guess, if she doesn't use such words, now it's kind of weird to me, because that's just how she is.

F: I actually did a presentation on this last year, I think when someone uses it with an endearing tone or as an endearing phrase, or a phrase of endearment, I think that like if they don't use it, then you're thinking I must not be as close to you as, because then at that point it makes you uncomfortable, and you're like, oh, well I guess we're not that close, because if they're calling everybody else a bitch, it depends on the tone and I think like the language you have to look at the overall context, like to see how to interpret meaning in language. Because words have so many different meanings, there's denotation and connotation and all of that. So, yeah, so if I have a friend who uses it and smiles, or like says it with like an endearing tone, and they don't say it to me and they're like hey, and I'm like, oh, well, we must not be that close. Call me a bitch!

[laughs]

F: You get what I mean, though? If they don't call you a bitch, but they're call everybody else a bitch, I want to be called a bitch. Yeah, so that's my experience.

I: Murray, you've gotten very quiet.

M: I agree, I feel like if you were to like call someone a bitch in an endearing way, I feel like it'd have to be someone who was like super close to you and I guess it does show that you're close enough that you can like joke about this and you know for sure you're that you're kidding and you don't have to like second guess.

F: Bitch please!

I: I've always wondered about that, what does someone mean when they say bitch please? Or like my best bitch, is that a thing?

F: Yes. You're my best worst person! You're an elite member of the worst—

I: --Is that what's it's saying?

F: I'm just kidding, I think best bitch means ride or die, or like ride or die, like you're riding or you're dying, if you're not riding, your dead. Like best friend.

I: So, someone you ride or die with. So then, what if you tried to say to a man, oh, you're my best bitch..does that mean the same thing?

F: No.

S: His reaction would be so—

M:--It doesn't translate.

I: And then if men said it among each other—

M:--that'd be weird, that would just be so weird to me—

I: Why would that be weird?

M: Because I feel like that's such a girl thing, it's just like girl—

F: Ingrained in our society. Girls say this, do not say this if you have a penis.

I: Do you hear bitch more than slut, or slut more than bitch?

M: I don't know. I hear bitch more than slut, but that's just me.

F: I hear both, I think I hear bitch more, but slut is more prone to be taken in a negative way.

Because the same way that bitch can be used as a term of endearment, slut can be used as a term of endearment. Cause I do have friends who are like, slut, hey slut, that's how they like, I'm not necessarily a fan of it, but there are friends who show friendship or companionship in that way, but like slut, no. That's typically more prone to be taken negatively because it's associated with, bitch is just like your persona, but slut is talking about your lifestyle—

M:--Yeah—

F:--you're a slut, I know that about you because we're friends. Like girly.

I: Is bitch still perceived as pretty negative or is it more is it less charged, is it more neutral? And the same question for slut—

S: --Are you comparing it to slut?

I: Yeah, or just in general, so like—

*M:--I think if you were to call someone a bitch, slut if you're in— (25: 25)

F: Slut is more like direct.

S: Yeah, and it's easy for someone to take that as an offense rather than bitch, I think.

I: Outside of the comparison, if you just hear bitch, do you think it's still more negative or now because it's used sort of a little bit more in that friendly tone, has it become a little bit more neutral.

M: Yes, like, I mean—

F:--It's more neutral than it was before.

F: Yeah, it still depends on context you're using it in, but it's definitely more acceptable.

S: Like I know this one person who, she uses the word bitch like, so, everyone else uses the word like hey bitch, close friends, and she doesn't know how to use the word bitch. She doesn't mean it in a derogatory way, her tone is not, doesn't suit the context, so, like I know another friend of mine sort of took it the wrong way, so I think the tone and the body language matters a lot. With this particular word.

F: I just think tone in general, with anything you say, cause like it depends on how well you know someone, if I've known someone for years, it's a lot easier to decipher what they're trying

to say.

[...]

I: We've already touched on this, but like an acquaintance, if they were to say bitch or slut to you, how would you perceive, how would you react to that?

M: I would like, I'd be a little like, just because like if you were a person who thought you could just like say like wor, like that, cause they're not like everyday words, they're pretty cutting words, if you're going to say someone you don't know very well, I'm just going to assume, oh, that's weird. I would probably feel a little bit put off by that.

L: I just feel like there isn't really a need to use such words, you can still show your love and closeness to another person by using girl, you know, the words that we discussed. Bitch is not needed. I feel like people just use it because they think it's like big now, but, yeah.

M: But I definitely wouldn't say, what up bitch, to like any acquaintance like ever, you have to be like at a certain level of friendship to say it and now feel like oh that was kind of crude.

I: If an acquaintance said that to you, do you think that's what they're kind of trying to convey?

M: That they want to—

I: That they're want to be close?

M: I hope not, cause that's not how it's done.

F: No, but yeah. I think that some people do.

M: Yeah, I think that'd be really awkward, but yeah, maybe. I don't think we're at that level.

F: Hey bitch girl, let's go get some lunch. And you'd be like, ehhhh. Psyc, swerve.

S: Like I know like today, I was in the dorm and then this girl, she was like, hey can you swipe me in to the elevator. And I have a habit of telling my close friends girl, so like I swiped it for her and I was running off into the distance and she was like thanks, and I'm like, no problem girl. She looks at me and I just smiled and was like that was awkward.

F: I guess it depends on where you're from as well.

S: Yeah, she reacted like a weird way, and I'm just like no, should not have said that.

F: Somebody from the South, typically like the stereotype, somebody from the South would be like, oh yeah, we just talk to people. You can tell. People from the North are typically associated with being reserved. And, it depends. [...] I think it also has to do with the pace of life, because if you think about, in the South, I think that there's more, everything's spread out, it's like the heat, it slows people down. It's true. Everyone's like hey, how ya'll doing, and you're talking to people in the neighborhood. And in the North, it's just really cold and everybody's just trying to get to where they need to be. Faster pace of life.

I: Well then, have you guys ever heard betch?

F: Betch!

M: Yes!

I: Does that mean the same thing as bitch or?

M: It's definitely a joke, like if you say betch.

I: Ok, so that's always understood to be a joke?

M: Yeah, I would say so.

F: It's like trying to bring fetch back.

S: I don't know, I've never heard of it.

F: Usually, I've found that people who aren't white that use betch are typically making fun of the way white people say bitch. Nobody has to say it for me to understand.

S: I've heard biotch. I haven't heard betch.

I: Is biotch the same thing? Or is it—

S: //I don't know,

M: //I don't know what biotch is—

S: Wait, you guys have never heard biotch?

M: I've heard heard biotch.

S: I don't know, are they making fun of the word or is it just a style?

I: Are they just trying to say it without saying bitch or?

F: I think sometimes people think that makes it better, like—

S: --we're sophisticated, like they're not trying to be harsh by saying bitch, but it's just like, oh, I can be more offended, biotch, so subtle.

F: I'd be like, bitch, what.

I: This came up in another interview, what about sloot?

M: Oh my god, what? I've heard it once or twice, I thought it was like really weird.

I: What was the context that you heard it in?

M: I don't even remember.

F: I've heard sloot. I think I've heard someone making fun of it, but I haven't heard anyone actually—

S: I think it's like fuck, when you say fudge instead of fuck.

M: Yeah. She's such a slut, but you don't want to say it—

S:--you don't want to be explicit about it.

F: She's such a sloot!

S: Sounds like something little kids would do. They wouldn't say slut, but like, she's a sloot! Mommy, who like know.

I: Now that we're talking derivatives of the words, do you know where the words come from?

M: No.

F: Dog!—

S:--female dog.

I: What about slut?

M: Good question. Do you know? Can I look it up, I so want to know now?

S: Are they ancient words?

M: I think it's funny how the word for a female dog would somehow—

F:--slut, mutt, she's a mutt!

M: Although the ultimate origin of the word slut is unknown, it first appeared in Middle English. Slutte. Dirty, untidy woman.

[END OF INTERVIEW]