# DUDE

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ABSTRACT: The patterns of use for the address term *dude* are outlined, as are its functions and meanings in interaction. Explanations are provided for its rise in use, particularly among young men, in the early 1980s, and for its continued popularity since then. *Dude* is used mostly by young men to address other young men; however, its use has expanded so that it is now used as a general address term for a group (same or mixed gender), and by and to women. *Dude* is developing into a discourse marker that need not identify an addressee, and more generally encodes the speaker's stance to his or her current addressee(s). *Dude* indexes a stance of cool solidarity, a stance which is especially valuable for young men as they navigate cultural Discourses of young masculinity, which simultaneously demand masculine solidarity, strict heterosexuality, and nonconformity.

OLDER ADULTS, BAFFLED BY THE NEW FORMS of language that regularly appear in youth cultures, frequently characterize young people's language as "inarticulate," and then provide examples that illustrate the specific forms of linguistic mayhem performed by "young people nowadays." For American teenagers, these examples usually include the discourse marker *like*, rising final intonation on declaratives, and the address term *dude*, which is cited as an example of the inarticulateness of young men in particular. As shown in the comic strip in figure 1, this stereotype views the use of *dude* as unconstrained—a sign of inexpressiveness in which one word is used for any and all utterances. These kinds of stereotypes, however, are based on a fundamental misunderstanding of the functions and meanings of these

FIGURE 1
Use of *dude* in the "Zits" Comic Strip
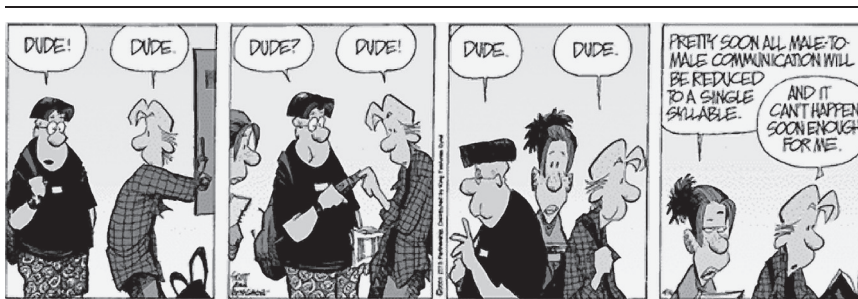
linguistic forms. As analyses of *like* and rising intonation have shown (e.g., Guy et al. 1986, McLemore 1991; Andersen 2001; Siegel 2002), these forms are constrained in use and precisely expressive in meaning. *Dude* is no exception. This article outlines the patterns of use for *dude* and its functions and meanings in interaction and provides some explanations for its rise in use, particularly among young men, in the early 1980s, and for its continued popularity since then.

Indeed, the data presented here confirm that *dude* is an address term that is used mostly by young men to address other young men; however, its use has expanded so that it is now used as a general address term for a group (same or mixed gender) and by and to women. *Dude* is developing into a discourse marker that need not identify an addressee, and more generally encodes the speaker's stance to his or her current addressee(s). The term is used mainly in situations in which a speaker takes a stance of solidarity or camaraderie, but crucially in a nonchalant, not-too-enthusiastic manner. *Dude* indexes a stance of effortlessness (or laziness, depending on the perspective of the hearer), largely because of its origins in the "surfer" and "druggie" subcultures in which such stances are valued. This indexicality also explains where *dude* appears in discourse structure and why it tends to be used in a restricted set of speech events. The reason young men use this term is precisely that *dude* indexes this stance of cool solidarity. Such a stance is especially valuable for young men as they navigate cultural Discourses of young masculinity,[1] which simultaneously demand masculine solidarity, strict heterosexuality, and nonconformity.

The discussion that follows illuminates not only the meanings and use of this address term but also the broader linguistic issue of how language-in-interaction creates and displays social relationships and identities, that is, how language is socially meaningful. An understanding of the ways in which *dude* works thus leads to a better understanding of how everyday language-in-interaction is related to widespread, enduring cultural Discourses (i.e., the relationship between first- and second-order indexical meanings, in Silverstein's 1996 terms). In this article I focus on gender meanings and on how cultural Discourses of gender are recreated in interaction with the help of *dude.*

The crucial connection between these cultural Discourses and the everyday use of *dude* is the stance of cool solidarity which *dude* indexes. This stance allows men to balance two dominant, but potentially contradictory, cultural Discourses of modern American masculinity: masculine solidarity and heterosexism. Connell (1995) argues that different types of masculinities are hierarchically ordered in Western cultures and that the most desired and honored in a particular culture is its hegemonic masculinity. Along with

Carrigan et al. (1985), he shows that heterosexuality is one component of hegemonic masculinities in Western cultures, especially in the United States. Kimmel (2001, 282) argues more forcefully that "homophobia, men's fear of other men, is the animating condition of the dominant definition of masculinity in America, [and] that the reigning definition of masculinity is a defensive effort to prevent being emasculated," where "emasculated" is equivalent to being perceived as gay by other men. At the same time, there is a cultural Discourse of masculine solidarity—close social bonds between men. In this cultural Discourse, a bond with, and loyalty to, other men is a central measure of masculinity. This Discourse is epitomized in the ideal of loyalty within a military unit, as outlined for American war films by Donald (2001) and illustrated vividly in Swofford's (2003) *Jarhead*, a first-person account of the author's experiences as a U.S. Marine in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Although this ideal of masculine solidarity could be understood to be consonant with the Discourse of heterosexism (i.e., by having a set of loyal close friends, a man need not be afraid that they will think he is gay), on another level masculine solidarity, in emphasizing closeness between men, is opposed to heterosexism, which emphasizes distance between men. Masculine solidarity and heterosexism thus delimit a narrow range of ratified, dominant, and hegemonic relationships between American men, since masculine solidarity implies closeness with other men, while heterosexism entails nonintimacy with other men. *Dude* allows men to create a stance within this narrow range, one of closeness with other men (satisfying masculine solidarity) that also maintains a casual stance that keeps some distance (thus satisfying heterosexism).

What follows provides evidence for these claims about *dude* in the details of its use. Data are drawn from a number of complementary sources. Survey data come from three surveys of two types performed by classes at the University of Pittsburgh. Ethnographic and interaction data are drawn from my observations in 1993 of an American college fraternity.[2] I also draw from various media sources and from my own experience as a bona fide "*dude*-user" in the 1980s. These multiple sources of data come together to present a consistent picture of the uses, meanings, and recent history of the address term.

I first investigate the wider use of the term and then excerpt several uses in the fraternity to illustrate its discourse functions and how it is used in interaction. I also discuss the personalities of the men who use *dude* the most in the fraternity, then describe the most salient phonological characteristics of the term—a fronted /u/—and possible connections between this feature of *dude* and the ongoing fronting of this vowel across North America. Finally, I explain the rise and use of *dude* by exploring cultural Discourses of masculinity and American identity more generally in the 1980s.

## HISTORY AND ORIGINS

The recent history of *dude* provides insight into its indexicalities as well as its rise in use in the United States. The discussion that follows is based on Hill's (1994) history of the term until approximately the 1980s. *Dudes* originally referred to 'old rags', and a *dudesman*, 'scarecrow'. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, "*dude* became synonymous with *dandy*, a term used to designate a sharp dresser in the western territories [of the United States]" (321). There was for a time a female version of the word, but it fell out of use. According to Hill, the use of *dude* as an address term developed in the 1930s and 1940s from groups of men, "Urban Mexican-American *pachuchos*[3] and African-American *zoot-suiters*" (323), known for their clothes consciousness. These groups began to use *dude* as an in-group term, and it soon was used as a general form of address among men. Then *dude* followed a well-worn linguistic path from stigmatized groups such as urban African Americans and Mexicans to whites through African American music culture (much as *cool* and *groovy* did). In the 1980s, "young people began to use *dude* as an exclamation of delight and/or affection" (325). Hill predicts that *dude* may follow *fuck* and its derivatives as being able to function in any grammatical slot or as a single-word utterance that can mean anything in the right context. The history of the term, however, shows that from the time it began to be used as an address term, it was an in-group term that indicated solidarity.

It is this cool solidarity and in-group meaning that has remained with *dude* until the present, and it is the kind of stance indexed when the men in the fraternity use it. However, I show below that, while it is true that *dude* is used as more than simply an address term, it is restricted in where and how it is used grammatically in discourse structure and with what intonation.

## THE *DUDE* CORPUS

As an assignment for two introductory undergraduate sociolinguistics classes at the University of Pittsburgh (in 2001 and 2002), students were required to listen for and record the first 20 tokens of *dude* that they heard throughout a three-day period. They recorded the entire utterance as best as they could remember it, the gender and ethnicity of the speaker and addressee(s), the relationship between speaker and hearer, and the situation. I have compiled the results from both classes into a 519-token Dude Corpus (DC).[4] The impression that *dude* is used by young men (under 30) is confirmed by the survey, but young women also used the term a significant amount, particularly when speaking to other women, as shown in figure 2.[5]

FIGURE 2
Use of *dude* by Gender of Speaker and Addressee for People under 30 Years of Age
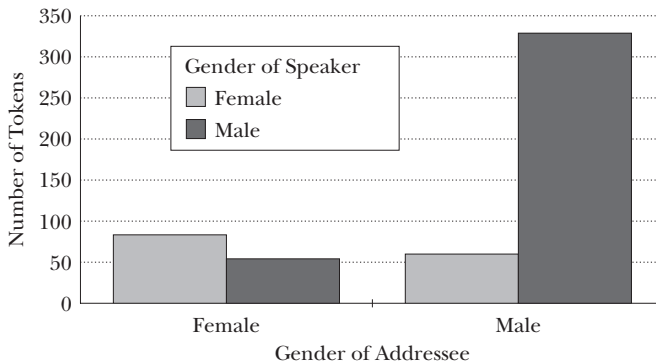


In addition to the overwhelming predominance of male-male uses of *dude* in these data,[6] it is important to note that the second most common speaker-addressee gender type is female-female, while in mixed-gender interactions there were relatively fewer uses of *dude*. This correlational result suggests that *dude* indexes a solidary stance separate from its probable indexing of masculinity, unless for some reason women are apt to be more masculine (and men, less masculine) when speaking to women.[7]

More clues to the solidarity component of *dude*'s indexicality can be found in the actual tokens used by women speakers to women addressees, however. The all-women tokens were not used in simple greetings, but mostly in situations where camaraderie was salient: only 1 of the 82 woman-woman tokens (1.2%) was a simple greeting (*Hey dude* or *What's up, dude*), as opposed to 7.6% (25/329) of the men's tokens. The women tended to use *dude* (1) when they were commiserating about something bad or being in an unfortunate position, (2) when they were in confrontational situations, or (3) when they were issuing a directive to their addressee. In these last two uses by women, *dude* seems to function to ameliorate the confrontational and/or hierarchical stance of the rest of the utterance.

For example, one token of commiserating was said in a whisper during a class: "Dude, this class is soooo boring." An even clearer example of commiseration (and clearly not masculinity) was recorded after the addressee had been describing a situation in which a man had been trying to "hit on" her. Following the story, the woman who heard the story replied simply, "Dude," with "a tone of disbelief and disgust." An instance of a confrontational situation in which *dude* is used was recorded after the addressee had

been teasing the speaker, who then said, "Dude, that's just not cool." Finally, a token used with a direct order while in a car: "Dude, turn signal!" There were also several instances of constructed dialogue[8] with men as addressees in the woman-woman tokens, which inflates the woman-woman tokens. However, these tokens also reveal information about the indexicality of *dude,* because all of these constructed dialogue tokens are used to express a stance of distance—or at least nonintimacy—from a man. For example, one token was recorded in the midst of telling a story about talking to a man. In the course of the narrative, the narrator says to the man "I'm like, dude, don't touch me!" Such tokens are clearly being used to create stances of distance between the speaker and the addressee ("don't touch me"), and these tokens thus reveal the nonintimate indexicality of the term.

*Dude* thus carries indexicalities of both solidarity (camaraderie) and distance (nonintimacy) and can be deployed to create both of these kinds of stance, separately or together. This combined stance is what I call COOL SOLIDARITY. The expansion of the use of *dude* to women is thus based on its usefulness in indexing this stance, separate from its associations with masculinity. *Dude* is clearly used most by young, European American men and thus also likely indexes membership in this identity category. But by closely investigating women's use of the term, the separation between the first-order stance index (cool solidarity) and the second-order group-identity index (men) becomes evident. These data also suggest, as would be intuitively predicted by anyone living in North American Anglo culture, an indexical connection between the stance of cool solidarity and young Anglo masculinity, thus showing an indirect indexical connection, of the kind outlined by Ochs (1992), between *dude* and masculinity.

## SELF-REPORT STUDY

The connection between the category 'men' and *dude* was further investigated by a project of a language and gender class at the University of Pittsburgh in fall 2002. This class administered a self-report survey to their friends on the terms *dude, babe,* and *yinz* (the latter being a Pittsburgh dialect term for second person plural). Respondents were asked how often they used the term and then whether they would use the term with particular addressees (boyfriend/girlfriend, close friend, acquaintance, stranger, sibling, parent, boss, and professor) using a Likert scale of 1 to 5. They were also asked why they used the term and what kind of people they typically think use the term. The survey is reproduced in the appendix.

These self-report data corroborate the findings of the survey above: that *dude* is used primarily by men speaking to other men, but not exclusively so. The highest average frequency rating was for man-man interactions (3.34), but men reported using *dude* with women as well (the average man-woman frequency rating was 3.24). As shown in figure 3, the gender of the survey respondent was more important than the gender of the addressee, since the difference between male and female speakers is greater than the difference between male and female addressees (i.e., the difference between the endpoints of the lines is greater than the difference between the two lines). However, there are again clues that *dude* is restricted to nonintimate solidarity stances. Consider figure 4.[9] The first noticeable pattern in this figure is that the gender of the addressee makes more of a difference to the men than the women: for women respondents (represented by the squares and diamonds), there is almost no difference between male and female addressees in any category, while for men respondents (the triangles), the gender of the addressee makes a striking difference, especially in the close friend category. In fact, in figure 4 the female lines are almost always within the male lines. These data thus show that *dude* is associated with a male friendship for the men and a nonhierarchic relationship for all respondents, indicated by the low values for parent, boss, and professor.

In addition, intimacy is NOT indexed by *dude*, especially for the men, as shown by the low ratings in the "heterosexual intimate relationship" (Hetero.) category. More importantly, the difference between the "different-gender, close-friend" and "heterosexual relationship" category is greater for men than for women (a difference of 0.63 for men and 0.55 for women). The disparity is even greater between "same-gender, close-friend" and "hetero-

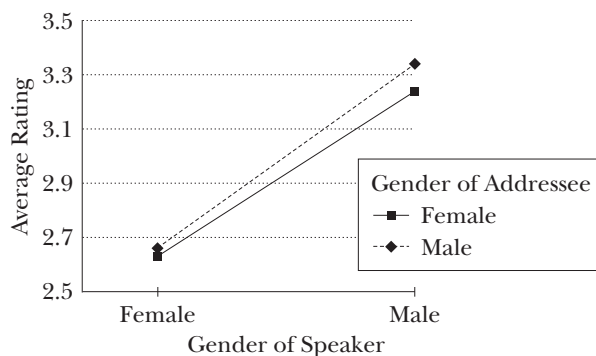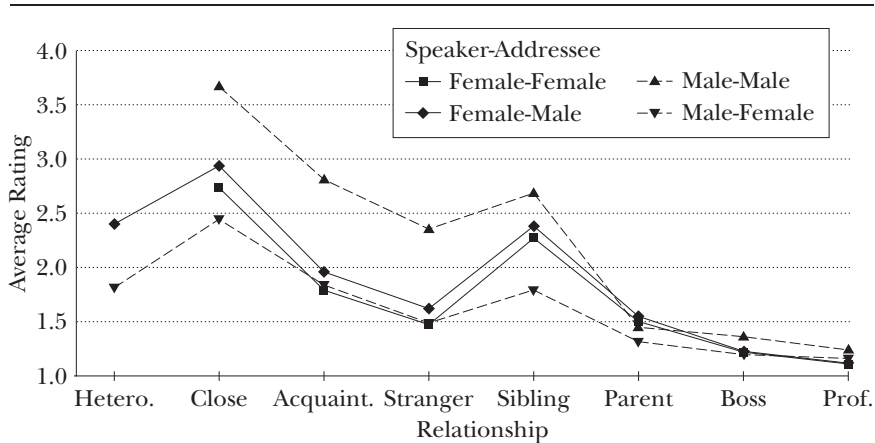Reported Frequency of Use of *dude* by Gender of Speaker and Addressee

FIGURE 4
*Dude* Reported Use by Gender of Speaker, Addressee, and Relationship
(see note 9 for descriptions of the relationship labels)



sexual relationship" (the difference for men is 1.85, while for women it is 0.33). Thus, intimate relationships with women are among the least likely addressee situations in which men will use *dude,* while a close female friend is the most likely woman to be addressed with *dude* by a man. In simple terms, men report that they use *dude* with women with whom they are close friends, but not with women with whom they are intimate.

This survey, combined with the DC, thus supports the claim that *dude* indexes a complex and somewhat indeterminate combination of distance, casualness, camaraderie, and equality. The survey also suggests that speakers are aware of the association between *dude* use and masculinity: in the open-ended question asking who uses *dude,* all responses suggested men, specifically young, drug-using men, often with descriptions such as *slacker, skater* (one who skateboards), or *druggie.* This second-order indexicality, or metapragmatic awareness (Silverstein 1996; Morford 1997), is one which connects the term to counter-culture, nonserious masculinity.

These indexicalities are clearly represented in films such as *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (1989), *Clerks* (1994), and *Dude, Where's My Car?* (2000), and in other popular representations of the term. In these films, some or all of the young male characters frequently use the term *dude.* The character Jeff Spicoli in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High,* played by Sean Penn, is one of the earliest, perhaps the best known and most prototypical, of these characters. This film is a comedy about a year in a southern Californian high school, with Spicoli as the do-nothing, class-cutting,

stoned surfer. While he is "clueless" and often falls on hard times, Spicoli is consistently laid back, even in exasperation, and especially in encounters with authority. The male characters who use *dude* in the other films mentioned here have similar personalities. Although they manifest it in slightly different ways, all take a laid-back stance to the world, even if the world proves to be quite remarkable, as in *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure* (in which the protagonists travel through time). I was a teenager at the time *Fast Times* was released. The characters in this film resonated with me and my peers because they represented (and satirized) a distillation of the dominant identity types found in my high school of mostly middle-class European Americans. As such, these characters, especially Spicoli, became media "linguistic icons" in Eckert's (2000) terminology. Many young men glorified Spicoli, especially his nonchalant blindness to authority and hierarchical division; in the early 1980s we often spoke with Spicoli's voice. At first these quotes were only in stylized situations where we quoted from the movie, but eventually many of the features of Spicoli's speech, especially *dude*, became commonplace as we endeavored to emulate the stance Spicoli takes toward the world. I will return to this film when discussing the rise of *dude*, but here it is evidence of the stances associated with *dude* as represented in popular media.

*Dude* has also been featured in comic strips, as shown in figure 1, from the comic strip "Zits," which has as its main characters American teenagers. *Dude* is implicated in stereotypes of male communication as inexpressive and monosyllabic (see also Sattel 1983), but in this episode of "Zits" the speakers are actually performing an act of solidarity (offering and accepting chewing gum), but with limited enthusiasm. *Dude* is perfect for such an interaction, and again bolsters the understanding of *dude* as indexing cool solidarity, especially among men. Figure 5 is a "Doonesbury" comic strip of a dialogue between two male college roommates. One of the roommates, distressed that the other has stopped calling him *dude*, interprets this as a symptom of becoming a more serious student overall. Here *dude* is clearly indexed with not being serious, since not using *dude* is seen as evidence of becoming serious. All of these representations suggest that *dude*'s first-order indexicality is one of cool solidarity, with a related second-order indexicality of men who shun authority and the establishment. Cartoonist Gary Trudeau uses this indexicality to humorous effect in a later strip when one of the characters in figure 5 joins the CIA; the humor is created by the clash inherent in the "slacker" working for the agency that arguably represents the height of establishment power. The indexicalities of *dude* thus encompass not just stances but also specific kinds of masculinity, and the two are intimately bound with one another in an indexical web.

FIGURE 5
*Dude* in "Doonesbury" Comic Strip



## *DUDE* IN INTERACTION

To understand how these indexicalities are put to use, this section investigates how *dude* is used in contextualized interactions among college-aged men in

1993 and views some examples of its use in interaction. I first outline where *dude* appears, and then the various functions it fulfills in interaction.

In reviewing the tokens of *dude* in the tapes from my year's ethnographic work in an American all-male fraternity (see Kiesling 1997, 1998, 2001a, 2001b) and in the DC, I have found that *dude* appears overwhelmingly in utterance-initial or utterance-final position. The frequencies with which *dude* appears in these positions are presented in table 1. It is also used regularly in sequential locations in interaction, such as in greetings, leave-takings, the prefacing of important information, and exclamations.

I also identify five specific interactional functions for *dude*: (1) marking discourse structure, (2) exclamation, (3) confrontational stance mitigation, (4) marking affiliation and connection, and (5) signaling agreement. Almost all of these functions overlap and derive from its indexicalities of cool solidarity and laid-back masculinity, although these indexicalities are employed in different ways depending on the function. These functions also show how *dude* encapsulates the men's homosociality, that is, the small zone of "safe" solidarity between camaraderie and intimacy.

DISCOURSE STRUCTURE MARKING. An individual use of *dude* may indicate a discourse structure, as described below, although the cool solidarity stance is simultaneously indexed when *dude* is used in this way. When this function marks off a new segment of discourse from a previous segment (as in the example below), it usually has a sharply falling intonation.

EXCLAMATION. *Dude* may be used on its own as an exclamation, to express both positive and negative reactions (commonly with another exclamative, especially *whoa*). The prosody used for *dude* in this function varies depending on the exclamation; in most instances it can be extremely elongated and

TABLE 1
Frequency of Positions of *dude*

| *Position* | | |
|---|---|---|
| Initial | 309 | (59.5%) |
| Final | 140 | (27.0%) |
| Medial | 19 | (3.7%) |
| Greeting | 36 | (6.9%) |
| *Dude* as entire utterance | 7 | (1.3%) |
| Exclamation with *whoa* | 8 | (1.5%) |
| TOTAL | 519 | |

NOTE: *Dude* is final in all greetings and exclamations.

falling in pitch, but not as sharply as in the discourse-structure-marking function.

CONFRONTATIONAL STANCE ATTENUATOR. *Dude* is often used when the speaker is taking a confrontational or "one-up" stance to the addressee. Through its indexing of solidarity, *dude* can attenuate or ameliorate the confrontation, signaling that the competitive or hierarchical component of the utterance is not serious. The DC has many instances of this kind of use, especially in woman-woman situations. In the terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory, this use is as a positive politeness strategy in situations of negative face threat. These instances are typically found at the end of the phrase and exhibit a low pitch that rises slightly on a slightly elongated syllable (not as elongated as in exclamations, however).

AFFILIATION AND CONNECTION. When *dude* is used as a true address term (i.e., it identifies the addressee), it is used to indicate a stance of affiliation or connection, but with cool solidarity as well. The pitch in this function is usually higher than in others, often slightly rising.

AGREEMENT. *Dude* is commonly used when a stance of agreement is taken, either sympathizing with something the addressee said, or agreeing with the content of the utterance. As with the affiliation and connection function, when sympathy or agreement is expressed and *dude* is used, this sympathetic stance retains a measure of cool. The prosody for this function is very similar to the confrontational *dude*, the only difference being that in the agreement function the pitch tends to be higher.

These functions are not all mutually exclusive; *dude* can perform more than one function in a single utterance, or it can be left ambiguous. Some examples of each of the functions in use show how speakers use this term in particular situations and how its indexicalities work in these situations.

   The first example, in which *dude* is used in its discourse-structure-marking function, is from a narrative told by Pete at the end of a meeting of fraternity members (see Kiesling 2001a). In this excerpt, Pete is telling about a road trip that he and Hotdog had taken during the previous weekend, in which they got lost. (This excerpt is not the entire narrative, which is very long and has numerous points which might be counted as evaluation and/or climax.)

   Excerpt 1 [10]
1    PETE: I was like fuck it just take this road we'll be there.
2        end up,
3        at one o'clock in the morning,
4        in south Philly.

5       I don't know if any y'all been at south Philly,
6       but it ain't where you wanna be at one o'clock in the morning
7       HOTDOG: it's it's the northeast of Washington D.C.
8       PETE: it is it's the southeast of Philadelphia
9       that's what it is.
10      I mean it's southeast
11      DUDE.
12      we're driving a 94 Geo Prism (.) with no tags, (1.1)
13      two White boys,
14      and we're like stuck behind this bu-
15      at one point,
16      we were stuck in an alley,
17      in an alley like cars parked on both sides, (.)
18      behind a bus,
19      and there's like two bars
20      like on both sides.
21      like (1.0) all these black people everywhere.
22      WASTED.
23      fucked up.
24      lookin at us.
25      *just like* (1.8)
26      I was scared shitless,
27      I 'as like Hotdog GO GO.
28      he was like there's a bus.
29      I don't care GO GO (0.7)
30      most nerve-racking time of my life-

Pete's use of *dude* in line 11 marks off an important segment of the narrative, a part in which he tells about the "danger" he and Hotdog were in. In lines 1–4 he is setting up their arrival in South Philadelphia. In lines 5–10, he describes in general that South Philly is dangerous, with help from Hotdog in line 7, who explains the status of South Philadelphia by relating it to a similar neighborhood in Washington, D.C., with which his audience is familiar. He has some disfluency getting exactly the form he is looking for, and then in line 11 utters *dude*, with a complete intonation contour that has a sharply falling intonation and is low in his pitch range. *Dude* thus serves to break off the string of disfluencies from the following utterances, which Pete "resets" by giving it more volume and beginning with a higher pitch. The utterances following *dude* then resume his evocation of danger more specifically, and the climax of this part of the story comes in lines 21–29, in which he describes the "dangerous" people around them, and then an evaluation in line 26 ("I was scared shitless").

In this example, *dude* is not picking out a single addressee: Pete is addressing the entire meeting. Rather, *dude* has two functions related to the

narrative structure and purpose. First, it delays the climax and resets the narrative, calling attention to the climax and evaluation to come. In this sense it is a discourse marker rather than an address term. So why does Pete use *dude* here and not something more "discourse-focused" like *so* or *anyway*, which are sometimes used to return to the main thread of a conversation or narrative once it has been left? The answer is the second function—that *dude* also retains its indexicality of cool solidarity and allows Pete to bring the audience into his story as if he were telling it to one person rather than many. Moreover, it invites the hearers to take Pete's perspective, thus further creating a separation between himself and the dangerous denizens of South Philly. Pete uses *dude* to build involvement, to use Tannen's (1989) term.

Later in the story, before Hotdog begins to conarrate, Pete again uses *dude*:

Excerpt 2
40    PETE: DUDE it was like boys in the hood man ai:n't no: lie:
41    HOTDOG: And they're all they're fucked up on crack, wasted
42        they're all lookin' at us they start comin' to the car,
43        so Pete's like FLOOR IT.
44        so I take off (.) and (.)

In this instance, Pete uses *dude* with an exclamatory function, with a slightly elongated vowel and a level intonation; *dude* is the most prominent syllable in the phrase, which lowers in pitch and amplitude throughout. But notice that the statement that follows is also a summary and evaluation of the situation he and Hotdog found themselves in, and continues the same involved, affiliative stance he used in the previous excerpt. We can infer this from his concurrent use of Southern vernacular English forms in *ain't no lie* and the address term *man*, which is similar to *dude* but less pervasive in this group.

An instance in which Pete uses *dude* to both attenuate a competitive stance and create connection is shown in the following excerpt from the Monopoly game:

Excerpt 3
44    PETE: Fuckin' ay man.
45        Gimme the red Dave. DUDE. (1.0)
46    DAVE: No.
47    PETE: Dave DUDE, DUDE Dave hm hm hm hm
48    DAVE: I'll give you the purple one
49    PETE: Oh THAT's a good trade

Pete is of course playing with the alliteration between Dave's name and *dude* in line 47 (Dave's real name also has an initial /d/). But Pete's use of *dude* in

line 45 is coupled with a bald imperative ("gimme the red"), and *dude* is in fact added almost as an afterthought, with a falling intonation on Dave, before *dude* (although there is no pause between the two words). Dave responds with his own bald refusal ("no"), which continues the confrontational stance initiated by Pete. The next line serves a purely interactional purpose, as it contains only Dave's name and *dude* repeated once in chiasmus. This "contentless" use of *dude* then can be performing only an interactional function (it is not performing a necessary address term function, since Pete also uses Dave's first name). Pete's chuckles after his use of the term indicate that he is not taking a truly confrontational stance, so he is probably changing his strategy to get the red property by emphasizing his and Dave's friendship. Dave follows suit in this "toning down" of the competition; he makes a conciliatory move after Pete's initial plea by offering Pete another property. In this excerpt, then, we see *dude* used in a purely affiliative way and in its mitigating function, especially useful because Pete is in an inherently competitive but friendly activity (the Monopoly game). These uses show how *dude* can be strategically placed so that the confrontation and the competition stay on a playful level. In this sense, it is a framing device as well as a stance indicator, indexing a "play" frame for the men (see Bateson 1972; Tannen 1979).

In the next example, Pete uses *dude* to create a stance of affiliation, but also to project coolness. Pete is in a bar with Dan, an out-of-town friend visiting another fraternity member. In this conversation, Pete agrees with many of the comments Dan enthusiastically makes but plays down his enthusiasm (see Kiesling 2001b). Particularly important here is that Pete is not just agreeing but doing so while keeping a cool, nonchalant stance that contrasts with Dan's enthusiasm about playing caps (a drinking game).

> Excerpt 4
> DAN: I love playin' caps.
>     That's what did me in last-┐       ┌last week.
> PETE:                          │that's-│
>     Everybody plays that damn game, DUDE.

Pete's use of *dude* in this excerpt matches the nonchalant stance of Pete's statement, thus helping to create that stance.

The next excerpt indexes a similar cool stance, but this time in a meeting. This example is Speed's first comment about which candidate should be elected chapter correspondent in an election meeting (see Kiesling 1997).

> Excerpt 5
> SPEED: Ri:tchie. I like Ritchie 'cause he's smart
>         and he probably (writes really good) too:.
>         so let him do it DUDE.

*Dude* helps Speed create a "stand-offish" stance in this excerpt, as it is used with the phrase "let him do it." Speed could have used something more active, such as "elect Ritchie," or "we need to put Ritchie in this position," but he frames his comments as a matter of simply stepping aside and letting Ritchie do the job. His relatively short comments are also consistent with this stance. Note also that Speed is speaking not to a single person, but to a roomful of members who are collectively his addressee, as Pete did in (1). *Dude* in this instance, then, is used purely to help create this stance of nonintervention, letting things take their course.

In the next excerpt, taken from a rush event (a social function held to attract potential members to the fraternity), Saul agrees with a potential member's (or rushee's) assessment of the University of Virginia men's basketball team.

> Excerpt 6
> RUSHEE: Junior Burroughs is tough he's gonna be (tough to beat)
> SAUL: Oh HELL yeah DUDE

This use of *dude* is especially interesting because it appears with an intensifier. The main part of Saul's utterance is his agreement with the rushee, as expressed simply by "yeah." But he intensifies this agreement with the use of "oh hell" before it with the primary sentence stress on *hell.* This indexes a stance not just of agreement but of enthusiastic agreement, in contrast to Pete's nonchalant agreement with Dan in (4). This difference is characteristic of Saul and Pete's personal styles: the former more often takes an enthusiastic interpersonal stance while the latter more often takes a cool stance. So it is not surprising that Saul should employ *dude* in a less cool, affiliative stance than Pete. Nevertheless, *dude* still serves to index both affiliation and distance, "toning down" the enthusiasm.

Finally, let us consider an instance of *dude* used in an interview. Mack uses it in (7) in an answer to a question I had asked about who gets elected to offices and whether the person who works hard or has the most ability actually gets elected to the office. In his answer, Mack takes me into his confidence about "the way things really work."

> Excerpt 7
> 60   MACK: You've been getting DUDE, what-
> 61        and this is, again what I'm coming down to
> 62   SK: ??
> 63   MACK: It really- the guys have been telling you what is supposed to happen
> 64        they don't know.

Mack here takes a stance of the knowledgeable insider, one he takes habitu-ally (see Kiesling 1997, 1998). In lines 63 and 64, he creates a dichotomy between what is supposed to happen and what really happens, which only he and a few others know about. In line 60, he begins this course of argu-ment ("you've been getting" refers to the answers I had received from other members about how people are elected to office), and he uses *dude* to signal that he is taking me into his confidence, into the inner circle of members. So here *dude* has solidarity function.

Although *dude* is used by almost all the men at some times, some use the term much more frequently than others. Pete uses *dude* at least sometimes in many different kinds of speech activities, as does Speed. Hotdog, Mack, and another member, Ram, by contrast, do not use *dude* in meetings but do use it in in-group narratives. Mack, as in (7), uses *dude* in the interview, but Hotdog and Ram do not. This pattern is strikingly similar to the patterns for the men's *-ing/-in'* use I have found (Kiesling 1998), suggesting that there is a similarity in the stances indexed and identities performed by the vernacular variant ([ɪn]) and *dude*. However, both of these linguistic forms (*dude* and [ɪn]) can index many kinds of stance while retaining core abstract indexicality of casual, effortless, or nonconformist (in the case of [ɪn]), and affiliation and "cool" (in the case of *dude*). They overlap in their indexing of effortlessness and coolness and are thus likely to be used by the same men.

In sum, these examples show how the general stances indexed by *dude* can be used as a resource in interaction. By using *dude*, the men are not rigidly encoding a relationship with an addressee or addressees. Rather, they are using the indexicalities of the term to help create an interpersonal stance, along with many other resources that interact with various parts of context (the nature of the speech event, participants' previous interactions and identities within the institution, etc.). I will acknowledge the vagueness with which I have been describing the stance indexed by *dude* and at the same time argue that this indeterminacy is characteristic of the overwhelming majority of social indexes (see also Silverstein 1996, 269). Without context there is no SINGLE meaning that *dude* encodes, and it can be used, it seems, in almost any kind of situation (as shown by the "Zits" comic). But we should not confuse flexibility with meaninglessness; rather, the complex of stances indexed by the term—distance, camaraderie, cool, casualness, solidarity—can be made salient through different contexts. *Dude*, then, shows us two impor-tant ways indexicality, and meaning more generally, work in language. First, the meaning that speakers make when using language in interaction is about stance-taking at least as much as it is about denotation. Nor is this social meaning-making most often focused on signaling group affiliation or "acts of identity" (Le Page and Tabouret-Keller 1985). Rather, it is about specific

relationships speakers create with each other in interaction. Second, meaning is made in contextualized interactions; words and sounds are indeterminate resources that speakers combine to perform and negotiate stances, and it is these stances which are the primary focus of interaction.

## HOW TO SAY *DUDE*

If context is important to interpretation, then the linguistic and socio-historical moment in which an utterance takes place is significant. Using *dude* in 2003 is different from using it in 1983, and certainly different from in 1963. This historical view also relates to the manner in which *dude* is pronounced. The importance of, and differences in, prosody has been discussed above; here I refer to the vowel quality of /u/ in *dude*. As shown by Labov (2001, 475–97), /u/ is being fronted across North America, especially after coronal onsets. *Dude* is thus a strongly favored environment for this fronting to take place. In fact, *dude* is almost always spoken with a fronted /u/ by the young speakers who use it, especially when it is used in a stylized manner (that is, when someone is performing while using the term, in the sense that they are marking it as not an authentic use of their own). I suggest that when older speakers pronounce *dude* with a backed /u/, younger speakers identify the token as unauthentic, uncool, or simply "old." There is thus a close connection between the fronted /u/ and *dude*. Phonology and lexis work together in this case to further make *dude*, in its most general sense, indexical of American youth. I would not go so far as to suggest that *dude* is driving this sound change, although Labov does argue that outliers (which are likely to be found in *dude* given its stylized uses) are important in the continuation of a sound change. While *dude* is not causing nor necessarily driving the sound change, it is certainly emblematic of it and is one of the ways that the sound change has been imbued with social meanings.

## DISCUSSION

The casual and cool stance that is the main indexicality of *dude* is an important feature of men's homosociality in North America. While masculine solidarity is a central cultural Discourse of masculinity in North America, this solidarity is nevertheless ideally performed without much effort or dependence. *Dude* helps men maintain this balance between homosociality and hierarchy. It is not surprising, then, that *dude* has spread so widely among American men because it encodes a central stance of masculinity. If *dude* use by men is re-lated to the dominant cultural Discourses of masculinity, then why did this

term expand significantly in middle-class, European American youth in the early 1980s? What are the cultural currents that made the particular kind of masculinity and stance indexed by *dude* desirable for young men (i.e., for the post-baby-boom generation)?

Youth in general often engage in practices that are meant to express rebellion or at least differentiate them in some way from older generations (Brake 1985). In language, this nonconformity can be seen in the "adolescent peak"—the rise in nonstandard language use by teenagers (see Labov 2001, 101–20), a peak which flattens out as teenagers become older. The rise of *dude* likely took place because cool solidarity became a valuable nonconformist stance for youth in the 1980s. While I can find no studies analyzing dominant cultural Discourses of masculinity in the 1980s, I would characterize this time—the Reagan years particularly—as one in which "yuppie consumerism" and wealth accumulation were hegemonic. Edley and Wetherell (1995, 141), moreover, comment that

it could be argued that the 1980s were characterized by the reinstatement of a new form of puritanist philosophy, once again emphasizing hard work and traditional family values (Levitas 1986). Typified in the character played by Michael Douglas in the film *Wall Street*, the stereotypical or ideal 1980's man was portrayed as a hard, aggressive person single-mindedly driven by the desire for power and status.

In perhaps the most well-known scenes in *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* (1982), a conflict is set up between Spicoli and his history teacher, Mr. Hand. In the first scene Spicoli is late on the first day of class, and in the second he has a pizza delivered to class. Mr. Hand is represented as a demanding, uptight teacher who takes stances that could hardly be further from those Spicoli adopts. Mr. Hand, of course, becomes outraged that Spicoli does not even seem to realize his behavior is unacceptable. From the eyes of a 1980s teenager, the conflict between Spicoli and Mr. Hand is an allegory for competing norms of masculinity and shows how the stances associated with *dude* are set up in conflict with stances of hard work and other "adult" values.[11] The "slackers" in the film *Clerks* (1994) are also the opposite of Edley and Wetherell's "hard, aggressive person single-mindedly driven by the desire for power and status," but in *Clerks*, the fun-loving of Spicoli has been replaced by nihilism: more "why bother?" than "who cares?" All of these portrayals, which can be connected to the use of *dude*, are part of a general American cultural Discourse which represents the post-baby-boom generation as having little or no career ambition—a whole generation of slackers. There is also a component of the surfer subculture associated with *dude* that valorizes not just skill and success, but the appearance of effortless, yet authentic, achievement. This kind of success is also quite different from the 1980s image of

success based on hard work. So in many ways the stances indexed by *dude* were (and still are) nonconformist and attractive to adolescents.

This view of the motivations for the rise of *dude* in American English shows that sociolinguistic norms are much more complex than, for example, associating a sound with prestige. The kinds of meanings indexed by language can be numerous, even if connected by a common thread, and change with each use. More importantly, *dude* shows that it is not just the indexicalities of a form that might change, but that the values and aspirations of the speakers might change as well. What was cool in 1982 is not necessarily cool in 2002 but may become cool again in 2005. In other words, the very definition of prestige changes over time. The casual stance indexed by *dude* is becoming more "prestigious" throughout the United States, so perhaps it will eventually be used by all ages and in most situations in America. For the time being, it is clear that *dude* is a term that indexes a stance of cool solidarity for everyone and that it also has second orders of indexicality relating it to young people, young men, and young counterculture men. It became popular because young men found in *dude* a way to express dissatisfaction with the careerism of the 1980s, and it has later been a way of expressing the nihilism of the 1990s. Perhaps we are becoming a nation of skaters and surfers, at least in certain cultural trappings, who only wish for, in Spicoli's words, "tasty waves and cool buds," and *dude* is the harbinger of things to come.

## APPENDIX
### *Dude* Survey
(This form modified from the original: *yinz* has been removed.)

### LANGUAGE SURVEY

Please help me with a survey for a linguistics class. The answers should take you only a few minutes. If you are interested in the topic, I can explain what we are studying after you have taken the survey.

Your answers are anonymous and confidential. No one will know who gave your answers, and the paper will be destroyed at the end of the course.

This survey asks you to answer questions about [two] words in English. These words are all terms of address. That is, they are used to greet someone or get their attention to talk to them in a sentence like this: "Hey, **sir**, you dropped something!"

The terms are *Dude* and *Babe*.

### *Dude*
1. How often do you use this term as an address term (circle one)?
    Many times each day
    About once a day

About once a week
Hardly ever
Never

2. What kind of person are you likely to use it to address?
    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 your | | The person is also a man | | The person is also a woman |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Girl/boyfriend | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Close friend | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Acquaintance | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Stranger | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Sibling | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Parent | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Boss | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Professor | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |

3. Why do you use the term? That is, what do you think it says about you to the person you are talking to?

4. What kind of person do you think uses it frequently?

### Babe
1. How often do you use this term as an address term (circle one)?
    Many times each day
    About once a day
    About once a week
    Hardly ever
    Never

2. What kind of person are you likely to use it to address?
    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 your | | The person is also a man | | The person is also a woman |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Girl/boyfriend | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Close friend | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Acquaintance | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Stranger | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Sibling | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Parent | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Boss | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |
| Professor | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A | \| | 1 2 3 4 5 N/A |

3. Why do you use the term? That is, what do you think it says about you to the person you are talking to?

4. What kind of person do you think uses it frequently?

### Now please answer a few questions about yourself:
1. What is your age?

2.  What is your ethnicity?

3.  What is your gender?

4.  In what city did (do) you go to high school?

5.  What is your occupation?

6.  If you are a college student, what is your major (or school, if undecided):

## NOTES

1.  I use the term *cultural Discourse* in the sense of poststructuralists, following Foucault (1980). Cultural Discourses are similar to ideologies, yet leave open the possibility of contradiction, challenge, and change, and describe more than idea systems, including social practices and structures. For a review of the term and its relevance to masculinities, see Whitehead (2002). I will always use a capital *D* with *cultural Discourses* to distinguish them from the linguistic notion of discourse, which is talk-in-interaction.

2.  Fraternities are social clubs, with membership typically limited to men, on college campuses across North America.

3.  *Pachuchos*, also spelled *pachucos*, refers to members of groups, or gangs, of young Mexicans and Mexican Americans known for their flamboyant dress, especially the zoot suit. The origin of the term is not completely clear, but it is likely derived from a native American word (Kiowa or Kiliwa). See Cummings (2003) and Sharp (2004).

4.  The corpus results, class assignment, and an electronic versions of the survey instrument are available at http://www.pitt.edu/~kiesling/dude/dude.html. I encourage instructors of linguistics courses to use the survey in their own courses, but please inform me that you have used it and, if possible, the results.

5.  Of the 519 tokens collected, 471 (91%) were in situations with speakers and addressees under 30 years of age. This result may reflect the age population of the class, of course, but it is a relatively valid representation of *dude* use for that age group. In terms of class, most students were middle class or upper working class. Statistics were gathered for ethnicity, with European Americans providing the vast proportion of tokens, but again these results are probably skewed by the predominance of European Americans in the class.

6.  These tokens could, of course, be influenced by who collected them. Both classes had more women than men, however, so if the results are skewed because of the sex of the observer, it is women's use of the term that has been artificially expanded.

7.  It has been pointed out to me that there was also a time when *dudette* was used, but that this term was unsuccessful. I do not remember hearing many instances of *dudette* used as an address term except with *dude* ("Hi, dudes and dudettes!"). I do remember it being used to refer to "female dudes." In any case, it was not a successful term, perhaps because of its inequality with the male form as a diminutive derivative.

8.  CONSTRUCTED DIALOGUE is more commonly called *reported speech,* which is essentially quoted speech; that is, it would be written in quotation marks in a novel. For example, "I'm like, dude, don't touch me," *dude, don't touch me* is reported speech. Tannen (1989) shows that such representations of other people's speech are often not what was actually said. Rather, the speech is CONSTRUCTED by the person doing the "quoting" to promote involvement in talk. The speaker in this example likely did not say exactly what she "quoted." Her use of a direct quote, however, makes her story much more vivid for the audience.

9.  Some of the relationship labels need explanation. The first is "Hetero." This category is "heterosexual intimate relationships," labeled on the survey as girlfriend/boyfriend. There were responses for male-male and female-female categories, but it is clear from the students who gathered the data that not all respondents understood the intimate nature of this category for same-sex situations. That is, not all male respondents who gave a rating for "boyfriend" are homosexual. This confusion makes the response problematic, and so I have removed the same-sex boyfriend/girlfriend data from this table, thus making it represent heterosexual relationships only. "Close" refers to a close friend, and "Aquaint." is an acquaintance. The rest of the labels should be self-explanatory.

10. Transcription conventions are as follows: Each line is roughly a breath group, and unless otherwise noted there is a short pause for breath at the end of each line in the transcripts.

| | |
|---|---|
| (text) | indicates the accuracy of transcription inside parentheses is uncertain |
| (?) | indicates an utterance that could be heard but was not intelligible |
| a: | indicates the segment is lengthened |
| (#.#) | indicates a pause of #.# seconds |
| (.) | indicates a pause of less than 0.5 seconds |
| = | indicates that the utterance continues on the next line without a pause |
| A\|B\| <br> \|C\|D | indicates overlapping speech: B and C are uttered simultaneously, not A nor D. |
| TEXT | indicates emphasis through amplitude, length, and/or intonation |
| *text* | indicates noticeably lower amplitude |
| bu- | indicates an abrupt cutoff of speech |
| ((text)) | indicates comments added by the author |

11. See http://www.netwalk.com/~truegger/ftrh/ for plot summaries and audio clips of the film, including a "film strip" of the famous scenes (http://www.netwalk. com/~truegger/ftrh/pizza.html).

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