LANGUAGE, GENDER AND IDENTITY: THE CASE OF KOTIS IN LUCKNOW-INDIA

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I explore the linguistics practices of a community of male sex workers who self identify as kotis in Lucknow-India. Kotis switch their identities between heterosexual males and kotis and this switch is most clearly manifest in their language choices. The data for this research was collected over four summers. I used ethnographic methods including one-to-one interviews, focus group interviews and participant observation to collect speech data. I analyzed the data using theories of variationist sociolinguistics especially the communities of practice framework, discourse analysis and gender studies.

The two linguistic features that kotis use are Farasi and feminine gender markings. Kotis use a code language which they call Farasi, which is a mixture of Hindi grammar and vocabulary of an unknown source. Kotis also use feminine gender markings in their role as kotis, when they assume their more feminine personae; the use of feminine gender marks them as different from other sexual identities. These two features of their language are discussed in detail. With the help of quantitative and qualitative methodology, I show that kotis use language to perform their identity as kotis.
Dedicated to my koti friends.

*I wish I could be more useful.*
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VITA

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Identity, language and sociolinguistics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Research question</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Structure of dissertation</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Theoretical frameworks</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Introduction</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 First wave variationist studies</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 Second wave variationist studies</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Third wave variationist studies</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Influences of Ethnography on the third wave</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 Influence of Gender Studies on third wave</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Conclusion and contribution</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The koti community: An ethnographic perspective</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Fieldwork in Lucknow</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.1 Early days in the field</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Fieldwork methodologies and me</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 Impressions</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 The koti community</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Kotis and <em>hijras</em></td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Other research on kotis</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Kotis as a Community of practice
   4.1 Introduction
   4.2 Communities of practice
   4.3 Kinds of membership in the community: Peripheral and core members
   4.3.1 Hijras and the koti community of practice
   4.4 Dimensions of a community of practice
   4.4.1 Mutual Engagement in the koti community
   4.4.2 Joint Enterprise in koti community
   4.4.3 Negotiable resources in the koti community
   4.5 Kotis as a Community of Practice – Issues of terminology and legitimization

5. Negotiating Sexual Identity: Shifting Gender Marking among kotis
   5.1 Introduction
   5.2 Combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies
   5.3 VARBRUL Analysis
   5.3.1 Independent Variables
   5.3.2 Topic
   5.3.3 Integration into community
   5.3.4 Addressee
   5.3.5 The Dependent/Linguistic Variable: Gender Marking in Hindi
   5.3.6 Quantifying Gender Marking
   5.4 Results of VARBRUL Analysis
   5.5 Summary

6. Connecting the local to the global
   6.1 Introduction
   6.2 Koti sexuality and the Indian sexuality continuum
   6.3 Issues of marginalization
   6.4 Representation and Identity
   6.4 Contributions of this research
   6.5 Future directions

Bibliography
Appendix A
Appendix B
LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1 Results of VARBRUL Analysis......................................................173
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 5.1 Gender marking and degree of integration........................................175
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

5.3 Identity, language and sociolinguistics

This research aims at highlighting the connections between language, identity and sexuality by uncovering how a group of people use language to display different identities and as a means to support their sexuality. I study the way language is intimately connected to identity and how this connection is used by members of a community to display their sexuality and switch identities. I worked with a community of male sex workers in India who self-identify as kotis\(^1\), collected ethnographic data in Lucknow-India and analyzed the data using theories of sociolinguistics, especially the communities of practice framework, discourse analysis and gender studies.

The contribution of this dissertation to sociolinguistics is threefold. First of all, this study highlights the importance of studying language and linguistic variation to unfold identity choices that speakers make. A closer look at choices of language can bring into focus the complex relationships people have to larger social forces. Secondly, this study highlights the usefulness of the communities of practice framework in studying smaller communities and how individual members of the community engage in meaning

\(^1\) Kotis have been present in the literature for a long time, and terms like khoja, zenana, jankha, moorat etc. have been used for them by other scholars. Zenana and moorat are commonly used terms for and by kotis in Lucknow as well.
making. Thirdly, this study brings into focus a community which has been out of academic discourse. A study like this can bring to attention the problems of marginalization and identity issues that such communities face.

Within the field of language and gender this research contributes to the understanding of how performance of gender works in varied cultural contexts. Scholars of language and gender have tried to explore the reasons behind the differences in the language use of people of different genders. Various reasons have been put forth for explaining this difference. These include the theory of dominance (Lakoff 1975), the theory of difference (Tannen 1990), power differential between different genders, etc. In recent years the field of language and gender has been increasingly influenced by the theory of gender performance put forth by Butler (1990). According to researchers working within this theory, the differences in language use are a result of how people are performing their genders. This performance is influenced by larger forces and discourses within the society. My research falls in the category of performance-based studies like Hall (2003, 2005), McElhinny (1992), etc., which say that the discursive practices of individuals are a result of how they choose to perform their identity.

1.2 Research question

The research questions that I answer through this research pertain to language use, research methodology and the koti community. The questions pertaining to language use is:
• Kotis use language as a mechanism that marks them as a separate community. They use Farasi, which is a secret code, and feminine gender marking to show that they are members of a particular community. They perform the role of kotis using language as a tool for this performance. The question I aim to answer is whether discovering the connections between how members of the koti community engage in making meaning within the community can help our understanding of the connections between language and identity.

The primary questions pertaining to research methodology that this research explores are:

• Is the framework of communities of practice useful for studying small communities like that of kotis? This question is also tied to the larger question of the usefulness of trying to connect local practices to global trends, which is what the communities of practice framework intends to do. For the purposes of this research, the local practices are those of kotis and the ‘global trends’ are the sexuality continuum within India.

• Is ethnographic methodology necessary for answering questions related to the language use of members of the koti community? Can qualitative research methodologies and quantitative research methodologies go hand in hand to provide a robust analysis of linguistic variation?

The questions related to the koti community that this research answers are:

• Do the kotis have resources like language, customs and ideologies that mark them as a distinct community? Previous work on kotis like Hall (2005), Cohen (1995)
and work on other sexualities and genders in the Indian subcontinent like Nanda (1995), Reddy (2004) etc. have questioned either the legitimacy or the accuracy of accounts of kotis and have hesitated to give this community the status of a distinct identity and, to some degree, culture. I question the claims that these researchers make.

- If the kotis have resources that mark them as a distinct community, what are these resources? How do the kotis use these resources, specifically linguistic resources, to sustain themselves as a community?

1.3 Structure of dissertation

Chapter 2 explores the different theoretical frameworks that have been used for this study. Variationist sociolinguists like Eckert (2005) say that the development of sociolinguistics happened in three waves. The first wave was concerned with defining how variation in language use is influenced by social categories like class, gender, ethnicity etc. The second wave was concerned with defining the reasons behind variation while paying attention to how members of small communities become active agents in deciding the direction and intensity of variation. The third wave looks at sociolinguistic variation as a reflection of how members of a community practice and learn. Practice and learning take on a new meaning within the third wave; they become the instruments which guide a person’s identity. Within the third wave an individual becomes an active agent in choosing and defining her identity.
The frameworks of variationist sociolinguistics, specifically third-wave variationist sociolinguistics, are discussed in chapter 2. This chapter also outlines the framework of communities of practice, which is widely used in language and gender studies and is the theoretical framework that has been used in this research to understand the way linguistic variation works in the koti community. The theories of cultural anthropology, discourse analysis and gender studies have been used to explore various aspects of the data. In chapter 2, I discuss how each of these frameworks influences third-wave variationist studies. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the contributions this research makes to variationist sociolinguistics as well as to the study of gender in India.

Chapter 3 provides an ethnographic perspective of the koti community and discusses the methodologies used for data collection. My role as a fieldworker in a community that is largely hidden from the public eye is discussed. I used ethnographic methods including interviews, focus-groups and participant observation for the collection of data; and in the chapter I discuss their usefulness as data collection tools. The description of koti community is written with the members in mind, and I have followed the basic principle of ethnography, which entails that members of the community should be represented from their own perspective. To the best of my knowledge there has never before been a depiction of the koti community from the perspective of the members of the community. This chapter also critiques other work that has been done on the koti community or similar communities and explores the contribution this research makes to the study of gender in India.
Chapter 4 discusses the theoretical framework of communities of practice. The objective of discussing the framework of communities of practice is twofold. Firstly, this discussion validates the fact that ethnographic methodologies have enriched the framework of communities of practice and that the use of ethnographic methods for data collection can be useful for the study of linguistic variation. Secondly, the questions related to the reasons behind linguistic variation can be explored using the communities of practice framework. The communities of practice framework was developed by Wenger (1992) and was brought into linguistics by Eckert (1998). This framework has been used in many language and gender studies; in this chapter I explore the utility and usefulness of this framework for community based studies like my own. I also argue that kotis are a community of practice and support my arguments by exploring the koti community within the three dimensions of a community of practice, which are mutual engagement, joint enterprise and negotiable resources. I show that kotis share these three dimensions of a community of practice by way of language, dress, learning tricks of the trade together and sharing experiences. The last section of this chapter is devoted to discussing how previous research on the koti community has been lacking and how studying the kotis as a community of practice can be useful for scholars of the Indian sexuality continuum because it provides a method of analysis for exploring the community further.

Chapter 5 discusses the use of gender marking among the members of the koti community. I combine quantitative methodology and discourse analysis to underline the connection between language and identity. The native language of the members of this community is Hindi. Hindi has grammatical gender for masculine and feminine. Kotis
switch between masculine and feminine gender markings; the switching of gender
marking depends on topic, addressee and whether the kotis are integrated or non-
integrated into the koti community. Topic, addressee and integration into koti community
came out as relevant factors during my fieldwork with kotis and also after consideration
of data. I explore each of these variables further and, with the help of the statistical
program VARBRUL, show that each of these factors play a role in the switching of
gender marking by kotis.

Chapter 6 situates kotis within the Indian male sexuality continuum in an effort to
connect the local practices and concerns of this community to the larger forces that
influence the marginalization of this community. I give a review of research that has been
done on ‘alternate’ sexualities within the Indian context and situate my work within this
research. This chapter also outlines the contributions this dissertation makes to language
and gender studies. I end the chapter by identifying the limitations of this study.
CHAPTER 2
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

2.1 Introduction

The central goal of sociolinguistics is to study the ways in which linguistic variation reflects and indexes different aspects of a person’s identity. Eckert (2005) asserts that the development of the field of sociolinguistic variation happened in three waves, which are not necessarily chronological. While each wave is concerned with how language variation indexes social identity, they differ in terms of methodology and in their conception of how choice of language and social identity are related. The first wave was most interested in explaining the large-scale forces behind variation; the second wave addressed issues of how individuals play a role in defining variation; and the third wave studies practice as the major force behind linguistic variation. My goal in this chapter is to legitimize my choice of a third-wave orientation for my research on kotis and to show that the first and second waves do not provide the theoretical and methodological grounds required for the study of a community like kotis.

The chapter is organized as follows. The second section discusses first-wave variationist studies. The third section discusses second-wave variationist studies. The fourth section discusses third-wave variationist studies. I also discuss the influence of gender studies, discourse analysis and ethnography on the third wave, along with a
discussion of major scholars whose work influences third-wave variationist sociolinguistics. I will discuss how each of the theoretical influences on the third wave studies enriches our understanding of the koti community. I will end the chapter with a discussion of the contribution of my own research to third-wave variationist work in general and to language and gender studies in particular.

2.2 The first-wave variationist studies

The first wave was influenced by the idea that social categories like class, ethnicity, education, etc. influence the way linguistic variation occurs. The goal of these studies was to establish correlations between social factors and linguistic variables. Eckert explains the goals of first wave studies as follows, “The focus in these studies is on capturing the vernacular, the ingrained patterns found in the individual’s most unreflective speech, and the source of regular linguistic change” (2005:3). The goal of early sociolinguistic studies like Labov’s was the study of the vernacular, since it was considered to be the most systematic data for study of variation and change. This approach to studying variation in language is also influenced by the roots of sociolinguistics in urban dialectology. The methodology for first-wave studies was influenced by large surveys of populations in particular geographic areas. Labov’s research was groundbreaking in that it explained the forces behind linguistic variation and explored how language change works; it was criticized by later linguists. The following criticisms were aimed at Labov’s research:

1. Definition of speech community and class
2. Imposition of class and other categories on people

3. Use of identity and style

*Definition of speech community and class:* Labov called New York City a speech community. A speech community is a unit which is defined by common understanding of variation; as Labov puts it, a speech community is “united by a common evaluation of the same variables which differentiate the speakers” (1966:125). While concluding the results of his NYC study, Labov says, “This result is typical of many other empirical findings which confirm the view of New York City as a single speech community, united by a uniform evaluation of linguistic features, yet diversified by increasing stratification in objective performance” (1972[1966]:117). Moreover Labov says, “That New York City is a single speech community, and not a collection of speakers living side by side, borrowing occasionally from each others’ dialect, may be demonstrated by many kinds of evidence. Native New Yorkers differ in their usage in terms of absolute values of the variables, but the shifts between contrasting styles follows the same pattern in almost every case. Subjective evaluations of native New Yorkers show a remarkable uniformity, in sharp contrast to the wide range of response from speakers who were raised in other regions” (1982:5). A speech community is not defined by class or any other measure of social belonging; the entire city of New York is a speech community because the people in NYC have a common understanding of the variables Labov discusses. However, other scholars argue that common values and ideology, which are what made NYC a speech community for Labov are too broad to be useful criterion. Also, they argue that the
concept of speech community does not seem to account for the influences of smaller, local categories and communities.

*Imposition of class and other categories on people:* Another problem with the Labovian paradigm lies in the imposition of class and gender on people; this led to debate on how to define class or gender so that categories people fall under are defined by the people themselves. Labov (1982) used occupation, education and income as indicators for defining the social class of New Yorkers. Each of these “indicators” (138) was “determined on a scale of 8-10 levels in the survey, and then grouped into four broad categories” (138). Educational rank was dependent on how much school a person had completed, with college being highest and grade school or less being lowest. Occupational rank was dependent on what someone’s profession was, with manager, etc., being highest and service worker, etc., being the lowest. The major problem is the essentialist nature of Labov’s ranking system. Moreover, this is a case of imposing categories on people. For example how would these criteria account for someone who has a PhD but works as a server in a restaurant? Eckert says, “The survey method’s primary virtues are coverage and replicability, both of which depend on the use of pre-determined social categories and fairly fleeting social contact with the speakers that represent those categories. As a result, the social significance of variation can only be surmised on the basis of a general understanding of the categories that serve to select and classify speakers. This led, above all, to a treatment of variables as markers of primary categories – class and gender” (2005:1).
Identity and Style: Mendoza-Denton (2001) puts the first wave in what she calls “Sociodemographic Category-based identity”. According to her, this category is constituted by, “Studies of linguistic identity that are based on stratification of a population according to sociological/demographic categories (such as region, age, sex, occupation, social class, ethnicity)” (480). While there is no mention of identity in Labov’s New York City study, one can look for reasons beyond the ones Labov gives, e.g., for more controlled performance while reading lists as opposed to word lists or casual speech. One of the reasons could be that people perform differently in different social contexts; their identity is not monolithic (like class, gender, and ethnicity) but is historically informed and constructed in context. The major criticism of the Labovian paradigm is not that it does not pay much attention to identity but that it treats identity as monolithic. The individual as an active agent is completely lacking in Labov’s early work. In Labov’s studies the individual behaves in a certain way because she belongs to a certain class and class determines behavior. Labov’s stratification of people in different classes does not leave much scope for incorporating identity, but his lack of interest in identity led to the second wave of sociolinguists, who not only believed in non-static participant-based and defined categories but also defined and commented on the role of identity in someone’s linguistic behavior.

Another problem with first wave studies has to do with their definition and conception of style. Labov (1966) came up with the idea of style as “attention paid to speech”. and he formulates the “decision tree” along similar lines. He talks about style shifting in the context of a sociolinguistic interview only and discusses the eight

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2 Labov (2001) describes “decision tree as, “eight contextual criteria as a decision tree for the analysis of spontaneous speech” (89).
“contextual criteria” which are primarily divided into casual and careful speech. Casual speech consists of narrative, group (any speech directed towards anyone other than the interviewer), kids and tangent (deviations from the topic being talked about) whereas careful speech consists of response, language (direct questions about grammar, minimal pairs, etc.), soapbox (“extended expression of generalized opinions” (91)) and residual (anything that does not fit any other criteria).

While Labov’s categorization of contexts looks like a robust tool for analyzing style, one is left confused about whether what he is calling context is actually style. If it is style, can one really comment on style with any amount of certainty without paying attention to context? In other words, how can we take the context out of any speech event? Even if we treat the categorizations like response, narrative, tangent, etc. as style shifts, we cannot definitively study them unless we study the situation in which the shift happens. Can what Labov calls tangent be treated not as style shift but as topic shift? If this is the case, then are we too struck in terminology, and in doing so are we ignoring the issue at hand, which is or should be – a closer study of the social phenomena that affect the use and choice of language varieties?

Baugh (2001) critiques Labov’s notion of reading style and says that not all informants are comfortable with this style. Baugh also says the decision tree, while very viable as a methodological tool, is not universally applicable; interview data and fieldworkers will have to change according to the situations on the field. Baugh also suggests alterations to Labov’s decision tree and adds formal vs. informal categories to all the casual and careful styles that Labov talks about. Baugh says, “Any a priori designations regarding distinctions between Careful and Casual speech would be
speculative at best, and researchers should be free to introduce the relevant evidence, including ethnographic data, that would lend greater empirical verification to ensuing analyses of the ratio of careful to casual speech, as well as the circumstances that may give rise to one form over the other during the course of sociolinguistic interviews” (115).

2.3 The Second wave of variationist sociolinguistics

The next phase in the development of sociolinguistic studies of variation sprang from the desire to understand the practices of local communities better. The second wave paid more attention to local categories; as Eckert puts it, “the categories were discovered in virtue of their place in local social practice” (2005:5). Ethnography and ethnographic methods became important for the analysis of linguistic and social variation. The goal was to understand the relationship of local categories and language variation. Linguistic variables, in the second-wave studies, were seen as indexing locally defined categories.

Among the most influential second-wave studies were those conducted within the framework of social network analysis. The first sociolinguistic study of this type was conducted by Milroy. While discussing early studies that used social network analysis, Milroy states,

The basic postulate of these recent studies is that people interact meaningfully as individuals, in addition to forming parts of structured, functional institutions such as classes, castes or occupational groups. The other main interest of the approach of these scholars is that it is largely structural. With a view to explaining social
behavior, they concentrate not on the social or personal attributes of the individuals in a social network, but rather on the characteristics of the linkages which bind them to each other (46).

In addition to this, Milroy states, “A social network acts as a mechanism both for exchanging goods and services, and for imposing obligations and conferring corresponding rights upon its members” (47). A social network is marked by density; a network is high-density if the ego is connected to people, and they are in turn connected to each other. A network is low-density if the ego is connected to people, but they are not connected to each other. Most lower-class communities which, are also the communities that interest linguists more due to their closer association with the vernacular, are dense networks.

By providing a frame for whom to interview and which circle to become a member of, social-network analysis added to the earlier notion of speech community by making a community seem more real and manageable. It also prevented researchers from assuming categories to put people in. What differentiates a speech community from a social network is its size. As Milroy and Gordon say, “To understand the correlations between language and these global categories, we need procedures which allow us to examine the specifics of local practice and local conditions, and which are sensitive to the local social categories and locally contracted ties with which speakers operate in their everyday lives” (2003:116). This was a leap from early sociolinguistic studies that were operating with a belief in speech communities.
The second wave of studies of linguistic and social variation brought changes to the existing definitions, assumption and methodologies. The major criteria which the studies differed from the first wave are:

1. Definition of community and class
2. Preventing imposition of class and other categories on people
3. Identity and style

Definitions of community and class: While the first wave studies assumed categories, the second wave tried to discover categories that were important for the local community they were studying. One of the problems with speech community was defining class and the arbitrariness of the criteria used to define class. Milroy (1980) states that, as a large-scale concept for studying the relationship between class and linguistic variables or the understanding of linguistic variables as markers of class, speech community works very well. Social class, a concept related to speech community, is another large-scale concept that puts people into well-defined blocks, which in turn are related to their speech patterns. The earlier studies did not put agency in the hands of speakers at all. For the second-wave studies, categories that were locally understood as important and valuable to members of the community were given attention for analysis of variation.

Preventing imposition of class and other categories on people: Issues related to identity were never discussed in their entirety in the first-wave studies. The concept of community was a way around these large scale concepts. While critiquing the concepts of speech community and social class, Milroy says, “Membership of a
group labeled ‘lower-middle class’ does not necessarily form an important part of a person’s definition of his social identity. Yet smaller-scale categories are available which reflect the fact that there are social units to which people feel they belong and which are less abstract than social classes. For this smaller-scale, more concrete, unit we reserve the term *community*, used in a specific technical sense” (14). This statement suggests a need for putting local categories at the center of sociolinguistic analysis.

The term *community* implies a sense of belonging to a single unit for its members, although researchers have objected to the idea because of the challenges associated with relating variation in smaller communities to the large-scale tendencies of linguistic variation and studying the patterns of variation. The added factor of there being more mobile and less mobile members in the communities adds to the complexity of studying smaller communities. As Milroy states, “language does much more than reflect people’s positions in an abstract hierarchical society, demarcating general social class, sex and age group” (1980:19) Within the social-network framework, variation is explained as a function of the structure of an individual’s social networks. The density of an individual’s network or lack thereof is used to explain the way they use particular linguistic variables. Network analysis and how an individual operates in their network are also connected to the identity of informants or how the informants want to associate or dissociate from particular groups.

*Identity and Style:* The second-wave studies gave more agency to the speaker, unlike the first-wave studies, which viewed the speaker as someone subject to class, prestige,
gender, etc. and not actively engaging in constructing her/his own identity. As Dodsworth puts it, the second wave treated variation as a “resource in the construction of identity” (2005:15); this is in contrast to the first-wave, where variation is seen as a result of social circumstances. According to the second-wave studies, the speaker chooses linguistic variables in order to identify with some particular group. Dodsworth (2005), while critiquing the Labovian paradigm introduces Milroy’s theory of social networks and says, “For Milroy, then, individuals have some autonomy in the use of linguistic variables, outside of the effects of social categories. Individuals make linguistic choices in order to identify with particular groups. This is probably the most important ideological difference between those working within a traditional Labovian paradigm and those who work within more recent models” (27). The idea that individuals have a say in their choices of linguistic variables is important.

Labov’s Martha’s Vineyard study followed an approach to investigating the relationship between language and social identity that is very similar to second-wave variation studies. Labov says that “no change takes place in social vacuum” (1972[1963]: 2) and that “one cannot understand the development of language change apart from the social life of the community in which it occurs” (3). On Martha’s Vineyard, Labov studied the influence of social factors like class, education, age, geographic position, ethnicity on the centralization of [ay] and [aw]. His ethnographic fieldwork with the members of this community is what differentiates this study from his other pioneering studies, like the New York City study. His findings showed that the older members show more centralization since they associate with the island more than with the summer inhabitants of the island. This indicated a change in approach from correlating identity to
other social variables to understanding identity as a phenomenon that emerges differently within cultures.

Labov claims, “It is not unnatural, then, to find phonetic differences becoming stronger and stronger as the group fights to maintain its identity” (1972 [1963]:29). This is the only mention of identity in Labov’s study. He does not clearly spell out identity in his work but the social variables that he has used in his studies like gender, class, ethnicity, etc., can all be understood as tenets that govern identity. Identity can be considered one of the strongest forces that govern linguistic change. People in Martha’s Vineyard associate or identify with certain aspects of social factors like ethnicity, age, etc.; this is reflected in their language. Depending on whether the residents of the island identify with a mainland or island identity, the usage of vowels changes, strongly suggesting that identity is a factor in bringing about change both linguistically and ideologically. Labov gives robust results to support his analysis about the effect of social variables on linguistic variation, but he does not directly comment on the way identity works.

Eckert and McConnell Ginet (1998) say, “His [Labov’s Martha’s Vineyard] study captured the intersection between interest, activity, and viewpoint that underlies a community of practice; and one can assume that the practice that unites these communities includes not only ways of talking, but also activities, dress (and other patterns of consumption), concerns, and topics of talk” (191). Not only does this hint at the conceptualization of communities of practice in Labov’s work but also reinforces the fact that it is possible to look at Labov’s work in an identity-centric, communities of practice approach. This also implies that the three waves are not chronological in the
strict sense of the term, since Labov’s Martha’s Vineyard study predates much of the work done within the second wave in terms of data collection methodology and analysis of results.

5.3 The Third wave of variationist sociolinguistics

Much of the recent sociolinguistic research in general and language and gender research in particular falls under the third wave. The basic tenet of the third wave lies in Eckert’s assertion that, “The individual, [thus], is not a lone ranger wobbling out in the social matrix, but is tied into the social matrix through structured forms of engagement. The individual constructs an identity – a sense of place in the social world – in balancing participation in a variety of communities of practice, and in forms of participation in each of those communities” (17:1999). The concept of communities of practice (Lane and Wenger 1991), and the idea that it is the practices of local communities that should be looked at for defining and understanding variation, form the basic postulates of third-wave variation studies.

Eckert and McConnell Ginet define a Community of Practice as, “An aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct a community of practice is different from the traditional speech community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which the membership engages.” (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999:174).
Wenger 1992 is one of the most influential researchers in the practice-based approaches to learning, which are the starting point of communities of practice studies. His research focuses on using the Communities of practice framework to understand social systems and social meaning. On his website Wenger says,

Theoretically, my work focuses on social learning systems.

I am trying to understand the connection between knowledge, community, learning, and identity. The basic idea is that human knowing is fundamentally a social act. This simple observation has profound implications for the way we think of and attempt to support learning. (http://www.ewenger.com/)

By calling human knowledge a “fundamentally social act” Wenger is acknowledging the importance of practice and social contact in every human endeavor – linguistic or otherwise. Wenger writes that “a central organizing principle of the world as human societies constitute it. They are the primary setting of activities, the seat of the organization of knowledge, mastery, and understanding, and the social building blocks providing stage and material for the definition of the individual” (1991: 148). He further adds, “Because communities of practice are organized around a practice, they have to organize themselves in such a way that their members can proceed with that practice, and proceeding with the practice both requires and results in an existentially coherent form of membership” (152). This implies that the nature of the practice that members engage in is not necessarily relevant to the concept. Also involvement in a Community of practice inherently results in some level of unity of identities, as Wegner suggests: “shared practice stabilizes the forms of individualities it supports through identities of participation” (152) Thus, if one claims that a particular community is a Community of
practice, one is also saying that there must be activities, ideologies and issues that unite the members of this community of practice, something that is missing from a social-network framework.

Eckert and McConnell Ginet (1992) were the first to use this framework to explain linguistic variation. According to Eckert, “social order comes down to the nature of communities of practice – gender, ethnicity, age and class are manifest in the range of communities of practice that exist, in the combinations of communities of practice that people in the social order participate in, and the practices within those communities” (16:2005). Thus, the individual is tied to the community of practice and her identity is constructed with respect to the communities of practice she participates in. The manifestation of this identity happens in the linguistic realm or as Eckert puts it, “key to this entire process of [identity] construction is stylistic practice” (17). The third wave brings participants to center stage and variation is viewed as performance of a certain identity which is context-driven. The concept of ‘practice’ became very important in the third-wave studies.

Communities of practice in relation to social networks

The communities of practice framework is not only interested in linguistic variation but also in understanding what kind of social meaning this variation has for people. Holmes and Meyerhoff (1999) distinguish between the social-networks and communities of practice frameworks and state:

a Communities of practice offers a different perspective from a social network on the study of language in society: A Communities of practice requires regular and
mutually defining interaction. In a social network, by contrast, weak ties exist even among people who have limited or infrequent contact. In short, a social network and a Communities of practice can be differentiated by the nature of contact that defines them. A social network requires QUANTITY of interaction; a Communities of practice requires QUALITY of interaction (180).

Milroy (2002) comments on how a community of practice is different from social networks. The following quote also from Milroy, shows that practice is central to the communities of practice framework, something that differentiates it from the social network framework. She also points to the similarities between the two frameworks in that they both treat the community as central to analysis of linguistic variation. She says:

Eckert employs the concept of communities of practice, which is closely related to that of social network to locate the interactional sites where social meaning is indexed by linguistic elements, and linguistic change and social meaning are co-constructed. A community of practice may be defined as an aggregate of people coming together around a particular enterprise (Eckert 2000:35), and in her analysis of the social dynamics of language change among Detroit adolescents, Eckert focuses on intersecting clusters of individuals engaged in such enterprises. Such clusters constitute gendered subgroups instantiating the adolescent categories which participants themselves construct. Network analysis typically does not attend to the identification of such clusters or the enterprises undertaken by members, but deals primarily with the structural and content properties of the ties which constitute egocentric personal networks (552).
Holmes and Meyerhoff (1998) offer a comparison among different approaches to studying linguistic variation (speech community, social identity theory, which is more social psychology-based, and community of practice). According to them, the speech community approach does not say anything about the relationship between an “individual’s group and personal identities”; the social-identity approach does not specify a clear relationship between individual and group identity; and the communities of practice approach says that there is an “actively constructed dependence of personal and group identities” (179).

The Third wave and Communities of Practice
The third wave added to the first and second waves by reevaluating the existing:

1. Definition of community
2. Categories for defining identity
3. Style

Definition of community: While the communities of practice framework mostly influenced sociolinguists interested in language and gender, other branches of sociolinguistics have been influenced by it too. This approach puts identity center stage. While criticizing earlier works which had an overly closed view of gender, Eckert and McConnell suggest that researchers should look locally to understand the way gender identity works. They say, “To think practically and look locally is to abandon several assumptions common in the gender and language studies: that gender can be isolated from other aspects of social identity and relations, that gender has the same meaning
across communities, and that the linguistic manifestations of that meaning are also the same across communities” (462).

Eckert and McConnell are not just criticizing language and gender research but also an entire body of variationist sociolinguistic studies that from their point of view are guilty of imposing categories on people. According to them, “To think practically is to focus on the historical processes of constructing gender categories and power relations” (462), which is to say that the focus is on construction of gender rather than on any ‘given’ gender category. Unlike earlier variationist studies, which define identity by placing people in predetermined grids, the communities of practice framework seeks to understand how people define themselves. Also, in contrast to sociodemographic community-based identity studies, which examine the way people use linguistic variation to define their identity, the communities of practice approach examines the way linguistic variables are used as a means to construct identity.

Using categories to define identity: Mendoza-Denton calls one type of studies that falls under the third wave “practice based identity” studies: “[the] Studies that I include under the heading of practice-based identity are centrally concerned with the identities that speakers accrue not because they claim or are assigned category membership but rather because identities are accomplished in the joint practice of particular activities” (486). Three pioneering works within what Mendoza-Denton calls the practice-based approaches to identity – Le Page and Tabouret-Keller (1985), Eckert and McConnell Ginet (1992) and Eckert (2000) are discussed below. All these studies fall within the third wave in that they avoid the pitfalls of essentialism by emphasizing the fluidity of identity.
Le Page and Tabouret-Keller study the way language, nationality and physical appearance define ethnicity in Belize. Their claim is that individual speakers use linguistic devices to associate or dissociate themselves with certain groups. Le Page and Tabouret-Keller’s hypothesis is that “the individual creates for himself the patterns of his linguistic behavior so as to resemble those of the group or groups with which from time to time he wishes to be identified, or so as to be unlike those from whom he wishes to be distinguished” (181). In this scenario the individual becomes important as she is the one who actively decides what group to identify with and what symbolic means to use to accomplish the identification. However, there are some constraints to the amount of leeway one can have within the group one wants to identify with. According to Le Page and Tabouret Keller

We can only behave according to the behavioral patterns of the groups we find it desirable to identify with to the extent that:

(i) we can identify the groups

(ii) we have both adequate access to the groups and ability to analyse their behavioral patterns

(iii) the motivation to join the groups is sufficiently powerful, and is either reinforced or reversed by feedback from the group

(iv) we have the ability to modify our behavior (182)

This is a leap from Labov’s work not only in methodology but also in the belief that individuals participate in their own identity construction, so that linguistic variation is not a rule-governed process where the individual lacks agency but is a result of the individual’s unique understanding of the community s/he lives in. Further, Le Page and
Tabouret Keller say, “We have proposed that self-ascription is always accompanied by linguistic symptoms, within the constraints of our four riders” (237). This claim hints at the understanding or rather is the understanding that identity is discursively constructed.

Mendoza-Denton introduces a third type of identity-based studies which she calls “practice-based variation”. Within the three waves, these too fall in the third wave. Some parts of my research fall under practice-based identity and others fall under practice-based variation. Mendoza Denton says practice-based variation studies, “focus on variation as practices unfold, identifying the use of symbolic variants in the moment-to-moment dynamics of interaction. Almost always ethnographic and discourse/conversation-analytic in perspective, studies (of Type III) track the shifting identities of speakers as interaction progresses, affording researchers a closer look at the microdynamics of indexicality in variation as well as processes of performance, achievement, and construction of identity” (489). The difference between practice-based identity and practice-based variation lies in the way these two treat identity. In practice-based identity approaches, identity is seen as a product of practice: people participate in different communities and have different resources which allow them to call themselves members of these communities. Practice-based variation looks at identity as something that emerges in discourse. Practice-based variation also demonstrates that variationist sociolinguistic studies do not necessarily have to be quantitative. In her 1996 study of the narratives of Jewish Americans, Schiffrin contends that people situate themselves in discourse, so that there is no such thing as a stable identity; identity is continually constructed in discourse. As Mendoza-Denton states, “Schiffrin stresses that just as
Labov (1972) argued that there are no single-style speakers, similarly, there are no single-identity speakers” (490).

Style: Style took a new meaning in third-wave studies. Irvine defines style as follows: “‘style’ crucially concerns distinctiveness, though it may characterize an individual, it does so only within a social framework ((of witnesses) who pay attention); it depends upon social evaluation and, perhaps, aesthetics; and it interacts with ideologized representations” (2001: 21). The definition of a community then in some way depends on how members of the community associate themselves with particular ways of talking – in other words, style. These features are shared and recognized by members of this community and mark them as a community of practice. Irvine also identifies what she calls “lessons” about style. The first lesson is distinctiveness. The second lesson is “that the relationships among styles are ideologically mediated” (22), and the third is the “consistency” of linguistic features that constitute style. Irvine is more interested in the anthropological understanding of style, and she gives agency to the speakers. She says, “styles in speaking involve the ways speakers, as agents in social (and sociolinguistic) space negotiate their positions and goals within a system of distinctions and possibilities. Their acts of speaking are ideologically mediated, since those acts necessarily involve the speaker’s understandings of salient social groups, activities and practices, including forms of talk” (25). Language ideology, Irvine suggests, is what separates style from dialect or register:

Style…also includes the more subtle ways individuals navigate among available varieties and try to perform a coherent representation of a distinctive self – a self
that may be in turn subdividable into a differentiated system of aspects-of-self. Perhaps there is another difference too: whereas dialect and register, at least as sociolinguists ordinarily identify them, point to linguistic phenomena only, style involves principles of distinctiveness that may extend beyond the linguistic.

For Eckert (2001), style is a means of finding out how language reflects social meaning. Linguistic variation, according is her is a mirror of how people organize themselves as active members of society; style is a mechanism which helps us unfold the relationship. Eckert criticizes Labov’s notions of style and his decision tree due the “circularity” (125) associated with separating what is vernacular or standard from a single interview depending on what “box” a particular discourse part falls into. So, for Eckert, the definition of style consists of “a clustering of linguistic resources, and an association of that clustering with social meaning” (123). This is different from earlier definitions in terms of goals as well as methodologies.

Third-wave studies use both qualitative and quantitative methodology for studying the interaction between the linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Scholars have tried to combine quantitative approaches with qualitative approaches to sociolinguistics to provide a robust theory of sociolinguistic variation. Many third wave studies use quantitative methods to support the analysis of data. Johnstone describes the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches as follows, “The contrast between sociolinguistics that is relatively quantitative and sociolinguistics that is relatively qualitative lies in whether research questions are answered via relatively mechanical procedures (counting, calculating averages, performing statistical test to see which factors vary systematically together or how likely results are to be random) or relatively non-
mechanical ones (asking people about things, watching, listening). But deciding what to count in what category always involves interpretation” (2000: 36). While this distinction is rather simplistic it does underline what quantitative and qualitative are broadly understood as.

Case studies
One example of a third wave study is Eckert’s (2000) ethnographic study of a school in Detroit. The study was an investigation of how linguistic practices index choices of identity among students in the school. The linguistic variables were five vowels that were a part of the Northern cities shift. Eckert found that class, economic status etc. did not predict the speech of adolescents as much as peer groups did. The two groups that she identified were jocks who associated more with the urban middle class norms and burnouts who associated more with the working class norms and affiliation to one of these groups had an influence on variation in speech. Eckert also comments on style which is intra-speaker variation and how style affects use of variables. Unlike earlier studies which understood style as speaker external, Eckert claims that style is actively negotiated by speakers and depends on how they want to align themselves with respect to others. Also individual style is sometimes comprised of features that are in contrast with what one wants to dissociate with. Eckert says, “While styles are constructed within communities of practice, the success of the global stylistic enterprise depends on the clear establishment of social meaning” (217). Once the social meaning of a style has been establishes, speakers associate or dissociate with it to define their own identity. Not only is Eckert (2000) a perfect example of a third wave study that combines quantitative and
qualitative methodologies, it also reinforced the usefulness of ethnography in sociolinguistic research.

The concept of identity as a group defined aspect of person’s life is also highlighted in Bucholtz (1998) which is a study of community of ‘nerd’ girls who use particular linguistic practices and other symbolic means to distance themselves from the ‘cool kids’. Bucholtz says, “An extension of the community of practice allows identities to be explained as the result of positive and negative identity practices rather than as fixed social categories” (203). In this study Bucholtz problematizes the category of nerds. She claims that nerds much like Eckert’s (1989) jocks and burnouts choose their own identity “through language and other social practices” (211). This is in opposition to the previously held view that nerds are ‘inadequate’ jocks or burnouts. Bucholtz emphasizes the fact that in communities of practice approach the categories, in this case nerds, are decided after ethnographic fieldwork, and come from within the community. The focus is on finding the details of what resources or mutually defined practices the members of the community use to distinguish themselves from other communities. Bucholtz also identifies positive and negative identity practices in this community. Positive identity practices reinforce membership or bring members closer to a chosen identity. For the nerds these are display of intelligence, knowledge, and association with school activities. Negative identity practices are used to distance them from the rejected identity. In the case of nerds negative identity practices are focused on distancing from anything that might be considered ‘cool’. In this study Bucholtz makes the important contribution of identifying categories from within the group she is studying and categorizing linguistic indexes as having positive and negative value for the community members.
Mendoza-Denton’s (1997) work on Latina gang girls also discusses the way gang girls use symbolic means including language to define their identity. Other examples of research under the practice based approach to identity are Cameron (1997), Hall (1995), Ogawa and Smith (1997) etc. Cameron (1997) was a discourse analytic study of five young college going men. Cameron identified features in the speech of men which would traditionally count as “women’s language” like gossip. Her analysis showed that men, in her study, were using language to perform masculinity and this goal was achieved by varied discourse strategies. Ogawa and Smith (1997) did a study of the language use of two homosexual men in a documentary called ‘Rasen no Sabyo’. The data they used consisted of tokens of use of pronouns, terms of reference and address. The main players in the movie, Yono and Takashi use masculine and feminine gender forms respectively for self reference as a reproduction of the heterosexual language use practices. Their conclusion suggested that the speakers did use gender specific terms to mark their sexuality within homosexual relationships. Hall (1995) was also a practice-based study of the hijra community in India. Her analysis is based on the way hijras learn to perform as hijras and acquire a “female persona” or identity (1996: 243).

2.4.1 Influences of Ethnography on the third wave

“Ethnography is the work of describing a culture” (Spradley 1979:3). Spradley suggests that ethnography refers to both the process and end result of doing research. It can be understood as a method of conducting social science research. Unlike other methods that put the procedures and methods of studying a phenomenon at center stage,
ethnography pays close attention to the phenomenon. The major characteristics of the ethnographic method are allegiance to the everyday contexts in which people interact and behave. Data is collected from participant observation, observation and different kinds of interviews. Ethnographers pay special attention to the way people interpret themselves, thus the focus is on open ended interviews and participant observation. Data collection is spread over a period of one or two years. Another characteristic of ethnography is the “unstructured” (Hammersley 1998) nature of data collection. Researchers have been known to arrive in the field with nothing more than an idea of studying a particular community. The issues and problems present themselves in the field. I have experienced this first hand in my own research. I went to Lucknow in the summer of 2003 to study Farasi which I understood as a mixed language spoken by kotis to protect themselves from exposure to outsiders and from the police. The field and my interactions with kotis presented me with other issues that became interesting and worth exploration. The focus of ethnographers is on small groups of people. Sometimes ethnographies can be written on a single person’s life story. But more commonly ethnographers focus on small settings and interactions. The contexts of these interactions are not artificially created but are studied as they happen in the natural setting of a community. The analysis and interpretations of the data are focused on description and explanations that are supported with evidence from the field.

Ethnographic methods have had a presence in cultural anthropology and sociology since the early twentieth century. Ethnographers claim allegiance to naturalism which is a branch of study that believes in studying the natural character of human interactions. As Hammersley and Atkinson state “…the research must be carried out in
ways that are sensitive to the nature of the setting. The primary aim should be to describe what happens in the setting, how the people involved see their own actions and those of others, and the contexts in which the action takes place” (2001:6). Ethnographers also pay close attention to how meaning is created in particular communities by the members of the community e.g., Mendoza-Denton (1996) did an ethnographic study of the way Latina gang girls in a Northern California public high school construct and negotiate their identity within the high school and outside it. She gave a description of how particular kinds of makeup have an effect of the way gang girls interpret their own toughness in the community. Norma-Denton sketches the meaning of eyeliner and the way they are applied have for these girls. She gives specific examples of how gang girls interpret long eyeliner as an indication of power and readiness to fight. Her study tells us that while certain devices like lipstick, eyeliner, clothing etc might appear to be irrelevant in the process of meaning making and interpretation to an outsider; they have a lot of significance when viewed from the perspective of people using them.

There is a difference between ethnography and an ethnographic perspective. While ethnography has all the characteristics described above, ethnographic perspectives follow some of the techniques of ethnography which depend on the demands of the research questions. The boundary between ethnography and ethnographic methodology is fuzzy but certain criteria can be used to decide whether a study falls in one category or another. The benchmark of ethnography is the time spent by the researcher in the community and variety of data collection techniques used. Was participation in different domains of the community a part of the data collection technique? Did the researcher learn the language of the community they studied? What kinds of interviews were
conducted during fieldwork? Answers to these and other similar questions can tell us whether a study is ethnography or not. A research following ethnographic methodology, which is where my research falls, uses techniques of data collection that are typical of ethnographies like open ended interviews, observation, participant observation etc. Usually a small amount of time is spent in the community and other research frameworks or methodologies are used to support the analysis. There is disagreement between scholars as to what constitutes an ethnography and why and this has led to some complex questions about validity of ethnographic accounts, research methodologies, the role of the researcher and the interpretation of a culture by the researcher (for a detailed discussion see Hammersley 1998). These disagreements also apply to studies that are not ethnographies but used some ethnographic techniques.

Duranti talks about the importance of ethnography for linguistic research. He says, “If the goal of linguistic anthropology is the study of linguistic forms as constitutive elements of social life, researchers must have ways of connecting linguistic forms with particular cultural practices. Ethnography offers one valuable set of techniques for such a goal. For this reason, the integration of ethnography with other methods for the documentation of speech patterns is one of the most important distinguishing qualities of linguistic anthropologists as compared to other researchers interested in language and communication” (1999:85). Duranti not only suggests ethnography as a method of doing linguistic anthropology but also recommends it as the only way to be able to get an ‘emic’ view of culture or sub-cultures under study. He does not equate linguistic anthropology with ethnography but does emphasize the connection between the two. While the primary goal of a linguistic anthropologist is to understand the way language
works and creates meaning in a community, an understanding of the culture can be attained only through ethnographic methods and Duranti propagates this with a focus on participant observation and different interview techniques.

Ethnographies are descriptions of cultures. The components of ethnography can be a description of issues relevant to the researcher or the holistic description of any particular society. As Hammersley and Atkinson put it, “The ethnographer participates, overtly or covertly, in people’s daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking question; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned” (1983:2). I must emphasize here that ethnography refers to both the process and end result of research. The ethnographer can address any component that interests her and the decision of what is relevant to the ethnography can be established in the process of doing the fieldwork and when the data is analyzed.


Bucholtz (1999) is a study that advocates the use of ethnographic methodology on the grounds that it is “participant rather than analyst driven” (210). She starts off by examining approaches to studying variation in speech with the speech community and practice theory and moves on to advocating an ethnographic approach which according to her “makes local interpretations central to the analysis” (210). Bucholtz also briefly discusses the communities of practice model which is now central to language and gender
research. In her analysis of nerd girls and also in her talk about communities of practice, Bucholtz refers to “ethnographic meaning” of linguistic variables. She does not explain what she means by ethnographic meaning. Broadly understood it would refer to the meaning particular variables hold for members of the community of nerd girls.

Bucholtz analyses the discourse of a group of five girls who identify as ‘nerds’ and engage in practices like display of intelligence, disassociation with popular culture and slang etc., that define their nerdiness. The ‘nerd’ girls use particular features in their language consciously to assign an identity for themselves. The identification of these features was possible because Bucholtz did ethnographic fieldwork in the community. But she does not state her methodology in any detail. Is it enough to state that ethnographic field work was conducted? Is it not important to inform the readers about how conclusions were reached? Is the use of interviews and participant observation enough to say that a particular study is ethnographic in nature?

The other study by Bucholtz that I will discuss here is her 2001 work on the use of what she calls “super standard English” by white ‘nerds’ to distance themselves from the “coolness” of European American youth culture which shares features with African American English. Bucholtz conducted a year long field work in the school she calls Bay City High. She states that she used varied methodology for conducting fieldwork which involved interviews and passing out slips for figuring out meanings of particular slang terms. She also makes it clear that the categories described in the article were not assigned by her but were arrived at after her informants attested them. Bucholtz states, “Membership in the nerd category, for the purposes of this study, was not assigned by me but reported by students themselves, both nerds and non-nerds”. (87) I believe the
attestation by non-nerds of nerds as nerds is important, this makes Bucholtz’s fieldwork strategy very sound. Category assignment is an important part of sociolinguistic and ethnographic research and this strategy makes her hypothesis viable. In this research she also supports all her interpretations with examples and counterexamples from her field work. This also makes the ethnographic nature of fieldwork come out.

Mendoza-Denton (1996) is a study of the way Latina gang girls make use of different colors and make up to define their identity and allegiance to particular gangs. Mendoza-Denton did an ethnographic study of the gang girls which stretched over two years. This study was a traditional ethnography where she described the way members of the community make meaning out of make-up and other symbolic devices including language. Each piece of information she provides about the gang girls is supported by data and she does not make any assumptions about any observations she made. She makes use of the notions of power and drag and supports these with data and statements that gang girls make about what makes them feel powerful. Her hypothesis about how gang girls question gender stereotypes and threaten them is supported with well defined examples which make her ethnography complete.

The other study by Mendoza-Denton that I will talk about here is her 1999 work on the way Latina gang girls use language ideologies about the use of Spanish and English and how social and educational pressures on the use of these languages influence attitudes about these languages. I am using this study as a bench mark of what ethnography should be. Mendoza-Denton states very clearly in the beginning of the paper all the research methodologies she used. Not only does she state her different data collection techniques she also states that she used interviews, audio recordings of
naturally occurring interactions, participant observation and community service to reach her hypothesis about the member’s attitudes about language. In this study too Mendoza-Denton supports every claim with robust example from either interviews or participant observation. Also Mendoza-Denton pays particular attention to individual informants and uses her interactions with them in different contexts to support her conclusions about the influence of Spanish or English use on the ideologies about gang affiliations.

Rudy Gaudio (1995) did an analysis of the speech of ‘yan daudu in Northern Nigeria. His field work was ethnographic and he spent 16 months in the field. ‘Yan daudu are Hausa-speaking men who “talk and act like women” and shift their gendered identity with the help of linguistic features. Gaudio analyses these shifts specially those in the use of oaths and swearing to establish the awareness these men have of the volatility of gender norms, gendered identity and their connection with language. Gaudio pays special attention to the contexts in which ‘yan daudu were interviewed and the influence of that on their responses, unlike Hall (2005) who does not describe the contexts in which particular recordings and interviews were made. One thing that does not come out clearly in Gaudio’s dissertation is the different strategies he employed to conduct fieldwork. A through and complete description of fieldwork strategies must be a part of any study that is ethnographic. The fact that Gaudio’s dissertation lacks such description makes it vulnerable to criticism on this ground.

Hall (1995) is not only an example of ethnography but is also directly related to my own research with kotis. Hall’s dissertation (1995) is a linguistic study of the hijras in Banaras, India. The aim of her study was to map the linguistic behavior of Hindi speaking hijras and to outline the ways that hijras use language to question the
stereotypical assessments of gender in India. Hall spent about a year in India and came across hijras during one of her language classes. In her dissertation Hall emphasizes the need to make hijra stories about themselves prominent. She lived in Banaras, interviewed hijras with her research partner and included the life stories of hijras in her work. Hall’s work is clearly an ethnography in terms of how much time she spent in the community, the small sample of people she interviewed, the nature of her interviews which were open-ended and her descriptions of the community. There are some issues which Hall does not talk about clearly. She says that much of her analysis was based on observation but she does not state what kind of observation and the nature of observation, she does not tell the reader what situations she observed. She does not state whether she observed hijras performing the ritualistic dances and singing, she does not state where and in what contexts she interviewed hijras. In her dissertation she talks about the way hijras switch between masculine and feminine gender markings but she does not give details of the contexts in which these shifts occur. She states, “Most of the hijras we interviewed, with the exception of Rupa who became a hijra as an adult, primarily employ feminine-marked verbs when speaking in the first person or when speaking to other hijras in the second person”. (ibid: 76) I believe that her interpretation and analysis would be stronger if she supported this claim with a description of situations and contexts in which hijras used feminine gender markings. Hall gives a detailed description of the life histories of hijras but she does not clearly define the contexts in which the switches in gender marking are made. This is my major criticism of Hall 1995, which otherwise is an excellent example of scholarship and use of ethnographic methodology.
Hall 2005 is a study of another sexual minority in India – a community of kotis in New Delhi, India. Hall gives an analysis of the performances of what kotis call ‘hijra-acting’ and claims that by their performances as hijras, kotis question the hijra and gay identities in India and claim their own as superior to both hijras and gays. Hall also brings in class as a meaningful category into her analysis claiming that kotis fall between the lower-class hijras and upper-class urban gays and this gives them a unique perspective on class, sexuality and desire. She sees a tension between hijras and gays and claims that this translates into the use of language since according to her hijras adhere to Hindi while gays claim allegiance to English. Hall says, “During 1999 and 2000, I watched and recorded 20 hours of these performances at a non-governmental organization in New Delhi”. This is the only description of data collection that she provides. Hall does not give any other description of the data collection she used. She makes claims about class but her work does have any mention of looking at employment histories of people she interviewed, their parent’s economic status or their educational back grounds. She claims that hijras are below kotis in the class continuum but does not support this with interviews with hijras or kotis or any other kind of data. She claims that there is a “English speaking gay identity” (127) but does not say anything about the contexts in which persons of this identity use English, or the ideological beliefs they have about English or Hindi for that matter. Hall does not say that her study is an ethnography nor does she make any comment on the ethnographic nature of the data collection techniques. That makes one question her data collection techniques and the claims she makes about kotis identity. How much data does one need to make a claim that a phenomenon exists in a community? Can a claim be made about the existence of
particular identities (English-speaking, *hijra*-rejecting gays of New Delhi) by observing them in their work place for 20 hours in a culture that is outside of their own? Unlike her dissertation research Hall 2005 seems to pay little attention to kotis’ own understanding of themselves. She gives only one example of a one-to-one interview with a koti and bases her claims of shifting gender identity on that. Hall’s understanding of kotis in Delhi also makes me wonder about all the assumptions she makes in this research and whether they are well founded. Her analysis seems to have been based on the assumption that kotis fall between upper class gays and lower class kotis and how this positioning gives them a perspective of their own in-between-ness. She does not support this assumption with any data or interviews.

Relevance for my study

Like the studies I describe above, my research aims to gain from ethnography. During fieldwork I tried to assimilate ideas from these studies and make my data collection robust. I did a community based data collection and tried to support every claim I made with ethnographic evidence. My study also makes use of the communities of practice framework (Eckert and McConnell Ginet), which Bucholtz (1999) talks about. I paid special attention to categories kotis put themselves into. In my writing I pay attention to the influences I might have on koti discourses given that I am from the same culture as kotis and how I could minimize these.

Most of the studies I discuss above do not give a clear indication of how they reached the conclusions about the study. Scholars like Hall and Gaudio do not tell us upfront what their data collection techniques and strategies were. One is left to assume
that they employed varied participant observation and interviews to reach the conclusions that they have. In my research and writing I will explain very clearly my objectives for conducting particular research and the different methodologies I follow to reach at conclusions. One of the other things that some of these studies lack is use of more than one data collection technique and a clear statement about the contexts in which particular forms of data was collected. Hall 2005, e.g., does not describe the contexts in which the kotis she met in New Delhi performed what she calls *hijra*-drag. Were they performing for a particular audience, was their performance part of a regular activity they did for amusement? How did her presence in the audience affect their performance? Such questions are left unanswered if scholars do not describe the contexts of particular data collection. In my work I hope to overcome this problem by describing the context of particular data settings.

All the studies that I critique have different goals but similar research strategies. My study is not an ethnography. I follow ethnographic methods. I incorporate a clear statement of what data collection techniques were used along the lines of Mendoza-Denton and support any and every assessment of the community I make with sound examples from members of the community like Bucholtz and Mendoza-Denton. In my fieldwork I also tried to gain as much information about the informants and their background as I could. I think that is important for assessments about where an informant is coming from and why they are particular ideas. In her 1999 paper that I discuss above, Mendoza-Denton gives the background of some of informants. She uses this information to analyze the attitudes the speakers have toward particular languages. I believe this is an important part of ethnographies and studies following ethnographic techniques. In my
fieldwork I conducted interviews with kotis which informed me about their backgrounds and attitudes. Some current linguistic research lacks this and I incorporate back ground descriptions in this dissertation. One of the theoretical goals of ethnography is to provide “descriptions of social microcosms” (Hammersley 1992:13). Given the sensitivity of the members of koti community, a description of their microcosms which include their interaction with other kotis, with their partners and families, with members of NAZ, throws light on the way meaning is made among community members and how this is reflected in and by the more global views of Indian society. One of the goals of my dissertation is to develop an understanding of how the microcosms interact and reflect the larger realities of social life.

5.3.1 Influence of Gender Studies on third wave

The theory of performativity has been given much attention by language and gender theorists in recent years. In my research I use the theory of performance as a tool to understand the deeper reasons behind the easily observable behavior of members of the koti community. Performance theory has also played a rather major role in recent sociolinguistic research of scholars like Hall, Gaudio, Cameron etc. They have incorporated the theory to explain the linguistic behavior of their informants in the specific communities they focus on. The performance theory does offer useful insight for language and gender. In this section I will first discuss the work of Judith Butler and situate my work within her paradigm of performance. I will then look at some other scholars who have critiqued this theory and offer my views on their critique.
give a critique of the way language and gender scholars have used this theory and how I use it in my own work and connect my work to the larger gender theory. I will end the discussion with a comment on how the use of language and other devices by kotis is different from or similar to the performances of heterosexuals and homosexuals in different societies.

Butler (1993) proposes the idea of a self that is not a result of any ‘given’ gendered ideal but instead is a result of the repetition of performances that it indulges in to become a particular gender. This non-distinct, undefined self is historically situated in how a person sees their own performance of gender with respect to the idealized performance of gender. This can be understood as the gendering of the female, male, lesbian, gay etc. We have available to us, certain gender ideals, for instance, that females as females are supposed to perform in a certain way and males as males are supposed to perform in a certain way. In the establishment of the self as a gendered self these ideals or non-conformity to these ideals play a very strong role. These are not available as a given set of rules but are understood and implied in the culture’s understanding of gender and gendered selves. So the feminine is not just a universal feminine but rather a reproduction of the cultural understanding of what feminine should be, and the same applies to lesbian, gay, masculine and any other gendered identity. Butler’s ideas on drag are also worth mentioning here. She says, “Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation” (313). Other scholars in the past have also talked about the constructivist aspects of gender identity. Simone De Beauvoir (1953) was perhaps one of the earliest scholars to suggest, “…that every human being is not
necessarily a woman; to be so considered she must share that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity” (11). De Beauvoir does not talk about the performative aspects of gender but they are all too present in her discussions of the self and the Other and women are the ultimate Other who are defined in terms of the heterosexual man. De Beauvoir’s ideas about the secondary status of women and their meeting certain expectations to be characterized as such speak to the fact that she believed that women or men were not concrete categories but concretized as categories with socialization. While De Beauvoir was a much earlier philosopher than Butler and she does not talk about the gendering of homosexuals, her ideas are still relevant and traces of them can be seen in current scholarship.

Butler makes claims about what she thinks and understands sex, gender, sexuality, performance and drag are. She does not comment on the cultural and contextual aspects of the performances she talks about. The sexual identities she discusses and homosexuality as she talks about it can be argued to be very western in their manifestations. Her theory does not account for the homosexuality that does not manifest itself publicly at all. Butler’s argument is that identities and sexualities are discursively constructed and that the performance (of gender) is what constructs the gender that is being performed. Butler (1999) says, “Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effect through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration” (Salih 2004:94). The introduction of the cultural situatedness of gender performance is not highlighted much in Butler’s work.
My research uses the theory of performativity in trying to explain the discourse of kotis and their identity shifts. The idea that identity is constructed through discourse is supported with data from varied situations in my work. My data and analysis show that kotis undergo a constant identity performance and negotiation. I agree with Butler in that gender is a discursive construct and support this with data from kotis. In my work I would like to expand on the theory of performativity to the discourses of kotis who enact their gender only through language.

Gender theorists like Hawkesworth criticize Butler for oversimplifying gender by calling it a mere repetition of “words, acts, gestures” (159). Hawkesworth criticizes Butler for making gender “too much about a matter of the self – a self that appears peculiarly unmarked by race, class, or ethnicity” (160). Similarly Butler could be criticized for giving too much agency to the self in deciding gender and performance of gender. It might not always be the case that people act like conscious agents to perform their genders. Because gender performance is not just informed by any one situation or factor –numerous factors that have nothing to do with gender inform the performance of gender e.g., class. She does not seem to provide a robust theory of how gender performativity works in particular cultural contexts. Also Butler does not seem to throw any light on how individuals negotiate their identity on a day to day basis. Within the performance of gender there are certain culture specific constraints and Butler does not give any indication of how the theory of performance would treat the way any particular individual negotiates their gender identities in daily interactions and everyday performances.
In my work I try to understand gendered performances not just as a repeated stylization of the discursive self but also how this discursive self comes to an understanding of the self it performs. I believe that the performance of gender is also informed by ones understanding of various social factors like class, race, etc. In my work I hope to give distinct examples of the koti’s understanding of their gender with respect to their desires, participation in the community, the cultural understanding of gender etc. I also hope to show that the performance of gender is a repeated performance of an ideal that exists historically, discursively and is culturally situated. I also try to understand and expand on the claim that not only is performance as heterosexual rewarded but non conformity to perform the norm which is heterosexual is punished. I will give explanation of these mostly through my data which gives clear indications of how kotis respond to the marginalization they suffer. One of the resources that kotis use is language and in chap 4 I elaborate on the way kotis use the secret code Farasi to stand up against stigmatization and marginalization.

Performance Theory in Language and Gender Studies

Language and gender theorists like Cameron, McElhinny, Gaudio and Hall have expanded on the theory of performance as propagated by Butler, with respect to the cultures or groups they studied. Cameron (1999) questions the way conversationalists assign gender to people in terms of certain linguistic features they show in discourse. Cameron analyses the discourse of five men and showed with discourse analysis that the features of their talk- gossip, cooperation etc, which have been identified as features of women’s language (Lakoff 1975); are actually not just limited to women and men’s
conversations show these features too. Cameron shows that features of masculine talk are not as important as the sustained performance of masculinity that her informants do. Even within their seemingly ‘feminine’ talk they are essentially performing the masculine and doing so consciously. At one point while talking about their class mates Cameron’s informants get into what she calls “gay sequence”. In this sequence they are not aware of the sexual preferences of who they call gay but anyone who does not meet their criteria of masculine or feminine is gay. Men in Cameron’s paper display their masculinity by constantly pointing out what is not masculine. They construct their identity by what Cameron calls, the “sustained performance of masculine” (59). Cameron’s work goes to prove that gender in not constructed for good at any one point of a person’s life but it is constantly reproduced by varied discourse strategies.

In their (koti) performances kotis continue to question the traditional male norm of behavior every time they perform as kotis- sexually and discursively. I believe that a conscious performance of what is the “antithesis of men” within the koti community helps kotis maintain their identities as kotis. There are times when they completely disassociate themselves from koti identity and perform as typical Indian males. Hall 2005 also reports this. When I asked a koti (in a casual conversation) who was married to a woman about how he would feel if his wife showed sexual interest in other women, he said that is not possible since he satisfied her completely (sexually). This goes to show that kotis are at some level unaware and disinterested in what women feel. But the submissiveness and powerless performances of the feminine are still used by kotis in their roles as kotis. I would be skeptical to say that this performance by Cameron’s informants or kotis is an imitation of an imitation. It is a performance of an ideal, aspects
of which are out there. A culture specific idealized woman or man is available to people. Kotis, like Cameron’s informants, exploit aspects of the idealized woman in their performances as kotis and idealized man in their performances as men.

McElhinny (1996) invokes West and Zimmerman’s (1991) idea of ‘doing gender’ and Butler’s performance theory to explain the linguistic practices of female police officers who find themselves in a male dominated profession and orient towards a masculine style. McElhinny found that most women police officers try to orient to a more “professional” identity which she claims must be “understood simultaneously as adaptation to one hegemonic masculinity and contestation of another” (238), the other identity here is the middle class males who within this community are not viewed as very professional. In one of the interviews one of the police officers agreed that she used a different kind of language which was more masculine since she had joined the police force and that her language had become “gruff” (225). McElhinny’s analysis goes to show that participants of a certain community of practice develop an understanding of behavior in the context of that community of practice and perform accordingly. The idea of learned behavior in a community of practice is important in my work on kotis. Also important is the fact that gender, as has been proven repeatedly by research, can be manipulated and constructed depending on the situation one finds oneself in. In my work I show that kotis, like McElhinny’s police officers, learn to perform in a certain way. I also show that there are degrees of performance depending on how integrated a koti is within the community (Nagar 2006).

Gaudio (1995) used the theory of performance in his work on the ‘yan daudu of Nigeria. Gaudio also shows how the use of different gendered practices by ‘yan daudu
makes them exploit particular aspects of feminine and masculine performances in
different situations. Gaudio proves that ‘yan daudu use strategies of indirectness and
humor which are typical of women, to convey their identities as feminine men. By
ridiculing and imitating the feminine aspects of talk in their discourses, ‘yan daudu not
only negotiate their own identities but also imply that they use language to exploit “the
instability and mutability of gender and language identity” (1995: 137). Gaudio also
points attention to the fact that as Butler (1990) suggests ‘yan daudu performances show
the “celebration and emancipatory implications of drag” (36). But this does not mean that
they are not firmly situated in their roles as traditional and patriarchal men.

Drag does not free ‘yan daudu of their other gender roles. Similarly, kotis do
conform to traditional male norms most of the time and koti performance does not free
them from their male roles. They use certain aspects of language and gesture to perform
the feminine but this is a very conscious attempt. As Gaudio suggests, “Acknowledging
the difficulty, if not impossibility, of speaker’s transcending the discourses within which
their identities have emerged, I suggest that an identity that situates individuals across
social boundaries affords them a critical perspective on the permeability and mutability of
those boundaries and the potential capacity to manipulate them, without ever fully
erasing them” (37). Gaudio here is making a move ahead of Butler and my ethnographic
work and data also suggest that people do not completely transcend their identity but
rather have available to them a capacity to manifest various identities.

Hall (2003) explains the importance of using performance theory in
sociolinguistics. She highlights the theory’s emphasis on non-essentialist view of gender
and how it is constructed and how this can be useful for sociolinguists. Hall also suggests
a way to rework Butler’s gender theory so that it includes culture specific performances which can be understood as “felicitous” or “infelicitous” (374). Since J. L. Austin’s work, *How to do Things with Words* (1962) the idea of language being *performative* has a central place in anthropological and linguistic enquiry. There have been other influential works in the past years on the concept of ‘doing’ gender and identity. The most influential of these is West and Zimmerman’s (1987) article ‘Doing Gender’ which emphasizes the importance of enacting acts of gender in everyday interaction as a way of doing ones gender and “being” gendered within the order of the society.

Barrett (1999) in his study of African American Drag Queens (AADQ) uses performance theory to explain the way AADQs use aspects of white women’s language to index their own multi-layered identity. Barrett makes the interesting point that the AADQs do not necessarily need to perform all aspects of their drag identity at any given point and that they can manipulate the drag identity to suit their purpose. There were times when they would use certain aspects of the drag identity to distance themselves from the drag. Barrett suggests, “Speakers in performance need only adjust their linguistic behavior to the extent necessary to index the identity in question” (319). This implies a multiplicity of identity and also a certain amount of agency on the part of the person who is performing the identity. In a way Barrett answers some of the criticisms people have against the performance theory. In my work I try to address the concern language and gender scholars have about the performance theory not answering questions about agency of participants and cultural situations in which certain performances happen.

In my research I also explore what performance of kotis as kotis means to them. Is it just the display of sexuality or is it a display to question and challenge the
heteronormative and heterosexual order as Rupp and Taylor (2003) suggest drag is. Do kotis exaggerate their feminine performance to challenge the marginalization they suffer as kotis or is it just being a koti that they are performing. My field work shows variations in the degree of performance kotis engage in which means they actively decide whether or not they want to be recognized as kotis or whether or not they want to accept the koti identity for themselves. My research speaks to the larger gender theory in that I provide evidence for the theoretical assumptions that are made by Butler, De Beauvoir, Hall Cameron etc. I try to incorporate their work into mine and give data to support my interpretation of their work, e.g. in line with Butler’s theory of performance I present evidence that gender is indeed not a given and members associating with different sexualities utilize the gender ideals they have available to them within the particular culture. I expand on Butler, in line with Barrett, and try to highlight the fact that individuals have the agency and resources to shift the extent of performance when they want to index certain aspects of an identity in any context. I support this claim by using the communities of practice framework (Eckert 2000) which shows that core members of a community of practice use linguistic and other resources differently from peripheral members. The community of practice framework treats identity as a part of practice and core and peripheral members of the community have different access to the practices that go into identity construction. I show that, core and peripheral members use language differently in their performance as kotis. I also expand on Butler by showing that people have an active association with aspects of gender identities which they exploit to perform their own gendered self. I will expand on the way performance theory has been used to explain the linguistic practices or linguistic variation by members of different
communities. I will show that the shift in linguistic practices is informed by how one wants to perform their identity and use available resources to display particular aspects of identity. I will also expand on the way theorists have used context in explaining gender-related identity shifts. I believe that the use of context has been ignored by language and gender theorists to some extent and my work will fill that gap.

I will also show that kotis’ use of gender marked language, gesture etc. is different because it is much more conscious than the performance of a heterosexual person. For kotis the use of feminine gender marking is also a representation of the difference they wish to show from other sexual identities, specifically hijras, men, gays and women. It can be understood as a challenging the heterosexual order. In everyday enactments of the performance of homosexual or heterosexual, people do not show so much variation and active shifting from one identity position to another. Kotis offer a unique case in terms of these shifts and also in terms of the linguistic manifestation of these shifts.

2.5 Conclusion and contribution

That gendered performances are a result of practices and performances that dissolve in the ongoing performances of everyday acts is an ongoing theme of current sociolinguistic research. Given this fact, this research will formulate a strategy to define what these performances are how they become manifest in language. I will use discourse analysis to highlight instances of language use that index a relationship between language and social factors. Gender theory, ethnography, and sociolinguistics will be used to
explain this relationship. The dissertation aims at exploring the koti sexuality and 
establishing the role of language in the construction of gender and sexuality. Since 
members of the koti community have close interaction with members of other gender and 
sexual identities like heterosexual males, bisexual males, hijras etc. this work will also be 
able to identify the importance of linguistic devices for members of other sexualities. The 
main focus will be the speech event and the way it is manipulated to convey much more 
than it appears to. This study will investigate koti discourse as a tool of mediation 
between the cultural complex and koti identity. The questions will focus on how in the 
linguistic market, linguistic devices become practice and are used to negotiate 
membership and identity. The research areas where this study makes a contribution are 
variationist sociolinguistics and study of gender in India.

1) Variationist sociolinguistics

This investigation draws on koti discourses as acts of performance and identity 
construction. Specific instances that index the performance of a particular gender are 
identified and studied. I explore how the instances of linguistic gender switching interact 
with other social factors. This work will build on the works that critically examine the 
methodology for language and gender research. Among these works are by Cameron 
Bucholtz and Hall (2003, 2004) and others. My research adds to these by highlighting the 
centrality of participants in describing variation in language use. In my work I show that 
categories emerge from participants and are decided by participants. The other 
contribution that this research makes to sociolinguistic work is combining different
methodological frameworks like gender theory, ethnography, discourse analysis, and quantitative analysis to provide a comprehensive picture of the koti community and identity.

This research will be a step toward critically examining research on language and gender and critiquing their methodology and analysis. Most of the studies I discuss above do not give a clear indication of how they reached the conclusions about the study. Scholars like Hall and Gaudio do not tell us upfront what their data collection techniques and strategies were. One is left to assume that they employed varied participant observation and interviews to reach the conclusions that they have. In my research explain very clearly my objectives for conducting particular research and the different methodologies I follow to reach at conclusions. One of the other things that some of these studies lack is use of more than one data collection technique and a clear statement about the contexts in which particular forms of data was collected. Hall 2005, e.g., does not describe the contexts in which the kotis she met in New Delhi performed what she calls hijra-drag. Were they performing for a particular audience, was their performance part of a regular activity they did for amusement? How did her presence in the audience affect their performance? Such questions are left unanswered if scholars do not describe the contexts of particular data collection. In my work I hope to overcome this problem by describing the context of particular data settings.

My data and analysis show that kotis undergo a constant identity performance and negotiation. I agree with Butler in that gender is a discursive construct and support this with data from kotis. Because gender performance is not just informed by any one situation or factor –numerous factors that have nothing to do with gender inform the
performance of gender. She does not seem to provide a robust theory of how gender performativity works in particular cultural contexts. Also Butler does not seem to throw any light on how individuals negotiate their identity on a day to day basis. Within the performance of gender there are certain culture specific constraints and Butler does not give any indication of how the theory of performance would treat the way any particular individual negotiates their gender identities in daily interactions and everyday performances.

In my work I try to understand gendered performances not just a repeated stylization of the discursive self but also how this discursive self comes to an understanding of the self it performs. I believe that the performance of gender is also informed by ones understanding of various social factors like class, race, etc. I give distinct examples of the koti’s understanding of their gender with respect to their desires, participation in the community, the cultural understanding of gender etc.

2. Study of gender in India

Hall researched the relationship of language and identity construction among the *hijras* in Banaras-India and more recently kotis in New Delhi-India (Hall 2005). Her work talks about the way sexuality and gender is negotiated in language. According to Hall, *hijras* use devices like variable use of gender markings, mannerisms, verbal insults etc. to convey the fluidity of identity. Cohen (1995) studies *hijras* and *jankhas*, another term for kotis, and commented on castration as castration of desire. In recent years, works like Vanita (2002), Vanita and Kidwai (2000) have explored non-heterosexual sexuality in India. These studies concentrate on the strong presence of homosexual fiction in ancient,
medial and modern Indian fiction but they do not look closely at the present situation of non-heterosexual sexualities in India. This research will build on this literature by offering a complete picture of koti sexuality which will also be important in defining the relationship of kotics with other sexual minorities like hijras, bisexuals and gays. My work will add to the existing scholarship on Indian sexuality by problematizing the existing notions of sexuality.

Hall (2005) talks about koti discourses and calls their performance “hijra-drag” that is a mechanism to find an identity within the complex ideological conflicts kotics have to face with respect to their sexuality. While Hall comes close to commenting on koti performances, kotics are treated as a reference point for other sexualities and not a distinct identity trying to claim a space within the sexuality continua. This research will therefore be the first in-depth study of the koti community.
3.1 Introduction

In the narrow lanes of constantly growing cities are found various subcultures and people who spend their lives searching for a voice that they never find. Their life becomes a constant experiment and struggle to find an identity – an identity which they can live with on their own terms, unlike the various fluid identities that they have to claim or acquire on society’s terms. One such subculture that I had a chance to observe in the Indian city of Lucknow is that of kotis. Kotis are a sexual minority. They are defined by the NAZ Foundation International\(^3\) as, “A gender as well as a sexual term and a self-identifying label used by many males who represent exaggerated effeminacy as a means to attract sexual attention of other males i.e., real men who will penetrate them.”

In this chapter I will first describe my fieldwork and my role as a fieldworker during data collection in Lucknow. I aim to address the everyday issues that surround kotis – issues pertaining to their partners, work, parents, jobs, and life as kotis. I also give excerpts from interviews with kotis which support my statements about them. As with any fieldwork, my role as a researcher interested in what kotis perceived as a shameful

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\(^3\) Naz Foundation International is one of the largest non-profit organizations in South Asia working in the HIV/AIDS sector for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. Their major focus in Lucknow is kotis, since they are mostly male-sex workers and are in the high-risk category.
existence influenced my interviews, access, and writings; I will discuss these aspects of
the fieldwork as well. Then I will give a description of the koti community as I saw them
in Lucknow-India during 2003-2006. I will also discuss the work of Shrott (1873) and
Nanda (1990) and to give a background of earlier research on this community.

3.2 Fieldwork in Lucknow

Lucknow is the capital of Uttar Pradesh – the largest and most populous state in
India. It has a rich cultural history and is often referred to as the ‘City of nawabs’. Hasan
(1990) writes, “Lucknow has been and, to some extent, still remains, a byword for finesse,
delicacy, refinement, politeness, sophistication and leisurely life style. It is a city with a
glorious past” (1). The city has a character and flavor to it. In spite of the recent
economic boom in India, which brought with it a lot of Western influence, Lucknow has
managed to keep much of its traditional culture. According to the 1991 census of India,
the population of Lucknow was 1,731,224.

The reason I chose Lucknow for fieldwork can be attributed to chance more than
anything else. When I started as a graduate student, I had a clear understanding that I
wanted to do my dissertation on the language and gender situation in India. This was a
very broad area, so to narrow it down I started looking for topics that interested me.
Gender issues jumped out, and I started looking for organizations that did gender-related
work in India to get a sense of what my dissertation topic and fieldwork could be. I met a
few people in Delhi, which is the city I had originally planned to conduct fieldwork in.
My idea was to study the linguistic situation in brothels in Delhi. Conducting fieldwork
in red light areas of Delhi was both dangerous and intimidating, so I wanted to get associated with some NGO to get access to these areas. In the process of trying to find an NGO, I met Rajiv Dua and Rajesh Jha, who were both social workers working with prominent NGOs in Delhi. When I told them about my interest in language and gender issues, they suggested that I work with kotis. I had never heard about kotis before, even though I had lived all my life in a city not too far from Delhi or Lucknow. Kotis were described to me as male sex workers who lived a double life. They were stereotypical males during the day, and in the evening they took the role of submissive and effeminate partners to heterosexual men who desired them. They also told me that kotis have a secret language which they call Farasi. Given that I had lived all my life in areas close to Delhi and went to college in Delhi, the fact that there was a community of men who were hidden, had a secret language, and were sex workers was fascinating to me. I thought getting to know some kotis would be an interesting experience even if it did not convert into a dissertation topic. I decided to do a pilot study of the koti community, and contacted the NFI office in Delhi and met a representative who suggested that, if the secret language of kotis was my primary interest, I would be better served in Lucknow, which is smaller in size and population than Delhi. The Naz Foundation International (NFI) headquarters are in Lucknow, so I had a better chance of meeting more kotis because of the bigger network NFI has in Lucknow. To find out about the secret language and meet a hidden community was enough incentive for me to go to Lucknow and get first-hand information.
3.2.1 Early days in the field

On my first day in the NFI office in Lucknow I met Kaushik ji and Arif ji, who were social workers and had a great deal of knowledge about the koti community in Lucknow. Arif ji, I later discovered, was a mentor to many kotis in Lucknow. When kotis learned about my association with him and Kaushik ji, they were comfortable in my presence. Since my first visit to Lucknow was for a pilot study, I did not have any agenda at that point. I was told in Delhi earlier that kotis had a secret language. Arif ji, Kaushik ji, and I sat down to talk about why I was at the Lucknow office. I did not have a good answer and I said I wanted to find out about the secret language of kotis. They suggested that the secret language Farasi was also shared by *hijras* and probably came to kotis from *hijras*. They suggested that also I talk to some *hijras* about the language as well. This suggestion seemed helpful, and since I did not have an agenda only a vague idea that something about kotis was linguistically interesting, I took the suggestion. I was interested in the issue, *hijras* are culturally and socially interesting, and an opportunity to interview *hijras* was not going to knock on my door everyday of my life. Moreover, I did not have a clue about how to explore the linguistic peculiarity of kotis or *hijras* so I hoped that this would provide me a foot in the door. I decided to do whatever the people at NFI suggested.

Arif ji and Kaushik ji also introduced me to Deepa on my first day at the NFI office. Deepa was a koti, a fieldworker for NFI, and her\(^4\) job was to meet kotis in cruising areas and inform them about safe sexual practices and HIV/AIDS. Given the nature of

\(^4\) In the entire dissertation I use feminine pronouns in most instances. My experience with kotis suggests that this is their choice rather than mine.
her job, she had an extremely large network among kotis in Lucknow. She became a great resource for me for the rest of my fieldwork in Lucknow. She also worked as a counselor for other kotis and had an intimate knowledge of cruising areas in Lucknow. She had personal contacts with many *hijras* and had a very large network of friends and acquaintances in the community. This made her one of my primary informants and my primary resource for access into the koti and *hijra* community in my first two visits to Lucknow.

During the first few days, I was skeptical about every step I took. My first few meetings and interviews with kotis proved me wrong. The linguistic and socio-cultural uniqueness of this community fascinated me to no end. On my first day at NFI, Deepa and I decided that we would start our meetings the following day and that she would talk to some *hijras* and kotis to establish if they wanted to be interviewed. As happens with fieldwork, it took Deepa and me more than a day to establish contact with kotis and *hijras* who were willing to talk to me. But I started talking to Deepa about her experiences and life as a koti, and she gave me many insights into the community.

3.3 Fieldwork methodologies and me

I am aware that, like any other researcher doing ethnographic fieldwork, I carried some baggage with me to the field. My baggage comprised my gender, my socioeconomic class, my education, and my foreign status. Every koti and *hijra* I interviewed knew that I was studying in America and that Lucknow was not my hometown. This made me somewhat foreign, in spite of the fact that I speak Hindi-Urdu.
and am from the state of Uttar Pradesh. I believe my gender and my foreign status both helped kotis feel closer to me. Most kotis I met and interviewed were interested in stereotypically feminine activities; to have someone who was a female and interested in their lives and issues was comforting to them. I was happy to talk to my koti friends about cooking, clothes, make-up, and boyfriend advice; after they realized I was not there to judge them on their sexuality and practices, they opened up to me. I recall talking to my koti friends about fairness creams, which are huge in India (wanting a lighter skin color is a regular concern for many people, and most cosmetic companies have some kind of ‘fairness cream’ the market), wigs, hair problems, fashion – pretty much every stereotypical girl-talk topic under the sun. I became a regular at koti events and parties. We shared good times; there were many relaxed afternoons when I almost forget that I was in Lucknow for fieldwork.

I realized early on in the fieldwork that projecting a feminine identity was very important to kotis; it gave them a place in the sexual continuum which was different from any other. While being feminine was very important to the identity of kotis, many kotis were also very conscious of their masculinity and the responsibilities that came with it. As a result, many kotis are kade taal ki murat (a koti hidden from the public eye who acts like a heterosexual man in most situations), which essentially implies that they are kotis but act feminine or act koti only when they are with their male partners or other koti friends they are close to. Many kotis by their late twenties and early thirties start believing that this is the best way to go since they can get respect from their families this way and still be kotis whenever they choose to be. After reading Cohen’s\(^5\) (1995)

\(^5\) Cohen did fieldwork in Banaras. Banaras is considered one of the oldest cities in India; it is about 200 kms. east of Lucknow. Cohen’s work is discussed in detail in the next chapter.
research and experiences with kotis in Banaras and New Delhi, I thought about how many of my experiences were different from his. But a difference in experience because of who we are is something ethnographers have to live with. My foreign status which is something I share with other researchers like Reddy, Cohen and Hall\(^6\) helped, because a majority of kotis live a hidden life; talking about being a koti can be harmful to their personal lives. The fact that I started my meeting with them with an IRB form which promised their anonymity and that I was not situated in Lucknow or India made it easier for kotis to open up to me.

My fieldwork was done in four phases. I started fieldwork in my early twenties and finished in my mid-late twenties. The first visit was very focused on trying to decipher the code language that kotis use. I met about ten kotis and four *hijras* on my first visit. The interviews I did were about an hour long with each person, and the questions were mostly open-ended. My very first interview was with a prominent *hijra*, and I was accompanied by Kaushik ji and Deepa.

Most kotis I interviewed were about the same age as me, but I did interview people who were 4-5 years younger or more than a decade older than me. Older kotis had very different life experiences than younger kotis. The older kotis felt that the younger kotis had corrupted the koti culture and were not as well behaved and respectful of older kotis. Respect towards elders is a big part of Indian culture and especially *hijra* and koti tradition. The older kotis felt the generation gap, as did the younger kotis. For the most part, the data collection was done with kotis from the age group 20-35 due to easy access

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\(^{6}\) Reddy, Cohen and Hall spoke the native languages of the areas they worked in and were graduate students or professors in American universities. They were from a different socioeconomic group than their informants. These characteristics are common to Reddy, Cohen, Hall and myself. Reddy and myself are Indian, Cohen and Hall are American but we are all somewhat foreign and somewhat outsiders in one way or another to the koti and *hijra* world.
and availability in the cruising areas. However, wherever I got a chance, I also interviewed some older kotis. The oldest koti I met was about seventy years old. She told me about a koti she knew who was in her eighties. I did not interview the eighty year old koti. During the entire fieldwork I interviewed about twenty-five kotis and four hijras.

Fieldwork was rewarding and challenging at the same time. One of the challenges I faced was meeting hijras. There were two occasions when I was almost thrown out of hijra households. This was mostly due to my inexperience with fieldwork; the experience as such proved to be valuable in the long run. On one occasion a hijra refused to talk to me and only talked to Deepa the entire 10 minutes I was in her home. This was because, soon after I entered, she saw my recorder and thought that I was going to record her without her permission. I explained that that was not the case but it was too late. I soon realized that the only way to get access in a hijra household was to go with a member of the household. After I discovered this, life became slightly easier. The other challenge that I faced during field work was visiting cruising areas. Visiting these areas was always challenging, given that I was sometimes the only female in the entire park; this was odd in an Indian context both in terms of my safety and my gender. My visits to the cruising areas were most challenging in the first year; they got easier in subsequent years but I was never completely comfortable in parks.

I visited two cruising areas/parks during the first two days of fieldwork. Kotis come to these parks to look for clients usually in the evening. The parks that I visited were not hidden from the general public; in fact, one of the parks was opposite what looked like another park which was family-oriented. Surprisingly, there were a lot of families and traffic in the other park, but the park where kotis hang out was rather
deserted. I was with Deepa on my first visit to the park; she and I sat on a bench and I observed what was going around me. Since it was dark and the park was not well-lit, I could not see much, but there were instances where I saw people come into the park, get in touch with some koti, and vanish in the park, behind the bushes, or leave after they found a partner.

NFI fieldworkers did most of their outreach work in parks, so I got a lot of access and did various rounds of participant observation in the parks in Lucknow. Participant observation during fieldwork sometimes involved participating in any activities that were going on and trying to contextualize them and understand the activities, to observe the patterns of behavior, people who were regulars, activities that they involved themselves in regularly, etc. While in the cruising areas, I could not actually participate in the activities of kotis so I would just sit on one of the benches in the park and chat with kotis while also keeping an eye on what was going on around me in the park. In the parks I was always a passive observer. I was always an outsider to the koti community. But I believe there are degrees of being an outsider. So while I was an outsider because I am not a koti or male or from Lucknow, I was an insider because I am Indian, speak Hindustani, am a woman and was in the middle of koti activities for many days. I always went to the parks with a fieldworker and stayed with them in the course of the evening. After a few visits I decided that I was not getting much out of visits to cruising areas; I got the sense that I was making kotis uncomfortable because they were at the park to solicit clients and meet friends and I was in the way of that. Also, I was to some degree risking my own safety and I was in the way of the NFI fieldworker, who wanted to

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7 In the parks the main activity kotis get involved in is finding clients. Some kotis use the park area to socialize with other kotis and do not engage in sex work at all.
distribute material and literature. In my subsequent visits, I went to the park the first few
days of the visit to let the kotis know that I was in town but I did not do much ‘hanging
out’ or interviewing in the parks. So while spending time at the cruising areas was a part
of the participant observation, it was not the primary source of participant observation
after my first two visits to Lucknow.

The place where I did major part of the participant observation was in the NFI
office. NFI has a social gathering for kotis one day of the week every week. Bharosa,
another NGO that works for the welfare of kotis in Lucknow, has a similar meeting for
kotis. These meetings are usually very informal. Kotis come from all parts of the town
and hang out. They watch movies together, chat and have snacks; usually the evening
comes to an end after some music and dance performances by kotis. I was present at
many of these meetings. I would usually sit down and chat with kotis about their lives,
gossip about other kotis and just generally hang out. My level of participation in these
meetings and gatherings was medium. I would participate in chatting and watching
movies, but I never danced or performed in these gatherings. I would encourage kotis to
dance, give and take relationship advice and be a good ear.

These were also the only contexts in which I met some pantis. Pantis are partners
of kotis. Sometimes kotis live with their partners, but usually they meet these partners
outside their homes on a regular basis. Such relationships can be long-term; they can also
be very short-term and last for only a couple weeks. During four visits to Lucknow for
fieldwork, I never interviewed a panti (panti is also the term for the penetrator in koti
sexual relationships).
During all the visits I also did extensive interviews. The interviews were of two kinds—individual face-to-face interviews and focus-group interviews. During the first visit I only did face-to-face interviews. I met about ten kotis and four *hijras* during the first visit. The interviews I did were about an hour long for each person; the questions were mostly open-ended, since I was still trying to understand the workings of the koti community.

Most of interviews with kotis were done in the NFI Office. The interviews with *hijras* were always done in their homes. I interviewed *hijras* because of their association with kotis. (I will elaborate on this more in the following sections.) The face-to-face interviews were always open-ended, but their subject changed with my interests. For the first few years the face to face interviews were aimed at understanding the community, later they became more focused on identity issues.

Focus groups were conducted for the quantitative analysis of koti discourses. After observing kotis in their near-natural environments, I found that switching from masculine to feminine or feminine to masculine roles was a regular part of koti discourses. I conducted focus-group interviews to record these switches. I was not present at the scene for a majority of the focus-group interviews. Deepa, Shakeela or Emrana, who were all kotis and my co-fieldworkers, helped lead the focus-group discussions. The focus-groups were also done with kotis I knew from previous years. I had interviewed each of the kotis who participated in the focus-group at least once for about an hour.

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8 A list of questions asked during face-to-face interviews is given in Appendix B.
9 My presence had to have a role in the way kotis communicated. There was no way for me to control this. Thus I call the discourse ‘near-natural’. Every thing except my presence was natural.
The first person I interviewed was a *hijra* and a *nayak*\(^{10}\) or head of the household. I was also told that she was one of the more prominent *hijras* in Lucknow and she had recently participated in elections for government office. Deepa and Kaushik ji went with me. Priya Devi lived on the bank of river Gomti; her home had two rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom but it had all the amenities. Two of her *chelas*\(^{11}\) also lived in the home with her. She offered me cold water, and Kaushik ji introduced me, telling her that I was a student and I was interested in Farasi. She said that I could ask her any questions about her life, her role in the *hijra* community, the election she participated in, the neighborhoods she went to for *badhayi*\(^{12}\). She said I could take pictures with her, talk to her about anything, but she was unable to talk to me about Farasi. She also told me that no *hijra* would tell me about Farasi. However, she pointed out, koti would be happy to talk to me about Farasi, but their Farasi was not as good as the *hijra* Farasi (this was introduction to something I was going to come across a lot during fieldwork –the love-hate relationship between *hijra* and kotis). I asked Priya Devi questions about *hijra* life and the history of *hijras*. She answered each question patiently and in detail but refused to talk about Farasi or introduce me to anyone else who could talk to me about Farasi.

The first meeting lasted about 15 minutes; I went back many times. Priya Devi opened up to me about Farasi and other aspects of *hijra* life and became one of my primary *hijra* informants. The first kotis I interviewed were employees of NFI. After establishing contact with them, I started interviewing their koti friends and participating

\(^{10}\) There is a hierarchy among the *hijras*; *nayak* falls at the upper levels in the hierarchy. The *nayak* gets a major share of the day’s earnings and usually has 3-10 disciples under her, who call her *guru*. They are also in charge of particular neighborhoods and *hijras* from other *hijra* families cannot work in those areas.

\(^{11}\) *Chela* is a Hindi word which translates to ‘disciple’ or ‘student’. In any *hijra* household there are many *chelas* that live and work with a guru or head *hijra* of the household.

\(^{12}\) *Badhayi* is the activity of singing and dancing at people’s homes for auspicious occasions like weddings, childbirth, the purchase of a home etc.
in meetings and gatherings organized by NFI. I came to know most kotis through Deepa, Shakeela and Emrana, who were my first koti contacts in Lucknow.

5.3.1 Impressions

Before I met kotis there were various aspects of their socioeconomic status that I was completely unaware of. Research with kotis opened my eyes to many hardships and life situations, which I had not even thought about given my class and social status. Many kotis participated in sex work out of necessity, and some of them used whatever little money they got to feed their families. Employment opportunities were a problem, and sometimes sex work was their only option. I found that many kotis had abusive partners, who beat them and extorted money from them. Most kotis were always scared and extra careful of exposure to their families about their lives as kotis.

By my second visit to Lucknow, I was amazed at the generosity of some of my koti friends. I am not sure what instigated this, but many of my koti friends started bringing me gifts. I came to know a koti who used to sell cleaning liquid from door to door in Lucknow. I can only imagine how hard and somewhat humiliating this job can be. Her koti name was Meera, and she was going through a particularly hard time because her wife was sick. During this financially hard time, she was kind enough to give me a bottle of cleaning liquid for my home. Another koti invited me and three other kotis to lunch at a time when she did not have a job or any other source of income. Because of lack of money many kotis did not have access to any means of transportation and could
not afford public transport systems. They would walk across the city in the summer heat to meet me and other friends.

I was also constantly impressed at how talented some of these people were. One of the things that I did during the early years of fieldwork was invite some kotis for lunch at the NFI office and just chat with them over lunch about their lives and interests. This sometimes led to watching movies together and listening to Bollywood music. It became obvious from these lunch meetings that kotis loved to sing and dance. Some of them were exceptionally good singers and dancers. They would take turns in dancing and sing together, and these meetings too made our ties stronger. These meetings also made me realize that kotis were very well connected within their networks. Because of these connections, I did not have much trouble getting access into the community.

3.4 The Koti community

Kotis are biological males who engage in sexual relations with other men they call pantis. Pantis can be one-night stands or life-long partners for kotis. Kotis have a sexual and socio-cultural identity of their own in the Indian sexuality continuum. Kotis refer to each other as janana. In colloquial Hindustani, this is the word for women and activities associated with women. This can be seen as an example of the way kotis think of themselves and how deeply they feel that they have the heart and desires of a woman. Kotis talk in terms of armaan or desires of a woman; they feel that all their desires are like those of a woman because of the fact that they are kotis. Some older kotis even tell the younger ones to behave in a decent way and to learn to cook and serve others because of the fact that they are kotis. They say that in their relationships with men, they assume
all the duties of a dutiful wife, which includes being beaten by the husband. Kotis relate the stories of being tortured, burnt or played on with knives. They say and believe that, if their man beats them, he is giving them the status of a wife or woman; they are ready to be ill treated if given that status. Doing the entire ‘woman’s work’ for the man is also considered a thing of high status within the kotis.

The following is from an interview with a koti who was married to a woman but had a man as a husband whom she lived with during the day. She was upset about the fact that her husband did not earn enough to be able to take care of her and she had to work because of that.

Ila: do you feel like a woman?

M: I feel that I should have a husband, who lives with me, stays over night, and has sex with me. I feel I should live with my husband like a woman lives with her husband. I have such a man. I feel like living with my husband like a woman, cook for him, wash his clothes, massage his feet, fulfill all his desires but one doesn’t find men like that in today’s world. I do all the work for him but in spite of that he says bad things to me, he beats me a lot.

Most kotis end up getting married to women and having a family. This is partly due to societal pressure and partly due to the importance and role of male progeny in the family. If a son in the family refuses to marry, then the chances of getting a male heir for the family decrease. During my stay in Lucknow, I did not come across any koti who had left her wife for a man. So kotis live the life of a man outside the life and role of kotis.

The main attraction of parties and gatherings that are exclusively for kotis is that they are able to take out their armaan or desires of behaving like women. When kotis dance at the parties the body movements and gestures during dance are highly feminine. They never sing in their male voice; they always switch to a female voice. Kotis associate going to parks with becoming a koti and getting clients. There are kotis who visit parks
and do not engage in prostitution, but going to parks is considered one of the important aspects of being and becoming a koti. This is also because most of the cruising areas in Lucknow happen to be parks. Most kotis say that they were identified by other kotis in a similar manner. Most of the kotis met other kotis in their mohalla or neighborhood. Coming into the koti community is described as bigadna or ‘getting spoilt’ and is also associated with prostitution or what is commonly referred to as dhanda karana. This phrase literally means ‘doing business’, but, when spoken by or for kotis or women, it has connotations of being associated with sex work.

Most of the kotis I met were from a low socio-economic background with little education, although I also got a chance to meet a few kotis who were educated and had government jobs. Kotis define themselves in terms of their sexuality and their ‘effeminate heart’. The kotis believe that they have the heart and soul of a woman and the body of a man. They live a double life in which, whenever they are kotis, they switch into the role of what they call janana or woman. They assume this role sometimes in their appearance too. I met at least one koti who cross-dressed every evening to do dhanda or business. Usually kotis do not cross-dress because of fear of family and society; cross-dressing is reserved for times when they are with hijras.

Kotis say that they have the feelings or armaan of a woman. They exemplify this by showing an interest towards “woman’s work” like cooking, cleaning, dressing up for occasions, having a soft heart, etc. This discourse by a koti who had a mustache 13 exemplifies the point.

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13 Keeping a mustache is considered to be a masculine thing and sometimes kotis who have a mustache are teased by other kotis because of the mustache. Some kotis keep a mustache to display masculinity even though they act feminine.
Shakeela: We become a little alert to show the world but in the heart, in the heart we are like women. We also have that...that, we have a man’s appearance but the soul is that of a woman. We will try to show that we are men, keep mustaches, talk like men but our heart will yearn for a man...the attraction, the effort will always be towards finding a partner. A life partner with whom we live...we look like men but we have the soul of a woman.

Most kotis say that the best thing to do is be a kade taal ki murat (hard rhythm with woman), meaning a koti who is hidden from the world and the society around her but still enjoys the liberties of being a koti. This means having some friendly relationships with hijras and close relationships with fellow kotis. Kotis who believe in this school do not participate in prostitution actively. They say they do not go out to look for clients, but if someone comes to them, they entertain him. They live with their family, which in this particular context means parents, wife, children and possibly the families of their brothers. They visit the cruising areas regularly, that is, once a day at some particular time in the evening and spend time with other kotis. They get the best of both worlds, but it is a hard rope that they walk on, and they too live under the constant fear of being caught.

Membership in the community depends on when and how one meets other kotis and how the other kotis identify younger kotis. The account given below describes the way in which older kotis identify younger kotis. Because of the societal pressures, kotis find themselves in extremely powerless and ashamed position because of their self assumed sexual perversion. This is also hinted in this discourse.

Ila: How do you identify other kotis?

EH: koti is such a thing that if a boy is new, has come (out of the house) recently, a koti will be able to identify a koti. She will call him, will talk to him. Then we will move our hips (like women do) and she will see us that we are doing this. In her heart she also wants to do the same thing. She will hide for one day; she will hide for two days.
after one month or so she will come to the market, then like us she will also move her hips. We identify very fast that someone is a koti. Our eyes tell us that this is a koti.

A reason that kotis give for “becoming koti” is sexual abuse during childhood. Many kotis I interviewed said that they were abused sexually in childhood by a relative or an elder man. They use the same discourse to describe this as is used in the cultural context by women or for women. If a woman is raped, it is said that her life has been spoiled forever and she is good for nothing. Similarly kotis who were sexually abused as children say that their life was spoiled. Kotis consider that if someone rapes them as a child, their manliness vanishes, and their body develops the defect of a being a koti.

Ila: Since when were you a koti?
Tamanna: since the age of eleven

Ila: what motivated you to become a koti?

Tamanna: Someone spoiled⁴ me. Ruined me, there was this guy in my neighborhood who spoiled me...now I have become a koti, and since I have become a koti I have to live like a koti.

Ila: Before the age of eleven did you feel that you were a koti?

Tamanna: no not then. This defect in walking⁵ etc. comes after being spoiled. A person gets defects after being spoiled. An active[implying heterosexual] person also becomes like this.

After interviewing Tamanna, I was curious about what kotis mean when they say “we were spoilt”. I asked Emrana about this; she laughed but then told me:

Ila: When you say I was spoilt then, why do you say spoilt?

Emrana: Spoilt means...now let me tell you. When I was fourteen years old, my heart was like that of a woman. I had not seen the world, I had not seen where people do business, where other effeminate men sit, people who move their hips sit. Now he comes in my neighborhood, effeminate man swaying his hips, I saw him and introduced myself.

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¹⁴ By ‘spoilt’ kotis mean sexually abused or raped.
¹⁵ Defect in walking: she is referring to a man walking with a feminine gait.
Then we became friendly and I also developed the habit of roaming around with him. Then I also started going to parks and participating in other activities with him. I saw the world around me. When I saw people do business from here I also started. This is called I was spoilt from here...

There are various other aspects of the koti community and identity that I will discuss in chapters to come. This is an introduction of some of the sides of the community that separate it from other identical communities. In the section below I will discuss another aspect of the koti community, which is their relationship with the hijras.

3.4.1 Kotis and Hijras

The focus of this research is kotis and their linguistic practices, but a discussion of kotis cannot be complete without a discussion of the relationship of kotis with hijras. The presence of hijras in the India society is much more felt than the presence of kotis. Their presence is legitimate and unquestioned. Hijras have served the third sex role in India for centuries16. They are a regular presence at weddings, childbirths, religious festivals and other occasions that are considered auspicious, like buying a new house or business. The activity of singing and dancing at other people’s houses is called toli badhayi (literally group-congratulate). Hijras usually perform a dance and sing in groups of three to ten on these occasions and demand money. Most people have an understanding of how much money17 to give to the hijras; mostly after some argument, a certain amount of money and clothing is agreed upon, and the hijras leave after blessing the newborn, the newlyweds or the home. It is rare that anyone says no to hijras or refuses them money.

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16 For a detailed discussion of the role of hijras in the Indian society, consult Nanda 1990.
17 Hijras divide the neighborhoods in any city according to which gharana or family they belong to and who their guru is. Some neighborhoods are more economically sound than others; this drastically affects the lifestyle and income of hijras.
They are considered auspicious and are feared because they can curse, and that is considered bad. I am not implying that life as a hijra is easy in India. They go through similar social stigma and marginalization that kotis face but, due to their association with religion and due to the availability of an accepted source of income, they are slightly more accepted than kotis.

Hijras consider that it is their right to get money from the jajmaan during toli badhayi. Jajmaan is the person or family who gives money because something good or auspicious has happened in her family. The hijras usually get paid well, depending on the socioeconomic status of the jajmaan. They get anything between Rs. 501- Rs. 21,001 and more on the birth of a male child. Most Indians believe that a male child can change the face of the universe for them, so they cannot afford a curse from the hijras if the child is male and are ready to pay any sum depending on their economic status. Every hijra going for toli badhayi gets a share, which is called bata, of the day’s earnings. The head of the group or the guru has the largest share, and the remaining money is distributed equally among the chelas. For this and similar reasons, hijras are a more economically sound community than kotis. By this I do not mean that all hijras are economically well off, but they are certainly better off than the kotis as they can use their ‘gender thirdness’ as a means of making a living. The attraction of the money and the desire of being able to live like a woman get coupled and leads to some koti castrations and conversions into hijras.

The relationship between kotis and hijras is complicated as the following pages will exemplify. A koti, when young, enters the community with some other koti who is either older or of the same age. The first place that the kotis in Lucknow said that they started visiting after coming into the koti community was the park or the cruising areas.
These are also places where older kotis visit. *Hijras* also visit and oftentimes do not resist creating a scene with the kotis. To my question about the difference between *hijras* and kotis, a koti said:

*Ila: What is the difference between *hijras* and kotis?*

*E: There is a lot of difference. Now like I am a koti. I have a right to stand up in the society; I have a right to visit relatives. When I came into this line, I felt like doing everything. I felt like becoming a *hijra*, wearing women’s clothes. I roamed around, did every thing. That was adolescence. In adolescence I did everything but then when my parents came to know about everything, I learned to stay at home. Then I came to know that I had sisters, daughters, nieces so if I become like this then this will affect their marriage. Then I had a sense of responsibility and that made me strong. I felt ashamed, if I go in this work people will tell them that your brother is like this, your son is like this, and your uncle is like this. Then I thought I should do things so that I am respected in society and I also get a chance to fulfill my desires.*

During fieldwork I heard stories of *hijras* beating the kotis. Such activities and the usual fear and shame surrounding *hijras* make the kotis avoid *hijras*. So, the primary relationship between *hijras* and kotis is one of fear. Kotis are afraid that *hijras* will not behave well with them. They call this *kacchi pacci karana* or to insult. From this fear arises respect for the *hijras*. Kotis always act submissively and respectfully in front of *hijras* just to make sure that *hijras* do not insult them or confront them directly. I also came across a few instances in which kotis claim that *hijras* take their money and earnings of the day and never give it back. Some kotis say that *hijras* are really good at *kacchi karana* (insulting) and would never leave kotis if given a chance. It is because of fear that *hijras* become a respected community for the kotis.

The kotis who do not fear *hijras* are usually the ones who have been in the koti community for many years or who have ‘seen the world’. There are kotis who ran away
from home and joined the *hijra* groups but realized later that *hijra* life was not worth it and so came back to their families and are now leading the life of a koti again.

_E:_ People at home know that I am a koti. I have worn lady’s costumes. I ran away to the *hijras*. But today my family members really respect me like they should respect a son. Neither the young nor the old say that this was a janana, or chakka (another derogatory word for *hijra*).

Kotis associate the pride of living with family with opting to live as kotis and not becoming *hijras*. This is one of the most common reasons some kotis give for continuing to be kotis. It appears that kotis have a desire to become *hijras* for various reasons that I will discuss later, but the desire is mostly because of the baggage that comes with becoming a *hijra* and leaving families. There are also kotis who never consider becoming *hijras* and are more than happy in their existence as kotis.

Kotis and *hijras* view the koti-*hijra* relationship differently. Both groups claim that they have little to do with the other group, but the reality is that some members of these two communities interact with each other regularly, and these interaction define their identities in more ways than one. A *hijra* I interviewed said that there is no relationship between *hijras* and kotis and that kotis have nothing to do with *hijras*.

_Ilia:_ what is the relationship between *hijras* and kotis?

_P:_ *Hijras* have no relationship with kotis. We don’t have a relationship with kotis because we have nothing to do with them. If someone is a *hijra* then he is of some use to us, he will earn for us, will be with us in front of the society. What do we do with kotis? Where will we take them, where we will take them, it is an insult to us. But yes, kotis who agree to live in our society have a relationship with us. If they live openly like *hijras* then we have a relationship with them.

*Hijras* trace their history back to Lord Ram and Krishna. Here is a discourse by a *hijra* who told me about the history of *hijras*. These are of course folk beliefs but hint at how old and important the community members consider themselves to be.
Ila: Tell me something about the history of hijras?

P: Our hijras were given birth to by God Himself. They have come from the womb. Today also there are hijras who are such by birth; I have seen hijra kids who do not have a penis with my own eyes. Nature has given birth to hijras; they were not made in the beginning. And this system of badhayi has come out since the time of Lord Krishna. When Krishna ji was born hijras sung badhayi, hijras went to Gokul and sung badhayi then after that the system of badhayi has come out. We also got a wish from Lord Ram. When Ram ji went to the jungle, hijras also went with him. When Ram ji reached the jungle, He said that women and men may go back to their homes. We stood there for fourteen years, waiting. When Ram ji came back he asked us about why we did not return and who we were. Then our hijras said to the Lord that He had asked men and women to return back home, we were neither man nor woman then how could we return, you never asked us to return. So we got three wishes. The first was that no one should be able to see our dead bodies; the second was we should be able to bless people and the third was we should have a right to ask for toli badhayi.

It is this historicity, legitimacy and ‘living like a woman’ lifestyle that forms the basis of the koti-hijra relationship.

3.5 Other research on kotis

There has been a lot of interest in the hijra community and various aspects of the hijra culture. The earliest work that I found on hijras was Shrott’s and I discuss it below. Research on kotis, however, is still in its preliminary stages, and much of the research does not comment on kotis as their own community. I present below a critique of some prominent research work on kotis.

John Shrott (1873) while writing in and about colonial India traces the history of what he calls eunuchs and khojas. He makes a division between khojas and hijras. His descriptions and the use of the term khojas by kotis in Lucknow to refer to themselves makes me believe that what Shrott calls khojas are kotis or another name for them. Nanda (1990) notes, “While in south India, where hijras do not have the cultural role that they do in North India, the term used for hijras, such as kojja in Telugu or pottai in Tamil, are epithets that connote a derogatory meaning of a cowardly or feminine male” implying that perhaps koyja and khoja is the same word which underwent some sound
states, “of the two classes, the khojas are the artificially created eunuchs, in contradiction to the Higras (impotents), or natural eunuchs, as they are termed” (404). Shrott also alludes to the fact that khojas were responsible for the *zenanas* which were the areas of the house or palace that females lived in. They worked as assistants to the women or as messengers. *Hijras* and kotis alluded to this in my interviews with them. The term *zenana* also means feminine or a female, and kotis are referred to as *zenana* to this day.

Although Shrott’s research is old and done in a colonial style, it does provide some interesting facts about *hijras* and khojas. One of the things that strike me as interesting is that after more than a century, the view of *hijras* as impotents holds true among the general public. Also, kotis and *hijras* both believe that they had an important task to perform in Moughal India, which was taking care of the female areas or females of the house. They suggest that because of a lack of desire for the female body, they are well suited for the female areas of the house.

Vanita (2002) talks about the depiction of same-sex love in Hindi cinema with the example of two movies – *Dosti* (literally ‘friendship’) which came out in 1964, and *Tamanna* (literally ‘desire’) which came out in 1997 – that she analyses that have male protagonists who have male friends. The films do not depict any heterosexual relationships and Vanita suggests that these movies have a story line that is parallel to most heterosexual love stories that come out of Hindi cinema. Indian culture values sacrifice; because it is a community-based society, the well-being of others is valued more than the well-being of the individuals involved in the story. The plot of the two movies Vanita talks about is centered on sacrifice; she says that the plot includes lyrics,
narrative, and the larger discourse of values and, as Vanita suggests the lovers are, “emblematic of a manhood, Indianness, and even humanness that are simultaneously alternative and normative” (147). Vanita’s research falls under the area of Indian sexuality, but her work is important because it highlights the perceptions about sexuality in Indian society at large. Vanita never talks about kotis specifically, but her work shows how much research needs to be done in the area of sexuality in India.

Nanda (1990) traces the lives and roles of *hijras* in the Indian society. There are a few occasions in the book when Nanda refers to *zenenas* (which is another word that kotis in Lucknow use to refer to themselves). At one point Nanda says,

> In parts of North India, effeminate males who are assumed to play the passive role in homosexual relationships are referred to as zenana, literally meaning woman…Zenana are said to think of themselves in the male gender, generally wear male clothing, and sometimes may be married and have children. Some zenana may live with *hijras* and perform with them, but they are not “real” *hijras* (Sinha, 1967). Although *hijras* assert that such men are “fake” *hijras*, merely “men who impersonate *hijras*,” some zenana go through formal initiation into the *hijra* community. (14)

While Nanda’s description fits the kotis that I met, the description also implies and suggests that kotis have no identity of their own and survive just as the shadow of *hijras*. I suggest a treatment of kotis that gives them a voice as people who have suffered the consequences of a society that does not recognize their sexuality. The ideas of homosexuality have been imposed on them; for a westerner they may seem to be homosexuals but that is an issue of what we treat homosexuality as – a sexual preference
or a cultural role. I would hope the latter and it is in this sense that I argue that kotis should be treated as kotis and not as gays, hijras, “fake” hijras, or anything else that fits a Western categorization of kotis.

Nanda has done much work on hijras; her book *Neither man nor woman: The Hijras of India* is one of the most respected anthropological works on them. Her research is important for me because, while she never talks about kotis, zenanas or jankhas directly, there are illusions to identities similar to these. As mentioned in section three, kotis associate and interact very closely with hijras, and Nanda does mention people peripheral to the hijra communities. From my observations in the field I know that the peripheral identities Nanda talks about are actually hijra wannabees and sometimes, and this is by no means true of all kotis, hijra wannabees are kotis. While describing homosexual activity in the hijra community Nanda keeps a distance and does not give a definitive statement, which I understand is not possible, but says:

> What is very clear is that some persons in India, born as males, and with a variety of gender identity/role disorders or incongruities join this community for a variety of economic, social and psychological reasons. It is as a member of the community, adhering to its rituals, living together, interacting socially, and earning their living in traditional ways, that hijras are identified

There are other persons in India, born as males, but who do not, for various reasons, join the community. (1992:60)

Nanda’s use of terms is problematic. She says that males who join the hijra community have “a variety of gender identity/role disorders or incongruities.” This statement implies that any sexual/gender identity which is outside of the normative

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19 Singing/dancing at weddings and child birth. Sometimes even begging on streets and prostitution.
boundaries is tantamount to “disorder or incongruities.” She further adds that these males join the community due to “psychological reasons”; what these psychological reasons might be is not elaborated further. Research on hijras mentions people who are peripheral to the community, but very little research has actually been done on these peripheral identities and their relationship and degree of interaction with hijras. Sometimes research on hijras, such as Nanda (1990), mentions zenanas only in instances where they are perceived as a threat to hijras or as a cause of disrespect for hijras. In her book Nanda mentions zenanas in places where she is talking about hijras, claiming that it is not them but the ‘fake hijras’ or zenanas who engage in sexual activity with other men. Nanda describes hijras having a special role in the Indian society and shows a contrast with zenanas who are male and not ‘neither male nor female’. At one point while talking about prostitution among hijras, Nanda says,

Hijra prostitutes today appear to be recruited from the zenana class, it is these individuals who pay the initiation fee to join the community, a fee that “born” hijras—hermaphrodites—do not pay. So while on the one hand, hijras publicly condemn those “who are men and join us just to make a living” on the other hand, they also allow them to join. In this way the hijra community absorbs some of its own competition and benefits financially from zenana’s earnings. Some of these zenanas may eventually become real hijras by undergoing the emasculation operation. (Nanda 1990: 54)

While this description is correct to some extent, I see two problems with it. First of all, any mention of the perspective of these zenanas is ignored. They have been given names like ‘fake hijras’ by researchers who have not interacted, observed, or interviewed
them. Secondly, the conditions in which zenanas join *hijra* households, including social and economic realities, sexual needs, etc., are not even mentioned in the accounts Nanda gives of them. This, I believe, is a misrepresentation of the koti/zenana community which is, as a matter of fact, stigmatized by *hijras*, straight folk, gays and as I have shown in the last few pages, researchers who work on *hijras* and hitherto are the only source of information about the marginalized community of kotis.

In this chapter I have described my fieldwork methodology and I have given an overview of the koti community. I have also explained the highlights of the historical perspective on *hijras* and kotis. The following chapter will discuss the koti community as a community of practice and critique contemporary literature on kotis in more detail.
CHAPTER 4

KOTIS AS A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter will be establishing that kotis are in fact a community of practice. I wish to prove that the communities of practice framework (which was discussed in Chapter 2 and will be expanded on in this chapter) is the most appropriate framework for studying the koti community and that the other frameworks do not provide the adequate theoretical and methodological tools to study a community like kotis. I begin the chapter by discussing the communities of practice framework. Then I establish that kotis are a community of practice. I use the three dimensions of communities of practice which are mutual engagement, negotiated resources and joint enterprise, to prove that kotis are a community of practice. I will end the chapter by discussing how defining kotis as a community of practice adds to our understanding of this community and is also an addition to current sociolinguistic research.
4.2 Communities of practice

The communities of practice framework has been extensively used in language and gender studies. The reason for this is the assumption of this framework that gender is not given but acquired and that practice is closely tied to linguistic variation. Bergvall (1999) says,

The communities of practice theory focuses on the assumption of variability of gendered practices and identities, challenging the dualized differences between putatively homogenous groups of females vs. males. It emphasizes the act of becoming gendered, of moving from peripheral or novice participation in linguistic action to a central or more experienced enactment, with a shared repertoire of linguistic resources. (279)

This assertion is central to the understanding of gender. It emphasizes the cultural situatedness of gender. The communities of practice framework is very important for studies that focus on the understanding of gender in groups that are marginalized because they provide a means to focus on the performative and practice-based aspects of gender – something other frameworks do not pay much attention to. This framework also allows for explaining issues related to identity and shifts in identity because its main emphasis is to steer away of preconceived notions of identity. The three dimensions of a community of practice are engagement, negotiated resources and joint enterprise. Holmes and Meyerhoff also list fourteen “criterial characteristics” of a community of practice and suggest that these can form the basis of testing the utility of the communities of practice
framework. Each of these “characteristics” fit into dimensions of a community of practice as well.

- Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
- Shared ways of engaging and doing things together
- Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
- Mutually defined identities
- The ability to access the appropriateness of actions and products
- Specific tools, representations, and other artifacts
- Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
- Jargon and short cuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
- Certain styles recognized as displaying membership

While the communities of practice framework brought new perspectives to sociolinguistics, it has its own weaknesses. The framework is criticized for:

1. Not being able to adequately connect practices of the local communities to large scale forces of variation and
2. Not being able to study adult populations because of the focus of this framework on the transient nature of identity.

According to Bergvall the framework seems weak when it comes to connecting the practices of local communities to global or large scale practices. She uses studies of gender to make her point. Bergvall says that of the three aspects of gender – “what is inborn, what is achieved, and what is thrust upon us” the communities of practice framework is good for addressing that issue of “what is achieved”. Bergvall says that,
“Despite its many virtues, it is not clear how a ‘localized’ communities of practice approach can derive a systematic account for gender norms established prior to the local practice of gender, at the more global level of ideology and hegemony” (284) holds water. Bergvall’s answer to this is trying to connect the “what is achieved” with “what is imposed” and communities of practice does not give a method for making this connection. She suggests that the best course to take might be to connect smaller ethnographic studies as suggested by Eckert with larger quantitative studies. These studies will be able to not only establish the values that local communities attach to particular linguistic norms but also show how these norms are reflected on large scale practices and values20. But the desire to connect practices of smaller communities to larger ones should also be based on the nature and goal of the study rather than on pre-defined notions. To try to connect the practices of high schoolers to that of the larger community is possible and does give insights into the way their framework works. To try to do the same with kotis, for example, might not be particularly useful. What can be done is an examination of claims. Do the claims about identity shift actually hold true if a statistical analysis of the linguistic data is put forward? If yes, than this adds weight to the ethnographic observations of the researcher.

The second problem that Bergvall points out with the communities of practice framework is that it sometimes fails as a framework for the study of adult populations because according to her, “the explanatory fit may be less than perfect, because the issues

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20 The large scale practices and values that this study speaks to is the view of sexuality for kotis. As we will see in the following chapter, the switching of gender marking by kotis is influenced by who they are talking to and what they are talking about; as an example when kotis talk about their families, they use masculine gender markings but when talking about their partners, they use a feminine gender marking. This can mean that the level of comfort kotis have with being kotis varies and plays out in their projection of their identity as kotis.
here seem to focus less on the acquisition of skills or practices, and more on the display and reification of practice through language and other semiotic systems. Communities of practice seem less able to account for the social ascriptions which, at this stage of life, are more pre-existing than immediately under construction” (280). What Bergvall states might be true for some communities but it can also be argued that any community is in a constant stage of constructing identities – be it defining identity within a particular age group, due to changes in lifestyles, due to changes in perception of the world, not to mention the changes that happen due to global events. How “pre-existing” a particular communities’ norms are can differ but I would like to argue that members of many if not all communities are in a constant state of flux. A new father within a community will undergo change in membership or membership status depending upon various interrelated factors, a family moving from one city to another will redefine their status and membership etc. So to say that the communities of practice framework does not define groups that are supposedly settled and not “immediately under construction” is unfair. Bonnie McElhinny’s (1992) study of police officers in Pittsburg and Hall’s (1995) study of phone sex workers are examples of how frameworks like communities of practice can be successfully applied to adult populations.

McElhinny’s findings suggested a strong relationship between practice within a community and how learning is an integral part of the speech pattern of any community. Bergvall’s notion about communities of practice not being a good framework for studying adult populations is refuted by studies like McElhinny which show that gender and language use are related and ever changing. Hall’s (1995) study on phone sex workers is another example of a study done within a framework that shows how studying
smaller communities informs us about larger issues that surround the use of language. This is also an example of research that studied an adult population successfully to highlight the fact that identities and performance of identities are not limited to any particular age. So Bergvall’s notion that communities of practice is not adequate to study adult populations is problematic.

Eckert and McConnell Ginet (1999) address the concerns scholars have shown for the framework. They answer the major concern that the framework lacks the ability to draw broad generalizations by taking the example of a high school in Northern California and first explain why the communities of practice framework is important for the understanding of this community. Defending their choice of concentrating on local communities they say, “Sociolinguists have tended to focus on the more abstract level of social structure in their interpretation of meaning, seeking global generalizations which, they assume, supersede local dynamic. But if variations in language use that have no clear referential differences are used to encode local social meaning, then the nature of this meaning is a very central linguistic concern. To the extent that the CofP is the locus of this kind of meaning construction, it should be a key focus for sociolinguistic study” (188). Eckert and McConnell Ginet make the point that a communities of practice is not “isolated and in-ward looking but shapes its participants’ relations both among themselves and with the rest of the world” (186). They also suggests that a community of practice is supposed to be seen not as an isolated group of people but as a part of a larger social order. Members of a community distinguish themselves from the rest of the world in peculiar ways but these ways are what become a part of their joint enterprise and give them a shared sense of community. In terms of language and gender one of the major
agenda is to establish what constitutes hegemonic devices in terms of gendered practices because hegemonic practices play a major role in identity construction of any group or individual. Scholars of language and gender have said that the communities of practice framework leaves out the issues of hegemony. But if we look at a community of practice and analyze the devices members of this community use to stand apart from other communities, we are in fact looking at what devices people use to construct difference from hegemonic devices.

Most scholars of language and gender are in agreement about the importance of a performative model and practice based approaches both of which influence and enrich the framework of communities of practice especially for studies that focus on language and gender. Cameron says, “whereas sociolinguistics traditionally assumes that people talk the way they do because of who they (already) are, the postmodern approach suggests that people are who they are because of (among other things) the way they talk” (1998:49). It has been argued time and again now that gender is performance and the performance of gender is learnt. But this performance does not ‘imitate’ any new role so to say. Categories exist a priori and their existence is a reason for the existence of communities of practice. Hall (1995:8) says, “For Butler and Sedgewick, gender identities are performative in the same way that certain speech acts are performative; that is they are felicitously produced only if they reiterate an already conventionalized set of norms. An expression of gender identity will not be intelligible unless it reaffirms a culturally established category.” Performance, as Hall and Butler note, also becomes learned behavior and so learning and participating in a particular community of practice becomes central to identity formation and performance. Researchers agree that there are
three dimensions of a community of practice that reflect the ways in which the members perform identity. These include mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise and a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time. Before discussing these dimensions with respect to the koti community I will give a description of membership or types of members of the koti community.

4.3 Kinds of membership in the community: Peripheral and core members

Members of a community of practice participate in the community in varying degrees. Participation gives members the status of core or peripheral members. Holmes and Meyerhoff say, “The progressive nature of a community of practice means that individual membership in a community of practice will differ. Some people will be core members, and some peripheral members. The basis of this variation lies in how successfully an individual has acquired the shared repertoire…” (1999:176). As holds for all communities of practice, kotis also participate in multiple communities. Family, workplace, the world of the clients, hijras, these are the other few communities that kotis participate in. they are members of all these in varying degrees. There are kotis who have very close relationship with hijras. So they are core members of two communities of practice in which they participate and in which their behavior takes shape. They may be peripheral members of one community and core members of another or they may be core members in both.

Membership in any community of practice varies. Wenger says, “placing the focus on participation has broad implications for what it takes to understand and support
learning” (1992:7). He adds that the “implications” are different for individuals and communities. He says for individuals “it means that learning is an issue of engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities” and for communities “it means that learning is an issue of refining their practice and ensuring new generations of members” (ibid). The sense of community and “ensuring new generations of members” is strong in older kotis. My fieldwork suggests that there are the following kinds of membership in the koti community.

1. **Kade taal kotis:** kotis who follow all the ‘rules’ of being heterosexual males in the particular socio-economic group they belong to but are also sex workers at certain times. They consider themselves the most prestigious within the community since they fulfill their duties while still being able to fulfill some of their own desires. Kade taal kotis have limited touch with *hijras*. Some of them are kotis who had lived in *hijra* households in the past but the life style did not suit them. Kade taal kotis have a strong sense of engagement with learning and contributing in the community. They are interested in teaching new kotis about the rules of the community etc. This engagement is both ideological and material.

2. **Kotis who have close association with *hijras* but not so much with *kade taal kotis*: These kotis live with *hijras* and aspire to be *hijras*. They can be part of the *hijra* household and go out with *hijras* for *toil-badhayi*. If they have huge aspiration to be the guru or head of a *hijra* household then they undergo castration but sometimes they just live with *hijras* and engage in occasional sex work.

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Along with this, the feeling that things are not what they used to be is also strong. Older kotis complain that younger kotis engage in too much sex work, are not respectful of older kotis like they should be and are not as talented (in singing and dancing) as they should be.
3. Kotis who are too scared to be a part of the community but have contacts with a few *kade taal kotis*: These kotis have some contacts within the community but are usually not involved with cruising areas or *hijras*.

A lot of kotis are too scared to participate in any of the two identity formative communities (*kotis* and *hijras*). In that situation they are peripheral members of the koti community. They interact with few kotis during cruising and do not participate in other activities like singing and dancing that core members participate in. I also came across kotis who had left the community because of the fear of getting caught. They do not have many friends in the community and do not like to interact with other kotis, leave aside *hijras*. They are the peripheral members of the community of practice.

4.3.1 *Hijras* and the koti community of practice

Kotis and their relationship with *hijras*\(^22\) is another aspect of their life which involves getting attuned to koti community life and forms an important part of engagement with the community. Staying away from *hijras* and encouraging the younger kotis to interact with respectable *kade taal* kotis is a theme of many kotis gatherings and a much discussed topic. Most kotis find it useful to be in touch with *hijras* but this can be tricky sometimes. Many *hijras* expect kotis to join the household after initial months.

\(^{22}\) My intention in this dissertation is not to downplay the *hijra* community in any way. I completely understand the difficulties and hardships members of this community go through. I merely wish to point out the differences between kotis and *hijras* as defined by kotis themselves. Some of the comments may seem derogatory but most kotis respect *hijras* for the support *hijras* show for the koti community.

Many researchers e.g., Nanda (1990) have pointed out that there are identities that fall at the periphery of the *hijra* community and have named kotis (or *zananas*) as one such identity. My work and commentary is an attempt to look at the *hijra* world from the eyes of these peripheral communities. It is for this reason that I wish to clarify that I am not attempting to comment on *hijras* or on their culture. I wish to highlight kotis not as a community in opposition to the *hijras* but as a community which is an integral part of the Indian sexuality continuum and is a separate community from *hijras*.
Their relationship with *hijras* shows them some interesting aspect of the kind of life they imagine living. This poses a problem with family values because an essential part of being a *hijra* is leaving one’s family.

It must be noted however, that whatever the nature of relationship between *hijras* and kotis, the constant engagement kotis have with *hijras* (or the lack there of), and the personality and lifestyle of *hijras* becomes an important part of ideological engagement with the other members of the koti community. Older kotis warn younger kotis from joining *hijras* and younger kotis want to because *hijras* have more visibility, power and money.

Emarana is in his mid thirties. He is a very well respected koti and lives with his parents and brothers. He is not married but he is not opposed to getting married because it is one of his duties as a son. He fell in love with a man once and was with him for a while before the man left him. He does not engage in sex work and was a regular at tea stalls. Emrana is a tailor but does not have a full time job. During one of the interviews Emrana told me that when she was young she joined the *hijras*. She also did sex work for a few months but then realized his responsibilities as a son and brother so left everything and is now a *kade taal ki murat*. She is much respected among younger kotis and mentors them. One time during an interview, I heard a young koti ask her about how she gets the occasional client. To a young koti, Emrana’s persona does not strike as koti at all because she conducts herself as a straight man. She said that one does not necessarily have to behave like a woman and move their hands and hips to get a good client. It is all in how you look at them, she said. In the example below the kotis are telling me about how they are different from *hijras* and this difference is constructed around leaving responsibilities.
of family life which is in the opinion of kotis, what hijras do and handling responsibilities which is what koti claim to do. In lines 57-61 Shakeela (S) describes how kotis can be themselves within a group of other kotis but when in public they have to be men.

48. I: and how are you different from hijras

49. Revati: With hijras it is such that, if one goes with hijras, with hijras one’s family…many hijras are such that [interrupted by S]

50. S: If I have to go with hijras then I will have to give up everything. If I go with hijras I will have to give up everything.

52. Revati: Give up everything

53. S: Now I know that my home, my family will not accept me and will trouble me a lot if I go to hijras. So…to go to hijras I will have to give up everything. If I am koti, I mean if I am koti

56. Revati: Kade taal ki (hidden from the world)

57. S: In kade taal. So I get ready a little bit and then fulfill my desires, like now we have all these kotis, they are my sisters here or they are my friends, with them I can talk about things, move my hands, ask them what they are doing, how they are, tell them who I am having sex with these days, who my boy friend is. Tell them about all these things

62. I: Emrana, how do you consider yourself different from hijras

63. Emrana: I am different from hijras because like Shakeela mentioned, with hijras one has to have everything, mother, father, sister, brother and there is disrespect.

65. Shakeela: As a koti I can go home, I can live at home.

66. Emrana: Relatives etc., every place we can go. But if I have to go to hijras then I will have to leave everything.

68. Shakeela: and being a koti, it is like living a double life. I will be able to at live home and I will be able to do what I want to do

70. Emrana: And in hijras those who go their parents somehow console themselves and are like, well, ok, my son is like this. So they come and go but relatives they don’t go to. It it quite shameful.

73. I: ok
74. I: So can one say that it takes some courage to become a hijra

75. Emrana: (laughs) to become a hijra is not a matter of courage. To become a hijras, 76. your own, it is a matter of your own feelings. The heart says to do all these things.

77. I: ok

78. Emrana: it is not courage. If you have to show courage do something good.
79. Something with respect. Is there any respect in this? Is it necessary that I dance and 
80. jump. Dancing and jumping only means that my desires are coming true. Dancing, 
81. flirting, dancing, shaking, sang this ghazal, sang that song and this is what is getting 
82. them money. That is how their family is happy too. You can win the world with money.

83. Revati: Is it necessary to go with hijras?

Jokes about how I am conducting the mike.
84. E: It is not necessary to go with hijras. So that is the case.

85. I: I want to ask you about how you feel that you are different from hijras. Or why you 
86. did not become a hijra? You joined their group once but you came back?

87. Revati: I did not like it, I mean. Their style, the way they talk. They punish after 
88. mistakes, all that I did not like at all

89. I: Punishment? How?

90. Revati: Like I...if there is someone older than me...and I misbehave with them...I did 
91. not talk very nicely...then I would have to pay a fine...I mean fine

The example above suggests a common ideology. It also suggests the differences 
between kotis and hijras and how kotis construct their identities around these differences.

Revati is a younger kotis, she is in her mid to late teens and she ran away from her family 
to a hijra household. She did not like the life style and the restriction hijra life involved 
and so came back to Lucknow where she started making friends with other kotis and 
finding comfort in a koti lifestyle. She was still involved with hijras to some degrees and 
I saw her in a hijra household in a salwar kameez and make-up at one point. She was not
ready to get castrated so she could never become a respected member of the hijra community.

4.4. Dimensions of a community of practice

In the following sections I will discuss the koti community with respect to the three dimensions of a community of practice. I will also examine the dimensions as a tools which help understand how communities work and device methods which are meaningful in terms of identity formation, learning and practice.

4.4.1 Mutual Engagement in the koti community

Mutual engagement entails that participants interact with other participants on a regular basis. I understand this dimension also as a way in which communities devise ways to be able to interact on a regular basis. It also entails a valid way of meeting people within the community. This dimension forms the basis of learning how to behave like a koti. According to Wenger (1992) learning is part of the ‘practice’ which creates a community of practice. Learning also plays a role in identity formation and gender construction, because if the claim is that gender and identity are constructed through practices, then we have to agree that practices do not come out of nowhere. They are learned. It is learned behavior at the level of communities of practice which produces and reproduces identities and practices. When individual members form small groups and come together to ‘perform’ certain roles within the large community, they become a
community of practice and it is at this level that group norms and behaviors are created. For kotis the community of practice that they participate in, as a part of the very basis of being kotis, defines them in various ways. They learn about the community, about the practices related to the community, what it means to be in the community and identify with the community.

Kotis strongly follow this dimension of a community of practice. Most kotis form groups with other kotis and regularly meet at some place which is usually the cruising area or any other designated place like a tea stall. For kade taal kotis the center of place for mutual engagement is cruising areas or any other designated hang out area where they can meet on a regular basis and share experiences. These experiences can be related to clients, home, other kotis, younger kotis or ideological engagement with being a koti.

To initiate younger kotis into the community is an unstated goal of many older kotis. The initiation usually involves taking a younger koti under their wing and providing protection. Below is an example of a discourse between kotis and myself where we are talking about the initiation of Shakeela, who is now a well situated koti, into the koti community and how Gayatri helped the process by taking in Shakeela as a daughter – a symbolic rite that many kotis undergo. Shakeela is in her mid to late twenties and is a well respected member of the koti community because of her association with NFI. Shakeela has been associated with the koti for more than fifteen years. She has a wife and three kids, mother and two nephews she takes care of. She is a kade taal ki murat. Shakeela is very responsible in duties as a husband, son, father and uncle. She is the only koti I know who has shared the secret of being a koti with her wife. The mother is not aware of Shakeela’s status as a koti. Shakeela does not engage in sex work and her giriya
lives in a different city. She visits him sometimes but usually she confines herself to being a mentor to younger kotis. Gayatri is in her early to mid forties. She has a regular day job and does not engage in sex work. Gayatri had been with the same man for the last fifteen years and their relationship was quite stable. Gayatri was also married to a woman and had two children who were both teenagers. She talked about the children proudly and invited me over to meet them one time. She was a regular at cruising areas but her main interest in coming to the cruising areas was to interact with other kotis. She was fond of singing so sometimes she would gather a few kotis around her and they would all sing together. She was also very interested in the well being of other kotis and liked to overlook the activities of younger kotis so that they did not get misled into something they would not want to do. In the discourse below Gayatri is relating a story from a time when Shakeela was young and new to the koti community and how Gayatri helped ease the transition for Shakeela. Gayatri and Shakeela are still quite close and Shakeela goes to Gayatri for advice on all kinds of issues. It is very common among kotis to form strong bonds with older members of the community and for older members of the community to take younger kotis under their wing. In some instances these relationships lead to older kotis becoming mentors to younger kotis. Gayatri and Shakeela have such a relationship. When Shakeela was new to the community Gayatri protected her and taught her ways of the koti world and this relationship grew to the extent that Shakeela calls Gayatri her mother.

G: she would go for business, and stand quietly. All jananis would yell at her. Now this poor thing, she didn’t know what to do. I would think why is everyone after this poor janani. You, you yelled at her too. Shut up, SHUT UP.

S: shut up, I would tell her...
**G:** what is her name? that, Razia, she would yell at her too. I said BEWARE.

**S:** she had such a habit

**G:** I said beware, she is my daughter. She told me she had come from outside to study here. She was lying to me and telling me she had come here to study. I said ok. She is my daughter. Them gradually I introduced her to everyone.

**S:** now if anyone says anything to me. I come out very well.

**G:** come out means, she will yell back. Now she is perfect. She is a perfect koti. She is perfect.

**I:** do others still ask you to leave.

**S:** why will I leave, I will start talking myself. I will talk back

As I mentioned in chapter 3, in Lucknow, kotis come to a well defined area which is the cruising area. It is this place from where their life as kotis once started. Young boys become kotis through contact with other kotis. It is in the cruising areas that their participation in the community starts. When they see others like them in the cruising areas, they have a desire to become like them. They get a target they can perform as and this performance is learned in the cruising areas which become an important part of the communities of practice that kotis participate in.

4.4.2 Joint Enterprise in koti community

Joint enterprise is, “not just a stated shared goal but a negotiated enterprise, involving the complex relationships of mutual accountability that become part of the practice of the community” (Holmes and Meyerhoff 199:175). Davies (2005) acknowledges that sometimes pinpointing the exact nature of joint enterprise can be
tricky for sociolinguists. He suggests two reasons for the lack of “specificity” in deciding the joint enterprise. He says:

Firstly, although Lave and Wenger (1991) explore a number of quite different learning mechanisms, from Western style formal vocational training to a seemingly unstructured acquisition of midwifery skills in Yucatan, there is always a concrete process which the community and the learners can orient towards: this gives a focus for a joint enterprise. It is inevitably more difficult to put a name to the joint enterprise which might hold together local communities like the ones Milroy interviewed in Belfast (L. Milroy 1987). Secondly, learning situations are often conducted in relation to institutions or at least some formal, concrete social structure. This gave a locus to which a group can orient its practice. Wenger’s claim processors define themselves – and their community of practice – as much in relation to Alinsu, their employer, as to their tangible work of handling claims. For Eckert’s (2000) jocks and burnouts, the acceptance or rejection of the institution of the School – and what it represents – acts as the basis for their conflicting enterprises. Again, for sociolinguistic study, there may not always be such a perceptible locus for potential community of practice in the frame, and thus it is not always easy to identify the enterprise that apparently drives the need for mutual enterprise. (563)

Given this argument and the lack of a “concrete process” involving learning for the koti community, it is important to utilize the fact that every community of practice engages in constant meaning making with other members of the community. As long as the researcher is able to pinpoint the mechanisms by virtue of which meaning making
takes place within the community, their job can be considered completed. Although for kotics, at least the ones who are core members of the community, coming to the cruising area regularly and engaging with other kotics and clients is a “concrete process” which results in learning to be a koti and is thus a basis of joint enterprise. Joint enterprise for kotics includes sharing tales of their life and having some fun time with each other after a day full of turmoil and identity crisis. Eckert and McConnell Ginet say “…one can assume that the practice that unites these communities includes not only ways of talking, but also activities dress, concerns and topics of talk” (1999: 191).

Ways of talking includes topics that I frequently found kotics discuss when they hang out. Many of these topics relate to the desire of kotics to be effeminate. One of the topics that kotics talk about is stereotypically feminine talk or ‘girl-talk’. I believe this gives them a sense of community and shared interests. During fieldwork many of my koti friends asked me about make-up and how to use make-up or what they call bhabka in Farasi. The issue of fairness creams also came up a lot.

The discourse below is from one of my interviews with Roopmati and Shakeela. They are talking about a koti (who I knew and had interviewed previously) who went to her home wearing make up and women’s clothes and his wife did not take that too well. The next day the koti who had broken the ‘code’ came to the usual hang out place and Roopmati gave her a hard time. The discourse shows how after some initial reservations, Roopmati comes around and back to her koti values.

I: Do you know how to clap?

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23 Norma Mendoza-Denton (1996) mentions the importance of devices like lip-stick and eyeliner which become the basis of identity for a group of Latina gang girls in Southern California. In this work, Mendoza-Denton emphasizes the interpretation of different thicknesses of eye-liner by the gang girls and how this frames them as different from each other. (See chapter 2 for a discussion of this work)
1. R: I was not able to earlier like this but now I can

2. Ila: ok

3. S: She is clapping chinal (person with vagina), why were you clapping at her so much last night

4. R: I couldn’t clap earlier

5. S: So why were you insulting her last night

6. R: now what do I do, now her she is, she has a young daughter, young son, till now she did business in a pant, shirt, all was well. But what I mean to say is that if you were silly enough to want to do business in women’s clothes I told her that it was fine to do business in a salwar suit in the night. But when you start going home take off the salwar suit and wear a pant and shirt and then go home, in your home your wife won’t come to know, your respect will stay as if is and you will be able to earn some money. But he, while he was drunk, went home wearing a salwar kameez.

7. S: His wife saw one day, second day he went home wearing a salwar kameez again and his wife saw him, his wife got mad. She called his elder brother, younger brother. Called them over, called his father over. They told him to get out of the home. If you live here we will put acid on you. If you don’t behave properly then I will kill myself by burning myself. She came here and stated crying so some jananis from here came to me and said that you are meeting her, talking to her, chatting with her, what will happen if someone from her family comes here? I said if someone says anything to me I will see. But then I thought if they come then many people will see and there will be drama. They will say that I am spoiling other people’s children. So I said to him…so I stopped talking to him for a little bit. All other jananis went away. Then she came. and met my granddaughter. My granddaughter told me; everyone explained to me that if a member of the family is not on the right track, has been kicked out of home then should we not support them. I said we should support them. Why won’t we support them. If everyone supports them then I will support them too. Why won’t I? I have never separated her. I have always supported her. I said this yesterday too and I have said from the beginning

As can be seen from this example, kotis have a value system which is dictated by being respectful to family. The koti who went to her home wearing women’s clothes was disrespectful to her family and so was chastised by an older koti. Dressing as a woman is a desire of many kotis in their twenties and thirties. Older kotis do not encourage this but accept it in closed rooms, gatherings and koti parties. Outside of these scenarios, cross
dressing is chastised by most kotis. There is a strong sense of mutual accountability among kotis and dress is an important part of this.

Kotis rarely cross dress but there are times when they do so secretly. There were at least two occasions during my visits to Lucknow when I was invited to the usual hangout place and some koti would sneak in a saree and makeup and wear them during a dance. Within the koti community this kind of display is referred to as “armaan pure karma” (desire fulfill to-do) i.e. fulfilling ones desires. I also saw pictures of kotis in women’s clothes. Most kotis say they cross dress once in a couple years or never. Some pictures I saw had kotis wearing a saree or a kurta but they still had mustaches and beards so I assume that at least some kotis do this for fun and not for the actual affect of cross dressing or passing which are the goal of cross dressers and hijras.

The topics of koti discourse usually revolve around the activities that they participate in or want to participate in. They talk at length about the clothes they wear, comment on the clothes that other kotis are wearing, whether others are wearing cheese satre or bile satre (good clothes or bad clothes), the way giriyas or boyfriends behave with them etc. The topics of their conversations construct their selves and their identity in distinct ways. It is not entirely ‘women’s talk’ and it is not ‘men’s talk’ if we assume that such labels do in fact exist. It is ‘koti talk’.

In the example below I was interviewing Pooja who was in her early thirties. She had very effeminate mannerisms and was not a kade taal ki murat which implies that in her role as kotis she was not interested in pretending that she is a man. Also she was not too concerned about people shouting her name out loud or passing comments about her sexuality. She asked me about makeup and dresses many times during our interviews and
during hanging out. She had a day job and she was married\(^2\) to a man who she liked very much and wanted to continue living with. To the best of my knowledge she was not married to a woman.

*Ila: When you sit with other kotis what do you talk about?*

*Pooja: We talk about a lot of things. We sometimes talk about our husband/boyfriend; we talk about makeup and such. Like what are the new lipsticks in the market, what are the new nail paints. Even if we don’t apply these things we have feelings. Now like some koti’s boyfriend/husband beats her then that poor woman relates her tales of agony. All kotis tell tales of their boyfriends and husbands.*

The life experiences of kotis overlap drastically and so most kotis have a lot in common. Kotis learn to share experiences. Shared stories of marginalization coming from families, or the police, or the *hijra* community, all these shared experiences form a basis for the formation of this community of practice and become a part of learned (and interchanged) knowledge within the community. Kotis have common concerns and things that worry or please them are similar at various levels. Kotis believe that they have the heart and soul of a woman and the body of a man. They live a double life in which when ever they are kotis they switch into the role of what they call *janana* or woman. They assume this role sometimes in their appearance too.

The relationship of kotis and *hijras* and the way this is communicated within the koti and *hijra* groups is another aspect of the negotiated enterprise that kotis have. Kotis have close association with *hijras* and have a direct or indirect relationship with them. This aspect of the community is also transferred from the older members in the community to younger members or from friends to friends and is like a practice. The discourse below is an example of the various aspects of the relationship between *hijras*

\(^2\) Marriages in India do not need to be registered by law. Homosexuality and same sex marriage are not legal in India so kotis do some simple rites like exchanging rings, garlanding each other etc. and call themselves married. Such weddings/marriages do not have legal standing.
and kotis. Chetna is in her early thirties and as can be seen in the example below she has a desire to become a *hijra*. She is quite impressed with the *hijra* life style and the money that some *hijras* can make. She is married to a man and lives with him. Chetna’s husband was abusive and demanded money from her all the time. Something she could not afford to do give her limited income from a small repair shop. The husband was also known to be abusive to some of Chetna’s other koti friends. Chetna was also married to a woman. She did not engage in sex work. She was always in need of money because of her husband and so joining *hijras* and going to *toli badhayi* with them was a good source of income for her sometimes.

*Ila*: Why do kotis meet hijras?

*Chetna*: Some Hijras are cunning but some are good. They will make you do their work, wash dishes, wash clothes, massage their feet and hands and if you refuse to do this will beat you, all the talk of the world is because of this

*Ila*: Have you ever lived with hijras?

*Chetna*: Yes, I have lived with hijras. I have also gone for toli badhayi25 I have gone to every place. Now I feel like getting castrated. But what do I do. I need money for that. I will need 80-90, 30-40 thousand rupees. Where do I get so much money from, hijras can’t do that, they say first give us money then we will castrate you. Now I feel like getting castrated.

*Ila*: Why?

*Chetna*: Because I think that I am also a woman. Why not become like a woman. (I want to) earn my own money, construct a house, raise my kids, I want to have cars, I want to have gold and silver, I think that if I become a *hijra* I will earn a lot. I will get bata26, I think like this.

In this discourse one can see that kotis fear the *hijras*, one can see that kotis admire the way in which *hijras* live their life and one can also see the attraction of money

25 Going to *toli badhayi* is the ‘profession of *hijras*’. It refers to going from one neighborhood to another looking for *jajmaan* or people who recently had child birth or a wedding in the family. They would pay *hijras* for their blessing and some dance and songs.

26 The share the every *hijra* gets after the *toli badhayi* is over.
that the *hijra* life holds for kotis. This koti had lived with *hijras* for a couple of years but had left the *hijra* household because of the reasons that he well describes as an answer to my first question. A few other kotis also told me that if they go to a *hijra* household even for a casual visit the Guru or head of the household might ask them to clean the dishes or wash the clothes, they would say:

*If we go to hijras they will tell us, O daughter, wash the dishes, wash the clothes.*

Chetna is a core member of the koti community and oscillates between being a *kade taal koti* and being a member of the *hijra* household. She is an attractive\textsuperscript{27} koti and this is a plus when she goes and dances with *hijras.*

### 4.4.3 Negotiable resources in the koti community

Holmes and Meyerhoff say, “Over time, the joint pursuit of an enterprise results in a shared repertoire of joint resources for negotiating meaning (Wenger 1998:85). This includes linguistic resources such as specialized terminology and linguistic routines, but also resources like pictures, regular meals, and gestures that have become part of the community’s practice” (176). They add, “The progressive nature of a community of practice means that individual membership in a community of practice will differ. Some people will be core members, and some people will be peripheral members. The basis of this variation lies in how successfully an individual has acquired the shared repertoire, or assimilated the goal(s) of the joint enterprise, or established patterns of engagement with

\textsuperscript{27} It is common knowledge among kotis and *hijras* that if a koti is good looking she would get more money from clients and she would be well regarded by *hijras* because during the ritual dancing and singing she will be more likely to attract attention.
other members” (176). That these communities exist within the large community of the ‘non-perverse’ and fight for survival is evident from the fact that they have devised techniques as diverse as clapping styles and linguistic codes to validate and sustain their existence. There are various resources that kotis use to index group membership. These are naming, clapping/gestures, cursing and the linguistics resources of Farasi and gender marking.

When a young boy enters the koti community he is given a female name. Giving female names to each other is an important part of getting engaged with the affair of being a koti. The names kotis give each other are mostly based on common female names in the region. The names give them a distinct identity which is different from their male identity. Usually the names are female but I met some kotis who did not have female names but were identified with an attribute they had and a female marker was attached to this attribute, for instance phool wali (flower-possessive marker feminine) meaning a women who has something to do with flowers.

Clapping and different clapping styles are very important for kotis. During one of the interviews I observed that kotis clap at each other. This is an indication of anger. There are two types of clapping styles. One is a clap with both hands. It is somewhat of a status symbol in this community to clap well, loudly and with a sharp sound. Another clap is with one full hand and another hand’s index finger and thumb made into a loop. This kind of clap is supposed to be a sign of impotency and hijras and kotis do this gesture as a curse to the other hijra or koti. Below is an example of a discourse I had with Lajo. She was in her early twenties when I first met her and was very friendly and open about her identity as a koti. She and I had long conversations about make up. Lajo was
concerned about the dark tone of her skin and what the sun was doing to it and we talked about fairness creams and if they worked. She asked to me get her some creams from America – something that I have yet to do. In our conversations she told me about her relationship with her husband and that they had been together for more than a decade. Her husband was a respectable man and this came up when we were talking about kotis and clapping.

Lajo: ..to kotis...like if we have to call kotis. Then we do not do (unclear). We start clapping loudly on the road and then kotis turn on their own. When they turn they understand that kotis are standing here so lets go meet with other kotis...all of them ask about each other. How are you? How are you? All the kotis meet here and with passion we clap here loudly so that one can hear us from far away. But now I am scared of clapping loudly because my husband has started telling me that I should not do this and live with some respect. I listen to him, I say if I live with you then I should listen to you. He says if there is an occasion to clap then you can clap, clap loudly, wear women’s clothes, meet other kotis, I will not mind one bit. My husband is very nice. I have married my husband. It has been almost twelve or thirteen years.

The way kotis and hijras curse each other or use slang is unique to this community. The most common slang term that kotis use with each other is chinal. In colloquial Hindi this means a loose woman or a woman who is available. This word is used by kotis both as slang and as a mechanism of showing closeness with other kotis and recognizing her as a woman. They also use it in its actual sense for kotis who are readily available to clients or men. The other commonly used slang term is randi. This word means widow in Hindi and has connotations of sexual availability. It is also an overtly feminine curse but kotis use it with each other all the time. The other curses and slang that kotis use in their role as kotis are also feminine. They curse each other like women curse each other. Swear words in this culture are largely based on sexual insult so it is not surprising that genitals form a basis of a lot of such insults. While using such swear words kotis use the female form of such swear words for each other.
A young koti’s entry into the community is fortified by her use of Farasi in the appropriate contexts. Kotis use this ‘special register’ when they act in their role as kotis. As I said earlier, kotis learn to become and behave like kotis when they come into contact with other kotis. In a similar manner, kotis learn Farasi after they come in contact with other kotis or hijras.

Ila: When you started meeting other kotis, when did you learn Farasi?

E: I learned Farasi by interacting with hijras. I used to visit hijras, sit with them, they would talk, this is called this, that is called that. Like I am standing here and some problem might emerge in this place, then I will say ‘kade karo’, kade karo means go away from here. ‘Pato’ also means go away from here. There are many purposes of one sentence. Like ‘kade raho’ also means do not move like women. This language is like this and it has to be learned by interacting with others.

During field work I observed that some young kotis (ages 13-17) did not know much Farasi. According to the older kotis they were new in the community, “nai nai bigdi hai” ‘she has been initiated/spoiled lately’- and this was the reason they did not know Farasi, but it was also claimed that they would learn very fast and within a year they would pick up ‘good’ Farasi and become proficient in it. Contact with hijras is not a condition for learning Farasi.

A koti cannot perform in a lot of contexts if she does not know Farasi. In a lot of situations, like in the cruising area, or within a group of other kotis, the use of Hindi does not provide a context in which a particular speech act could turn out to be felicitous. It is in this regard that the use of Farasi becomes important. Also, Farsi sets apart kotis from another identity which they are confused with, gays. The use of Farasi gives kotis a distinct identity an identity which is distinct from that of the ‘English speaking gays’. Farasi becomes a resource for kotis which they either learn from others or learn ‘on their own’. This example illustrates the way in Farasi is learnt within the community.
Ila: So did kotis teach you or did you learn from hijras?

E: Like I know Farasi and I am speaking, now she asks me (pointing towards another koti) what is the meaning of ‘cheesa’, cheesa means good, surila also means good. What is ‘jholi’, jholi means eye, what is ‘natwache’ natwache means nose etc....now she asks us such questions and settles these in her mind. This is how people learn.

Ila: Like a new boy comes to you and you think that he is a koti, do you teach her Farasi or does he learn on his own?

E: Her heart jumps to interact with us, sit with us, she develops an interest and friendship and in doing so she tells us to teach her. I tell her to listen carefully when I talk. If they listen carefully they would learn. I also learned like this.

Kotis consider the knowledge of Farasi as a prestige issue. Kotis who know good Farasi are considered superior to the ones who cannot speak Farasi. Kotis sometimes become the chela of some senior koti. In that situation the older koti refers to the younger ones as beti or daughter. My assumption for now is that there is a correspondence between the amount of Farasi one knows and the closeness of ones relationship with hijras. Here is an example from a discourse by a koti who tells the story of why she learned Farasi. The fact that knowing Farasi is considered a prestigious thing can also be seen in this discourse.

SA: Jananas clap on the road, swing their hips; what will the world say. I used to be very scared...I did not know how to talk. They (the other kotis) used to talk in Farasi, when they would do so nothing would get into my head. I told my guru, then he said he knew all that. He said he would train me in a few days and then you will be able to learn the language. I said ok. I will be with you. I asked him to teach me the language etc. and I will take care of the janana who clapped at me. Make me such that I can fight her. From that day onwards whenever I used to visit my guru in the evening, she made me practice clapping. She taught me how to clap. She taught me Farasi. I leaned everything and then my guru made me stand in front of the janana who had clapped at me. He said you were clapping at this lad till yesterday and he was shy, today talk to him like your equal, he will reply to you. Then I clapped at her, I also talked in Farasi and he kept looking at my face.

Kotis do not actively teach Farasi to younger kotis. They learn because of a desire to learn and because of a desire to be like other kotis. The desire to learn does not include
only Farasi. It also includes a lot of other things which kotis share with each other. This includes the older members of the community teaching the younger members the tricks of the trade. This includes techniques of safer sex, techniques of pleasing the client etc. This also includes ways to avoid certain people like the police or the *hijras* in some cases. In these situations knowledge of Farasi helps.

These examples illustrate the use of Farsi by kotis, the female names they refer to each other with and the feminine gender markings in their use of Farasi. The data I present here is a part of the conversation that I had with kotis in Lucknow. I also give a brief commentary on the context in which each of these sentences were said and how and why they find place in this paper as examples. The items in bold are in Farasi and the other items are function words from Hindi. In most of the examples the topic is a man in the koti’s life or something related to that man or men. In this particular instance they were using Farasi because I had asked them to. During observation and in the cruising areas I found that kotis use Farasi very similar to what the examples show. They use Farasi in any context that warrants hiding. If we look at (c), Deepa is asking a koti about her experience when the other koti spent the night with some guy called Kundan. This topic, would definitely warrant the use of secrecy, if the kotis are in public.

a) hum-si log surili nai kya
   We people good not what

   ‘Are we not good enough?’

*This is a ‘jealous’ remark by one of the kotis asking what is special about the other kotis who are (presumably) preferred by one of their boyfriends.*

b) ojo bili kotiyon ke saath thibti hai
   He ugly kotis CM with go v-ending

   ‘He goes out with ugly kotis.’
Deepa was telling her friends that one of the other kotis they know hangs out with bad/unfriendly/ugly kotis.

c) us din raat main kundan ke saath thibi thin that day night in Proper N CaseM with stay Past
to kaise kalam rahe then how (environment) CM
‘That night when you stayed with Kundan, how did every thing go?’

Kundan is a male name and the two kotis were talking about one of them staying with this guy called Kundan who is the client or ‘boyfriend’ of one of them.

d) ojo dusri murton pe lugta hai he other kotis on (involve) V-ending
‘He gets involved with other kotis.’

In this sentence one of the kotis is talking about a ‘giriya’ which means a straight man in this code. The interesting point about this example is the use of the word ‘murat’ for referring to other kotis. This is also the word that is used to refer to women in Farasi.

e) ojo mera bhavla to chamti hai par tum nai He my boyfriend CM likes V-ending but you don’t/not chamti ho like- V-ending
‘My boyfriend likes you but you don’t like him.’

One of the kotis is telling the other one that her boyfriend/partner likes her but she does not like him or pay any attention to him.

f) makbare par khanjade par to roz jati hona tomb on business on CM everyday go-FM V-ending
‘Don’t you go to the tomb for business everyday?’

In this example one of the kotis is asking if the other goes to the ‘tomb’ everyday for business. The ‘tomb’ she is referring to is actually the cruising area where many kotis meet in late evening and do ‘business’. Note the use of feminine gender marking.
They are talking about two kotis who were treated badly by one of the clients. According to them they were treated badly because they had misbehaved.

Kotis claim that Farasi is used whenever they had to talk about ‘work’, or their lives as kotis in front of their wives or other family members. Farasi is used in all domains where other kotis are involved especially where secrecy is called for. Farasi is used in the cruising areas, in front of strangers, in the NGO where a lot of kotis work.

The use of Farasi in certain contexts, like in the cruising area (and not at home) sets kotis apart from hijras. For hijras Farasi is another language and they may or may not need a context to make the use of Farasi felicitous. But for kotis, use of Farsi itself provides a context which makes the use felicitous or infelicitous depending on the listener. Barrett says, “Linguistic forms are based not only on speaker identity, but on the speaker’s assumption concerning the identity of the listener and the listener’s position in the history of discourse” (37). Utterances are not only judged by the speaker’s ability to say them but also by the speaker’s judgment about the listener-whether a koti thinks somebody could be a client or fellow koti will also decide her choice of code. Depending on her judgment about the listener, the koti will decide to use Farasi or Hindi and this is where the learned behavior and community norms come into play.
Negotiable resources: Koti identity and Farasi

The use of Farasi and its recognition in the community as an identity marker is something that deserves mention. Evoking the notion of Performative Indexicality as noted by Barrett is important at this point. He says, “Linguistic variables and stylistic choices operate as a system of indexical signs. It is traditionally held that these signs index a particular identity category, typically one referring to broad groups defined around gender, ethnicity, or class. In the type of sociolinguistics proposed here, there is a conscious recognition that this set of indexical signs operates as performative language, the very means of constructing and constraining the categories themselves” (2002:33). Barrett says that linguistic variables play an active role in putting people into categories but their performance is felicitous only if they are recognized as separate. In other words their performance is felicitous only if it is meant to be, only if the members of the community have learned when it is meant to be felicitous. “If the listener does not recognize the variable or lacks knowledge of its previous citations, the performative will be infelicitous. Furthering his argument Barrett says in relation to “covert communication” among lesbians, “The language chosen in such cases usually has a fairly narrow range of citation so that it is recognized as having performative indexicality primarily by other lesbians and tends not to be recognized by heterosexuals” (34). Kotis also use Farasi for performative indexicality. To claim membership in the koti group, knowing and learning Farasi is important. For claiming koti identity the use of Farasi is essential.

Kotis are a distinct identity and as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet say, “The social practices that construct gender are at the same time also constructing other aspects of
identity—such as life style, heterosexuality, ethnicity or social class—illuminating generalizations involving gender are most likely to emerge when gender is examined not in isolation but, but in interaction with other social members” (1999:191). There are reasons for which people come together or because of which people start identifying with each other. These are also factors which marginalize kotis in the society. The factors that cause the marginalization of kotis are not confined only to their sexuality or economic status. Class, socioeconomic status and caste\textsuperscript{28} can be called internal factors i.e., the factors which are internal or absolutely ‘essential’ for the marginalization of the kotis. Another kind of factor that I would like to identify at this point is the external factors. These external factors, I would say, depend on what identity a koti wants to perform at any particular point of time. The external factors include dress, body language, use of Farasi and occupation to a certain extent. I treat the factors which are a part of representation as external factors. So dress, language and self identification with a name become worthy of discussion at this point.

Also, Farasi gives kotis an ‘authentic’ way of claiming identity. Kulick and Cameron (2003: 95) say, “The linguistic reflex of this (identity politics) is an impulse to claim for the community ‘a language of our own’- a distinct way of speaking and or writing which serves as an authentic expression of group identity.” Within the koti community, the identity of members is defined ‘around their sexuality’ since their sexuality makes them entitled to claim membership in the community. Another aspect of membership in the community is the knowledge of Farasi. Within the community, the members who know more Farasi are respected more. When young boys enter this

\textsuperscript{28} Caste, socioeconomic status and class are the most ‘used’ factors for marginalizing people. My field work experience with the kotis informed me that not only were the kotis marginalized because of their ‘perversity’ but also because of these factors which seem to surround most of the kotis that I met.
community they are somewhat aware of their ‘perversity’ and deviance. But they are
made to learn Farasi to give legitimacy and identity to this ‘perversity’. Their identity is
defined around sexuality which is defined and actively constructed by Farasi. In this way
Farasi acts as an external representational device which not only gives voice to the
political statement that the kotis want to make thorough language but also defines the
*collective identity* and the *community of practice* that kotis construct and participate in, in
the course of their journey as kotis.

5.3 Kotis as a Community of Practice – Issues of terminology and legitimization

The final issue that I want to address in this chapter is related to how calling kotis
a community of practice reinforces my belief that they are in fact a sexual minority in
India. The most important research on the language of sexual minorities in India is done
by Kira Hall. Hall (1996) talks about the way Hindi speaking *hijras* in Banaras (India)
switch between the use of feminine and masculine gender markings. She starts from the
voice quality and pitch range of *hijras* and moves on to choice of gender marking. Her
analysis is based on the way *hijras* learn to perform as *hijras* and acquire a “female
persona” (243) and the reasons for which they choose to switch linguistic gender. Hall’s
research has covered many aspects of the linguistic practices of *hijras*, including use of
gender markings, use of insults and the performative aspects of the linguistic practices of
*hijras*.

Hall 2005 is a study of a community of kotis in New Delhi, India. In a way this
research is a continuation of Hall’s earlier work on *hijras* because her goal seems to be
concerned with *hijras* more than it is concerned with kotis. Hall gives an analysis of the performances of what kotis call ‘*hijra‐acting*’ and claims that by their performances as *hijras*, kotis question the *hijra* and gay identities in India and claim their own as different from both *hijras* and gays. Hall also brings in class as a meaningful category into her analysis claiming that kotis fall between the lower-class *hijras* and upper-class urban gays and this gives them a unique perspective on class, sexuality and desire. She sees a tension between *hijras* and gays and claims that this translates into the use of language since according to her *hijras* adhere to Hindi while gays claim allegiance to English. Hall says, “During 1999 and 2000, I watched and recorded 20 hours of these performances at a non-governmental organization in New Delhi”. This is the only description of data collection methodology that she provides. Hall does not give any other description of the data collection she used. She makes claims about class but her work does have any mention of looking at employment histories of people she interviewed, their parent’s economic status, or their educational backgrounds. She claims that *hijras* are below kotis in the class continuum but does not support this with interviews with *hijras* or kotis or any other kind of data. She claim that there is a “English speaking gay identity” (127) but does not say anything about the contexts in which this identity uses English, or the ideological beliefs this identity has about English or Hindi for that matter. Hall does not say that her study is ethnography nor does she make any comment on the ethnographic nature of the data collection techniques. That makes one ask the question about her data collection technique and the claims she makes about kotis identity. How much data does one need to make a claim that a phenomenon exists in a community? Can a claim be made about the existence of particular identities (English-speaking, *hijra*-rejecting gays
of New Delhi) by observing them in their workplace for 20 hours. Unlike her dissertation research Hall 2005 seems to pay little attention to kotis own understanding of themselves. She gives only one example of a one-to-one interview with a koti and bases her claims of shifting gender identity on that. Hall’s understanding of kotis in Delhi also makes me wonder about all the assumptions she makes in this research and whether they are well founded. Her analysis seems to have been based on the assumption that kotis fall between upper class gays and lower class hijras. She does not support this assumption with any data or interviews.

The data for my research was collected in Lucknow which is about 250 miles from New Delhi and the identities Hall talks about are not very different from the ones I encounter in Lucknow. Not only does Hall seem to misrepresent koti identity, her analysis of koti performances is also weak. Hall sees hijra drag as an essential part of koti identity. While the boundaries between hijras, kotis are far from clear and shifting identities is an important part of koti identity, hijra drag is not an essential part of koti identity. What Hall calls hijra drag or performance of hijra identity by kotis can alternatively be looked as an essential element of koti identity. Hall does not tell us what contexts or situations bring out the display of hijra performance which is a weak part of her analysis.

The kotis’ understanding of themselves as identity-shifters is necessitated by the many roles required of them in their everyday routines: When at home with their wife and children they play the role of man, when on the streets with fellow kotis they play the role of hijras, when cruising in a park with male clients
they play the role of girl. Indeed, role-playing is essential to the ways in which kotis recount their daily interactions.

While Hall is right in saying that kotis are identity shifters and role players, her claim that they are *hijras* when with other kotis and girls when with male clients is objectionable. Kotis are kotis and not *hijras* or girls; their identity as kotis is distinct from *hijras* and women.

Another scholar who has done work on kotis in recent years is Lawrence Cohen. My critique of Cohen is based on his use of terminology and the way he chooses to represent kotis in Banaras and Delhi. Cohen (1995) introduces *jankhas* and *zenanas* to his audience as “men who sometimes dress like women and dance like *hijras* but do not elect castration” (276). His research was situated in Varanasi (also called Banaras). Cohen recognizes the gaps in the work of researchers like Nanda who mention jankhas but do not actually present an analysis of this group and says, “Much of how *jankhas* in Varanasi live and perform gender is not mimetic of *hijras*. Their training in dance and gender performances is tied to a tradition of urban low-class burlesque performance” (277). Cohen talks about the relationship between *hijras* and zenanas and cites numerous researches, including his own fieldwork in Varanasi to highlight the complexity of this relationship. Not only does Cohen highlight the relationship but looks at it from both a *hijra* and a zenana perspective which is rare for any research that I have seen on this topic.

The first relationship or perceived29 relationship between *hijras* and zenanas is the view that zenanas are precursors to *hijras*. Young men undergo the castration surgery and join

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29 I call the relationship perceived because in my fieldwork experience I learned that there was no one way in which this relationship can be defined. Every koti and *hijra* had a different view of what this relationship is or could be. These views by and large fell into the three categories Cohen discusses. There was also the forth category where both kotis and *hijras* asserted that they had nothing to do with each other.
hijras. This castration Cohen suggests is “social,” “symbolic” and “psychological” (285).

The second perceived relationship is:

*hijra* life is ordered, respectable, asexual, and safe; *zenana* life is chaotic, indulgent, homosexual, and dangerous. Becoming a *hijra* is represented as a move through a liminal phase characterized by homosexual rape into a controlled sexuality where sartorial gender, rather than genital sex, constitutes essential difference. Here castration is a social necessity, the violent performance of *hijras* asexuality, but not a transformative moment—which long precedes castration. (286)

The third relationship that Cohen mentions is the threat or competition zenanas are or can be to *hijras*. This kind of relationship has also been discussed by Nanda and I have already elaborated on it earlier in this section. What is outstanding about Cohen’s work is that he problematizes labels and looks beyond the general understanding scholars have had of kotis and *hijras*. As he mentions towards the end of this article, “just as *hijras* are not the disembodied liminal markers of academic texts on gender, *jankhas* are seldom the conniving pseudo-*hijras* that *hijras* often perceive them as being” (300).

Cohen’s most recent work on the Indian male sexuality scene was difficult to put within a framework. I believe that his goal was to shed light on the complicated political issues that influence classification of male sexualities in India. He outlines two views on what he calls the “kothi-panthi” politics. Each view finds a supporter in either Ashok Row-Kavi or Shivananda Khan who are both well known activists in the AIDS prevention sector and gay politics in India. I am well aware of Khan’s position having worked with his team in Lucknow and I must say I am also a supporter of his work and
goals. In his article, Cohen gives detailed accounts of his interactions with these two men and I believe his goal in doing this is to provide a historicity to their views. Cohen suggests that the two positions with regard to male sexuality and classification in India arise from the debate around whether homosexuality or non-normativity as far as sexual practices are concerned and the terms used to classify people identifying with these groups, are indigenous to India or are they Western concepts that gay activists try to evoke to get funds for AIDS preventions activism. Within this larger debate there is also the issue of kothi-panthi divide which Cohen seems to suggest might be a new construct and not as old as kotis claim it to be. The tension Cohen perceives is well conveyed by this quote:

Borrowed by internationally funded fieldworkers from the language of Chennai (Madras) the word alis (transgender communities also known in Hindi as hijras and English as eunuchs, the word kothi can refer to men who act or identify in some way as women, who repeatedly enact a desire to be penetrated by a real man (the so-called panthi), and who are sometimes sex workers. One network cast kothi and panthi as the dominant nonelite forms of South Asian male desire for another male, framed these as embodying “gendered” as opposed to “sexual” norms and utilized a systematic “kothi-panthi” model as the core of any future interpellation of MSMS for preventive health. Gay men within these terms were an elite minority with different needs not rooted in local communities, and AIDS intervention targeting the majority of MSMS were to lie elsewhere. The other network located multiple subtypes of kothis within a complex grid of identifications and practices that included gay men and refused gender as the

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30 MSMS: Acronym for males who have sex with males.
dominant structuring axis defining men’s desire for sex with men. The elite other is rather that of the foreign NGO (i.e., the British-born Khan) that can “discover” authentic Indian culture and impose it on the natives and that can imagine a universe where sexuality and gender are analytically distinct. Both networks articulated their work as a stand against the inauthenticity of a category (“gay” or “kothi”) promoted by what we might term AIDS cosmopolitanism, an imagined formation of dislocated agents using the economically fortified social enterprise of AIDS prevention to support its own covert projects. (2005: 270-71)

While I couldn’t agree more with Cohen’s assertion that both views that he presents have political and even economic roots, I do not agree with his conclusion which essentially says that the identity and classification of kotis as kotis is new and a construct of the organizations that support Shivanand Khan’s ideology. In the four times I visited Lucknow, I interviewed kotis of all ages. The oldest koti I interviewed was approximately 70 years old. While the terms koti, jankha, zenana, janana are used interchangeably in Lucknow, they are not at all imposed on kotis. Fieldworkers know about these terms, so do their target audience and the issue of whether the koti identity is a gender or a sexuality is outside the scope of their understanding of themselves.

Cohen talks about Hall’s work in an NGO in Delhi where she links koti Farasi with hijras and comments on her work for recognizing kothis as an identity. He says:

Hall’s discussion of hijra Farsi is of great importance in opening up a field of language ideology and in moving beyond the ahistorical treatment of “gender” in her earlier work. My interest here is in the inclusion of kothis as a long-standing and distinct “community” linked to hijras. Kothis have arrived, at least in one
Delhi NGO, and they make powerful claims of corporeality and continuity on visiting academics. Although invisible in earlier academic work, they are suddenly a presence and one that refuses any account of a recent origin. And they appear congruent with hijras. (277)

Given the multiplicity of identities in India, it does not surprise me that there has not been much past research on kotis and as I mentioned earlier, research on hijras, including Nanda and Hall (1995) has mentioned identities peripheral to the hijra community but never studied them. Also, I am not sure what Cohen is trying to achieve by questioning the presence of an entire group of people and claiming that this group is a construct of an activists’ imagination. Is his goal to classify sexual groups in India or is it to criticize these classifications? If the latter than any proposal to do the same is lacking from his work. Another criticism of Cohen which has been levied by Reddy (2000) is lack of any concrete criteria to classify kotis or hijras and a lack of acceptance that classification is ever possible.

Reddy’s ethnographic fieldwork for her dissertation was based in Hyderabad which is an ancient city in Southern India. She found that in Hyderabad hijras fall under the umbrella term kotis—which is a term used to refer to a multitude of identities within the spectrum of male sexuality. What is interesting about the situation in Hyderabad is the fact that it has most of the terms and identities that I found in Lucknow but the classificatory terms are very different. Reddy says, “I argue that the act of penetration in sexual intercourse, along with ‘doing [gendered] work,’ serves as a central axis around which various sexual and gender identities are configured. In this performative understanding, the gender system appears to be divided into pantis (anatomical “men”)
on the one hand, and both *kotis* or effeminate men and *narans* (anatomical women), on the other” (2000:44). This quote serves as an example of the classificatory difference between Lucknow and Hyderabad. In Lucknow the term koti does not subsume *hijras* and the classification includes separate categories of men, women (*niharan*), koti, *panti*, and *hijra*. Given the linguistic diversity in India, this does not surprise me but it does highlight the pan-Indianness of the identities of *hijra*, koti, *panti* etc. It also highlights the similarity of issues that concern marginalized identities in India by emphasizing that the axis of penetration is indeed one of the major parameters which decides the genderedness of people. These issues include the obvious marginalization and the more subtle issues like the dichotomy based on penetration within the community.

Reddy 2005 talks about the complexities of AIDS/HIV prevention in India and how important culture and an intimate understanding of culture specific ideals and values are to the social implications of AIDS prevention programs. Her main interest is *hijras* and the impact or lack thereof of the new programs in the Hyderabad region on this community. She problematizes the notions of local shame and respect in the larger network of male sexualities in India which includes *hijras* and MSMs. MSMs also include the category of kotis. Reddy points out the problems with the current models of sexuality used in India and suggests that because these models lack an understanding of the cultural intricacies of individual areas this might be a reason behind the high instance of HIV positive cases in India. Reddy also mentions the koti community and how it is different from the *hijra* community. The *hijra* community according to Reddy authenticates its identity through the idea of respect which is closely tied to sexual
abstinence. This is in contrast to the koti community which stereotypically does not attach respect to sexual abstinence. She says:

*hijras* implicitly or explicitly define themselves in opposition to the overtly licentious (in their constructions) and much disparaged *kada-chalta kothis*31 (‘men’ who would be included within the MSM category) or *gandus*, as they more commonly and pejoratively refer to these individuals. According to *hijras*, *gandus* are men who enjoy anal sex, are defined not only by the *form* of their sexual desire, but more importantly, by its *excess*. As such, *gandus* are disparaged by *all hijras*—both the supposedly asexual *hijras* as well as those who are sexually active. (Italics Reddy’s, 260).

Reddy also says that the AIDS prevention oriented non-profit sector in India is more interested in the MSM population and as a result of this *hijras* are marginalized by these organizations. While these issues are outside the scope of my research, they still throw light on the issues facing gender and sexuality politics in India. Reddy’s article also shows the multiplicity of terms that are used for kotis-khoti, gandu, and MSM to name a few from her article. She even refers to kotis as gay which is slightly problematic. She says “through all of these authenticating practices32, *hijras* take pride in their visible performance of sexual/gender transgression, and explicitly deride gay men for their shame-ridden, invisible of secret (gupt) lives” (261). In the Indian context, gay men do not have a secret or invisible life—they are part of the elite and so-called English-speaking population. Kotis however do have a secret life. So if we refer to ‘gay’ as an identity,

31 What my informants call *kade taal kotis/ ki murat*. Hyderabad is in Southern India and Lucknow is in North India so this difference is an attribute of linguistic variation.
32 Reddy is referring to the practice of castration or singing and dancing at weddings which are traditional *hijra* roles in the Indian context.
grouping kotis in this category is wrong. However, if one treats ‘gay’ as a particular kind of same sex practice or a synonym for a particular kind of homosexual practice, kotis, *(and pantis)* can be grouped with gays.

I believe that my critique of the work done by other researches on kotis can be summed up in terms of a problem with representation, terminology and classification. I disagree with Hall and Cohen on these grounds. Hall and Cohen engage in representing the koti community in a way that is not conducive to the development of this community in any way. It is too much of an academic exercise which neglects the fact that kotis have a presence and a worldview which gets neglected if researchers do not present the voice of informants in their most natural settings. To illustrate this I will end this chapter with an extract from an interview I did with Emrana, Shakeela, Ruby and myself.

1. I*: Ok. So tell me something. How do you differentiate yourself from gays? Now look, 2. x is gay, how are you different from him? 3. E: I mean, I am not different from kotis. If he is a koti, then I am a koti too. 4. I: ok 5. E: I do not consider myself as different from kotis 6. I: [yes] 7. E: I mean, those who misbehave, swing and flirt on streets, I do not associate with them 8. 9. I: No, I understand But what about gays? 10. E: What is gay? 11. I: For example X. X is not a koti. He is gay.

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31 I am not particularly proud of this interview. I have a very probing tone and I am not a supporter of such a tone as a fieldworker. In my defense, I knew these kotis for three years, so this was more of an argument between friends, and I had a reason to be this probing.
12. E: I am aware that he is a koti but now that you are saying he is not I will accept but I have heard that everyone here is a koti. Everyone says that. They say this is an office for kotas. X is a koti, Y is a koti, everyone here is a koti. But now that you are saying this, if you are saying this, I will believe that they are not kotas. I will understand them as giriya.

17. I: Oh no, no he is not a giriya

18. E: Now this I mean koti you are saying
19. If he is not a koti, then he is a giriya

21. Ila: no. no. he will himself, if I talk to him, he will say in English, I am gay.

22. E: gay meaning? I don’t understand.

23. i: okay

24. E: if you explain to me in Hindi, I will understand

I ask another younger koti who was hanging out with us.

25. I: R, do you understand that meaning of gay?
26. R: yes

27.i: how do you differentiate yourself from gays?

28. R: gay means…people tell me, it means gandu, it is called gandu

29. I(to E): do you understand gandu

30. E: you are saying this

31. R: it is called active (penetrator)

32. E: let me confirm with Shakeela (Shakeela comes in)

33. I: My questions is this Shakeela. How do you differentiate yourself from gays?

34. S: I will call myself MSM

35. I: okay
36. S: we can have sex with a woman, whether it was once or four time or always and we
37. also have men-to-men sex\textsuperscript{34}.

38. i: okay

39. S: So that is how it is.

40. I: But how is this different from gays? You understand what gay is?

41. S: the exact meaning of gay you will get from X

42. I: ok

43. S: that you will get from X

44. I: ok. Alright

45. S: As far as I understand, these gays, theirs is also only a little different. They also
46. have a wish for one partner, living with them, together with them, get married, live
47. together. It is of this type.

It is a long conversation but it goes to prove my point about how kotis look at
themselves and how they create distinctions between their own community and other
communities that they are sometimes grouped with. As can be seen from lines 1-34,
Emrana and Shakeela do not understand what the term gay implies. They authenticate
Vanita (2000) and my point that koti sexuality is unique to India. It also questions
Cohen’s claim that koti is an identity imposed on people. If there are a certain number of
kotis, and this number is not miniscule, and they all understand themselves as kotis and
do not have much to do with ideologies of non-profits\textsuperscript{35} then they are as authentic as it
gets.

\textsuperscript{34} This example can be interpreted as hinting to kotis being bisexual. I cannot deny this, but I do not agree
with this either. I believe that bisexuality in the West is a matter of choice, which is to say people who are
bisexual prefer to have sex with males as well as females. With kotis, the issues of preference and a clear
distinction between the objects of sexual desire does not arise. They have to be have sex with women
because it is a family obligation.

\textsuperscript{35} Because of the wide net NAZ foundation has among kotis in Lucknow, many kotis do have interaction
with fieldworkers from NAZ and do get help and information from them. But there is no ideological or
political exchange between and average koti on the streets and NAZ foundation.
Calling kotis a community of practice adds to the work of Cohen (1995, 2005), Reddy (2000, 2005) and Hall (2005) by providing an alternate view of the community, one that has been missing in their research. This alternate view addresses the issues of classification, terminology and representation. Calling kotis a community of practice also adds value to the framework itself as a valuable tool for studying a complicated community which shows gender as a practiced entity, something I suspect Eckert wanted from the framework. By claiming that kotis are a community of practice, not only am I providing a theoretical framework for the study of this community but I am also taking the analysis that has been done on them by Hall and Cohen a step further. I am recognizing them as sexuality and as a community that has a set of practices and values which differentiates it from any other community. As with all communities of practice, members of this community too interact with and participate in multiple ongoing communities of practice including that of hijras but this participation is what gives kotis their uniqueness. By claiming that kotis are a community of practice, I am also claiming that they belong to a coherent and well defined (and defined by virtue of the practices they participate in) community.
5.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with linguistically mediated shifts in gender positions in koti discourse. The two aspects (being heterosexual for the world and kotis for themselves) of kotis’ shifting identity can be most clearly observed in their linguistic practices and particularly in the way they use gender marking. I will support my claim the kotis use gender markings to shift identities with both quantitative and qualitative evidence. I will argue that exaggerated femininity and gender position mark kotis as a distinct gender and their sexuality as a distinct sexuality.

Indian culture has a different view of sexuality than Western cultures. Sexuality and sex are not discussed or even mentioned openly; this leaves kotis with language as the only way in which they can manifest their distinct identity in situations where they need to. When kotis are talking about themselves, they use more masculine gender markings and less feminine gender markings, but when they are talking about other kotis they use more feminine gender markings. They are trying to perform a more feminine identity for themselves but keep shifting this identity into a masculine one whenever there is need for ‘correctness’. When talking about family, they want to preserve the male
stereotypical role for themselves; hence the high instance of use of masculine gender markings.

The other factor that plays a role in which gender marking is used when is power. According to Kiesling (1997), “Along with the freedom brought by power…comes the expectation (or requirement) that a man will somehow embody this power in his identity”. Kiesling says this with reference to Western men; for Indian men I would add that to wear one’s power on one’s sleeve is more a requirement than an expectation. My fieldwork, field notes and interviews with kotis suggest that, outside of their role as kotis, men who identify as kotis conform to all norms and play all roles that are assigned to men in Indian society. Kiesling says that people assume roles in society and “place themselves in roles” (67) with the help of language. Within the koti discourses that were analyzed for this study, any topic that fell under the category of ‘male’ roles (like topic 4 below, ‘talking about family/children/ wife’) involved more instances of masculine gender markings; this hints at the association of power with the use of masculine gender markings.

Kotis try to occupy a subordinate position in koti-male and koti-hijra interactions. Historically, hijras find themselves in a much more desirable position than kotis, who view themselves as an anomaly. Many kotis aspire to be hijras, and many even end up getting castrated and living as hijras. Many view themselves as subordinate to hijras and thus use feminine gender marking to legitimize their subordination.

Hall (2002) talks about the way in which Hindi-speaking hijras in Banaras use masculine or feminine gender marking to signal particular identities. Hall also talks about the topics that evoke this kind of shift in hijras; she says that hijras usually talk about
their childhood using masculine gender markings but use feminine gender markings when talking of themselves in the *hijra* roles. Her analysis is based on the way *hijras* learn to perform as *hijras* and acquire a “female persona” (243) and the reasons for which they choose to switch linguistic gender. Similarly, in the discourse of kotis, gender markings are the most obvious means by which a shift in identity and personas is performed. As mentioned earlier, people construct their identities around discourse; switching gender marking gives kotis a way to construct and reconstruct their identity.

Recent ethnographic studies are sometimes criticized for being non-replicable, while studies based on quantitative methodology are sometimes criticized for being essentialist, that is, imposing categories on people. In this chapter I will follow a methodology such that these criticisms can be addressed. As Mendoza-Denton (2001) puts it, “Essentialism in sociolinguistics includes the analytic practice of using categories to divide up subjects and sort their linguistic behavior, and then linking the quantitative differences in linguistic production to explanations based on those very same categories provided by the analyst” (477). The goal of this chapter is to ensure that (1) categories are not imposed on informants and are derived from their own understanding of their lives, and (2) quantitative analysis of the data fits into the discourse analysis and information provided by members of the community. I combine quantitative and qualitative methodology to explain the reasons behind the choice of shift in gender markings among kotis. The quantitative analysis includes two kinds of conversational data – individual one-to-one interviews and focus-group sessions. Information collected from participant observation was also used as a basis for deciding the social factors that influenced their linguistic behavior. The focus-group included eight informants; this chapter presents data
from three focus-group sessions. The individual one-to-one sessions used for this paper involved the same kotis who were participants in the focus-group sessions. The one-to-one interviews were primarily used for gathering information about the kotis’ background and deciding the parameters of the quantitative analysis. The interviews were open-ended; I asked questions ranging from the kotis’ relationship with their husbands to their relationships with their parents. The qualitative analysis lays the foundation for the quantitative analysis by identifying the factors that decide the use of language and the play on identity that is a part of koti life.

5.3 Combining Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

Scholars have tried to combine quantitative approaches with qualitative approaches to sociolinguistics to bridge the gap between the micro level at which variation occurs and large societal factors that cause the variation. In this dissertation I take an approach to linguistic variation that combines qualitative and quantitative approaches. Below is a review of some current research which formed the paradigm for my own research with the koti community.

Rickford and McNair Knox (1994) start their analysis of the style shifts in the speech of their informant Foxy saying, “this chapter is a study of addressee- and topic-influenced style shift in language, within the framework of quantitative or ‘variationist’ sociolinguistics” (235). Their study is grounded in the variationist framework but it certainly has characteristics which make it a perfect example of how to combine qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The paper defines and draws attention to the
importance of studying stylistic (intrapersonal) shifts in variationist sociolinguistics. The hypothesis is that address and topic have an effect on the use of certain variables in speech. They collected data from only one informant but there were two interviewers, one of whom was African American (as was Roberta, one of the interviewers’ daughter, who was the same age as their informant Foxy) and another one was European American. It was found that interviewer’s (addressee’s) race and the topic had an effect on the use of more vernacular variants. Their study is qualitative in nature because their data collection is ethnographic and they use discourse analysis to explain variation. In this particular study, they include data from only one informant. They had been recording this informant for five years, and Faye (McNair Knox) knew Foxy personally. This kind of data collection technique is similar to the life history/stages approach. This study also shows that following a quantitative methodology does not necessarily mean ignoring qualitative aspects of data collection or data analysis. Rickford and McNair Knox also conduct a discourse analysis of the interviews and analyze misfiring, extensive quotation usage, etc. to show how Foxy uses speech to create ethnic distance. This research also shows that identity is not monolithic but changes and is affected by various factors – addressee race and topic in this case. Rickford and McNair Knox is a perfect example of a study which uses qualitative data collection yet explains the results with both qualitative and quantitative means. That Foxy’s identity changes and she uses language to make this shift is an implied result of the study. Whether style shift and identity shift can be equated is a broader question which the study does not answer, but given its results, one can safely make that assumption.
Keisling (1998) did a study of the variation in the use of the (ING) variable in the speech of fraternity men and highlighted the importance of identity-based explanations (as opposed to power-or prestige-based explanations) for variation in men’s speech. Keisling studied the way men’s identities are shaped by the “surrounding cultural forces” (70). He claims that men try to align to roles that index power and do so with linguistic devices (among other things). His study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodologies, as he uses data-collection techniques that are clearly ethnographic. He knows each of the informants personally and explains the results of his study with discourse-analytic techniques. Not only this, he also explains individual results of speakers use a particular variant with other information; while explaining the high instance of (ING) in the speech of one of his informants he says, “The explanation of Speed’s use of (ING) lies in the alignment roles he indexes; the rural south, the working class, and athletes. In addition, he espouses a personal ideology that values freedom and practicality, and devalues formality” (85). This is followed by a discussion of other social variables that effect Speed’s choices of variants. Keisling also does a discourse analysis of his informants discourse and shows how variables are used to index a particular identity. Keisling says, “Hegemonic masculinity pushes men to have a particular identity, to construct identities that appear to dominate in some way, either actually or symbolically” (94). His analysis and conclusions emphasize identity and alignment. His work shows how fraternity men align themselves to particular identities and use language as a resource to do so. The kind of results Keisling gives could not be reached without detailed ethnographic fieldwork and asking questions like why and how. A conclusion like, “while identity is a display, it must be understood in terms of social relationships a
speaker chooses not to identify with” (95) cannot be made without developing a perfect understanding of how members of any particular community operate within the community.

Schilling-Estes (2004) analyzes an hour-long interview between two people, both belonging to two separate ethnicities, in Robeson County, North Carolina. The interviewer was an African American who self-identified as part Cherokee Indian. The interviewee was a Lumbee American Indian. Schilling-Estes uses both qualitative and quantitative methods to establish that linguistic devices are used to shape ethnic identity in the context of the interview and also in general. Both phonological and morphosyntactic features are studied. Robeson County is tri-ethnic with Whites, Blacks and Native Americans. Schilling-Estes states that “establishing and maintaining ethnic divisions has long been important to county residents, and it is impossible to escape ethnic classification in the county context, especially if one has historical roots and/or long-standing family ties in the area” (165). The interview was divided into nine topics. The topics were broadly divided into race relations, family and friends and race relations in the county; six variables were identified. Each of the features had ethnic or regional associations, e.g., two variables post-vocalic r-lessness and monophthongal /ay/ are associated with African American Vernacular English. The results of this study suggested that the use of a given feature varied not only between the two speakers but also depended on the particular topic they were talking about. Schilling-Estes shows, using both quantitative and qualitative methods, that the speakers were aligning to particular ethnic identities using linguistic features and that this alignment was also based on topic. Of the results of the analysis, the most interesting was the higher use of r-
lessness by the Lumbee speaker than by the African American speaker when the topic
was the Civil War. Schilling-Estes emphasizes by this result that the use of a particular
feature is “multifaceted” (187); single associations (ethnicity in this case) can sometimes
not be enough to explain the use of features. This study is a very important contribution
to the third wave variationist sociolinguistics. Not only does Schilling-Estes combine
qualitative and quantitative methodologies, but her examination of the data explores
various factors contributing to variation in the speech of the two informants; she gives
details of many of these factors to establish the multiplicity of identity and the role of
linguistic devices in emphasizing this multiplicity.

In this chapter, the quantitative analysis strengthens the qualitative analysis by
providing numbers that reinforce its claims. This chapter shows how marginalization has
instigated a desire in kotis to have an identity that manifests itself only in language.

5.3 VARBRUL Analysis

The quantitative analysis was used to test what social motivations were behind the
use of gender marking. It was conducted using VARBRUL; the independent variables
were topic, gender marking used by addressee and integration into the community. The
dependent linguistic variable was use of gender markings by kotis.
5.3.1 Independent Variables

Switching between genders is an integral part of koti identity. Koti discourses show that the switching of gender markings is context-driven. Various factors decide the context – topic, addressee and integration into community. These factors, which were also treated as independent variables for the quantitative study, were selected based on the ethnographic investigation of the community, as well as previous research that has shown these variables are relevant for the analysis of discourse.

While I was on the field I tried to interact with kotis in varied situations, which I discuss in chapter three. I observed that kotis prefer to use one gender marking over another in certain contexts. As I was formulating these thoughts, I revisited the data, which spoke to my hypothesis that certain topics, addressee and integration into community were factors that decided the use of gender marking. Not only did these factor groups come across as the most important, they had also been pronounced important in earlier variationist sociolinguistic studies which concentrate on discourse analytic data. In the following discussion I will give a description of the literature that informed the use of these factor groups; I will also provide examples from discourses by kotis which tell us why these factors are important.

5.3.2 Topic

Rickford and McNair-Knox (1994) highlight the effect of topic shift on style shift in language. Their study tries to address the issue of influence of addressee and topic on
the way style-shifts occur in the speech of Foxy— their consultant for this study. They also draw parallels throughout the study with Bell’s (1984) audience design model, which they claim explains style shift. They talk about the importance of context and setting in determining variation. They list three “hypotheses” from Bell’s (1984) work on audience design. The most important for my study is “Speakers associate classes of topics or settings with classes of persons. They therefore shift style when talking on those topics or in those settings as if they were talking to addressees whom they associate with the topic or setting” (258).

While my research draws somewhat from Rickford and McNair Knox, there is a fundamental difference in our goals. Rickford and McNair Knox looked at style shift in their interview with the informant Foxy; my major goal was to identify shifts in identity. One of the most important questions that Rickford and McNair Knox point to in their work is, “What is Foxy reacting to as she style shifts between one interview and the other—her interlocutor’s personal characteristics (race and familiarity, for instance) or their specific linguistics usage? (241)”. This question highlights a fundamental sociolinguistic concern: What are speakers reacting to when they switch dialects or, in the case of kotis, gender markings? I assert that speakers are aware of their identity and shift identity in accordance with situation and context. Like Foxy, the kotis are reacting to cues about identity and what form of identity they wish to display in particular contexts.

My study is similar to Susan Ervin-Tripp’s (1964) study of code-switching among Japanese/English bilinguals, where she regards topic as “The manifest content or referent of speech” (88). Her study is concerned with the effect of topic and listener on the choice of language, Japanese or English, by bilingual speakers. The first conclusion that she
draws after her experiment is that there is a shift in language when there is a shift in content, which is regarded as something which determines topic. Thus, there is a connection between topic and choice of linguistic code. The other claim that is made in this study is that topic and “receiver” (which can be understood as addressee) do not affect speech individually. It is a combination of these two which has an affect on the choice of linguistic code.

Like Ervin-Tripp’s, my study also treats topic as including both “gross categories such as subject matter (economics, household affairs, gossip) and propositional content of utterances” (88). Like Ervin-Tripp’s Japanese immigrant women, who switch between English and Japanese depending on topic, kotis also switch gender markings depending on circumstances and topic. In her study Ervin-Tripp identifies certain key words that she associates with particular topics and then draws an association about which topics belong to Japanese culture and which belong to American culture. In my study, too, topics were chosen on the basis of what could and could not be related to koti identity within the koti discourse.

Topics Identified from the data

The selection of topic was based on ethnographic evidence collected during fieldwork. Some choices of topic were obvious like the topic ‘Talking about husband or partner’ but some were a little less obvious and in such cases, the ethnographic evidence was used as a tool which helped make the choice. The examples in this section prove my points about gender marking but are not necessarily representative of all the data that was included for the variationist analysis. The topics that came up as relevant are:
5. Talking about husband/giriya

6. Talking about other kotis

7. Talking about family/kids or life outside the koti community

8. Talking about hijras or relationship about hijras

9. Talking about life in general

1. Talking about Husband/Giriya: This included cases of kotis directly referring to their giriyas or husbands or themselves with reference to giriyas or husbands. Since kotis are hidden most of the time and other kotis are the only people they can share information about their partners, this is a very hot topic among kotis. Also, kotis have very tight networks and they know each other’s partners and are also informed about many men from their and their friends’ past relationships. Partners of kotis often become the bone of contention among friends. Consider example 1 below:

Example 1

1. R: hum makbare gaye ghoone, R: I went to makbara
2. humko ek giriya chesa laga I liked a giriya
3. hume kya pata uske paas how do I know he did not
4. gadi wadi nahi thi, have a car etc.
5. hume cheesa laga peeche I liked him.
6. hum lagin thin. Hume giriya I was (Verb-end) after him. giriya
7. lag raha tha. Hum uske was interested in me. I
8. peeche lagin'. Peeche lagate lagate was after him. Being after
9. hum bahar ayin'. Gadi start ki I came out. He started his car
10. Humare peeche peeche. And came after me.
11. Humse kaha kahan jayengi'. He asked me where I was going
12. Humne kaha yahan, to I said there, so
13. kahe chod dein, humne he said can I drop you
14. kaha chod deejiiye. I said yes
15. Hum peeche baith gayin'. I sat in the back.
Reena was in her early to mid-thirties during the time of this interview. She was a regular at the cruising areas and sex work was like a part-time job to her. She surprised me with her knowledge of cruising areas, clients and other kotis. She had a day job as a janitor and was married to a woman. In the example above, Reena is talking about a man she was pursuing in the park, someone who could be a potential giriya. While talking about him, Reena gives herself a female identity. She starts by talking about herself using masculine gender marking in line 1 but switches to feminine gender marking in line 6 as she is starts talking about the giriya. In line 11, she is using feminine gender marking in reported speech for herself.

2. Talking about other kotis: This is when kotis were referring to other kotis and/or their relationship with other kotis. This is one of the most important topics since this reveals how kotis are placing themselves with reference to other kotis. The example below is from an interview I did with Pooja, who was about 30-35 years old and has been in a stable relationship with a man for the last many years. Because of this relationship, Pooja did not involve herself with sex work, but she was a regular at the cruising areas where she would chat and have fun with other kotis. This was my third interview with her. In the example below she is answering a question about her relationship with other kotis.

Example 2

3. P: kabhi kabhi to aisa yeh 
4. hai ki apas main bhi ladaiyan 
5. ho jati hain hum mooraton main, 
6. phakkad taal hone lagatein hain. 
7. Farasi main jo hain vo galiyan 
8. hone lagatini hain ki 
9. chal, to aisi f hai, 
10. tu aisi f hai, tu aisi f hai. 

L: sometimes it so happens 
there are fights 
within the kotis 
we start clapping at each other 
it so happens that in Farasi cursing starts happening 
you shut up, you are like f that 
you are like f that, you are like f that
11. Tu sabse badi f vo hai,  you are the worst f
12. moorat hai.  you are a moorat (woman)
13. Tu das das giriya rakhne  you are the one (with) ten-ten giriyas
14. wali f hai. Tu dhurwati f hai. keep f. You have sex
15. Tu ye karati f hai. you do f that
16. To moortein jo hain then kotis
17. humko bhi kehtin f hai also tell f me
18. ki tu bhi to dhurwati f hai. that you have sex f
19. Tu itni f bili f hai, you are very f bad f
20. tu khol ki bhi bili f hia. you are bad f from within
21. Duniya dar ki bhi bili f hai. you have a bad family f 36
22. To main kehti f hoon Then I say f
23. nahi main kade ki hoon. no, I am a good koti
24. Main duniya dar ki my family is
25. bili f nahin hoon. not bad f
26. Main kade se rehti f hoon I live f properly

Pooja (P) is describing how sometimes kotis get into fights with each other and the kind of things kotis say to each other when they fight. In this entire discourse Pooja does not use any masculine gender markings for herself or for any other kotis. Pooja is not a kade taal koti, so her use of feminine gender marking is not surprising, but she also uses feminine gender marking when referring to other kotis, as can be seen in lines 15-19.

3. Talking about family, kids or life outside of the koti community: This is when kotis are talking about their own family, friends, and children or those of other kotis. This topic was included in the analysis since this is when the effeminate koti identity contrasts with their heterosexual identity.

Example 3

1. E: Ghar main rehne main E: When I started living at home
2. pata chala ghar main I learned at home
3. behan bhi hain, beti bhi hai, I have a sister, daughter
4. bhanji bhi hai to I have a niece, then
5. agar hum aise ho jayege m if I become m like this

36 Duniya-dar ki- bili-world-everyone’s-bad: I do not know the actual translation of this slang term. I am assuming it is referring to someone’s family and incest.
6. to humse ye asar inke then it will affect
7. shaadi bayaho par padega. their chances of marriage.
8. Phir uske baad, Then after that,
9. zimmedariyon se hame with responsibilities
10. majbooti mehsoos hone lagi I started feeling strong
11. phir hamen zalaalat mehsoos then I felt ashamed that if
12. hone lagi ki agar I go in this business
13. hum is kaam main jayege then everyone will say to them
14. to sab unse kahenge ki your brother is like that
15. tumhara bhai aisa hai, your son is like that
16. humhara beta aisa hai, your uncle is like that.
17. humahara mamu aisa hai. Then I thought I should do
18. To hamne socha vo kaam something that in the community
19. karen ki jisse samaj main I get respect
20. izzat bhi bani rahe And my desires
21. aur hamara shauk also get fulfilled
22. bhi poora hota rahe.

Example 3 has two instances of gender marking. Emrana, one of my primary
informants, was describing her transition from being an irresponsible koti to a kade taal
ki koti. Emrana is telling me how, after being at home for some time, she realized that she
had to live a double life because her actions as a koti would be harmful to other members
of the family. She is talking about some of the relationships and roles she has as a
member of the family; in describing each of these roles she is talking about herself as a
male member of the family. Emrana realized that if she continued to be a koti openly it
would affect the marriage prospects of the women in the family. Marriages are largely
dependent on the prestige of the family; an effeminate male in the family would be very
harmful. So Emrana chose a path where she could still be a koti on some occasions but
was mostly followed the roles given to a heteronormative male with responsibilities.

4. Talking about hijras and relationship with hijras: Kotis share a very complex
relationship with hijras; it is for this reason that talking about hijras is treated as a
separate topic. The relationship is complex because of the various factors involved; one is the constant desire of kotis to be a part of the hijra community and the other is their constant fear of the hijra community because of the more powerful position that hijras occupy within the sexuality continuum in India.

Example 4

2. R: To maine apni maa se kaha 
3. ki ab jo hai main 
4. chibdon ke saath nahi 
5. tha\textsuperscript{m} lekin ab main chibdon 
6. ke saath reh ke dikh\textsuperscript{m} doonga\textsuperscript{m}. 
7. En Dusshera wale din hum 
8. chibdon ke ghar main jake chela\textsuperscript{m} 
9. ho gayen\textsuperscript{f} meri guru 
10. ka naam Rajjo hai, 
11. main unhi ke beti\textsuperscript{f} hoon 
12. main unhi ke saath rehti\textsuperscript{f} 
13. hoon unhi ke ghar ka sara 
14. kaam karati\textsuperscript{f} hoon.

In the example above Roopmati describing how she became a member of the hijra household. During the course of data collection I did many interviews with Roopmati and she was one of the older kotis whom I got a chance to interview. In the discourse above she was talking about how she got mad at her mother and joined a hijra household. In one of the other interviews Roopmati told me that she could never get a higher status within the hijra household because she was not a good dancer. She could dance if it is necessary but she usually avoided doing so. She went for toli badhayi with hijras but she usually confined herself to playing some musical instrument while the hijras danced. Her usual role in the hijra household was cooking and cleaning.

In example 4 lines 4, 5 and 7 Roopmati refers to herself as male because she is talking about her role as a son. In line 7 she uses the word ‘chela’ in masculine form as
opposed to ‘cheli’ which is feminine. But in line 8 she refers to herself in feminine
gender and calls herself the daughter of Rajjo (the hijra she joined). She continues to
refer to herself in feminine in lines 10-13 in which she is describing her present
occupation and whereabouts. This example also shows the switch Roopmati makes
between genders with reference to talking about her mother (where she usesmasculine
markings for herself) and talking about joining hijras, where she uses feminine marking
for herself.

5. Talking about life in general: During interview sessions many kotis talked about their
life and their becoming a koti, or their life/life in general. Topics which were related to
such aspects were included in this category, which was sometimes also used as the
default. The example below is from an interview with Vaishna. Vaishna was not a kade
taal koti. She was a part of a hijra household, but during the time of this interview she
and her guru were fighting and she had been thrown out of the house so she was living
with a friend in hiding. She and her guru reconciled later. Vaishna was from a different
town than Lucknow, so, in spite of the fact that she lived with hijras, she was not in too
much trouble with her family. She was active in the cruising area and was frequently
involved in sex work, which is why she and her guru had problems. In the example below
she was responding to my question, “For how long have you been a koti?”

Example 5

1. V: ye kam se kam,            V: This is at least
2. achche khase jab samajhdar   I pretty smart
3. ho gaye the, padhte the,      was (aux) I studied (aux)
4. iskool main padhte the,       studied (aux) in school
5. to iskool main bhi           in school too
6. nachte gate the,             I would dance (aux) sing (aux)
In the example above Vaishna was telling me how she came to realize that she was a koti. In the entire discourse she uses masculine gender marking for herself but in the last line she says that she realized that perhaps she was a girl and then she uses feminine form to talk about herself.

Example 6 is from an interview with Emrana. He does not involve himself with any kind of sex work and lives the life of a ‘kade taal ki murat’, which refers to kotis who live with their families and do not show any overtly effeminate styles. Emrana does not engage with hijras on a regular basis; any contact is limited to short exchanges of greetings, etc. In example 6, Emrana is talking about young kotis coming into the community and being recognized as kotis.

Example 6

1. E: koti ek aisi f cheez hoti E: koti is such f a thing
2. hai, agar ladka naya hai, if a boy is new
3. ghar se nikla hai to and has just come out of the house
4. koti koti ko pehchaan legi f a koti will f recognize
5. ki ye koti hai. that this is a koti.
6. Use bulaenge m baat cheet they will call m him/her, talk
7. karenge m. Phir uske samne will m. Then in front of them
8. hum matkenge m chatkenge m we will move m and swing m hips
9. to vo hum ko dekhagi f then she would see f us
10. ki ye aise kar rahe m hain. That they are doing m this.
11. Uska man andar se kar her mind is willing from inside
12. raha hai ki hum bhi karein. to do all that
13. Vo ek din chupayegi \( f \), she will hide \( f \) one day
14. do din chupayegi \( f \). Phir ek do she will hide \( f \) two days. Then in
15. maheene baad vo bhi one-two months she too
16. bazzar main aa jayegi \( f \), will come \( f \) in the market
17. hum logon ki tarah like us.
18. vo bhi matkegi \( f \) chatkagi \( f \) she will also move \( f \) and move \( f \)
19. Hum log bahut tez pehchantein \( m \) we recognize \( m \) very easily
20. hain ki ye koti hai. that someone is a koti
21. Hum logon ki nazarein our eyes
22. matlab bata deti I mean tell us
23. hain ki ye koti hai. that this is a koti.

In this example Emrana uses feminine gender markings in lines 1 and 4 for referring to kotis as a group noun. The topic is related to other kotis and their coming into the community. In lines 6-8 he uses masculine gender marking for kotis even though he is talking about something that is considered very feminine but in line 9 he switches back to feminine gender marking when talking about new kotis in the community. Line 10 again brings about a shift in gender marking and Emrana uses masculine gender marking for kotis. In lines 13-18, Emrana sticks to the use of feminine gender marking for the prospective koti but in line 19 again switches to masculine gender marking for other kotis. This suggests that Emrana assigns different gender identities to people on the basis of power they have within the koti community. Not only is the issue of whether a koti is integrated or not important for assigning gender to them, Emrana also sees himself as masculine and other younger kotis or aspirants as feminine which is related to his coming off as a man more than as a koti. Culturally speaking, use of feminine gender by a man would be considered very inappropriate. Emrana is very conscious of this, but he is also conscious of the fact that using feminine gender marking is an essential part of koti identity. The switches Emrana makes in Example 6 are a reflection of how he perceives his own reality as koti and as a man. Within the topic of talking about other kotis he gives
himself a masculine identity but gives other kotis a feminine identity keeping his masculinity safe. Whether a masculine identity or a koti identity is primary for a koti varies from koti to koti. But there are some generalizations that can be drawn depending on whether a koti is fully integrated into the community or not. If a koti is fully integrated into the community then within their role as kotis their koti identity is primary for her. If a koti is not fully integrated into the community they may or may not have koti identity as primary in their role as kotis.

In the example below, Roopmati is talking about herself in masculine gender but talks about other kotis in feminine gender. The topic is life as kotis.

Example 7

1. R: phir-
2. hum ameena bad gaye
3. wahan par
4. kotiyon' ka adda
5. mila- phir
6. kotiyon' ka adda mila
7. to is tarah se
8. har kotiyon' se
9. jaan pechann hoti gayi

R: then-
I went to ameena bad
over there
I saw the place of kotis'
met-then
I met the place of kotis'
so like this
with every koti'
I kept meeting

Roopmati is a middle-aged koti. She was married to a woman for eight years, during which she was active as a koti. She has been separated from her wife for a long time and she does not have any contact with her family. Sex work was her main occupation. For most of the year she lives in a *hijra* household and cooks for the head *hijra* of the house. She is a regular at cruising areas. She does not get many clients since she is past her prime for sex work so she works as a pimp getting clients for younger kotis. In the example above Roopmati talks about herself in the masculine gender (line 2) but when talking about other kotis she starts using the feminine gender (lines 4, 6, 8). She
is referring to a past time when she was gaining entry into the community. This indicates a different kind of identity for oneself as an incoming koti and for kotis who are already ‘established’ as kotis. When kotis enter the community there is an acculturation process that they participate in, which teaches them how to be a koti. In the example above, Roopmati is talking about a time when she was not a koti and others were. This warrants use of different gender markings for herself.

5.3.3 Integration into community

One of the most difficult challenges facing an ethnographer is deciding categories for people, especially if people do not divide themselves into categories clearly. Unlike Eckert’s (1998) jocks and burnouts, kotis do not clearly distinguish themselves as integrated or non-integrated into the koti community. Nonetheless, there is an understanding among members of the community about who is a fully integrated member and who is not. One of the factors that decides if a koti is integrated or not is whether she is ‘nai nai bigdi’ which literally means someone who has been spoilt (bigdi: has connotations of someone who has recently started engaging in sex). There are other labels that community members give each other. These include kade taal ki murat, which refers to kotis who are not integrated into the community and not overtly feminine in their behavior. Pacci refers to a koti who is well integrated into the community and is like a role model for the aspiring young kotis, who are referred to as kachchi (literal meaning: ‘unripe’).
Other than these labels, I used three factors to decide whether kotis were integrated into community or not. These factors were (1) the age at which they became kotis, (2) the amount of their interaction with *hijras*, (3) the amount of time they spent in cruising areas looking for clients and interacting with other kotis. The last two factors usually overlap since meetings with clients mostly end in minutes; then they come back and spend the rest of the evening with other kotis.

The linguistic gender markings kotis use also depends largely on how integrated they are into the koti community. I use the communities of practice framework to investigate the way kotis become members of communities of practice and gain control of the way in which membership is granted. There is a connection between core and peripheral members; many kotis begin as peripheral members and finally become core members. As with many communities of practice, the concept of core and periphery is not enforced by members themselves; it is the situational and circumstantial evidence that allows the researcher to draw such a conclusion about the members of the community.

Below is a representation of the core and peripheral members of the community. This is a reductionist model, and but it helps understand the way core and peripheral members of the community behave and the kind of interaction there is between members.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Members</th>
<th>Peripheral Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Cross Dress occasionally</td>
<td>2. Do not cross dress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Close or regular interaction with <em>hijras</em></td>
<td>3. Do not interact with <em>hijras</em> and live with families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Usually prostitutes</td>
<td>4. Participate in sex work occasionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Show effeminate behavior, sometimes even in public</td>
<td>5. Do not interact with other kotis on a regular day to day basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Usually married to women but do not have much responsibility in the marriage</td>
<td>6. Usually married to women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Speak Farasi on a regular basis</td>
<td>7. Do not speak Farasi on a regular basis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ease with which a particular koti talked about their relationship with other men was also used as a contributing factor to whether they were integrated into the community or not. Most kotis who I found to be integrated in the community showed a certain level of ease with displaying femininity and values of womanhood in the particular socioeconomic group they belonged to. In the example below, Chetna is describing how her man is a disappointment to her; one of the reasons she gives is his inability to support her financially.

Example 8

5. C: arre bahut zyada karata,  
6. aur aye din to mujhse  
7. paise manga karata hai,  
8. 100 do kabhi 200 do,  
9. kabhi 50 do.  
10. Kahan se lake doon batayiye aap.  
11. Main koi dhande walif  
12. to hoon nahi, pehle  
13. karatiθ thiθ kisi zamane  
14. main dhanda ab to main,  
15. ab ek admi ko rakhe hoon  
16. to sochtiθ hoon usi admi  
17. ki kamai se mera kaam chale.  
18. Dene ki bajaye aur  
19. leta hai mujhse,  
20. samajh leejiiye ab,  
21. kya karoon?

Chetna who had a repair shop, had been with this man for a while, most kotis knew that the man was abusive. Many advised Chetna to leave this man, but she was too much in love with him. She wanted to become a hijra, but she was in her thirties which meant it was late for her to take that step now. What is interesting about example 8 is the value system that Chetna believes in. In spite of being a biological male she is so at ease with
her koti identity that she partakes in all of her culturally applicable ‘duties’ as a woman to this man and expects the same from him in terms of financial support.

The next example is from a conversation between Roopmati and Vaishna. I was not a part of this conversation; two other kotis were present. Vaishna is well integrated into the community, and so is Roopmati. Both have lived and continue to live with hijras; both have been sex workers in the past; and both have spent significant time as members of the community. The ease with which Vaishna discusses her giriya is what interested me most about this discourse.

Example 9

5. R: Rajjo ke yahan se  
   R: From Rajjo’s place
6. tum kade bol gayif ho kya?  
   R: have you distanced yourself?
7. Maine suna hai  
   I have heard
8. giriya pat gaya hai.  
   your giriya ran away
9. humne suna hai  
   we have heard
10. tumhara giriya pat gaya  
    your giriya ran away
11. par tum to giriya ko  
    but you with giriya
12. thigaye baithif ho  
    are still sitting
13. V: ajo giriya..ajo giriya  
    that giriya...that giriya
14. humsio ko mila tha  
    I met (aux) him
15. Allah, tumko kya batain  
    Allah, what should I tell you
16. vo giriya aisa chis karata  
    he made love so well
17. hai aisa chis karata  
    he did so well
18. hai hi nashiya gayi thi...  
    like I was (aux) drunk
19. humsio ke huthvache usne  
    my lips (Farasi) he kissed so well
20. aise chis kare hain,  
    he made me high
21. mujhe madhosh kar diya,  
    to make love to him
22. mujhe dhurane par  
    he forced me
23. majboor kar diya...  
    I came before him
24. usse pehle main pat gayi...  
    his (unclear) is so good, sister
25. ujo ka (unclear) inta surila bajif  
    What can I say
26. tumko kya bataein.  
    it is beautiful if you see it
27. Itna surila ki tum dekhogi f  
    Your mouth will start watering
28. tumhara laar tapakne lagegi.  
    he is a beautiful giriya
29. Maha joban ka giriya,  
    I choose such good giriya
30. aisa giriya chuntif hoon na  
    you will just keep looking at them
31. ki tum dekhtif reh jaao gi f....  
    I eat young ones
32. main to chipku khatif hoon.  
    What I eat

157
33. Joban joban ke sab all young young ones
34. tepke barbad karati hoon. I spoil young boys

Given the cultural context, this discourse is interesting because sex is not discussed in many cultures, including Indian culture. But Vaishna is not following this unstated rule; instead she is pretty vocal about the giriya. Her discourse hints at some sort of rebellion against norms which kotis display. The reasons for this rebellion can be the constant marginalization they face. The kotis, like Vaishna, who are fully integrated into the community face marginalization more than other kotis who are peripheral to the community. Vaishna uses feminine gender marking in every instance to show that within the intimate scene she is the one in a feminine role.

5.3.4 Addressee

Ervin-Tripp (1964) also suggests the importance of addressee and the code that is being used by the addressee for the way code-switching occurs in speech. In her experiment with Japanese women, she found that when the addressee is talking in her non-native language it is hard for the receivers to use that language, (English in this case), with her. Likewise, from my interviews and ethnographic analysis, I found that the informants in the situations I analyze were reacting to the specific linguistic usage of the addressee and also their own position with respect to the addressee. They were also responding in accordance with the way they wish to be seen by others and the way they identified themselves at that moment. If someone is being addressed using feminine gender markings and replies using masculine gender markings or vice versa, then she is
trying to assume a particular gender persona or to avoid some particular gender position.

This can be seen very often in koti discourses.

The example below is from a discourse between three kotis Shakeela, Poonam and Roopmati. They are talking about Poonam being Gayatri’s daughter. Many kotis have ‘relationships’ with each other and have some ritual within the community to put a stamp on the relationship.

Example 10

1. S: to tu GAYATRI kif beti hai. S: So you are Gayatri’sf (gen.) daughter
2. P: beti hain nahi banane P: I am not daughter (going)
3. jaa rahefm hainm I amfm goingm to be (daughter)
4. R: betif ka darja to hia hi. R: You have the status of daughterf
5. P: jab miltif hain to beti hi, P: When she meetsf (aux) f daughter call
6. hum mummy hi I mummy
7. kehteim hainim unhe… callim (aux)im her

In the example above, Shakeela (who is Gayatri’s daughter) uses feminine gender marking to refer to Poonam in line 1 and calls her another koti’s (Gayatri’s) daughter. Poonam continues to use masculine gender marking in lines 2 and 3. In line 4 Roopmati refers to Poonam as Gayatri’s daughter again. Poonam in line 5 uses feminine gender marking for Gayatri, who is Poonam’s mother, but continues to use masculine gender marking in line 7 when Poonam is referring to himself. In this particular instance Poonam refuses to identify with a more feminine identity and sticks to a masculine persona in spite of the fact that Shakeela is trying to give Poonam a feminine persona in the conversation.

Addressee effect also interacts with topic; there are certain topics where only feminine addressee words are used when kotis are in their koti roles. An example is their use of the swear words chinal ‘loose woman’ or randi ‘prostitute/widow’, for each other.
This is mostly when the topic is related to koti identity. The use of these swear words by addressee triggers the use of feminine gender marking among kotis.

Gender assignment to oneself and to others is different. Kotis assign feminine gender to themselves for certain topics and assign masculine gender to themselves for other topics. This can be seen clearly in the example below. Three kotis are a part of the discourse – Reena (RA), Anita (A) and Shakeela (S). Anita is integrated into the community while Shakeela and Reena are not. Shakeela works for the NAZ Foundation International and maintains a persona which speaks to his position as a responsible worker of the organization. Shakeela is also aware of his sexuality and is not confused or ashamed of himself because of his sexuality. Anita is very effeminate in her mannerisms and is not very comfortable with the fact that she is a koti. She is educated, and during fieldwork she and I often talked about politics in India. She was very interested in newspapers but did not have much luck finding a regular job in spite of her education. Reena is a construction worker. He comes to the cruising areas whenever he feels a need to meet someone. He is married to a woman and he has kids who he feels responsible for.

In the conversation below Reena, Anita and Shakeela are talking about their life as kotis. The conversation can be seen as a window to the way kotis look at their sexuality.

Example 11

1. RA:  hum to behan(passport) yeh chahti(they want) RA:  Sister, I only want
2. hain is janam jaisa beet this life is going
3. raha hai, beet raha hai, like it is going
4. agle janam main hum but in the next birth
5. ya poore mard bane make me a full man
6. aur nahi banana hai to and if not that
7. poori janani bana ke bhejna. then make me a full woman
8. A: ye galat baat hai, A: This is wrong
9. ye galat baat hai. this is wrong
10. Aap pore mard hain. You are a full man
11. Lekin apne apne but you have your
12. shauk paal rakhe hain. your hobbies
13. RA: chal. (shut up)
14. A: ye galat baat hai, A: This is wrong
15. aap poore mard hain you are a full man
16. lekin apne apne shauk main but in your hobbies
17. S: shauk koi nahi palata ha--chal S: No one has hobbies—shut up
18. RA: chal. Shauk kya RA: Shut up. What hobbies
19. paal rakhe hain do we have
20. tum keh rahi ho, you are saying,
21. hum tumhari baat manti hain ok, I agree with you
22. A: chal..tum galat keh A: Shut up. You are wrong
23. rahi ho. Galat keh rahi ho. You are saying wrong
24. yeh hum log ke galati hai this is our mistake.
25. S: Kyon galati hai. S: Why is it a mistake
26. hum jab bade nahi the, when I was not old enough
27. jab hume akal nahi thi, when I was not smart enough
28. tab hume ladkiyan kyon nahi why did I not like girls
29. achchke lagin, hume kisi ne bataya no one told me
30. nahi. Humari amma ne my mother
31. nahi kaha ki ladke pasand did not tell me to like boys
32. karana ye humari behnon my sisters
33. ne to nahi bataya tha. did not tell me that.

In line 1 of example 11 Reena uses the vocative behan for the other kotis present in the conversation. Reena also uses feminine gender marking for herself in this sentence. Use of feminine gender marking is also a way of showing solidarity and trying to be a part of the in group, which is what Reena is doing in the first sentence. In line 12 Anita refers to having a particular sexual desire as a ‘hobby’, which the other kotis seem to disagree with. Anita, being a koti integrated into the community, calls herself and other kotis present ‘full men’ and blames their ‘hobbies’ for their current state. When addressing other kotis, Anita still uses feminine gender marking and considers being a koti a mistake. Shakeela, in the following sentence uses, masculine gender marking for himself. He is referring to a time when he was a kid, and he is defending his sexuality. In
this discourse there is a shift in gender markings on the basis of what prompts the use of a particular gender marking. In line 1, Reena wants to show solidarity and wants to be treated as an in-group member and that effect the use of feminine gender marking. In line 10 Anita uses masculine gender marking and this is prompted by belief in the mistake of being a koti.

The next example is from a fight between two kotis during a focus-group session.

The two kotis involved in the fight are Roopmati and Vaishna. I was not present in this session.

Example 12

5. R: main jo hoon choti\textsuperscript{f}  R: I am, she is young\textsuperscript{f}
6. hain to choti\textsuperscript{f} ke nate main  she is young\textsuperscript{f} so
7. inko nahi jhad rahi\textsuperscript{f} hoon.  I am not saying\textsuperscript{f} anything to her
8. Nahin to jhadna to main  otherwise, I can scold
9. bhi janti\textsuperscript{f} hoon. Main apne  I also know\textsuperscript{f} how to scold. I am
10. baddapan ka lihaj kar rahi\textsuperscript{f} hoon. Respecting (aux.)\textsuperscript{f} my own age.
11. V: humsio ko kya bhadenge\textsuperscript{f},  V: what will\textsuperscript{f} she say to me
12. humsio khudi pacci\textsuperscript{f} hain.  I am an expert\textsuperscript{f} myself
13. Humse kalam jeet ke ask her to beat me in talk
14. dikhyein miyan, aisi konsi show me miyan\textsuperscript{37}, what
15. baat hai, main aise aise kalam is the big deal. I will do such talk
16. karoongi\textsuperscript{f} utar nahi do such talk, she will\textsuperscript{f}
17. payegi\textsuperscript{f} poori\textsuperscript{f}, main  not be able\textsuperscript{f} to compete\textsuperscript{f}
18. aisi kachhi karoomgi\textsuperscript{f},  I will\textsuperscript{f} insult so much
19. aisi kachhi karoomgi\textsuperscript{f},  I will\textsuperscript{f} insult so much
20. miyan dekhti\textsuperscript{f} reh  miyan they will\textsuperscript{f} just
21. jayegi\textsuperscript{f} Main bhi payal ki\textsuperscript{f} look\textsuperscript{f} at me. I am\textsuperscript{f} also Payal’s
22. chela\textsuperscript{m} hoon miyan,  disciple\textsuperscript{m} yes miyan
23. Rajjo ki\textsuperscript{f} chela\textsuperscript{m} hongi\textsuperscript{f},  if she is Rajjo’s\textsuperscript{f} disciple\textsuperscript{m}, must be\textsuperscript{f}
24. hongi\textsuperscript{f} miyan main  must be\textsuperscript{f}, miyan
25. Rajjo se utar jaoon,  I can fight Rajjo
26. joban main hijre Saida great. Saida hijra
27. se utar jaoon, mujhse  I can fight. who
28. kaon kalam karega\textsuperscript{f}. will\textsuperscript{f} fight me?
29. R: Tum kya Rajjo se utar paagoi\textsuperscript{f},  R: what will you be able\textsuperscript{f} to say to Rajjo
30. Saeeda se kya utar paagoi\textsuperscript{f}. and able\textsuperscript{f} to say to Saeeda
31. Uki gand ka dhovan bhi to their ass washing

\textsuperscript{37} Miyan is a common vocative in the Lucknow dialect and is masculine.
32. tum nahi ho. Payal to even that you are not. Payal
33. unhi ke ghar ki bidgi their house, was spoilt
34. chibdi hain, unhi ke castrated (in) their
35. ghar ki bigdi, unhi house she was spoilt, their
36. ki chela nati thi. she was a disciple, grand-son
37. Tum apni didiyon ke you, your grandmothers
38. upar chadhne ko sawar walk all over (your grandmother)
39. ho rahi ho, ye are ready, this is
40. tumhara harami pan hai. your impoliteness.

In this example Roopmati uses feminine gender marking for referring to Vaishna in lines 1 and 2. In lines 3, 5 and 6 she uses feminine gender reference for herself. Vaishna uses feminine gender marking in all instances. One of the reasons is the addressee effect and the persona that she is being given by Roopmati. The other reason is the topic. Roopmati and Vaishna are talking about a topic that is central to their feminine koti identities. The fight between Roopmati and Vaishna started because they are disciples of two different powerful *hijra* households. Vaishna is the younger one and is supposed to respect Roopmati because of her age. Vaishna does not do that, so they start fighting. The entire conversation is not just an example of addressee effect but it is also an example of the claims that I have made about topic and integration into community.

In the example below, Chetna (C) is talking about the reason she met *hijras*. She is integrated into the koti community. She is a male sex-worker, has a small hut where she meets her clients. She also has a permanent partner she calls her husband. She was once a part of a *hijra* family but has left them now. She visits the cruising areas.

Example 13

4. E: tum hijron se kyon milte the Why did you meet *hijras*?
5. C: main isiliye hijron se milti I use to meet *hijra* so that
6. ki inke saath jaanon, naachoo gao, I could go with them, sing, dance
7. kapde pehno achche achche, wear nice-nice clothes
8. bunde baliyan sab pehan wear ear-rings
9. ke niklu, log mujhe etc. and go out. People watch me
10. dekh aur kahein haan kitni f achchi f and say, how very f beautiful f
11. lag rahi f hai. she is looking f
12. E: kabhi hijron ke saath rahi f ho? E: have you ever lived f with hijras
13. C: haan main rahi f hoon. C: yes, I have lived f
14. toli badhayi main bhi gayi f hoon, I have also gone f for toli badhayi,
15. har jagah gayi f hoon. I have gone f everywhere.

Chetna (C) uses feminine gender marking in all possible instances of gender marking. Emrana (E) uses masculine gender marking to address Chetna in line 1 but uses feminine gender marking to address her in line 9. This is triggered by the fact that Chetna uses only feminine gender marking for this topic.

In example 14, Chetna is describing how her giriya has learned Farasi from interacting with her.

Example 14

5. C : Waise hi main bolti f C : When I speak f
6. hoon to mera giriya my giriya
7. bhi seekha gaya m hai. Has also learned (aux) m
8. Vo bhi kehta m hai He also says m
10. khane aahai f hai, eating you are coming f for
11. dhurane ja rahi f hai”. You are going f to fuck”
12. Dantane lagata f hain mujhe. He starts f scolding me
13. Main chup baith jati f hoon. I sit (aux) f down quietly
14. Koi janani ati f hai he makes her go and says
15. usko bhaga dete hain keh ke, get out
16. kade kar ja,
17. chal bhag yahan se. run away from here
18. yahan mat dhurana don’t fuck here

Chetna is responding to my question about how she learned Farasi and she goes on a tangent and tells me that her giriya has learned Farasi too. She talks about herself in feminine gender; in lines 5, 6 and 7 she is referring to herself in feminine in reported speech.
5.3.5 The Dependent/Linguistic Variable: Gender Marking in Hindi

The linguistic variable for this study is gender marking. In the upcoming section I give a description of the way gender marking works in Hindi.

Gender in Hindi Nouns

All nouns are assigned either masculine or feminine gender. The gender assignment is natural in some cases and is based on sex. Examples of such cases are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Masculine Form</th>
<th>Feminine Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ladka 'boy'</td>
<td>ladk-i 'girl'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malik 'owner'</td>
<td>malk-in 'female owner'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naukar 'servant'</td>
<td>naukar-ani 'female servant'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thakur 'headman'</td>
<td>thakur-ain 'wife of headman'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many times the assignment of gender is arbitrary; for example, the word for chair is assigned feminine gender, while the word for food is assigned masculine gender.

Feminine forms can be derived from the corresponding masculine forms by suffixing –i:, -in, -ani, -ain as shown above. Feminine form of non-human nouns is formed by adding the suffixes -i:, -iya:, -in, e.g., bandar ‘monkey’; bandariya: ‘female monkey’.

Rules of Gender Agreement

Abbi (2001) states, “Hindi and Punjabi gender assignment of a noun controls the agreement feature in the rest of the sentence, resulting in each modifier inflecting for gender” (26). Masica (1991) also notes that in Indo-Aryan languages nouns have an inherent gender while and other categories like verb, pronouns, adjective and postpositions inflect for gender. Discussion of each of these types of agreement follows.
Gender Agreement in Adjectives

Shukla (2001) differentiates between two kinds of adjectives in Hindi—declinable
and indeclinable. Declinable adjectives inflect for gender and number whereas
indeclinable adjectives do not. Examples of the former include 1.a. and 1.b. below.

1.a. ram Achch-a ladk-a hai Ram is a good boy
   Ram good- Mas. Sing boy- Mas. Is
1.b. sita achch-i ladk-i hai Sita is a good girl
   Sita good-Fem. girl-Fem. Is
1.c. Ladk-e achch-e hain The boys are good
    boy-Mas.Pl. good-Mas.Pl. are
1.d. Ladk-iyan achch-i hain The girls are good
    Girl-Fem. Pl. Good-Fem.Pl. are

In case of declinable adjectives the suffix –a occurs after a masculine singular
noun, the suffix –i occurs after a feminine singular or plural form and the suffix –e occurs
after masculine plural noun as can be seen in 1.a., 1.b. and 1.c. respectively.

Gender Agreement on Possessive Pronouns

Pronouns in Hindi can take four forms in singular and plural – Direct, Oblique, Object
and Possessive. Possessive forms of the first person pronoun are illustrated in 2a-d.

2.a. Mer-a bhai My brother
    My-Sing. Mas. Brother (Mas)
2.b. Mer-i behan My sister
    My-Sing. Fem Sister (Fem)
2.c. Mer-e kutt-e My dogs
    My-Pl. Mas. Dog-Pl. (Mas)
2.d. Mer-i kitab-ē My books
    My-Pl. Fem Book-Pl. (Fem)

Only possessive forms are inflected for gender. This also hold true for honorific
forms of the second and third person pronoun.
Gender Marking on Postpositions

The postposition that marks genitive case agrees with the head noun in gender, as can be seen in examples 3.a.-g. below.

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.a.</td>
<td>Ladk-i</td>
<td>Ka</td>
<td>coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Girl-Fem</td>
<td>Gen-Mas.</td>
<td>coat Mas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.b.</td>
<td>Ladk-i</td>
<td>Ki</td>
<td>topi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.c.</td>
<td>Ladki</td>
<td>Ke</td>
<td>kapd-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.d.</td>
<td>Ladkiyō</td>
<td>Ki</td>
<td>chudiyā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.e.</td>
<td>Ladh-e</td>
<td>Ki</td>
<td>kitab</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boy-Mas. Obl.</td>
<td>Gen-Mas</td>
<td>Book. Fem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.f.</td>
<td>Ladh-on</td>
<td>k-e</td>
<td>kapd-e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.g.</td>
<td>Ladh-on</td>
<td>k-i</td>
<td>kitaben</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender Agreement on Verbs

The cases of verb agreement which are relevant for this work include continuous present indicative, explicator compound verbs and experiential constructions. The continuous present indicative is expressed by the perfective form of the verb *rehna* ‘remain’ or *li* ‘take’ followed by some form of the auxiliary *hona* ‘to be’ as in examples below. The perfective form of *rehna* and *li* agrees with the noun in gender and number (examples 4.a.-g). Tense is marked on the auxiliary “to be” (examples 4.a-g). Honorifics are marked on the verb and the auxiliary (examples 4.f.-g) and have different forms for masculine and feminine.

<p>| | | | |</p>
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<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.a.</td>
<td>sita</td>
<td>keh</td>
<td>rah-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sita</td>
<td>say</td>
<td>Per.-Fem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hai</td>
<td>is-</td>
<td>Sing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sita is saying*
4.b. ram keh rah-a Hai  \textit{Ram is saying}

Ram say Per-Mas. is- Sing.

4.c. ladk-e keh rah-e ha-i \textit{The boys are saying}

boy-pl. Obl say Per.-Pl-Mas. Obl. are-Pl.

4.d. ladk-iyan keh rah-i ha-i \textit{The girls are saying}

girl-pl. say Per.-Pl. Fem are-Pl.

4.e. ladk-iyan keh rah-i th-i \textit{The girls were saying}

girl-pl. say Per.-Pl. Fem were-Pl.

4.f. papa keh rah-e th-e \textit{Father was saying}

Father say Per.-Hon. Mas. was-Mas.

4.g. mummy keh rah-i th-i \textit{Mother was saying}

Mother say Per-Hon. Fem. was-Fem

Explicator Compound Verb (ECV) constructions are considered an areal feature of South Asian languages. ECV refers to a series of two or more verbs in the same sentence where the first verb is the main verb and the following verbs are delexicalized. Abbi (Ibid.) states that in Hindi the ECV can express aspectual and adverbial meanings. In the case of ECV construction gender marking occurs on the second verb.

*Examples are from Abbi (Ibid. 190,191)

5.a. us ne khana kha li-ya *Aspectual S/he has eaten (the food)

s/he Erg. food eat take- Per. Mas.

5.b. ye main kya kar baith-i *Adverbial (regret) Oh! What have I done(Fem)

this I what do sit-past-Fem.

5.c. ye main kya kar baith-a Adverbial (regret) Oh! What have I done(Mas)

this I what do sit- past-Mas.

The Experiential verbs in Hindi require an experiencer noun marked with the dative postposition \textit{ko}. In these cases the verb agrees in gender with the noun that describes the experience. Example 6.a. and 6.b. illustrate this

6.a. ram ko dard Hu-a \textit{Ram felt pain}

ram dat. Pain-Mas. ‘to be’-Mas

6.b. ram ko sardi Hu-i \textit{Ram had cold}

ram dat. Cold-Fem ‘to be’-Fem

168
Gender Agreement and -wala

The derivative –wala is another important aspect of the data which deserves mention here. Abbi (2001) calls –wala a particle which can be suffixed to nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs. The Adjective-wala constructions act as modifiers to the head noun as can be seen in 6.a-b.

6.a. Lal -wal-a kapda  The cloth that is red.
Red -particle-Mas. cloth Mas.
6.b. Lal -wal-i chunni  The chunni (a kind of garment) that is red.
Red -particle-Fem garment Fem.

When attached to a noun, the particle –wala conveys an agentive sense.

7.a. Phool- -wali gali  The street with flowers
Flower -particle-Fem Street-Fem
7.b. Phool -wala kamra  The room with flowers
Flower -Particle-Mas Room-Mas.

When it is attached to adverbs it refers to the time, location, space or manner of the of the following head noun. In all cases –wala agrees in gender with the head noun. Examples 8.a. and 8.b. illustrate this.

8.a. Upar-wal-a Karma  The room which is above
Up-derivative-Mas. Room (Mas.)
8.b. Upar-wal-i Khidki  The window which is above
Up-derivative-Fem. Window (Fem.)
5.3.6 Quantifying Gender Marking

After this description of the way gender marking works in Hindi, I will now discuss the way gender marking tokens were chosen for the VARBRUL analysis. The example below is from a discourse by three kotis; the words in bold are the potential tokens for the analysis.

1) **M**: jab madhvi tumhare saath th-i.  
   When Female Name your with was-Fem
   When Madhvi (another koti, not a part of this conversation) was with you

2) to hum nahi keh rah-e th-e ki baat kar topicalizer IPr. not say ECV-Hon. Mas/Fem. were-Hon.Mas. that talk do then did I not say we have talked.

3) li. Tum kitn-i katir ho tumhe maan gay-e hum, did II Pr. how much-Fem cunning are you understand ECV-Mas. I Pr.Sg.  
   You are so cunning, I understand you now;

4) tum hat-i nahi rah-i ho. Matlab hume II Pr. Sg. move-Fem. not ECV-Fem. Aux. meaning I Pr.  
   You did not move from there, I mean

The conversation above is from a focus-group interview. In line 1, there is one token of feminine gender marking. This token is included in the data pool for the VARBRUL analysis. This is a token of feminine gender marking; the topic is another koti and the addressee used masculine gender marking in the previous line who koti is integrated into the community. Line 2 has two tokens of gender marking. They were both included for the analysis too. The person who is talking is referring to herself using masculine gender marking. The topic, addressee and integration into the community are the same. Line 3 has two tokens of gender marking. In the first token the person is talking about another koti and using feminine gender marking; in the second token the person is
still talking about the other koti but using masculine gender marking. In line 4 there are two tokens of gender marking both of which were included for the analysis. The following example is a discussion of the tokens that were gender marked but were not included for the VARBRUL analysis.

1) **mere** husband bahut **achch-e** hain.
   I Pr. Sg. Mas. Hon. husband very good-Mas. Hon. Aux.(Hon.)
   *My husband is very nice*

2) **Apne** husband ke saath kam se kam
   Mine-Mas. husband Gen. with less to less
   *with my husband. At least*

3) barah ya terah saal ho **gay-e** hain
   twelve or thirteen years to be gone (ECV) Mas. aux.
   *twelve-thirteen years have passed.*

In the example above there are four potential tokens which have gender marking on them. None of these were part of the tokens used for the analysis. Only tokens where there is a choice between masculine and feminine markings were included in the analysis. The first token in line 1 is *mer-e* which is masculine. The token is not included in the analysis first of all because it is used to modify a masculine identity, husband, and thus there is no variation in the way it is used or could be used. The second token in line 1 is an adjective modifying the noun ‘husband’, so there can be no variation in this case either. Line 2 and 3 have two tokens of gender marking, but none of them qualify as tokens for the data pool for the same reason.
5.4 Results of the VARBRUL Analysis

The number of tokens chosen for the VARBRUL analysis is 1660 from eight speakers in three different focus-group sessions. The total recorded time that was analyzed for this study is 195 minutes. Table 5.1 gives an outline of the factor weights for the first run.

### Input 0.397

Application Value 1(Feminine)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Input + Weight</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOPIC</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1: Talking about partners (A)</td>
<td>0.742</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about other kotis (B)</td>
<td>0.699</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about Hijras (D)</td>
<td>0.607</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about life in general (E)</td>
<td>0.433</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking about Family (C)</td>
<td>0.095</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADDRESSEE’S USE OF GENDER MARKING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Input + Weight</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2: Feminine (f)</td>
<td>0.718</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masculine (m)</td>
<td>0.376</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DEGREE OF INTEGRATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Input + Weight</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3: Integrated into Community (I)</td>
<td>0.596</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un-integrated into Community (U)</td>
<td>0.407</td>
<td>283</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance p < 0.001
Chi-Square/cell: 7.0039

---

**TABLE 5.1**
The letters in parenthesis indicate the coding used for the VARBRUL analysis.

The input value is 0.397, which means that feminine gender marking was used under the specified circumstances about 40% of the times. The results show that the
factors that have the most influence on the occurrence of feminine gender marking are topics when kotis are talking about their partners. For this topic, the possibility that the kotis would use feminine gender marking is the highest, with a factor weight of 0.742. Talking about other kotis also favors the use of feminine gender marking, the factor weight for this topic is 0.699. Talking about *hijras* also favors the use of feminine gender marking among kotis. This suggests the importance of role assignment in koti discourse. This trend also speaks to the power relationships between kotis and *hijras* and the way kotis look at themselves in relation to *hijras*. The topics which least favor the use of feminine gender marking are ‘talking about life in general’ and ‘talking about family’. The factor weights are 0.433 and 0.095 respectively.

The next significant factor group is use of gender marking by addressee. In the case of this factor group prior use of feminine marking by addressee instigates the use of feminine gender marking by kotis. The factor weight for addressee use of feminine marking is 0.718, but for use of masculine gender marking it is 0.376. This indicates that use of masculine gender marking by the addressee disfavors the use of feminine gender markings in koti discourse.

The other factor group that is significant and has an influence on the use of feminine gender marking is integration into community. Kotis who are integrated into the community use more feminine gender markings than kotis who are not integrated into the community. In this category integration into the community has the most influence on the use of feminine gender marking, with a factor weight of 0.596. Non-integration into the community shows a slighter effect, with a factor weight of 0.407. Figure 5.1 displays
differences in gender marking among the eight speakers, according to their degree of integration:

As can be seen in figure 5.1, kotis who are integrated into the community show a greater instance of use of feminine gender marking in the data set as a whole than the kotis who are not integrated into the community. Roopmati, who is integrated into the
community, and Emrana, who is not integrated into the community, show an interesting trend. Roopmati uses feminine marking 68% of times and masculine gender marking 32% of the times, whereas Emrana uses masculine gender marking more than 70% of the time. Vaishna and Chetna are similar in that both use more feminine gender marking than masculine gender marking. Reena, who is not integrated into the community, shows a high instance of masculine gender marking at 68% and low feminine gender marking at 32%.

Figure 5.1 also shows that Chetna uses feminine gender marking 68% of the times she uses gender marking in her discourse. This suggests Chetna uses feminine gender markings more in situations where other kotis do not. She is well integrated into the koti community and that plays a role in her use of gender marking.

5.5 Summary

The results suggest a close connection between linguistic gender marking and identity shifts. This also highlights the connection between language and gender. I have tried to use techniques of both quantitative sociolinguistics and discourse analysis. By way of this research I hope to have shown the relationship between the way identity choices are made and the way they may vary with respect to language external factors like topic, addressee and membership status. The examples in section 3 highlight the performative aspect of koti discourse, and section 4 reinforces this with statistical data. The statistical analysis of the data also allows us to look at the relevance of the performativity theory for contexts that have not been studied before. In section 3 of this chapter, I explain Emrana’s use of
language in terms of his standing with respect to the koti community. A comment on Emrana’s life style was possible because of the ethnographic work I did with the community. Figure 5.1 shows that Emrana uses masculine gender markings in more than 70% of the tokens. This is a window into the way he manifests his identity as a koti who is not integrated into the community and who a peripheral member. Without a detailed ethnographic analysis, it would not have been possible to decide the relationship each koti had with the community; without a discourse analysis it would not be possible to decide the importance that topic, addressee and integration into community have on the way identity is performed; without a quantitative analysis this relationship would not be highlighted the way it is now. Thus, I advocate an approach that would bring together different methodologies to reach the goal of clearly identifying the relationship between language and identity in general and language and sexuality in particular.
6.1  Introduction

The goal of this chapter is to find a relationship between the larger forces of sexuality, globalization and identity and the small community of kotis that I met in Lucknow. In the next section I will situate the koti community in the larger frame of Indian sexuality. In the following section I will address the issues of marginalization and representation with respect to the koti community and show how kotis are marginalized and use representational devices like language and dress to fight this marginalization. The last section will discuss the implications of this research.

6.2  Koti sexuality within the Indian Sexuality Continuum

Situating kotis within the Indian sexuality continuum is an arduous task given the multiplicity of identities, named and unnamed sexualities and the limits of my knowledge of this subject. But to make any conclusive comments about identity, discourse and sexuality, it is necessary that we have an idea of where kotis situate themselves and where other scholars have situated them. The way koti sexuality is structured around hiding perhaps speaks to the fact that in the Indian context shame is a central theme which goes hand in hand with sexuality. As a concept sexual identity does not exist in most Indian contexts which essentially leaves no space for alternate sexual identities.
Hijras build their identity around gender thirdness, something kotis cannot do because they are a part of the mainstream society.

There are three major themes that I found in literature on homosexuality in India. The first is a fear of homosexuality; this is represented in the work by Srivastava (1973) that I discuss below. The second is a historical account of homosexuality and a description of the historicity of this phenomenon. This literature is largely a response to some political belief systems which accuse the West for bringing in homosexuality to the East. This view is represented in the work of scholars like Ruth Vanita (2000, 2002) Saleem Kidwai (2000), Stephen Murray (1997), etc. The third theme is represented in the work of scholars like Gayatri Reddy (2005), Lawrence Cohen (1995, 2005), etc., and aims at studying male sexuality in India as it stands today. These scholars have done fieldwork with kotis and have researched various aspects of sexuality ranging from issues related to terminology to issues related to object of desire. My research falls within the third theme. My goal in this dissertation has not been to tie these themes together or attempt a dialogue among these – that might not even be an achievable goal; my goal has been to inform the reader of the spectrum of research available on this subject and to situate and add my own work within and to this body of research. To try to achieve this goal, I will start by a review of some literature on the subject of male homosexuality in the Indian subcontinent.

Fear of homosexuality

Srivastava (1973) wrote an article on the nature of homosexuality in Indian prisons. While this research is old and was done in an era when any sexual activity
outside of the heterosexual “norm” was viewed as an aberration, it offers some insight into the view of homosexuality in India in that time. Srivastava starts by saying, “Prisons in India are unisex institutions, where besides many deprivations, heterosexual expression in its normal and healthy sense is completely absent. It is for this reason of sexual deprivation for an unusually longer period of time that the prisons naturally become fertile grounds for sex abnormalities and face manifold problems of sexual aberrations” (327). Srivastava also talks about the fact that some inmates had “married couple-like sexual alliance with some other inmates of the prison” (314) something that I have alluded to in this dissertation. Srivastava’s research and research methodology are definitely questionable but are in line with the times this research was conducted in. What is interesting is the commonality in terminology (“active” vs. “passive”38) as well as some traditions within the community. Srivastava does not mention whether the inmates self-identify as kotis; in fact the term koti is not mentioned anywhere. But then this research was not aimed at giving inmates a voice. One of the interesting aspects of this article is the dichotomy Srivastava draws between what he calls “actives” and “passives”.

While this particular theme is not directly related to what I do in this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that there exists a branch of scholarship which is not only opposed to homosexuality but actively engages in creating a fear of homosexuality. This also provides a window into a tradition of discourse on homosexuality which was based on ‘Othering’ people from any sexuality except heterosexuality.

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38 Within the koti circles, ‘active’ refers to the person who penetrates, and ‘passive’ refers to the person who is penetrated. I heard kotis use these terms during fieldwork. Cohen (2005) also mentions these terms in his work. In the koti world, only ‘passive’ men have the status of koti; ‘active’ men are called panthis. One of my older informants, Roopmati, once told me a story: her patron turned out to be ‘passive’, and the deal had to be broken because she is a koti and does not engage in ‘active’ roles.
History and homosexuality

Vanita and Kidwai’s *Same sex love in India: Readings for Literature and History* (2000) is the most important text on the subject of history of homosexuality in India. The book traces the presence of homosexuality in historical texts and literature originating in the Indian subcontinent. In the preface to the book, Vanita and Kidwai say:

“Our study suggests that at most times and places in pre-nineteenth-century India, love between women and between men, even when disapproved of, was not actively persecuted. As far as we know, no one has ever been executed for homosexuality in India. This does not mean, however, that there were no difficulties to be overcome. Even when love between men or between women was not trivialized, viewed as inferior to love between men and women, or ignored (and it often was treated in all these ways), even when it was romanticized and to some degree encouraged, society rarely provided institutions that allowed it to be chosen and lived out as primary, in refusal to marriage (xviii)

In the rest of the book Vanita and Kidwai discuss various aspects of homosexuality and disclose various contexts and scenarios in which homosexuality was acceptable in India.

Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe’s (1997) anthology titled *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History and Literature* also presents many articles describing the presence of homosexuality in the Islamic world including present-day Pakistan. In the same anthology Hasan Mujtaba, while discussing male prostitution in Pakistan, says, “Male prostitution is by no means a recent phenomenon. The famous British explorer Sir Richard Burton39, who visited Sindh long before the British conquest, found a brothel of boy prostitutes in Karachi soon after he anchored there. The business has continued to

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39 1821-1890.
flourish since then” (267). Mujtaba’s article focuses on the presence of current male prostitution in Pakistan; this is the only reference he makes to the history of prostitution by men.

The purpose and value of research that traces the history of homosexuality is twofold. As I mentioned earlier, it refutes the claim that homosexuality is a Western phenomenon, and it also speaks to the fact that contemporary ideals and laws within the Indian subcontinent are in some ways influenced by colonial thinking (which, by and large, was not welcoming of homosexuality); thus they should be reconsidered in the light of what happened in pre-colonial times, which these researchers show were far more tolerant of homosexuality.

Contemporary research on homosexuality

Within this theme falls the research by Cohen, Reddy and Hall that I have discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.5). The research within this theme is focused on mapping contemporary issues facing homosexuality in India. Reddy and Cohen focus on cultural, descriptive and terminological issues, while Hall focuses on issues related to identity and language. The problem with the scholarship within this theme is that there is a complete lack of dialogue; all these scholars are addressing the same issues and studying similar populations in different parts of India, but there is no common ground in their work.

Nanda, Reddy, Cohen and Hall have worked in India, and their research questions are similar to some extent. Nanda’s research discussed the category *hijra* in contemporary Indian society, hers was an ethnography, which unlike much other research
on hijras, provided a picture which hijras had a say in. She mentions homosexuality, but a discussion of identities peripheral to the hijra community is missing from her work.

Reddy (2004) aims to describe the models of homosexuality in India. She suggests that there is a “gay” model and a “kothi” model. The former, according to Reddy, is a newer model and is a result of knowledge of global categories which is available to people from certain socio-economic classes. The “kothi” model that Reddy talks about encompasses hijras and kothi; in the part of India where Reddy did her fieldwork, kothi is the umbrella term for both hijras and kotis as well as other identities which self identify as neither, e.g., panthis. Within the larger scheme of things, the issues Reddy raises are classificatory and are bound to a particular region. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of India, this is not surprising.

Cohen’s research is more exploratory in nature. He raises many issues about terminology and classification, like Reddy, which I discuss in Chapter 4, and questions the categories of koti, panti etc, but he does not give any conclusive answers to the problems of categorization that he raises. Hall (2005) focused on issues of identity and discourse among kotis in New Delhi. Other researchers like Naqvi and Mujtaba present ethnographic evidence for the presence of hijras and zenanas in Pakistan40. Describing zenanas, they present a discourse by Farzana, a hijra who says, “There is a world of difference between hijras and zenanas. Some zenanas even have families, wives and children. We are certainly not the same. Zenanas are in just for the dhanda (business)” (265).

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40 The identities of hijra, zenanas/koti are pan-Indian subcontinent including countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Myanmar. Naz Foundation International has offices or sister organizations in all these countries. Most of the studies I discuss here do not address the historicity of kotis or hijras, but there is a historical account of the presence of such identities in the work of Shortt (1873).
Situating my research within this general theme is one of the goals of this dissertation. The kotis I met in Lucknow self-identified as kotis; the non-profit that is working with them also calls them kotis. Whether this term is politically motivated or historically viable was not my concerns, unlike Cohen (2005), who focuses on these issues. My point of contact with kotis was the non-profit; all the kotis I met from ages 16 to 65 called themselves kotis. After meeting and interviewing kotis issues of identity and performance became the academic ideas that I explored with them. Given the conclusions that I have reached in chapters 3, 4 and 5, I can say that kotis as a category and a community are very much present in the contemporary scene of Indian sexuality. They are different from other alternate sexualities in India in terms of objects of desire, sexual identity, as well as self representation. For kotis the object of desire is straight men or what they call *giriya*. This also goes to says that for kotis the understanding of maleness comes from the role a male plays in a sexual interaction. For kotis the *giriya* or the real man has to play the role of a penetrator. The sexual identity of kotis is inter-related to their object of desire. I want to emphasize that kotis have a distinct understanding of what is and is not acceptable for a sexual partner. This distinction marks them as a distinct sexuality.

6.3 Issues of Marginalization

Kotis have been marginalized due to their sexuality because their identities, ideologies of sexuality and objects of desire do not fit in the cultural model of
heterosexuality and heteronormativity. It is possible that their choices of language, dress and gestures serve as a way to question this marginalization and to some extent reinforce it. The specific issues related to the marginalization of kotis that I will discuss here pertain to language, differences from hijras and gays in India, socioeconomic status and ability to “come out”.

Rupp and Taylor (2003) present research on drag queens and say that the performance of drag is used as a way to make heterosexuals question their gender identities. Koti performances do not do so directly. Kotis are hidden from society, and their questioning of sexuality and norms is secretive within their community, but their performance is comparable to the challenge that drag queens pose to heterosexuals. Like drag queens, kotis both question and reinforce ideals of binary division of genders; outside of their roles as kotis, they have to follow the very binary division they oppose as kotis. Kotis reinforce the traditional gender binaries by assuming the role of an ‘ideal’ female in their interaction with their partners. Chetna (example 8, chapter 5) is an example of a koti who reinforces the gender binary by assuming the duties of a woman with her husband, but in the role as a husband (Chetna is married to a woman), she performs the stereotypical duties of a heterosexual man.

Rupp and Taylor (2003) say, “This (drag) leads to the broader question of what makes a cultural performance such as drag serve as social protest, a question that has vexed scholars of social movements, if not so much scholars of cultural studies, who tend to find the connection between culture and politics unsurprising. To answer this question, we draw upon three bodies of scholarship. The research on gender and sexuality has

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41 Hijras face the same marginalization but are protected by religion which accepts them to some degree and gives them the legitimization that koti identity lacks. Also, hijras, as Nanda (1995) suggests are supposed to be asexual and being asexual has prestige attached to it in the Indian culture.
pointed to the use of external markers such as dress, gestures, and other behaviors, as well as language and interaction, in creating a polarized and hierarchical gender and sexual system consisting of male/female and heterosexual/homosexual. This rigid binary system of gender creates cultural barriers to social acceptance of homosexuality and to self acceptance among lesbians and gay men” (216). Representation of self is thus a technique which gives people a way to express social protest. These techniques of self-representation in the form of dress, in the case of drag queens, and language, in the case of kotis, form a way to show protest against dominant orders in society. The language use by kotis can be looked at as an assertion of their sexuality, but it can also be looked at as a means they have developed to show protest and difference from the heteronormative and heterosexual order. The language that kotis use does not have any meaning for the people outside the koti community. This language has acted as a means to protest Otherness and expression of Self for a long time for these two communities. Halliday mentions various “anti-societies” which use forms of language or what Halliday calls anti-language that become “the means of realization of subjective reality: not merely expressing it, but actively creating and maintaining it” (1976: 574).

Language also acts as a protest against marginalization. It is probably analogous to dress or other forms of representation in other cultures. Language is also an important means of showing deviance. For a long time, in the early part of twentieth century, language was considered an important means which defined deviant behavior. Kira Hall (1998) says, “…scholars have supported theoretical claims about the interplay of language, gender, and society by referencing the speech patterns of ‘the linguistic deviant’ – the speaker who fails to follow normative expectations of how men and
women should speak” (228) Women and homosexuals neatly fell into this group since they did not follow the normative, modes of spoken language as defined by white males. In the context of Indian society, I would say that this deviance in language and performance is a source of marginalization of these groups by mainstream cultures. But, what causes marginalization is also a source of covert prestige; something that gives kotis a sense of belonging to the community. Perversity in language, i.e., the use of Farasi or the special register, is a way in which a sense of identity is created within the kota community. Language plays a role in making kotis a part of the larger kota community.

_Hijras_ and kotis become marginalized others as they do not perform in the way they are supposed to. _Hijras_ have the edge because they are supposedly biological Others too. They are viewed as hermaphrodites or eunuchs and given the status of a third sex. Because of this status accorded to them, there are certain positive superstitious values and beliefs that surround their presence. They are a stigmatized group even after these values have attached to them (For a detailed discussion of _hijras_, see Nanda 1998, Hall 1995). _Hijras_ have the status of third gender. Within the kota- _hijra_ subculture being a _hijra_ has more prestige than being a kota. Koti or any other sexual identity is not recognized by the mainstream culture. This non-recognition is a source of marginalization.

Kotis are doubly crossed. They do not have the biological otherness (like _hijras_) surrounding them, to protect them against stigmatization and to give them shelter within the umbrella of _hijra_ culture. Some of the kotis, for this reason, do find refuge in the _hijra_ community and end up becoming _hijras_. Others for various reasons continue to live on the edge. Kotis are marginalized because of their sexuality in the community at large and because of their identity as non-_hijras_ in the _hijra_ community.
Another possible reason for the marginalization of the koti community is the economic status of kotis. Caste in a lot of cases in India goes hand in hand with socioeconomic status; it also forms a basis for the marginalization of the kotis and their community. A distinction in class plays a role in deciding the sexuality of members of the class. A distinction in class also hints at the different value systems within a class which might or might not reflect the value systems of the entire community. Somerville says, “…_Queer_ does not presume that the men it denoted were effeminate, for many queers were repelled by the style of the fairy and his loss of manly status, and almost all were careful to distinguish themselves from such men…the distinction between ‘queer’ and ‘fairy’ also signaled class differences: effeminate ‘fairies’ were associated with working class culture but the queer was linked with middle class communities, such as those in Greenwich Village, and the more well-to-do sections of Harlem and Times Square” (2000: 56). Coming out as queer or gay is perhaps difficult and unacceptable in all societies in all world cultures to this day. But within cultures the ease of coming out as queer is different; for example, it is easier to come out as gay in America\(^\text{42}\) as compared to India. Within these broader cultures, the ease of coming out as gay is class-dependent. It might be easier to come out as gay in the higher socioeconomic groups rather than in lower socioeconomic groups. It is in this way that socioeconomic status plays a role in defining sexuality and constructing alternate sexualities like koti, who are different in their desire and object choice but are also different in their socioeconomic class from the gays in India.

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\(^{42}\) Factors like socioeconomic class, education, region, etc. influence the ‘coming out’ process of people in the American society as well.
Another issue to which Somerville draws attention is the cultural implications of coming ‘out’ and its importance for a person. She says, “A ‘skeleton in the closet’ is ‘a private or concealed trouble in one’s house or circumstances, ever present and ever liable to come into view.’ To be ‘in the closet’ is to be palpably invisible in a structure of visibility, proximity, and knowledge although individuals may desire to be ‘in’ or ‘out’ of the closet, one can never fully control the interpretation of one’s status. One must therefore constantly renegotiate the boundary between ‘in’ and ‘out’ in a culture that simultaneously seeks out and erases lesbian and gay identity.” Renegotiating boundaries between ‘in’ and ‘out’ is vital to the kotis, too, because coming ‘out’ can have all kinds of consequences, from being thrown out of the family and being marginalized in severe ways to being questioned about their masculinity. Not ‘coming out’ but remaining ‘in’ at least gives them the security of family, which means financial security in a lot of cases and keeps them out of the open ‘public space’. Kotis thus live in the liminal space and keeping coming ‘out’ and going ‘in’, depending on the need of the hour. This liminal space also defines their uneasy relationship with *hijras*.

Exclusion and Othering are the criteria which define marginalization. Whatever is viewed or even understood as Other is stuck with the tag Abnormal. This abnormality then actively goes into the construction of their otherness. Williams discusses, “…how public attitudes toward respectability and sexuality – as aspects of nationalist ideologies and the formulation of appropriate forms of sociality, especially those adopted and legitimated by the diverse groupings of the middle classes of European nations – functioned to shape social attitudes toward the human body and its sexuality.” The discourses of respectability and prestige that surround the middle class decide the people
that will be marginalized and the basis on which they will be marginalized. Since kotis represent a ‘perverse’ sexuality, they become easy prey to racialization. Williams says that sexuality has always ‘haunted bourgeois society and nationalism’, which can form a basis for racialism.

Vanita (2002) in the essay, ‘Whatever happened to the Hindu Left?’ says, “Indian culture is of the type that some anthropologists have classified as a shame culture – in contrast to Christian culture, which is a guilt culture. This means that many behaviors that are not considered immoral in Indian society are considered shameful.” It is this shame that surrounds the sexual preference of kotis which makes them the racial others. The impatience of society towards kotis is a mirror to the impatience society shows towards acts which are considered shameful. It is this ‘shame’ which keeps kotis hidden. The same shame also surrounds the hijras, since the narrative around hijras is that they have ‘no shame’.

Another possible reason for the marginalization of kotis is that they represent what Williams calls ‘subordinated masculinity’: “Subordinated masculinity becomes to culture what women are deemed to culture: its natural enemies.” Men who are unable to perform as dominant members in the community are viewed as ‘not male enough’ and so are marginalized. Such men are viewed as ‘betrayers’ and are marginalized in the same way as women are as eternal betrayers. This is also the reason behind the racialization of hijras and gays in India. Kotis, as has been noted, earlier are doubly crossed in this respect. Kotis also act as outsiders to the dominant order. As Williams says, “The
outsider fulfilled a crucial function as the antitype-warning of what the future might hold if society relaxed its and abandoned its quest for respectability.”  

6.4 Representation and Identity

The factors that cause the marginalization of kotis are not only confined to their sexuality and caste or economic status. Class, socioeconomic status and caste can be called internal factors, i.e., the factors which are internal or absolutely ‘essential’ for the marginalization of the kotis. Another kind of factors that cause marginalization are the external factors. These external factors depend on what identity a koti wants to perform at any particular point of time. The external factors include dress, body language, use of Farasi and to a certain extent occupation. Throughout the discussion on self-representation by kotis, I draw a comparison between kotis and drag queens to look for possible correspondences between these two traditions. Rupp and Taylor (2003) say that they “explore drag as a long tradition of resistance and challenge to the dominant order.”

The idea that drag developed out of a resistance or challenge to the dominant order of heterosexuality is an interesting one. The historical development of the hijra and koti communities is not something I can comment on at this point, but these traditions certainly date back to the Moughal era. Hijras and kotis are quite proud of their heritage and their association with the Moughals; they find some prestige in this historicity. This

43 Either the outsider eats you up, or you eat the outsider. There are no middle grounds. This is also the possible reason for the uneasy relationship Indians have had with the West. The West was the outsider and so posed a threat to the dominant order. There was a time when every Western idea was seen as a threat to Indian nationalism. Slowly, with capitalism and industrialization, Western ideas became ‘insider’, and the traditional became the outsider; hence the unease with ideas of homosexuality and a lot of other insider ideas which have now become outsider, since insider and outsider changed places.
hints at the age of the koti community and their development as hidden but acceptable and present for the audience which wants it to be present. The history and heritage also tells them that there might have been a time when they were actually respected. Drag, on the other hand, was more visible perhaps, but the development of these two traditions is comparable, and both, it can be said, developed as a ‘challenge to the dominant order.’

Community formation becomes an important part of reinforcing challenges. As Rupp and Taylor say, “What is clear from the history of drag is that it has long served as a community building function, since drag shows and drag balls were places that women and men with same-sex desire knew they could meet others with the same interests” (217). Drag thus became a community of people which stood against dominant order. Within this community there must have been various representational devices which marked identity and association with a particular ideology. In the case of drag queens, dress and makeup performed the function of a signifier for an ideology which was against the dominant order. In the case of kotis too, dress plays a role in representing self. Kotis do not cross dress like drag queens do, but their choice of color and design in dress, especially the cuts, do hint at an interest in the feminine way of dressing, although more research needs to be done to say this with assertion. With the representation devices and self-identification with the non-heteronormative, communities like drag queens and kotis make a political statement against heteronormative order. As Rupp and Taylor say, “Drag both built community among gay and lesbian people and challenged, if more or less politely, the dominant gender-divided and heterosexual order.”

Within communities like drag and koti, performance of identity and representation of this performance become devices to show control of the situation
members find themselves in. As Rupp and Taylor note, “Cultural repertoires of protest are distinguished from other non-deliberately political forms of cultural expression by the fact that the performance is staged by a set of actors for whom, in however transitory a manner, culture serves as an arena for the enactment, reinforcement or renegotiation of *collective identity.*” They add, “The formation and affirmation of *collective identity,* ‘the shared definition of a group that derives from members’ common interests and solidarity,’ is the final factor that distinguishes a cultural performance as political.” So the performance of drag becomes a political statement as a result of *collective identity.*

In the same way, the use of Farasi and the effeminate portrayal of self form a basis for identity. Language performs the function of creating discourse of domination and subordination. The use of feminine gender markings by kotis in their use of Farasi is a performance of a discourse of subordination which is characteristic of feminine discourse in this culture. Performance of discourses of subordination and submission through language goes into the construction of ‘collective identity’ and also does the function of making this performance a political statement against the heteronormative order by reinforcing and questioning this order simultaneously.

Also, Farasi gives kotis an ‘authentic’ way of claiming identity. Kulick and Cameron (2003) say, “The linguistic reflex of this [identity politics] is an impulse to claim for the community ‘a language of our own’ – a distinct way of speaking and or writing which serves as an authentic expression of group identity.” Within the koti community, the identity of members is defined ‘around their sexuality’ (Cameron and Kulick 2003) since their sexuality makes them entitled to claim membership in the community. Within the community, the members who know more Farasi are respected
more. When young boys enter this community they are somewhat aware of their ‘perversity’ and deviance. But they learn Farasi to give legitimacy and identity to this ‘perversity’. Their identity is defined around sexuality which is defined and actively constructed by Farasi. In this way Farasi acts as an external representational device which not only gives voice to the political statement that the kotis want to make thorough language but also defines the collective identity and the community of practice that kotis construct and participate in, in the course of their journey as kotis.

6.5 Contributions of this research

This research is a contribution to the theory of performance, the framework of communities of practice and field work methodology as well as to an understanding of a much ignored community.

Theory of performance of gender

This research adds to our understanding of the applicability of the theory of performance of gender and shows how the performance of gender can be very closely tied to linguistic resources. In case of kotis, these resources are Farasi and switching gender marking. By conducting an ethnographic research on this community I was able to understand how performance as a koti and as a heterosexual male is successfully achieved by using language for their identity shifts.
Framework of communities of practice and fieldwork methodologies

In this dissertation I have claimed and proved that kotis are a community of practice. I have also combined qualitative and quantitative methodologies to emphasize my points about kotis being a community of practice. I have shown that within their community kotis learned to perform like kotis; this learning is based on practicing to be the particular identity that they wish to portray within the community.

My fieldwork which involved interviewing, focus-groups and participant observation, gave me an opportunity to study the community closely. If it was not for the depth and breadth of the fieldwork I would not have been able to make conclusive judgements about the nature of this community. By combining one-to-one interviews, focus-group interviews and participant observation, I was able to pinpoint the similarities and differences in the ideologies of members of this community, something that I think is essential to be able to comment on a community with complex issues.

Giving a voice to kotis

This dissertation also adds to the understanding of the koti community – a community which is completely functional on its own, is not a conglomeration of identities peripheral to the hijras, and has names, terms and issues that are their own. This is an addition to research done on kotis by other scholars. To the best of my knowledge, my research presents a view of this community that is based entirely on what the kotis told me. The theoretical tools that I used to present this data can become secondary to a reader if her aim is to inform herself about how this peripheral community operates. I hope that my
effort of trying to give a voice to kotis will be useful for Naz Foundation International in getting grants and support from national and international organizations for their cause.

6.6 Future Directions

This research would be better if I had explored the relationship between religion and sexuality in India more completely. I would also suggest that future research on kotis address issues of comparative sexuality and universals of gender and sexuality fully. Political ideologies as they relate to sexuality and gender have a very strong and important role in legitimizing and de-legitimizing sexualities. I would suggest that future research explore the political ideologies that went into de-legitimizing alternate sexualities fully. I believe that a discourse of that nature can help understand the deeper reasons behind stereotypes against alternate sexualities and help us resolve some concerns people have about the legitimacy, historicity or even biology of homosexuality.


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Milroy, Lesley and Matthew Gordon (2003) *Sociolinguistics: Method and Interpretation* Blackwell Publishing Ltd.


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APPENDIX A

LIST OF FARASI WORDS
This is a list of terms used by kotics. Some of these terms are from a document prepared by NAZ Foundation International. Others are from my own recordings. This list is not comprehensive.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adiyal</td>
<td>Very</td>
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<tr>
<td>Banwachi</td>
<td>Impotent woman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barwachi nasha</td>
<td>Drug use</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhapka</td>
<td>Make-up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhavla</td>
<td>Brother</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bila</td>
<td>Bad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bimarchi</td>
<td>Illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chalki</td>
<td>Motor cycle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cham</td>
<td>Liking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamakti khol</td>
<td>Movie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandarna</td>
<td>To look at fondly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chande</td>
<td>Potato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapatbaaz</td>
<td>Lesbian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapatbazi/kothorpan</td>
<td>Homosexuality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheesa</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chhindu</td>
<td>Hindu penis/ uncircumcised penis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chia</td>
<td>Wedding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chibrra</td>
<td>Hijra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dhurtaal/dhurana</td>
<td>Intercourse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dingor</td>
<td>Police</td>
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<tr>
<td>Duniyadari</td>
<td>Incest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ghamar</td>
<td>Tummy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Giriya</td>
<td>Man/ sexual partner/ penetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hatwachi</td>
<td>Masturbation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humsio (Hindi: hum)</td>
<td>First person singular</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jhalke</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jholi</td>
<td>eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joban</td>
<td>Something good</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kachchi</td>
<td>Wrong/ insult</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kade</td>
<td>Shut up/ run away</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kalam</td>
<td>Talk/ conversation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khabdibaaz</td>
<td>Thief</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khanjra</td>
<td>Prostitution</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khaulni</td>
<td>Tea</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khilva</td>
<td>Alcohol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khol</td>
<td>Home</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khomar</td>
<td>Fellatio</td>
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<tr>
<td>Khutni</td>
<td>Back biting/ Farasi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kotma</td>
<td>Impotence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lappa lori</td>
<td>Kiss</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likkam</td>
<td>Penis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likkam taal pe</td>
<td>Erection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liplipa</td>
<td>Milk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lotar</td>
<td>Lie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugarna</td>
<td>Love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugnewala</td>
<td>Ready to die</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugni</td>
<td>Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moorat</td>
<td>Woman/ other kotis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natwache</td>
<td>nose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niharan</td>
<td>Woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ojo</td>
<td>Second person singular: he/she</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panthi</td>
<td>Man/ sexual partner/penetrator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parekh</td>
<td>Customer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat jana</td>
<td>Ejaculate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Patauni</td>
<td>Semen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satre</td>
<td>Clothes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sippo</td>
<td>Vagina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudda</td>
<td>Old man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suddi</td>
<td>Old woman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surile</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sursuri</td>
<td>Cigarette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taakna</td>
<td>To eat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taakni</td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taal</td>
<td>Talk/situation/perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teenda</td>
<td>Beaten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thappal</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thibna/ thigna</td>
<td>To live/ reside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulla</td>
<td>Boy/son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tulli</td>
<td>Girl/daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumsio (Hindi: tum)</td>
<td>You</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunni</td>
<td>Small penis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upal</td>
<td>Pregnancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONS ASKED DURING FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS
Introductory questions:

- What is your name?
- How old are you?
- Where are you from? (If not from Lucknow, which part of India are you from)
- What motivated you to come to Lucknow?
- What do you do?
- Did you ever go to school?

Questions about being/becoming a koti:

- Since when have you been a koti?
- What inspired you to become a koti?
- When you came to the cruising area who did you meet first?
- What kind of information did they give you about the koti community?
- Were there any problems you faced when you first came to the cruising areas?
- Who helped you when you were new to the community?
- What do you like about being a koti?
- Who is your mother in the community? Who are your sisters?
- Do you know Farasi?
- How old were you when you first started talking in Farasi?
- Who taught you Farasi?
- Do you engage in sex-work?
- How much do you get paid from a client?
Relationship with *hijras*:

- Do you have any contact with *hijras*?
- How often do you meet with *hijras*? Where do you meet *hijras*?
- Have you ever lived with *hijras*?
- Did you like living with *hijras*?
- What is the difference between *hijras* and kotis?
- Did you ever consider becoming a *hijras*? Why or why not?
- Do you have a *hijra* guru?

Family background:

- What does your father do?
- Do you live with your family?
- Does your family know that you are a koti?
- Are you married?
- If yes, then for how long? Does your wife know that you are a koti?
- What would happen if she came to know?
- Do you have children?

Relationship status:

- Do you have a *giriya*?
- How long have you been with this *giriya*?
- Where is he from?
- Does your *giriya* know that you engage in sex-work?
- Do you live with your *giriya*? Have you ever lived with a *giriya*?