Semiotic Review 5: The Semiotics of Food-and-language | article published January 2017 |
DOI: https://doi.org/10.71743/k6fam963 |

Food, Talk, and Knitting: Mutually Constitutive Elements in a Process of Adult Language Socialization

Jocelyn C. Ahlers
jahlers@csusm.edu

Abstract: Language socialization, the process by which individuals acquire identity markers associated with particular communities of practice, continues throughout life (Ochs 2000; Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002); food often plays an important role creating environments where socialization can take place (e.g. Ochs and Shohet 2006). This paper considers the process by which some people, while learning to knit, are also socialized into identity as "knitter", a process marked and facilitated by shared food consumption. Examining data gathered through participant-observation within two knitting groups, coupled with data drawn from a large on-line survey of the knitting community at large, I argue that food and language are mutually constitutive of the socialization experience for knitters, not simply due to co-occurrence, but because they indirectly index ideologies which underpin different knitting identities; that is, knitting and food are both semiotic resources in the expression of broader identities which have ideological and social coherence. Among some groups of knitters, this is a broader identity of service, sacrifice, and community building; among others, it is an identity associated with values of self-expression and feminism.

Keywords: adult language socialization; discourse; ideology; knitters; food

1. Introduction

In the United States, the family meal has long been seen as a key site for the socialization of children into both their social roles, and into the ways of speaking that are associated with those roles (e.g., Ochs and Taylor 1992; Ochs and Shohet 2006; Schieffelin 1990); it also serves as a locus for socializing children into the social, moral and political stances of their families (e.g., Ochs et al. 1996; Paugh 2005; Sterponi 2003). In fact, meals in general serve important broader socialization goals, as seen for example in Karrebaek's work (2012, 2013) on the lunchtime socialization of children of immigrant families in Danish schools. This process of language socialization is understood to continue into adulthood, as individuals take on successive and additional roles in their lives (e.g., Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002; Dunn 1999; Ochs 2000). The role of food as an index of culture and of cultural values for adults has been addressed by authors such as Watson (1987) in his discussion of the social role played by common pot feasting as a social leveling device in China, Beoku-Betts (1995) in her exploration of the role of women in maintaining cultural food practices among the Gullah in the Sea Islands of Georgia, and Riley (2009, 2012) in her description of the intimate connections between food acquisition and social networks in France and French Polynesia; such work points to the potential relevance of food and language as mutually constitutive elements of adult (language) socialization. The purpose of this paper is to add to our understanding of the role of food and the sharing of food as a semiotic resource in the process of language socialization outside of childhood, through a consideration of knitters and their knitting communities. I argue that food and language are mutually constitutive of the socialization experience for knitters, not simply due to co-occurrence, but because they jointly index ideologies which underpin different knitting identities.[1]

Language socialization is the process by which a neophyte (of any age) "acquires the knowledge, skills, orientations, and practices that enable him or her to participate in the social life of a particular community." (Garrett 2008,189) This process, which is ongoing, involves the development of communicative competence in discourse practices and their ideological underpinnings, so that the novice can use language in the ways which are expected by, and appropriate to, their community of practice (see, e.g., Garrett 2008; Garrett and Baquedano-Lopez 2002; Ochs and Schieffelin 1984; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). "A central focus [of language socialization studies] is thus the examination of how language practices index sociocultural information" (Paugh 2005, 57). Such studies "explore how children and other novices acquire cultural and linguistic knowledge and practices as interrelated processes through everyday social interaction with those around them" (Cavanaugh et al 2014, 92); neophytes not only learn how to talk, but also why to talk, and what certain kinds of contextualized talk mean. Such socialization can take place in a number of settings, ranging from formal educational settings to peer interaction (Baquedano-Lopez 2000; Duff 2010; Dunn 1999; Fadar 2001; Field 2001).

This paper has two main purposes. The first is to explore the process of adult language socialization, within a neophyte's native language, through an examination of socialization practices among knitters. The second is to consider the role of food as a co-constitutive element in the socialization process. I first began to consider the question of socialization into and among communities of knitters in the United States when my attention was drawn to several incidents involving knitters and knitting-related, women-owned businesses (see note 3 for one such example). In each of these incidents, outsiders' perceptions of knitting and knitters had a significant, and potentially negative, impact on a small woman-owned business, and it became clear to me that the underlying cause of these incidents was the mismatch between what knitters believe to be true of themselves, and what non-knitters believe about them. In other words, the activity of knitting has semiotic power, but its interpretation differs rather dramatically depending on the orientation of the interpreter.

In my investigation of the process by which neophyte knitters become socialized into various knitting communities a few things became increasingly clear. While there is a sense in which the act of knitting indexes belonging to a broader (even world-wide) community of knitters, an individual's knitting identity/ies are acquired through association with and participation in particular communities of knitters. Socialization into the practices and ideologies associated with specific communities of knitters occurs within the context of these communities of practice, "aggregate[s] of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relationships – in short, practices – emerge in the course of their joint activity around that endeavor." (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992, 96) As neophyte knitters acquire the skill of knitting and are, often but not always, socialized into one or more communities of practice and the knitter identities associated with them, they acquire a range of knowledge and competencies. These include knitting techniques and associated vocabulary. This knowledge also encompasses ideologies associated with knitting: why knitters knit, the perceived benefits of knitting, experiences and attitudes shared by knitters, and an understanding of the disjunct between knitters' own valuation and valorization of their craft, and outsiders' perceptions of its worth.

Within the broader community of knitters, focused as it is on the common endeavor of knitting, there are subcommunities which include knitters with more specific understandings of what knitting means and why they knit. More specifically, while one subcommunity of knitters aligns with or even embraces the more traditional semiotic links associated with the act of knitting (e.g., femininity, elderliness, homemaking, care of others), another actively reframes the activity and meaning of knitting to include affiliations with feminism and self-care, as discussed further below. Thus, socialization takes place on multiple levels within specific communities of practice, as knitters learn about and

associate with the broader knitting community, and as they align with (or not) the more defined values of particular subcommunities. This phenomenon is similar to one discussed by Jacobs-Huey when she describes using the term “hairdresser” instead of “hairstylist” (2008, 173), except in this case, it is not the word “knitter” itself that is at issue. It is the tone – vocal or ideological – that is potentially problematic. Knitting bears an indirect indexical relationship (Ochs 1992) to very specific ideals of the feminine (e.g., homemaker, nurturer, etc); as discussed further below, this indirect indexicality is embraced by some communities of practice as constitutive of a broader identity as “knitter”, and problematized by others. This is one area where adult language socialization, or indeed the socialization of older youths into new and subsequent social roles, differs, potentially significantly, from early childhood language socialization. Older neophytes carry with them, in at least some cases, either implicit or explicit knowledge of the group into which they are being inducted, and of dominant out-group ideologies associated with the new community. Guardado (2009) considers this in his description of heritage-language Scout groups, as does Ahlers (2012) in her discussion of gender socialization during Native California heritage language acquisition. In this case, knitters must negotiate their previous exposure to the idea of knitting and new, in-group, valences associated with the identity/ies of “knitter”.

As I gathered data on the process by which knitters acquire this range of knowledge, through participant-observation in a number of venues (see Section 2), I became increasingly aware of the functions that food plays in this socialization process, which led me to the second key point of exploration in this paper: the role of food as both a marker of socialization opportunities among knitters, and as a semiotic resource in creating coherent ideologies associated with particular subcommunities of knitters. This is perhaps not surprising, given the role of food and shared meals in socialization; “the sharing of food, or *commensality*, is an activity that promotes the experience of belonging to a particular social group” (Karrebaek 2012, 2, emphasis original). As mentioned above, in the United States, the dinner table is a central venue for children to learn about family values not only around food and eating (e.g., Ochs et al 1996; Ochs and Shohet 2006), but also in such areas as morality (e.g., Sterponi 2003) and work (e.g., Paugh 2005; 2008). Food and language are mutually constitutive of these socialization experiences, as neophytes learn to talk about food, and talk around food, in conjoined conversations. In the settings described in this paper, that mutual constitution encompasses knitting, as neophytes learn how to talk *about* knitting, and as knitters, in ways that overlap with speech and practices around and about food in these settings. Thus, food, knitting, and talk each “help **constitute** other domains of social reality” (Ochs 1992, 343, emphasis original) through processes of indirect indexicality. Among knitters, food appears to serve two distinct but overlapping roles: as a marker of socializing venues, and as an index of the ideologies associated with an identity as “a knitter” within a particular community of

knitters. Thus, this paper explores the ways in which multiple semiotic resources – here, talk, food, and knitting – together constitute socialization experiences for neophyte knitters, and a key conclusion is that these three activities overlap in their indexing of particular ideologies which are coherent with the values of the two subcommunities of knitters discussed in this paper.

After outlining the data and communities under consideration here, I begin by briefly discussing socialization opportunities within the context of knitting classes, where food serves as a marker denoting the shift from learning how to knit to learning how to be a knitter. I then turn to my main focus: the casual, everyday kinds of conversations which take place, often around food, within knitting groups and their role in aiding neophyte knitters in their acquisition of both the discourse conventions of their particular knitting community of practice, and of the ideologies which underpin those discourse practices. At the same time, I identify/analyze the food and food practices within each group that align with these practices and ideologies and are mutually constitutive of them. My goal is to describe the discourse patterns which emerge in these contexts, and to expose the ideological underpinnings of these patterns as well as the ways in which these ideologies reinforce and are reinforced by those associated with and indexed by food and knitting. These ideologies in turn structure and inform the identities of particular communities of knitters, allowing them to preferentially orient to particular stances within the broader knitting community.

2. The data

The data for this paper are drawn from two sources. The first data source is an ongoing process of participant-observation in two central venues. One is a knitting circle at a local yarn store (LYS)[2] which meets in the evenings twice a month, and more loosely on most Wednesday and Friday afternoons. The other is a week-long retreat at an institute which offered classes in garment design, spinning, weaving, and dyeing. The observations from these events which are included in this paper are drawn from field notes, rather than audio or video recordings, and identifying information has been removed. The field notes were all documented either during or just after the interactions included in this paper. The second data source is an online survey on knitting, knitting identities and knitting communities. I uploaded the survey in early August 2009, and solicited participants through knitting blogs, flyers at my LYS, a posting on Ravelry, and through flyers distributed at Sock Summit in Portland, OR[3]; respondents were encouraged to share the survey url with other knitters, so that the survey was also distributed through snowball sampling, which has led to international response, although most respondents are from the U.S. and Canada. Within two months, nearly 2,000 respondents had participated in the survey. When the survey was closed in August 2010, most questions in the survey had around 2700 responses. The final question in the survey asks respondents if they are

willing to be contacted for a future interview; nearly 38% of respondents have indicated their willingness to participate.

These interviews, combined with additional longitudinal participant-observation, will form the next steps in this research project. As stated in Section 1, longitudinal research is a hallmark of language socialization studies. However, in working with knitters, it is difficult at best to follow individual knitters through the entire socialization process, for a number of reasons. First, knitters do not learn to knit, or to be knitters, in cohorts, or even, very often, in public and accessible settings. Many knitters first learn the skill of knitting itself from a female relative, often early in life, and then pick it up again as adults. Second, the acquisition of the identity of "knitter" is one which tends to happen in many settings, in which the knitter participates throughout the process of identity development, rather than sequentially (and trackably); these include online fora such as those available on Ravelry, participation on blogs either as an author or commenter, the reading of magazines and books, and participation in multiple person-to-person communities of knitters, including those at LYSs, knitting and weaving guilds, informal Stitch 'N Bitch groups, etc. Thus, the discourse patterns described and analyzed in Sections 3.1 and 3.2 represent trends in the strategies used consistently at the gatherings of the groups who are the focus of this paper. As such, they are the strategies to which neophytes and relative neophytes are exposed when they participate in activities with these groups.

There are currently some 53 million women (approximately 36% of women in the U.S.) in the United States who claim some knowledge of the skill of knitting (Craft Yarn Council of America); the number of those who knit under the age of 35 has risen more than 50% since 1998. Among the respondents to the survey I conducted, 72% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 57% have a household income higher than $60,000/year. Of the 2,418 people who answered the question "Would you call yourself a) someone who knits, or b) "a knitter", 85% responded that they would call themselves "a knitter". Conversations with early respondents suggest that while there were a few who did not find this distinction relevant, most in fact did, and the follow-up question "If you would call yourself 'a knitter', what marked the transition, for you, from being someone who knits to being 'a knitter'?" received extensive responses from 2,019 respondents, suggesting that the process of socialization into an identity as a knitter is one which many knitters recognize and are aware of. Interestingly, the definitions of respondents' knitting communities do not show extensive overlap with their descriptions of the people who taught them to knit, suggesting that the socialization process is one which is separate and separable from the process of learning to knit itself; this matches the participant-observation data discussed below. In answering the question "Who first taught you to knit", 1,130 respondents of a total of 2,179 referred to a female relative as an initial teacher. In response to the question, "Who makes up your 'knitting community'? How

would you define that phrase?", however, very few respondents made mention of female relatives as members of their primary knitting communities.

This mirrors the differentiation between the two learning processes at work here (learning to knit and learning to be a knitter), as overlapping but distinct. It also points to the iterative process of learning the skill of knitting before it "takes" (a word that appears frequently in survey responses); the acquisition of identity for many may help to consolidate the acquisition of skill. Finally, this suggests one foundation for the indexical relationships between knitting and femininity while at the same time helping to explain why some identities associated with being "a knitter" deny or attempt to subvert that indexicality.

Thus, two processes are at play here: the acquisition of the skill of knitting, along with the technical vocabulary and discourse rules associated with the acquisition and practice of that skill; and the acquisition of an identity as a knitter, along with the concomitant socialization into one or more of the communities of practice comprised by knitters. Food has two roles to play in these overlapping processes. First, the presence of food serves to demarcate the shift from opportunities for skill acquisition to opportunities for identity socialization in the setting of knitting classes. Second, the kind of food that is present, and discourse (or lack of discourse) about food, index social stances and ideologies that align with those about knitting in particular communities of practice associated with the two knitting subcommunities under analysis in this paper. Finally, discourse patterns align with and reinforce these ideologies. In this way, knitting and food, through their alignment with one another and with specific discourse patterns, serve as two co-constitutive elements within the socialization process for neophyte knitters.

3. Socialization and knitters

These overlapping but distinct processes can be seen at play in the context of formal knitting classes and less formal knit night or "stitch and bitch" groups. I turn now to an examination of the processes of learning to knit and learning to be a knitter in the context of knitting classes. This leads to a general overview of the linguistic markers of the process of learning to knit. In this section, I also address the function of food to demarcate the shift from "learning to knit" to "learning to be a knitter", which seems to be fairly wide-spread, and then look more closely at the role of food as an index of values associated with the broader knitting community. In later sections, I take up a discussion of interrelationships among values about knitting and knitted objects, linguistic practices, and attitudes towards food within the two subcommunities of knitters that are the focus of this paper, and show how these three semiotic resources (re)present a coherent identity for potential uptake by neophytes during the socialization process.

The process of learning to knit takes place in a number of locations, including classes (often offered at yarn stores, but also at workshops, knitting conventions, retreats, and fiber festivals), books, videos, and online video tutorials. Knitting classes at an LYS are one such place, and my observations of such classes show that language use in this context has a number of distinctive characteristics. Talk focuses on the skill of knitting, and on the learning and use of terminology specific to the skill being acquired. In the context of knitting classes, there is usually at least one person who takes the role of "knower", and at least one who takes the role of "learner"; typically these roles are established at the outset, and don't change significantly during the teaching process. Teachers have a slightly privileged position in all class-time conversations, by virtue of having the floor during the teaching portion of the class, and because they are able to re-take the floor at any time by invoking a "learning" frame, thus moving a conversation away from the more general, and back to the acquisition of both a skill and the vocabulary associated with that skill. The expectation of such events is that learners will acquire some particular skill associated with knitting, and that talk associated with that will be the focus.

During such classes, knitters acquire not only the physical technique of knitting, but also the terminology associated with such techniques. Knitters are aware of the process of vocabulary acquisition and of the different sorts of vocabulary that they acquire during the socialization process. In answering the question "Are there any topics of conversation or words or phrases that you associate with knitters and would not expect the general public to understand? If so, can you give some examples?" (2,044 responses), survey respondents gave answers which include technical vocabulary associated with the skill of knitting: knit, purl, circs, dpns, straights, cable needles, intarsia, two-stranded knitting, continental and English knitting, etc; they also include vocabulary which has more to do with the experience of membership in the broader knitting community: LYS, Sock Summit, the Yarn Harlot, Ravelry. Typical answers include both kinds of vocabulary: "Ripping, frogging, circs, dpns. The different fibers available for knitting. Handspun. Wool festivals. Sock Summit." (Survey response: 9/20/10) Some respondents distinguish explicitly between the two kinds of vocabulary, here referred to as "technical terms" related to the skill of knitting, and "inside jokes" related to knitting identity: "The sweater curse, as an inside joke. Lots of technical terms like ssk, skp etc." (Survey response: 6/15/10) Thus, vocabulary acquisition of this sort is part of the process of becoming a member of the broader knitting community – these words and phrases are recognized by knitters across the United States and other English-speaking countries.

Knitting classes, although explicitly focused on teaching the skill of knitting, inherently also include opportunities for socializing neophytes learning to knit into the community of knitters, and often, into an identity as a knitter; because these classes take place within, and help construct, certain communities of practice, they are important sites for

socialization. Because students require time to complete each step of the process they are learning before they are able to proceed to the next, and because it is possible to knit and talk at the same time, lessons also include space for other kinds of non-teaching talk to take place. Such talk is qualitatively different from teaching talk, in that all participants in the conversation are on equal footing, and turn-taking is nearly equal and is governed by more general conversational rules. Topic choice appears to be governed by community values, as discussed in more detail below; in fact, it may be that these conversations offer an early opportunity for inducting community neophytes into the non-instructional conversational and ideological norms of the particular knitting subcommunity within the context of which these classes take place.

There comes a time in many group learning situations where the teaching portion of the exercise is completed, and if the group stays together to knit for a while longer, more general conversation is privileged and teaching, if it takes place at all, occurs as a side-note to the conversation, as and when a person gets into trouble with a project. The move to this different type of conversation is not necessarily marked by a change in physical location, but is marked instead by a change in language use and, very often, by the bringing out and sharing of food. Most saliently, there is a sustained shift away from the conversational roles of teacher and student, and towards conversations which include personal anecdotes, not only about knitting, but about life experiences more generally, and in which access to the floor is granted equally to all participants; when teaching does take place, any more experienced knitter is likely to take up the role of teacher relative to someone who is having difficulty with their project. Thus, this shift from socialization into "knitting as skill" to socialization into "knitting as identity" is marked both linguistically and, very often, by the presence of food.

Food serves as a particularly potent marker of this kind of socialization opportunity for several reasons. As discussed above, food has a salient role as an index of socialization precisely because of its central role as a culturally and historically important practice in the United States (see, e.g., Ochs and Shohet 2006; Ochs and Taylor 1992, 302; Paugh 2005). Food has also been shown, in New Zealand workplaces, to occur "at meeting boundaries when the serious transactional business has been concluded and the meeting is becoming less formal" (Holmes et al 2013, 198). In other words, food serves to "ease participants across the boundary" (Holmes et al 2013, 198) between formal and informal talk. In the case of knitting, food is also salient because it indirectly indexes behavior patterns and attitudes that resonate within the community of knitters broadly writ due to alignment with prototypical behavior patterns associated with the craft of knitting. This includes the gendered nature of production: both everyday food production and general knitting production are associated predominantly with women in the United States, and specifically among the knitters who responded to my survey. Furthermore, both everyday

food and knitted products are characterized by their ephemeral and utilitarian nature. For example, both are consumed: food is eaten, and is, in fact, created in order to be eaten, while knitting is often used (admittedly more slowly) until it is worn out or outgrown. Knitting has historically also typically been ripped back when a garment is no longer useful – its yarn reclaimed and repurposed – which has led to a dearth of extant historic knitted pieces, especially relative to the number of knitted garments which have existed during knitting's thousand-year history[4]. Finally, both food and knitting can and do play similar constitutive roles in creating and maintaining family and community ties. Both often appear at the same kinds of events: births, illness, deaths, weddings, etc. And their presence is founded on the same ideological underpinnings: survey respondents, when describing their motivation to knit, cite the desire to show support and caring for loved ones, or to provide for their physical well-being, or both. Similarly, the production and service of food in such settings is also understood to be one important way to nurture friend/family/community ties and to show solidarity and caring. This set of associations appears to be salient for the North American knitting community broadly.

But there are also interesting parallels to be drawn between the particular kinds of foods offered and eaten and the food talk engaged in, and the more specific ideologies associated with knitting and its purposes within particular knitting subcommunities.[5]The rest of this paper focuses on the discourse styles and foodways associated with two knitting subcommunities, on the (food) talk which socializes knitters into those discourse styles and their associated ideologies, and on the way that ideologies associated with food and discourse are mutually reinforcing and constitutive of the socialization experience. These data are drawn specifically from the participant-observation described above at knit nights at a local yarn store in San Diego County, CA, and at a week-long retreat in the Bay Area in Fall 2009.

3.1 LYS

At the time of these observations, knit nights at the local yarn store (LYS) took place twice a month, on the first and second Wednesdays. Knitters also often gathered more informally on Wednesday and Friday afternoons as people got off work and came to knit together for an hour or so. The Wednesday evening groups typically had 10-15 people in attendance; afternoon groups were smaller, ranging from 2-8 people. Skill levels ranged widely, from knitters who were expert in most areas of knitting and who were willing to try almost anything, to knitters who were still learning basic techniques. Within this specific community of practice, the desire to learn new and harder techniques was not one which was general to all members; while there were some women who pushed themselves to master more difficult technical aspects of knitting, there were also women who had mastered the basic skill of knitting and explicitly stated that they weren't particularly interested in trying new, "hard" things – this is in contradistinction to the group described

below. Furthermore, while women in this group entered knitted objects into, for example, the local county fair, their work was not shown at juried art shows, nor did any of them make their living through their knitting (with the exception of the yarn store employees themselves, some of whom began as members of the group). The ages of knitters varied widely during the period described here, ranging from 13 (a girl who came only occasionally to knit night) to women in their early seventies. The group was majority white and middle-class. Education levels ranged, but most were at least college-educated. Political leanings also covered a wide range; the yarn store is located in a politically conservative part of the state, but at least some of the knitters leaned towards the liberal end of the spectrum. Nearly all of the knitters in regular attendance spoke English as a first language, and all of them were women.

This group was heavily engaged in knitting done for others. The store itself has sponsored several long-term KALs (knit-alongs) which result in donations for charity projects, including a Hats for Troops project, the Red Scarf project[6], and most recently Knit For the Cure, for which the women in the group knit items to be sold at auction to raise money for the Susan Komen Foundation. Charity knitting places certain constraints on knitters, depending on the project. For example, the Red Scarf project requires that scarves be some shade of red, that they be unisex in design, and that they be at least a certain size. The Knit for the Cure project requires that every item have at least some pink in it. Most charity projects require that the items be washable and dryable, which itself places significant constraints on fiber as well as design choices. This means that for projects such as these, the focus is not on the artistic nature of the object primarily, but on its utilitarian value, and on the practical questions of care. Furthermore, because these items will be donated, yarn choices tend not to be overly expensive, and luxury fibers don't play nearly as large a role as they might otherwise (and as they do for other subcommunities of knitters, as shown below). As will become clearer through comparison with the second community of knitters under consideration here, the emphasis on this kind of knitting is the expression of a coherent set of group values which include a focus on knitting as functional, on community, and on acts of charity towards groups which are important to members of the knitting group. This last is itself also constitutive of the desire to build and support community within this group; each of these charity projects is suggested by a woman with specific and personal ties to the cause (a deployed son, a battle with breast cancer), and is taken up by the larger group both as an expression of general community values associated with the broader relationship networks to which these women also belong, and as a specific and individual support of the woman and her interests and concerns.

Food choices in this group parallel these values. Most of the women in the group had jobs which were not related to their knitting or other fiber arts. Thus, knitting time was

squeezed into busy schedules (many of the women also had school-age children living at home and/or full-time job or education schedules). Furthermore, not everyone had significant disposable income. The range of cost of the food brought to knit night was broad but not discussed. Turn-taking in the bringing of food was neither assigned nor policed, but the responsibility seemed to rotate through the group fairly evenly. The food which the knitters brought to knit nights reflects these busy lives and considerations of affordability; it was typically either easy to make (e.g. banana bread) or something which was bought at one of the local stores on the way to knit night. It was almost always sweet, with the occasional foray into the area of salty snacks (e.g. crackers and hummus). The healthy nature of the food was less important than other factors: ease of preparation and presentation, the ability to eat small bits of it in little bites between rows of knitting, and, often, the idea that the food is a treat (e.g. dessert), coming, as it did, along with the "treat" of escaping busy lives to spend time with friends while knitting. It is important to note that the food was also not "challenging"; that is to say, it was food that a reasonable majority of the general population was likely to enjoy, in very much the same way that the knitting that is done for charities must appeal to a fairly large, unknown, audience. This reliance on what could be thought of as common denominator food choices and practices meant that socialization around specific food ideologies did not need to take place, permitting food to operate as an indexical tool for socializing membership into this knitter subcommunity. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the food was brought to be shared. While there were times during the Friday midday meeting when someone might bring her lunch to eat between rows, at knit night food was always put on the table for general consumption; even when a woman brought her own meal to lunch, it was fairly common to offer a bite or bit to whomever else might be at the table.

Talk about food largely paralleled talk about knitting projects, described below. All food was received appreciatively, and homemade food was typically complimented specifically. The response to such compliments often included description of how it was made, or an offer of the recipe; typically, a woman would brush aside comments on how difficult it must have been to make, or what a good cook she was, in favor of offering to share the technique or recipe. This desire to teach, share, and encourage is one which is a hallmark of the interactions among these group members, as we see in their conversations about both knitting and food. Food was not criticized or rejected. Dietary restrictions weren't typically cited in response to an offer of food; while women in the group may have such restrictions, they typically do not discuss them when food is offered (a way to maintain solidarity by not explicitly rejection someone else's food). Even side comments about a particularly decadent treat – "oh, I shouldn't, but…" – were often the same as those made about a particularly desirable skein of luxury yarn (just before the woman in question either ate the food or bought the yarn). Finally, the purpose of this sharing of food was social; while no-one was assigned to bring food, and not everyone did every time the group met,

there was always something on the table, everyone took a little something, and the presence of food greased the conversational wheels. Thus, food served not only to mark these socializing events, but as semiotic resources in the process of socialization. We see that knitting and food have the same kinds of functions, and their value is grounded in the same ideologies: finding common ground, sharing, privileging community over the individual.

The linguistic socialization that took place during these conversations, along with food, was mutually constitutive of these community values. Conversational practices followed norms which aim to maintain solidarity and reduce conflict. During the course of a gathering, talk typically moved back and forth between conversations which encompassed the whole group, and smaller, side-bar conversations between neighbors. Because of the ideological diversity of the group, and because of the privileging of community and community ties within the group, conversations tended to steer away from topics which might be controversial (although within smaller subsets of the group, when members knew that they shared a particular stance on an issue, such topics might be raised). Topics instead tended towards those in which everyone could participate one way or another (e.g. child-rearing, pet-ownership, and, of course, knitting and food), rather than to the esoteric or expert, even though some members did share such expert knowledge and would occasionally engage in side conversations about their shared areas of expertise. The policing of these boundaries took place in a non-confrontational manner, also in keeping with the desire to maintain solidarity; note here the parallels both with the way that turn-taking in the bringing of food wasn't explicitly policed, and with the way that women managed the offering of food that they didn't like or couldn't eat (i.e. a polite demurral without any specific rejection). The discourse tactics used to police these boundaries are drawn from more general discourse strategies whose focus is the avoidance of face threat.

For example, at one knit night which took place in the late spring of 2009, the topic of health care came up among the women at the table. The group that night was fairly large (approximately twelve women), and the conversation at the table varied from including everyone at the table for some topics (e.g. the presentation of finished knitted items) to smaller groups carrying on conversations simultaneously around the table (as when women were engaged in catch-up talk with their neighbors, or helping one another with difficult parts of knitting projects). The topic of health care arose during a lull in the conversation, allowing the initiator of the topic to take the floor. She expressed herself forcefully on the subject, presenting her opinion that socialized medicine always results in poor delivery of and access to medical care, and citing her experiences with medical care in government service. Responses to her conversational turn contrasted sharply with the usual responses to table-wide turns; rather than responding to or commenting on her

initial turn (as tends to happen with non-controversial topics), the group fell silent, failing to take up her topic-introduction as an opportunity to initiate a new group conversation. She responded to this silence in turn by allowing the topic to drop, and the group then engaged in a number of smaller conversations until someone successfully introduced a group-wide topic (about pets) during another conversational lull.

This deployment of silence as a policing tactic occurs in smaller groups as well, although it often proves less successful in one-on-one conversations; in such cases, the additional tactic of latching on to non-controversial subjects within a more controversial conversation is used to continue talk while maintaining solidarity in spite of differences of opinion. An example of this occurred at a Friday afternoon knitting circle which was particularly small. At one point, I sat at the table with one other knitter, who initiated a conversation about the California prison system, a topic that is controversial, particularly in the current budgetary and political climate in the state. Two other women joined us at the table after the conversation had begun, but did not engage in the talk until the speaker mentioned in passing the home business she had recently started; as she prepared to return to the main topic of the conversation, one of the silent knitters broke in with the question, “Are you very busy with that right now?”, effectively taking up the side note as a new topic, and moving the talk back into an area which allowed for more general participation without risking group solidarity by expressing an opinion which was in conflict with that of the speaker. Insofar as the introduction of potentially controversial topics violates group norms, they constitute a “breach”, and thereby reveal implicit assumptions about appropriate discourse strategies, and about the ideologies which are the underpinning of those strategies (see, e.g., Jacobs-Huey 2007, 172).

The talk about knitting itself in this group is similarly community-building. While everyone will bring their completed projects to share and to be praised, few people will engage in any kind of conversation that could be seen as bragging about skills. Statements by group members that someone’s project must have been extremely difficult, and that the speaker could never have completed such a thing, tend to be met with demurral, and with offers to teach the speaker the skill in question. Note again here the parallels with conversation about the food that knitters bring to share, described above.

It is worth noting that membership and participation in this group has been very stable over time; these women have a vested interest in maintaining solidarity. The LYS is the only one in the area (the next two closest yarn stores are about a forty-minute drive away), and for many of the group participants, these meetings represent a significant social outlet. The one split that I observed in the group (when a small subset of women with children began meeting separately away from the store so that they could bring their children with them) caused distress and much conversation among and across group

members. These women come together because of their shared interest in knitting, broadly. Because of this, their identity and practices as a group are reflective of the broader knitting community. Furthermore, in the absence of more specific shared values and interests, these women appear to fall back on the conventions associated with their age, gender, class, and ethnic backgrounds. These norms include: linguistic practices which avoid conflict while still expressing interest in the interests and abilities of their interlocutors; food sharing norms which dictate turntaking, affordability, and sharing; and knitting projects which create and reflect community ties (e.g., charity, knitting for family, etc). In this sense, this specific knitting community of practice is probably quite similar to many others found nationwide, and the women in this group might feel at home, at least superficially, if they were to find themselves in another such group. At the same time, the felt sense of specificity is strong. In particular, these women value community and solidarity with one another in spite of the potential for political, religious, ethnic, and socio-economic differences within the group to be divisive. Knitting for the purpose of consolidating ties with other people brings them together as a community, and language socialization (e.g. avoidance of controversial topics, policed through non-confrontational means) and food choices (e.g., food which is quick to prepare or buy, the responsibility of all, easy to share, and fun to eat) index and reinforce these values and thus mutually constitute a coherent socialization experience.

3.2 Institute

The week-long retreat that is the focus of the second set of observations took place at a fairly isolated venue in the San Francisco Bay Area of California, and included both dormitory-style lodging and three shared meals a day; the institute, at the time, had taken place semi-annually for a few iterations, and some in attendance were repeat participants. Each participant took two classes during the week; the classes each met for three hours every day. Dining was communal, and there were opportunities for socializing and socialization not only at meals, but also after classes, at post-dinner gatherings each night, and in dorm rooms. Participants at this particular workshop ranged in age from approximately late thirties to approximately late sixties (three participants in their late thirties were the youngest by a significant margin; their ages were the subject of comment); of the teachers and students in attendance, all but one were women. A significant number of participants were women who made some or all of their living through their fiber-related arts, including spinning, dyeing, weaving, and garment design and pattern-writing, as well as teaching. Some were exhibited artists. All participants were at the retreat to learn new techniques and skills and had as an explicit goal the desire to push themselves and their knowledge base into new areas. This group of women was also typically liberal in their political leanings, and demographically homogenous. They were almost all white and at least middle-class; most were also well educated (post-graduate degrees were common). The lack of socioeconomic diversity in particular is in no small

part an outcome of the fact that participants had access to the resources needed to attend a retreat for a week.

Classes were focused on the transmission of skills-based information and language. Because of this group's specific desire to increase knowledge and skill level and to become exposed to a wide variety of technique, while the classes structurally looked very much like those offered at the LYS, there was in each a broader range of examples, possible approaches to solving design problems, and techniques. Additionally, people often explicitly asked questions about, and discussed pros and cons of, using specific techniques, materials, or tools in particular projects. Thus, students learned not only vocabulary, but also the thought processes involved in approaching design issues. In this way, the specific subjects and structures of the classes reflected the goals of the participants' advanced skill acquisition – and took for granted a set of assumptions about the participants: that they had (significant) disposable income, and were willing and able to spend it on tools and materials. In some cases, socialization into both skills and these assumed values overlapped, as in a conversation that I had with one teacher who critiqued the quality of my sewing scissors, saying that it is important to have high-quality tools. Undergirding this statement is the assumption of values which are already shared; as I show below, this parallels conversations about other group values, including those related to food.

In spite of these specific emphases, the broader structure of the classes was similar to those seen in LYS knitting classes and knitting classes elsewhere (at conferences and workshops, for example). And, as with these other classes, those at the camp offered opportunities for socializing learners into membership in this subcommunity of knitters through acquisition of values. This took place naturally during those periods when students were practicing newly-introduced skills and could simultaneously converse about other topics; as with the LYS classes, these shifts were also often marked by the bringing out of snacks, although in this setting, snacks were not necessarily shared broadly throughout the group. The types of snacks varied, but included such items as nuts, dried fruit, trail mix, granola bars, and fresh fruit. Such opportunities were also marked by a loosening of conversational constraints and were often initiated by the teacher's sharing of an anecdote, opening the door to responses from students and to side bar conversations. As with classes at the LYS, the teacher maintained a privileged position vis-à-vis the students, in terms of being able to bring the conversation back to skills acquisition, and even, to some degree, managing conversational topics. The similarities with the LYS classes reflect a larger set of resemblances, not only across the knitting community, but in the teaching/learning classroom practices of North America, more generally.

While the structure of the classes was similar to those at the LYS, conversational norms both in informal class discussion periods and more generally during free periods at the camp, were quite different from those which prevail within the LYS group. Political topics were not shunned in the least, and most participants in such conversations were vocal and confident in their opinions. Their talk about knitting and fiber arts more generally patterned in much the same way. These were women who valued their skills, who framed their work within the fiber world in terms of "art" rather than "craft", and who discussed the distinction between the two explicitly; furthermore, participants were aware of the disjunct between this stance and broader social interpretations of fiber arts. Attitudes towards, and discussion of, the tools of their art paralleled and reflected these attitudes. Generally, participants were of the opinion that it is important to use the best and highest quality possible materials, because the products which result from these materials are art; they are meant to be lasting, and to give pleasure to both the artist, and to the viewer/wearer. Note the alignment of this philosophy with the lesson I received in class about my scissors. Most participants were creating their products either for themselves or for sale. There was frequent commentary that other people (i.e. non-knitters) don't appreciate what goes into the creation of such works, and would not know how to appropriately care for them, and that it's therefore better to give mass-market items to other people, and to save the handwork for those who are likely to understand its worth. Such decisions, in terms of materials used for, and distribution of, hand-made items privileges the creators' identities as artists, while simultaneously reflecting an ideology of in-group belonging, exclusive of the out-group. The more specific and narrow shared interests and experiences permit these women to not simply rely on the norms associated with their socioeconomic, ethnic, and national backgrounds, as do those women in the LYS group, but to develop more group-specific norms that further constitute the subcommunity instantiated and socialized through the community of practice created at the retreat.

Meal times were key venues both for socialization into these attitudes for neophytes, and for expressing solidarity around these attitudes for those who had been members of this group longer. Below is an example of a representative conversation which took place at dinner, about halfway through the retreat[7]:

> 1 K1: People at work asked me where I'd be all week.
> 2 I told them I was going to a workshop on natural dyeing.
> 3 (Gales of laughter around the table)
> 4 K1: And they say,
> 5 Oh (flat voice). (hesitation)
> 6 I hope you're OK? (sounding concerned)
> 7 'Cause they know I lost my father recently.

8 (More laughter from K1 and around the table)
9 K2: I tell them I'm going to a fiber institute,
10 and they think it's about colonics.
11 (Laughter continues)
12 K3: And I tell people I'm knitting bombs in my basement.

The laughter in this conversation arises from, and relies on, in-group knowledge shared by this subcommunity of knitters, in particular of the double meanings of "dyeing/dying" and of "fiber". Everyone around the table knows that outside of the fiber-arts world, people do not associate "fiber" with wool, etc, (see line 10) and that, furthermore, a first-pass hearing of the word "dyeing" will be interpreted by outsiders as the homophonous "dying". This is the only thing that makes the laughter that comes after K1's assertion in line 7 that her father died recently at all appropriate; her own laughter after that conversational turn (line 8) indicates that she intended her statement to be read by her audience as a solicitation of solidarity, rather than of sympathy for the loss of her father. It is this sense of solidarity that makes K3's turn (line 12) a logical follow-on to the others; as artists, these women understand the use of their art as protest and/or political and social commentary (which is what K3 is doing when she knits bombs for an art installation which is meant to query the industrial-military complex in part through the juxtaposition of bombs, as objects, and the construction of those bombs, as knitted objects), and they simultaneously have a shared image of the reaction of a non-group member to the statement that someone is knitting bombs in her basement. The laughter here is entirely in-group, and indicates solidarity throughout precisely because it is laughter aimed at non-group members, and is based on a shared understanding of the ways in which outsiders react to members of the in-group. In other words, as women are socialized into the identity of "knitter" in this specific subcommunity via these specific practices, they not only acquire the in-group understanding of what that means, but also become explicitly aware of the contradictions which exist between the in-group prototype associated with that word, and the out-group prototype. It is the differences between these which underlie the laughter in the above conversation. Furthermore, in this group, an ideology which privileges insider knowledge relative to outsider ignorance is reinforced and (re)produced by conversations like these. This ideology motivated the opinionated discussions on non-fiber topics, as mentioned above; it also motivated discourse styles in conversations that took place in the classroom during non-teaching moments. Being a knower, and expressing and defending knowledge and opinions, is valued. Such discourse styles match and support the in-group versus out-group positioning that is so critical in understanding the conversation above. Note here the use of indirection relative to the out-group, a shared understanding of which

marks in-group belonging. By contrast, within the LYS group, indirection is used between and among in-group members as a strategy to avoid negative face threat.[8]

Intriguingly, ideologies indexed by food, as well as the food shared at the institute itself, reflect these values; the theme of that year's institute was "Slow Clothes", a clear referent to the "Slow Food" movement. One of the advertising points of the institute was the fact that the food was healthy, largely organic, and grown locally whenever possible. During the week, there was a great deal of discussion about how good the food offered by the catering staff was (the food was cooked and served cafeteria-style), and about how nice it was to be able to eat well while away for a week. A number of people had dietary restrictions of some kind, something which was not typically raised as an issue at the LYS knit nights. Furthermore, food itself was seen as a political choice, rather than primarily as a tool for building community among disparate people (let alone simply seen as food/calories). Note that, because of the structure of the retreat, participants were not responsible for providing food to share within the group; shared meals were cooked and provided by the camp staff. Snacks brought by participants and eaten between meals were not assumed to be shared items. There was a great deal of discussion of foodsheds[9], of the importance of eating organically and/or locally, and of the ways in which such choices have an impact on one's health and on the environment more generally. These discussions were well-informed and the women who participated in them were, as in the fiber arts discussions described above, opinionated and confident in their stances. Furthermore, these kinds of food opinions also index a knowledge-based in-group versus out-group stance, as shown above in the conversation about fiber. Thus, once again, food served not only to mark out and constitute those occasions which were available for general socialization into the values held by this particular knitting community, but also as an index for those values and a semiotic resource in reifying them. As with the LYS group, ideologies associated with food, knitting, and discourse are coherent and mutually reinforcing.

3.3 Contrasts

I turn now to a conversation from the institute which is enlightening, in that it exemplifies clearly the differences in the ideologies into which knitters in these two communities of practice as representative of the two subcommunities of knitters are socialized. Note that all of these values exist within the broader knitting community; they are reflected in many of the answers to questions in the online survey, and often a single knitter espouses all of these values, to a greater or lesser degree. Thus, socialization into these two groups is in part a process of learning the relative prioritization of values within a given group. Conversations such as the one below are important opportunities for neophytes to acquire knowledge of that prioritization. The focus of the conversation below is the question of acrylic. This conversation took place late at night in a dorm room, over whisky and

chocolate (note the presence of food – and luxury, if not "healthy", food, at that – as one element in this socialization opportunity), among three institute participants, including me[10]. The other two were women who are in their late sixties and early seventies, both grandmothers and long-time knitters (and weavers and spinners); both of them generate income through their fiber arts. They are both self-identified feminists who took part in feminist marches in Washington in the 1960s and 1970s; they connect their fiber art to their feminism explicitly.

> 1 K4: My knitting group is all well-educated women.
> 2 They all have at least one degree or more.
> 3 I go to another one sometimes and they aren't like that at aaaalll.
> 4 (pause)
> 5 They all knit with acrylic.
> 6 K5: Could that be partly socioeconomic?
> 7 K4: I don't think so.
> 8 I mean, they knit a lot for charity.
> 9 But I think they also think it's functional.
> 10 K5: They're ashamed of their knitting.
> 11 They don't think it's worth it.

K5's statement in lines 10 and 11 is a reflection of both her feminist leanings, and of the attitude that these fiber activities constitute "art", rather than "hobby" or, even, "craft", in the sense of summer camp crafts; the distinction between "art" and "craft" and the question of how these women feel about applying one versus the other to their work and products, was the topic of several group conversations at the institute. It reflects her feminist stance in the sense that she believes that women should value the work of their own hands, enough to make time for it, spend money on it, enjoy it, take pride in it, and make products which will last and be beautiful, all without guilt. Her statement is one which reflects her sense that society at large believes that women's work is not considered worth spending much on (this is not unique to the world of knitting: see Stalp 2007 for a similar discussion with regard to the quilting community, and Druckman and Charlotte 2010 for a consideration of the gendered roles of cooks – women – and chefs – men[11]). As both "art" and as women's work, knitting is worth spending time and money on. The process of indirect indexicality by which knitting is linked to women is thus both accepted and problematized here. It is accepted in the sense of recognizing the historic truth of that link, and problematized in the sense that the kind of women to whom knitting is linked is challenged – not a passive grandmother in a rocking chair, but an active feminist on the march. In many ways, especially for this group of women, knitting is seen

to have the potential to function semiotically as a reclaimed marker, in much the same way that “queer” has been revalorized in some contexts.

What is particularly intriguing about this brief conversation is that it is clear that these two women, at least, are aware of the reasons which “other” knitters might cite for using acrylic in their knitting: those “other” knitters knit for charity and because they want their knitting to be functional (lines 8 and 9). And K4 and K5 are correct; these are exactly the reasons that the women in the LYS group provide when they talk about their yarn choices for projects intended for charity, for children, and for non-knitters. However, it is clear from the comments made by K4 and K5 that while they know these reasons intellectually, they don’t find them compelling emotionally. K5 speculates in line 6 that maybe the reason (one wonders if she’s not searching for the “real” reason because the stated reasons don’t resonate with the ideologies which underlie her attitudes towards and reasons for knitting) could be socioeconomic; when K4 refutes this (lines 7-9), K5 turns to shame as a motivating factor (line 10). These shifting indexicalities represent the relative prioritizations which are part of the specific ideologies associated with each of these subcommunities. A conversation like this is key in socializing the neophyte into the ideologies this particular group of knitters, and in reinforcing those values for group members. It is clear that knitting for charity and knitting for function are not privileged as reasons for their choice of material; knitting is valorized for other reasons among this group of women, e.g., practice of art, creation of income, expression of self-worth.

By contrast, the knitting group at the LYS privileges community above all; not community with other knitters exclusively (although that is part of it), but community with loved non-knitters, and/or with a broader community of those in need of the kind of emotional support a hand-knitted item can bring. Because the goal of knitting is to build these broad-based connections, women choose to create things that are easy, less time-consuming to make, and that are easily cared for, thus circumventing concerns that non-knitters will destroy the knitted item while still being able to give the work of one’s hands, i.e., privileging the giving. This reflects a different prioritization of values from those of the women at the institute, who choose instead to give mass-market items when they give gifts, or to donate money to charities, thereby reserving their knitting practice as a means of challenging themselves in terms of skill and to work with quality materials, or as a means of gaining income through the business of selling their art, thus privileging their identities as artists. Knitted items for each group symbolize something different: for the knitters at the LYS, knitted items are love made tangible; for the knitters at the institute, they are representative of creativity and learning, artistic drive and ability.

Food for these two groups is similarly representative: for the women of the LYS, food is friendship and community and fun and time taken for themselves – it is meant to be

shared, both in the bringing and the eating, in much the same way that charity and community-oriented knitting is shared; for the women of the institute, food is representative of political stance, and of the belief that women should demand the best for themselves, in much the same way that their knitting represents their artistry and self-care. And, finally, discourse patterns represent and reinforce these ideologies: at the LYS, maximally non-confrontational avoidance of potentially-controversial topics; at the retreat, an embracing of spirited debate on a variety of topics.

4. Conclusion

Language socialization takes place whenever a person, regardless of age, goes through the process of becoming a fully-fledged member of a social group. In this exploration of one aspect of the socialization of knitters, I hope to have shown several things. First, that this socialization has two elements: a) the acquisition of the skill of knitting and its concomitant technical vocabulary, which ties knitters into the broader community of people who know how to knit; and b) the acquisition of an identity as knitter (or, possibly, multiple "knitter" identities), along with concomitant ideologies, which ties knitters both into that broader community and into more local communities of practice. Second, that food, as an important element of childhood socializing experiences within the context of white middle-class American life, has the capacity to continue to constitute such socialization throughout the life course; in this case, it is both a marker of socialization venues and goals (skills versus values) and an index of in-group ideologies. Third, that socialization into group identity within particular communities of knitters includes the acquisition of discourse strategies which also reflect and (re)produce prevailing group ideologies. And finally, that knitting, food, and talk are all semiotic resources in performing and learning the identities of knitter described here. The co-occurrence of food, talk, and knitting within an instructional frame allows the ideologies associated with each to be mutually constitutive, and to serve as a touchstone both for neophytes during their socialization process and for groups more broadly in creating and maintaining coherence.

Endnotes

1. I would like to thank Kathleen Riley, Jillian Cavanaugh, and an anonymous reviewer for their thoughtful and tremendously helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this article; this paper is better because of their input. Of course, any remaining mistakes and shortcomings are my own. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the many knitters who have allowed me to join in their groups, as both observer and participant, and the many more who have helped me to become a better knitter. And finally, my deepest appreciation to Leela Bilmes Goldstein, for both friendship and teaching me how to knit.↩

2. A “local yarn store”, or LYS, in knitting parlance, refers to what is essentially a knitter’s home turf, the place where she most commonly goes to buy yarn, get advice, or just hang out. In this case, the LYS to which I refer is a yarn store in San Diego county, CA, where, during the period described in this paper, I participated in knit night gatherings, as well as both taking and teaching classes.↩

3. Ravelry is a social networking site for knitters, spinners, and crocheters, with more than 1,000,000 registered users at the time of writing. Sock Summit was a five-day knitting convention focused on sock knitting which took place in 2009 and 2011. At the first Sock Summit, more than 3,000 knitters attended. When the website for class registration opened in May 2009, it received more than 10,000 hits in the first 60 seconds, causing it to crash; this occurred in spite of the organizers’ attempts to convince the web host that a sock knitting convention would, in fact, receive a great deal of interest among knitters, and that the knitting world had far more members than non-knitters tend to believe. This incident is an excellent example of the kinds of mismatch of in-group/out-group ideologies described above. In this case, the web host’s prototype of “knitter” (e.g. old ladies in rocking chairs) obscured the reality of thousands of people with both interest and income to spend. It is this mismatch that knitting neophytes must negotiate in the socialization process. The site did not crash during the 2011 registration process.↩

4. While it is outside the scope of this paper to include an overview of the admittedly fascinating history of knitting and its links to, among other things, gender and economics, much has been written on this elsewhere (see, e.g., Rutt 1987; Strawn 2007).↩

5. See Duff 2010 for a similar point regarding the role of mutually-reinforcing classroom discourse practices in socializing students into broader group norms of, e.g., independence versus collaboration.↩

6. The Hats for Troops project focused on knitting either hats, or, more typically, helmet liners for troops serving in Afghanistan and Iraq; the Red Scarf project calls for handknit scarves to go into Valentine’s Day baskets to be sent to college students who have timed out of the foster care system.↩

7. This conversation is taken from field notes which were recorded directly after the meal.↩

8. Thanks to Kathleen Riley for this insight.↩

9. A parallel term to “watersheds”, the notion of foodsheds asks people to examine and understand the geographical sources of the food(s) that they eat, and is linked to movements which emphasize eating locally.↩

10. This conversation is taken from fieldnotes documented during the conversation, when we were each sitting in our own beds, with books/notebooks/knitting to hand.↩

11. Thanks go to Jillian Cavanaugh for sharing this point with me.↩

References

Ahlers, Jocelyn. 2012. Language revitalization and the (re)constituting of gender. *Gender and Language* 6(2):309-337.

Baquedano-Lopez, Patricia. 2000. Narrating community in doctrina classes. *Narrative Inquiry* 10:429-452.

Beoku-Betts, Josephine A. 1995. We got our way of cooking things: Women, food, and preservation of cultural identity among the Gullah. *Gender and Society* 9(5):535-555.

Cavanaugh, Jillian, Kathleen C. Riley, Alexandra Jaffe, Christine Jourdan, Martha Karrebaek, and Amy Paugh. 2014. What words bring to the table: The linguistic anthropological toolkit as applied to the study of food. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 24(1):84-97.

Craft Yarn Council. CYCA study shows younger women fuel yarn evolution. Accessed 8/17/11. http://www.craftyarncouncil.com/know.html.

Druckman, Charlotte. 2010. Why are there no great women chefs?. *Gastronomica* 10(1):24-31.

Duff, Patricia. 2010. Language socialization into academic discourse communities. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 30:169-192.

Dunn, Cynthia Dickel. 1999. Toward the study of communicative development as a life-span process. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* 30(4):451-454.

Eckert, Penelope, and Sally McConnell-Ginet. 1992. Communities of practice: Where language, gender, and power all live. In *Locating Power: Proceedings of the 1992 Berkeley Women and Language Conference*, edited by Kira Hall, Mary Bucholtz, and Birch Moonwoman, 89-99. Berkeley: Berkeley Women and Language Group.

Fadar, A. 2001. Literacy, bilingualism, and gender in a Hasidic community. *Linguistics and Education* 12:261-283.

Field, Margaret. 2001. Triadic directives in Navajo language socialization. *Language in Society* 30:249-263.

Garrett, Paul. 2008. Researching language socialization. In *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, 2nd Edition, Volume 10: Research Methods in Language and Education, edited by A. King and N.H. Hornberger, 189-201.

Garrett, Paul B., and Patricia Baquedano-Lopez. 2002. Language socialization: Reproduction and continuity, transformation and change. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31:339-61.

Guardado, Martin. 2009. Speaking Spanish like a Boy Scout: Language socialization, resistance, and reproduction in a heritage language Scout troop. *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 66(1):101-129.

Holmes, Janet, Meredith Marra, and Brian W. King. 2013. How permeable is the formal-informal boundary at work? An ethnographic account of the role of food in workplace discourse. In *Culture and Language Use: Studies in Anthropological Linguistics*, V. 10: Culinary Linguistics, edited by Cornelia Gerhadt, Maximiliene Froberius, and Susanne Ley, 191-209. John Benjamins.

Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2006. *From the Kitchen to the Parlor: Language and Becoming in African American Women's Hair Care*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jacobs-Huey, Lanita. 2007. Learning through the breach: Language socialization among African American cosmetologists. *Ethnography* 8(2):171-203.

Karrebaek, Martha Sif. 2012. "What's in your lunchbox today?": Health, respectability, and ethnicity in the primary classroom. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 22(1):1-22.

Karrebaek, Martha Sif. 2013. Rye bread and halal: Enregisterment of food practices in the primary classroom. *Language and Communication* 34:17-34.

Ochs, Elinor. 1992. The negotiation of context in face-to-face interactions. In *Rethinking context: Language as an Interactive Phenomenon*, edited by Duranti, Alessandro and Charles Goodwin, 323. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ochs, Elinor. 2000. Socialization. *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 9(1-2):230-233.

Ochs, Elinor, and Merav Shohet. 2006. The cultural structuring of mealtime socialization. In *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development* 111:35-49.

Ochs, Elinor, and Carolyn Taylor. 1992. Family narrative as political activity. *Discourse and Society* 3(3):301-340.

Paugh, Amy L. 2005. Learning about work at dinnertime: Language socialization in dual-earner American families. *Discourse and Society* 16(1):55-78.

Paugh, Amy L. 2008. Language socialization in working families. In *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*, *2nd Edition, Volume 8: Language Socialization*, edited by Duff, P.A. and N.H. Hornberger, 101-113.

Riley, Kathleen C. 2009. Who made the soup?: Socializing the researcher and shaping her data. *Language and Communication* 29:254-270.

Riley, Kathleen C. 2012. Learning to Exchange Words for Food in the Marquesas. In *Food: Ethnographic Encounters*, edited by L. Coleman. Oxford: Berg.

Rutt, Richard. 1987. *A History of Handknitting*. Colorado: Interweave Press.

Schieffelin, B.B. 1990. *The give and take of everyday life: language, socialization of Kaluli children (No. 9)*. CUP Archive.

Schieffelin, Bambi and Elinor Ochs. 1986. Language Socialization. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 15:163-191.

Stalp, Marybeth C. 2007. *Quilting: The fabric of everyday life*. Oxford: Berg.

Sterponi, Laura. 2003. Account episodes in family discourse: The making of morality in everyday interaction. In *Discourse Studies* 5(1):79-100.

Strawn, Susan. 2007. *Knitting America: A glorious Heritage from Warm Socks to High Art*. Minneapolis: MBI Publishing Co.

Watson, James L. 1987. From the common pot: Feasting with equals in Chinese society. In *Anthropos* 82:389-401.