

From kid talk to adolescent talk: Vowels on the preadolescent heterosexual market
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Ethnographic research in high schools (Eckert, 2000) has shown that adolescents' use of phonological variables is tied to their participation in the adolescent peer-based social order. This talk examines the origins of this peer-based social order in late elementary school. At this time, there are major differences among kids as a function of their participation in new social practices. These social practices center around the development of heterosociability (Eckert, 1996; Thorne, 1993), and are located in a heterosocial community of practice or "crowd." Focusing on the negotiation of a heterosexual social order, the crowd's activities define a social market. It is here that we can see the move from something that sounds like "kid talk" to what one might call "adolescent talk".

Based on ethnographic work in a Northern California elementary school, this talk will show that preadolescents' use of elements of the Northern California Vowel Shift is related to speakers' relation to the heterosexual market. The Northern California Vowel Shift is a rotation of vowels that involves the lowering and backing of lax front vowels and the fronting of back vowels and wedge. While all speakers front the nucleus of /uw/, there is considerable variability in the fronting of /U/ and /uh/, and the nucleus of /ow/. Further, for all speakers, there is a split between /ae/ before nasals, which raises, and in other environments, where /ae/ backs. There is considerable variability in the extent of this split. While the basic elements of this shift are present in the speech of the entire cohort, certain changes are considerably more advanced in the speech of those who are engaged in the heterosexual market. Based on acoustic and quantitative data, we will show that the move from "kid talk" to "adolescent talk" goes along with a variety of other social-developmental moves.

- Eckert, Penelope. 1996. Vowels and nailpolish: The emergence of linguistic style in the preadolescent heterosexual marketplace. *Gender and belief systems*, ed. by Jocelyn Ahlers et al., 183-90. Berkeley: Berkeley women and language group.
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