

15 Exceptional Speakers: Contested and Problematized Gender Identities

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1 Introduction

The field of language and gender has witnessed several pivotal shifts in its interpretation of normative and non-normative gender identity. This review aims to expose these shifts in an examination of the ways in which 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. What immediately becomes apparent in an overview of the literature is that linguistic deviance takes as many forms as the field has theories. In foundational discussions of language and gender in the early 1900s (e.g. Jespersen 1922) the linguistic deviant is the “woman” herself, whose speaking patterns are peculiarly divergent from more normative (in this era of scholarship, male) ways of speaking. In early feminist work by those arguing for what has been termed a *dominance model* of language and gender (e.g. Lakoff 1975), which theorizes women’s divergent speech patterns as a byproduct of male dominance, the linguistic deviant is multiplied in some texts to include all speakers who are in some way disenfranchised from institutionalized male power – women, hippies, homosexuals, and even academic men. When the field shifted in the 1980s to a *difference* or *two-cultures model* of language and gender (e.g. Maltz and Borker 1982), which works on the assumption that children are socialized into divergent interactional patterns within single-sex playgroups, the linguistic deviant resurfaced as tomboy and sissy, whose preference for other-sex playmates was discussed, oddly enough, as proving the more normative, two-cultures rule. This latter use of the linguistic deviant could be said to parallel early discussions of non-Indo-European “women’s languages” and “men’s languages” in the first half of the twentieth century

(e.g. Chamberlain 1912; Sapir 1915, 1929; Furfey 1944; Haas 1944; Flannery 1946), where the effeminate man, and occasionally the “feminist” or “young” woman, appear in the footnotes as strange and deviant exceptions to an otherwise unshakable linguistic dichotomy.

But footnote deviance does not end with effeminate and feminists. Because the overwhelming majority of our field’s theories have been based not just on the speech patterns of heterosexuals (see McElhinny, this volume), but also on those of White middle-class English speakers, the deviant “ethnic” is also a common character, particularly in discussions that seek to make universal claims about how women and men speak (see Trechter, this volume). Most notable in this respect are studies supporting a two-cultures model of language and gender, where women whose speech styles do not conform to those identified for the unmarked middle-class White woman become problematic for the theory. Here, the “African American female” surfaces as our most marked footnote deviant, whose supposedly more direct speaking style wins her regular and honorable mention. When scholars began to diversify the canon by studying the speech patterns of men and women in a variety of communities, societies, and cultures, a new theory of language and gender was born that has as its focus organizations of language and gender in particular *communities of practice* (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992). It is only when the field shifts to this perspective that we begin to see the purported linguistic deviant on her or his own terms, as a member of a community whose speaking styles are influenced by more localized norms of language and gender (see Besnier, this volume; Leap, this volume). Because what is “normative” becomes potentially infinite within this theoretical paradigm, the research canon becomes diversified as well, enabling not only more sophisticated research on language, gender, and ethnicity, but also the development of a field that has the sexual and gender deviance of previous generations at its center: *queer linguistics*.

This chapter, then, serves as what we might call an “underbelly” review of major works in language and gender research. It is not my intention to criticize earlier studies for their exclusions of certain communities of speakers; such an undertaking would be an unfair and pointless enterprise, particularly as all theories are limited by the intellect of the time in which they were developed. In contrast, I offer this review as an exposition of the historical shifts governing our field’s understanding of normativity on the one hand and deviance on the other. What I illustrate here is that the concept of non-normative gender identity, while addressed in the gender and language literature in a peripheral manner until quite recently, is nevertheless foundational to the major theoretical perspectives that have developed within the field of language and gender.

2 Footnote Effeminate and Feminists

The field’s first exceptional speakers surface in a flurry of anthropological discussions on sex-based “languages” that appeared at the turn of the twentieth

century. Early anthropologists and ethnographers, in their explorations of non-European languages and cultures, developed the twin concepts of “women’s language” and “men’s language” as a means of explaining the morphological and phonological differences they observed between the speech of women and men. It is appropriate to begin our discussion here, not only because the work of these anthropologists ushered in a long trajectory of intertextual discussion regarding the social origins of gendered ways of speaking, but also because their representations of non-Indo-European languages initiated a dichotomous understanding of normative linguistic behavior that remains surprisingly influential in the field today.

What many of these texts have in common is what I identify here as “footnote deviance” – the casual and cursory mention of speakers who, simply put, do not play by the linguistic rules. Because so many of these scholars were, in pre-Whorfian mode, discussing the divergent patterns of speaking for women and men in these societies as reflecting and reinforcing a social configuration of gender unknown to more “civilized” European cultures, the unyielding nature of the dichotomy between women’s speech and men’s speech was repetitively emphasized, so much so that scholars regularly spoke of these gender-influenced varieties as “separate languages” (see, for instance, Richard Lasch’s 1907 discussion of “Frauensprache”). What results is the kind of representation aptly identified by Sara Trechter (1999) as linguistic exoticism, where non-European languages, and the cultures carried through them, are portrayed as having rigidly defined gender roles, even to the point of restricting the way people talk on the basis of sex. The early portraits of languages like English are hardly parallel, for even when divergent patterns of speaking for women and men are acknowledged, as in Otto Jespersen’s (1922) early piece on “The Woman,” they are discussed more as a matter of individual choice, if not taste. And so we arrive at the long-standing distinction in the literature between “sex-exclusive languages” on the one hand and “sex-preferential languages” on the other, with the first designation giving the impression of rigidity and coercion and the second of fluidity and choice. In Trechter’s own words, the exoticizing logic goes something like this:

People who have gendered linguistic forms are radically different from European Americans; they are the people who actively restrict the speech of others in their rigid societies, whereas we have the choice to prefer certain linguistic variables over others in our free, modern society. (1999: 104)

It may come as some surprise, then, that linguistic deviance is at all discussed in the early literature on so-called sex-exclusive languages. Yet even as scholars are presenting the “women’s languages” and “men’s languages” of various non-European cultures as rigidly dichotomized and mutually exclusive, they also make mention of the speakers who buck the system. The most popular of these deviants is the effeminate man, the cross-talker whose non-conformity to a sex-exclusive language model makes him not just a linguistic anomaly, but a social weirdo, an outcast. The fact that he is labeled as “effeminate” or

“womanly” by the rest of society for using women’s language is then held up as evidence for the extreme and unforgiving nature of the model. An early example of this approach comes to us from Alexander Chamberlain (1912) who, in a two-page review that appeared in *American Anthropologist* entitled “Women’s Languages,” discusses how male Caraya speakers interpret women’s language as “‘very bad’ and make jests about it” (1912: 580). After pointing out that one of the chief differences in the speech of the two sexes is that women insert consonants (most commonly *k* or *h*) between vowels, Chamberlain offers the following aside:

Dr. Krause confirms this, and cites the jest of the Caraya Indian Pedro, who said one day that Dr. Krause’s companion, Francisco Adam, “was a woman,” because he pronounced the Brazilian word *jacuba* (a kind of drink), not *šāūbā*, as a man would have done, but *šākūbā* after the fashion of the women. (Chamberlain 1912: 580)

The anecdote works to affirm the “separateness” of the two varieties, since a male speaker who crosses the linguistic divide will not just be seen as womanly or effeminate, he will actually *be* a woman. It is noteworthy that this statement occurs only after Chamberlain has reviewed a number of different theories regarding the origin and significance of women’s languages, in which he rejects an early argument by the explorer Bréton, that such languages might have occurred as a result of the tribal stealing of foreign women, in favor of later socio-economic explanations developed by Sapper (1897) and Lasch (1907). For Chamberlain, the severity of the sex-divide illustrated by this anecdote affirms the severity of the sex-based division of occupation and labor “among primitive peoples” (1912: 579). The resulting portrait of women’s and men’s language use is rigidly dichotomous, so much so that a speaker’s use of the “other” variety changes his sex altogether in the public perception.

A more modern example of this same approach is found thirty years later in Paul Furfey’s (1944) review entitled “Men’s and Women’s Language,” which includes the following footnote as a quick aside: “Particularly interesting was Dr. Herzfield’s observation that a man using a woman’s expression would be considered effeminate” (1944: 223n). As the author offers no further explanation in the footnotes as to why this observation is “particularly interesting,” the import of the comment is clear only when read alongside the larger argument developed within the text. Throughout the review, Furfey repeatedly suggests that the sex-based linguistic differences evident in many non-European languages point to a “consciousness of men and women as different categories of human beings” – one that is, in his own words, “bound up with a masculine assertion of superiority” (1944: 222). The implication, of course, is that the same sort of hierarchical consciousness does not exist in European cultures, a point Furfey alludes to early on in his stated goals for writing the article: “The present paper will discuss divergencies in the language usages of men and women, a phenomenon which is barely discernible in the familiar languages

of Europe, but which is not at all uncommon among primitive peoples" (1944: 218). In fact, Furfey compares the gender stratification evident in these so-named "primitive" cultures with the class stratification of European cultures, arguing that their use of women's and men's languages parallels the use of standard and non-standard dialects in English. Whereas language in English is used "as an aid to upper-class control," says Furfey, language in these more primitive groups "serves as a tool of sex dominance." Furfey's review, then, by avoiding any in-depth discussion of gender in European languages, works to exoticize the oppressive nature of gender in non-European cultures. And the most exotic proof of this oppression is the linguistic effeminate, whose use of women's speech situates him on the social hierarchy as squarely female. Since it is through men's language that masculine superiority is asserted, a man who uses women's language is necessarily emasculated to a position of powerlessness.

The significance of this emasculation potential is also articulated in Regina Flannery's (1946) article on "Men's and Women's Speech in Gros Ventre," albeit for a rather different reason. We find a slight shift of tone in this article, as Flannery appears to move away from previous representations of sex-based speaking styles as distinct "languages" with her use of the term "speech differences" (a theoretical positioning reflected in the article's title). But in keeping with previous research, Flannery nevertheless emphasizes the mutually exclusive nature of these gendered styles, making bold statements such as "there are numerous interjections which may be used only by men and others equally numerous which may be used only by women" (1946: 133). Two pages later, however, we find out that there are indeed exceptions to what is presented here as an unyielding rule when we learn, somewhat abruptly, of the place of the "mannish" woman and "effeminate" man in language shift:

One such woman said that the expressions used by women are "more modest" and that if a woman used men's words she would be considered mannish, and likewise a man who used women's words would be considered effeminate. A much older woman said that if a member of either sex "talked like the other" he or she was considered bisexual. This she illustrated by telling of the mortification suffered by the parents of a boy who persisted in acting like a girl in every way. The boy's mother was so sensitive that "she never went about and she just bowed her head in shame when her son was heard talking like a woman." (Flannery 1946: 135)

Flannery's use of the terms "mortification" and "shame" toward the end of this brief passage is telling, in that she wants to underscore the dichotomous nature of these linguistic varieties by exposing the social damage caused by their misuse. We later learn that it is this very mortification and shame that is accelerating language loss in the more general population. Because children are afraid that they will be "laughed at" by older generations for being bisexual if they make a linguistic mistake of this nature – knowing, as they do, "the connotations in the minds of older generations" (1946: 135) – they choose to

avoid using Gros Ventre altogether by speaking only English. Flannery's argument, then, is a historical one, and our footnote effeminate wins the dubious distinction of promoting language shift.

It is perhaps not incidental that Flannery discusses English as "freeing" the younger generations of Gros Ventre speakers from the rigidity of linguistic gender in their mother tongue. The kind of evolutionary logic reflected in her discussion of language shift is evident in the vast majority of these early descriptions of men's and women's languages, which regularly contrast the "archaic" and "primitive" nature of sex-exclusive language systems with the modernity carried by sex-preferential systems such as English. A case in point is Otto Jespersen's (1922) early discussion entitled "The Woman," in which he outlined the many different kinds of sex differentiation evident in the world's languages. An important fact that has gone unnoticed about Jespersen's article – now infamous in language and gender studies for its representation of "the woman" as the linguistic Other – is the evolutionary logic betrayed by its organization.

This is apparent in the way in which he contrasts the types of linguistic differences that exist in "primitive tribes" with those of "civilized peoples." The extreme phonetic differences existing in non-European languages give way to "very few traces of sex dialects in our Aryan languages" (1922: 206) followed by only "a few differences in pronunciation between the two sexes" (1922: 209) in contemporary English. The vocabulary and word-choice differences evident for the sexes in English, in contrast to the phonetic differences evident for the sexes in non-European languages, hold a more advanced position on the evolutionary linguistic continuum. This representation hinges on Jespersen's sociological explanations for phonetic divergence, with primitive tribes and early civilized peoples sharing a sex-based division of labor that resulted in different phonological systems for men and women. Modern-day languages like English do not have distinctive grammars for the two sexes since the age-old division of labor has, in Jespersen's understanding, only "lingering effects" (1922: 219) in the twentieth century.

This teleological logic is also betrayed by the kinds of exceptional speakers Jespersen chooses for three of his four "time periods" in language and gender relations. We move from the young Carib-speaking man who is not "allowed" to pronounce the war-words of men's language until passing certain tests of bravery and patriotism, to the sixteenth-century French-speaking effeminate who imitates women in his reduction of the trilled *r*, to the modern-day English-speaking feminist who imitates the slang of men. The gendered rigidity evident in the non-European languages mentioned at the beginning of the article gives way to a certain fluency in the European languages discussed later, with the crucial turning point being sixteenth-century France. It is at this juncture, suggests Jespersen, that the sex-based division of labor, with its rigid linguistic reflexes, is replaced by a sex-based public-private dichotomy – a sociological shift that leads not to separate languages, but to slight differences in pronunciation in men's and women's speech (Jespersen 1922: 208–9).

Significantly, Jespersen cites Erasmus's note that female impersonators are the sole exception to what would otherwise be a "woman's" phonetic rule; this marks a transitional moment between the sex-exclusive systems of primitive times and the less rigid gender distinctions of modern-day English (see Freed, this volume, on the rigidity of gender distinctions in general). In the subsequent paragraph, Jespersen makes this transition overtly clear when he concludes:

In present-day English there are said to be a few differences in pronunciation between the two sexes [. . .], but even if such observations were multiplied – as probably they might easily be by an attentive observer – they would be only more or less isolated instances, without any deeper significance, and on the whole we must say that from the phonetic point of view there is scarcely any difference between the speech of men and that of women: the two sexes speak for all intents and purposes the same language. (1922: 209)

Jespersen's exceptional speakers, then, enter the text in order to illuminate how our present-day linguistic and cultural situation differs from that of the less civilized world that precedes us. The height of this linguistic evolution is captured by the educated feminist of the final time period. Her use of the "new and fresh expressions" of men, precipitated by "the rise of the feminist movement" (1922: 212), points to an equality between the sexes that was heretofore non-existent. The divergent uses of vocabulary and syntax that Jespersen subsequently identifies are then theorized not as sociological, but as cognitive, psychological, and personal.

3 The Woman

Given the care with which many of these early anthropologists describe both "men's language" and "women's language" as normative aspects of a particular linguistic and cultural system, Jespersen's more concentrated focus on "the woman" marks an important theoretical shift in the literature. Jespersen ushered in a new understanding of linguistic deviance, with English-speaking women and their speech peculiarities usurping the cross-talking effeminate of non-European cultures. In contrast to some of the more balanced discussions of language and gender that preceded him, Jespersen – in his more concentrated gaze on "the woman" and her conversational patterns – portrays men's speech as normative and women's as deviant. This is a new form of linguistic exoticism, one that has "women's speech" in modern-day English as its target instead of the women's and men's languages of non-European cultures. The scholars who followed Jespersen, also observing differences between women's conversational patterns and the more socially accepted or dominant patterns of men, tended to

represent women's speech as abnormal, as the marked case, as norm-breaking. In this segment of our field's early history, then, the most contested and problematized gender identity becomes "the woman" herself.

This trend intersects with the anthropological tradition in important ways. Even though a surprising number of anthropologically oriented scholars had argued, for various non-European languages, that women's forms were sometimes more archaic than men's forms – among them Albert Gatchet (1884) for Hitchiti, Paul Ehrenreich (1894) and Fritz Krause (1911) for Caraya, Waldemar Bogoras (1922) for Chukchee, Mary Haas (1944) for Koasati, and Edward Sapir (1929) for Yana – the academic prose tends to position women's forms as nevertheless derivational. Gatchet, for instance, spends some time discussing the existence of an "ancient female dialect" in Hitchiti, still spoken by women and elders in the community. But even though he claims that this dialect was formerly the language of men as well as women, he goes on to give a grammar only of the newer "common form (or male language)," avoiding any further discussion of the dialect. Although the women's variety is older and apparently basic, Gatchet's prose positions it as both "uncommon" and marked. We see a comparable positioning in Edward Sapir's (1929) discussion of "Male and Female Forms of Speech in Yana," a text that aims to make a claim about the "linguistic psychology" of women and men. In the beginning of the article, Sapir is careful to argue for two different directions of derivation in Yana, with male forms fundamental in some cases and female forms fundamental in others. Yet in his conclusion, when theorizing why these sex forms might have come to exist in the first place, he ignores the latter of these directions altogether and discusses women's forms as purely reductive and derivational (a decision that seems to rest on an earlier observation that the male form in both cases "is longer than the female form"): "Possibly the reduced female forms constitute a conventionalized symbolism of the less considered or ceremonious status of women in the community. Men, in dealing with men, speak fully and deliberately; where women are concerned, one prefers a clipped style of utterance!" (1929: 212). There is no way for women to win in these early texts: when their language forms are discussed as fundamental or older, they are theorized as conservative and archaic before their more innovative and youthful male counterparts; when their language forms are discussed as derived or newer, they are theorized as psychologically deviant or otherwise abnormal.

But Sapir deserves credit for at least considering derivational processes, unlike many of his contemporaries who unreflectingly assumed men's speech to be basic. Typifying this approach is the work of Chatterji (1921), who equates the Bengali language with men's speech and discusses the speech of women, children, and the uneducated classes as derivational (he describes all three groups, for instance, as pronouncing the Bengali initial *l* as *n*). As Ann Bodine (1975) argues in her insightful review of this literature, Chatterji's description, without historical or internal evidence to the contrary, could just as appropriately be rendered in the opposite direction, particularly since women, children, and the uneducated classes make up the overwhelming majority of the

Bengali-speaking population. The simple fact that so many of the early articles on sex differentiation in language carry the title “Women’s Speech” or “Women’s Language” points to an understanding of male speech as *the* language and women’s speech as a kind of oddity (see Bodine).

In fact, the term *peculiar* becomes the most common descriptor for women’s speech in the literature of this period. Jespersen (1922) himself is a big fan of this buzzword, using it to describe women’s divergent uses of vocabulary (e.g. “The use of *common* in the sense of “vulgar” is distinctly a feminine peculiarity”), as well as to theorize women’s divergent uses of syntax (“These sentences are the linguistic symptoms of a peculiarity of feminine psychology”). His prose parallels that of Bogoras (1922) in his article on Chukchee published during the same year, who also discusses certain facets of women’s pronunciation as sounding “quite peculiar”:

Women generally substitute *š* for *č* and *r*, particularly after weak vowels. They also substitute *šš* for *rk* and *čh*. The sounds *č* and *r* are quite frequent, so that the speech of women, with its ever-recurring *š*, sounds quite peculiar, and is not easily understood by an inexperienced ear. (Bogoras 1922: 665)

Bogoras’s discussion is an especially clear case of the male linguistic gaze that characterizes much of this literature, with the author assuming a male readership that would identify with male uses of the language as opposed to female ones (certainly these phonetic forms do not sound so peculiar to the women who use them). The same gaze is evident in Sapir’s (1915) article on “Abnormal Types of Speech in Nootka,” published just seven years earlier, where he describes the “peculiar forms of speech” used by and for a variety of social deviants, among them fat people, abnormally small people, hunchbacks, lames, left-handed people, cowards, and circumcised males. Sapir’s attempt to render these kinds of distinctions “less glaringly bizarre” by paralleling them to the sex distinctions found in non-European languages such as Eskimo is a noble undertaking. But it forces a parallel between women and other “deviants” that paves the way for subsequent representations of women as the peculiar linguistic Other.

4 Hippies, Historians, and Homos

We find reflexes of this early trend even in the ethnographically informed discussions of women’s and men’s speech patterns that surfaced with the rise of speech act theory in the 1960s and 1970s. Elinor Keenan (Ochs)’s ([1974] 1996) oft-cited study of Malagasy-speakers in Madagascar, entitled “Norm-Makers, Norm-Breakers: Uses of Speech by Men and Women in a Malagasy Community,” is a case in point. Keenan (Ochs) spends the first three-quarters of her article outlining the linguistic repertoire of “the people of

Namoizamanga" (1996: 100), describing in great detail their varied discursive strategies for avoiding direct affront. It is only in the last few pages of the article that we come to realize that women are not included in this description because of their preference for a more direct and confrontational speaking style. Although Keenan (Ochs) presents Malagasy-speaking men as "norm-makers" and Malagasy-speaking women as "norm-breakers," the women of her study are certainly adhering to "a norm" just as much as the men are: their expected participation in more direct forms of information-finding, bargaining, and child-scolding speaks to the strength and persistence of that very norm. But since it is a norm deemed inferior by the more dominant male-speaking population, Keenan (Ochs) chooses to portray the speech of these Madagascar women as deviant, or even (as the title of her article might imply) subversive. The representation of women as a problematized gender identity, then, becomes central to feminists working within the *dominance model* of language and gender, which focuses on how women's speech patterns are trivialized, or otherwise marginalized, in male-dominant societies. Norms in such studies are viewed as singular, and women become the non-normative exception.

But the women of these texts rarely stand as the lone exception to an oppressive discursive regime. As with Sapir's (1915) work on deviant speech in Nootka, early researchers frequently discussed the speech patterns of women with reference to other marginalized identities in order to emphasize their abnormality, or as in the case of Robin Lakoff (1975), to highlight their disenfranchisement from the powers that be. Lakoff's text *Language and Woman's Place* is worth spending some time on here, not only because it is generally considered the prototype of dominance models of language and gender, but also because it established a new way of conceptualizing the relationship between gender, language, and marginality. Most scholars have read Lakoff's work as being exclusively concerned with women's patterns of speaking, ignoring her rather extensive discussions of a variety of other identities presented as problematic, among them the effeminate homosexual, the anti-capitalist hippie, and the asocial male professor. Because Lakoff is interested in the socializing forces that produce an asymmetry in the way women and men speak, she tests her theoretical argument with reference to the speakers who are in some way tangential to this socialization. For Lakoff, women have much in common with homosexuals, hippies, and academics: specifically, all of these identities share a marginality determined by their exclusion from institutionalized male power.

Central to Lakoff's explanation for this shared marginality is the gendered division of labor, and more specifically, the divergent ways of speaking brought about by this division. This concern prompted her to devote several pages of her discussion to Lionel Tiger's *Men in Groups*. Tiger's book, published in 1969, develops a classic anthropological argument about how gender works, attributing divergent behaviors in women and men to an evolutionary division of labor along the lines of biological sex. Like many physical anthropologists of this era, Tiger supports the explanatory power of a "man-the-hunter" model

of human evolution, which holds that the evolution of male-dominant human societies was initiated by cooperative male hunting, a sex-based behavior observed in primates and supposed to have existed in primitive human communities. For Tiger, this evolutionary argument is key to an understanding of the concept for which he is most well known: male bonding in human societies. While primitive females stayed behind with their young and made decisions primarily in an individual capacity, the males were forced by the circumstances of labor to develop a group mentality. Because the hunt would be successful only if the hunters found ways to cooperate with one another, primitive males, unlike their female counterparts, began to develop interactive techniques to enhance group enjoyment and minimize personal friction. These interactive techniques, according to Tiger, find their modern-day realization in human male-bonding rituals.

Scores of articles written by feminist anthropologists subsequently challenged the man-the-hunter model of human evolution, including Nancy Tanner and Adrienne Zihlman's (1976; see also Zihlman 1978) female-focused model of human evolution often referred to as the "woman-the-gatherer" challenge (see di Leonardo 1991), a perspective that presumably allows for the possibility of some kind of group mentality for women as well. But Lakoff did not have the benefit of these critiques, writing as she was in the early 1970s, and she embraces Tiger's evolutionary discussion of male bonding as one way of explaining women's and men's differential orientations to politeness. Women, excluded from a male workplace built on "present-day reflexes of male bonding" (1975: 77), tend to orient themselves to politeness forms that discourage bonding, gravitating toward the first two rules of Lakoff's politeness paradigm: Formality (keep aloof) and Deference (give options). Men, on the other hand, as a result of their socialization within workplace situations that require them to develop techniques of working together as a group, are more likely to embrace Lakoff's third rule of politeness: Camaraderie. The latter rule would be essential in, for example, a male-dominated corporate workplace, as group members must develop interactive measures to gloss over emotional reactions and disagreements that might hinder progress toward a common goal. These are measures women have generally not needed to develop, Lakoff suggests, since they have historically been excluded from these group-oriented work environments.

Lakoff's remark that women's use of terms like *divine* is "not a mark of feelings of inferiority but rather a mere badge of class" (1975: 52) is telling in this respect, as she situates women within a powerless "female class" that exists outside of the institutionalized power structure and employs a non-work-related vocabulary deemed irrelevant by this very power structure. Her use of the term *female class*, incidentally, is quite consistent with radical feminist discussions of the time that identified women as a *fourth world* (e.g. Burris 1973) or *separate caste* (e.g. Dunbar 1970). Barbara Burris, for instance, in her "Fourth World Manifesto," argued that women around the world form a caste colonized and denigrated by male imperialism. But while for Burris "the long suppressed and ridiculed female principle" is "a female culture of emotion,"

for Lakoff the ridiculed principle is a female culture of talk. Certainly Lakoff's emphasis on the discriminating effects of the dichotomization of public and domestic spheres is prominent in the work of many feminist theorists of the time, not the least of which include Sherry Ortner's (1974) and Michelle Rosaldo's (1974) socially based arguments for the universal subordination of women in the early 1970s. "Woman's place," to borrow from the title of Lakoff's book, is a place excluded from the public sphere of men's work, and the language patterns that have developed as a result of this exclusion are devalued as "women's language."

The notion of a masculine workplace, then, is fundamental to Lakoff's theoretical explanation for men's and women's differential use of linguistic phenomena. This explains why academic males, hippies, and homosexuals occupy the margins of Lakoff's text as problematized gender identities. Like women, these groups are in some way excluded from a social history of male bonding in the labor force, and as with women, this exclusion leads to language patterns dissociated from what Lakoff terms "real-world power." The following excerpts from Lakoff's text – concerned with hippies, academic men, and homosexuals, respectively – underscore the fact that her text is not so much about gender as it is about power:

Hippies

I think it is significant that this word ["groovy"] was introduced by the hippies, and, when used seriously rather than sarcastically, used principally by people who have accepted the hippies' values. Principal among these is the denial of the Protestant work ethic: to a hippie, something can be worth thinking about even if it isn't influential in the power structure, or moneymaking. Hippies are separated from the activities of the real world just as women are – though in the former case it is due to a decision on their parts, while this is not uncontroversially true in the case of women. (Lakoff 1975: 13)

Academic men

Another group that has, ostensibly at least, taken itself out of the search for power and money is that of academic men. They are frequently viewed by other groups as analogous in some ways to women . . . what they do doesn't really count in the real world . . . The suburban home finds its counterpart in the ivory tower: one is supposedly shielded from harsh realities in both. Therefore it is not too surprising that many academic men . . . often use "women's language." (Lakoff 1975: 14)

Homosexuals

It is of interest, by the way, to note that men's language is increasingly being used by women, but women's language is not being adopted by men, apart from those who reject the American masculine image [for example, homosexuals]. This is analogous to the fact that men's jobs are being sought by women, but few men are rushing to become housewives or secretaries. The language of the favored group, the group that holds the power, along with its nonlinguistic behavior, is generally adopted by the other group, not vice versa. (Lakoff 1975: 10)

For Lakoff, male hippies, male academics, and male homosexuals are all in some sense gender deviants – identities who have forsaken a capitalistic power structure built on masculine ideals for pursuits considered trivial in the “real world.” This would explain, suggests Lakoff, why the language patterns of hippie, academic, or homosexual so often appear to resemble that of the American middle-class housewife. That these disenfranchised groups are likely to use some of the same specialized lexical items as American middle-class women, she argues, points to a more general conclusion: “These words aren’t, basically, ‘feminine’; rather they signal ‘uninvolved’ or ‘out of power’” (1975: 14). While certain patterns of speech may be considered feminine because women are, in her own terms, the “‘uninvolved’ ‘out of power’ group *par excellence*,” Lakoff is careful to note that any group in society may use patterns associated with “women’s language” (an observation that best explains her consistent use of scare quotes around the term). For Lakoff, then, it is the feminine-sounding male, marginal to the world of institutionalized masculinity, who ultimately enables her to formulate the crux of her argument: “The decisive factor is less purely gender than power in the real world” (1975: 57).

Yet in spite of their centrality to Lakoff’s theory, these marginal figures are frequently, if not entirely, overlooked in subsequent discussions of her work. The majority of her critics, swept up in an imperative to test her argument empirically, interpreted Lakoffian “women’s language” to be only about women, developing study upon study to determine whether or not female speakers actually use “women’s language” more than their male interlocutors. What is amusing, in retrospect, is that a great number of these studies analyze the speech patterns of the very academics that Lakoff identifies as linguistically divergent. Betty Lou Dubois and Isabel Crouch (1975), for instance, in an adversarial critique often cited as “disproving” Lakoff’s hypothesis (see, for example, Cameron 1985: 44), offer as empirical data an analysis of the “conversational give-and-take” in a question-and-answer period at an academic conference. Besides the fact that the authors of this article give us no information on how many women are actually participating in the discussion analyzed, the empirical finding that “33 tag questions were spoken by men, *none* by women” (1975: 293) is hardly relevant to Lakoff’s overall theoretical argument, particularly in the context of an article that makes no mention of the Lakoffian buzzword *power*.¹ Perhaps this oversight is also behind Crosby and Nyquist’s (1977) seeming portrayal of themselves as original authors of the claim that both men and women may use “women’s language.” Quoting Lakoff out of context as asserting that women’s language is “language restricted in use to women” (1977: 315, fn. 3), they choose to rename Lakoff’s “women’s language” as *the female register* so as to allow for men’s use of these variables as well. While the authors do recognize that Lakoff’s central argument has to do with power, they reinterpret her discussion of power as being more about job status than about access to male work environments (or institutionalized masculinity), opposing her claim with the finding that there is no difference in the speech of high-status (male) police officers and low-status (male) police clerks.

Misreadings like these point to a more general critique regarding the unsophisticated manner in which such concepts as “power” and “status” have been theorized and evaluated in quantitatively oriented language and gender research. But Crosby and Nyquist’s mission to distinguish the female register from the female speaker is nevertheless admirable, and it is this distinction, also voiced by O’Barr and Atkins (1980) in their focus on the use and perception of “powerful” and “powerless” language in the speech of trial witnesses, that in many ways enabled the development of *queer linguistics* – a field that explicitly questions the assumption that gendered ways of talking are indexically derived from the sex of the speaker.

5 Sissies and Tomboys

The 1980s ushered in an alternative flavor of language and gender research, marked in part by Daniel Maltz and Ruth Borke’s (1982) proposal of a new framework for examining differences in the language use of American women and men. Their approach, sometimes identified as a *two-cultures* or *difference model* of language and gender, holds that American women and men come from two different sociolinguistic subcultures, in which they learn different rules for interacting with one another and interpreting conversational contributions. In a gender-oriented extension of John Gumperz’s (1982) cultural approach to inter-ethnic communication, Maltz and Borke based their argument on a variety of studies on childhood playgroups that find that boys and girls orientate to their own sex as preschoolers and develop divergent interaction patterns. The singular norm of studies in the dominance approach becomes dual again, with male and female speakers traveling on different (and frequently oppositional) tracks of normativity. What is interesting about Maltz and Borke’s platform for this review is a short aside in their concluding notes, where they give us the “tomboy,” together with “lesbians and gay men,” as one of “a number of specific problems that appear to be highly promising for future research” (1982: 94). Why these marginal identities might be problematic for a two-cultures approach to language and gender (or “potential research problems,” in the words of Maltz and Borke) is fairly clear. Because the argument is based on the assumption that boys and girls are socialized into interaction differently in their single-sex playgroups, what happens to the theory when we find children who appear to shun this very socialization? Do they, for instance, grow up to be lesbians and gay men who share conversational patterns with the other sex? The sissy and the tomboy, then, as apparent exceptions to a socialization rule presented as having few if any defectors, become oddly important to a two-cultures perspective.

The most overtly theorized discussion of sissies and tomboys appears in Eleanor Maccoby’s (1998) *The Two Sexes: Growing Up Apart, Coming Together*,

a comprehensive review of previous research that supports a two-cultures approach to the subject of gender. Maccoby is interested in how biological, social, and cognitive forces come together to constitute what she calls gender's "explanatory web," creating divergent patterns of behavior for the two sexes that begin in the womb, materialize in early childhood, remain through adulthood, and are ultimately transferred to the next generation. In contrast to much of the two-cultures research that has as a main goal a description of "what boys do" as opposed to "what girls do" (offering linguistic evidence, for instance, to support the claim that boys' interaction is more "hierarchical" while girls' is more "collaborative"), Maccoby seeks to determine *why* these interactional differences arise in the first place. As her focus is on gender conformity in same-sex childhood playgroups, not dissension, tomboys and sissies appear in the text not so much as trouble-shooters for a two-cultures approach (or as identities whose interaction is interesting in their own right), but as exceptions that prove the more normative rule. And because this normative rule is produced biologically as well as socially for Maccoby, our tomboy and sissy come to play an interesting role in her theorizing of each of these influences.

Maccoby's primary sociological argument for why divergent patterns of interaction exist between the two sexes has to do with the "greater strength" (1998: 41) of boys' playgroups as opposed to girls'. The forces binding groups of boys together, she argues, are much stronger than those binding girls together, leading to a much more exclusionary kind of play in which peer group acceptance becomes the overriding concern. Boys therefore have a much greater need for recognition from other boys, and this drives them to engage in the status-oriented discursive behaviors identified by many linguists for all-boys' groups. What better way to prove the strength of boys' groups than to reference the sissy, whose inappropriate participation in these male rituals wins him rejection from his peers? The sissy not only evidences the strength of male socialization, says Maccoby, since we find boys accusing other boys of sissy behavior from preschool on if their activities are deemed too girl-like, he also highlights the restrictive nature of that socialization. The fact that girls do not enact sanctions against tomboy behavior in the same way that boys enact sanctions against sissy behavior illustrates that boys' groups are more cohesive, more conforming, more gender-exclusionary: "Clearly, an essential element in becoming masculine is becoming not-feminine, while girls can be feminine without having to prove that they are not masculine" (1998: 52). It is worth noting that Maccoby's use of the tomboy is diametrically opposed to Lakoff's (1975), who points to the "little girl [who] talks rough like a boy" as evidence for the strength of female socialization. For Lakoff, the fact that the tomboy is "ostracized, scolded, or made fun of" by parents and friends is suggestive of how society "keeps her in line, in her place" (1975: 5). In fact, this scenario functions as one half of the Batesonian double-bind that Lakoff employs as central to her overall argument:

If she refuses to talk like a lady, she is ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine; if she does learn, she is ridiculed as unable to think clearly, unable to take part in a serious discussion: in some sense, as less than fully human. (1975: 6)

The disparity between Lakoff's and Maccoby's sociological analysis of the tomboy could be a result of the twenty-year time differential between the two texts. Barrie Thorne (1993), in her ethnographic study of gender in American elementary schools, suggests that attitudes toward tomboys had probably changed over the two decades, with more and more girls entering team sports, schools loosening their dress codes, and parents putting less pressure on girls to be "ladylike." But to say that boys' groups are more cohesive because the label "sissy" operates as an insult whereas "tomboy" does not, as Maccoby does, ignores the import of age on peer acceptance of gender deviance. Certainly, Penelope Eckert's (1996, 2002) research on adolescent girls' management of the "heterosexual marketplace" suggests that it would be quite difficult, if not socially detrimental, for a girl to continue her tomboy leanings into the teen years. The differences of perspective voiced here undoubtedly have much to do with the fact that there is very little ethnographic, much less linguistic, research on so-called "deviant" gender identities in either childhood or adolescence. The tomboy's unwritten nature, then, makes her ripe for all sorts of scholarly pickings. In fact, Thorne discusses tomboys and sissies as part of a larger critique of the very two-cultures approach espoused by scholars like Maccoby, arguing that the variation we find within genders is greater than the variation we find between boys and girls taken as groups. For Thorne, the tomboy is just one aspect of a "complicated continuum of crossing" (1993: 112) – a continuum that is, in her opinion, obscured by research that operates on the assumption of gender as separation and difference. Thorne's chapter entitled "Crossing the Gender Divide," in which she provides contextualized examples of when and why children participate in the group activities of the other gender, serves as a demonstration of how research on gender can proceed in a non-dichotomous fashion: "An emphasis on social context shifts analysis from fixing abstract and binary differences to examining the social relations in which multiple differences are constructed and given meaning" (1993: 109).

But what most distinguishes Maccoby's tomboy from other social science toms is that hers begins in the womb. Maccoby argues that gendered behavior in childhood is a function of biology as well as socialization, so it is not surprising that we find extended discussions of prenatal deviants. We learn, for instance, about the male play patterns of girls who were exposed to excess amounts of adrenal androgen while in the womb (identified in the scientific literature as AGS females), as well as the rough-and-tumble play of female rhesus monkeys whose mothers had been injected with testosterone when pregnant. Maccoby is careful to avoid drawing links between this scientific research and sociological discussions of actual tomboys, but here again we see deviance embraced as evidence for normativity. The argument goes something

like this. "Normal" boys and girls, as a result of prenatal hormonal priming, have different rates of maturation when it comes to particular kinds of behavior. Girls appear to self-regulate their behavior much earlier than boys do, having earlier success at potty-training, for example, and showing faster progress in language development. A boy's lack of self-control earns him more hierarchical, disciplinary commands from his parents as well as more rough-and-tumble play; a girl's more advanced language capacity invites more relational and nurturant talk about feelings. These same children eventually come to self-select playmates who behave as they do. The resulting single-sex playgroups begin to accentuate the behaviors encouraged earlier by parents, until definitively divergent patterns of interaction emerge for the two groups. The AGS girl stands on the sidelines of this discussion, stepping in at critical junctures as evidence for the biological component of Maccoby's explanatory web. The fact that AGS girls prefer male play partners and high levels of rough-and-tumble play gives Maccoby the evidence she needs to argue for biology's role in the construction of dichotomous gendered behaviors. And it is the biological aspect of Maccoby's argument, of course, that is particularly powerful, as it enables her to make a universal claim about how gender operates. Our biotom, then, in her conjoined biological and social deviance, provides evidence not only for a two-cultures gender normativity, but also for its cross-cultural persistence.

One last remark is called for here regarding the way in which Maccoby suggests that the phenomenon of early same-sex attraction might have an additional evolutionary purpose. Referring to the research of anthropologist Arthur Wolf (1995), she remarks that sex segregation in children's playgroups might occur so as to prevent incest and minimize the risks of inbreeding. Wolf conducted a study of boys and girls in southern China who, because they had been affianced by their parents at an early age, lived together in the same household for several years in preparation for marriage. He found that such children come to lack sexual interest in each other when they reach adolescence, offering as evidence the fact that their subsequent marriages have exceptionally low rates of fertility. Maccoby's interest in Wolf's research again has to do with the biological aspect of the explanatory web, as his findings provide yet another biologically oriented reason for why same-sex segregation might occur: "Children's spontaneous avoidance of cross-sex others who are not kin serves the biological function of keeping these others within the pool of potential mates" (Maccoby 1998: 94). Now this claim is problematic for all sorts of reasons, but what I want to focus on is the way in which this observation forces a connection between gender identity and sexual orientation. If tomboys and sissies spend much of their childhood with "the other sex" instead of their own, do they then, as Wolf's theory implies, grow up to lack sexual interest in the opposite sex? Is this where lesbians and gay men come from? Certainly, Maltz and Borker's (1982) juxtaposition of "tomboys" and "lesbians and gay men" as potential problems in their early research platform implies some connection between early deviant gender identities and the sexual orientation

of adults. Indeed, the conflation of gender and sexual identity appears through much of the language and gender literature (McElhinny, this volume), where, until quite recently, the conversational practices of lesbians and gay men are discussed not as indexing community membership, but as instancing gender deviance (see also Kulick, this volume).

A telling example of this conflation surfaces in Burrell and Fitzpatrick (1989), where we find the heterosexualization of a conversational excerpt that takes place between two gay men in Deborah Tannen's (1986) *That's Not What I Meant!: How Conversational Style Makes or Breaks Relationships*. In her bestseller, which includes a chapter on the cross-cultural nature of male–female communication, Tannen gives us one of the field's first gay couples in the form of Mike and Ken, whom she describes, refreshingly, as "two people who lived together and loved each other" (1986: 126). The excerpt at issue regards a fight over salad dressing, where, according to Tannen, each partner misunderstands the conversational frame used by the other. But while Tannen discusses this exchange in gender-free terms in order to demonstrate the kinds of misunderstandings that can occur in close relationships (she is specifically interested, for instance, in demonstrating Gregory Bateson's notion of *complementary schismogenesis*), in Burrell and Fitzpatrick virtually the same exchange is re-interpreted entirely along gendered lines; Mike and Ken even surface as "Bob" and "Joanne." The two excerpts – Tannen's followed by Burrell and Fitzpatrick's – are reproduced below:

From Tannen (1986: 119)

Mike: What kind of salad dressing should I make?

Ken: Oil and vinegar, what else?

Mike: What do you mean, "what else?"

Ken: Well, I always make oil and vinegar, but if you want, we could try something else.

Mike: Does that mean you don't like it when I make other dressings?

Ken: No, I like it. Go ahead. Make something else.

Mike: Not if you want oil and vinegar.

Ken: I don't. Make a yogurt dressing.

(Mike makes a yogurt dressing, tastes it, and makes a face.)

Ken: Isn't it good?

Mike: I don't know how to make a yogurt dressing.

Ken: Well, if you don't like it, throw it out.

Mike: Never mind.

Ken: What never mind? It's just a little yogurt.

Mike: You're making a big deal about nothing.

Ken: You are!

From Burrell and Fitzpatrick (1989: 176–7)

Bob: What kind of salad dressing should I make?

Joanne: Vinagrette, what else?

Bob: What do you mean, "what else?"

Joanne: Well, I always make vinagrette, but if you want make something else.

Bob: Does that mean, you don't like it when I make other dressings?
 Joanne: No, I like it. Go ahead. Make something else.
 Bob: Not if you want vinagrette.
 Joanne: I don't. Make a yogurt dressing.
 (Bob makes a yogurt dressing, tastes it, and makes a face.)
 Joanne: Isn't it good?
 Bob: I don't know how to make a yogurt dressing.
 Joanne: Well, if you don't like it, throw it out.
 Bob: Never mind.
 Joanne: What never mind? It's just a little yogurt.
 Bob: You're making a big deal about nothing.
 Joanne: You are!

What interests me with respect to the Burrell and Fitzpatrick version is how the authors reformulate the excerpt as a conversation between "the independent spouse" Bob and the "traditional wife" Joanne. "Throughout this admittedly trivial interaction," the authors explain, "the independent spouse, Bob, saw his wife as becoming increasingly more demanding, whereas the traditional wife Joanne, perceived her husband as becoming more hypersensitive and temperamental" (1989: 177). That an excerpt between two gay men is so easily recast into a heterosexual discussion of "The Psychological Reality of Marital Conflict" betrays a much larger theoretical problem in the language and gender literature of the 1970s and 1980s: namely, the persistent assumption that sexual identity is really about gender. How Tannen's gay men wound up as heterosexuals in Burrell and Fitzpatrick's book is not entirely clear,² but their transformation offers an illuminating example of how sexual identity is often disregarded, or ignored altogether, within a two-cultures model of language and gender.

When gays and lesbians do receive mention in the model, they tend not to be subjects of study in their own right, but tangential characters who provide extreme evidence for a dichotomous view of gendered behavior. Tannen (1990), for instance, in her subsequent bestseller *You Just Don't Understand*, refers to Philip Blumstein and Pepper Schwartz's (1984) popular finding that "lesbians have sex less often than gay men and heterosexual couples" as support for her argument that men tend to be initiators and women respondents: "But among lesbians, they found, often neither feels comfortable taking the role of initiator, because neither wants to be perceived as making demands" (Tannen 1990: 147–8). This discussion surfaces at the end of a chapter subtitled "Lecturing and Listening," in which Tannen explores the unequal roles played by men and women in conversation. Here, lesbians come to serve as a test-case for Tannen's theory, providing an archetypal female–female example of the behaviors she identifies as enabling the conversational inequality. Tannen reads the lesbian hesitancy to initiate sex as a gendered trait, and offers it as evidence for a more general theory regarding women's discomfort with self-assertion. Lesbians, then, as same-sex partners, are discussed as a kind of "grown-up" version of the childhood all-girl playgroups so instrumental to two-cultures theorizing.

Tannen's occasional comparisons of lesbians with gay men, as in a later chapter in the book when she contrasts lesbian and gay understandings of the relationship between money and independence (1990: 292), are intended not as discussions of sexual identity, but as paradigmatic examples of difference between women and men more generally.

6 Queers and the Rest of Us

What is exceptional about Tannen's lesbians and gay men, however, is precisely that they are not exceptional; that is, their interactive behaviors are viewed not as deviant, but as entirely in line with the interactive behaviors of heterosexual women and men. While we may fault her work for failing to consider the potential influences of sexual identity on conversational exchange, as Greg Jacobs (1996) does in a review of the literature for *American Speech*, her refusal to portray lesbians and gay men as peculiarly deviant, in the manner of former generations of researchers, is better understood as progressive for the linguistic scholarship of the time. Her work might even be said to reflect a transitional point in the academic treatment of sexual identity, when identities previously viewed as deviant or non-normative began to be brought into the mainstream of scholarly discussion. I want to argue here that three theoretical moves in the language and gender research of the early to mid-1990s precipitated this transition: first, the introduction of the notion of *communities of practice* (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992); second, the more sophisticated development of *ideological* approaches to the study of language and gender (e.g. Gal 1991; Bucholtz and Hall 1995; Bucholtz, Liang, and Sutton 1999); and finally, the birth of *queer linguistics* (Livia and Hall 1997), a field that activates, albeit critically, the philosophical notion of performativity. All of these moves were formulated within, and influenced by, larger theoretical moves in the academy. Most notable in this respect is multicultural feminism, which encouraged the intellectual embracement of heretofore understudied identities in a postmodern drive to diversify the academic canon. The linguistic reflexes of this drive, accordingly, share a focus on more localized organizations of language, gender, and sexuality. The two-norm approach of the previous generation gave way to a paradigm that reframes the normative as ideologically produced within specific practice-based communities. Norms of feminine and masculine speech, then, although always constrained and influenced by dominant ideologies of language and gender, become potentially infinite in local articulation, particularly as gendered ideologies are produced only in interaction with localized understandings of race, class, sexuality, and age.

The concept of gender performativity, as developed within queer linguistics and more generally in sociolinguistics, is closely allied with ideological and practice-based approaches to the study of language and gender, although this fact has been little discussed in the literature. As Anna Livia and I argue in our

introduction to *Queerly Phrased* (Livia and Hall 1997), the concept is much needed in the field as a way out of the circular research paradigm encouraged by the theoretical tenets of social constructionism. The feminist distinction between *sex* and *gender*, with the first term being used for the biological and the second for the social, was a politically necessary one, as it threw a decisive wrench in essentialist arguments that limited social agency to biological predisposition. But this distinction also had a compromising effect on ethnographic research, leading language and gender scholars, for example, to seek out the sociolinguistic reflexes of a prediscursive biological sex. Working from the assumption that the social maps onto the biological (a perspective criticized by feminist Linda Nicholson (1994) as a "coat-rack model" of sex and gender),³ researchers pre-identified their subjects as "male" and "female" and then isolated the conversational strategies that distinguished these groupings from one another. Sexual identity, as a subjective designation not easily related to biology, remains invisible within this paradigm.

But the performativity of gender, as formulated by Judith Butler (1990, 1993) via a Derridean reworking of J. L. Austin's (1962) notion of the "performative utterance," disallows sociolinguistic approaches to identity that view the way we talk as directly indexing a prediscursive self. To a post-structuralist like Butler, there is no prediscursive identity, as even our understanding of biological sex is produced through cultural understandings of social gender. This kind of thinking puts much more weight on the speech event itself, requiring us to examine how speakers manage ideologies of feminine and masculine speech in the ongoing production of gendered selves. It also gives us a non-essentialist understanding of personhood, as what becomes important is not how speakers affirm or resist a pre-given biological designation, but how they activate various identity positions within particular conversations and localized contexts. Rusty Barrett's (1999) work on the "polyphonus identity" displays of African American drag queens in a Texas gay bar is an exemplary model of how such research might proceed, as he illustrates the ways in which speakers make use of linguistic variables with indexical associations to a variety of social categories.

Yet Butler's theory also has its limits for ethnographic sociolinguistic research. Most pressing in this regard is the restricted agency awarded the subject in a post-structuralist focus on discursive determinism (see Livia and Hall 1997), together with the undertheorization of the local in a philosophical text concerned with universal explanations for how gender works. Here is where the field would do well to remember how Austin's performative was taken up by linguistic anthropologists such as Dell Hymes, Charles Briggs, and Richard Bauman in the early ethnography of speaking. While Butler focuses almost exclusively on the rigid regulatory frames that make femininity and masculinity intelligible (in Austinian terms, the "conventional procedures" that make a performative utterance felicitous), these authors focus also on the emergent properties of specific speech events. Their perspective, as I have argued elsewhere (Hall 1999), is an ethnographic extension of the "dual-direction-of-fit"

that Elizabeth Anscombe (1957) and then John Searle (1979) identify for Austin's classic performative. While the words of a performative do in some sense "fit" the world, conforming to the conventions that govern their success, they also constitute it, so that by their very utterance the world is also made to fit the words.

When we recognize this duality as existing within ritualized performance (as Tambiah 1979 does in a direct application of Austin's felicity conditions to ritual in the late 1970s), or more relevantly within conversational exchange, then we are compelled to examine the creative qualities of the speech event alongside the constraining ones. Hymes's (1975) repeated call to "understand structure as emergent in action" is critical here, as he and other scholars of performance, most notably Bauman and Briggs (cf. 1990), led us away from the analysis of ritual as mere reiteration. What moves into focus with their work is not Derridean iterability but "the total speech act," as they uncover not just the cultural conventions that make performance, ritual, and even everyday conversation felicitous, but also the creative aspects that govern any speech event. Butler's limitation of creativity to resignification – as, for instance, when a drag queen performs the "wrong" gender and thereby exposes the constructed nature of gender perceived as natural – is impoverished in ethnographic terms, since it reduces drag queen performance to an appropriation of a dominant ideology of femininity. This is, indeed, the assumption behind Butler's argument that drag is a kind of "double mimesis," that is, men acting like women acting like women. But as Barrett so cogently demonstrates in his linguistic research, drag queens are not acting like *women*, they are acting like *drag queens*. Their interwoven appropriations of African American Vernacular English, the "Standard" English phonology associated with *White-woman style*, and lexical items indexical of gay male speech suggest that gender identity is a multivocal phenomenon that depends on interaction with other social identities for its articulation. Because drag queen identity is always localized and produced through a variety of conflicting cultural scripts (race, class, sexuality, and gender among them), it would be ethnographically reductive to discuss their performances purely as a subversion of a non-localizable "femininity."

This brings me to the crux of an argument about how Butler's theory of gender performativity must be reworked, or at least acquire new focus, in the sociolinguistic study of language, gender, and sexuality. The only way identities previously regarded as non-normative can be brought into the mainstream of scholarship is if we localize what constitutes "felicitous" and "infelicitous" performances of gender and sexual identity within the language ideologies circulating in specific communities of practice. To discuss drag queen performance as the infelicitous enactment of dominant conventions of gender, as Butler does in her focus on drag as subversion, assumes a kind of singularity to drag queen identity, one that becomes interesting only in its potential to denaturalize heterosexual normativity. Queer linguistics, in contrast, invites us to discuss the conversational practices of all sexual identities – whether marginal or central to organizations of heterosexual kinship – as potentially

felicitous on a more localized level. While much of the early research in the field has focused on the language practices of understudied sexual identities (just as much of the early research in language and gender focused on the language practices of women), its boundaries also embrace the findings of such scholars as Penelope Eckert (1996, 2002), whose ethnographic work on “the heterosexual marketplace” illustrates how heterosexual identity structures the adolescent social order in an American elementary school. Like queer theory, queer linguistics is necessarily concerned with how heterosexual normativity is produced, perpetuated, and resisted, but it seeks to localize these productions within specific communities of practice.

Recently, the field of queer linguistics, and indeed the entire study of language and identity, has come under fire from Don Kulick, who argues that the language practices of, for instance, gays and lesbians must be “unique to gays and lesbians” (2000: 259) if they are to be of interest to sociolinguists. But Kulick’s criterion of “distinct and describable linguistic features and patterns” (Harvey and Shalom 1997: 3; cited by Kulick 2000: 276) puts him out of step with most recent work on language and identity. Indeed, in his article for the *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Kulick takes difference to be the necessary starting point for scholarship on language and sexuality, arguing that because linguistic differences across sexual identities have not been satisfactorily demonstrated, the entire field is therefore not viable. Now this is an odd claim given Kulick’s (1999) strong praise for research on “transgender and language” in a previous review for the *GLQ*. We are left to assume that what makes transgender speech “distinctive” and thereby worthy of attention for Kulick, as opposed to the speech of gays and lesbians, is the mismatch between the original biological sex of the speaker and the social gender he or she produces. This recalls the problematic associated with the coat-rack theory of sex and gender, except that what comes into focus is not the men and women who affirm their biology, but the men and women who betray it. Certainly, there is nothing structurally “unique” about the feminine self-reference employed by the transgendered Hindi-speaking *hijras* of my own research (Hall and O’Donovan 1996, cited by Kulick 1999: 613; Hall 1997), as Hindi-speaking women make regular use of these linguistic forms on a daily basis.

Kulick’s insistence on difference, then, not only requires linguistic deviance as a prerequisite for sociolinguistic research, it also recalls the much criticized difference model of language and gender (see Bucholtz and Hall 2002 for a fuller discussion). This approach, as noted earlier, has been extensively problematized for its tendency to emphasize cross-gender variation at the expense of potentially more significant intragender variation and cross-gender similarity. The practice-based and ideological models of language and gender that developed in response to these critiques, such as queer linguistics, seek not to describe how women’s language use differs from men’s, or how homosexuals’ language use differs from heterosexuals’, but to document the diverse range of women’s and men’s linguistic repertoires as developed within particular contexts. In these models, gender is seen as materializing only in interaction with

other sociological discourses, including historical, national, ethnic, racial, age-related, and sexual ones. This, I would argue, is the direction that research on language and sexual identity must continue to take if the exceptional speakers of previous generations are to move squarely out of the footnotes.

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NOTES

- 1 Nora Newcombe and Diane B. Arnkoff (1979) are among the few scholars who noticed the oddity of scholars disputing Lakoff's claims with empirical research on the speech patterns of academics. In a criticism of Dubois and Crouch's (1975) findings, they assert: "Furthermore, an academic population may have distinctive speech styles. Lakoff (1975, 1977) has discussed at some length her belief that academic men are exceptions to her rules and use a speech style generally identified as 'female.' Many of the same reservations can be expressed about another study reporting no sex differences in the use of tag questions (Baumann 1976)."
- 2 Deborah Tannen (1996) discussed this "heterosexualization" in a plenary lecture at the fourth annual meeting of the Lavender Languages and Linguistics Conference in Washington, DC. I am grateful to her for allowing me to discuss this here, although for rather different reasons. According to Tannen, Burrell and Fitzpatrick have explained that they were unaware that the excerpt had originally appeared elsewhere, stating that one of their students had shared the data with them in class as self-collected.
- 3 See Bonnie McElhinny (2002) for a thorough and engaging discussion of divergent feminist approaches to the relationship between sex and gender.

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