BETWEEN SPEECH AND SILENCE:
The problematics of research on language and gender¹

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1. Introduction

The historic silence of women in public life, and women's attempts to gain a voice in politics and literature, have been major themes of recent feminist scholarship. It has become clear that gender relations are created not only by a sexual division of labor and a set of symbolic images, but also through different patterns of speaking and contrasting possibilities of expression for men and women. Feminists have explicitly written about scholarship's responsibility to "hear women's words" and have rightly argued the theoretical importance of "rediscover[ing] women's voices" (Smith-Rosenberg 1985:11, 26).

In these writings, silence is generally deplored, because it is taken to be a result and a symbol of passivity and powerlessness: Those who are denied speech cannot make their experience known and thus cannot influence the course of their lives or of history.² In a telling contrast, other scholars have emphasized the paradoxical power of silence, especially in certain institutional settings. In religious confession, modern psychotherapy, bureaucratic interviews and in police interrogation, the relations of coercion are reversed: Where self-exposure is required, it is the silent listener who judges, and who thereby exerts power over the one who speaks (Foucault 1978:61-62). Similarly, silence in American households is often a weapon of masculine power (Sattel 1983). But silence can also be a strategic defense against the powerful, as when Western Apache men use it to baffle, disconcert and exclude white outsiders (Basso 1979). And this does not exhaust the meanings of silence. For the English Quakers of the 17th century, both men and women, the refusal to speak when others expected them to marked an ideological commitment. It was the opposite of passivity, indeed a form of political protest (Bauman 1983).³

The juxtaposition of these different constructions of silence highlights the three issues I would like to raise in this paper. First, and most generally, the example of silence suggests a close link between gender, the use of speech (or silence) and the exercise of power. But it also

shows that the link is not direct. On the contrary, it appears that silence, like any linguistic form, gains different meanings and has different material effects within specific institutional and cultural contexts. Silence and inarticulateness are not, in themselves, necessarily signs of powerlessness. Indeed, my first goal is to draw on a tradition of cultural analysis to show how the links between linguistic practices, power, and gender are themselves culturally constructed.

Yet these cultural constructions are not always stable, nor passively accepted and reproduced by speakers. The examples of silence as subversive defense and even political protest suggest that linguistic forms, even the most apparently quiescent, are strategic actions, created as responses to cultural and institutional contexts (Gumperz 1982). Although sociolinguistic studies have long noted differences between men's and women's everyday linguistic forms, much early research considered talk to be simply an index of identity: merely one of the many behaviours learned through socialization that formed part of men's and women's different social roles. Recent reconceptualizations of gender reject this implicit role theory and promise a deeper understanding of the genesis and persistence of gender differences in speech. They argue that gender is better seen as a system of culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction between and among men and women ⁴. I draw on sociolinguistic studies of everyday talk to provide evidence that it is in part through verbal practices in social interaction that the structural relations of gender and dominance are perpetuated, and sometimes subverted: In social institutions such as schools, courts and political assemblies, talk is often used to judge, define and legitimate speakers. Thus, small interactional skirmishes have striking material consequences. My second goal is to show how verbal interaction, whatever else it accomplishes, is often the site of struggle about gender definitions and power; it concerns who can speak where about what.

Finally, such struggles about gaining a voice, and my earlier example of women's silence in public life, draw attention to a currently widespread and influential metaphor in both feminist and non-feminist social science. Terms such as "women's language" "voice" or "words" are routinely used not only to designate everyday talk but also, much more broadly, the public expression of a particular perspective on self and social life, the effort to represent one's own experience, rather than accepting the representations of more powerful others. And similarly, "silence" and "mutedness"

(Ardener, E. 1975) are used not only in their ordinary sense of an inability or reluctance to create utterances in conversational exchange, but refer as well to the failure to produce one's own separate, socially significant discourse. It is in this broader sense that feminist historians have rediscovered women's words. Here, "word" becomes a synecdoche for "consciousness."

Yet, despite this metaphorical link, everyday talk and the broader notion of a gendered consciousness have only rarely been investigated together, or by the same scholars. Studies of gender differences in everyday talk have tended to focus on the formal properties of speech -- intonational, phonological, syntactic and pragmatic differences between men and women, and the institutional and interactional contexts in which they occur. In contrast, studies of "women's voice" have focused more on values and beliefs: whether or not women have different cultural conceptions or symbolic systems concerning self, morality or social reality, than those of the dominant discourse.⁵ That the two are inextricably linked becomes evident when we view both kinds of research as studies of symbolic domination.

As my discussion of the culturally defined links between speech and power will show, some linguistic strategies and genres are more highly valued and carry more authority than others. In a classic case of symbolic domination, even those who do not control them consider them more credible or persuasive (Bourdieu 1977b). Archetypal examples include standard languages and ritual speech. But these respected linguistic practices are not simply forms; they deliver characteristic cultural definitions of social life which, embodied in divisions of labor and the structure of institutions, serve the interests of some groups better than others. Indeed, it is in part through such linguistic practices that speakers within institutions impose on others their group's definition of events, people and actions. This ability to make others accept and enact one's representation of the world is another aspect of symbolic domination. But such cultural power rarely goes uncontested. Resistance to a dominant cultural order occurs when devalued linguistic strategies and genres are practiced and celebrated despite widespread denigration; it occurs as well when these devalued practices propose or embody alternate models of the social world.

Several influential social theories that differ importantly in other respects have in one way or another articulated this insight. Whether we use Gramsci's term

cultural hegemony, or symbolic domination (Bourdieu 1977a), oppositional, emergent and residual cultures (Williams 1973), or subjugated knowledges (Foucault 1980), the central notion remains: The control of discourse or of representations of reality occurs in social interaction, located in institutions, and is a source of social power; it may be, therefore, the occasion for coercion, conflict or complicity.⁶

Missing from these theories is a concept of gender as a structure of social relations (separate from class or ethnicity), reproduced but also challenged in everyday practice. These theories neither notice nor explain the subtlety, subversion and opposition to dominant definitions that feminists have discovered in many women's genres, and sometimes embedded in women's everyday talk. Indeed, even the authority of some (male) linguistic forms and their dominance of social institutions such as medicine, or political process, remains mysterious without a theory of gender.

This interaction of gender and discourse has been explored by recent feminist analyses in literature and anthropology; some have suggested that women's "voices" often differ significantly in form as well as content from dominant discourse.⁷ The importance of integrating the study of everyday talk with the study of "women's voice" becomes apparent: The attention to the details of linguistic form and context typical of research into everyday talk is indispensable in order to gain access to women's often veiled genres and muted "words". And both kinds of studies must attend not only to words but to the interactional practices and the broader political and economic context of communication in order to understand the process by which women's voices-- in both senses --are routinely suppressed, or manage to emerge. My final aim is to show that, if we understand women's everyday talk and linguistic genres as forms of resistance, we hear, in any culture, not so much a clear, autonomous and heretofore neglected "woman's voice," or separate culture, but more ambiguous, often contradictory linguistic practices, differing among women of different classes and ethnic groups and ranging from accommodation to opposition, subversion, rejection or reconstruction of reigning cultural definitions.

Thus, my theme is the link between gender, speech and power, and the ways this can be conceptualized on the basis of recent empirical research. I will first explore what counts, cross-culturally, as powerful speech; then show the differential power of men's and women's linguistic strategies in social institutions; and finally reinterpret women's strategies and linguistic genres as forms of resistance to

symbolic domination.

2. Cultural Constructions

Many cultures posit a close connection between the use of language and the emergence of the self. This is well illustrated by the Laymi Indians of Highland Bolivia, a group of settled peasants engaged in subsistence agriculture. They represent a new-born individual's progression to a fully socialized human in terms of the child's relation to language: a baby becomes a child when it starts to say words; the passage from childhood to young adulthood is said to occur when the individual can speak and understand fully (Harris:1980:72). Some cultural conceptions which link person and language appear not to be focussed on gender at all. For instance, the metalinguistic discourse of the Kaluli in New Guinea classifies speakers largely on the basis of clan or village origin (Schieffelin 1987). Similarly, in Samoa rank seems much more important in ideas about speech than gender (Ochs 1987). Nevertheless, there are many cases in which not just personhood, but gender as well are conceptualized in terms of language. Such conceptualizations define the symbolic significance of men's and women's speech features: what is powerful and weak, beautiful or execrable, masculine and feminine, in the realm of talk. Men's and women's linguistic practices are profoundly shaped by such cultural images.⁸

Perhaps the best example is Keenan's (1974) study of the Malagasy of Madagascar, who explicitly associate different styles of talk with men and women. According to the Malagasy, men characteristically use an indirect, ornate and respectful style that avoids confrontation and disagreement with others; women use a direct style of speaking associated with excitableness and anger, that is seen as a source of conflict and threat in interpersonal relations. Women are excluded from the major formal genre of oratory that is required for participation in political events. And men avoid a series of speech activities that women engage in, such as accusations, market haggling and gossip. Importantly, these differences are linked to notions about power. First, both men and women consider men's speech far superior. Second, it is women's directness, defined as inept, that is said to bar them from political authority and from speaking at political meetings where the egalitarian social system requires that the existence of conflict be skillfully hidden.

Yet, cross-cultural evidence indicates that indirectness is not always associated with masculinity, nor confrontation

with women. The case of American gender stereotypes provides an informative contrast. The cultural evaluation of American middle class speech is revealed in studies of midwestern teenagers who think of men's speech as "aggressive" "forceful" "blunt" and "authoritarian," while women's speech is considered "gentle" "trivial" "correct" and "polite." Only careful empirical research can document the subtle differences that actually exist between American men's and women's speech, but these stereotypes provide the expectations and ideals against which speakers are routinely judged, (Kramarae 1980). Indeed, there is an entire literature of advice books, etiquette manuals and philological and linguistic tracts, published in the United States and Western Europe which have for several centuries constructed, without benefit of evidence, images of male and female "natures" linked to their supposed speech patterns (Kramarae 1980:91).⁹

From the example of the Malagasy and American stereotypes it might appear that, whether blunt or indirect, verbal skills of some kind are associated with authority and power. A contrast to both is provided by Irvine's (1979) description of the Wolof of Senegal, who are organized into a stratified caste system. High caste nobles derive their power from an inherited quality manifested as a sense of reserve in all activities. Diffidence and inarticulateness are so much a part of noble demeanor, that elite men often hire low status professional orators to speak for them in order to avoid showing verbal fluency in public. Thus, cultural conceptions demand that ordinary men and women be more articulate than men with high status.

While inarticulateness is a trait that is a sign of a Wolof man's elite identity, it is exactly inarticulateness which is represented as women's defining and debilitating condition in rural Greece. The image of women is not unitary in Greece: they are seen as both garrulous and silent. But in both modes women are conceptualized as incapable of controlling themselves and therefore of achieving the articulate and swaggering self-display that constitutes the culturally constructed image of powerful men (Herzfeld 1985).

These examples from disparate groups provide a useful demonstration that the links between gender, power and linguistic practices are not "natural" and can be constructed in quite different ways. But these examples are static, and seem to imply that speakers passively follow abstract cultural dictates. A historical case is helpful then, because it charts changes in conceptualizations, and shows how ideals

come to restrict women's possibilities of expression. Outram (1987) considers the dilemma of elite women during the French Revolution. The discourse of the French Revolution, glorifying male 'vertu', identified the influence of women with the system of patronage, sexual favors, and corruption of power under the Old Regime, in which elite women had actively participated. The discourse of the Revolution, in deliberate contrast, was committed to an anti-feminine logic: political revolution could only take place if women and their corrupting influence were excluded from public speaking and from the exercise of power. Outram argues that, in part as a result of this new conceptualization, the famous and powerful political participation of upper class women in the Old Regime was replaced, in the era of the Revolution, with vigorous attacks on female political activists. By the new logic, elite women's public speech and activities brought their sexual virtue into question. For a woman, to be political was to be corrupt; the revolutionary discourse of universal equality applied only to men. Women who wanted to be both respectable and political had very few choices: One of the best-known figures of the Revolution, who was later imprisoned for her participation, provides a telling example. Mme Roland's political activity included providing a forum in which men debated the issues of the day. Her memoirs and letters reveal that it demanded a painful compromise: this well-informed woman retained respect by listening to the men's political discussions but remaining utterly silent.

The historical dimension in Outram's study allows us not only to chart the affect of changing discourse, but to specify the social source of the cultural constructions in a way not possible in the more static descriptions of non-Western cases. These particular cultural definitions were not simply the product of some age-old and monolithic male dominance, but emerged articulately in the ideas of revolutionary theorists and Enlightenment philosophers. Perhaps other patterns of ideas about gender differences in speech could be traced to similarly specific times and social contexts. For example, it is a recurrent and unexplained finding of recent sociolinguistic surveys that in north American, British and some other industrialized cities, middle and working class women more frequently use phonological forms associated with the highest ranking socioeconomic classes than men of their class. Middle and working class men more frequently use pronunciations characteristic of the working class than their female counterparts. And all men evaluate working class features more positively than women do (e.g. Labov 1974, Trudgill 1983). Clearly the phonological symbolization of gender and

of social class are inextricably linked. The universalizing explanations offered so far credit women in general with greater sensitivity to language and prestige. But these theories founder on counter-examples from other societies. Instead, I suggest these findings gain meaning within a broader cultural pattern. The linguistic evidence forms part of a general symbolic structure linking manliness with "tough" working class culture and femaleness with "respectability," "gentility" and "high culture" that, some analyses suggest, emerged on both sides of the Atlantic in the 19th century and continues to be one component of current gender images.¹⁰

In short, the culturally constructed link between types of verbal skill, gender identity and power is not only variable, but dependent on an entire web of related conceptions and, as the final examples hint, on historical and political economic processes as well.

3. Power in Everyday Talk

Mme Roland's silence was neither natural nor an automatic acquiescence to Revolutionary cultural conceptions. Instead, her letters and memoirs allow us to understand the forums she created and her public silence as strategic responses to a cultural double bind that offered her either speech or respect, but not both. Neither wholly determined by cultural images and changing social structures, nor entirely a matter of her own agency, Mme Roland's speech and interaction are excellent examples of practices that reproduce gender images and relations or, as later examples will show, sometimes tacitly criticize and resist them.

Interactional sociolinguistics provides the tools for analyzing speech strategies as practices actively constructed by speakers in response to cultural and structural constraints. If speech enacts a discourse strategy and is not simply a reflex or signal of social identity, then attention must be paid not only to the gender identity of the speaker but also to the gender of the audience and the varying cultural salience of gender in different social contexts. Male-female differences in speech have been found in every society studied; but the nature of the contrasts is staggeringly diverse, occurring in varying parts of the linguistic system: phonology, pragmatics, syntax, morphology and lexicon (see Philips 1987). Here I will pay special attention to co-occurring features of speech which form patterns, called styles, genres or ways of speaking that are linked, in some way, to gender.¹¹

Unlike the earliest studies that noted only obligatory linguistic differences between men and women, current research distinguishes between cases where a speech form is normatively required for men or women, from cases where it is a favored strategy for one gender because it enacts, consciously or not, men's and women's contrasting values or interactional goals, (McConnell-Ginet 1988). Such differences in values and goals emerge with force when the division of labor creates largely separate worlds for men and women, so that "members of each sex learn to be proficient in different linguistic skills and to do different things with words, (Borker 1980:31)." Indeed, considerable ethnographic evidence suggests that differences in verbal genres between men and women are widespread, especially where men's and women's activities are distinctly defined (Sherzer 1987).

For example, among the Kuna Indians of Lowland Panama, speech genres emerge from the division of labor. Genres associated with public political meetings and ritualized attempts to cure illness are largely restricted to men, while the more privately performed genres of lullabies and tuneful mourning are restricted to women (Sherzer 1987). Similarly, among the Kaluli, living in the Southern Highlands of Papua New Guinea, it is the men who tell several types of stories, recite magical formulae for hunting and perform songs and dances in major political and ceremonial contexts. Women compose more limited ceremonial songs and engage in expressive public weeping on occasions of profound loss (Schieffelin 1987). Among the Laymi Indians of Bolivia, women control and create genres of publicly performed song and music that are essential to courting and to the ritual cycle; men control speaking in the local political assembly and speaking directed to the spirits in curing rituals (Harris 1980).

These studies underline the fact that in many societies women actively create and perform major expressive activities, often in public, a point also emphasized by feminist folklorists (Jordan and deCaro 1986). Such evidence effectively counters the persistent but erroneous image of women as universally silent in public, or restricted to domestic activities. It highlights as well one function of speech in a gender system: genre differences create the kind of pervasive behavioural contrast that transforms gradients of human difference into culturally salient dichotomies of masculinity and femininity. But, a simple catalogue of 'his and hers' genres obscures the important insight that women's special verbal skills are often strategic responses --more or

less successful-- to positions of relative powerlessness.

For example, in a Hungarian-German bilingual town in Austria, women use German more than men do. Women's use of German corresponds to their general rejection of the peasant way of life associated with the Hungarian language and their acceptance of the wage labor symbolized by German. It is, in part, women's relative powerlessness in the peasant social order that makes the escape to worker status so attractive for them, and thus explains the verbal strategies they use (Gal 1978).¹²

Strategies are not always directed toward change. In a Tenejapan village of southern Mexico, women are more polite than men in two ways. They use many more linguistic particles that emphasize solidarity with their interactional partner, and also use more of a contrasting set of particles that avoid imposition and stress the listener's separateness and autonomy. Indeed, women's intent to impose by requesting, commanding or criticizing is often couched in irony. Because irony requires the listener to infer the speaker's intent, it allows the speaker to disclaim the intent if it results in challenge or threat. Men use less irony and fewer particles of either kind, showing considerably less sensitivity to the details of social relationships and context. Women's usage is an interactional strategy, an accommodation arising from their social and even physical vulnerability to men, and the consequent necessity to show deference to men on the one hand, and maintain strong networks of solidarity with other women. This suggests that levels and types of politeness strategies used by women to men and to other women may well be a sensitive measure of women's structural power in many societies (Brown 1980).

But women's responses to powerlessness may also be attempts to subvert male authority, only to end by reproducing it. A striking example is Harding's (1974) analysis of a peasant village in Spain. Women and men characteristically occupy different physical spaces (the house and shops vs. the plaza and the fields); have different work and concerns (family and neighbors vs. land, politics, economics); and different speech genres. While men argue in public, as a form of verbal play requiring an appreciative audience; women talk in small, closed groups of kin, often practicing "gossip" --the gathering and evaluating of information about people --as their only means of social control. Harding argues that it is women's subordinate position to men, and not simply separation, that leads women to develop special "manipulative" verbal skills such as

teasing out information, carefully watching others so as to anticipate their needs, and using irony or self-effacing methods of persuasion. Gossip itself is women's most powerful verbal tool, but it is two-edged. It tends to subvert male authority, by judging people in terms of values the male-dominant system rejects. But partly as a result of this subversion it is condemned and decried by the dominant culture. Moreover, it is seen by all as a negative form of power that makes or breaks reputations, causes conflict and disrupts relationships. It is negative in another sense too. As Harding reveals, women develop this genre for lack of other forms of power, but they are trapped by it themselves: "Th[e] sense, if not fact, of being under constant verbal surveillance restricts the behavior of women and helps keep them in their place," (1975:103).

Although there is no parallel separation of the sexes in the United States, American men and women also seem to use somewhat different verbal strategies in conversation. In a provocative synthesis of recent research findings, Maltz and Borker (1982) argue that sex-segregated children's play groups, common in American society, create gender-specific verbal cultures whose practices speakers retain into adulthood. But the gender differences are so subtle people are aware only of their result: frequent miscommunication between men and women who otherwise claim to be friends and status equals. Maltz and Borker rely in part on Goodwin's careful studies of children's play groups in an urban black neighborhood, but information on white children and adults of various classes and ethnic groups also seems to support their generalizations about men's and women's strategies.

For instance, boys and men organize into relatively large hierarchical groups, using direct commands and vying with each other for leadership positions by holding forth in competitive verbal display. Side comments and challenges are the proper responses by those who do not have the floor. Girls, on the other hand, play in smaller groups, forming exclusive coalitions. There is plenty of conflict in all-girl groups, but their verbal interactions implicitly deny conflict and hierarchy, phrasing commands as proposals for future activity. Girls and women carefully link their utterances to the previous speaker's contribution and develop each others' topics, asking questions rather for conversational maintenance than for information or challenge (e.g. Goodwin 1980). But these differences are not as innocent as Maltz and Borker's image of parallel, mutually miscomprehending gender-cultures would suggest.

One way of interpreting the female strategies is as a set of practices that, whatever the actual power relations within the girls' or women's group, nevertheless enact values of support and solidarity that directly oppose and implicitly criticize the boys' and men's practices of heroic individuality, competition and the celebration of hierarchy. In this sense the two 'cultures' are not separate at all, but defined by each other, enacting in speech forms several familiar cultural oppositions in American discourse about gender. They are also not equal in power. Goodwin and Goodwin's (1987) most recent reports indicate that when boys and girls argue together, the boys' strategy is employed by all. This suggests that the boys' strategy is dominant in two senses: the girls but not the boys must learn both, and the boys seem to be able to impose theirs on the girls in cross-sex interaction. This kind of dominance is also suggested by a series of studies on patterns of interruption in cross-sex interactions among status equals. Between pairs of speakers who knew each other well, as well as between those that were strangers, men interrupted women more than either sex interrupted in same-sex interactions. Moreover, the assumption that interruption is a gesture of dominance is supported by the finding that adults interrupt children more than the reverse (West and Zimmerman 1983)¹³. A study of naturally occurring conversation by young American married couples in their homes is also suggestive in this regard. Although the women raised almost twice as many topics of conversation as the men, the topics raised by men were the ones that were accepted and elaborated in the conversation by both men and women. Yet it was the women who provided most of the interactional "work," the questions and minimal responses ("uh-huh"), that kept the conversation going (Fishman 1978).

More systematic evidence is needed, especially about the effects of social context on the details of everyday friendly talk.¹⁴ And we need replications across classes and ethnic groups of studies relying on very small samples of white middle-class speakers. Nevertheless, in cross-gender talk, as in the cross-ethnic miscommunication on which Maltz and Borker model their analysis (Gumperz 1982), it seems clear that the differences in strategies provide an opportunity for the more powerful group to enact and reinforce its dominance through the microprocesses of verbal interaction.

But a major flaw in many of the studies of linguistic strategy I have discussed so far is their assumption that speech and gender are best investigated in informal conversations, often in one-to-one or small group

relationships in the family or neighborhood. This creates the illusion that gendered talk is mainly a personal characteristic or limited to the institution of the family. Yet, as much feminist research has demonstrated, gender as a structural principle also organizes other social institutions: workplaces, schools, courts, political assemblies and the state show characteristic patterns in the recruitment, allocation, treatment and mobility of men as opposed to women. These are inscribed in the organization of the institution. Patterns of talk and interaction play an important role in maintaining, legitimating and often hiding the gendered aspect of these institutional arrangements. The role of men's and women's linguistic strategies within institutions deserves considerably more attention than it has so far received. I will discuss only a few suggestive examples from schools and bureaucracies in the US, and political assemblies in several small scale societies.

Within institutions, interviews, meetings and other characteristic verbal encounters are often crucial for decision making. On the basis of talk, some individuals are hired, chosen to participate, receive resources, or promotions and authority, while others are denied. In complex, capitalist societies the class and ethnic background of speakers is crucial in such gate-keeping encounters (Erickson and Schultz 1982). And gender routinely interacts with class and ethnicity. For instance, in a study of speech in American courts, the testimony of witnesses using the linguistic forms characteristic of women with no courtroom experience and of low status men, was judged by experimental subjects to be less credible, less convincing and less trustworthy than testimony delivered in a style characteristic of speakers with high status (O'Barr and Atkins 1980). It appears that courts reinforce the authority of forms associated with high status speakers, who tend to be men.

The "meeting" is a speech event ubiquitous in American bureaucratic, corporate and academic life. In a study of faculty meetings, Edelsky (1981) considered the university as a workplace, not as an educational institution. In meetings with equal numbers of male and female participants of equal occupation status, she asked whether women were as successful as men in "getting the floor," that is in getting the opportunity to talk and thereby contribute to the decisions. But a direct comparison of men's and women's participation was not possible. Who spoke and how often depended on the implicit rules by which speakers participated. And there were at least two sets of rules, two kinds of "floor." In

episodes characterized by the first kind of "floor" speakers took longer and fewer turns, fewer speakers participated overall, they did not overlap much, there were many false starts and hesitations and speakers used their turns for reporting and voicing opinions. The other kind of "floor" occurred at the same meetings but during different episodes. It was characterized by lots of overlap and simultaneous talk, but little hesitation in speaking, and more general participation by many speakers, collaboratively constructing "what's-going-on." Several speakers did the same communicative functions such as suggesting an idea, arguing or agreeing; joking, teasing and wisecracking were more frequent.

It is evident that the interactional strategies of American men and women, as outlined by Maltz and Borker, are differently suited to the two kinds of "floor." It was men who monopolized the first kind of floor, by taking longer turns, holding forth and dominating the construction of the floor through the time they took talking. In the second kind of floor, where everyone took shorter turns, men and women took turns of about equal length; and all speakers participated as equals in the communicative functions performed (1981:416). Importantly, the first, more formal kind of floor in which women participated less, occurred vastly more frequently, at least in this institutional setting. Explicit and tacit struggles between speakers about how meetings are to be conducted are conflicts about the control of institutional power. Even among status equals and in mixed sex groups, the interactional constraints of institutional events such as meetings are not gender neutral, but weighted in favor of male interactional strategies. The organization of the meeting masks the fact that speakers are excluded on the basis of gender, while accomplishing that very exclusion.

Perhaps more pervasively than any other institution, schools judge, define and categorize their charges on the basis of linguistic performance. The different strategies of boys and girls can also affect their access to the often linguistic resources, such as literacy, that schooling offers. A single example will suffice to suggest how ethnic differences interact with gender in this process. In her fine comparison of language acquisition and training for literacy in three southern communities in the US, Heath (1983) carefully describes the complex and artful linguistic practices of a black working class community. Children must master "analogy" questions posed by their elders, in which they are encouraged to see the parallels and connections

among disparate events and tell about them cleverly, without spelling out explicitly what the links are. Such descriptions differ from school requirements which match middle class patterns. And what is expected of black girls at home differs considerably from the more extensive verbal skills demanded of boys. Working class black girls, in contrast to boys of their own group, are neither expected nor encouraged to practice a wide range of story-telling tactics in competitive "on-stage" public arenas where community adults as well as children watch and judge, (1983:95-98; 105-112).

The results of these difference emerge in a parallel study of teacher-student interaction in a first-grade classroom with both black and white students (Michaels 1981). When the white teachers --all women-- instituted a "sharing time" ("show and tell") activity, they had the explicit goal of bridging the gap between the oral discourse the children already knew and the literate discourse strategies they would eventually have to use in written communication. They asked the children to tell about a specific object or give a narrative account about some important past event. For the white boys and girls this worked quite well. They told topic-focused stories that the teachers understood; and the teachers' questions and comments helped the students make their stories more explicit and develop the more complex structures of standard literacy. The working class black girls however, organized their stories to resemble children's responses to "analogy" questions. They noted abstract parallels between disparate situations and events and relied on the listener to infer the implicit links. Although the white teachers were of the same gender as the black girls and had excellent intentions, they failed to understand this principle and thus were unable to collaborate with the black girls in producing more elaborate, structurally complex stories. The black girls felt frustrated; their stories were rarely even completed before the teachers cut them off. As a result, they could not benefit from the steps toward literate, standard discourse that the classroom activity apparently accomplished for the white children. They would not be able to use this linguistic skill as an economic resource later in life. The teachers were also frustrated. To them it appeared that the girls could not "stick to the point" nor discern what was "important." On the basis of many such interactions the black girls would be judged intellectually inadequate.

This ability of social institutions to create gendered definitions of speakers through talk is equally illustrated by political assemblies in small-scale societies where adult

men consider each other equals. In many such societies, as among the Malagasy and the Laymi Indians described above, only men talk at public, political meetings. Ethnographers have repeatedly described men's talk in this context as allusive and indirect, making use of images, parables, and metaphors to hide, veil or ambiguate the referential message, thereby denying conflict (Brenneis and Myers 1984). Women are excluded on the grounds that they lack the necessary verbal subtlety. This seems to suggest that speech differences are powerful indeed, since they seem to directly limit women's access to the political process. However, ethnographers also report that the meetings are not the main site of decision making, and indirect speech is not primarily a means of persuasion or coercion. Usually decisions are made and consensus reached before and after the meeting in informal discussions that employ a more direct style and in which women participate actively, thereby having considerable effect on decisions (Harris 1980:73; Keenan 1974; Lederman 1984). What, then, is the meaning and effect of women's exclusion from speaking at meetings?

The linguistic form of political meetings defines not how decision-making actually occurs, but rather what can be shown "onstage"; what can be focused on as the legitimate reality. Comparative evidence suggests that meetings at which orders are given or announced by leaders ratify an ideology of hierarchy, regardless of the way decisions were originally reached. Meetings in which indirectness creates a lack of coercion and hierarchy between participants ratify an ideology of egalitarian relations, at least in societies where there are few other institutionalized political structures (Irvine 1979). If men's indirect oratory constructs the social reality of an egalitarian male polity, then the exclusion of women creates the reality and legitimates the ideology of women's subordination to that polity. As Lederman (1984) points out about the Mendi of New Guinea, for the women listening in silence at such a meeting, this reality is all the harder to challenge since it is formally acted out but never explicitly articulated.

In sum, societal institutions are not neutral contexts for talk. They are organized to define, demonstrate and enforce the legitimacy and authority of linguistic strategies used by one gender -- or men of one class or ethnic group-- while denying the power of others.¹⁵ Forms that diverge are devalued by the dominant ideologies. "Floors" with many participants, black girls' stories, women's gossip in Spain, Mendi women's directness, all attempt to contest the hegemony of the dominant forms. But it is not the "floor" that is

judged inauspicious, rather women are seen as timid or unable to express themselves; it is not that the black girls have different story-telling experiences than white children and less training than black boys, but that they cannot think properly. Despite the resistance demonstrated in women's linguistic practices, Bourdieu's (1977b) remark about the effects of this kind of linguistic domination applies: by authorizing some linguistic practices and not others, the institution appears to demonstrate the inferiority of those who use unauthorized forms and often inculcates in them feelings of worthlessness.

But notice that the Mendi meeting, like Mme Roland's forums, and single-speaker "floors," also illustrate another sort of symbolic power I mentioned at the start of this paper: they are interactional and linguistic forms, but not only that; they also attempt to impose and legitimate certain definitions of women, men and society. I now turn to a fuller discussion of this second aspect of symbolic domination and the way women's voices are sometimes raised against it.

4. Genres of Resistance

Despite the long-standing Western emphasis on language as primarily a means of representing an already existing reality, anthropologists have long been aware of the ways in which the metaphors, literary genres and interactional arrangements readily available in a community shape the way speakers define the social world. In short, conventional language and its conventional usage are not neutral media for describing social life. Some formulations about social life, when inscribed in a division of labor or other organizational form, serve one group's interests better than that of others. A hegemonic discourse, in this broad sense, is a form of power, and is sometimes resisted or contested.

This important and quite general notion of a dynamic between dominant and subordinate discourses or practices has been discussed, in many forms and with many terminologies, by a variety of social theorists. However, feminist scholars have been strongly influenced by a limited version of this insight, explicitly applied to women. Ardener, E. (1975) and Ardener, S. (1975) argue that women, due to their structural positions, have different models of reality than the male-dominated societal model. The form of women's models is often non-verbal, inarticulate or veiled, while the discourse of men is more verbal and explicit, and thereby more congruent with the usual discourse of western social science. Being unable to express their structurally generated views in the

dominant and masculine discourse, women are neither understood nor heeded, and become inarticulate, "muted," or even silent. In such cases women may talk a lot, but do not express their own different social reality.¹⁶

The "muted group" thesis usefully draws attention to the importance of the symbolic language, the form, of dominant and subordinate discourse. However, as I will demonstrate with a series of examples, the Ardeners' formulation is flawed in several respects. First, it assumes that "mutedness" is a static reflex of women's structural position. In contrast, when viewed in terms of broader theories of gender and symbolic domination, "mutedness" becomes only one of many theoretically possible outcomes of gender relations. A much wider array of women's verbal strategies and genres becomes visible, some considerably more articulate and more actively oppositional to dominant models than the "mutedness" thesis allows. Second, if domination and resistance are matters of interactional practice as well as structure, as I have been arguing, then we must focus not on "mutedness" as a structural product, but on the processes by which women are rendered "mute" or manage to construct dissenting genres and resisting discourses. As Warren and Bourque suggest: "...understanding dominance and muting [as processes] requires a broader analysis of the political economic and institutional contexts in which reality is negotiated, (1985:261)."

Ethnography itself is such a context, for ethnographic reports are deeply implicated in the process of representing self and others, creating images of social reality through language. Keenly aware of this, feminist critics of anthropology have charged that women in the societies studied were ignored or perceived as inert because androcentric ethnographers dismissed women and their concerns, making them appear passive and silent. Feminists challenged the authority and credibility of these male-biased accounts. But Ardeners' thesis suggests that the problem is more complex. It claims that women rarely "speak" in social anthropological reports because social science investigators of both sexes demand the kind of articulate models provided by men, not by muted women. And indeed, some women anthropologists have also complained of the inarticulateness of women informants in some contexts. It seems there is a need to re-examine how ethnographies are created. Currently, just such a re-examination is also the project of anthropologists who are similarly challenging the authority of ethnographic writing, but on different grounds. Following post-modernist trends in philosophy, they assert that traditional ethnographies mask

the actual practice of fieldwork and writing, (Marcus and Clifford 1986). By claiming to accurately represent the facts about an exotic culture, the naive realist conventions of ethnographic writing implicitly deny that ethnographic facts are selected, indeed constructed in the encounter between the anthropologist and the "other" who is her/his subject. In order to reflect the process of ethnographic knowledge, these critics suggest experimentation with literary forms so that writing may be a "polyvocal" and dialogic production in which the ethnographer lets the people speak and ethnographic facts are shown to be jointly produced by ethnographer and informant.

What has received too little attention in all these critiques is the unavoidably power-charged verbal encounter in which anthropologists and native speakers, with different interests, goals and deeply unequal positions meet and attempt to talk. Keesing (1985) provides a fascinating example of the ethnographic interview as a linguistic practice. In order to record women's versions of native life (kastom) among the Kwaio, a tenaciously traditional group living in the Solomon Islands of the South Pacific, Keesing had to analyze what he calls the 'micropolitics' of talk. In response to Keesing's requests, the men created and told life histories eagerly and artfully, even though the Kwaio lack such a genre as well as a tradition of self-revelation and self-explanation on which the western literary form of the autobiography is based. In contrast, Keesing recounts that he could not elicit autobiographical narratives from women, not even those who were old, knowledgeable and influential. They spoke to him in a fragmented, inarticulate and joking way, especially in front of elder men who urged them to cooperate. They appeared distressed with what was requested of them: "mute." A subsequent fieldtrip, eight years later, this time with a woman ethnographer, brought quite different results. In sessions with both ethnographers, Kwaio women took control of the encounters, even bringing female friends as audience to the recording sessions. But, unlike the men, who had provided societal rules and personal life narratives, the women rejected the ethnographers' personal questions and instead created moral texts about the virtues of womanhood, inserting personal experiences only to illustrate women's possible paths through life. Through their texts, Kwaio women were reformulating and embellishing a long-standing strategy of Kwaio men: To enlist the (at first) unknowing anthropologist in their efforts to codify and authorize Kwaio custom. By legitimating their own customs in an anthropologized form the Kwaio men were able to use it to resist the demands of state regulations, thereby attempting,

through vigorous neo-traditionalism, to maintain their political autonomy in the face of colonial and neo-colonial incursions.

A deeper understanding of Kwaio women's talk requires revisions of all three critiques of anthropological fieldwork. Clearly Kwaio women were not so much structurally mute and inarticulate as responsive to the immediate interactional context, especially relations of gender inequality within their own society and in the ethnographic interview. Pragmatic analyses of the interview as a speech event suggest it is the ethnographer's task to discover the conditions under which informants can talk. Similarly, it is not enough to insist, as the post-modernist critics do, that the ethnographic encounter and the genres that emerge from it are jointly produced. While important and accurate, this observation by itself ignores the importance of gender and other forms of inequality. It omits the several levels of unequal power and privilege which characterize the ethnographic encounter and which also determine who is able to talk and what it is possible or strategic to say. The women's inarticulateness and subsequent "voice," as much as the men's systematization of their culture, were responses to wider fields of force which assure that some texts or genres are more powerful than others, making a simple co-production of ethnographic texts impossible, (Asad 1986, Polier and Roseberry 1988:15). Finally, feminists would have confidently predicted the changes produced by the presence of a woman anthropologist, and would have understood that the genre of autobiography is problematic not only because it is culturally specific to the West, but also because it has been shaped by western gender ideology that assumes a male subject.¹⁷ Yet the case of Kwaio women suggests revisions and expansions for gender theories as well: A female ethnographer may be only part of the answer. In this case, the presence of the male anthropologist was also important, for the women were attuned to his established role as mediator between the Kwaio and the outside world. Thus, attention must be paid to relations of power that connect Kwaio society to a world system in which, as the Kwaio are aware, anthropologists, as wielders of western discourse, have authority that Kwaio women, perhaps differently than men, can try to channel to their own ends through the ethnographic interview.

Ethnography is only one of the many contexts in which we can observe the processes that make women seem "mute". Another example is provided by an elite intellectual study group, the Men's and Women's Club of 1880s London, and their

discussions of sexuality (Walkowitz 1986). Club rules asserted men's and women's equality, but rule number 17, accepted by all, stipulated that discussion must stay within a Darwinian, scientific framework. That both assured and hid men's dominance. For women members respected, but lacked, such scientific knowledge. This is at once an instance of linguistic domination, and an attempt at imposition of a social reality: Women's private letters reveal that many found the terms of such a science inadequate to express "complex thought and feeling" about the difficulties of their sexual lives. Minutes of the meetings suggest that face-to-face with men, women were often silenced by this dilemma. But other data show various attempts to formulate opposition: transforming or adapting men's scientific arguments in papers written for the club, writing private letters of complaint to each other, and even attempting to create a different idiom for talking about sexuality by drawing on public events of the time.

If women are not always silent or inarticulate, then the task of anthropology is to seek out and understand the genres and discourses women produce. Especially revealing are genres that, created by speakers for themselves to reflect on their own experience, are not primarily a product of the ethnographic interview. As I have already shown, students of everyday talk have identified men's and women's often different verbal genres; students of oral literature have catalogued their forms and the rules for their performance (e.g. Sherzer 1987). But these are not simply "ways of speaking;" the differences in content or perspective that they often construct deserve equal attention. Indeed, it is in the conjunction of form, content and context of performance that women's consciousness emerges. First, my examples will demonstrate the great range of articulateness evident in women's genres. Second, while women's genres often diverge from men's, the evidence does not support a thesis of separate women's cultures. On the contrary, they can best be read as commentary that shows a range of response--acceptance, resistance, subversion and opposition -- to dominant, often male discourse.

Women sometimes produce a cultural commentary of gesture and ritual that may be called inarticulate because it rejects words altogether. An important instance occurred in the Nigerian Women's War of 1929. During the massive protests against proposed taxation of women's property by the colonial government, women re-formulated on a large scale a locally practiced custom of obscene dancing called "sitting on a man," that traditionally occurred at the houses of men who

had over-stepped social mores upheld by women. Contemporary witnesses of the Women's War report that women's protests included marching nude, lying on the ground kicking their legs in the air and making obscene gestures. As Ifeka-Moller (1975) explains, these gestures were mysterious and alarming to European observers but, for the women and men involved, they constituted an eloquent protest against the male political control and government taxation that women saw as a violation of their rights.

A similarly gestural but much more contradictory and acquiescent practice is American women's consumption of popular romantic novels. If we analyze only the texts themselves, romance readers appear as passive consumers of a hegemonic popular culture that demeans them by presenting images of women as illogical and magnetized by male brutality. But Radway (1984) examines not just the content but the social event of reading. She shows that for many romance readers, reading itself, often done in stolen moments of privacy, is a combative act, contesting the usual self-abnegation of their lives. Yet, while revealing a real tension in dominant gender ideology, this is a limited and self-defeating protest: reading allows temporary escape from limited lives, but the texts make those lives seem more desirable.

A more verbally explicit and subversive, yet veiled and ambiguous genre, is the oral lyric poetry (*ghinnawas*) performed among intimates by the Bedouin of Egypt's Western Desert. In describing these delicate, brief and artfully improvised performances, Abu-Lughod (1986) stresses that the dominant ideology, the "public language" of the Bedouin is one of honor, autonomy, self-mastery, personal strength and sexual modesty. The poems directly violate this code of honor and implicitly criticize it by expressing the feelings of dependency, emotional vulnerability, and romantic longing condemned by the official view. The poetry constitutes what Abu-Lughod calls a "dissident or subversive discoursemost closely associated with youths and women, the disadvantaged dependents who least embody the ideals of Bedouian society and have least to gain in the system as structured.... Poetry is the discourse of opposition to the system and of defiance of those who represent it, (1986:251)." But the poetry is anything but a spontaneous outpouring of feeling. Indeed, its formal properties and context of performance enhance its ability to subtly carry messages counter to official ideals. It is formulaic, thereby disguising the identities of poet, addressee and subject. It is fleeting and ambiguous, performed by women and youths

among trusted intimates who can decipher it exactly because they already know the reciter well. Yet, this poetry of subversion and defiance is not only tolerated; it is culturally elaborated and admired because of the paradoxical intertwining of official and dissident discourse. The oral poetry reveals a fundamental tension of Bedouin social and political life which, while valuing and demanding autonomy and equality between lineages, demands inequality between the genders and generations within lineages and families. "A discourse of defiance by those slighted in the system, [poetry] is exalted because a refusal to be dominated is key to Bedouin political life, and it is avoided by [male] elders because it threatens to expose the illegitimacy of their authority, (Abu-Lughod 1986:254)." Thus, the verbal genre of women and youths reveals the contradictions of the ruling ideology.

My final example is a poetic genre more verbally explicit, more directly critical of social and political relations, and much less accepted by official ideologies. Though limited to a much smaller segment of the female population, it is equally revealing of contradictions in dominant discourses. Migrant laborers, moving between the mines of South Africa and their native Lesotho, compose a genre of poetic songs called lifela, performed competitively, often for a fee, by 'men of eloquence' usually at social gatherings in border towns. They sing of poverty and forced migration; their songs reinforce a rootedness in the rural village, despite migration, and a longing for traditional gerontocratic and patriarchal social relations. However, there are also some women who sing lifela. But their circumstances, as well as the content of their poetry, are significantly different.

In the current migrant system, women's position is in many ways even worse than men's. Women are forbidden to migrate by the legal system, but left alone in the village they must make decisions without being granted the autonomy to do so. "The South African government, the Lesotho government and male Basotho attitudes have openly conspired to prevent female migration, which threatens the divided-family system on which both the migratory labor system and male domestic power are based (Coplan 1987:424)." Female poets are among those who have managed to escape these constraints and have migrated illegally. While for men South Africa is unequivocally a land of wage slavery, for these migrant women it represents relative choice, opportunity and autonomy. Women have borrowed the men's genre but have transformed it, providing a considerably more radical social

critique. Rather than identifying with rural life, the women's poetry sharply and explicitly criticizes men, proclaims traditional marriage unworkable, but recognizes as well the physical dangers and insecurity of life as an illegal migrant. The women's opposition is palpable not only in the content of the poetry, but also during the performance of the poems/songs in the tavern: "Male ...patrons, stung by the critical barbs of female performers routinely rise to sing spontaneous retorts ...[but] are shouted down or even pushed aside by [female poets] determined to hold the floor, (Coplan 1987:429)."

Such attempts to silence the protest songs of migrant women in Lesotho return us to the process by which women are rendered "mute" or are able to construct an alternate discourse, resisting attempts to suppress it. I have attempted one approach to this question, examining women's genres as practices, analyzing ethnographic interviews or Bedouin poetry very much as I did earlier examples of "ways of speaking" such as collaborative "floors" and gossip: focusing on the immediate interactional context of the genre -- the participant structure of the interview, the intimacy of Bedouin confidantes, the liminality of border taverns-- for clues to the forces that allow it to be performed. More broadly, however, the issue of when and how women's subversion or opposition to hegemonic culture emerges is as much a question about the structure of gender systems and political economy as about linguistic practices, genres and counter-discourses. Comparative work, such as Warren and Bourque's (1985) study of women's public speaking in two quite differently organized Peruvian communities, or study of the social identities of women who sing lifela, can start to illuminate this issue, as can historical research into changing images of sex and gender (Steedman et al. 1985, Walkowitz 1986). Another research tactic is to compare women of different classes and ethnic groups, using linguistic practices to raise the classic issue of the relationship between consciousness and social position.

A study of this kind is Martin's investigation of American women's discourse about their own reproductive processes, as compared to the dominant discourse on this subject, which is medical science. Martin (1987) used the same linguistic metric to compare medical textbooks and women's folk models: the system of metaphors through which reality is made comprehensible and meaningful in each. She demonstrates that medical texts construct the body as a model of industrial society, with cells as factories having systems of management and control. The physical events of

menstruation are constructed by science as failed production and an alarming breakdown of authority in the body.

Comparing this system of metaphors to women's ways of talking about menstruation in interviews, Martin found that middle class women acquiesce to the medical model. They explain menstruation in medical terms, dwelling on internal organs and processes, worrying about the "correct" color of the blood. But working class women, both black and white, shared "an absolute reluctance to give the medical view of menstruation (1987:109)," in spite of exposure to it at school, and the interviewers' many efforts to elicit it. Instead, working class women described menstruation in phenomenological terms untouched by the medical model: what it feels like, looks like, smells like in immediate experience. Martin concludes that "... middle class women appear much more 'mystified' by the general cultural models than working class women. They have bought the ... medical accounts, (1987:111)." Perhaps this is due to their favorable opportunities for satisfying employment and thus positive attitudes towards both the image of production and schooling as a source of information. Once again, gender and class are intertwined. This is certainly a start towards understanding the processes by which some women but not others develop divergent and resistant consciousness; or why subordinate men sometimes share women's practices.¹⁸

These diverse examples of women's genres, drawn from many parts of the world, and many kinds of sociopolitical formations, were chosen in part to highlight that women's resistance or criticism is sometimes couched in implicit forms such as ambiguity and irony, but in other cases much more directly expressed. Indeed, the examples illustrate a range of linguistic explicitness (gestural; brief and ambiguous; extended and explicit); diverse social contexts (public demonstration, closed meeting, intimate conversation, paid performance); and several levels of subversion or opposition to dominant discourses (from self-defeating complicity, to resistance, to open criticism). Interestingly, it seems that these three parameters do not correlate in any simple way. Strong protest can appear in silent gestures, as in the women's war; or in the explicit public performances of critical poetry. Resistance may be knowing yet silent, as in American working class women's refusal of some medical metaphors, verbal yet veiled as in Bedouin poetry, verbal but privately expressed, as in the Men's and Women's Club, or explicit and public, as in bilingual Austrian women's use of German. But in each case, women's linguistic practices made visible a crack, a fault line in the dominant male discourse

of gender and power, revealing it to be not monolithic but contradictory and thus vulnerable.

5. Conclusions

I have argued that gender relations are constructed, in part, through different possibilities of expression for men and women. Tools from several scholarly traditions are needed in order to unravel how linguistic practices, gender and power are intertwined. The research results from several traditions that I have brought together here clarify and inform each other; they deserve to be conceptually integrated. The notion of symbolic domination through patterns of language use, and of gender as both structure and practice, are essential to that endeavour.

Cultural constructions of language, gender and power shape men's and women's ideas and ideals about their own linguistic practices. Students of everyday talk have often neglected this symbolic side of interaction. For instance, even such seemingly small details as the systematic differences between American boys' and girls' turn-taking in single-sex play groups fit and reinforce the broad cultural logic of gender symbolism in the United States. However, women's acquiescence to such cultural expectations is neither passive nor automatic. Indeed, as students of everyday talk have shown, women actively construct linguistic strategies in response to these cultural conceptions and to the relations of gender inequality they encode. While women's practices sometimes bring change in established structures, often, as in the case of Spanish women's gossip, the strategy may aim to resist male dominance, but ends by reproducing and legitimating it. This is in part because men and women interact not as individuals, but in institutions such as workplaces, families, schools and political forums, where much decision-making about resources, and social selection for mobility, occurs through talk. And institutions are far from neutral arenas: they are structured along gender lines, to lend authority not only to reigning classes and ethnic groups, but specifically to men's linguistic practices.

But power is more than an authoritative voice in decision-making; its strongest form may well be the ability to define social reality, to impose visions of the world. Such visions are inscribed in language and enacted in interaction. Although women's everyday talk and women's "voice" or consciousness as evidenced in expressive genres have been studied quite separately, I have argued that both can be understood as strategic responses, often of

resistance, to dominant, hegemonic cultural forms. Often the form is a culturally defined opposite, as well as the ideology. Thus, attention to linguistic detail, context of performance, and the nature of the dominant forms is essential to both endeavors. The precise form of questions and turn-taking is crucial in understanding the construction of different "floors" in American meetings (everyday talk); the exact, formal conventions of intimate Bedouin poetry (expressive genre) indispensable for understanding how it is suited to the expression of vulnerability and dependence. Although the linguistic materials are quite different, both collaborative "floors" and intimate poetry locate a contradiction in dominant discourse and subvert it through rival practices. One undermines the hierarchical form and ideology of meetings which favor men's expertise in competitive talk; the other is the opposite of ordinary talk and undermines the cultural rule of honor, threatening to reveal the illegitimacy of elder men's authority. This returns us to the cultural constructions we started with, now revealed not only as ideas that differentiate the genders, but as discourses that are sources of power, which are enacted, and sometimes contested, in talk.

NOTES

1. This paper will appear in a different form in Gender, Culture, and Political Economy, Micaela diLeonardo (ed.) University of California Press. I would like to thank Judith Gerson, Suzanne Lebsock, Michael Moffatt, Kit Woolard and Viviana Zelizer for careful readings and important comments, and Bambi Schieffelin for her bibliographic suggestions. This paper is dedicated to the memory of Ruth Borker.

2. The question of "silence" in feminist scholarship is two- fold. On the one hand, the titles of some recent books suffice to illustrate a concern with obstacles to women's self-expression: Silences (Olsen), On lies, secrets and silence (Rich), Stealing the language (Ostriker), Man made language (Spender). On the other hand, the fact that social science has neglected women makes women of the past and other cultures seem silent, when in fact the silence is that of current western scholarship. I return to this issue in section 4. Even everyday usage, such as the generic 'he' for persons of unspecified sex, has the effect of making women appear silent.

3. There is a growing literature on the meanings of silence, which is usefully reviewed in Tannen, D. and Saville-Troike (1984). The relationship of silence to women's speech is mentioned in Thorne, Kramarae and Henley (1983:16-17). Smith, S. (1987:49) highlights the irony of Foucault's assertions, when applied to women's writing; Moi (1985) discusses femininity and silence from a literary critical perspective.

4. Among the influential works that have developed and argued for this conception are: Rubin 1975, Kelly-Gadol 1976, Gerson and Peiss 1985, Connell 1987.

5. Among such works, perhaps the best-known evocation of "women's voice" is Gilligan (1982), and the literature inspired by it. Also relevant here are historians' discussions of women's culture that stress the content of beliefs and values, (for example, Smith-Rosenberg 1985; see debate in Feminist Studies 1980).

6. Lears (1985) provides an excellent discussion of Gramsci's contribution and the analytical uses of 'cultural hegemony'; see also Lukes (1974). I have pointed to a very general and fundamental concern that these theorists share, ignoring for my purposes their many differences, e.g. the relative importance of history and human agency as opposed to structure, or how to conceptualize the relationship between material and ideational forces.

7. Feminist literary critics have provided diverse analyses of this relationship, see Furman (1980) and Moi's (1985) critical review. Recent western feminist practice itself provides a handy example in consciousness raising, which is a new form of linguistic practice as well as a challenge to dominant definitions about gender. Section 4 discusses the anthropological evidence.

8. Borker (1980) makes this point, and provides many examples, some of which are also cited here. Hymes (e.g. 1974) has long argued for the analysis of speakers' ideas about speaking and its relation to social categories. Silverstein (1985) provides a detailed discussion of the way such conceptions, along with culturally constructed notions about how language works, i.e. 'linguistic ideology,' mediate between social change and changes in the internal workings of language, e.g. phonology, address systems, morphology.

9. Linguistic theory has been more deeply involved with definitions of gender than is generally recognized. Cameron (1985) provides a useful discussion of the way notions of gender originally drawn from definitions of men and women were used to define grammatical gender, then later recycled from language to social life and used to justify gender arrangements.

10. Such a gender/class link is suggested, in passing, in a number of works. For example, the relationship between working class culture and masculinity is described for British adolescents by Willis (1977) and extended to adults by Connell (1987:109). The connection between images of femininity and middle class gentility in 19th America is suggested by Halttunen (1982) and Douglas (1977). Smith-Rosenberg (1985) discusses Davy Crockett as the poor, tough, 'uncultured' archetype of American masculinity, along with other, contrasting images of gender in the 19th century.

11. I will not be discussing a range of important, related issues that are critically reviewed by McConnell-Ginet (1988), e.g. the process by which speech strategies become part of language as a form of cognitive competence, and the semantic coding of gender inequality in the lexicon, among others.

12. Such strategic language choices, associated with the differential life circumstances of men and women in bilingual communities, have been reported by several researchers. The choices of women vary according to the specific historical and political economic circumstances of the community, so that women are sometimes conservers of ethnic languages, and sometimes leaders in the shift away from them.

13. These patterns of interruption have been questioned by some workers, and deserve more study, especially work that is attuned to contextual differences in everyday talk.

14. A related approach focuses on a different context: language socialization. Importantly, it is not only the child but also the caregiver whose identity is defined in such interaction (Ochs, forthcoming). In a comparison of Samoan and middle-class American patterns, Ochs found that American caregivers (usually mothers) accommodate much more to children, both verbally and non-verbally; indeed, the middle-class image of the "good mother" requires this. For instance, they routinely reinterpret speech and action that are joint activities of mother and child as the praiseworthy accomplishment of the child alone. This not only constructs the child as more competent than he or she really is, but also serves to deny or veil the greater knowledge and power of the (often female) caregiver. American notions about gender and childhood are thus linked and reproduced.

15. Interactions in many other institutions deserve more attention in these terms. For a recent attempt to understand interactions between women patients and doctors in American clinics see Fischer 1988. For suggestive discussion of educational reform based on similar ideas, see Treichler and Kramarae (1983), and the very different approach of Walkerdine (1985).

16. The Ardeners' thesis is more complex, but the parts I have summarized have had strong influence not only on the Ardener's own circle (see articles in Ardener 1975) but also on other feminist writers such as Showalter, Kramarae, Spender, and Warren and Bourque (1985).

17. Many scholars argue that the western genre of autobiography arose in the late Middle Ages, in the midst of profoundly reformulated notions of individualism and its relation to the movement of history (Olney, 1980, Stanton 1987). Because these notions of the new "Man" assumed a male subject, women's autobiographies in the West have often been perceived as illegitimate and suspect (Smith 1987:43). Kwaio women's refusal to recite the personal narratives and societal rules characteristic of men's responses to similar ethnographic questions, their insistence instead on moral justifications of womanhood, evoke a parallel strategy in Western women's autobiographies, in which a recurring figure of divided consciousness can be read as the authors' awareness that they are being read as women and thus judged differently in their self constructions (Smith 1987).

18. The evidence about class is more ambiguous when birth metaphors are also considered. Women of all classes (as well as some doctors) have invented new metaphors for birth that reject the analogy between the production of goods and the production of babies. Such new metaphors, essential for re-organizing experience, have been embodied in the varied new institutions of birth clinics, at-home births and other women's health movements in the US and Europe. As Martin (1987) argues, linguistic practices are not only reflexes of existing structural categories of speakers, but are also newly created, forming the conditions necessary to build new institutional structures.

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