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THÈSES CANADIENNES SUR MICROFICHE

NAME OF AUTHOR/NOM DE L'AUTEUR MS. JAN SUMMERTON

TITLE OF THESIS/TITRE DE LA THÈSE Sex Contamination in Language

UNIVERSITY/UNIVERSITÉ SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY.

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED/ GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE M.A. (CMNS)

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED/ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE DEGRÉ 1976

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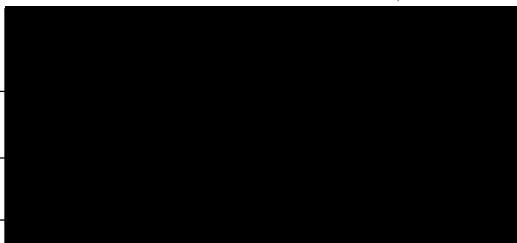
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SEX CONTAMINATION IN LANGUAGE

by

JANET L. SUMMERTON

B.Ed., University of B.C., Vancouver, 1965

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in the department of

COMMUNICATION STUDIES

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

December 1976

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines four areas: labels and descriptions for women, how women use the language, women's style of interaction and women's nonverbal behavior. This examination is based on a bibliographic review of relevant literature in the social sciences and recordings of ethnographic data collected locally.

Part One delineates the scope and nature of the thesis. Part Two deals with women's place in the linguistic universe. Labels and descriptions often refer to women as outside the mainstream of society and in terms of their relationship to men. Part Three discusses the social construction of reality and sex roles as fabrications in keeping with the existing social order. Conventional sex differentiated patterns of interaction reinforce social positions. Part Four outlines some specifics of women's use of language and women's communication style. Part Five discusses the relativity of language; the relationship between language, conceptions, attitudes and behavior; the attitudes and beliefs which have obscured the issue of status differential; and role theory - that roles develop out of relationships and are reciprocal. Brief mention is made of the silence about women in recorded history and the present relationship of women and the media.

In summary, it is the author's conclusion that the observable differences in communicative behavior are not innate sex differences but are related to differences in status. That is, women's style of communication can be viewed as communication of submission. The author concurs with what has been called the feminist view that traditional scholarship is male oriented and reflects a male perspective of the world. She therefore

concludes that it is the task of intelligent women to critically assess theories, models and research, and to authentically document women's behavior and position in society, thus generating a body of recorded knowledge from a feminist perspective.



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And I will speak less & less to you  
And more and more in crazy gibberish  
you cannot understand:  
witches incantations, poetry,  
old women's mutterings....

Robin Morgan,  
The Monster

Preface

After eight years in the university system as a student and fifteen years in the educational system as a teacher, consultant and administrator, I am fully cognizant of the traditional format of academic work. Researching this topic for close to a year led to experiencing profound revelations about women's communication in general and particularly my own communicative behavior. Thus I decided to present this material in an unconventional format. I chose not to write as a man to men - the traditional form of scholarship. I place women back in the first person, using the pronoun 'we' to refer to women, not society as a whole. Society as a whole is male dominated and has made me feel invisible and unimportant for thirty seven years. My tool of communication is a language saturated with male bias. Also thirty seven years of conditioning are hard to overcome in one year. So lapses occur throughout the thesis. Criticism from my committee after I had submitted the first draft illustrated how well I had learned my lessons of submission. The purpose of the thesis was meekly suggested, by innuendo and inference, well into the body of the work. My conclusions and suggestions reflected my lack of a sense of history and my feelings of powerlessness in the society. I experienced rising

tides of emotion - no, of anger - as I wrote the thesis, and in true 'ladylike' fashion, suppressed this to just below the surface.

I have always considered my personal style to be concise, if not terse, elaborating only where necessary. The thesis, with sixty-eight pages of body and twenty-five pages of notes reflects this style. It took a colleague to point out the connection between this habit and the subject of the thesis. For subordinates do not presume to take up much of the 'master's' time. I have learned to speak briefly and to the point - sometimes quickly - aware, if only subconsciously, that to speak at all is with the good graces of my superiors.

I have struggled to present documentation on the subject of women in communication in as authentic a manner as possible. I am fully aware of the weight of male domination on my attitudes, perceptions, thought patterns, behavior and use of language and have attempted to transcend this. However, the language is inadequate to communicate the new, fleeting perceptions and consciousness I am experiencing. To write this work in any other style would be a disservice both to myself and to other women.

I set out to investigate a suspected phenomenon - a pattern of behavior, and soon discovered the narrowness and shallowness of information in this area. The process of collecting and sifting through the data was not intentionally biased, although I recognize my own ethnocentricity. I did intentionally focus my research on contemporary women - academics, ad hoc social critics and colleagues, considering that, as Poulain de Barre says "All writing by men about women must be considered suspect for men are at once judge and party to the lawsuit." (Quoted by Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, p. xxv).

1  
"Language is masculine, but only  
in the sense that it was created  
by man to be used as a most  
powerful instrument with which  
to produce a world of his own  
by interpreting the existing world  
in terms of his masculine sexology."

Otto Rank,  
Beyond Psychology,  
p.242

Part One  
Introduction

Rank's comment illustrates the crux of the problem of women in communication. The English language was created unilaterally by the men in society and only describes the world as men see it. This leaves half the society - us women - in an unenviable position. We see the world from a different perspective and learn early in our lives to deny this experience and espouse the dominant world view. More importantly, we think of ourselves as I, in the centre of our world and are bombarded with messages that contradict our essence. We are called the dark side of men, we are what man is not, the second of opposing principles - objects. Since man is normal we are the abnormal, the aberration. We are the others, the outsiders - outside the mainstream of human (real male) experience. Thus language has only provided the means of describing us in relation to man, not as equal independent people. As Gornick says in her introduction, "I am as human as you are... but I suffer from the deprivation of that initial recognition." (1)

Until recently this sexist base of language has rarely been challenged as women's intellectual and communication powers have been stultified. In the new wave of feminism of the last few years educated women have begun to articulate the discrepancies and inadequacies of the language. This

work attempts to discuss some of the issues in as authentic a manner as possible, given that we are just beginning to equip ourselves with the linguistic tools necessary to objectify and share our collective female experience.

Although male scholars in linguistics and anthropology have observed and written of sex differences in aboriginal languages since the nineteenth century, concern with the same issues in English is a relatively new field of study. (2) Myths such as, women chatter incessantly, and women have nothing important to say, have crept into the literature and have been transformed into facts with no concrete supportive evidence.

In 1975 the first books devoted to this topic appeared and to date four have been published - all in the United States. (3) Articles and research reports are occurring in increasing numbers in both the academic and the popular press. The data is gradually being accumulated and shows progressive coherence and clarity.

I have chosen to limit the scope of this work to four topics:-

1. Our names and descriptions
2. Our style of language



3. Our style of interaction
4. Our non-verbal communication

from four sources:

1. social scientists
2. linguists
3. literature
4. personal ethnographic data

I include the last source since preparing this thesis has lead me to experience 're-vision' that is, to reassess past interactions and to be more conscious of the evidence available in the everyday world.

We women have the choice of using three styles of written communication. We can imitate a masculine style, choose a cool impersonal style, or write from our own perspective. Though most of my references are women, writing in the last eight years since the dawn of the latest feminist movement, all three styles are represented. Mary Ritchie Key's book; Male/Female Language, is a good example of the cool impersonal style. Casey Miller and Kate Swift in Women and Words also avoid the feminist perspective which they rationalize in their introduction this way - "using 'they' helps maintain distance... Since we are women writing on a subject that in the short run divides the sexes ... and since we do not claim to be nonpartisan... we needed the objectivity 'they' encourages." It may be

comforting that Miller and Swift recognized the problem. Their solution, however, is disappointing evidence of the price some women are willing to pay to operate in a male-dominated world. On the other hand, much of the feminist writing is fraught with anger - outrage against what Adrienne Rich calls the 'oppressor's language' we are forced to use. (4) Such an approach is hardly constructive .

It behooves intelligent women to challenge the language and concomitant beliefs and attitudes they are confronted with daily, thus to question the traditional (read male) frameworks of analysis and patterns of logic. Ellen Morgan, editor of An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words, said feminists "tend to reject elitism and authoritarianism, and base their politics on personal experience, their style is more descriptive, and, if not more tentative, more relative, more inclined to the many faceted, less structured by the desire to assert one idea to the exclusion of others than to convey the multiple and personal character of experience. (5) Although our authentic style at this point in time is clumsy, cumbersome and inconsistent, it represents a necessary part of our development.

If I come into a room out of the sharp, misty light  
and hear them talking a dead language  
and if they ask my identity  
what can I say but  
I am the androgyne  
I am the living mind you fail to describe  
in your dead language,  
the lost noun, the verb surviving  
only in the infinitive.

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Adrienne Rich,  
The Stranger

Part Two

Our Place in the Linguistic Universe :

Labels, descriptions and omissions

In an attempt to understand other cultures linguists and anthropologists found the study of language, particularly vocabulary, was invaluable. Often such study provides information that individual members of the society would have found difficult to articulate. For along with learning the words to communicate with each other we learn a set of conceptual categories for ordering the myriad of impressions, the chaos of experiences presented to us. These categories are reflected overtly in vocabulary, hence the ensuing discussion of contemporary usage.

1. I'm a woman, not a lady  
or the ups and downs of being female

To be referred to as a lady has a chilling effect on me.

I feel obliged to behave as a porcelain statue (or is that statuette?) limiting my behavior, my language and my ambitions.

For a few hundred years 'lady' referred to a woman with status in the society. She was a person of culture and refinement. By the twentieth century ladies were on their way down, to the extent of being used as a euphemism for prostitute in 'ladies of the night'. Taking the degradation a step further, the incongruent 'cleaning lady' slipped into the vernacular.

We still have 'ladies auxiliaries' and 'ladies clubs' - terms of a somewhat frivolous nature. Try using 'ladies' instead of 'women' in the following; Women's caucus, Status of Women, or Women's liberation. The substitution not only weakens the image and detracts from the seriousness of our endeavors - it approaches the ludicrous.

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In some local circles 'lady' is used to refer to a girlfriend, wife, housemate and/or lover. The reasons given for this usage are twofold - a reaction against traditional labels and as an uplifting term of dignity and respect. I'd say that means we're in trouble, for pedestals have never proved to be stepping stones to recognition or equality.

Unfortunately, the use of the word 'girl' for any females of any age is still prevalent. We have office girls, sales girls and girl Fridays. Can you think of a time when 'girls' used for females over sixteen gives an impression of full humanity? The organizers of the Miss America pageant have recognized the tenor of the times and changed their pre-show promotion to "fifty beautiful young women will compete for the title...!"

You've come a long way, Baby!

If I've come so far, why do you still call me baby? (6)

## 2. The afterthought - the use of modifiers and endings

We have many nouns in English, which although officially neuter, in current usage assume a male identity. To make these words apply to women we put 'woman' or 'lady' in front of them or add the suffixes 'ess' or 'ette'. So we have woman pilots and lady doctors, hostess, stewardess and usherette. The implication is that male is normal, usual, female an afterthought. Consider the type casting in these supposedly neuter words; chief, executive, tycoon, scoundrel, officer, writer, president, or traveler. (7)

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If we neglect to qualify these words we experience mistaken identity. A woman at the University of B.C. recently had a meeting with a representative of the human rights commission to discuss a charge of racial discrimination in hiring practices. The representative (a male) grew increasingly uncomfortable and finally explained he was supposed to be meeting with the dean to discuss the issue. To which the woman replied 'I am the dean.' I had similar experiences as a principal in the public school system. Indeed I fall into the same trap of making assumptions. Recently I went to a meeting at a lawyer's office and was surprised to find a room filled with women. I had assumed the lawyer was male.

### 3. The Descent of the Female

Since the misogynous period of Charles II in the seventeenth century many words involving women have degenerated to acquire a negative connotation, become sex-specified or narrowed in meaning. For example, whore originally meant lover of either sex; tomboy meant a rude boy; virgin an independent woman; shrew a wicked, malignant man; and courtesan originally meant a member of the court. Consider these originally parallel terms, and their current usage; matron and patron, mistress and master, governess and governor. Spinster and bachelor hardly conjure up feelings of equality. and there are no parallel terms for ladies' man, housewife or divorcee. (8)

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In olden times, women were grouped with the slaves, the idiots and minors. In these days of supposed enlightenment we don't seem to have progressed very far. In the sixties, President Pusey of Harvard, complaining of the military draft, said "We shall be left with the blind, the lame and the women" for graduate students. A somewhat more optimistic view was taken a decade later in the Saturday Review in which a columnist referred to someone as "defender of homosexuality, of Mozart, women's rights and dumb animals".

A step up, no doubt, from the company of the halt and the blind. Better still is the explicit recognition of the sensitivities of the female in Section 415.5 of the Penal code in California which states that it is a crime to use vulgar, profane or indecent language within the presence and hearing of women. In an even more magnanimous vein J. Ritchie et al in his book Decedents, Estates & Trusts informs us that "married women, infants and lunatics may be the beneficiaries of a trust." We are reminded however that such a concession carries some degree of risk if we bow to the insights of Spiro Agnew who in 1970 said "it is difficult to tame oceans, fools and women."

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And, to complete the picture, men use words from the realm of animals to demean us women further. We are called pigs, cows, nags, vixens, geese, dogs, mice - and cold fish! (9)

#### 4. More Discrepancies - Seminal Thinkers and Masterpieces

Women "scold", "scream", "shriek", "titter" and "chatter". We are, as men are not, "promiscuous", "vivacious", "hysterical", or "brazen" - and when we stand up for ourselves as women "castrating"! The greatest insult that can be levelled by one man to another compels the invention of simple metaphors associated with the female, eg. "old



woman", "effeminate", "weak sisters" or simply, "just like a woman". (10) The flip side of the coin is to praise a woman's efforts by telling her she thinks like a man, or has produced a seminal piece of work. We have old masters, masterpièces and masterful works. Women artists, if they are lucky, can have one-man shows!

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#### 5. Men and Boys first

Established linguistic habits put the male first in most cases as in men and women, male and female, his and hers, brother and sister. Mary Ritchie Key suggests to change the order would be difficult, not only because of chauvinism. She feels rhythm in language is important, and these phrases flow with more ease in the traditional order. It is interesting to note that women writing of sexism in language often repeat these patterns. For example, Varda One, a columnist in a California feminist paper, talks of master and mistress, patron and matron, and Mary Ritchie Key called her book *Male/Female Language*. (11)

#### 6. Generic Man, Invisible Woman

Keeping in mind that the male half of the species named

the world, it is not surprising to find ourselves in the position of having a word which at one and the same time is purported to refer to the human race as a whole and specifically to males. Expressions such as the Ascent of man, manpower, manmade, the common man, the man on the street, the average man, don't give us a feeling of equal participation in society, or of initial recognition.

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Recent research supports feminist contentions that man means male to most people. In 1972 Schneider and Hacker asked three hundred students to participate in a study to test the hypothesis that 'man' is understood to be generic. The students were asked to select pictures for a textbook in sociology. Half the students were given chapter headings such as "Social Man", "Industrial Man" and "Political Man". Other students were given headings such as "Society, Industrial Life" and "Political Behavior". Analysis revealed that both sexes considered males only when the word "man" was used, while the other headings produced images of both male and female.

In 1973, Nielsen tested one hundred children from nursery school to grade seven, using a picture selection technique. She also found that both sexes considered man (as in

sentences such as "Man must work in order to eat" and "Around the world man is happy" meant male, not female. (12)

The pronoun "he" is also used generically or when the sex is unknown (as in Someone's at the door, isn't he? The average Canadian - he). Again the cultural myth emerges that humans are male until proven female. Feminists' urgings to use "he or she", "they" or the form "s/he" have been met with the counter arguments that the suggestions are clumsy and unnecessary. Lakoff espouses this view, although she recognizes the feminists' position. She suggests this area is "less in need of change and less open to change than others". Yet Graham reports findings of a survey of pronoun citations: out of 940 citations for he, 744 were applied to male humans, 128 to male animals, 36 to persons in male linked occupations - only 32 referred to the unspecified singular subject. Gena Corea offers the following solution,

"If women think it's important and men don't... let's use a pronoun that pleases women. Men don't care what it is as long as it's not clumsy, so from now on, let's use 'she' to refer to the standard human being. The word 'she' includes 'he' so that would be fair. Anyway, we've used 'he' for the past several thousand years and we'll

use 'she' for the next few thousand, we're just taking turns." (13)

The research reiterates feminists' claims that to use "man" or "he" in a generic sense is inaccurate. To continue the practice perpetuates the myth of woman as invisible, as outside ~~the~~ mainstream of experience.

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#### 7. Dictionaries - the Bastions of Male Conservatism

Websters' Third New International Dictionary (1966) defines manly as "having the qualities appropriate to a man, not effeminate or timorous, bold, resolute, open in conduct or bearing", and womanly as "marked by qualities characteristic of a woman, characteristics of, belonging to, or suitable to a woman's nature and attitude rather than to a man's". For examples of womanly the authors came up with "convinced that drawing was a waste of time, if not downright womanly"... and "her usual womanly volubility". Random House Dictionary (1967) states "Qualities usually considered desirable in a man" as "strong, brave, honourable, resolute and virile" with "feminine, weak and cowardly" as antonyms.

Websters' Third lists these qualities for woman; "gentleness, affection and domesticity, or on the other hand, fickleness, superficiality and folly". In the entry for man, no

negative attributes are given. Womanish is defined as "unsuitable to a man or to a strong character of either sex."

The Random House Dictionary provides the following "gems" in illustrative sentences:

bargain      His mother-in-law was no bargain.      16  
tremble      She trembled at his voice.  
nerves      Women with shrill voices get on his nerves.  
and He lets his wife lead him by the nose.  
She made his life hell on earth.  
It was only too apparent that his mother rules the roost.

Dictionaries exhibit sexist behavior by:

1. giving more space to male items than female
2. using illustrative sentences to reinforce sex role stereotyping
3. presenting the male first and using man generically
4. including the prejudiced comments of the authors.

Even the drawings are mainly of men and male animals.

In 1973 a group in Chicago published volume one of the 'Feminist English Dictionary' called An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words: English Words and Phrases Reflecting Sexist Attitudes Towards Women in a Patriarchal Society, Arranged According to Usage and Idea. The women took

material from established dictionaries and arranged them in the following categories:

Woman as Whore  
Woman as Whorish  
Woman as Body  
Woman as Animal  
Woman as "Ess", Woman as "Ette"

17

One of the authors, Ellen Morgan explained that the dictionary was compiled with the hope that "lexicographers will be jarred to perceive the prejudice inherent in their scholarship. (14)

#### 8. In a Nutshell

It seems the authorities can't agree on the exact relationship between language and thought. What we do 'know' is that the structure we impose on the world is arbitrary - indeed, fictional. For each linguistic community has a different set of categories, a different perspective, a unique world view. The language we learn is a passport to a linguistic community. It also imposes limits and confines our expression. (15)

Since men have controlled the naming process and thus the ordering of the world we find women are relegated in the language to the positions of:

1. the other, the opposite
2. the deviation from the norm
3. the second, the less important

18

In many instances we are absent, invisible or described in terms of our relation to man. In essence, language treats us badly, with a preponderance of negative labels and descriptions for people who want to be considered fully human.

Inextricably woven in with the language are attitudes, assumptions, values and behavior models. We cannot determine which came first, or which is the basis for the others.

It does seem apparent that language is one area where we could improve our lot by changing traditional meanings, deleting objectional terms and introducing new words.

Since language is in a constant state of change and adaptation this would not be an insurmountable project.

Many of us are experiencing a new consciousness, and fleeting visions of awareness. We need to create an adequate language to verbalize and share this new perception.

Simone de Beauvoir, twenty years ago, pointed out that

women have difficulty using the pronoun "we", so used are we to looking at ourselves through male eyes. Unfortunately, a great deal of the work written by women recently still exhibits this habit. Sexism and sexist are new words in our language, and we have managed to expand the original meaning of chauvinism. With perseverance we can continue to influence the language. For surely, language both reflects change in attitude and behavior and influences these changes. (16)



Part Three

The Social Construction of the Female

## 1. Introduction

In any society communication is essential for maintaining social order. That is, through communication, members of the society hold a social contract, a tacit agreement, governing their relations with each other and their conduct. This involves accepting a set of values, beliefs and attitudes - learning the cultural code. In our case that means accepting that women are inferior and subordinate, for there's no denying we live in a patriarchal society. 21

You might say, at this point, why do women continue to agree to these shared myths and assumptions? The Emperor has no clothes! The arrangement does appear illusory, fragile. But consider the elaborate web of structures, created mainly through language and communication, which protect, indeed reinforce the male power base. Marcuse calls it "the linguistic universe of the establishment" functioning as both the "voice and the deed of suppression".

(17)

In the last section I discussed the power men have to name and to define the world. Another aspect of their power is the control over the major institutions, particularly the conglomerate of media, which daily, hourly, reinforces

traditional beliefs and attitudes. Through this power man  
can control our behavior. They can ignore, discredit or  
devalue women and our accomplishments. We have limited  
access to money, positions of influence and educational  
opportunities. We are also faced with the power of brute  
force. Rape can be considered a form of social control  
for the threat of it serves to restrict our mobility. (18)

Men render us insufficient  
then speak of us as so born...

Fanny Burney

The Wanderer

It might be taken as proof  
of the fertility of the human mind  
that, given so little sexual  
evidence, it should contrive  
so large a body of dependent  
sexual opinion.

Mary Ellman,

Thinking About Women

p.6

There is a great deal of controversy about sex role differences. Opinions and theories abound, facts and proof do not. The discussions centre on two issues; whether these differences are inherent or culturally defined, and theories of socialization.

The assignment of role behavior is one of the main ways of keeping us in our place. Just as the conceptual categories discussed earlier are arbitrary and vary from one culture to another, cross cultural research suggests each society arbitrarily assigns sex roles. (19) Of course, in all societies women bear the children and in most societies nurse them. Thus women tend to exhibit feminine kinds of behavior. However, in some societies men also behave in what we consider traditionally feminine ways. Margaret Mead's classic studies on the male and female in New Guinea provide some of this evidence. The Tchambuli society exhibited sex roles contrary to ours. The women were dominant, the men emotionally dependent. In the Arapesh society both men and women were co-operative, unaggressive and responsive to the needs of others while among the Munduigumor both the men and women were aggressive, individualistic and unresponsive. (20)

What are the stereotypes of "feminine ways" in our society? Women should be passive, dependent, non-competitive, sensitive, conforming, timid, weak, submissive, irrational, compliant, frivolous, nurturant and supportive, for a start. As recently as 1970 Inge Broverman et al. found both female and male therapists held these traditional role expectations. Given a questionnaire of one hundred and twenty two bipolar items, the therapists were asked to check the items representing healthy female, healthy male or healthy adults (sex unspecified). The results indicated a high correlation between the concepts of healthy male and healthy adult. The concepts of healthy female and healthy adult did not agree. What we still do not know is the exact relationship between such stereotypes and behavior. But it seems reasonable to assume that "existing sex-role standards exert real pressure on individuals to behave in prescribed ways". (21)

These stereotypes are perpetuated in books, magazines, films and on television. (22) A 1974 Ontario study of television programming coded shows in regard to content and sex and occupations of the central characters, the men outnumbered the women 3:1 and showed up mainly in authoritative roles - the experts. Women appeared mainly

as housewives and mothers and were rarely shown in work oriented or cognitive roles. Recent research on sex stereotypes in television commercials produced the following results: 1. In the majority of commercials men were the announcing or authority figures. 2. Women were usually portrayed as consumers. 3. Female characters were less likely to possess expertise or to be knowledgeable. 4. Fifty-one percent of the women were identified in terms of their relationship to other people, while only thirty-six percent of the men were so identified. 5. Only eleven percent of the central figures in occupational settings were women. (23)

26

If biology is not destiny we need to consider what social purposes such stereotypes serve. In view of the previous discussion on communication and control, I would suggest these role expectations function in two ways: 1. to incapacitate women, for if a woman behaves in a traditionally 'female' way she is incapable of functioning in positions of power and influence and 2. to keep us in our place, for if we act 'feminine' we do not question or attempt to change our subservient position in society. So the more feminine our behavior, the more removed we are from the centre of society. At least two writers, considering

these 'feminine' qualities, have drawn a parallel with other victimized, oppressed groups. (24)

Granted, sex role stereotyping also defines men's roles.

But as Janeway says,

"For the sex which is regarded as superior its ordained role bestows a privileged status.

The inferior sex knows that it will always be limited by the role assigned to it. Masculinity challenges men - which isn't always pleasant.

Living up to traditional standards of maleness can sometimes be a bore and sometimes a burden.

It does not however, impose the sort of hindrance and restriction that femininity demands of women - the fence around women's place is more apparent to those living inside it than to those outside in man's world." (23)



Part Four

Communication and Submission

## 1. How we use language

In keeping with our position in society we women are not permitted and indeed reluctant to use language in the same way as man, particularly in social interaction where men are present. This is not surprising in light of the cultural expectations discussed earlier. Our language has been characterized as lacking assertiveness, indicating hesitancy and indecision - in a word, the language of submission. Jespersen reflected on the nature of our language fifty years ago, but the majority of the literature, which is speculative rather than empirical, has been written since 1970. This literature refers primarily to oral language patterns. (26)

29

### a. Vocabulary

Jespersen claimed our vocabulary was not as extensive as men's vocabulary. However, Lakoff and Key consider we have an extensive vocabulary in connection with our particular life interest and roles - that is, the vocabulary of sewing, cooking, child bearing and raising, and an elaborate set of colour words. Key points out as roles change and overlap so the vocabulary domains become less sex-specified or exclusive. Of course, the extent to which we will be able

to change our roles is a moot point. (see Part five, Reverberations)

Two pieces of research are relevant here: In 1970, Hoyt Gilley and Collier Summers studied sex differences in the use of hostile verbs. Subjects were asked to make up sentences from a given noun and a given verb. Twenty 'neutral' and twenty 'hostile' verbs were given. The results showed men used hostile verbs with a greater average frequency than women. The authors conclude men are less inhibited in expressing hostility!

30

In 1974, Teresa Bernardez-Bonsatti, a psychiatrist, reported on four years experience with feminist and non-feminist women, aged from eighteen to forty-five, from mixed socio-economic and educational backgrounds. Her observations of the initial two or three interviews with these patients were that non-feminists were compliant, submissive and unassertive, and tended to speak of personal inadequacy, defining themselves in terms of others and rarely using 'I'. The feminists, who had all attended consciousness raising groups, were more active, inquisitive, less submissive and compliant. Their self-definitions were more autonomous than the non-feminists. The author concludes that "feminists are healthier persons although

they are outside the 'norm' for female behavior." (27)

b. Syntax

Lakoff suggests we weaken our speech through syntax in the following ways:

(1) We use tag questions -

isn't it? doesn't he? don't you think?

31

Key says we tend to do this to reinforce the feminine image of dependence and the desire not to appear aggressive.

(2) We make compound requests -

do you mind if? would it be all right?

will you please?

We avoid making simple, direct requests.

Key says "In a world where women do not usually function in roles of decision making and giving commands it is not surprising that females use alternatives to the imperative construction."

(3) We use hedges, qualifiers -

well, y'know, kinda, maybe, I guess, I wonder

thus weakening plain, forceful speech.

In this connection, Swacker investigated sex differences in speaking patterns. She asked male and female students

to describe three pictures by Albrecht Durer. These descriptions were taped and analyzed. She found women tended to use what she calls 'indicators of approximation' (...about six books). On the other hand, Hirschman did not find women used more hedges or qualifiers. In 1974 she analyzed conversations in dyads (single sex and mixed sex) for the presence of hedges and qualifiers, for frequency of fillers and affirmative words. The two significant differences were women used 'hmmm' to a much greater extent and men used 'I think' more than women. (28)

32

(4) the use of hyperbole -

esp. person claimed we use more adverbs of intensity  
awfully, terribly, quite, so - really?

Lakoff says we speak in italics -

I'd never do that. It was most extraordinary.  
because we are afraid we will not be convincing by words  
alone.

Key's students found women tended to use more emphatic forms  
fantastic, horrifying, startling.

It is obvious that extensive research is necessary to prove  
or disprove these ideas. I offer these recent experiences  
as evidence: I read Lakoff's book for the first time about

six months ago, and having recognized some of these patterns in my own speech I attempted to eliminate or at least curtail them. Shortly afterwards I was called for an interview for an administrative position in Vancouver. During the interview I made a conscious effort to particularly avoid the use of hedges and qualifiers. Later I was told I was the most assertive of the women interviewed. (However a man got the job.) Early this fall I presented a paper on women's communication styles to the Women Studies conference in Vancouver. During the discussion the women indicated they recognized many of these patterns in their own language. Informal conversations with colleagues and friends also support this analysis.

33

Two researchers have looked at stereotypes of women's speech. Siegler and Siegler tested the hypothesis that strongly assertive forms would be attributed more often to males and less assertive forms to females, and that syntactic forms associated with males would be rated more intelligent than those associated with females. The results were consistent with both predictions. Considering this research was reported in 1976 the results are disappointing. The authors conclude that recently reported changes in attitudes toward women may have been more a function of

changes in social desirability of expressing anti-feminist prejudices than of changes in attitudes.

In 1973 Kramer analyzed cartoons in the New Yorker.

Female and male students were asked to indicate whether the captions were spoken by a woman or a man. She reported that for most of the captions there was a clear consensus that the speaker in the cartoon was of a particular sex.

Next she chose cartoons from Playboy, Cosmopolitan and Ladies Home Journal. The captions were given to four groups of students, who were asked to indicate the sex of the speaker. In this study also, the sex of the speaker was overwhelmingly identifiable. Kramer concludes the cartoons are exaggerated reflections and reinforcements of the sex role stereotypes found in our society. (30)

### c. Talk Like a Lady

We are expected to be more polite and more careful in our speech. Coarse language and swearing have been the perogatives of males, although in some sectors of contemporary society, women are using harsher expletives. In the main we are still criticized and even penalized for this behavior.

In 1974 the superior court of New Jersey upheld the dismissal

of a teacher for "abusive rhetoric", "unladylike unfeminine language" she used in a speech as head of the local teachers association. One of the more tragic accounts of this is from the trial of Inez Garcia. "A woman's use of the word, fuck, was a factor in convicting her of murder in the killing of a three hundred pound man, who she testified had helped his companion rape her. In the extensive press coverage of the trial much attention was given to the defendant's psychological transformation from a demure wife and mother who had never been known to use strong language - a devout Catholic who had been too ashamed at first to tell anyone except her priest the reason why she had killed - to a woman who could shout from the witness stand, pounding her fists on the judge's bench, "I killed the motherfucker because I was raped!" In a gruelling cross examination she testified with tears streaming down her face as the prosecutor made her draw a diagram of the rape scene and describe how she was forced to undress by her attackers. "Then what happened?" the prosecutor asked, "You want me to tell you?" "Yes" "He fucked me!" Garcia screamed. Some months later a university lecturer in creative writing, commenting on the case in a national magazine, said "the defence of justifiable homicide in a state of shock and rage was undermined by Miss Garcia's foul mouthed performance on the stand and her playing to the feminist gallery as



well as by the fact that the killing took place seventeen minutes after the alleged rape occurred." Even if the lecturer is presumptuous in his conclusion that the coarse language helped convict this woman, I find his comments disturbing evidence of the underlying attitudes. (31)

36

Some research has been done on standard and non standard English. It infers we women aspire to replicate the King's English, and that men feel freer to digress. In a commercial for cigarettes a few years ago the man said "Winstons taste good like a cigarette should". His female companion corrected his grammar. Shuy, Wolfram and Riley studied the speech of seven hundred Detroit residents, selected at random. Multiple negations (double negatives) and pronominal apposition (my sister, she) were investigated for their frequency and use. Women were more sensitive to these forms and were less likely to use them. Labov conducted a similar study in New York and also found women had a stronger tendency to correct speech. Trudgill studied urban speech in Norwich, England and found the same sex differentiation. Trudgill suggests one explanation, that the subordinate position of women makes it more necessary for us to secure our social status. (32)

## 2. Interaction style

From the evidence presented thus far we can speculate on the typical female behavior in social interaction.

Remember the stereotypes of our behavior involve submission, compliance, passivity, concern for others & nurturance when considering the research that follows. After an extensive and complimentary introduction William Buckley turned to his guest, Clare Booth Luce, and said "I should like to begin by asking her whether she finds implicit condescension in the rhetorical formulations with which men tend to introduce her. Mrs. Luce replied "Bill, I thank you for that warm and extra ordinarily friendly introduction. You'll be pleased to know that in the entire introduction, which was flattering to say the least, there was only one masculine put-down. This is a high level of achievement for a man introducing a woman. You spoke of her inability on occasions, to hold her tongue. Now, had you been speaking of a man who spoke out and made enemies for himself in the process, whether he was speaking out stupidly, rightly or wrongly, you would have said, "He is blunt, he makes enemies by what he says. He is overly candid". You might have used many phrases. But the phrase "hold her tongue" is a phrase that men frequently use about children and women... It comes

out of man's desire, highly successful, through the centuries to master women. One of the first things children and women are taught to do is to hold their tongues." Contrary to contemporary folklore we talk less than men in mixed interaction. Wood conducted a study, in 1966, using photographs to elicit spontaneous speech. She found men tended to use more words per utterance. Swacker, in 1975 replicated these findings. Strodbeck reported in 1951 that in his study of married couples men talked more than women. In 1957 in his study of mock jury deliberations he reported similar findings. Soskin and John (1963) studied the talk of married couples and reported finding the husband talked more and produced longer units of speech. Argyle et al. conducted a study of dyads in 1968, also reporting men spoke more than women. Hirschman, on the other hand, in 1973 and 1974 could not duplicate these findings. (33) She did find conversations were longer when at least one female was present and suggests women do maintain conversations. We tend to ask for suggestions, opinions or expressions of feelings - and often elicit instrumental talk from the men - giving information (often in a patronizing way). Mary Ritchie Key says "Men are forever explaining things to women." We are expected to be respondents rather than initiators, to be

more concerned with feeling, positive or negative. This was confirmed by Soskin and John and Strodbeck - much of women's talk involved agreeing, complying and passively accepting. Drag and Shaw found females more effective in conveying both negative and positive emotions. Zaidel and Mehrabian found females more effectively conveyed negative emotions, men more effectively conveyed positive emotions and females were better at interpreting the emotions of others.

39

Men interrupt more frequently than we do according to Wood and to Argyle et al. We have trouble maintaining control of conversations. Zimmerman and West investigated two party conversations which had been recorded in public places. In male-female interactions "virtually all the interruptions and overlaps (98% and 100%) are by male speakers". And, interestingly, none of the women actively responded to the interruptions. We have trouble maintaining control of conversations. Chesler says "Even control of a simple-but-serious-conversation is usually impossible for most wives when several men, including their husbands, are present...women talk to each other, or they listen silently while the men talk. Very rarely, if ever, do men listen silently to a group of women talking. Even

if there are a number of women talking, and only one man present, he will question the women, perhaps patiently, perhaps not, but always in order to ultimately control the conversation, and always from a superior position."

Bernard reports a study of student reaction to lecturers of different sexes. Identical words delivered by a woman and a man were rated more authoritative from the man's lips. As Ellman says, "The male body tends to lend credence to assertions, the female takes it away". In 1967 Goldberg asked students to rate the competency of articles in six academic fields, manipulating only the sex of the author's name. He found both male and female students rated the articles by men to be more impressive. Pheterson et al. in 1971 conducted a similar study asking students to judge paintings. The women judged the female entries less favorably than identical male entries, but judged the female winners to be equal to the male winners. Bough and Allen (1975) and Levenson (1975) did not replicate the original findings. Both reported that females over-evaluated the work of the females, which they suggest may reflect an over reaction or simply a change over time. Chobot et al., in 1974 found women's articles were not rated lower than men's articles, but the men's articles swayed women's opinions more. It is clear further research

is needed in this area. (36)

### 3. Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication is a major component of social interaction. In fact, Birdwhistle has suggested that two thirds of the social meaning of a two person interaction is conveyed in this mode. As adults we know, and use the code of nonverbal communication. Yet, so subtle was the learning of this code there are few of us who could recall from our youth more than a few incidents of the learning process. As with the modes of communication described earlier differences in nonverbal communication can be analyzed in terms of gender. The issues of power, of dominance and submission are essential to this analysis. Initial investigations reported men's nonverbal behavior could be considered indicators of higher status whereas women's nonverbal behavior was considered to indicate warmth and expressiveness. Only recently have researchers been willing to view women's communicative behavior as appropriate for those deemed inferior. Charm has been defined as nothing more than a series of gestures indicating submission. (37)

Research with primates shows the dominant members (usually

male) seem to have more personal space and territory. This appears to be true in human groups also. In our environment men are more likely to have personal spaces or territories which are both larger and more inaccessible than women's spaces. For instance, the den in the home and the office in the workplace are less likely to be invaded by us than a space we may define. Two women recently interviewed on CBC radio were discussing the problems of setting up a business in public relations. Apart from the difficulty of establishing a roster of clients, they were deluged with business acquaintances (mainly men) dropping in for coffee and staying to chat for an hour or two. The women pointed out in the interview that these intruders would not have conducted themselves in the same manner with other male business acquaintances. The situation of the male bosses invading the space of their female employees is readily observable, as is the reverse situation - the reticence of the women to invade the man's space. (38)

42

Considering the personal space that is an extension of the body, researchers have found women allow others to be closer to them than men do. Yet, when given the opportunity, the female subjects did not reciprocate the behavior. Touch can be considered an invasion of our personal space. I am not referring to touch for purposes of expressing

sexual intent or intimacy, although women's touch is often misinterpreted to mean that. Uninvited touching can be considered yet another reminder of our lower social position. Henley collected data on incidents of touching in public and reported men touched women twice as often as women touched men. (40)

43

Body postures which are the exclusive domain of women reflect the limited personal space. We hold ourselves in, keep legs together, hold arms to our sides, fold ourselves up into neat, tight packages. Not only did generations of clothes designers hobble and confine us, we do it to ourselves. Marge Piercy in her novel, Small Changes, wrote of a female teaching movement to a theatre group, "Women condensed. Women crossed their legs by putting one leg over the other and alongside. Women kept their elbows to their sides taking up as little space as possible. They behaved as if it was their duty not to rub against, not to touch, not to bump a man." These behaviors appear more frequently in the areas of society where sex roles are maximized. This summer I spoke with women who consider they spend most of their time in liberating relationships. We were discussing the difficulties of operating in a more traditional relationship - as in some work situations.



One woman described the code-switching as a drawing up, pulling oneself in - mentally, but particularly physically.

(41)

We seem to prefer more eye contact than men. Exline et al. concluded this behavior indicated we were more concerned with affective aspects of relationships. I concur with the interpretation that we depend heavily on visual cues from other participants in social interaction. We use the feedback we receive to adjust our behavior. It could be considered a simple tactic for survival, especially in mixed sex relationships. 44

Sex differences also occur in smiling. We do smile more than men - indulging in what Bugental et al. called 'public smiling'. They found middle class white women smiled more frequently when they thought they were being observed (videotaped) than when they thought they were not. (The lower class women in the study rarely smiled). The smiles of the middle class women were not related to the content of the verbal communication. Shulamith-Firestone wrote "I had to train myself out of that phoney smile which is like a nervous tic on every teenage girl. And this meant that I smiled rarely, for in truth, when it came down

to real smiling I had less to smile about." Smiles as well as communicators of happiness, can express nervousness, insecurity, and approval seeking, and can be used to disarm others - another useful tool for people of low status. (43)

## PART FIVE

Reverberations

The relationship between language, thought and culture is far from clear and the subject of continual debate. Sapir wrote in 1928, we are all at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for our society. "The real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.. we see, hear and otherwise experience very largely as we do because the language habits of our community predispose certain choices of interpretation." Whorf added "We cut up and organize the spread and flow of events as we do largely because, through our mother tongue, we are parties to an agreement to do so, not because nature itself is segmented in exactly that way for all to see." Cross cultural studies have been used to illustrate and support this hypothesis of linguistic relativity, or linguistic determinism. I stand with those who cannot accept the hypothesis entirely, for we need not be passive, we are not controlled by our language. There is no doubt of the significance of language as part of culture. Language influences the culture in that it is the conveyor, it reflects "past acts of perception and cognition, which collectively repeated and approved, have passed from individual experience into cultural habit." To study language then will provide valuable information

on the habitual thought and behavior of a culture - thus its current world view. But note that the language reflects habits and does not necessarily preclude potential patterns. (44)

While cross cultural research has provided useful information of the relativity of languages and cultural world views, Basil Bernstein's work has focused on similar differences within a culture. In his studies of the speech of middle and lower class people in Britain he has suggested the different linguistic forms and codes, and fashions of speaking are a function of the form the social relations take - "these codes essentially transmit the culture and so constrain behavior. (45) Thus, when we women are taught the female code, we are also taught our place in society. Studying our language and how the general language refers to us has clarified our status in society.

The language also reflects conceptual categories. As pointed out earlier, women are rarely admitted to the category of man as equal human beings. We do seem to often be associated with inanimate objects, children and animals. Jill Johnston recognized the arbitrary nature of these categories:

"There's only one group I feel I belong to really and that's the group called women. I feel I have more in common with frogs or grasshoppers than men...After all, this was the revelation of feminism. We always knew we weren't frogs, but it was never clear that we weren't men. We were all the one group and we were called mankind. Some women are beginning to wonder now if we don't actually have more in common with such species as crustaceans than with men. That may be an idle thought, but crustaceans and women alike are not given to erecting skyscrapers."

49

Language can reflect changing conceptualizations.

Polanyi called language the "product of man's groping for words in the process of making new conceptual decisions to be conveyed by words". Language can also be used to change conceptual decisions - by forcing us to think in new ways. (46) The items in the appendix and the poetry quoted throughout are examples of this power of language. The women writers were attempting to use the language to jolt people out of habitual patterns of thought and to reconsider women's condition.

Bernstein has written of the relationship between the class system and the distribution of knowledge.

"Historically and now only a tiny percentage of the population has been socialized into knowledge at the level of the meta language of control and innovation.."  
Women have not had access to this meta language, or even access to the power to name the world as we see it, to describe our experiences and our 'world view'. In the Diary of Adam by Mark Twain, Adam is disturbed and annoyed by Eve's attempts to share in the process of naming the world. Adam's descendents seem just as reluctant to allow our current efforts to reach fruition. (47)

50

Ours is still a society based on patriarchy and rife with sexist attitudes. Behavioral differences which developed as a result of the status differential between men and women have been attributed to innate sexual differences. Elaborate theories have been constructed to justify this transition (and perhaps to obscure the real issue). For, if women can be convinced it is our nature to be gentle, loving, compliant, barefoot and pregnant, we won't struggle to improve our lot. The web of myths about our 'nature' creates ambivalence in most of us, which we may never completely resolve - ambivalence between the social message and our own experiential knowledge. Del Jordan, in Lives of Girls and Women describes such an experience:

"...about this time I started to read an article in a magazine, on the subject of the basic difference between the male and female habits of thought, relating chiefly to their experience of sex... The author was a famous New York psychiatrist...He said that the difference was easily illustrated by the thoughts of a boy and a girl looking at the full moon. The boy thinks of the universe, its immensity and mystery; the girl thinks "I must wash my hair."... It was clear to me at once that I was not thinking as the girl thought;... I knew if I showed it to my mother she would say, "Oh, that's just maddening male nonsense, women have no brains." That would not convince me; surely a New York psychiatrist must know. And women like my mother were in the minority... I wanted men to love me... I felt trapped and stranded." (48)

51

Myths of the home and the nuclear family have been created.

We are told women's place has always been in the home.

Yet Philip Aires points out that our idealized view of home and family are fairly recent social inventions, about three hundred years old, created by rising middle classes of some societies, and never reaching universal acceptance. (49)



Of course there are the basic biological differences between the sexes and therefore different functions in the reproduction of the species. But sex differences beyond the functions of 'wet nurse and sperm donor' appear to be social fabrications, for we have no conclusive evidence to the contrary. (50)

Mead suggested a society that has realized the extent to which male and female personalities are socially produced has three options:

1. To standardize the personality of men and women as clearly contrasting, complementary and antithetical, and to make every institution in the society congruent with this standardization.
2. To admit that men and women are capable of being moulded to a single pattern as easily as to a diverse one, and to cease to make any distinctions in the approved personality of both sexes.
3. To lessen the rigidity in the classification of the sexes by recognizing real individual differences or by creating a new artificial category. (51)

Our society has tried to implement the first option - it is the most suitable for maintaining a patriarchy. And we still experience the polarization of the sex roles.

However women's position is changing, and traditional sex typed descriptions are even less appropriate now.

In increasing numbers we are gaining some measure of economic autonomy, control over our reproductive system, and wider educational and occupational opportunities.

(It's important to note we may be extending our opportunities horizontally, but the number of women in positions of power and influence is still negligible.) However, the archaic stereotypes are reinforced partly by word magic. (52)

53

Men have surrounded us with myths of mysticism (our intuition) and mystery. To say we are complex, unfathomable or perplexing is a good way to put us aside and not have to face dealing with us as equal human beings who want equality. We are illogical, irrational so obviously we are not to be taken seriously. These traditional beliefs will not be easily dislodged.

Rigid role definitions have the effect of compressing the personality, of limiting our emotional and behavioral range. There are some current attempts to encourage cross role behavior - teaching women to be more assertive, less other-directed and compliant, and teaching men to be in touch with their emotions. Since the traits assigned to us have been downgraded I suspect it will be difficult

for the majority of men to incorporate any of them into their behavior. For despite all the joyful exceptions to the rule, the few people we all know who live beyond this code of female/male behavior (at least some of the time), the current social system appears to represent the ultimate 'masculine society.' - A society where the master considers that the end justifies the means, emotion is not to cloud 'important' decisions, competition takes precedence over co-operation. Thus the masters, in denying supposedly 'feminine' traits, can destroy people and the environment, rationalizing it through more word magic - for our safety, for the good of the country. Systems and institutions can become more important than people. Power plays reach the ultimate of stockpiling weapons having the capability to destroy the world many times over. On the individual level, men experience alienation and increasing frustration which is manifested in increasing violence, particularly against women, in the form of rape, beatings, mutilation and murder. Pornographic movies have been superceded in some areas by 'kill' movies - the victim is usually female. We don't know the extent of psychic violence, which is harder to identify or document.

These concepts of femininity and masculinity influence our interpretation of other cultures. In Chinese,

yin and yang express opposing forces, but are not connected to masculine and feminine. In translation we added this dimension - of course you know which symbolizes darkness and which, light! (53)

55

So masculinity and feminity have become ugly, divisive words. They imply that they refer to reality rather than social mythology. They encourage us to think in absolutes, of two poles with no gradations between. They are words we could do without.

The communication patterns described in part four are not easily understood by considering sex roles alone. With the added dimension of different but unequal positions in society, the patterns begin to make sense. People in subordinate positions have to lead a delicately balanced life, attempting to stay in the good graces of their superiors. This involves discreetness, politeness and cultivating the ability to please. So we are hesitant, avoiding behavior that will displease men. We listen attentively and do not interrupt - we contain our speech and our behavior. Of course we avoid forceful language, strong statements of opinion in the presence of a person of higher status. Such behavior functions as defense

mechanisms and as tools of subtle manipulation of the masters. We are credited with managing interpersonal relationships. But unfortunately the motivation for our behavior is survival rather than genuine expression.

Continued research focused on the specifics of our communicative behavior, in conjunction with research on the communication patterns of men may yield useful information for us to change our behavior. But we are in danger of taking the part for the whole. We need to observe these behaviors in the social context. We know little about the repertoire of communicative behaviors, the effect of social class, economic and educational levels, and relationship between the participants, on these behaviors. If communication between women and men can exist in a genuine interaction of equals, what are the conditions involved and can they be replicated?

Although sex stereotyped roles confine us, we can't get rid of roles altogether, for they are basic to social order. They also provide stability and continuity for the individual. We participate through these roles or patterns of expectations of behaviors. Roles arise out of relationships. That is they are socially defined. Through continual communication with others we verify,

extend and modify our concept of our role. Thus, communication both reflects and reinforces our role. Because of this social construction of roles, attempts to change our roles must be agreed upon by others. Roles are reciprocal. Changing our role necessitates others changing. Women have been able to change roles, to escape the feminine stereotype, on occasion. Janeway says most of these exceptional women moved from one role to another, therefore their behavior continued to be predictable. The process of creating new roles is socially disruptive. For breaking the social contract means that others do not know what to expect; can no longer predict our behavior. More importantly, because of the reciprocal nature of roles, others do not know what is expected of them in the new situation. Janeway says "There are two sides to a role: what the role player does and what role others understand him to be doing. It is easier for each side to do the opposite of what was done before than to create something new". In that way some of the rules of the game stay intact. Janeway goes on to explain that when women first break from the traditional role of compliant woman we may be forced or choose to take on its opposite - the shrew - before working out a new role. A shrew can be discounted as having lost her ability to please men. So when we attempt to create new roles we threaten the social order - the established

relationships, the shared myths and assumptions. The others in the relationship, group or society will react negatively out of concern for the loss of personal and social stability. There's no doubt that it is necessary to 'update' our role for the traditional, stereotyped version is inappropriate for contemporary women. The extent to which we will be able to change it ultimately depends on the men in society who may not readily give up their position of power. (54)

58

Part two documented some of the evidence of how we are committed or devalued through language. We have lost our names and are hidden behind generic man. But to fully understand the contemporary condition of women in communication two related issues should be considered - the silence about women in history and the present relationship of women and the media.

Recorded knowledge has been accumulated mainly by men. So history, psychology, sociology, etc. best explain men's achievements and use the male perspective. We have been taught to view this knowledge as adequate to describe and explain the world. We are only just realizing the inadequacy of these male tools for our understanding of

the world. Men just cannot write authoritatively about what goes on in women's heads, about our perspectives - only we can do that. Male audacity in that regard is equalled by the practices of ignoring us or depreciating our efforts. Our knowledge of women's political activity and other accomplishments through history and our information about past women's lives from women's point of view are fragmented. Women's acquisition of the tools of reading and writing lagged far behind that of men as did (does) access to the means of disseminating and sharing information. Evidence of women's accomplishments is tucked away, obscured. How many female artists and artisans of the past are written or spoken of in the public domain. The engineering marvels of the pueblos are often commented on, with no reference to the women who created them. Where is it written that women made the camel hair tents of the Bedouin or the earth lodges of the Omaha? How common is the knowledge that many of the illuminated manuscripts of medieval times were produced by nuns. What about the women painters, sculptors, composers through history? Who has heard of the women painters who earned the patronage of various members of European royalty or Sabina von Strausbourg, sculptor of the thirteenth century. Some of



the paintings attributed to Franz Hals have turned out to be the work of his contemporary, Judith Leyster. You can see one of her paintings in the Hals museum in Holland. (55)

Women writers have suffered similar problems of discrimination and lack of recognition. Some chose to write under male pseudonyms. Colette originally published under her husband's name. Early women writers portray womanhood as a struggle against confinement. (56)

Many women broke through traditional female roles, despite the resistance and prejudice, to become active, independent and creative people. Yet the images of these people have not been preserved for us to use as culture heroes and role models.

The lopsidedness of history is particularly evident in the recording of the last women's movement. This movement gathered strength and momentum in the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early part of this century. Social organization of women began (perhaps again) at this time and women at last began .

to share their experiences and define collective realities. They achieved major legal changes. Yet little information of their other accomplishments remain.

Similarly, women's activities during the first and second world wars are largely ignored. And yet women worked in armament factories, in foundry trades, in automobile, armoured vehicle and aircraft construction and maintenance, and in electronics. Women were active in the resistance movement during World War II, and, more recently, fought in the ranks in Israel and Indo China. Carolyn Bird says "Generally speaking, frontier conditions - wars, revolutions and feverish boom times which provide urgent work for all hands - have motivated men and women to similar or androgynous goals. By contrast, periods of slow or orderly economic growth have cultivated masculinity and femininity as goals in themselves." (57)

So, where are we today? DeBeauvoir's book, *The Second Sex* heralded the beginning of the latest feminist movement, which got underway in the late 60's. More women are working outside the home, although our salaries have not kept pace with those of men.

We have made inroads into various professional spheres but have not yet had any control over "the mechanisms of the professions" - the dissemination of information or the transmission of new values. (58)

In the culture at large, the mass media has developed as incredibly patriarchal in its organization and saturated with male bias in its products. Ethel Strainchamps edited a book for the Media Women's Association in 1974. It contains over 70 reports from women in television and magazine and book publishing. In the preface Strainchamps describes the problems that occurred between the compilation of the material and publication. A major publishing house was supposed to print the report, but, despite the terms of the contract to print the manuscript as presented, the copy was changed enough to change the intent of the committee. So another publisher had to be found, delaying the report by two years. Many of the reports are anonymously written - "even women associated with an industry dedicated to communication may not feel free to communicate candidly without fear of reprisal". (59)

The film industry does not seem to be an exception. Writers in Women and Film called it "A closed and sexist industry whose survival is precisely based on

discrimination. Motion pictures have been one of the most potent medium for conveying reinforcing stereotypic attitudes".

Jill Johnston wrote "The actual rôle of women in film and media right now seems puzzling to me. Can women work their way to the top to the real power positions, of production and direction, to any significant degree within the established industry, and if so, would they be the people, or women to transform the image of women once they got there?" She suggests it will take a decade to see the images of women significantly changed. Women have formed alternative, independent institutions, attempting to produce/print authentic material avoiding traditional distortion or censorship which occurred under the rubric of editing. (60)

Sheila Rowbotham states "Women have come to revolutionary consciousness by means of ideas, actions and organizations which have been made predominantly by men. We only know ourselves in societies in which masculine power and masculine culture dominate... The language which makes us invisible to history is not coincidence, but part of our real situation in a society which we do not control". (61) What we have learned, then, is

the male perspective of a male society. Models represent their world. Traditionally (male) scholars are part of the establishment or speak for the establishment. Supposedly 'neutral' scholarship is actually saturated with male perspectives. We are expected to use theories and methods in which we are excluded or ignored. (62)

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We have taken the major step of beginning to articulate the problems in relation to communication. To view the patterns of differences in terms of status instead of sex alone further clarifies the issues and suggests more solutions.

To press for social reform through changes in language and interaction patterns appears naive, to say the least. The social system is flexible enough to accomodate some realignments. However a major change of our position in the direction of equality would be socially disruptive - hardly in the best interests of the 'masters'.

Social critics and reformers may be interested in continued investigation of sex differentiated communication. More accurate maps of the way language

treats women could be drawn, by reviewing current dictionaries and current language usage patterns in various segments of society.

Since schools support the establishment, curricula could continue to be investigated and modified to eliminate blatant sexism. However, considering the patriarchal nature of the educational system, changes in the language of the textbooks would seem to be of little use.

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The other major tool of socialization, the media, also provides much fodder for the investigator's mill. Further studies on the stereotypes perpetrated could provide interesting documentation on the current attitudes towards women in contemporary society. The women's movement is no longer a newsworthy item although women's lib still makes good material for comedians.

Periods of social decay such as the one we are experiencing create confusion and allow minority groups to achieve some social concessions. Personally I choose anarchy until the apocalypse, followed by action to build a more egalitarian, androgynous society.

NOTES

PART ONE

1. The quote is from Vivian Gornick, ed., Woman in A Sexist Society, New York, Basic Books, 1971.  
For the concept of the other, the outsider see:  
Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1952, Shulamith Firestone, Dialectic of Sex, New York, Morrow & Co., 1970, Chapter eight; Vivian Gornick's essay, "Woman as Outsider", op.cit., Mary Daly, Beyond God the Father, Boston, Beacon Press, 1973 and Colin Wilson, The Outsider, London, Pan Books, 1963.
2. From Mary Ritchie Key in her Book, Male/Female Language, Metchuen, Scarecrow press, 1975, p.15 - 16 and her paper, "Linguistic Behavior of Male and Female", Linguistics 88 (August, 1972), p.16, and Nancy Henley and Barrie Thorne, Language and Sex, Difference and Dominance, Rowley, Mass., Newberry House, 1975, annotated bibliography. Otto Jespersen (1921) and Edward Sapir (1929) were among the first to do extensive studies on male and female language. Jespersen wrote of feminine weaknesses, Sapir put women's language in the category of 'abnormal types of speech'. Greenough and

Kitteredge (1901) wrote of feminine peculiarities.

3. The books are: Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, Metchuen, N.J. Scarecrow Press, 1975; Robin Lakoff, Language and Women's Place, New York, Harper and Row, 1975; Nancy Henley & Barrie Thorne, Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance, Rowley, Mass. Newberry House, 1975; Casey Miller & Kate Swift, Words and Women, Garden City, N.Y., Doubleday, 1976. May I have the envelope, please!
4. The 'oppressor's language' appears in the poem, "The Burning of Paper instead of Children" by Adrienne Rich, The Will to Change, N.Y., Norton, 1968 - "This is the oppressor's language, But I need it to talk to you." See also Rich's essay, "When We Dead Awaken" in College English, 34:1, October 1974, p. 18-25; Jean Faust's essay, "Words That Oppress" in Women Speaking, April, 1970, and Shulamith Firestone, Dialectic of Sex, as examples of the outraged writing. Discussion of women's access to media in part three.
5. From Ellen Morgan's essay, "Women and the English Language" in An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words..., Feminist Writers Workshop, Chicago, 1973.



PART TWO

6. See: Louise Ackerman, "Lady as Synonym for Woman", American Speech 37:3, 1962, p. 284-285; Dorothy Hage, "There's Glory For You", Aphra 3:3 (1972), p. 2-14, Jessica Murray, "Male Perspective in Language", Woman, A Journal of Liberation, 3:2, 1973, p. 46-50.
7. See: Feminist Writer's Workshop, An Intelligent Woman's Guide to Dirty Words..., Varda One, "Manglish", Everywoman, (1971), Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, p. 74 and Casey Miller and Kate Swift, Words and Women, p. 159.
8. See: Wilfred Funk, Word Origins and Their Romantic Stories, New York, Grosset and Dunlap, 1950, Chapter 15, Robin Lakoff, Language and Woman's Place, New York, Harper, 1975, Chapter 3, Varda One, "Manglish", Everywoman, 1971.
9. The examples of groupings are all from Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, p. 82-84, except J. Ritchie, Decendents, Estates and Trusts, quoted in Aphra 6:3, 1976 p.107. Key uses these quotes in connection with

a discussion on invention of categories, suggesting the groupings reveal thought patterns and influence behavior. Mary Ellman, in Thinking About Women, N.Y. Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968, p.38, quotes John Weightman "a convicted criminal, however potent, has been classified as an object, and therefore feminized by society." She goes on to say "an admirably simple social equation: a man in prison amounts to a woman."

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10. See Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, p.81, Casey Miller & Kate Swift, Words and Women, Chapter 4. Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women, p. 39, quotes Norman Mailer, saying of another writer "(he) reminds me of nothing so much as a woman writer".
11. See Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, Peter Farb, Word Play, New York, Alfred Knopf, 1973, Sol Saporta, "Language in a Sexist society" unpublished.
12. General comments on this are in Dorothy Hage, "There's Glory for You", Peter Farb, Word Play, Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language. The research is reported in Casey Miller & Kate Swift, Words and Women, p.22-25.

13. The Gena Corea quote is from Media Report to Women, 1974, 3:1. Alma Graham cited the research in "The Making of a non-Sexist Dictionary", Ms.2, December, 1973, p. 12-16. Lakoff's comments are on p.44-45, Language and Woman's Place. General discussion of she/he also in Casey Miller and Kate Swift, Women and Words, chapter 3, Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, chapter 9, Donald Hook, "Sexism in English Pronouns", General Linguistics, 14:2, 1974, p. 86-96.

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14. Dictionary research is in Manglish by Varda One, Lee Gershuny, "Sexist Semantics in the Dictionary", Etc., 31:2, June 1974, p. 164-170, Ailleen Nisen, "Sexism in English, A Feminist View", Female Studies, 6, 1972, p. 102-109. Casey Miller & Kate Swift, Words and Women, p. 58-60.

15. Linguistic relativity and linguistic determinism are discussed in the last section. See: Michael Polanyi, Personal Knowledge, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962, Ernest Becker, Birth and Death of Meaning, New York, Free Press, 1962 and Susan Langer, Philosophy in a New Key.

16. Mary Daly, in Beyond God the Father, Boston, Beacon Press, 1972, talks of the necessity of creating a new language. See also Adrienne Rich's essay, "When We Dead Awaken", in College English, 34:1, p. 18-25

PART THREE

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17. The quote is from Herbert Marcuse, An Essay on Liberation, Boston, Beacon, 1969, p. 33. See also Jerome Bruner, On Knowing, Harvard University Press, 1962, p. 137, Otto Rank, Beyond Psychology, N.Y., Dover, 1958, p. 242 and Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes and Control, vol.1, London, Routledge, Kegan and Paul, 1971, p. 122.
18. Polk in "Male Power and the Women's Movement", Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 10:3, 1974, p. 415-431, outlines six sources of male power; 1. normative 2. institutional 3. control of options through reward 4. the power of expertise 5. psychological power 6. brute force.
19. See Naomi Weisstein, "Psychology Constructs the Female" in Vivian Gornick ed., Woman in a Sexist

Society, Joyce Walstedt, Psychology of Women,  
a partially annotated bibliography, Pittsburgh,  
Know, Inc., 1974. Sandra Bem and Daryl Bem,  
Homogenizing the American Woman, Pittsburgh,  
Know, inc. 1972.

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20. See Margaret Mead, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies, New York, Morrow, 1935, Nancy Chodrow's essay "Being and Doing" and Ruby Leavitt's essay "Women in Other Cultures" in Vivian Gornick, ed., Woman in a Sexist Society. Leonore Weitzman's essay, "Sex Role Socialization" in Jo Freeman, ed., Women, a Feminist Perspective.
21. The research is by Inge Broverman et al., "Sex Role Stereotypes and Clinical Judgements of Mental Health", Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 34:1, 1970, p. 1-7. See also Cheris Kramer "Female and Male Perception of Female and Male Speech", a paper presented to the American Sociological Association, August, 1975.
22. See Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women, V. Gornick, Women in a Sexist Society, chapters 13, 14, 15, Jo Freeman, ed., Woman, a Feminist Perspective, Section 5 and "Women: Nine Reports on Role, Image

and Message", in the Journal of Communication, 24,  
Spring 1974, p. 102-155

23. The Ontario Study was reported by Pyke in the Ontario  
Psychologist, 1974. The other research is in McArthur  
and Resko, "The Portrayal of Men and Women in American  
Television Commercials, Journal of Social Psychology,  
92:2, December, 1975, p. 209-220.

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24. See Jo Freeman "The Social Construction of the Second  
Sex" 1970, Pittsburgh, Know, Inc., and Esther  
Greenglass, "The Psychology of Women, or the High  
Cost of Achievement" in Mary Lee Stephenson, ed.,  
Women in Canada, Toronto, New Press, 1973. Both  
make reference to Allport's work on personality  
traits resulting from victimization.

25. The quote is from Elizabeth Janeway, Man's World,  
Woman's Place, New York, Dell Pub., 1971, p.98.

See also Chapters 8 - 11, op.cit.

#### PART FOUR

26. Main sources for this section are: Mary Ritchie  
Key, Male/Female Language, chapter 10 and Robin  
Lakoff, Language and Women's Place, part two.

There are exceptions to this 'language of submission' which can be considered in terms of Malinowski's contest of situation - that is, we each have a repertoire of behaviors to employ - the choice depends upon the relationship of the participants, the situation where the interaction takes place and a whole range of conditions involved. Women in positions of authority (in women's spheres) may not exhibit the range of characteristics described. See also Jespersen, Language, It's Nature, Development and Origins, chapter 12.

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27. Gilley and Summers research is in the Journal of Psychology, 1970, 33-37. I consider their findings appropriate to women's condition of inferior status. Obviously we would be more careful about using hostile verbs in the face of our superiors. See the section on correct language. Teresa Bernardez-Bonsatti presented a paper on her work to the American Psychological Association in 1974. A summary is in Thorne and Henley's Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance. Her conclusion shows the double bind of women who are attempting to change their position - healthy female or healthy adult?
28. Key suggests our language is the language of apology.

Swacker's and Hirschman's research is reported in Thorne and Henley's Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance.

- 29.. See also the section on source competence.
30. Siegler and Siegler's research is in Psychological Report, 39, 1976, 167-170. Kramer's first research on the New Yorker cartoons was reported in Psychology Today, June, 1974. A complete review of both studies is in the Journal of Popular Culture, 8:3, 624-630.
31. General references on politeness are: Robin Lakoff, Language and Woman's Place, -Casey Miller and Kate Swift, Words and Women. The New York Times reported one example of the unladylike language of Ms. Pietrunti. She called the school board chairman, Mr. Bell, Ding Dong Bell. Her story and the account of the trial of Inez Garcia are in Words and Women.
32. See Cheri Kramer, "Women's Speech, Separate but Unequal", Quarterly Journal of Speech, 60, Feb. 1974, 14-24. Labov, Sociolinguistic Patterns, 1972, 301-304, Trudgill, "Sex, Covert Prestige and Linguistic Change in the Urban British English of Norwich." Language in Society, 1, 1972, 179.



33. See Argyle et al. "The effects of visibility on interaction in a dyad", Human Relations 21:1, February, 1968. Strotbeck, "Sex Role Differentiation in Jury Deliberations", Sociometry, 19, 1956, 3-21. Soskin and John, "The study of spontaneous talk" in Rober Barker, ed., The Stream of Behavior, Appleton, Century-Crofts, 1973. Wood, "The influence of sex and knowledge of communication effectiveness on spontaneous speech," Word, 22, 1966, 122-137. Swacker, "The sex of the speaker as a sociolinguistic variable.", in Thorne and Henley, Language and Sex, Difference and Dominance. Lynette Hirshman, "Analysis of supportive and assertive behavior in conversations." paper presented to meeting of Linguistic Society of America, July, 1973.
34. See: Jessie Bernard, The Sex Game, chapter 6, Argyle, op.cit., Strotbeck, op.cit., Soskin and John, op.cit., Drag and Shaw, "Factors influencing the communication of emotional intent by facial expressions", Psychometric Science, 8, 1967, 137. Zaidel and Mehrabian, "The ability to communicate and infer positive and negative attitudes facially and vocally", Journal of Experimental Research in Personality, 3, 1969.

35. Wood op.cit., Argyle, op.cit., Zimmerman and West, "Sex roles, interruptions and silences in conversation". In Thorne and Henley eds., Language and Sex: Difference and Dominance. Phyllis Chesler, "Marriage and Psychotherapy" in The Radical Therapist, New York, Ballantine, 1971.

36. Bernard mentions her research in her book, The Sex Game, chapter six. Mary Ellman's quote is from her book, Thinking About Women, p. 148. See also: Goldberg, "Are Women prejudiced against women?", Transaction, 5, 1968, 28-30. Pheterson et al. "Evaluation of the performance of women as a function of their sex, achievement and personal history." Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 19, 1971, 114-118. Bough and Allen, "Is the women's movement erasing the mark of oppression from the female psyche?" The Journal of Psychology, 1975, 89, 240-258. Levenson, et al., "Are Women still prejudiced against women: A replication and extension of Goldberg's study.", Journal of Psychology, 89, 1975, 67-71. Chobot et al. "Prejudice Against Women, a replication and extension.", Psychological Reports, 35, 1975, 478.

37. See: Mary Key, Male/Female Language, chapter 11. Irene Frieze and S. Ramsey, "Nonverbal maintenance of

traditional sex roles", Journal of Social Issues, 32:3, 1976, 133-141. Nancy Henley, "Power, Sex and Non-verbal Communication", Berkeley Journal of Sociology, 18, 1973, 1-26. Birdwhistle, "Masculinity and femininity as Display" in Kinesics in Context. The definition of charm is by Lynn O'Connor, "Male dominance: the nitty, gritty of oppression." It Ain't Me, Babe, June 11, 1970, 9-11.

- 38. See: Robert Sommer, Personal Space, Irene Frieze and S. Ramsey, op.cit. The women interviewed were on CBC am radio early in October, 1976. They felt the men's attitude was that the women were not serious in their attempts to establish a business - they were 'playing' at it.
- 39. See: Argyle, op.cit., Pillegrini and Empey, "Interpersonal Spatial Orientation in Dyads," Journal of Personality, 76, 1970, 67-70.
- 40. See: Nancy Henley, "The politics of Touch", in Phil Brown, ed., Radical Psychology, N.Y., Harper and Row, 1973. Jourard, "An exploratory study of Body-accessibility" British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 5, 1966, 221-231, Jourard and Rubin, "Self disclosure and

touching: a study of two modes of interpersonal encounter and their inter-relation" Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 8, 1968, 39-48.

41. Marge Piercy's Small Changes was published by Doubleday in 1973, See also Irene Frieze and Ramsey op.cit. In contrast to women's posture, men sprawl.
42. See Argyle, et al., "Gaze, Mutual Gaze and Proximity", Semiotica, 6, 1972, 32-49. Exline, et al., "Visual behavior in a dyad as affected by interview content and sex of respondent". Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 1, 1965, 201-209.
43. Bugental et al. research is in "Perfidious Feminine Faces". Journal of Personality and social Psychology, 17, 1971, 314-318. Shulamith Firestone, Dialectic of Sex, p.90.

#### PART FIVE

44. Sapir's quote is from D. Mandelbaum, ed., Culture, Language and Personality, University of Chicago press, 1966, p. 63-69, Whorf's quote is from Language Thought and Reality, p.240. See also, Hymes, ed., Language in Culture and Society, Harper and Row,

1964 - particularly Hymes' introduction to the section on World View and grammatical categories. The last quote is from Hymes, p. 118.

45. See Bernstein's Class, Codes and Behavior, Volumes one and two, London, Routledge, Kegan and Paul. The quote is from Volume one, p. 122. See also Bernstein's essay, "Language and socialization", in Minnis, ed., Linguistics at Large, Paladin, p.225,242. 80
46. Jill Johnston is a columnist for the Village Voice. This quote comes from her book, Gullibles Travels, Links Books, 1974, p.190. The Polanyi quote is from his book, Personal Knowledge, University of Chicago Press, p. 112. See his chapter on articulation and Jerome Bruner's essay, "The control of human behavior", in his book On Knowing, Harvard University press, 1962.
47. Bernstein's quote is from "Language and socialization," Minnis, op.cit., 230.
48. The quote is from Alice Munroe's book Lives of Girls and Women, McGraw Hill, 1971, p.150.

49. See Philip Aries Book, Centuries of Childhood, Vintage, 1965.
50. The phrase "wet nurse and sperm donor" is from Sandra and Daryl Bem, Homogenizing the American Female, Know, Inc., 1970.
51. See the conclusion of Margaret Mead's book, Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies. 81
52. Neil Postman's book, Language in America, is a good reference on the subject of word magic. See also Mario Pei's Word's in Sheeps Clothing.
53. Mary Ritchie Key, Male/Female Language, p.27. She also gives the example from the Aztec language. The Aztecs had a god embodying both male and female elements and an appropriate pronoun to describe the god. English writers have assigned this god male gender.
54. See Elizabeth Janeway's book, Man's World, Women's Place, Chapters 9 & 10. Peter Berger, Social Construction of Reality, p. 72-79
55. See Judy Chicago, Through the Flower, Chapters 7 & 8, Nancy Reeve, Womankind, Chicago, Aldine-Atherton, 1971, p.83.
56. See Thinking About Women by Mary Ellman, and The Female Imagination by Patricia Spacks.

57. See Judy Chicago op.cit. She describes the Women's Building at the World Fair in Chicago in 1893. Mainly the result of the political work of Susan B. Anthony the building was designed and managed by women and housed displays of women's achievements through history. Carolyn Bird, Born Female, p.21.

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58. October 1976, report made public from the Federal government that the average men's salary is \$11,000, average women's salary is \$5,000.

59. The book is Rooms with No View: A woman's Guide to The Men's World of the Media, ed. Strainchamps, N.Y., Harper, 1974. The quote is from the introduction.

60. See Jill Johnston's essay, Women and Film in her book Gullibles Travels. All quotes come from there.

61. See Sheila Rowbotham's book Women; Resistance & Revolution, page 11.

62. See Millman & Kanter ed. Another Voice: Feminist, Borun et al., Women's Liberation: An Anthropological View and Jeanette Silveira's The Effect of Sexism on

on Thought.

63. See Thelma McCormack's essay, "Towards a non-sexist perspective on social and political change" in Another Voice, op.cit.



## Appendix One - Feminist's Re-Visions

When girls are comforted and boys ignored or ridiculed when they cry, females often grow up crying whether they want to or not. And males grow up not crying - whether they want to or not. This gives men a big power advantage, (it's hard for a blubbering woman to appear 'mature' and confident vis-a-vis a tight lipped man) but leaves men with an often painful lack of emotional outlet.

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This crippled emotional condition found in males, which I call 'testeria'...accounts in part for the ability of the male ruling class to efficiently, calmly and maturely carry out planetary catastrophe. Male inventions, like war, capitalism, totalitarianism, industrialism, and other atrocities are only possible if millions of efficient, calm, mature male people are diligently repressing their healthy human emotions. Since the turn of the century over 50 million human beings have been slaughtered in war by psychiatrically normal male people.

Along with testeria - the condition of having puny, inadequate emotional responses - comes another male-linked disease which is even more serviceable to the

masculine mystique - penisolence... the more active phase of male emotional disease... It is a pushy and evasive attempt to master one's own distrss by mastering other people..."

Juli Loesch,

Aphra 4:1, 43-45

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We will be equal, we say new man and new woman.

But what man am I equal to before the law of court or custom?

The state owns my womb and hangs a man's name on me

Like the tags hung on dogs, my name is, property of ....

The language betrays us and rots in the mouth

with its aftertaste of monastic sewers on the palate.

Even the pronouns tear my tongue with their metal plates.

from Doing it Differently.

Marge Piercy,

To Be of Use, p.56

Try thinking in female for a moment.

Imagine: That everything you have ever read uses only female pronouns, she, her, meaning both men and women. Recall that most of the voices on radio and faces on TV are female, especially when important events are in the news. Recall that you have only one male senator representing you in Washington (if you are tempted to laugh and say that would lead to catastrophe, ask yourself where we are now). Imagine that women are the leaders, the power centres. Men are shown in films only in their natural roles as husband and father, or else as whore and very nasty persons. Men are shown only in their natural functions of trying to attract women and making the world a comfortable place for women. Film men who rebel against this die very ugly deaths. Women star in all films of international excitement or adventure. Imagine that countless films show men as simple minded little sex objects, and you despair of finding a strong role model for your little boy (for whom you see other futures than slut, bitch or house-husband). Imagine that the women in charge of the film industry use their power to ridicule the men's liberation movement, presenting them in films as a bunch of frustrated studs, deluded into thinking they can be women, burning their

jockstraps and waving signs - but always ending up in the boudoir of a condescending woman, always giving up the struggle and being happily subservient to her.

Then imagine that if you complain you are given the biological explanation: by design female genitals are compact and internal, protected by her body.

A man's genitals are exposed and must be protected from attack. His vulnerability requires sheltering - thus, in films, men must not be shown in ungentlemanlike professions. Psychological films remind men of their childhood, when their sisters jeered at the primitive male genitals, which 'flap around foolishly' while the sisters could ride, climb and run unencumbered. Men are passive, and must be shown that way in films, to reflect and protect reality. Anatomy is destiny."

Sharon Smith

Quoted by Jill Johnston

Gullibles Travels,

P.203

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