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(see DeVault, 1999; Sprague, 2005), but instead offer a sensitizing frame-
work that may guide feminist research and the kinds of stories feminist field-
workers tell. Nor does this book offer a philosophical discussion of feminist
epistemology (but see DeVault, 1999; Fonow & Cook, 1991; Harding, 1987,
1993, 2004; Hartsock, 1998; Hawkesworth, 2006; Smith, 1990; Sprague,
2005). Feminist researchers seeking guidance in doing participatory action
research (PAR) (Cancian, 1992; Fine, 2006; Sprague, 2005, pp. 182–184),
particularly from a feminist perspective, will also have to look elsewhere.
However, PAR usually involves an awareness and analysis of inequalities,
so the advice offered here may be helpful.

I assume that readers already have learned or are acquiring basic field-
work skills, such as observing, interviewing, taking notes, and writing ana-
lytic memos (see Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Esterberg, 2002; Lofland,
Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2005). Like other interactionist fieldworkers,
I treat data collection and analysis as intertwined rather than as separate
activities. The principles and questions found in *Feminist Fieldwork
Analysis* can be used at any stage of the research process, including choos-
ing a setting, analyzing an observation, or writing a chapter. Applying what
you find in this book might lead you to see things in the field you would
not have noticed otherwise, or to see connections between pieces of data
that appeared unrelated. Or you might see some of the same things that
would have caught your attention anyway, but interpret them in new ways.

All fieldworkers examine patterns of interaction. Feminist fieldworkers
still have to figure out which patterns to focus on, how to analyze them, and
what to write about them. The studies I chose for this book reflect what
I think of as the special contributions of feminism to fieldwork: "Pushing
against that which is most taken for granted, feminist inquiry probes
absences, silences, omissions, and distortions in order to challenge com-
mon sense understandings" (Hawkesworth, 2006, p. 3). By becoming cog-
nizant of patterned absences as much as what lies in our field notes, we can
better understand the hidden and not-so-hidden workings of inequality.

2. TALK IS ACTION

It's common in U.S. society to separate words and deeds, and to give a lot
more weight to the latter. For example, the expression "Walk the talk"
implies that "walking" is the real thing and words are merely talk. But the
actions we take (for example, meeting with others to organize an event,
writing a petition, or giving a speech) always involve more words. Words

are the tools of thought, shaping how we see the world. They point us in particular directions, preventing us from seeing some things and making other things all too clear. With words as our daily tools, we can't help but *do* things with them.

Another expression, "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will never hurt me," implies that no matter what we do with language, we can't use it to inflict serious harm. A poster I've seen in a catalog plays off of this cliché to capture the harmful possibilities of language: "Sticks and stones will break my bones, but names will really hurt me." Names—and words, more generally—don't have to hurt, but they can. Racial epithets, slang terms for women, and racist and sexist jokes degrade people of color and women as a group, regardless of anyone's intention. Language can also sustain an environment in which people use sticks, stones, guns, or bombs against others. If we think of a group of people as less than human, it becomes easier to hurt them. The use of "gooks" by U.S. soldiers for the Vietnamese and the use of "hos," "sluts," and "bitches" by men for women in the United States serve as enablers; they don't cause war and rape, but they make it easier for killing and raping to happen.

One does not have to be a *feminist* fieldworker to take words seriously. Words constitute the notes jotted down in the field and the fuller set typed up later. They are the analyses we develop in memos and drafts. Even "head-notes" (Ottenberg, 1990, p. 144)—notes that we should have written down, but didn't—come to us in words. What feminists have taught us is to pay attention to the part that language can play in *reproducing inequalities*, even when the words seem benign or positive (Lakoff, 1975; Spender, 1985). For example, feminists pointed out many years ago that male generics (such as "man," "mankind," and "freshman") make men the norm, render women invisible, and reinforce the idea that it's acceptable to linguistically subsume women under men. But many of the students I teach, including women, claim that "you guys" and "freshmen" are now true generics and thus harm-less. I tell them that if "you gals," "you girls," or "you women" were applied to a group of men, the men would feel insulted. "Man" and "men" are still the linguistically superior categories in our society, and "woman" and "women" are derogated (Kleinman, 2002b). And the women in my classes aren't indifferent about "you guys"; they like it so much that they get mad at the possibility of losing it. Being "one of the guys" feels like a raise in sta-tus, even if it erases them (as women) at the same time.

If a Martian were to visit U.S. society, no doubt it would notice that women are consistently defined in relation to men (Mrs. or Miss, Mrs. His Last Name) and men are defined in relation to the world (Richardson,

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2004). Douglas Hofstadter (1985) takes on the role of Martian-as-anthropologist through his parody of sexist language; he substitutes "white" for "man" to create such terms as "freshwhite," "whitekind," and "you whiteys," revealing the ubiquitous sexism in standard U.S. English that remains invisible to us. Like a good fieldworker, he examines the systematic appearance of male-defined terms and the systematic absence of positive female generics. While not denying racism, he shows how sexism is normalized and made invisible in a way that racism is not.

In this chapter, I will discuss field studies that illustrate the importance of analyzing language for understanding the reproduction of inequality. As we'll see, participants' words (which may include written documents and not only talk) do not stand apart from patriarchal patterns, but are a part of them. In the first half of the chapter, I will look at the legitimating rhetorics of the powerful—how those in the privileged group "explain" their sexist behaviors. In the second half of the chapter, I will look at studies that unravel seemingly benign language practices that reinforce inequality. All of the studies in this section teach us that feminist fieldworkers need to pay close attention to what participants say—or don't say—to fully understand the intricacies of inequality.

The Legitimating Rhetorics of the Dominants

When Terry Arendell (1997) began her study of divorced fathers, she worried that the men she planned to interview would portray themselves in the best light and be unwilling to talk about negative feelings toward their ex-wives because she was a woman and ex-wife. But the opposite occurred. Many of the divorced fathers spoke against their exes; some lashed out at Arendell as if she were a stand-in for their ex-wife. Her study revealed that male entitlement may well follow men into a research project, in how they act toward the researcher and in the stories they tell. Feminists should be aware of both throughout their projects. Here's how they played out in Arendell's experiences with the men and in her analysis.

Sixty-six of the 75 men Arendell interviewed were less concerned about how the divorce affected their relationships with their children than they were about the damage they believed had been done to them, *as men*, by their ex-wives. These men felt wronged, and they justified their hostile feelings for and treatment of their exes and children.

As Arendell (1997) put it, men of different races and classes,

> . . . buttressed and buffed their masculine identities through their interactions with me . . . they were both presenting themselves as *masculine* persons—defined by them as being competent, assertive, controlling and rational—and working on proving their manhood during their conversations with me. (p. 347)

Her harrowing tale of interviewing these men (Arendell, 1997) shows that they proved their manhood in a variety of ways: Some asked her out; others inappropriately touched her or asked her personal questions. Several men told her how to handle the tape recorder or directed her to questions she should ask. Still others acted aggressively, even violently. As she recounts:

> We [Arendell and a divorced father] were sitting at a diner, with my chair next to and facing away from the back wall. As he recalled how he had picked up his estranged wife by the neck, causing her to struggle, choke, and gag, he thrust his arm across the table and put his hand around my neck. He kept it there as he continued to talk, becoming louder and more excited as he retold the episode. I pushed my chair back as far as it could go but quickly hit up against the wall and so was trapped within his reach. When he finally pulled his hand away, he wagged his index finger directly under my nose as he said, "And I said to her, don't ever make me that mad again. Don't you ever let me get this mad again, don't ever make me this mad" . . . Not until the fourth time hearing the tape did I realize that a waitress had approached the table and asked if everything was okay. (pp. 360–361)

The men's reactions to Arendell reflected their understandings about gender—and about their ex-wives. The men held traditional views and voiced these understandings in justifying their behavior. They believed that men and women are different and that the man should head the family. The men said the legal system had worked in their disfavor, even when they had won custody of the children. These divorced fathers categorized their ex-spouse and children as a unit apart from them, even in cases of joint custody. As several men put it, "It's me and them" (Arendell, 1992, p. 162). By setting up the wife-and-children as the enemy unit, the men could justify their hurtful actions. For instance, they said that providing child support meant that they were sending checks to the undeserving woman who just happened to be the mother of their children.

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The fathers couched their legitimating rhetoric in terms of *rights*—as men and as fathers. Arendell analyzed the language of "men's rights" as a rhetorical cover for male entitlement. The men expected to control their wives and children, resented that loss of control, and wanted to regain it. As one man told Arendell (1992):

> I am a strong advocate for fathers' rights, for men's rights. I had to fight for my rights as a father; and it cost me over twenty thousand dollars to win the custody fight. But I had to show my ex that I was still in control here, that she couldn't deny me my basic rights just because she got the divorce she wanted. By winning the custody battle, I showed her that I was still in charge. But I knew all along that I would let my son go back to live with his mother once this was over. (p. 166)

One lesson we can draw from Arendell's study is that the word "rights," when used by the privileged, may be a ploy to maintain or take back privilege.

The rhetoric of rights also allowed the men to feel anger—an acceptable masculine emotion—rather than loss or grief. They interpreted their anger as legitimate, even heroic, as they fought against a perceived injustice. Arendell's findings alert feminist researchers to think about how men may use rhetorics rooted in masculinity to go beyond *justifying* sexist behavior, constructing themselves as *honorable*, or even heroic.

Another part of Arendell's analysis of masculinity and fatherhood teaches us that feminist fieldworkers should examine the rhetorics used by those who *reject* sexist legitimating rhetorics and how others in the dominant group react to that rejection. Nine of the 75 divorced fathers in her study responded in more positive ways to the divorce. (Postdivorce custody arrangements did not account for the differences in outlook and behaviors between these men and the traditional fathers.) Androgynous fathers, as Arendell called them, did not think of the family as broken and themselves as separate from the ex-and-children. Rather, they thought of the family as "a network of relationships which, as a result of the divorce, necessitated changes in assumptions and interactions" (Arendell, 1992, p. 170). These men had developed a parenting partnership with their ex-spouse, viewed their children as persons in their own right, and believed they themselves had become better people by increasing their parenting duties (some of the men had parented little before the divorce). These fathers never spoke of men's rights; they didn't consider themselves adversaries of their exes or children. Yet many people, especially other men, pushed these fathers to reframe their androgynous model. As one man said:

> Even my father and brother told me to get on with my life, to start acting
> "like a man" and to let this child go, that my involvement with him would
> just interfere with my work and future relationships with women. They told
> me that people were going to think I was a wimp, you know, unmanly, for not
> standing up to my former wife. (Arendell, 1992, p. 173)

As feminist researchers, we should be aware of whether, and how, other men (and women) try to pull men back into patriarchal patterns. Like the androgynous men in Arendell's study, men who resist patriarchy threaten male privilege *generally*. And this threat is likely to lead to a backlash response on the part of men who go along with (patriarchal) business as usual.

Men who stalk women also see themselves as having lost control over their exes and justify their behaviors rather than show remorse. In these men's view, *she* is the one who has power over *him*. The men cannot see that in reality, *he* controls *her* life. The man's sense of ownership of the woman shows itself in the many references to jealousy in Jennifer Dunn's (2002) study of stalkers. Love and jealousy presumably justify the violence the men perpetrated against their female ex-partners. As one defendant said about the woman he stabbed repeatedly:

> She was my girlfriend and I still love her. I was mad and jealous . . . I went
> all the way inside her class. And I gave her some candies, and a rose . . . I
> always gave her presents . . . What she did to me felt bad and that's why,
> when I saw the hickies, I got mad, 'cause I love her a lot, well, I loved her,
> I still love her. (p. 42)

This stalker's father echoed that sentiment: "He is just very intense and very serious, and he loved this girl too much" (Dunn, 2002, p. 42). Dunn's study teaches us to be on the lookout for how culturally valued rhetorics—such as romance—may be used by men who engage in intimate violence to legitimate their controlling and harmful behavior toward women. Men's framing of "the problem," as the stalkers' accounts indicate, also positions women as the *cause* of the man's harmful behavior, an idea that permeates the rape culture.

Like Arendell's study of divorced fathers, in-depth interviews with 114 convicted rapists (Scully & Marolla, 1990) indicate that men are willing to speak openly about—and legitimate—the harm they do to women. Using the concept of "accounts" (Scott & Lyman, 1968), the authors found that 47 of the men were *admitters*: They said that they had forced sexual acts on their victims and called it rape. But they also offered *excuses* for their actions, finding ways to deny full responsibility for what they had done. Sixty-seven of the men were *deniers*—they accepted responsibility for the

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act, but denied that they had done anything wrong. These men offered *justifications* for their actions, finding ways to show that they had acted appropriately in the specific situation.

Admitters claimed that the use of alcohol and other drugs had impeded their judgment; being in an altered state "caused" them to force themselves on a woman. The men also appealed to emotional problems, arguing that anyone who acted this way must be "sick." Like the stalkers, some of these men gave excuses tied to conventional expectations for intimate relationships. For example, one man attributed his crime of abducting and raping a woman he didn't know to his finding out, a few days earlier, that his wife had become involved with her former boyfriend:

> My parents have been married for many years and I had high expectations about marriage. I put my wife on a pedestal. When I walked in on her, I felt like my life had been destroyed, it was such a shock. I was bitter and angry about the fact that I hadn't done anything to my wife for cheating. I didn't want to hurt her [the victim], only to scare and degrade her. (Scully & Marolla, 1990, p. 274)

This man's claim that he had felt "bitter and angry" for not punishing his wife for "cheating" suggests that enacting punishment would have been understandable, perhaps acceptable. That rape is a crime of sexism is shown by his response to his anger at his wife: He found a woman he didn't know as a substitute, as if any woman would do. The authors point out that the popular conception of rape as a psychological disorder rather than a social problem may inform rapists' rhetorics of legitimation. Feminist researchers can analyze psychological, biological, and other kinds of accounts to see how ideas in popular culture, including studies reported in the mass media (especially how they are presented), may be used to justify men's harmful behaviors toward women.

Scully and Marolla's (1990) study shows us how cultural ideas about men and women permeate rapists' talk about their crimes. Deniers tried to justify their behavior by placing the responsibility for their actions on the victim. They positioned the victims as seductresses; appealed to the idea that a woman's "No" really means "Yes"; said that "most women eventually relax and enjoy" the sex (p. 266); claimed that "nice girls don't get raped"; and accepted some of the guilt, but saw what they did as a small mistake (pp. 266–270). As the authors' note, the men's excuses reflect folk ideas (popular notions in the society) about rape, including the idea that if the woman does not fight back or the rapist does not use a weapon, it can't be rape. One rapist who threatened his victim with a bayonet, said:

> At the time I didn't think it was rape. I just asked her nicely and she didn't resist. I never considered prison . . . at the time I believed that *as long as I didn't hurt anyone* [italics added] it wasn't wrong. (p. 268)

Treating rape as if it were separate from harm is not uncommon. Newspaper accounts of rape, especially stranger rapes, sometimes conclude with, "There were no injuries." We know what the journalist means—the rapist did not beat up the woman, cut her, or shoot her. But the wording reinforces a view of rape as something less injurious than other forms of physical assault. The feminist researcher can look for patriarchal patterns in such media accounts.

Rhetorics of legitimation aren't always as overt as those that researchers have found among divorced fathers, stalkers, and rapists. But justifications may lie just below the surface, still within reach of the researcher. Asking what the powerful are *leaving out* of their talk may help unpack these rhetorics. The insights that can be gained by paying attention to systematic absences in participants' words can be seen in Carol Cohn's (2000a) interviews with male officers about women's entry into the military. Her study reveals what the men have learned *not* to say, at least at first, in an interview with a female researcher: that they resent women's entry into their previously all-male preserve. Cohn (2000a) analyzed one typical interview in depth, showing how the officer appealed to "objective standards" to legitimate his complaints about women in the military: "They say they want equal rights—well then, they should be held to the same fitness standards we are" (p. 136). This rhetoric hid the officer's strongly negative feelings (revealed later) about having women enter "his" masculine organization.

Appealing to differences between men's and women's physical training (PT) test scores as the reason to keep women out of the military appears fair. Yet Cohn's analysis suggests that feminist fieldworkers might find it useful to develop twinges when the terms "fairness" and "objectivity" are used by the powerful when they talk about their views of women entering male preserves. When the powerful refer to "objective tests" as a "reason" to keep out the less powerful, it is wise to pay attention to the test itself. What does the test measure? Why might some particular test be used rather than something else? Is the test relevant to what the job will entail? Does it predict success later on?

Cohn (2000a) found no clear link between men's fitness standards in the military (the PT test) and specific job requirements. The tests were geared toward (average) male capabilities, and these were not the ones best suited for situations the soldiers would face. Cohn also looked at what is omitted from standard testing. Fitness experts consider flexibility an important part of overall health and fitness, and women, on average, score higher than men on this measure. But flexibility was absent from the PT test, showing that

the test itself was skewed toward showing men in the best light and women in the worst. Also, there was variation among men and among women in how they scored on the PT test, but Cohn found no indication that military officers complained when men had low scores. These patterned absences suggest the hypothesis that it was the entry of women into the military—not "objective" scores on tests—that bothered the male officers.

Cohn's (2000a) analysis of the interview with the colonel shows that male officers' appeals to the PT test were a way to keep women out of the military without their having to admit that they believed male military personnel, and men generally, were better than women. For example, as the interview progressed, the colonel said:

> Hold it—they're [women are] coming into the organization, we're all equal, is what we say—and then we're changing the standards. Maybe they needed to be changed, who knows? But still, those were the rules that everybody lived by until that one day when a female walked in that door. (p. 142)

Later, he added, "You joined a male organization, no doubt about it, that's no secret—and everything's gonna change now all of a sudden? It rubs people the wrong way" (p. 143).

Colonel Holmes, when asked directly if women should be in the military, said that 10 years ago, he would have said no. But he now sees that some women are just as smart as the men, and so on. Cohn (2000a) asked him what reasons he would have given 10 years ago. He replied, "Just 'cause this is my male organization and what the heck are they doing, coming in?" (p. 144).

Men in the military are faced with a dilemma: They have worked with competent women and know it is no longer acceptable to say it's unnatural for women to be in the military. Yet they remain angry about losing this male-defined sphere. Referring to tests that are supposedly objective and fair for everyone (that is, both women and men) allows them to believe they are not being sexist, but merely reporting that women just don't do as well and thus should be kept out.

The colonel's account suggests that women won't do as well as men in the military and that such incompetence can have dire consequences. But feminists turn that account on its head. They argue that the problem men have with women in the military—or any other male-defined arena—is not that women will fail to do their jobs as well as men, but that women will do their jobs competently (Johnson, 2005). Perhaps women will even do their work better than men; they will, after all, have a lot to prove.

Women's competence in a male domain suggests that women and men are not that different. Finding similarities between women and men is especially threatening in any occupation, such as the military, that is culturally equated with masculinity. Once the line between "male" and "female" becomes blurred, it's harder to justify male superiority, which is based on the assumption of difference. If women and men aren't so different, then why should men be paid more, have a greater role in the public sphere, and perform less housework, childcare, and emotion work? The studies I have discussed in this chapter thus far show that men, in justifying their prejudices and harmful behavior toward women, focus on assumed sex differences, illustrating Lorber's (2004) point (mentioned in the first chapter) that such differences are not benign, but can be used by the powerful to reinforce and justify male privilege and power.

In addition to studying how men justify overt harm, researchers can examine how men justify the lack of effort they put into working toward gender equality. Francine Deutsch (2004) found that heterosexual men used the following techniques to justify their failure to take equal responsibility for domestic labor: They ignored what was going on around them (for example, a child asking for something); claimed incompetence; praised their wives' skills in doing housework and childcare; appealed to men's and women's "different standards" of neatness and cleanliness in the home; and denied they did so little work. What is striking is the men's use of accounts that flatter their wives:

> I definitely wasn't as good as Roz. Roz's just good. She's good if they get a splin-
> ter. She's just good at all that stuff. She's wonderful [as a mother] . . . I feel real
> lucky to have her as a partner because it takes a lot of the burden off me. (p. 471)

Saying that the female partner is especially skilled suggests that the man—and by extension, men in general—are incapable of learning how to care for children, and that domestic labor is divided up reasonably by who is talented at what. But Deutsch noted a pattern in these so-called talents: Men just happen to be better at doing tasks that require only occasional attention (see also Hochschild, 1989b), while women just happen to be talented at everything else. And Arlie Hochschild (1989b) and Annette Lareau (2003) found in their studies of families that women were almost always the household managers. Women/mothers in heterosexual couples kept track of which child needed to be taken where, whether they were out of bread or milk, and whose birthdays were coming up, including the husband's relatives'. Even when women designated some of the work to their male partners, they continued to do the worry work, figuring out what needed to be done and when.

Some of the men that Deutsch (2004) interviewed shared equally in domestic labor—for a while. What rhetorics did they use to make it easier for them to reduce their labor later on? One man split parenting with his partner in the first few years after the birth of their child, but then, as his wife put it, he "reneged" on their agreement. The husband/father in this couple described his time of equal parenting this way: "It was just great. It completely felt like my own choice and not something that I should do or that I had to do" (p. 474). The language of personal choice, a popular rhetoric in U.S. middle-class society (Schwalbe, 2005, chapter 4), allowed this father to make *other* choices when he felt like it. It's hard to imagine mothers offering the same rhetoric or, if they did, having it taken seriously by their partners or other family members.

Deutsch's study raises important questions for feminist analysts to ask: Who is expected to do what, given their sex, and what are the consequences if someone does not live up to those expectations? The mother who abandons her duties (indeed, the mother whose child merely has unmatched socks) will be held responsible for "bad parenting" in a way that men are not. Who uses the language of personal choice and when? Whose account is legitimated by others and whose is not?

Equal partnerships are possible, but Deutsch (2004) found that this occurs only if the wife/mother insists on it. As one man said about his wife, "Sally is very strong. There's no question about that. I think [the reason for our equal sharing is] partly that Sally makes it that we both share. She feels very strongly about that" (p. 473). Other women too fight for equality in the home, but often meet with a lack of success. Men, Michael Messner (1993) argues, are more likely to give up some of the *costs* of masculinity (for instance, having to be consistently tough and strong) than they are to give up some of their male *privileges* (getting out of cleaning the toilet). We need more research on how men come to value a sense of fairness and take on, and maintain, a commitment to equality.

Ideological Uses of Positive and Benign Language

Feminist fieldworkers might well be primed to look for what lies underneath the accounts of stalkers, rapists, colonels, divorced fathers who rarely see their children, and men who do little housework. But feminist fieldwork studies teach us that we also need to be sensitive to the ideological content and function of language when participants are in groups or organizations committed to nontraditional goals or relationships. The language used by participants may justify differences in privilege and power even when that language seems positive (or neutral) and the fieldworker wants to believe in the group.

For example, in my study of Renewal (Kleinman, 1996), the holistic health center I described earlier, I discovered that everyone, regardless of their position—paid or unpaid, higher paid or lower paid—spoke in ways that emphasized solidarity and the language of equality: "We all care about each other. We're trying to do something different, and that's difficult." How could I dare write an analysis that would criticize such well-meaning statements? Participants did care about each other—they showed it through the affection they displayed before the start of meetings and the tears that fell as they "processed" interpersonal conflicts at retreats. They were making sincere efforts to sustain an organization that differed in some ways from conventional organizations. At the same time, the structure of Renewal was hardly in line with their ideals, and largely reflected members' dual concerns with being both alternative *and* conventional.

As I noted in Chapter 1, there was a status hierarchy between the practitioners (most of them male) and the female staff and volunteers. I came to see that the language of solidarity masked inequalities in the organization. But how did I get there? I learned that it was important to see *who* was making such positive statements as, "We're in this together," and *when*. The key male practitioners made solidarity statements more often than the female staff and volunteers, and they tended to make them after any surfacing of rumblings from staff members to the effect that things were not quite fair in the organization. No one at Renewal was getting rich, and the practitioners did a lot of work on the board. So at first I thought of the language of solidarity as a way for members to deal with chronic budgetary problems; it allowed them to believe they were doing something special and in communion with others. I had trouble stepping back and seeing that the content of their solidarity talk did not benefit everyone equally.

What helped (in addition to reading the feminist work I listed in Chapter 1) was to think about the content of members' idea of fairness or equality. Participants didn't spend time talking about equality per se, so I had to search in their talk for their assumptions. Only when I did this examination could I see that their ideas—shared by both the practitioners and staff— helped maintain the privileged position of the practitioners. This entailed analyzing participants' positive-sounding language, including their talk of caring for each other and sharing alternative ideals.

Members' notions of equality were individualistic and apolitical, almost antipolitical. For them, the "variables" that are the sociologist's stock in trade (sex, race, class, job) were unimportant—these constituted superficial roles that got in the way of authentic interactions and relationships. Members believed it was important to search for the "real self" behind the

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"mask" of a person's role (see Turner, 1976). Presumably each individual is unique and should be respected equally. But members did not give each other equal respect: Jack and Ron (the two founding members of Renewal) received the most respect and affection and were forgiven quickly for any mistakes they made. In addition, the psychologistic language that members valued—a way of speaking that privileged the male psychotherapists— meant that power relations could be depoliticized and reduced to personality traits.

What did I learn? The language of solidarity (for example, "We're all in this together") might *mask*, *deflect from*, or *compensate for* inequalities. Fieldworkers can ask if members of the oppressed group accept the language of the dominants, or see through it and go along with it anyway, making solidarity more important than their own subordination. We can also see whether subordinates change their view after a while, and examine the conditions that bring about the change.

Language, then, should be linked to relationships, and changes in those relationships over time. For example, the key female staff members at Renewal had intimate relationships with Ron and Jack. Only at the termination of those relationships—initiated by the men—did the women begin to define the men's language as manipulative. At that point, solidarity talk no longer compensated for the women's lack of pay and respect. As Carla, a key member of the staff, said in an interview after she left the organization:

> Ron and Jack would never come right out and say, "We are members of the old society. We are the patriarchs. We are doing something that in this culture gets a lot of money. And we're not gonna be different just because we're in an alternative organization." That's what it *was*, really, but they would never come right out and say that. (Kleinman, 1996, p. 119)

Yet, despite Carla's new language of inequality—patriarchs and money—she forgave the men, largely because she thought Ron and Jack were better than other men:

> I still think that Ron and Jack are such wonderful people in many ways. Yet they had such blind spots. Real blind spots. You've got to understand that they are probably better than a lot of men. They're a lot more human than men on the outside. (Kleinman, 1996, p. 119)

Perhaps Carla wanted to save face; after all, she had been involved with Jack for quite a while. Yet her response also gave the men extra points for being "human." In contrast, Carla and the other staff women at Renewal

expected all the women there to be "human." They assumed that care and compassion are female characteristics and thus deserve little praise in the case of women. In fact, they criticized each other and the female practition-ers when they failed to live up to perfectionistic standards of humane words and deeds (see Kleinman, 1996, pp. 120–122).

Carla's interpretation of the male practitioners' behavior, even after her "awakening," suggests that feminist fieldworkers must investigate partici-pants' feminist-sounding language. Although Carla used the language of "patriarchs," she nevertheless saw the men as humane, at least when com-pared to other men. She may have been right. But the lesson is to pay atten-tion to language that fits with feminism as much as to language that is obviously nonfeminist or antifeminist.

Like solidarity talk, neutralizing language can also serve ideological functions. For example, Jackson Katz and Sut Jhally's (1999) content analysis of the media portrayal of the "school shootings" in Columbine showed that journalists used the generic language of "youth killing youth." Katz and Jhally noted that this gender-neutral language hid the facts: In Columbine, as in all previous school shootings, the perpetrators were boys. And until Columbine, all the victims had been girls (see Katz, 2006).

Significantly, male-defined generics ("freshman" and "chairman," for instance) that make women invisible appear in the mass media with regular-ity. But when exclusively boys or men commit violent actions, suddenly *true* generics—such as "youth" and "kids"—are used. In addition, girls' actions in gangs are framed in relation to their sex ("What Has Happened to Girls?") rather than analyzed in relation to their age. Katz and Jhally argue that the use of true generics in the reporting of the Columbine shootings and similar murders protects boys, men, masculinity, and male privilege.

Such protective language is used especially when the perpetrators are *white* men. Katz (2006) compared the coverage of the rampage at Woodstock '99 with that of the Puerto Rican Day rampage in Central Park in 2000:

> At Woodstock most of the rapists and assaulters were white, and as a result, race hardly ever came up as an issue in the discussion ex post facto. But in Central Park most of the men were African-American and Latino. This no doubt caused some politicians and members of the media to denounce them as "lowlifes" and "thugs"—terms not heard about the alleged (white) perpe-trators at Woodstock. (p. 103)

Yet in all the cases that Katz (2006, pp. 91–112) examined, mention of the masculinity of the perpetrators was absent. The language of "youth" and "crowd behavior" hid not only the sex of the perpetrators but also the

culture of masculinity that may have prompted the crimes themselves. It is up to feminist analysts to ferret out what is hidden in seemingly neutral accounts, whether in the mass media or in a field site.

Use of the passive voice can serve the same functions as neutral language. People, including journalists, use the passive voice in discussing men's violence against women. Similar to "youth killing youth," the language of "X percent of women were raped last year" hides the fact that all the perpetrators were men. Even the phrasing I used above, "men's violence against women," rarely appears in publications or in conversations. Instead, we more often hear "violence against women." Naming the victims (women) rather than the bulk of perpetrators (men) not only leaves men off the hook; it also reinforces the idea that rape and sexual assault are "women's issues," not men's responsibility. Within the usual framing, the solution becomes a matter of providing more emergency call boxes on campus and more shelters for women rather than preventing men (through education and other means) from harming women. As Katz (2006) wrote:

> People frequently ask why battered women stay with the men who beat them . . . It is instructive that few think to ask similar questions about batterers. Why do they beat women? Why do so many American men seek to control through force the women they claim to love? How might the use of active language point us toward answers to these questions? (pp. 111–112)

Without naming the problem as one that is primarily about men and masculinity, feminist solutions can't be sought (or won).

The ideological work of neutral language is also shown in Cohn's (2000b) fieldwork in a community of North American nuclear defense intellectuals and security affairs analysts. The so-called objective discourse there masked the realities of war and turned war into a game of masculine posturing. The language of war in that setting was often abstract, hiding the bloodied bodies of real people. At the same time, the "unacknowledged interweaving of gender discourse in security discourse allows men to not acknowledge that their pristine rational thought is in fact riddled with emotional response" (p. 374). The defense intellectuals interpreted feelings that are culturally defined as feminine (such as sadness) as "emotional." Participants considered such an emotion inappropriate for what they called "the analytic process." Emotional responses that are culturally defined as masculine, such as taking pleasure in aggression and competition (especially winning), were rarely labeled emotional. Thus, these feelings could become legitimated as part of the participants' "analyses" and accepted as indicators of their being realistic about the situation rather than dismissed as emotional.

The language of science can also protect men. Karen Booth's (2004) analysis of scientists' discourse surrounding the source and spread of AIDS in Kenya also demonstrates the ideological functions of "objective" language. She found that published articles highlighted women (prostitutes, in particular) as "high frequency transmitters" of HIV while keeping the men who had sex with prostitutes invisible. This biomedical model, applied by researchers to HIV and published in prestigious medical journals, positioned prostitutes as the transmitters of the disease, men as the bridge between prostitutes and the men's wives, and wives/mothers as transmitters of HIV to their babies.

Yet it was men who visited prostitutes, men who refused to wear condoms (especially with their wives), men who had permission to beat their wives if their wives suggested they wear a condom, and men who said that they "must" have multiple partners. As Booth (2004) commented about the language used by researchers:

> Like criminals, they [prostitutes] are "implicated" in the infections of men. Men are never described as "implicated" in the infection of anyone, including their wives or infants. Only the prostitutes are described as "harboring" various sexually transmitted viruses and bacteria; they are, it is implied, providing safe sanctuary for these evil pathogens, which are just waiting to be transmitted to "susceptible" men. (p. 101)

Booth found in her fieldwork in two clinics in Nairobi as well as in published medical texts that everyone—women, men, policy makers, researchers, and nurses—reinforced this view.

It is especially ironic that researchers posited men as the "bridges" between prostitutes and wives rather than as agents. HIV is much more likely, for physiological reasons, to spread from an infected man to a woman than from an infected woman to a man. The ideology embedded in scientists' language not only absolved men of any blame, but kept all those involved in fighting AIDS from working on changing the behavior of men (condom use, as one particular example, and sexism, more generally). By failing to bring men into the picture in an active way, researchers, policy workers, nurses, and others made it unlikely that strategies for disease prevention and treatment would be successful (Booth, 2004). We learn from this study to look for whether and how "objective" language portrays the role of the powerful as benign, or even casts them as victims, while putting blame on the less powerful.

Talk of differences between men and women as benign (whether appealing to nurture or to nature) may also unwittingly reinforce sexism. Schwalbe (1996) found in his study of the mythopoetic men's movement that these

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largely straight, white, middle-class men were drawn to Jungian psychology because it helped them deal with their not living up to traditional masculinity. As a result, "The men felt some of the devaluation that women typically experience in our society. Jungian psychology offered relief from the mild victimization they had experienced as gentle men" (p. 57).

The mythopoetic men engaged in rituals that had them crying in front of other men and revealing fears. Although these kinds of talk, emotion work, and rituals are culturally associated with women and femininity in U.S. society, the men dissociated their practices from women and made it clear that this was *men's* work (a term they used, along with "getting in touch with one's deep masculinity" [Schwalbe, 1996]). Thus, their terminology reinforced a division between women and men and failed to give credit to the women who had been doing this kind of psychological and emotional work for years in the women's movement. The female partners of some of the men involved in the group had tried to do this kind of intimate work with them in the past, but the men saw their wives' work as somehow different from "men's work."

The men in this movement knew that men on the outside might define such rituals and interactions as womanly or as something only "sissies" would do. Consequently, they went to great lengths to legitimate their involvement in mythopoetic activities as masculine. They could have characterized revealing vulnerabilities as "human work," thus putting gender itself into question—but they didn't. Rather, they reinstated their identity as men, an identity they did not want to relinquish because it is culturally valued above the identity of women. Thus, even in a setting in which men were trying to challenge the usual norms of masculinity and engage in activities typically associated with women, they framed and spoke about their work in ways that maintained the higher status of men and masculinity. Without recognizing it, they reinforced the gender hierarchy.

As feminist fieldworkers, we can keep an eye out for gender-inflected discourse and see who it benefits and who it disadvantages. For example, the depoliticized language of Jungian psychology kept the mythopoetic men from seeing their systematic benefits:

> By promising the men that truth and power could be found within, [Jungian psychology] preempted the careful study of alienating political and economic (and yes, male-dominated) institutions. It also allowed the men to avoid questioning the ways in which their own material ease depended on the very forms of social life that caused their psychic distress. (Schwalbe, 1996, p. 56)

Gendered ways of speaking can vary situationally, and these too can be scrutinized for consequences. For example, various authors have studied women's complaints about the "inexpressiveness" of their male partners, especially when it comes to talking about sadness, fear, or the relationship. As one woman told Lillian Rubin (1983) in an interview:

> I pull for it, I pull hard, and sometimes I can get something from him. But it'll be late at night in the dark—you know, when we're in bed and I can't look at him while he's talking and he doesn't have to look at me. Otherwise, he's just defensive and puts on what I call his bear act, where he makes his warning, go-away faces, and he can't be reached or penetrated at all. (p. 70)

Yet Jack Sattel (1976) argued that men are capable of speaking in intimate ways when it benefits them. Men often speak with emotional sensitivity at the start of a relationship, something they use to seduce women. Once they are in a committed relationship, they often reassert control by masking vulnerability. Sattel acknowledged differences in gender socialization that might account for this behavior, but concluded that men's "inexpressiveness" has more to do with men's unwillingness to be vulnerable than a learned inability. His analysis goes beyond male-female partnerships:

> To effectively wield power, one must be able to convince others of the rightness of the decisions one makes and to guard against one's own emotional involvement and the consequences of that decision. One must also be able to close one's eyes to the potential pain one's decisions have for others and for oneself . . . A little boy must become inexpressive not simply because our culture expects boys to be inexpressive but because our culture expects little boys to grow up to become decision makers and wielders of power. (p. 471)

Sattel then went on to show that working-class men and men of color are more likely to be expressive than middle-class white men. These class and race differences suggest that the language and behaviors of "inexpressiveness" have more to do with preparing particular men for power and privilege in the public sphere than they have to do with male ineptness. Male inexpressiveness becomes a kind of "emotional capital" (Cahill, 1999; see also Jackall, 1988) that can be used to demonstrate that one is the "right man" for the (high-status) job.

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Feminist analysts should attend not only to terms that are obviously ideological, such as sexist, racist, classist, and heterosexist talk. We can also be attuned to participants' terms or phrasings that appear benign or neutral—including talk about "sex differences"—to see how they fit overall into inequalities that might be present in the group or organization. The case of Renewal (Kleinman, 1996) shows that the language of similarity and solidarity can mask inequalities, depending on the context. Booth's (2004) study shows that abstract language that makes strong distinctions between men and women (and between different "kinds" of women) also has the potential to reproduce inequality. In Schwalbe's (1996) study, we see that a group's use of language that emphasizes men's differences from women—even as members claim that women and men merely have different issues—can also reinforce men's privileges. As in the case of male generics and the language of "objectivity," many sexist terms (and ideas) are unconscious or may even come across as flattering or positive. It's our job not only to notice what dominants and subordinates say, but to see how what they say reinforces or challenges inequality. Becoming aware of the overt and hidden ideological content and consequences of language may also help us analyze how the less powerful *fail* to see inequalities. As in the case of Renewal, participants' apolitical understanding of equality may make it difficult for dominants and subordinates to see inequalities in their midst.

Questions to Ask in the Field or at the Desk

• How does men's sexist talk produce solidarity among men and the exclusion of women?

• In cases where men are called to account, what rhetorics do they use to justify their actions, if they offer justifications?

• Do men dismiss their own behavior as "just joking," argue that "If women can't take it, they don't belong here" (such as in blue-collar work), or appeal to innate differences ("Women aren't meant for this work")?

• Do men make some exceptions, allowing a few women to become "one of the guys"?

• What happens when a woman who fits in calls the men on their sexism? What kind of talk ensues then?

• What language does the powerful group use to justify harming the less powerful group? Do they draw on culturally acceptable rhetorics (for example, romance and victim blaming)?

• Do groups in the setting share a language, or is the language of the powerful different from the language of the less powerful?