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IDEOLOGIES OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LANGUAGE IN SOCIOLINGUISTICS

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The early stages of feminist thought in a discipline are typically associated with filling in gaps: correcting sexist biases in the existing literature and creating new topics out of women's experience. In feminist sociolinguistics examples of such research include the study of gossip (for example, Harding, 1975), of sexist language (Lakoff, 1975), and of women's consciousness-raising groups (Kalčik, 1974). However, as Thorne and Stacey note, as feminist work proceeds in a discipline 'feminists discover that many gaps were there for a reason, i.e. that existing paradigms systematically ignore or erase the significance of women's experiences and the organization of gender' (1993: 168). The task of feminist scholars thus goes beyond adding discussions of women to address the broader goal of the transformation of existing conceptual schemes in their disciplines. For example, in history, feminist and other radical scholars have challenged the assumption that history is primarily about politics, public policy and famous individuals. The inclusion of women has even led to a rethinking of the notion of historical periodization itself, since historical turning points are not necessarily the same for women as for men (Kelly-Gadol, 1977). Scholars have also turned to thinking about gender as a 'primary field within which or by means of which power is articulated . . . for concepts of power, though they may build on gender, are not always literally about gender itself' (Scott, 1986: 1069). In art, scholars turned from a search for the great women artists to an understanding of how the training practices for artists had denied women access to crucial materials, mentors and examples. In literature, feminist scholars have extended their project from the critique of texts by male authors and the recovery of texts written by female authors to asking questions about how literary periods and notions of dominant aesthetic modes are established, and thus how certain writers, texts and genres become valued as central or canonical (see, for example, Feldman and Kelley, 1995). In anthropology, feminist scholars and others have questioned the value of that traditional analytic category 'culture', arguing that this

notion smooths over contradictions and conflicts of interest within (and perhaps even between) cultures in ways that may be particularly likely to obscure the lives of women and other disadvantaged cultural members (Abu-Lughod, 1993). They've also asked questions about how the canon of anthropological thought gets constructed (Behar and Gordan, 1996).[1]

Feminist sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists are also increasingly asking questions about fundamental analytic concepts in sociolinguistics that must be revalued when gender is taken seriously. The definition of hypercorrection (Cameron and Coates, 1988), of standard and vernacular language (Morgan, 1994a; 1994b), of women's language (Inoue, 1994) and even theories about the way language marks social identity (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992; Ochs, 1992) have all been critiqued by feminist sociolinguists.

This chapter constitutes a contribution to the ongoing feminist reevaluation of fundamental assumptions in disciplines by focusing on, and deconstructing, a dichotomy used in sociolinguistics, the dichotomy of 'ordinary' and 'institutional' language.[2] This dichotomy is implicitly informed by liberal political and neoclassical economic theory, and with these theories shares three problems: (1) an emphasis on the separation rather than the interpenetration of spheres; (2) a theory of social identity that focuses on abstract individualism; and (3) the idealization of fraternal interactions. The dichotomy, that is, encodes a theory of the social world in terms of a model of the relevant social spheres, with a specific picture of personhood, and with a specific picture of the paradigmatic form of social relations. Because of spatial constraints, I'll focus on the first of these problems in this chapter.[3] As with other research standpoints, this dichotomy is one from which 'certain features of reality come into prominence and from which others are obscured' (Jaggar, 1983: 382). The dichotomy's flaw is not in its inevitably partial vision, but rather in a failure to acknowledge its position and what these categories reveal and obscure. This dichotomy, I argue, is most useful for understanding American middle-class lives, and among them, most useful for understanding the lives of American middle-class men. With Michelle Rosaldo I want to argue that

> ways of thinking about language and about human agency and personhood are intimately linked: our theoretical attempts to understand how language works . . . inevitably tend to reflect locally prevalent views about the given nature of those human persons by whom language is used. (1982: 203)

However, unlike her, I'm not focusing on cross-cultural comparisons of linguistic ideologies, but rather considering how a hegemonic Western linguistic ideology may distort our understandings of how interactions, especially among or with those in less powerful positions, occur in the West. In this sense, the dichotomy is ideological. It is contestable,

socially positioned, and linked to particular social interests.[4] The assumption of difference between ordinary and institutional language obscures the fact that the possibility of insisting on such a difference is a privilege associated with one's economic and social status within a society. In particular, poor people (and women, especially minority women, are disproportionately poor) who must rely on state aid are forced to open themselves up to state scrutiny in ways that collapse this distinction. In addition, as a result of an emphasis on the separation rather than the interpenetration of spheres, relationships between occupations (including mothering) and gendered styles have been ignored, and discussions of family interaction have been conducted outside political economic contexts. Obscuring the politics of families is particularly detrimental for women and children. The recalcitrance of this dichotomy to critique may lie in its deep affiliation with hegemonic Western norms as expressed in liberal political and neoclassical economic thought. This chapter argues that the terms 'ordinary' and 'institutional' are ideological labels rather than designations of structures, interactions, or spheres.[5] As such the use of these labels is always already a theory of the social world. The labels, and the representation of the social world they represent, must be understood as contested, instead of assumed.

Linguistic studies of ideology

The topic of ideology has experienced a surge of interest in European sociolinguistics and North American linguistic anthropology recently (see, for instance, Fairclough, 1989; 1992; 1995; Friedrich, 1989; Gal, 1989; Hill and Mannheim, 1992; Kroskrity et al., 1992; Wodak, 1989; Wodak and Matouschek, 1993; Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994; van Dijk, 1993). Studying language ideology is a

> much-needed bridge between linguistic and social theory, because it relates the microculture of communicative action to political economic considerations of power and social inequality, confronting macrosocial constraints on language and behavior. (Woolard and Schieffelin, 1994: 72)

This area is ripe for study, since many social theorists holding a 'language as ideology' view do not adequately theorize notions of language, ideology and social control, while many linguists fail to explore the political implications of linguistic choices (Gal, 1989: 359–60). Susan Philips points out that

> language has become relevant in the study of ideology because of its widely recognized involvement both in thought and in social action and for some because of its concreteness or materiality. Language is central to the creation, promulgation and maintenance of ideologies. We experience the world through human interaction that is constituted by discourse and much of the ideational content of human dealings is expressed and mentally experienced through language. (1992: 377)

In the European-centred tradition of critical discourse analysis, the importance of studying ideology is often linked to understanding non-violent means of exercising power over others (see Wodak and Matouschek, 1993: 227, for a useful summary). For instance, van Dijk argues that '"modern" and often more effective power is mostly cognitive, and enacted by persuasion, dissimulation or manipulation . . . managing the mind of others is essentially a function of text and talk' (1993: 254). This explains, argues Fairclough (1993), why ideology has received such emphasis in twentieth century social theory. Under these sociohistorical circumstances, discourse analysis is particularly important because of its 'distinctive . . . role in the constitution and reproduction of power relations and social identities' (1993: 139).[6]

The responsibility of linguists is not, however, simply to contribute to studies of ideology, but is also to reflect upon ideologies about language, including and especially our own linguistic ideologies. Woolard and Schieffelin (1994) describe some of the ways linguists' analytic categories have been ethnocentric, nationalist and bourgeois. Ethnographic critiques of speech act theory have pointed out how its underlying assumptions are rooted in 'an English language ideology, a privatized view of language emphasizing the psychological state of the speaker while downplaying the social consequences of speech' (1994: 59). Nineteenth century philology and the emerging discipline of linguistics contributed to religious, class and/or nationalist projects, while the idealism of twentieth century formal linguistics has contributed to class-linked and class-perpetuating norms of prescriptivism. Critics of linguistic relativism have pointed out how it works to assuage bourgeois guilt over the destruction of native Americans. Smitherman-Donaldson (1988) considers the reproduction of racism in academic discourse on African-American speech. Studies of ideologies promulgated in linguistic studies have thus pointed to the ways that such ideologies have reified and obscured a wide range of social inequalities.

Notably absent from this list, however, is the way linguists' ideologies might have supported gender bias, or gender bias as it interacts with other forms of bias. My critique of the ordinary/institutional distinction thus simultaneously participates in an ongoing feminist reanalysis of fundamental terms in sociolinguistics as well as the ongoing examination of linguists' linguistic ideologies. I'll begin by describing the definitions of institutional and ordinary language currently in use, and then demonstrate their connection to public–private dichotomies widely critiqued by feminist scholars. I'll then show how these discourse spheres, though posited as separate, actually interpenetrate, and the ways that the interpenetrations are most marked for those who are least privileged.

Defining institutional and ordinary language

The focus on 'ordinary' conversation and everyday cognition and social practice was originally articulated in sociology as a challenge to the Parsonian structural-functionalist focus on systemic analysis, and to the notion of social actors as structural dopes (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990: 284–5). The focus on 'ordinary' language in sociolinguistics can also be understood as part of a wider strategy that celebrates non-standard or everyday speech patterns as a challenge to official language norms that are disadvantageous for many speakers (see Gumperz, 1982; Labov, 1972). The political effectiveness of this opposition lies in its celebration of the ordinary; its limitations and political liabilities also lie in this.[7] The problem with the strategy of inverting the values is that this reform fails to critique structuralist sociology's distinction between public and private spheres (Gamarnikow and Purvis, 1983; 2).

'Ordinary conversation' is defined by Levinson as 'that familiar predominant kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking which generally occurs outside specific institutional settings like religious services, law courts, classrooms and the like' (1983: 284). By contrast, 'institutional' language is often characterized by an orientation to some core goal, task or identity associated with an institution, and constraints on what participants can relevantly say (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 22).[8] Formally, institutional language may be realized by reductions of the range of possibilities for participation that are found in ordinary conversation, in the form of restrictions on turn-taking, the use of specialized vocabularies, asymmetrical question-answer sequences, and special opening and closing sequences (Drew and Heritage, 1992; Goodwin and Heritage, 1990).

Scholars generally offer two kinds of arguments (one formal, and the other social) for positing ordinary conversation as the basic interactional mode.[9] First, the notion of an unmarked communicative context is said to be essential to pragmatic explanations of deixis and discourse explanations of turn-taking (Levinson, 1992; Sacks et al., 1974).[10] Second, conversation is taken to be the prototypical kind of interaction since it is the form in which people are first exposed to language and thus serves as the matrix of language acquisition (Goodwin and Heritage, 1990: 289; Levinson, 1983: 284; Schegloff, 1987):

> Ordinary conversation is the predominant medium of interaction in the social world. It is also the primary form of interaction to which, with whatever simplifications, the child is initially exposed and through which socialization proceeds. Thus, the basic forms of mundane talk constitute a kind of benchmark against which other more formal or 'institutional' types of interaction are recognized or experienced . . . The study of ordinary conversation, preferably casual conversation between peers, may thus offer a principled approach to determining what is distinctive about interactions involving, for example, the specialism of the school or the hospital or the asymmetries of status, gender and ethnicity, etc. (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 19)

Whether or not it is possible to establish a formally unmarked communicative context, the logic which moves from arguing that ordinary conversation is formally unmarked to socially prototypical is problematic. In Drew and Heritage's argument ordinary conversation moves from being defined as a mode of interaction contrasted with institutional or formal talk to a default mode of interaction among peers who share the same status, and indeed the same identity. They move from positing face-to-face interaction as the 'primordial site of sociality' (Schegloff, 1987: 208) into a more culturally specific notion of conversation as egalitarian exchanges among peers. This is an empirical claim, and yet it is here treated as a first principle. This definition already assumes the distinction of institutional and ordinary language, and the spheres in which they are spoken, when in fact what counts as institutional talk (such as political or ritual talk) may be precisely what a scholar must discern (see, for example, essays in Brenneis and Myers, 1984, on political talk in egalitarian societies). Furthermore, some cultures and some subcultures value and orient towards a certain kind of institutional talk, rather than peer interaction, as the prototype of conversational exchange (see Duranti, 1993, and Kroskrity, 1992, for examples). This may in turn influence behaviour in 'ordinary' conversation. Finally, the invocation of a felt difference between ordinary and institutional talk remains silent about who feels this difference: might this difference be experienced differently by people positioned differently within society?

The separation of public and private spheres as ideology

Like other false dichotomies, the ordinary/institutional dichotomy obscures differences within categories, assumes that differences between the categories is as great (or greater) than differences within them, and ignores interpenetrations between them (Butler, 1990; Scott, 1990). Before I turn to some examples, I'll consider some of the extensive feminist work on a similar distinction, that of public and private spheres, and argue that the ordinary/institutional distinction is a linguistic version of this ideological distinction. The construction of the ideology of complementary and distinct public and private spheres is one of the dichotomies most intensively studied by Western feminists (for example, Cancian, 1989; Dahlerup, 1987; Hurtado, 1989; Jaggar, 1983; Pateman, 1989; Rosaldo, 1974; 1980; Strathern, 1988; Yanagisako and Collier, 1987).[11] Indeed, this study has been intensive and extended enough that in a recent book review one feminist scholar even dubbed the theoretical debate on private versus public spheres as 'rather stale' (Valverde, 1994; 210). A dismissal of continuing investigations of how this division perpetuates itself seems to underestimate how deep-rooted these ideological principles are in Western life and thought. The very

centrality of these principles is linked to their recalcitrance to change. This centrality motivates the need to expand political critique into new disciplines and political arenas, as well as regularly renew it in scholarly and public forums where the critique has already been offered. Dismissing the need for further such studies also assumes that the private and public split has the same meaning everywhere, when in fact part of the classificatory power of the distinction may be in lumping together dissimilar situations (as, for instance, the distinctions 'women' and 'men' often do). Pateman has noted that 'The term "ideology" is appropriate here, because the profound ambiguity of the liberal conception of the private and public obscures and mystifies the social reality it helps constitute' (1989: 120).

What social reality is mystified by the public–private distinction? Numerous historians (see, for example, Cancian, 1989; Smith-Rosenberg, 1985) have remarked that the sharp ideological distinction between private and public social spheres in the West can be tied to the industrial revolution. As commodity production moved outside households, work and family were increasingly distinguished. Households became defined as homes, refuges from the heartless competitive world of early capitalism. These distinctions were, of course, ideological, not actual. They best described and describe the lives of middle-class households, but even there the distinction was troubled. The private–public distinction is not necessarily relevant to the lives of poor women and women of colour whose every act is subjected to a kind of public scrutiny (Hurtado, 1989) or applicable to immigrant households shaped by other cultural distinctions (Yanagisako, 1987).[12] The economic distinctions between home and work also became encoded in the political theory – liberalism – which arose alongside industrial capitalism. The distinction between public and private is covertly normative in liberal economic theory, but in liberal political theory it is overtly normative: the private is the realm in which the state may not act in liberal political theory (Jaggar, 1983: 144).

Contrasts between the political and the personal, the economic and the domestic, the institutional and the ordinary depoliticize the domains contrasted with the political, the economic, the institutional. To do this is to 'shield such matters from generalized contestation and from widely disseminated conflicts of interpretation; and, as a result, [to] entrench as authoritative certain specific interpretations of needs', in particular those which tend on the whole to advantage dominant groups and individuals and disadvantage their subordinates (Fraser, 1989: 168). Issues such as wife battering, women's unpaid work in households, and the need for community and institutional child care, are bracketed off as non-political. 'Leaks' between these categories are signs of social and structural shifts; promoting the visibility of, and alternative interpretations of, such leaks is part of the political work of social movements.

The interpenetration of ordinary and institutional language

Occasionally the ordinary/institutional distinction is explicitly mapped onto private/public language (see Fabian, 1986: 139–41). More often, however, this mapping is implicit. Like the notion of public/private, the ordinary/institutional dichotomy works not simply as a descriptive distinction but as a normative one that obscures the interpenetration of spheres. There are institutionalized inequities in families linked to larger social and political-economic forces that are ignored by seeing families as egalitarian contexts. There are also personalized interactions that disguise institutional power by modelling themselves on these idealized families. Drew and Heritage dismiss a large body of sociological, anthropological and feminist research which defines families as institutions (cf. Hartmann, 1981a; 1981b; Ochs and Taylor, 1992; Thorne with Yalom, 1992) in a footnote: 'Notwithstanding the standard sociological usage within which the family is also a social institution, we will avoid using the term to describe activities that would be glossed as family dinners, picnics, and the like' (1992: 59, n. 1). By assuming rather than demonstrating that the family is not like other institutions, Drew and Heritage thereby violate their own ethnomethodological principles – and end up reinscribing an idealized notion of families familiar from liberal political and economic theory, where, as Jaggar points out, 'If home is [viewed] as a haven from the heartless world . . . [and] the sphere in which people exercise natural human affections, these will be degraded if subjected to the impersonal scrutiny of the law' (1983: 144). Though the cultural centrality of 'ordinary' conversation is partly said to be established because of its importance in language socialization, the ways that children are simultaneously exposed to interactional asymmetries in families – between adults and children, between older and younger children, between women and men – are all obscured in the idealization of families (see Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984, and Wodak and Schulz, 1986, for descriptions of variations in language socialization practices).

Indeed, the construction of people as ordinary can itself be a political move for someone working within an institution. In her ethnography of a centre for Jewish senior citizens living in an urban ghetto, Barbara Myerhoff (1978: 88–9) describes a ritual graduation ceremony designed by a new teacher of Yiddish history whose hope is to revitalize the centre, and draw its members (and himself) to the attention of the world and their own children. Throughout the ceremony the teacher underlines how the centre's members, humble and uneducated, have been disgracefully ignored and forgotten. Some members of the audience grumble: '"I, for one, would appreciate it if he wouldn't make us out to be quite so humble," Hannah whispered.' However the teacher goes on to have a poem read for the graduates:

> You are
> Silent and humble

> Who weave their lives in a hidden way
> Modest in thought and deed, unheralded,
> Unsparing in speech and rich in beauty
> Hidden is your fine spirit.

Hannah grumbles again about hearing more about how we are humble. A man sitting near her says, 'Humble, maybe, but silent, not so much.' Both are shushed loudly by other members of the audience. By painting these senior citizens as silenced, the teacher tries to take credit for revealing them to the world, for returning their voices to them. The senior citizens contest this portrait of themselves. The example highlights the importance of discerning from whose perspective the label *ordinary*, or *humble*, or *silent*, is being applied, and for what purposes.

In addition to seeing how the imposition of the label 'ordinary' can be a political act, we can consider how 'institutional' language attempts to use 'ordinary' language to effect its own ends. Impersonal market relations are personalized with the use of 'ordinary' talk based on 'real' feelings and 'private' experiences in the commodity of country music (Fox, 1992) and in the growth of the phone sex industry (Hall, 1995). Fairclough (1989; 1993) points to the 'synthetic personalization' (that is, the tendency to treat people handled as masses as individuals, or with simulated solidarity) found in bureaucratic forms, letters and interactions, a process he understand as 'the appropriation of private domain practices by the public domain' (1993: 140). See also Hochschild (1983) on flight attendants' routinized performance of positive affect. Advertising discourse, often using these personalizing devices, penetrates into homes through television, radio and print media. The widespread use of mass-produced greeting cards (di Leonardo, 1992; Papson, 1986) is a commodification of the work of communication with kin and friends. Numerous kinds of bureaucratic and professional interventions, interviews and interactions (Cicourel, 1992; Cunningham, 1992; Fairclough, 1989; Gumperz, 1982; Leach, 1972; Schiffrin, 1994) and many kinds of therapeutic talk (Fairclough, 1989) also exemplify the interpenetration of 'institutional' and 'ordinary' language.[13]

Some occupational identities, as Marxist scholars have long noted, are powerful enough to shape world view and behaviour in a variety of realms, including 'ordinary' interactions. There are a variety of stereotypes about elementary school teachers speaking in 'inappropriately' simple and cheerful ways that suggest this, including this anecdote recounted by anthropologist Michael Dorris:

> Adam's first-grade teacher was Alice Hendrick, a woman of many years' experience, of utter patience and optimism and understated skill. She had taught six-year-olds for so long that even when speaking to adults, she clearly enunciated each word and gave frequent, supportive, rather unnerving compliments. 'What nice shiny shoes you're wearing,' she once said when I attended a PTA meeting. 'And you arrived right on time!' (1989: 103)

In my fieldwork with police officers, I found that many police officers said that once they were hired, interactions with friends and family often came to be oriented around their occupational identities.[14] For instance Naisha, an African-American female police officer, stated that the job had taken away her freedom to act like herself.

> You go to a party, they're all like this. 'Shhhh, her comes Naisha.' What am I gonna do, arrest my family? Even my mother she'll be introducing us, 'This is my son John, William, and my daughter Naisha, she's a cop.' Why didn't she say, 'This is my son John, He's an accountant'? Right away people are starting to tell me, 'Yeah, I had this cop stop me once.' Why would she do that? [81B-540]

Police officers regularly described other ways that the institutionalized interactional style that they were socialized into on the job changed their interactions with spouses and children (that is, 'ordinary' conversation). Many police officers, male and female, described adopting an authoritative style with their children. One officer reported having his wife tell him to 'stop ordering our kids around'. Another reported acting according to the advice he gives to men involved in domestic disputes ('just take a walk - let things cool down') when he argued with his wife. She responded with anger at his refusal to engage in discussion with her. He acknowledged that perhaps advice useful for a dispute so severe as to require police attention may not be the best for all disputes with his wife. Many police officers believed that the high rate of divorce among police officers is in part a result of their taking their interactional style home.

These examples suggest that interactional styles at work and with friends and family are not independent and distinct. The notion of individuals' involvement in different communities of practice offers an alternative way of talking about variations in communicative contexts:

> Speakers develop linguistic patterns as they act in their various communities in which they participate . . . in practice, social meaning, social identity, community membership and the symbolic value of linguistic form are constantly and mutually constructed. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992: 473)

The notions of interpenetration, intertexuality, interdiscursivity and heteroglossia all can also be used to demonstrate that

> even the apparently most homogeneous or self-contained text exhibits, at a close analysis, elements that link it to other texts, with different contexts, different norms and different voices . . . In all kinds of social situations, verbal and kinesic conventions interpenetrate one another to form complex messages, with multiple points of view and different voices . . . To be a competent member of a given speech community means to be an active consumer and producer of texts that exploit heteroglossia and at the same time reproduce at least the appearance of an overall encompassing system. (Duranti, 1994: 5-6)[15]

Investigating the ways that different members of an interaction are using different genres thus allows one to see how people 'are busy producing orders and oppositions that can be assessed and played against legitimate expectations' (1994: 6). Interpenetration, then, can be one sign of conflict between different groups or ideologies in a given interaction (1994: 106). I turn to examples of just such conflict in the following section.

The interpenetration of public/private spheres in welfare, legal and medical contexts

One of the defining characteristics of institutional language is said to be that it exhibits constraints on what participants can relevantly say (Drew and Heritage, 1992). However, because conversational analysts do not assume that one can decide if talk is institutional simply by virtue of the setting, but rather hold that institutional talk is that in which professional identities are made relevant (1992: 3–4), we will see that institutional representatives have considerable latitude in designating what counts as institutionally 'relevant'. The interpenetrations that result in the United States are particularly significant for women, especially poor women and women of colour, since they are more likely to need institutional aid because women's work often pays less, because they often have custody of children, because they are often working as caregivers for the elderly, because they have fewer opportunities to work as casual labourers than men and because the control of reproduction is culturally construed as women's responsibility (Fraser, 1989: 147–8; Golden, 1992: 29). Poor men and men of colour are also disproportionately affected. This section reviews studies of 'institutional' talk in welfare, legal and medical contexts to illustrate the range and kinds of these interpenetrations.[16] Each of these studies problematizes the definition of institutional and ordinary talk, the separation of public and private spheres of talk. In some cases the original analysts themselves make a version of this point; where this is true it is so noted. In many cases, however, I am reanalysing the data in order to make this point.

State welfare contexts

Since I've outlined the ways that liberal political theory specifically legislates against state interference in people's private lives, it seems appropriate to begin by looking at the cases where the state does feel justified in so interfering. I'll begin, then, with a consideration of interactions in a social welfare office. Although the other examples below are drawn from American institutional contexts, this first example is drawn from a Swedish context, largely because I am unaware of any sociolinguistic studies of interaction in American welfare offices (a lacuna perhaps revealing, in and of itself, of how 'institutional' has been

defined in American sociolinguistics).[17] Linell and Fredin (1995: 302) note that the state distinguishes between those who are 'legitimately' poor (that is, poor because of illness or involuntary unemployment) and those who are 'illegitimately' poor because of laziness or substance abuse). Because of this distinction social workers in a welfare office are licensed to determine the legitimacy and credibility of clients' requests for assistance by asking probing questions about the applicant's use of time, attempts to seek work, and living arrangements, including the intimacy of his/her relationship with the person s/he may be living with. The level of financial aid often therefore turns out to be a peripheral topic, while the clients' moral characters are central. The social workers then make judgements about clients (in at least the sense of deciding how to award money) based on the intelligibility of their answers to the state. A woman who lived in a collective (rather than as a boarder or a single renter), a man who lived with a woman who was not a sexual partner, and a man whose trip to another city to try to settle the affairs of a failed business led to a failure to register at a local employment office, all presented life and household circumstances which did not fit the norms of the social welfare office, and led to further and sometimes repeated questions about the client's life. For instance, the first man had to respond to repeated questions about whether his apartment mate was a girlfriend or mistress. He needed, that is, to repeatedly state that they shared a household and not a bed. For poor people, then, the realm of what is institutional often includes a much wider range of what is 'ordinary' or 'private' for wealthier people.

Institutional representatives do not, of course, unthinkingly reflect state-based ideologies. Often they have chosen to work with particular populations because of their empathy or political alignment with those groups. Linell and Fredin's study adopts a subtle and, I think, sympathetic approach to the analysis of the social workers' behaviour.[18] They present a Bakhtinian analysis of social workers' discourse strategies to show how social workers often develop polyvocal monologues in which they are adopting the client's perspective as well as that of the social welfare system (1995: 316). This polyvocality itself questions the clarity of the ordinary/institutional distinction.

Differences in how ordinary/institutional boundaries are drawn for social groups accorded more or less social privilege is also evident in a study done by sociologist Prudence Rains and described and further analysed in Fraser (1989). The study considers black teenagers' reception of instruction in pre-natal care, schooling and counselling from a municipal social worker. The teenagers drew on the health services, while resisting the psychotherapeutic aspects of the programme. The following is Fraser's description:

> The young black women resisted the terms of the psychiatric discourse and the language game of question-and-answer employed in the counseling

> sessions. They disliked the social worker's stance of nondirectiveness and moral neutrality - her unwillingness to say what *she* thought - and they resented what they considered her intrusive, overly personal questions. These girls did not acknowledge her right to question them in this fashion, given that they could not ask 'personal' questions of her in turn. Rather, they construed 'personal questioning' as a privilege reserved to close friends and intimates under conditions of reciprocity. (1989: 179)

Here there is an active contest between recipients of state services, and the state representative, about what is 'private' and 'relevant'. Houghton's (1995) work on adolescent Latinas who are institutionalized after being labelled as school truants, or as inhabitants of crowded or unsanitary homes, arrives at similar findings. Once institutionalized these women found that

> personal freedoms and choices [that] are often taken for granted by citizens who comply with mainstream values are contingent upon attendance and success in therapy. These freedoms often include the 'privilege' of parenting one's children, for instance, or of reuniting with family members . . . Social workers relocate individuals geographically and thereby prevent them from interacting in community, family and peer groups that potentially subvert mainstream values. Residents are often denied visitations with family because such visits are deemed likely to undermine 'therapeutic progress'. (1995: 129)

The women were asked to submit to therapy to address their resistance to dominant values which emphasize work and material acquisition, to address contraceptive 'problems' and a perceived reliance upon the welfare state. Like the African-American women described in Rains's study, these young Latina women also resisted therapeutic attempts, in this case by mimicking almost to the point of parody therapists' linguistic strategies, and by introducing a genre of talk they called *girl talk*, used in free-time periods, into the therapeutic encounters. Their use of 'ordinary' talk in 'institutional' settings was a form of resistance.

Legal contexts

Evidence that a strict boundary between public and private spheres, and between topics which are institutionally relevant and those which are not, is a class privilege does not only arise in welfare offices. It also arises in interactions with representatives of other state bureaucracies, including legal aid lawyers and police officers. Indeed, Sarat found that the welfare poor did not distinguish between those agencies which regulated their access to welfare benefits and those which were supposedly more clearly their advocates, like legal aid services (1990: 351). He cites comments from Spencer, a 35-year-old man on public assistance whom he talked to in a legal services office:

> You know it's all pretty much the same. I'm just a welfare recipient whether I'm here or talking to someone over in the welfare office. It's all welfare, you know, and it seems alike to me. I wish it was different but I've got to live with it this way. They're all the same. Welfare, legal services, it's all the Man.

Not only are no distinctions drawn between bureaucratic contexts by these recipients, but also distinctions between legal and ordinary interactions are collapsed for most of them:

> The legal consciousness of the welfare poor is . . . substantively different from other groups in society for whom law is a less immediate and visible presence. Law is, for people on welfare, repeatedly encountered in the most ordinary transactions and events of their lives. Legal rules and practices are implicated in determining whether and how welfare recipients will be able to meet some of their most pressing needs. Law is immediate and powerful because being on welfare means having a significant part of one's life organized by a regime of legal rules invoked by officials to claim jurisdiction over choices and decisions which those not on welfare would regard as personal and private. (1990: 344)

Being a welfare recipient with the need for legal assistance is being a person who must deal with the rules of welfare, many of which seem to clients more like confinement by the state than protection by it (1990: 345, citing White). The clients of legal aid offices cannot assume a private space in their lives, but instead must struggle for it: '[The welfare poor's] recognition that ". . . the law is all over" expresses, in spatial terms, the experience of power and domination; resistance involves efforts to avoid further "spatialization" or establish unreachable spaces of personal identity and integrity' (1990: 347). Interestingly enough, the strategies for resistance used by legal aid clients also collapse the public/private distinction, but rather than collapsing it all into an impersonal/institutional domain, they collapse it into a private/personalized domain, and understand many of the problems they experience with the welfare/legal bureaucracy as personal attacks. Sarat provides a cogent analysis of this strategy:

> [A client who interprets his problem as a personal attack] denied the bureaucratic legitimacy which accompanies claims that decisions are impersonal and resisted efforts to clothe power in the rhetoric of rules. This tendency to see problems with welfare as personal attacks is quite consistent with views of law as driven by assessments of character or by who, not what, you know. (1990: 360)

The welfare poor thus challenge bureaucracies' presentations of themselves as neutral, objective and professional. Interactions which institutional representatives might perceive as 'institutional' are thus shown to be 'personal' and paternalistic in the eyes of clients.

My analysis of an interaction between a male African-American police officer (PO) and an African-American homeless women (C) who wants to report a burglary further supports the idea that the definition of 'institutional' and 'personal' may not be self-evident, given different

participants' strategies for understanding an interaction (see McElhinny, 1996a). In this interaction one of the woman's best friends from a homeless shelter has taken some of her belongings. The alleged thief turns out to be known to the officer, who has arrested her in the past for prostitution, drug use and child neglect. This interaction is notable in a number of ways for challenging the institutional/ordinary distinction. For instance, this officer tends to use familiar and vernacular language. Police officers, like other professionals, must use a specific vocabulary that marks, as it establishes, their orientation towards policing institutional norms. Sometimes this may include a technical register (*homicide* for 'murder', or *minor* for 'kid' or 'child') but, unlike other professionals, for police officers the professional knowledge deemed most relevant is not classroom knowledge but 'street' knowledge. The police officer's use of terms like *rockhead* (for 'crack user'), *jug* (for 'alcohol'), his use of vernacular language, and even his use of the address terms *baby, girl* and *girlfriend* all work to establish this orientation. Perhaps more noteworthy and egregious, however, are the discourse sequences that the officer uses to establish that he has a certain amount of 'knowledge' about the two women, as well as to determine if the victim is telling the truth. In Example 1 he displays his 'knowledge' about Emily, the alleged thief, by asking a leading question (note the use of street lexical items like *ho* for 'whore' in lines 1, 3 and 5, the use of informal address forms like *girl* in line 9).[19]

Example 1

1	PO:	Emily hoing ever- any more?
2	C:	Huh?
3	PO:	Emily ever ho any more?
4	C:	Hole?
5	PO:	Hoing!
6	C:	I don't
7	C:	[xxxxxxx]
8		[<police radio>]
9	PO:	See you doing it to me again girl.
10	C:	I DON'T KNOW.
11		I'm telling the truth.
12		I don't know.

In Example 2 the officer treats the victim like a suspect, asking her questions about prostitution and drug use. This example also illustrates (see line 15) that part of the complainant's reaction to the officer's increasingly familiar probing is to use formal address forms like *sir* and *officer*.

Example 2

1	PO:	What about you?
2	C:	I don't ho.

3		(2.0)
4	PO:	Did you stop?
5	C:	I never di::d.
6		(3.0)
7	PO:	Then how did you get money for drugs?
8	C:	What you mean [how'd I get money for dr-]
9	PO:	[How'd you get money to get] high?
10	C:	When I used to get high?
11	PO:	Yeah.
12	C:	I had a welfare check.
13	PO:	That don't go nowhere.
14		You can't get no mileage out of that.
15	C:	I never did it like that officer.
16		I never did- sold my body for no drugs.
17		If I didn't have it
18		I just didn't have it.
19	PO:	Okay.
20		(9.0)

Despite the claim by Drew and Heritage (1992: 27) that institutional interactions are perceived as 'unusual, irksome or discomforting' because the restrictions on contributions, asymmetries and positions of relative ignorance for clients compare unfavourably with the relative equality and equal knowledge states of speakers in 'ordinary' conversation, the complainant's attentiveness to 'legally enforceable norms' are a resource for her resistance of the police officer here. At the points where she invokes the officer's formal identity with the use of *sir* or *officer*, he typically discontinues his current line of questioning.

Now, it is well established that the way that responsibility for actions is differentially assigned to different groups in a society reflects certain notions about personhood, so that for instance in the American legal system minors and the mentally insane are understood as less responsible for their actions than other people, and they are also understood as something less than full people (Hill and Irvine, 1993: 20–1). This encounter suggests how greater responsibility for forestalling crime is assigned to those who regularly inhabit the environments where criminal activity most frequently occurs, irrespective of what actual knowledge they have, by virtue of the greater knowledge they are supposed to have about how to forestall it. The same connection between familiarity and responsibility often works in assessment of date rape and domestic violence (see Ehrlich and King, 1996; Drew, 1992). This more rigorous standard of proof makes it more difficult for these victims to get their rights as citizens recognized. It also opens them up to the kind of intrusive institutional and personal questioning exemplified here.

Medical contexts

In medical interactions, discourse analysts have carefully documented a variety of ways in which diagnoses seem to be based on physicians'

stereotypes about women (with different stereotypes applied to different groups of women) rather than on medically available facts. Often, such stereotypes mean physicians resort to questions about, and explanations based on ideas about, women's home or family life, rather than the immediate medical problem. These examples show how boundaries between public and private, institutional and ordinary, talk are redrawn depending upon the client and stereotypes about such clients.

Paget (1983) describes a series of medical encounters between a male physician and a female patient in which a physician arrives at an assessment that the woman's basic health is good and that the problem is 'her nerves', or hypochondria. The woman, a postoperative cancer patient concerned about the possible spread of her cancer, is subsequently diagnosed by another physician with cancer of the spine. Paget notes a number of different kinds of topical and discursive discontinuities in the encounters, partly explicable by the physician's ignoring the woman's comments or questions. The physician is eager to shift discussion away from the physical problems the woman has had since her most recent cancer operation to problems in the woman's marriage before the operation: 'Do you have any problems in your home with your husband or your marriage or is that . . .?' (1983: 64).[20]

Fisher's (1983) study of how the treatment of women with abnormal Pap smears is negotiated in two clinics shows how, even within similar institutional contexts, what constitutes private and public talk can be defined differently for different populations. In a faculty clinic staffed by physicians, no women received hysterectomies, while in a community clinic staffed by residents and serving a population of older, poor and/or Mexican or Mexican-American women with many children, over 50% of the women received hysterectomies. In the faculty clinic, Fisher notes that the 'physical layout honored the humanness of patients. There was a separation of public and private space. The waiting room was separated from the backstage medical area. Examining rooms were separated from consulting offices' (1983: 153). In the community clinic, however,

> there was no separation of public and private space. There was no waiting room. Patients sat in the hall outside of the examining room overhearing medical talk that frightened them. There were also no consulting offices. All talk with patients occurred either in the halls (in the presence of other patients) or in the examining rooms . . . it is a very different experience to sit across the desk from a doctor, fully clothed, discussing your medical problem from having a similar discussion with a resident while you are sitting undressed on the examining table. (1983: 153)

Finally, Borges's (1986) discussion of the medicalization of non-medical problems shows how distinctions between institutional and ordinary problems are collapsed into the category of the institutional in ways that feed the increasing power of certain institutions in contemporary society. She describes one physician–patient interaction in which a

woman who is currently undergoing a divorce and living in an area without any friends or family nearby reveals to an internal medicine specialist that she is eating little (just 'salads and I drink my glass of wine and uh I eat strawberries'), smoking, drinking more heavily, and taking contraceptives because they make her feel less depressed. The physician arranges a further appointment, seemingly to check on her emotional health and determine if a therapeutic group or medication might be warranted. Borges wonders:

> Is this medical help? I wonder. In theory a clergyman, a social worker, or even a friend could have provided this function. Looking back on this encounter one striking element is the extent to which the medical encounter deals with the private issue of this woman's life and the lack of any sort of critique of the social relationships that seem to be the cause of her depression. There is a remarkable absence of a critical analysis of the distressing social patterns within her family and little mention of strategies for structural change (except therapeutic intervention). (1986: 31–2)

Although it's possible to imagine a kind of medicine in which the professional's responsibility is precisely this kind of therapeutic role, the professional in this case seems to be stepping in in the absence of any other support network for the patient.[21] Borges underlines that traditional medicine, when so practised, may work to defuse socially caused distress, and thus works as a conservative social force.

In a second interaction examined in the same paper a woman new to a neighbourhood describes herself as exhausted, achey and nervous. She also mentions that she's undertaken an extraordinary amount of entertaining and community work recently but resists a physician's suggestion that the solution to her stress is to take on less (1986: 47). In the end, despite the doctor's naming her problem as 'suburban syndrome', he provides the woman with a renewable prescription for a tranquillizer. Again, Borges's analysis is useful. The encounters demonstrate, she writes, that 'the general tendency to rely on technical solutions (at least quasi ones) for personal problems that would otherwise involve matters of individual responsibility and choice leads to a depoliticization of the individual and society' (1986: 34). She concludes that in both cases

> Not only do these women shift the responsibility for understanding themselves upon their doctors . . . but because of the false expectations they nurture, they in turn create a growing market for technical experts and their products (tranquilizers, birth control pills, etc.). The human needs for intimacy – family, friendship, and community – are transferred onto the mystique of the physician, a technical expert. (1986: 34)

Here the collapse of ordinary and institutional talk into the institutional feeds the importance of the medical institution – but does not enable asking questions about political and economic institutions that make

treatment necessary. As static, structuralist categories, 'ordinary' and 'institutional' talk do not permit historical understandings (or interrogations) of the constructions of these categories.

Explanations for interpenetrations

One way of understanding some of these interactions could be that the institutional representative overstepped professional boundaries. This explanation is a common one in sociolinguistic studies:

> Research on interaction in conversation, classroom, medical settings and so forth tends overwhelmingly to present exchanges in terms of single sets of shared rules and understandings, and the orderliness they produce. Disorders . . . are almost automatically seen as failures or breakdowns not to be accounted for within the system. (Pratt, 1987: 51)

From this viewpoint, the problem is precisely that there has been some interpenetration of ordinary and institutional discursive spheres, and therefore the solution is their separation. This view presupposes that professionalism is the norm, and that institutional representatives who are intrusive are individuals working outside institutional boundaries. This view also assumes that what it means to speak on behalf of the institution and on one's own behalf is rather straightforwardly determined (see Drew and Heritage, 1992: 3–4). This explanation leaves us with the niggling question of why certain classes of people (the poor, women, certain minority groups) seem to more frequently end up with such aberrant institutional representatives – and perhaps even why it's been relatively easy for sociolinguists to find and record such interactions, if they are in fact aberrations from typical practice.

Another way, however, of understanding these interactions is that the institutional representatives are behaving precisely as the institution would have them act. First, let's consider how institutional concerns would shape the welfare interactions. Because Americans live in a limited welfare state where benefits are only given to those who qualify for such assistance (those who are 'entitled' to it), people must continually prove that they are poor, sick, disabled or old enough to qualify for state aid. All applicants are continually suspected of being free-loaders. To need aid is thus to be forced to open oneself up to state scrutiny. The explanation for why certain groups of people are more subject to scrutiny lies in this. As Aida Hurtado points out,

> the public/private distinction is relevant only for the white middle and upper classes since historically the American state has intervened constantly in the private lives and domestic arrangements of the working class. Women of Color have not had the benefit of the economic conditions that underlie the public/private distinction. Instead the political consciousness of women of Color stems from an awareness that the public is *personally* political . . . There is no such thing as a private sphere for people of Color except that which they manage to create and protect in an otherwise hostile environment. (1989: 849)

The ambivalence about the provision of assistance that is part of the structure of the American welfare system, the unofficial mandate of relief agencies to refuse aid rather than grant it, leads to certain kinds of bureaucratic behaviours that make aid difficult to obtain, or unattractive. Golden notes that, 'Even before the Reagan administration began to attack the relief system, the agencies were always under fire for giving too much to people who were undeserving. Relief officials were in a sense forced to degrade their clients because "the general public requires it"' (1992: 61–2). Some of the 'rituals of degradation' to which relief-seekers are subject include endless waiting in anterooms, impolite or indifferent behaviour from case workers, wading through numerous appeal processes to get benefits, having benefits abruptly terminated without explanation, lack of knowledge about their rights, and even paying in supermarkets with food stamps. These rituals of degradation work in precisely the same way as did eighteenth century paupers' badges (1992: 61).[22] We've seen some of the discursive construction of indifference and 'impoliteness' above.

Now, not all the institutional clients described here are seeking welfare benefits. Some are seeking legal assistance which is much less controversially supposed to be available for all American citizens, yet they are still subjected to a ritual of degradation. Others are seeking medical assistance. This suggests that the categories used for sorting citizens that influence the welfare bureaucracy also influence other kinds of bureaucratic behaviour. This is not surprising if one considers the place of these categories in shoring up larger socioeconomic systems:

> What has to be understood, however, is that the loathing of 'reliefers' is not an accidental feature of American culture. It has deep roots in the two main tenets of market ideology: the economic system is open, and economic success is a matter of individual merit (and sometimes luck); those who fail – the very poor – are therefore morally or personally defective . . . the ritual degradation of a pariah class . . . serves to mark the boundary between the appropriately motivated and the inappropriately motivated, between the virtuous and the defective. The point is, then, that relief practices are not a mere reflection of market ideology; they are an agent in nurturing and reinforcing that ideology. (Piven and Cloward, 1993: 149)

Paradoxically to many Americans who have grown markedly mistrustful of the state precisely because 'a government that does little is unlikely to generate confidence, affection or loyalty' (1993: 448), a partial solution may be to extend the state in certain ways. This is one way, though not the only way, to create the economic conditions that Hurtado notes would be required to undergird the public–private, and institutional–ordinary, distinction for the poor. Extending the state need

not mean extending institutional scrutiny to all citizens if extension simply means that the state straightforwardly assures legal, medical and other services to all citizens without regard to 'legitimacy' of need. It has been argued that bureaucratic interactions are by nature depersonalizing and intrusive (Ferguson, 1984). However, studies by Nordic scholars suggest that in countries with more comprehensive welfare states, that is, states which provide a basic level of social security as citizens entitlements, rather than those like the US which provide poor relief after means testing (see Piven and Cloward, 1993: 409–10), all citizens are treated as customers of the state rather than having some citizens singled out as charity cases. This marks the 'fundamental difference between being dependent as consumers of public services or being dependent as clients on social welfare. The status as clients is often associated with economic dependency, control and social stigmatization' (Borchorst and Siim, 1987: 146).[23]

This difference in treatment of citizens, depending upon whether they are understood as consumers or as clients, is also evident within the United States in the ways applicants for different kinds of state aid are served. In the labour-market-based programmes like unemployment insurance which tend to serve more men than women, beneficiaries are required to do less work in order to qualify and remain eligible, they are less subject to intrusive controls and surveillance, and they are more likely to receive cash rather than 'in kind' benefits. Thus, beneficiaries of these programmes are 'positioned as *purchasing consumers*' (Fraser, 1989: 151, her emphasis). Beneficiaries of 'relief' programmes such as Aid to Families with Dependent Children, food stamps and Medicaid – programmes which overwhelmingly serve (or served) families (especially female-headed families) – are continually suspected of making fraudulent claims, and are subjected to various kinds of administrative humiliation, including surveillance, and reception of 'in kind' benefits (like food stamps) or money which is designated for specific purposes. These beneficiaries are thus '*clients*, a subject-position that carries far less power and dignity in capitalist societies than does the alternative position of purchaser' (1989: 152, her emphasis).

The extension of the state is only a partial solution because, as Fraser (1989) points out, in both subsystems of the welfare state people are positioned in ways that are not empowering, since their problems are treated as individual cases in ways that erect barriers against collective identification. The state

> imposes monological, administrative definitions of situation and need and so preempts dialogically achieved self-definition and self-determination. It positions its subjects as passive client or consumer recipients and not as active co-participants involved in shaping their life conditions. Lastly it construes experienced discontent with these arrangements as material for adjustment-oriented, usually sexist therapy and not as material for empowering processes or consciousness-raising. (1989: 155)

This leave feminists in the complex position of opposing cuts to social welfare, but trying to oppose the ways welfare systems reinforce, instead of challenge, structural inequalities.

Conclusion

As literary critic and queer theorist Eve Sedgwick has stated, one of the most important epistemological contributions of feminist thought to contemporary social analysis is pointing out how 'categories of gender and, hence, oppressions of gender can have a structuring force for nodes of thought and axes of cultural discrimination whose thematic subject isn't explicitly gendered at all' (1990: 34). In particular, she notes that dichotomies – such as, culture versus nature, mind versus body, rational versus emotional, active versus passive – have been particularly fruitful sites for feminists to unearth the masked, and therefore perhaps all the more insidious, construction of gender hierarchies (1990: 34).

The critique of dichotomies is not only part of a feminist scholarly tradition, however. Indeed, one way of understanding the history of sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology is as a systematic attempt to dismantle structuralist dichotomies that have oversimplified or distorted our understandings of language as social life. As Gal (1989: 346) has noted, challenges to the dichotomies of *langue* and *parole*, social and individual, and synchrony and diachrony constituted the founding moments of American sociolinguistics (see Hymes, 1974; Labov, 1966; Weinreich et al., 1968). Later scholarship successfully deconstructed other dichotomies, including literary/poetic and ordinary language (Fox, 1992; Labov, 1972; Pratt, 1977; Williams, 1977), emotional and referential language (Besnier, 1990), formal and informal language (Irvine, 1979), oral and written language (Chafe and Tannen, 1987; Tannen, 1982) and idealist and materialist conceptions of language (Friedrich, 1989; Gal, 1989; Williams, 1977; Woolard, 1985).

In this chapter I've critiqued a dichotomous contrast between ordinary and institutional language which I've argued masks gender hierarchies, as well as class and ethnic ones. I've argued that the dichotomy assumes Western bourgeois cultural and gender norms. Postulating ordinary and institutional interactions as separate obscures contests in institutional settings, especially those serving women, the poor and minorities, over what is legitimately institutional. It also obscures interactional inequalities in putatively ordinary interactions (such as families), and the ways that people's interactions in work settings can shape interactional styles elsewhere. Use of the terms as if they mark already defined spheres is actually part of the reification of those spheres. Instead, 'institutional' and 'ordinary', like the terms 'public' and 'private' are best understood not as designations of structures, spheres, or things, but rather as cultural classifications and

ideological labels that are differently applied in different social situations by different people.[24]

These problems are more than isolated and unrelated problems in sociolinguistic thought. They are linked to a bourgeois model of social life that underpins a liberal political and economic system. The division between public and private life, of which the institutional/ordinary distinction is one example, obscures interpenetrations and relationships between home and work, home and state. The dichotomous contrast is problematic because it is simultaneously too broad and too narrow. It is too broad in that it overgeneralizes across differences within the categories of 'ordinary' and 'institutional', and because the seeming comprehensiveness of the two categories makes it more difficult to bring interpenetrations of contexts into focus. It is too narrow because it does not see the economic conditions that underlie the possibility of the distinction, and the way they are shaped by and reflect a liberal political theory that speaks from a bourgeois point of view.

Notes

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1. Although, as I'll note below, feminist sociolinguists have begun to question fundamental analytic categories, we have yet to question the construction of the sociolinguistic canon, namely that body of works which is regularly taught in undergraduate and graduate classes, and which is understood as obligatory knowledge for qualifying as a sociolinguistic scholar (though see McElhinny, 1994c, for a description of how the work of an eighteenth century woman linguist, Hester Lynch Thrale, was overshadowed by her friend Samuel Johnson). This is a rich area for further inquiry.

2. This dichotomy is central to the analytic tradition of conversational analysis. To focus on this dichotomy might thus seem to single out conversational analysis for perpetuating a particular ideological tradition. There are, however, related dichotomies in other sociolinguistic traditions (ritual versus ordinary talk in the ethnography of speaking, standard versus vernacular language in variationist sociolinguistics) that can be deconstructed in similar ways. See Duranti (1994) for a deconstruction of the ritual/ordinary distinction, and Haeri (1991) and McElhinny (1993a) for a deconstruction of the standard/vernacular distinction. The point here, as I argue more fully below, is that Western sociolinguistics does not stand apart from deeply rooted Western conceptual dichotomies.

3. The other two problems are more fully reviewed in McElhinny (1997). There I consider the ways the use of this dichotomy draws upon a notion of personhood, abstract individualism, that has been most extensively elaborated in the liberal economic theory that undergirds, and describes, capitalist relations. I also consider how a focus on fraternal interactions implicitly suggests that egalitarian relations are most successfully undertaken among people who are more alike than different, and thus occasions problems for considering what egalitarian relationships might look like when one takes gender, age, ethnicity, and other aspects of social diversity and identity fully into account.

4. The term 'ideology' has been used with a wide range of meanings (see Eagleton, 1991, and Woolard, 1992, for two useful reviews). Some argue that ideology is necessarily false, deceptive, mystifying or distorting, while others are agnostic about the truth of ideologies, focusing on seeing them as socially positioned. Those that focus on social positioning sometimes argue that ideology is used by socially dominant groups to promote their interests, while others argue that ideology can be found in all social groups. Finally, some definitions of ideology pick out ideas and beliefs which are simply used as symbols by a group, while others pick out those which are involved in social contests. It is important, I believe, to retain some notion of ideology which distinguishes between true and false beliefs (or, more cautiously, more false and less false beliefs), since 'if we extend the term ideology to include oppositional political movements, then radicals at least would want to hold that many of their utterances, while ideological in the sense of promoting their power-interests, are nonetheless true' (Eagleton, 1991: 26). Feminists, Marxists, and anti-racists all have ideologies too. However, it is also important to point out, as Eagleton (1991: 15–16, 19) does, that ideas may not be false but may still promote or legitimate the interests of dominant groups (for example, through false generalization), and that it seems appropriate to retain the term 'ideology' for those cases as well. This is precisely the sense in which the ordinary/institutional distinction is ideological. I therefore follow Fairclough (and Gramsci) in focusing primarily on the social effects of ideology, rather than truth value (1995: 76).

5. I borrow this formulation from Fraser's (1989: 166) discussion of the putative boundaries separating political, economic and domestic dimensions of life.

6. For a more extensive review of language and ideology as used in critical discourse analysis, see Fairclough (1995: 70–84) and Wodak (1989).

7. The strengths and limitations of this strategy parallel the political uses and liabilities of other kinds of essentializing identity politics. For a discussion of the implications of this for feminism see Butler (1990) and Jaggar (1983), for feminist sociolinguistics see McElhinny (1993a; 1996b), and for anti-racist practice see hooks (1990).

8. Michael Agar provides a slightly different definition of institutional and ordinary talk. Institutional talk is that, he says, in which 'one person – a citizen of a modern nation/state – comes into contact with another – a representative of one of its institutions' while 'natural conversation' is characterized by 'symmetrical social relations, unconstrained topic flow, and informality of style' (1985: 147). Note that there is some mixing of criteria here for defining the two forms of talk: whether the speaker is speaking on her/his own behalf or that of an

institution, how egalitarian the interaction is, formality, and topic control. The discussion below applies equally well to this definition.

9. Not every commentator places equal weight upon both of these. For example, Drew and Heritage (1992: 21) are careful to point out that they are less interested in specifying the features which define ordinary or institutional talk than in designating some 'family resemblances' among cases of institutional talk and some reasons for them.

10. I do not have the space to review the formal evidence here, though I will briefly note that the idea and portrait of a universal basic turn-taking system as biased towards two-party conversation without preallocation of turns has been challenged as ethnocentric. In particular, the predisposition towards free alternation of speakers (rather than, say, simultaneous talk) doesn't seem to be required by human processing constraints, nor does it seem to be the conversational norm in all cultures (Reisman, 1974; Morgan, 1996). In addition, turn-taking rules are construed in this model as 'a sharing device, an "economy" operating over a scarce resource' (Levinson, 1983: 297) where that resource is the conversational floor. But there are speaker situations, and possibly even cultures, where the floor is not necessarily seen as a valued good (Bauman, 1989), but rather the production of silence is. An even more radical critique of the notion of turn-taking would not simply point out that silence, as well as the floor, can be a valuable good, but would question instead the free-market economic metaphor implicit in talking about conversation as a 'speech exchange system', replacing this metaphor with, say, a metaphor of 'conversation as collective' (see, for example, Kalčik, 1974).

11. Feminist critiques of the ideological force of the public/private distinction have used two distinct definitions of private and public (Dahrlerup, 1987; Pateman, 1989). One sense is the distinction of domestic life (the *family*) from the political (the *state*) critiqued by, for example, radical feminists who extended the realm of the political into the realm of the home and family with the slogan 'personal is political', thus enabling them to bring issues of domestic violence, incest, and marital inequalities into greater visibility (Koedt et al., 1971). The other is the distinction of the *family* from the *economy/workplace* used by, for example, socialist feminists who argued that the distinction (as used by both Marxists in terms of production/reproduction and liberal theorists in the division between private and public) obscured the work done by women in household settings (motherwork, domestic tasks, administration, financial planning) and overinflated the importance of work done in the public sphere (Ferguson and Folbre, 1981; Hartmann, 1981a; 1981b; Jaggar, 1983: 212–3). 'Institutional' talk provides a covering rubric for both workplace and state interactions.

12. The meanings of the distinctions are also far from uniform, even in European and North American contexts: East European feminists currently point out that the construction of a private sphere was more liberating for women in oppressive states than was participation in the public sphere, though the political strategies of Western feminists have suggested the opposite (see Funk and Mueller, 1993).

13. A rather different example suggests the ways people can resist the intrusion of commodity capitalism into spaces they designate as 'private'. In the summer of 1996 the University of Toronto installed metal frames for advertising in bathroom stalls, positioned on doors directly opposite toilets. The frames contain rotating ads for cars, alcohol and other commodities meant to appeal to

an undergraduate student population. Resistance to the intrusions of commodity capitalism into this space quickly appeared as responses, some in the form of graffiti on the ads, others in the form of formal protests issued by university groups (including the faculty association). That there is not similar resistance to ads appearing elsewhere in the university suggests that the institution, and the stall users, have different ideas about the relative privacy that toilet stalls accord users. Such struggles are useful for denaturalizing what is designated as institutional and non-institutional.

14. All discussions of police officers in this chapter draw on fieldwork with the Pittsburgh Police Department in 1991–2 (also described in McElhinny 1993a; 1993b; 1994a; 1994b; 1995a; 1995b).

15. For further discussion of interdiscursivity see Fairclough (1993: 137).

16. Fraser (1989: 185) critiques Foucault for his focus on the discourses of traditional institutions (legal, medical, etc.) in ways that ignore, for instance, the discourses of social movements. She argues that this rather traditional approach thus misses out on a possibility for discussing contestations of some of these institutional discourses. Sociolinguistic investigations of institutions could be critiqued in similar ways. Assumptions about what counts as institutional talk have largely led sociolinguists to ignore a number of alternative institutional discourses, including the discourse of collectives (versus that of corporations), the discourse of midwives and nurse practitioners (versus that of physicians), the discourse of the welfare rights movement (versus that of state organizations), interactions in the offices of non-profit organizations and headquarters for social movements, among others.

17. There are of course philosophical, sociological and ethnographic descriptions of such interactions in, for example, Fraser (1989), Golden (1992), and Piven and Cloward (1993).

18. Nonetheless, Linell and Fredin's (1995) analysis sometimes falls into the trap of using the welfare system's categories of analysis for understanding the clients (see Pratt, 1987, for a similar critique of Cicourel, 1982). For instance, they claim that the exact relations of this man and his apartment mate never become clear. This is certainly the social worker's belief, as evidenced by her repeatedly returning to this question. However, the client's responses are consistent on this point. Further, Linell and Fredin describe disagreements between welfare workers and clients as clashes between the everyday, personal rationalities of the clients and the state's norms (1995: 311, 313). This explanation simply suggests that the problem is a sort of cultural conflict, and thus the solution would be acquainting each with the concerns of the other. The problem with this understanding however, as with some other dual-culture understandings of social problems, is that it suggests that the problem is a misunderstanding rather than disagreement. The focus on different communities with different rationalities fails to look at ongoing relations of dominance, or at processes of appropriation, penetration and cooptation and how to distinguish among them. See Goodwin (1994), Pateman (1989), and Pratt (1987) for similar arguments on slightly different issues.

19. *Hoing* is *whoring*, with a vocalized /r/, that is, an /r/ that has become a vowel. The phonological process of /r/-vocalization is widely found in African-American speech, though this process is largely lexicalized in this word now. The complainant displays innocence by not initially understanding the slang/African-American Vernacular English term used by the police officer (line 2). When the

police officer repeats his question, the complainant treats the missing phone as an /l/ that is vocalized (line 4), a phonological process that is also widely found in African-American Vernacular English, as well as in the regional dialect of Pittsburghers (see McElhinny, 1993a: 242–58). By misunderstanding the word, the complainant resists the officer's insinuations and displays innocence about the activity.

20. The patient described by Paget does not refuse to answer the physician's questions. It's possible to interpret this as the patient's cooperation with the physician's construction of what counts as institutional, but as Woolard (1985) has pointed out, speakers' cooperation with hegemonic norms does not indicate whether or not they concede the legitimacy of those norms. Pratt (1987: 53) also points out that many sociolinguistic analyses of institutional interaction have difficulty distinguishing cooperation from coercion, compliance or some other complex response. In this case, the fact that the patient sought medical advice elsewhere suggests she has not adopted the physician's way of viewing her.

21. The appropriateness of this strategy of moving from a narrow focus on disease to looking more broadly at a patient's lifestyle is not necessarily being questioned here. Practitioners of holistic medicine regularly and systematically make broad inquiries into all aspects of patients' lives as an important part of their attempts to restore health. The patients who seek such medical practitioners are, however, licensing them to ask such questions – and in turn may be given the opportunity to discuss their problems in ways quite different from traditional medical interviews (see Fairclough, 1992: 138–49, for a comparison of a traditional medical interview and an interaction with an alternative (homoeopathic) practitioner).

22. Piven and Cloward point out that another target (they claim it is the principal target) of such spectacles of degradation, particularly in moments of welfare state contraction, is the able-bodied poor who remain in the labour market: 'Harsh relief practices serve to enforce work . . . some few of the very young, the old, or the disabled are allowed on the rolls even during periods of political stability. But once there, they are systematically punished and degraded, made into object lessons for other poor people to observe and shun, their own station raised by contrast' (1993: 147).

23. The metaphor of citizens as consumers (rather than, say, workers) has its own problems. It applies a commodity logic to state services rather than more comprehensively attacking the pervasiveness of such logic.

24. I am inspired here by Fraser's (1989: 166) description of how the terms 'public' and 'private' are terms of political contest.

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