In And Out Of The Toolbox Of Language: Reading Marginality In Sexist And Heterosexist Language

Ms Sonia Bhattacharya

M.A, Mphil, NET (Sociology),
Lecturer of Sociology in Cambridge International Institute,
Visiting Faculty (Lecturer of Sociology)
IAS dept. St. Xavier's College, Kolkata

Abstract: Marginality can be located in the realms of language. The Post Structuralists envisage that language, being a 'social construct,' is a tool in the hands of the power holders deployed to reproduce subjectivity in terms of deference as against the subject or the individual identity. This paper wishes to locate the power differences created in language in every day parlance concerning the disabled, women and gay men in Chile.

Differences between women and men have always been a topic of interest to the human species. Academics and scholars are as much the product of the times they live in as are non-academics and their work on language can be as subject to prejudice and preconception as are comments of lay people. In some cases this tendency has led to certain contradictions. On the one hand, there are popular English terms that imply deference and stigmatise those who are attributed with such terms, while on the other, there are Popular English proverbs which discriminate women's verbosity and language from men following the Androcentric Rule. The Chilean society follows the gender normative linguistic patterns to ridicule the sexual minorities who have culturally been constructed through language and day to day communication. Hence the linguistic ploy of human society goes a long way to "marginalize" sections of society "othering" them utmost and muting them.

Keywords: marginalize, androcentrism, stigmatise, subjectivity, hetero -normative

This paper wishes to establish the stance that Marginality can be located by reading between the lines of language. It seeks to account for a theoretical essay exploring the realms of language by confining to the post structural social theory. Language is a cultural construct. Hence aligning with the post structural theoretical assumption of locating power politics in language should not invite gross disagreement with the said stance of this paper.

The imposition of a marginalized identity is often, in fact always (as this paper would argue), a result of language which is a constituent element of the social climate in which we exist. In other words, identity can be claimed to be a social construction. To better understand this it is helpful to recall Foucault's (1983) concept of subjecthood, a term he uses interchangeably with identity. He states that '[t]here are two meanings of the word subject... subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.' Foucault refers to this twofold signification as assujetissiment, a French word which has no English equivalent and has been translated variously as 'subjectivation' (Butler 1997), 'subjectification' (Minson 1985: 44), and 'subjectivisation' (Connolly 1998: 155). I choose "subjectification" as it is a word already in existence which means 'the action of making or being made subjective' which seems to suit very well Foucault's statement: 'I will call assujetissiment the procedure by which one obtains the constitution of a subject, or more precisely, of a subjectivity which is of course only one of the given possibilities of organisation of our self-consciousness.'

Of all the ways of becoming "other" and therefore marginalized via language in our society, gender, sexuality

and disability are few of the instances that this paper would explicate with exemplification. These are unique sites of subjectification which imply with great clarity and intensity the ways in which identity as a process of labeling, differentiation and social positioning join the personal to the political, the subjective to that which subjugates.

THE MAKING OF THE *"DISABLED OTHER"*- A Mechanism to MARGINALIZE

Hughes (2000) describes the construction of disability as a process of 'invalidation', an 'othering' process that has both produced and "spoilt" disability as an identity' (558). To be or become invalid is to be defined as flawed or deficit in terms of the unforgiving tribunal nature and necessity, normality and abnormality over which medical science presides.

Disability, thus, can bring into high relief the creation of identities fundamental to Foucault's (1980) basic premise that 'the individual is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of relations of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces.'

I will be taking this argument one step further by asserting that the interaction between knowledge and power which constitutes our identities, whether they be positive or negative, is mediated by language, that, indeed, because language is built on the process of "othering" it constitutes a naming process which defines identity through difference. Our words are very powerful tools of representation which are accorded even more potency when they are taken for granted as transparent symbols of "reality". I believe that the "loosening of the ties to our identities" (Simon 1995: 109) which is the objective of Foucault's genealogical approach can only be fully realised through the development of a clear understanding of the fundamental role that language plays in naming what is "normal" and what is "other".

The idea that the subject is created in the process of naming is central to the work of Althusser (1971) who coined the term 'interpellation' to describe how the practice of subjectification is facilitated by locating the subject in language. The recognition implicit in the concept of interpellation demonstrates the power of the name, the label. It connects our sense of self with society's definition. 'Thus, our occupation of a subject-position, such as that of a patriotic [or disabled] citizen, is not a matter simply of conscious personal choice but of our having been recruited into that position through recognition of it within a system of representation, and of making an investment in it' (Woodward 1997: 43).

The concept of interpellation is helpful, not only because it paves the way for an understanding of the creation of the subject through language, but because it points to the internalisation of oppressive language which is fundamental to the creation of the disabled identity. The language we use and the labels we identify with become so taken for granted that we eventually feel that we actually, inherently are what we have been named. Therefore, to create the possibility for challenging this deeply embedded subjugation, it is necessary, I believe, to historicise the process of identification through language and, in so doing, to unseat its hegemonic hold.

There are many social theorists who argue for the connection between language and identity and a growing number who are beginning to include this link in their analysis of the disabled identity. Indeed, the view that identity is created through language has a long history, beginning with Baldwin (1897), Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), founders of the sociological field of symbolic interaction, who based their theories on the premise that 'the self is primarily a social construction crafted through linguistic exchanges (i.e., symbolic interactions) with others' (Harter 1999: 677).

I propose that my sociological study of language and identity in relation to disability will be to combine Saussurean linguistics with Foucault's understanding of discourse to explore the ways in which language functions to stigmatise and the way of challenging it. Ferdinand de Saussure founded his linguistic theories on three main premises, each of which are relevant to the development of a better understanding of the creation of the disabled subject through language. He argued that language is socially constructed, that the symbols we use to create meaning are arbitrary, and, most importantly for our purposes, that we can only understand the meaning of these symbols through contrasting them with what they are not. When Saussure argues that 'language is not a function of the speaking subject' (quoted in Derrida 2000: 91), he is stating the basic principle of semiotics which is that language is predetermined in its possibilities by the structure, already in place, by which a particular culture governs its realm of linguistic signification.

He refers to this structure as la langue which Hall (1997) describes as 'the underlying rule-governed structure of language...the language system.' Alternately, there exists la parole which is the individual speech act which expresses itself through this system. Hedley (1999) refers to langue and parole as 'the two different modes in which language exists for us simultaneously: as a system of already encoded meanings and as ongoing open-ended meaning-making activity.'

This concept of the system of language and the speaking subject is analogous to Foucault's (1972) explication of the two forms of subjectification, i.e., subjection and subjectivity. Being 'subject to someone else by control and dependence' can be said to rely on the existence of la langue, a socially governed system of linguistic possibilities, while being 'tied to [one's] own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge' is similarly related to the individual speech act, la parole.

A semiotic perspective is also useful to the analysis of subjectification through language because it demonstrates that meaning is not transparent, that is, the language we use to describe things does not mirror reality. Saussure (1959) expresses it thus: 'a linguistic sign unites not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound-image' (166). According to this argument, words are arbitrary; they have no inherent connection to the thing they describe. It is the meaning behind the words, the concepts they bring to mind when they are spoken, and that gives them their power.

This is why it is so difficult to resist oppressive identifications through using "politically correct" language, for, if the concepts behind the words remain unchanged, then the new words end up being just as negative in their connotations. Thus, if new, "politically correct" language begins to take on the meaning of the word it replaces, then the

game remains unchanged. For language to liberate, new meanings must emerge, be represented and the word must be capable of making new "moves."

Saussure uses the terms "sign", "signifier" and "signified" to denote the relationship between the "referent" (the thing itself), the word used to describe it and the concept this word is intended to relay. A sign is the combination of a word (the signifier) with a concept (the signified). I believe that it is this kind of relationship between the signifier, "disability" (and all the other words and phrases which are used to describe impairment), and the very negative concept which is signified, which creates a less than salubrious identity for disabled people. When someone is named "disabled", they are not being accorded with a tag which simply describes a physical or material condition, they are being ascribed a set of oppressive associations which stem from the hypostatization of an abstract concept.

Finally, and most importantly, Saussure (1959) based his linguistic theories on the premise that 'in language there are only differences'. This fits together closely with the aforementioned stipulation that the symbols we use as signifiers are arbitrary, that they have no inherent relationship with the thing being described. Because of this, a word can only begin to have meaning when it is contrasted with what it is not.

From this comes the practice of defining what is "normal" against that which is "other" through the construction of binary oppositions. I believe that it is this diametric construction of identities, the good against the bad, the strong against the weak, the desirable against the undesirable, which is fundamental to the oppression of people who fall outside the prescriptions of the norm. For it is because the politically desirable identity can only be defined in relation to its antithesis, and that this formulation negates any differences that may conceivably exist between these two extremes, that subjectification is such a win or lose affair. Thus, when Saussure (1983) argues that '[t]he mechanism of a language turns entirely on identities and differences' he is accurately observing a system of identification which has no room for the recognition of all the greys which exist between "white" and "black".

It is through the dichotomous construction of language that those who are defined as Other become stigmatised. I argue that the primary mechanism though which labeling is achieved is through the creation of stereotypical identities. In this way key words, such as "cripple", "disabled" or "handicapped", are attached to a set of images which, regardless of whether they describe the person in question, are assumed to do so because they are associated with disabled people in general.

Stigma as a form of negative stereotyping has a way of neutralising positive qualities and undermining the identity of stigmatised individuals. This kind of social categorisation has also been described by one sociologist as a "discordance with personal attributes". Thus, many stigmatised people are not expected to be intelligent, attractive, or upper class (Coleman 1997).

Stereotypes are very powerful political tools in their concise and incisive ability to subjectify and, I would argue, both emanate from and contribute to the process of normalisation through the construction of binary oppositions. For the norm is also represented by a "stereotypical" image of an active, independent, achievement oriented worker who is usually male, wealthy and heterosexual. The threat wielded by the negative stereotype can be a strong deterrent against bucking the system and those who, like disabled people, cannot avoid becoming the Other become exemplary, through their stereotypical representation, of what not to be.

Stereotyping, in other words, is part of the maintenance of the social and symbolic order. It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant', the 'normal' and the 'pathological,' the 'acceptable' and the 'unacceptable', what 'belongs' and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them. It facilitates the 'binding' or bonding together of all of Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them - 'the Others' - us who are in some way different - 'beyond the pale' (Hall 1997: 258).

This kind of understanding of language puts a new light on the children's rhyme: "Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me." A name alone cannot hurt, but when backed up by such deeply oppressive images, it can wound beyond repair. This wound is what I wish to sum up as a feeling of subjective and objective marginality- thanks to the oppressive language.

GENDERED LANGUAGE- BINARY OPPOSITION AND 'DIFFERENCE' AS A POLITICAL INSTRUMENT MARGINALISING WOMEN

It is only relatively recent that sociolinguists have turned their attention to gender. Why is it so? The answer is that, until relatively recently, men were automatically seen as the heart of society, with women being peripheral or even invisible. I am impatient to use the phrase; made inconspicuous by invisibility, here. This is the phenomenon of androcentrism. So to begin with, I don't think I will be wrong to assert that even before the strategy of "difference" to marginalize women; the linguistic discourse had completely erased the existence of the "female entity"-marginalize by complete concealment.

The publication of Robin Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place* in 1975 was a symbolic moment. While Lakoff's book has been criticized for its sweeping claims and lack of empirical evidence, its significance cannot be underestimated, as it galvanized linguists all over the world into research into the uncharted territory of women's talk. Since then, linguists have approached language and gender from a variety of perspectives. This can be labeled as the deficit approach, the dominance approach, the difference approach and the dynamic or social constructionist approach.

The Deficit approach was characteristic of the earliest work in the field. Most well known is Lakoff's *Language and Women's Place,* which claims to establish something called "women's language" characterized by 'empty' adjectives like *charming, divine, nice and* 'talking in italics.' It is described as weak and unassertive, in other words, as deficient vis-à-vis male language. This approach was challenged because of the implication that there was something intrinsically wrong with

women's language, and that women should learn to speak like men if they wanted to be taken seriously.

The Dominance Approach sees women as an oppressed group and interprets linguistic differences in women's and men's speech in terms of men's dominance and women's subordination. Researchers using this model are concerned to show how male dominance is enacted through linguistic practices. 'Doing power' is often a way of 'doing gender' too (see West and Zimmerman 1983). Moreover all participants in discourse, women as well as men, collude in sustaining and perpetuating male dominance and female oppression.

The Difference Approach emphasizes the idea that men and women belong to 'different' subcultures. The 'discovery' of distinct male and female subcultures in the 1980s seems to have been a direct result of women's growing resistance to being treated as a subordinate group. The invisibility of women in the past arose from the conflation of 'culture' with 'male culture.' But women's culture was different from the overarching male culture and here is the politics played when this difference was assigned with the dimension of power-that women's difference in terms of their voice, psychology, experience of love, work and family from men places them in a subordinate position. The reader locates another controversy in this approach and that is when applied to *mixed talk*, as was done in *You Just Don't Understand (1991)*, Deborah Tannen's best selling book about male-female 'miscommunication.' Critics of this book argue that the analysis of mixed talk cannot ignore the issue of power.

The most recent approach is sometimes called the Dynamic Approach because there is an emphasis on the dynamic aspects of interaction. Researchers who adopt this approach take a social constructionist perspective. Gender identity is seen as a social construct rather than as a 'given' social category. As West and Zimmerman (1987) eloquently put it, speakers should be seen as 'doing gender' rather than statically 'being' gender. This argument led Crawford to claim that gender should be conceptualized as verb not a noun. What has, therefore, changed is linguists' sense that gender is not a static, add-on characteristics of speakers, but is something that is *accomplished* in talk every time we speak.

Differences between women and men have always been a topic of interest to the human species and supposed linguistic differences are often enshrined in proverbs; A woman's tongue wags like a lamb's tail. (England). The comments of contemporary observer, recorded in diaries, letters, poems, novels and so on, also provide us with evidence of folk linguistic beliefs about gender differences in language. Academics and scholars are as much the product of the times they live in as are non-academics and their work on language can be as subject to prejudice and preconception as are comments of lay people. In some cases this tendency has led to certain contradictions which can be accounted for by assuming a general rule: The Androcentric Rule**;** 'Men will be seen to behave linguistically in a way that fits a writer's view of what is desirable or admirable; women, on the other hand, will be blamed for any linguistic state or development which is regarded by the writer as negative or reprehensible.'

Turning to the early twentieth century, we find Otto Jespersen, a Danish professor of English language, writing on the question of changing vocabulary. He asserts that it is men rather than women who introduce 'new and fresh expressions' and thus men who are the 'chief renovators of language.' This apparent inconsistency can be accounted for by the Androcentric Rule. According to the rule, women were held to be the culprits for introducing ephemeral words. Moreover, Johnson's Dictionary stigmatizes the words *'flirtation'* and *'frightful'* as 'female cant.' Jespersen says that women differ from men in their extensive use of certain adjectives, such as *pretty* and *nice.* Linguistic interest in gender differences, specifically singles out "empty" adjectives like *divine, charming, cute…*as typical of what has been called 'women's language.' In fact *so* is also claimed as having 'something of the eternally feminine about it.' This adverb is a great favourite with ladies in conjunction with an adjective. To exemplify the 'ladies usage': 'It is so lovely!, He is so charming!, 'thank you so much!,"' I am so glad you've come!' Jesperson's explanation for this gender- preferential usage is that 'women much more often than men break off without finishing their sentences, because they start talking without thinking out what they are going to say.' He provides no evidence for this claim.

Additionally, the earliest grammarians were concerned about the 'correct ordering' of elements in phrases such as '*men and women.'* This idea of a "natural order" and of the superiority of the male is unabashedly prescribed for linguistic usage; 'The Masculine gender is more worthy than the Feminine' (Poole1646;21). This idea seems to have been a necessary precursor of the sex-indefinite *he* rule, which proscribes the use of *they* or *he or she* where the sex of the antecedent is unknown. Compare the following three sentences:

- ✓ Someone knocked at the door but they had gone when I got downstairs.
- ✓ Someone knocked at the door but he or she had gone when I got downstairs.
- ✓ Someone knocked at the door but he had gone when I got downstairs.

According to prescriptive grammarians, only the last of the above three utterances is 'correct'- the first is 'incorrect' and the second is 'clumsy.' Thus, the important point is that the androcentric-male-as-norm- attitudes so conspicuous in early pronouncements on language were actually used as the basis for certain prescriptive rules of grammar. Feminists oppose this use of a sex-indefinite *he* as misguided and doomed to failure. What the people need to be aware of is that the present rule was itself imposed on language users by male grammarians of the eighteenth century and after. It is naïve to assume that codification was carried out in a disinterested fashion: those who laid down the rules inevitably defined as 'correct' that usage which they preferred, for whatever reason.

Now I would like to turn to Verbosity to ground my argument further.

Many women, many words; many geese, many turds (English Proverb).

There is an age old belief that women talk too much. English Literature is filled with characters that substantiate the stereotype of the talkative women. Rosalind in *AS YOU LIKE IT,* SAYS, 'Do you not know I am a woman? When I think, I must speak.' Jespersen accepts the cultural stereotype of the voluble chattering woman. This tells us that the scholars of

language in the early part of the twentieth century were subject to the prejudices of their times.

The other side of the coin to women's verbosity is the image of the silent woman which is often held up as an ideal- 'Silence is the best ornament of a woman' (English Proverb). Silence is made synonymous with obedience. During the Renaissance, eloquence was highly acclaimed but while eloquence is a virtue in a man, silence is the corresponding virtue in a woman. As one scholar comments; 'the implication is that it is inappropriate for a woman to be eloquent or liberal, or for a man to be economical or silent."

The model of the silent woman is still presented to girls in the second half of the twentieth century: research in English schools suggests that quiet behaviour is very much encouraged by teachers particularly in girls. Such conditioning begins very early in a child's life.

The idea that silence is "the desired state for women" is supported by the theory of 'muted groups' proposed by the anthropologists Shirley and Edwin Ardener. Briefly they argue that in any society there are dominant modes of expression, belonging to dominant groups within that society. If members of a 'muted group' want to be heard, they are required to express themselves in the dominant mode. While muted groups are not necessarily silent, their mutedness means they have difficulty making themselves heard by the dominant group. However in many cultures muted groups are indeed silenced by rules laid down by the dominant group.

Discourse and language cannot be easily separated for each plays a part in the operation of the other. However, for our present purposes, it is important to recognise that, while labels stigmatise, discourses silence. Discourse silences the 'inferior' people in many ways. It leaves them with no language with which to express themselves, it invalidates their narratives and, therefore, their subjective realities, and it renders them invisible. During an interview, when Foucault (1988b) was asked whether he had any intention of trying to rehabilitate the Other through raising the profile of subjugated language, he replied: 'How can the truth of the sick subject ever be told?' (29). Discourse, in creating the space for subject formation by marking the boundaries of exclusion, leaves us with a "silent majority" who has no way of telling their stories and articulating their subjecthood or lack of it. In the case of women, they are silenced and made invisible in the discourse of English language.

People can question the ideologies of their culture, but it is often difficult. It can be a challenging intellectual task, but it can also result in social stigma. People who question the dominant ideology often appear not to make sense; what they say won't sound logical to anyone who holds that ideology. In extreme cases, people who ask such questions may even appear mad. So while it is possible to question the dominant culture there is often a price to be paid for doing so (Jones and Wareing 1999: 34).

In discussing the effects of internalised oppression, Young (1990) argues that when people who are classed as Other attempt to voice any objections to their identification they are 'met with denial and powerful gestures of silencing, which can make oppressed people feel slightly crazy' (134). This assignment of the category of madness to anyone who attempts to speak outside of the dominant discourse is

represented within Foucault's (1988c) definition of madness as 'forbidden speech' (179). For him, madness is not a valid category pertaining to "mental health." It is a punishment and a deterrent, a warning to those who might attempt to speak outside of acceptable discourse. So we speak the language in such a way that we are circumscribed within the dominant structure like, "whoever has written the book I like it very much because '*he*' (not *she or he* as it would sound clumsy or *they* as it is beyond the dominant trend) had expressed *his* thoughts very well." The speaker here does not even try to acknowledge that the author of the book can be a "she" since the linguistic discourse does not grant this permission and moreover it goes unnoticed. Hence, women-their linguistic habits, expression and behaviour of verbosity are 'different' from men's linguistic culture-the dominant culture- the former is inferior and powerless vis-s-vis the latter. This affirms the "politics of difference" as a mechanism of language to marginalize women.

SEXUAL MINORITIES IN CHILE MARGINALISED BY THE NORMATIVE HETEROSEXIST LINGUISTIC PRACTICES-THANKS TO THE SEXIST LANGUAGE CONSTRUCTION

The social construction of gender and sexual identity emerges from a well-established and thriving system of beliefs surrounding acceptable gender and sexual norms. Discursive practices such as the normative use of heterosexist comments and address terms play a significant role in creating pressure for members of a society to adhere to these rigid social expectations.

I address the phenomenon of how discursive practices promote the marginalization of homosexual or gender non-normative males. Specifically, I focus on discourse samples that are 'heterosexist', meaning that they align with "the institutionalized assumption that everyone is heterosexual or should be and that heterosexuality is inherently superior and preferable to homosexuality or bisexuality" (Marrones 2001:26). I would like to show that the conventionalized use of such expressions "naturalizes" gender-normative heterosexuality, the consequence of which is that gender and sexual minorities are 'marked' as abnormal or inferior and therefore are marginalized in the Chilean society. (This section of the paper, has been assembled from an article of Sara Balder who carried out a fantastic and in-depth work in the field of Chilean society to locate the normative discursive practices there.)

The language samples she examines target males that are gender and/or sexually non-normative (i.e. males that are effeminate and/or homosexual), illustrating that the perception of gays as abnormal or inferior stems from the association of non-normative males with women. As in many patriarchal Latin American countries, women are perceived in Chile to be inferior members of society. By analyzing language samples used in everyday discourse, she shows that this association is made primarily in two ways: first, by alluding to effeminate gender expression of gay males, and second, by alluding to their passive sexual role. By using conventionalized verbal insults and address terms to ascribe feminine gender and sexual traits to men, language is used in society to convey the

hegemonic norms of dominant culture. The prevalence of the heterosexist commentary she examined reproduces the hetero-normative ideology that governs linguistic and social practices in Chile. She approached the concept of identity as a social phenomenon by illustrating that the use of heterosexist commentary facilitates the social positioning of both self and 'other' (see Bucholtz & Hall forthcoming), whereby speakers index themselves as heteronormative by labeling someone else as non-normative and as such, subordinate.

HETEROSEXIST COMMENTARY: IMPLIED INFERIORITY OF HOMOSEXUAL MALES

The heterosexist language used in Chile presupposes a direct relationship between gender identity and sexual orientation. In other words, all gender-normative individuals (i.e. feminine women and masculine men) are inherently surmised to be heterosexual. Consequently, anyone who does not adhere to the gender norms prescribed for their particular sex is labeled as homosexual. By derogating individuals that demonstrate non-normative gender traits or sexual orientation, hetero-normative discursive practices in Chile exemplify the importance Chileans place on asserting heterosexuality as part of their normative gender. This phenomenon can be observed in a number of typical Chilean verbal comments. During her research period in Chile, she collected a total of twelve conventionalized heterosexist verbal insults, which she categorized into three distinct but related groups:

Allusion to gender non-normativity:
'His umbrella gets inverted'
'His foot gets left behind'
'His rice is getting burnt'
'His pilot light goes out'
Reference to effeminate physical gestures:
'He drops his hotdog'
'He has imaginary suitcases'
Allusion to homosexual acts or homoerotic desire:
'He does Gemini sixty-nine'
'He bites the pillow'
'His hotdog is dripping'
'He likes cactus fruit'
'He likes to take the dirt road'
'He likes it by 'Detroit''

These comments demonstrate the overlapping conceptualization of gender and sexual orientation in Chile, in that male effeminacy is perceived as inseparable from male homosexuality. The first two categories of phrases rely on allusion to effeminate gender expression to associate gay males with women; the third category of phrases relies on reference to attraction to other men or taking the passive sexual role in order to make this association. I will look at five comments that allude to non-normative gender characteristics of the referent:' his umbrella gets inverted',' his foot gets left behind',' his rice is getting burnt', 'he drops his hotdog', and 'he's walking with imaginary suitcases'. These comments ascribe effeminate gender characteristics to a male in order to convey the conversational message that he is homosexual. Although these comments allude to the referent's gender non-conformity, albeit in some roundabout way, they are understood in practice to mean simply, "he is gay". That is to

say, the actual conversational meanings these comments convey in practice is that of sexual, and not gender, non-normativity. This indicates that conventionalized heterosexist discourse in Chile often relies on reference to gender non-normativity in order to imply non-normative sexual orientation. The three phrases in the third category that position the referent in the passive sexual role: 'He bites the pillow', 'He likes to take the dirt road', and 'He likes it by 'Detroit' position the referent in the passive sexual role of the 'recipient', which is typically conceived as the female role. By verbally placing a man in the sexual role that dominant society has reserved for women, these comments derogate male homosexuality, conveying the message that gay males are inferior. All of these comments tend to be used frequently in everyday discourse, principally by gender-normative males.

I argue that, in conventionalized heterosexist comments, the Chileans conceptualize the 'abnormality' of alternative gender and sexual orientation as the outcome of something that went wrong. In Chilean society, gender and sexual minorities are commonly described as victims of social or biological misfortunes that render them socially inadequate. Conceptualized as victims by the dominant hetero-normative culture, individuals with alternative gender and sexual orientation are in turn placed in a subordinate position within the social hierarchy. The resultant power differential between normative and non-normative individuals comprises the very essence of gender relations in society. Cultural anthropologist, Roger Lancaster, maintains that conceptualization of gender and sexual minorities as essentially being rendered 'woman-like', which is reinforced by the use of heterosexist commentary in everyday discourse, denies non-normative males of power, social status, upward mobility, as well as the freedom to openly identify as gay.

Moreover, the comment, 'his rice is getting burnt', also aligns with the 'homosexuality is an unfortunate situation' metaphor, in that it is a decidedly negative circumstance if the rice you are cooking gets scorched. Since cooking rice is typically considered a feminine activity, the phrase refers to a situation that is socially disadvantageous in the general sense, and also with respect to gender norms. The referent is essentially trying to engage in a feminine activity, which defies normative social gender expectations. Furthermore, this comment plays on the feminine gender trait of overemotional reaction when small things go wrong. A stereotypical woman might become emotional or upset if her rice gets burnt, e.g. she might shriek 'Oh! My rice is burning!' instead of reacting with indifference as a typical man might (in the off-chance, that is, that he would even be in the kitchen in the first place). Thus, when the comment is applied to a male referent, the implication is made that he, too, would react in a similar, overtly emotional way to the type of miniscule misfortunes that women are popularly conceptualized as not being able to deal with. Metonymically, the referent's involvement in this disadvantageous situation signifies that the referent himself is somehow a disadvantaged member of society; and as ineptness or inadequacy are mapped to the traits of homosexuality and effeminacy, the resultant outcome is that the referent is indicated to be gay.

The first observation that can be made about 'He drops his hotdog,' which is in the category 'reference to effeminate

physical gestures', is that it aligns with the fact that 'homosexuality is an unfortunate situation' metaphorically. Let me explain this gesture: imagine a man is holding a hotdog in what I will call the 'resting position' between taking bites, and then picture his hand and wrist bending away from him as the hotdog falls to the ground. This motion represents a stereotypically effeminate gesture, and its inclusion in this phrase contributes an element of humor above that provoked by the 'homosexuality is an unfortunate situation' metaphor. Though humor is definitely a key element of Chilean heterosexist discourse, in any case, the imagined gesture allows the phrase to function metonymically,[i.e the rhetorical strategy of describing something indirectly by referring to things around it, such as describing someone's clothing to characterize the individual] in that the referent is identified as homosexual by something associated with homosexuality: display of effeminate gesture.

Although the other phrase in this category, 'he has imaginary suitcases, does not rely on the 'homosexuality is an unfortunate situation' metaphor, I feel that it takes the previously-mentioned humor component to an even greater height. According to Chilean ideals about gender expression, this fashion of holding one's hands and arms while walking is effeminate. And since use of effeminate gestures is associated with homosexuality, this comment, like the previous one, metonymically refers to a man as gay.

The comments in the last category, 'allusion to homosexual acts or homoerotic desire', are principally metonymic in that they identify the referent as homosexual by calling to mind something that is associated with homosexuality – in this case, participation in a homosexual act or homoerotic desire. Three of the phrases in this category specifically indicate that the referent is the passive participant in a homosexual act of anal sex. All of these comments are non-literal figures of speech, in that their literal meaning clashes with their intended meaning: what is meant differs from what is said. In addition to this type of conventionalized verbal commentary, the equation of homosexual men with women is also commonly expressed in Chile through the frequent use of address terms such as *maricón, maraca, culiado,* and *hueco.* These terms are loaded with metonymic reference to gender and/or sexual non-normativity, and play a vital role in the continuity of heterosexism's prevalence in Chilean society.

Thus, normative heterosexist discursive practices demote alternative sexual identities. As such, they provide verbal tools with which speakers can express their adherence to the normative gender and sexual expectations of dominant society. By derogating individuals who do not fall within the inventory of socially acceptable identities in Chilean society, this type of language assigns legitimacy only to gender-normative heterosexuals, thereby denying gender and sexual minorities of social power. In this sense, active validation of socially normative sexual and gender values is synonymous with power in Chilean society. A discourse of heterosexuality involves not only difference from women and gay men, but also the dominance of the former over these latter groups.

Disguised as a creative variety of joking remarks, Chilean heterosexist commentary reinforces the social structure in which gender- and sexually-normative men maintain their dominant role, causing gender and sexual minorities to be marginalized.

This assertion aligns with the opinions of sociolinguists Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, who stated that, "Language is a primary vehicle by which cultural ideologies circulate, it is a central site of social practice, and it is a crucial means for producing socio cultural identities" (Bucholtz & Hall 2004:512). To this respect, I would like to add two qualifications to the statement that has been mentioned at the beginning of this paper,

✓ Language is a sufficient, if not necessary, condition for fostering marginality. [The first two sections]
✓ Contextual conversational language, particularly, have intense marginalizing implications. [The last section]

No wonder GULZAR SAHAB pens down the voice of these "marginalized groups" when he reflects:

"Lafzon mein ghutan si hoti hai."
One feels suffocated in language.

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