

2018

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Lynne Tirrell

University of Connecticut, Lynne.Tirrell@uconn.edu

Recommended Citation

Tirrell, Lynne. 2018. "Authority and Gender: Flipping the F-Switch." *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly* 4 (3). Article 1.

Authority and Gender: Flipping the F-Switch¹

Lynne Tirrell

Abstract

The very rules of our language games contain mechanisms of disregard. Philosophy of language tends to treat speakers as peers with equal discursive authority, but this is rare in real, lived speech situations. This paper explores the mechanisms of discursive inclusion and exclusion governing our speech practices, with a special focus on the role of gender attribution in undermining women's authority as speakers. Taking seriously the metaphor of language games, we must ask who gets in the game and whose moves can score. To do this, I develop an eclectic analysis of language games using basic inferential role theory and the concept of a semantic index, and develop the distinction between positional authority and expertise authority, which often conflict for members of oppressed groups. Introducing the concepts of master switches and sub-switches that attach to the index and change scorekeeping practices, I argue that women's gender status conflicts with our status as authoritative speakers because sex marking in semantics functions as a master switch—"the F-switch"—on the semantic index, which, once thrown, changes the very game. An advantage of using inferentialism for understanding disregard of women's discursive authority is that it locates the problem in the sanctioned moves, in the deontic structure of norms and practices of scorekeeping, and not primarily in the individual intentions of particular people.

Keywords: authority, gender, inferentialism, language games, scorekeeping, discursive injustice

¹I am grateful to the Program Committee of the Eastern Division of the American Philosophical Association for the opportunity to present an earlier version of this paper at an invited session on "Feminism and Philosophy of Language," and to members of that session for insightful feedback. Thanks also to participants of WOGAP at MIT for their wonderful discussion of an earlier draft, and to Jeremy Wanderer and Mary Kate McGowan for helpful comments. I am especially grateful to the FPQ referees for their thoughtful and thorough suggestions.

“What speaks is not the utterance, the language, but the whole social person
(this is what those who look for the ‘illocutionary force’ of language in
language forget).”

—Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1977, 645)

“She was warned. She was given an explanation.
Nevertheless, she persisted.”

—Senator Mitch McConnell

1. The Problem

If, as Bourdieu urges, what speaks is “the whole social person,” then an account of mechanisms of discursive inclusion and exclusion becomes necessary. Socially salient speaker-identity factors often operate as catalysts of inclusion and exclusion. Since social contexts tend to be gendered, and that most contexts of power de facto authorize male participants, I take gender-based exclusion as my main focus. Even amongst peers in professional and purportedly sex-neutral contexts, a speech act issued from a female body does not automatically carry the same authority as what seems to be the same speech act issued from a male body.² Furthermore, even within her area of expertise, a woman’s basic claims are often challenged, demanding justifications usually not required of similarly positioned men. This essay is a companion to the already significant discussion in social epistemology of the ways in which women’s testimony is disregarded (especially Code 1991 and Fricker 2007). Here, I offer suggestions about the discursive mechanisms of such disregard. The status of women as authoritative speakers is related to, but distinct from, women’s status as knowers. Mechanisms of disregard are found in the very rules of our language games.

It can be difficult to identify sameness of game. Sometimes, women who think they are playing the same game as men discover that they are not, or that within what seems to be the same game, rules and strategies for employment of the rules are distinctly gendered. From its founding in 1787 until 1922, the US Senate explicitly excluded women’s participation.³ In those days, women did not even enter the practices or games of the Senate. Once women were legally electable, the

² See Greenwald and Krieger (2006), Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. (2012), Ridgeway and Correll (2004), and Steinpreis, Anders, and Ritzke (1999).

³ US Senate, “Women in the Senate” web page, n.d.
https://www.senate.gov/artandhistory/history/common/briefing/women_senators.htm.

mechanisms required for disabling their speech acts became more complex. Sometimes women are subjected to strategic deployment of rules that seem to apply to everyone, but in fact are seldom if ever used against men. For example, during the 2017 confirmation hearing for Senator Jeff Sessions to become US Attorney General, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell simultaneously shut down two women by invoking the arcane Rule 19 to prevent Senator Elizabeth Warren from reading Coretta Scott King's 1986 letter against appointing Sessions as a federal judge. King's letter cost Sessions that earlier appointment; she criticized Sessions's use of his position as a US Attorney to intimidate elderly black voters by prosecuting them (unsuccessfully) for voting fraud, his indifference to civil rights violations, and more. For her attempt to read this letter, McConnell charged Warren with a rule violation, saying, "She was warned. She was given an explanation. Nevertheless, she persisted." And yet, later, several male senators—Udall, Sanders, Merkley, and Brown—were allowed to read the letter without facing Rule 19 (Firozi 2017a; Kane and O'Keefe 2017, Lowery 2017; and Wang 2017).⁴ Mull this over: Men read it, while a woman remained red-carded, cast out of the game, literally unable to participate in the rest of the hearing. Once the first man read the letter, why was Senator Warren not reinstated? The strategic invocation of Rule 19 was clearly done to exclude her from participation. Prior to addressing fine-grained epistemic questions of truth, knowledge, belief, judgment, and trust, we should examine the ways that differently embodied speakers gain or lose entrance to speech situations because of their embodiment.

Senator Warren was red-carded from the Senate-hearing game, but she played social media very effectively. Immediately following her ouster, Senator Warren read the entire letter live on Facebook, from outside the Senate Chamber, while over four million people watched. The page was shared 221,662 times. Senator Warren still had a strong political voice, maintained by engaging in other practices, but the practices and moves available to a senator within the proceedings were now closed to her. She remained cast out of the very game she was elected to play. This case illustrates someone who mistakenly thought she was a full player—someone who could make all the moves of the game. The fact that men were allowed to make the very same move—reading the very letter into the record—is evidence of McConnell's imposition of gendered practices.

Language is a complex set of games and practices, sometimes distinct, often overlapping, of varying ease or intensity. Speech acts constitute moves in those games. Those moves enact what Lewis (1979) called *permissibility facts*, a concept developed by Brandom (1998) as *inference licenses*. My concern is how a listener's

⁴ Senator Warren used the "red card" metaphor while speaking with Rachel Maddow (Firozi 2017b).

attributing femaleness to the speaker can reshape or even block the issuing of licenses, generating varieties of illocutionary disablement (Langton 1993). People often think men and women are in the same game and women simply fail to score. Noticing the power of gender attributions illuminates differences between games, even games that seem quite similar. Gender attribution typically functions as a linguistic disqualifier for a woman, across all the many ways she may inhabit that category, and across so many of the discursive practices in which she seeks to engage. This is to say that gender attribution delimits and sometimes nullifies possible illocutions that a woman's speech act might achieve.⁵

Playing a language game requires the power to make moves. Often, entering a game as female impacts one's available moves. Gender attribution often activates a mechanism that shapes the scope and force of a speaker's capacity to make discursive moves, which is a component of authority. The mechanism functions, in some sense, prior to evaluations of the content of what the speaker says, and so is, in some sense, logically prior to epistemic considerations of merit and weight. This is tricky, because authority itself has epistemic implications. Authority involves the capacity to make moves and to have those moves count in ways that generate uptake, and so, authority ultimately credits the speaker with knowledge and/or power. Asking how one gets into position to exercise authority reveals mechanisms governing the complexity of the various roles and powers available in the many language games we play. Understanding these active mechanisms promises to help us develop tools for a richer analysis of discursive injustices. Women's status *as* women undermines our discursive authority because sex marking in semantics functions as a master switch on what we say—a switch that, once thrown, changes the very game on us, whether we know it or not. Let's call this mechanism *the F-switch*.⁶

⁵Attribution matters for the account of who gets excluded *qua* woman. "Woman," here, encompasses all the ways such attributions are made, including anyone to whom the status is attributed, as well as those who identify as women but to whom others do not make the gender attribution. See Watson (2016).

⁶ Maleness still seems to be the discursive norm in most professional and official contexts, and female speakers are marked as such. In some contexts, femaleness might dominate, giving women presumptive authority. Then, attributions of maleness might flip an M-switch. For example: a group of women adhering to traditional gender roles who become stay-at-home Moms, who de-authorize the parenting insights of a male stay-at-home parent. Research on gender variation in voice-overs on political ads shows that male voices remain the norm, but women's voices are used strategically depending on several factors (see Strach et al. 2015).

To understand the mechanics of identity-based denial of authority, imagine an ordinary electrical box. It has rows of switches, and usually, at the bottom of each row, one or more master switches to throw the whole row. Now imagine that the index attached to an utterance is like that panel, with a discursive master switch for each set. Certain identity factors might trip just one switch, but some, like gender and race, usually function as master switches, simultaneously tripping a set of switches. My analysis relies on three elements to develop this idea: the core moves of language games, the governing power of a semantic index, and basic inferential role theory. Each of these will be explained in turn.

Although our primary analogy focuses on gender, we can see how the concept of a master switch brings into simultaneous interactive play other identity factors tied to oppression. Gender attributions are ever-present in the intersectional identities we each inhabit, and we should eschew abstractions from lived complexities to pure gender alone (Dotson 2016; Smith 1979). And yet, focusing on gender highlights the power of ascribing deontic status based on a major identity factor, while seeing gender as a master switch helps show how salient identity factors carry others in their wake. These factors map onto a speech act's governing semantic index. Although focused on gender attribution, the analysis offered here can be applied to many socially salient categories, such as race, class, sexual orientation, age, and more. For the oppressed, identity factors tend to limit uptake; the distinction between positional authority and expertise authority shapes my analysis of these limits. Ultimately, on this approach, cases in which one factor seems predominant are actually cases in which flipping one switch is in fact flipping many. Despite seeming to take gender in isolation, this view offers a mechanism whereby we can explain the immediate power of complex intersectionality.

1.1. Roadmap

Having outlined the problem, I use an analogy in section 2 to develop a more rigorous account of games. Girls' basketball before 1975 illustrates a particularly glaring version of what I will explain as "flipping the F-switch." The pre-'75 basketball analogy highlights the importance of noticing who gets into the game, whose entrance is precluded or challenged, and why. In this section, I explain Sellars's language-game triad of entrance moves, internal language-language moves, and language-exit moves and then focus on entrance moves. I introduce the distinction between *neutral* and *nonneutral* entrance moves. Here I also develop the key concept of *game-assigned powers*, a phenomenon easily tracked in sports but often elusive in language encounters. Whether one enters the game neutrally or nonneutrally and which game-assigned powers one has will carve out a range of permissible and impermissible moves. This is a crucial way that identity factors shape score, and so the next subsection explores the relation between speaker

identity and the semantic index governing the speech act. Section 2 closes with a more general discussion of language games. My framework of neutral and nonneutral entrance moves, with distinctive game-assigned powers, explains some structural aspects of the norms of games. This paper focuses on the ways that entrances shape the other kinds of moves open to a player, and so adds depth and breadth to the Sellarsian framework.

Section 3 turns our focus to authority—who has it, what kinds there are, and how it is tied to domain. Still using the concept of game-assigned powers, I introduce and explain the distinction between positional and expertise authority, which, while neither exclusive nor exhaustive, is often a good way to track the sources of a speaker's capacity to make moves and have them gain uptake. Finally, section 4 wraps up our discussion of the F-switch. After examining both legitimate and illegitimate challenges to speaker authority, I argue that the F-switch should not be construed as a sub-switch on the speaker-item on the index, making only minor changes in play, but rather as a master switch that ranges across the entire index, changing the very game. Appeal to a master-switch model better explains the widespread systematic undermining of women's participation as equals in discursive practices.

2. Basketball and Other Games

Consider basketball before 1975. If boys and men were playing, it was the same 5-on-5 game men play today. If girls or women took the court, the game changed to a 6-on-6 three-zone game. Today's NBA-style rapid dribble and dunk was unthinkable. Girls had to stay in tight little zones, could dribble only 3 times, and then pass or shoot. The basic moves—dribbling, passing, shooting—were the same, but the rules about who could undertake which action were radically altered depending on whether the F-switch was thrown. What counted as a move, as legal, as a foul, and so forth, all changed, and these changes made a difference to both scorekeeping and strategy.⁷ All these variations are set into motion when 'girl' is adduced. In hindsight, these gendered variations seem unjustified and stultifying, underscoring the gamey-ness of the game. It is easy to see that basketball was radically changed by flipping the F-switch, but in linguistic contexts, identifying the game-change often proves more elusive.

The basketball analogy is apt for understanding how gender shapes the discursive and nondiscursive games we play. Gender organizes hierarchies of power, functioning within and across lived normative practices, including discursive

⁷ By the late 1960s, some leagues introduced a new position: the rover, who could play in any zone, and move across zones. The dribble-pass-shoot limitation still applied (Carpenter and Acosta 2005).

practices. In everyday practices, gender often disallows many illocutionary acts women attempt, operating as a master switch. The master-switch view holds that once the F-switch is thrown, scorekeeping itself changes: some moves, for example, that are usually taken to be legal and open to all, perhaps even constitutive of the game, now become fouls when made by women. Seeing gender attribution as a master switch on the semantic index highlights that male and female speakers are often, in fact, engaged in variant language games, with different rules and disparate outcomes.

Considering actions within language games, Sellars suggests three basic kinds of moves (Sellars 1954). Some speech acts are *entrance transitions*, getting us into the game. Once in a language game, we make *internal moves*, taking us from one position in the game to another position, usually changing the score as we go. Finally, *exit transitions* take the speaker (and sometimes others) beyond the game. Each of these types of speech act has its own requirements and its own types of challenges. Sellars took entrance transitions to move from perceptions to speech, concerning the relation between seeing and saying. But whose seeing is allowed as grounds for saying? How does one enter a normative game at all—what's the *ante*? Can anyone play? Sellars's account assumes a neutral baseline amongst speakers and moves, but this is always open to question.⁸

The pre-'75 basketball analogy highlights the importance of noticing who gets into the game, whose entrance is precluded or challenged, and why. Challenging a speaker's entrance might be easier—and do more damage—than challenging a speaker's move within a game in which she actually is participating as a peer. But there's the rub: identifying who counts as a peer within the game. In language games, only *players* make the illocutionary moves they think they are making. Keeping track of allowed and disallowed entrances, internal moves, and exits, helps us track the powers of each position, trends of inhabitation, and more. This went awry with Senator McConnell's silencing of Senator Warren, a duly elected member of the Senate, whose strong voice is often publicly influential. Senator Warren's attempted move—to read a historical document on the Senate floor for inclusion in the current hearing—is common enough. But this particular influential woman reading that particular powerful letter was just not a move the majority leader wanted to allow, so he twisted its interpretation to make it a foul and eject Warren from the game. Is she a *player*? Can she make all the same moves as the men?

⁸ See Wittig's (1992) "The Mark of Gender" for an insightful discussion of this point.

2.1. Entrance Moves and Game-Assigned Powers

Let's start with some concepts to clarify moves and powers. In sports and games, entrance moves may be neutral or nonneutral. Neutral entrance moves create peers within the game. In Monopoly, whether entering as a duck or a thimble, each player begins with the same money in the bank, and each has the same goal: to accumulate assets. No player gets special game-assigned powers. Games with nonneutral entrance moves assign specific powers upon entrance. How one enters, what one enters as, shapes the range and scope of a player's participation, allowing only some moves within the game and only some types of exits. In tennis, each player steps onto the court with the same game-assigned powers, so entrance is neutral. Today's basketball has relatively neutral entrance moves as well, for every player can play offense or defense, depending on the action required at the moment of play, field or court position, and so on. A soccer goalie's entrance to the game is nonneutral, since the goalie has position-specific game-assigned powers (like using hands) forbidden to others.

In American football, every player enters with position-specific game-assigned powers, making it a very constricted game. Only certain players play offense or defense, and only at certain times within the game as determined by the unfolding action. Each position assigns different powers and ranges of action; the game is constituted by players doing certain sorts of things in these ways. Relative to field situation, game-assigned powers settle which internal moves are open to any particular player in any particular position. Quarterbacks and receivers can score any time, but guards can only score a touchdown on recovering a fumble. American football is explicitly constrained in ways that basketball, soccer, tennis, and Monopoly are not. The numbers players wear on their backs denote positions (and hence game-assigned powers); a particular player can switch, but the team must declare it explicitly to the referee and mark it by taking the appropriate field position.⁹

Nonneutral entrances can shape internal moves as well as potential exit moves. Entrances set deontic statuses which limit or enhance many other statuses within and beyond the game. Consider two sorts of nonneutral entrance moves directing potential exits. The placekicker is allowed entrance only at specific moments in the game, is highly protected during the play, and exits the field promptly at the conclusion of that play. The position-specific game-assigned powers of quarterbacks and receivers allow them to make the most consistently obvious contributions to the score, leading to more glory on and off the field. (Some are gracious enough to emphasize their dependence on the team.) The game-assigned

⁹ Regularly a defensive tackle, "Refrigerator" Perry sometimes played fullback, even scoring in Super Bowl XX.

powers of the quarterback enhance his status within the game and beyond, while the game-assigned powers of linemen are much less status-enhancing.

To start out tidy, our central concern is two identically credentialed speakers issuing what should be authoritative speech acts, where both speakers meet any basic felicity conditions of the speech act, and yet only one is met with a basic preemptive challenge.¹⁰ Given the power of gender to shape deontic standing, in far too many cases, a speaker's gender is itself a felicity condition. Of course, no one is just a woman; everyone lives within the overlapping and interwoven forces of sex, race, class, ethnicity, and more, and each of these forces can become more (or less) salient in particular contexts. Sometimes it is useless to try to figure out which factors are most salient, but other times salience is very clear (Dotson 2016; King 1988; Smith 1979). The account developed here, starting with gender as if it were isolable, develops a structure that applies more broadly, to all salient identity categories, makes room for variations that depend on time, place, and practices, ultimately helping to explain why some of our lived identities are so exponentially constrained or enhanced by multiple intersecting social identities (Garry 2011; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al. 2012; King 1988; Smith 1979). The concept of a lived index, and a master switch, makes sense of an oppressed person saying, "I was silenced due to race" or "I was silenced due to gender." Neither acts alone—all racism is engendered as all sexism is enracinated—but sometimes we see one factor being the master switch that throws the rest of the switches at once.

2.2 Identity and Index

Monopoly's ducks and thimbles are gender neutral, but gender marking is ubiquitous in everyday life. Feminists define gender as a set of practices that construct and maintain power along lines of sex, marking the attributes of men as dominant and attributes of women as subordinate (Frye 1983; Ridgeway and Correll 2004; Young 1990). In the game terms developed here, men tend to have greater game-assigned powers, women fewer, and the powers women do have tend to support men's enhanced status. Patriarchal practices give substance and force to the mechanisms that damage women's authority, even over our own domains.¹¹

¹⁰ Felicity conditions are the factors in the context that make the speech act "happy," that is, apt to work. Without them, it's a sure fail, but they don't guarantee any outcome (Austin 1962, 14–24). I focus on cases that fail due to denied positional authority. For a discussion of credibility of speaker testimony in issuing astonishing reports (Jones 1993, 154ff.).

¹¹ Resistance to gender binarism has enhanced liberation, but sex marking and sex announcing are still ubiquitous. As genders proliferate, entrance moves might shift with various gender-identity attributions. Excluding transgender women from the

On my account, flipping a switch, like the F-switch, is enacting a set of social norms that govern specific aspects of the game. Variations in game-assigned powers might bring different games into play. In pre-'75 basketball, gender was a nonneutral entrance factor, changing the rules so dramatically that boys and girls did not play the same game. Gender attribution changed the games by shaping available entrance moves and internal moves. Similarly, whether someone's speech acts count as moves within a language game also depends upon the person's available game-assigned powers. Taken as a master switch, a speaker-identity factor may shape entrance positions with special limited or enhanced game-assigned powers, or may even completely bar someone from the game. Flipping a master switch has preemptive force. The resulting positions raise concerns about justice, for they enhance the prospects of some, while diminishing the prospects of others.

In explaining how gender attributions can disqualify women's discursive authority, I focus on where gender belongs on the semantic index attaching to a speech act (in a culture with a dominant culture of binary genders). I consider two alternatives: that the F-switch is a sub-switch on the speaker part of the index, making only minor local changes in play, or that it is a master switch governing the index as a whole, changing the very game. If identity factors are on a sub-switch, the rules of the game do not change—all parties are in the same game, all would enter with the same game-assigned powers. Ultimately, appeal to a master switch better explains the widespread systematic undermining of women's participation as equals in discursive practices. The master-switch view identifies a global negative positional authority that trumps positive expertise authority. If my analysis is right, it opens up new ways of thinking about illocutionary disablement and threats to discursive authority.

The index enables participants to monitor the score (what's been done, where things stand within this specific language game), and to develop strategies for play. The index should be construed as revealing a lived social and discursive reality, not as a mysterious or imagined abstraction. The index attaching to a speech act marks speaker, audience, time of utterance, place of utterance, as well as the game, context, field, or market within which the utterance occurs, and more (Kaplan 1979). We note place of utterance, for example, because speech happens in real places—locations enhanced by social meanings, including a society's many explicit and implicit behavioral norms. Legal jurisdiction makes this explicit. In 2014, in Massachusetts, a same-sex couple saying "I do" before an appropriately empowered official was, in fact, getting married. What seemed like the same action in 2014 in

Michigan Women's Music Festival vividly illustrates gatekeeping gender boundaries, with some women denying game-assigned powers to transgender women, saying, "No, you can't even play with us."

Ohio was not, because the official lacked the game-assigned power to sanction the union due to a statewide ban on same-sex marriage.¹² The time matters, because by 2017 such actions were legal in all 50 states, and nearly 20 nations. Any actual (lived, normative) index contains the information needed for interpreters to understand what a particular speech act does. On my view, the index tracks game-assigned powers and moves that embody these. Such tracking is crucial to scorekeeping.

Scorekeeping reveals the normative structure of the game itself. This echoes Brandom's view that the "norms that govern the use of linguistic expressions are implicit in these deontic scorekeeping practices" (Brandom 1998, xiv). Brandom does not address identity factors like gender, but his framework has ample room for it. When scorekeeping varies due to identity factors, like gender, differential norms are revealed. Scorekeeping tracks conversational and other moves within a language game, noting how each move changes the moves available to other participants in the game. Invoking Rule 19 blatantly changed Elizabeth Warren's available moves in the Senate game. Brandom explains discursive practice as "a kind of practical know-how—a matter of keeping deontic *score* by keeping track of one's own and others' commitments and entitlements to those commitments, and altering that score in systematic ways based on the performances each practitioner produces" (xiv). By tracking the factors making the speech act do what it does, the index helps track the score. Since the content of Senate Rule 19 did not change to enable the men to read the letter, McConnell's very invocation of the rule became the issue.

Throwing a master switch simultaneously throws many sub-switches, and so with one quick move, the game changes. Any factor on an index could become a master switch in a particular context, thereby realigning the relative values and actions of the other factors (attaching to various switches). Master switches tend to be highly socially entrenched. In racist societies, master switches associated with races automatically throw different sub-switches; African Americans, for example, often report automatic class biases once race is adduced. Flipping the race switch flips a class switch, plus many others, activating discriminatory stereotyped inferential networks. When affluent African Americans report feeling a need to assertively mark their class status, they are trying to unflip the class sub-switch, overturning operating assumptions the master switch enabled. Exactly which sub-switches are thrown by throwing a master switch is specific to local social practices.

In contrast, one might argue that identity factors attach to sub-switches for speaker or audience; each factor independently changes permitted inferential licenses. A sub-switch is thrown *within* a game, so it impacts internal and exit moves but not entrance moves. The sub-switch would not automatically change position-

¹² For up-to-date information, see Freedom to Marry's "Wining in the States" web page at <http://www.freedomtomarry.org/states>.

specific game-assigned powers. Flipping a sub-switch makes a woman's participation like dancing backwards in high heels: she's in the same game, but her moves are somehow realigned. Like the master switch, it would change the relative weights assigned to various sorts of moves within the game. A sub-switch still matters to scorekeeping, but the sub-switch view fails to explain the power of any factor to change the very game. The F-switch is best construed as a master switch because with gender, switches tend to get thrown in clusters, not as singletons. Thinking of the switches as clustering helps capture intersectionality.

Throwing the F-switch renders a woman's entrance *nonneutral*. It limits her game-assigned powers, curtailing potential moves and shaping available strategies. At its most extreme, functioning across many games, throwing the F-switch might completely refuse recognition to a speaker because of her sex; this would be to deny a woman full normative status as a member of a particular discursive community. Nonneutrality does not yet settle how widely variant the game is into which she is cast. Perhaps she gets some *prima facie* entitlements and some entitlements associated with gender-specific domains, and limited access to the rest. This opens her to *prima facie* challenges that her male counterparts do not face, because their game-assigned powers are secure. This was our initial concern. By limiting her entitlements, flipping the F-switch limits her powers within the game. She doesn't get to make all the moves. Nowadays, it seems absurd to impose the three-dribbles rule in basketball, but often we are oblivious to parallel limitations in our discursive games. What are women discursively disallowed from doing within a particular game? On the master-switch view, gender is a metaposition, shaping game-assigned powers (entitlements). Noting differences in positions and entitlements brings the age-old issue of double standards into the logic of discursive practice and the discursive constitution of agency.

There is a complication: the discursive situation is usually less explicit than pre-'75 basketball. Often multiple games are being played at once in what seems at first to be the 'same game.' Once the F-switch is flipped, a woman's game changes, imposing distinctive normative constraints within which to achieve her goals. Case analysis should expose these alternate rules and deep normative double standards. Clarifying shifts in game-assigned powers would reveal changes of game. Sometimes flipping the master switch blocks admission to the game. When inventive strategies for entrance moves are required, we should assume that internal and exit moves will be compromised as well. Differences in game-assigned-powers may be explicit, as, for example, when, in the 1960's, the first women admitted to Harvard's PhD program in philosophy were denied library privileges.¹³ This difference in library powers explicitly constrained their available internal moves within the studying

¹³ Conversation, Claudia Card, Amelie O. Rorty, November 2009, Cambridge, MA.

game, requiring inventive strategies.¹⁴ Noticing the constraints on one's game-assigned-powers can make the difference between success and failure, opening the possibility of creative strategies.

Finally, we must consider that there are gender-biased universes of discourse that favor women, in which a woman speaker might have de facto greater game-assigned powers than a man. In certain arenas, members of an oppressed group may have greater authority and deontic standing than oppressors. The logical concept of a domain of discourse, linked to the concept of jurisdiction, helps fill in some details of the variations of language games. To dig deeper, we must first consider some features of language games.

2.3. Language Games: An Eclectic Approach

Speech acts occur within rule-governed practices. Understanding a speech act requires attention to conventions—lived norms and practices—and particular contexts of use. An account of speech acts should address who acts, their standing for the action, how well their standing is recognized, the kind of uptake sought, what kind it gets, and the outcomes it engenders. We saw this in the role of jurisdiction for the success or failure of same-sex marriage ceremonies. Similarly, the success of a particular utterance of, for example, (A) “I hereby sentence you to 30 days in the county jail” depends on the speaker's position, the time and place of utterance, the position of the person spoken to, conventions governing sentencing, the universe of discourse over which the utterance reigns, the community in which it is issued, and more. Some of these factors may delimit a domain over which the speaker has (or is presumed to have) authority, or may mark the broader field of normative practices and material actions giving substance to the domain. A judge's utterance of (A) is likely to be felicitous, in Austin's sense, if the judge issues such a sentence to a convicted criminal, in a courtroom, in the sentencing phase of trial. The criminal's incarceration is compelled, because an entire institutional apparatus is set into motion by the judge's speech act. The judge has the *positional* authority that gives her the power to use the force of the state, and she has the *expertise* authority of a jurist. There will be more to say about these forms of authority in section 3.

The success of a speech act relies in part on the authority of the speaker to drive audience uptake. Speaker authority and audience uptake go hand in hand, and neither occurs in a vacuum. Most Austinians usually construe uptake as audience

¹⁴ Think of Wittig: “The result of the imposition of gender, acting as a denial at the very moment when one speaks, is to deprive women of the authority of speech, and to force them to make their entrance in a crab-like way, particularizing themselves and apologizing profusely” (Wittig 1992, 81).

recognition of the speaker's illocutionary intention; instead, I take uptake to be a matter of next discursive moves, moves either depending on or disregarding the original speech act. Authority is a kind of power that requires attribution of a deontic status to the speaker. Authority is not primarily a matter of linguistic competence, for many more are competent than have authority, and some have authority without much competence. Bourdieu (1991, 72) warns: "The linguistic relation of power is never defined solely by the relation between the linguistic competences present. And the weight of different agents depends on their symbolic capital, i.e., on the recognition, institutionalized or not, that they receive from a group." Symbolic capital, recognition of the authority and agency of others, is built into a courtroom situation, but it is found to some degree in all discursive encounters. A judge's verdict is a particularly formal speech act, set within serious social and political rituals backed by a machinery of force. In less formal circumstances, one's symbolic capital still crucially depends on social support for the practice and for one's authority within it. To track authority and uptake in less formal contexts, we might, for example, notice differential patterns of responses. (Here philosophy of language intersects with epistemic concerns about credibility.)

Discursive authority is a situational power to make felicitous speech acts *and* gain a range of appropriate uptakes. A speaker's discursive authority renders her speech acts socially meaningful. Except for filibustering senators, speakers want not just floor time, but engaged attention and appropriate responses. Brandom's inferentialism treats this engagement as a matter of making successful commitments, licensing others to make inferences, defending one's own claims against challenges, and challenging claims of others (where needed). Every speech act carries with it these *task-responsibilities* to justify identifications, defend inference licenses, meet challenges, and more. If Pat says "Charlie is a clever beagle," Pat licenses others to make inferences about Charlie, species, breed, temperament, and more. If asked, Pat's task-responsibilities may include identifying which Charlie, defending Pat's ascription of breed, and so on. If I use Pat's claim in making a new claim, I may defer justification back to Pat. In this way, our claims become intertwined; the license you issue today may enable my claim but may also require future defenses from each of us.

Further developing inferentialism's call-and-response aspect, Kukla and Lance (2009) argue that all discourse is essentially *vocative*, requiring audience recognition and response. Any speaking-to someone is a hail, and, ipso facto, calls for attention and response. I see this call for attention and response as key to understanding discursive authority. Kukla and Lance emphasize the power of hails to shape our relationships, saying,

Concrete normative relations among people are established and sustained through vocatives—that is through the Yo-claims that *hold us in place* in social space. We become and remain the types of beings that have specific, agent-relative engagements with others through an ongoing network of hails and acknowledgements. . . . Vocative discourse plays a crucial role in constituting individuals as particular, normatively positioned persons. (2009, 181)

If women tend to hail and be hailed differently than men, this would shape women’s distinctive constitution as agents. There is ample anecdotal evidence for such differential hails (Locke 2011). Consider the case of students in a co-taught seminar who are told to call their female professor “Claudia,” and their male professor “Professor S,” by the professors’ choices. This practice constructs different symbolic capital for each professor: Professor S accepted an institutional status-marking hail whereas Claudia chose to resist the trappings of institutional and positional power. Actually, their symbolic capital arose differently—Claudia’s in resistance, Professor S’s in participation. Symbolic capital can begin with a hail and develop into something that infuses the practice.¹⁵

Within language games, responses matter, because speakers aim for effects. Among other things, speakers seek acknowledgment (accurate ascription of both locutionary and illocutionary acts), understanding, assent, appreciation, and, importantly, the power to engender action. The engendered action might be purely discursive and internal to the game, or it might be an exit move, perhaps a physical action like grabbing an umbrella when the forecast includes rain. Taking the game metaphor seriously, Lewis (1979) urges us to think of each speech act as having the potential to change the game’s score. Applying Lewis’s framework, my conception of discursive authority is the functional ability to generate permissibility facts (licenses) within a conversation; applying Sellars’s concept of exit moves, we want these permissions and licenses to actually play a role beyond the language game. Nonlinguistic (but still normatively laden) responses show that licenses and permissions can be tied to broader social and material reality, shaping not just what we say but how we live, how we treat each other, how we may oppress or liberate.

Nonresponses are never neutral. Refusing uptake to someone’s speech undermines their standing within a game, undermining their internal moves, and—if systematic and preemptive—may even bar their very entrance to the game. Widespread systematic reshaping of uptake responses on the basis of gender attribution is a mechanism of sexism. Widespread systematic reshaping of uptake responses on the basis of race attribution is a mechanism of racism. Oppression

¹⁵ Thanks to Claudia Card for this true story; the analysis is mine.

systematically denies persons authority on the basis of identity factors and so shapes who actually counts as a player in the language game. In this way, the Lewis account, so fruitfully developed by some antipornography feminist philosophers, can be seen to walk alongside Kukla and Lance's emphasis on the ways that hails and responses create a structure of norms that constitute our social beings. Sometimes the limited construction sticks, and the imposed underlying limitation is the source of the injustice of flipping the F-switch. Like basketball players who never learn to rush the basket, the oppressed can be stuck taking three steps and then passing or shooting. Sometimes the mechanisms of oppression don't "take," and women try to play, but in that case flipping the F-switch silences a woman's potential contributions by undermining her authority.

Gendered domains shape who gets to speak about what, when and where they get to speak at all, and a host of other normative assignments and restrictions. As a position in a normative order, gender influences the possibility of success for many acts, speech acts included. Clearly, gender impacts positions, and thus shapes game-assigned powers. Next, we must identify several varieties of discursive authority, distinguishing positional authority from expertise authority, to see how gender might enable or disable these kinds of authority (within a domain) and thus how gender might render certain speech acts possible or impossible.

3. Authority

Authority is a normative power to engender the discursive, symbolic, physical, or material actions of others. Bourdieu's social theory of discourse reminds us that one speaks "not only to be understood but also to be believed, obeyed, respected, distinguished" (1977, 648). These epistemic states can be tracked through linguistic behaviors. Discursive authority may engender either internal or exit moves, and the actual discursive authority of some can block the developing authority of others. Authority results in uptake, and uptake further entrenches authority.

There are three primary forms of authority, varying in strength and domain. Theists ascribe *perfect* authority to God, who, as the original speaker of performative utterances, has creative as well as absolute coercive power. On this view, God's pure ideal sovereignty is independent of any other grounding. No human has such independent authority, but people are both creative and coercive to lesser degrees. Persons with authority usually have either *positional* or *expertise* authority, and sometimes both.¹⁶

¹⁶ Maitra (2012) introduces a special but common kind of authority, arising simply from others licensing what a speaker says, even without any real positional or expertise grounds, so the distinction is heuristic rather than exclusive or exhaustive.

3.1. Positional Authority: King, General, Judge

A king's word is law, securing uptake on pain of punishment. The king might be an idiot, but the throne—a position with broad game-assigned powers—provides power to oppress, exploit, and kill with impunity. In this extreme case of positional authority, enforcement power drives audience uptake. What *kind* of uptake one gives the king may vary, but uptake is mandatory. A king's subjects navigate between their own autonomy, penalties of disobedience, and probabilities of getting caught. Giving uptake to positional authority need not be the same as obedience, and it does not require believing in the truth of what the authority says. As with any game, one needs to know the rules and norms, the costs and benefits of compliance. Positional authority can engender wily hypocrisy, evasive maneuvers, and dampening expectations.

Positional authority grants the holder specific game-assigned powers, so it is relative to a game or domain in which positions are allocated. A general's positional authority, for example, exists within the army's strict hierarchy of power, which counts only some kinds of speech acts as authoritatively issued by the general within their "command," that is, with their *domain*. Institutional authority is positional; speakers gain authority (and linguistic capital) by inhabiting institutional roles that authorize certain kinds of speech acts. The CEO, health inspector, or referee all inhabit roles authorizing certain kinds of speech acts and lose the power to achieve those acts when they lose the position. These roles grant positional authority.

Bourdieu (1977, 657) sets a wide scope for positional authority: "What can be said and the way of saying it on a given occasion depend on the structure of the objective relationship between the positions of the sender and the receiver in the structure of distribution of linguistic capital and the other kinds of capital." Uptake of positional authority arises from participation in practices and institutions that distribute symbolic, social, and material power, governing who can say what, when, and where, and how others must attend to these sayings. When positions are backed by force, the positional power is clear. Positional power may also generate enhanced status for one's statements about the world, about values, and about all sorts of things beyond one's domain. The third form, *expertise* authority, functions differently.

3.2 Expertise Authority: Scientist, Scholar, Professional

Expertise authority derives from knowledge or skill. The use and development of this expertise benefits others through the expansion of our collective epistemic (and other) resources. We—together—know more if our experts do, so an expert's authority is importantly generative. Ideally, the expert's authority resides in the soundness and utility of what is known. Expertise tends to

be widely valued, since the rest of us get the lessons more or less on the cheap, increasing efficiency across society (Pierson 1994). Mistrust of experts might arise from failing to grasp what the expert knows, but it could also arise from fear that the expert's knowledge gives them power to harm.

Expertise authority is weaker than positional authority, because obedience is not required, but stronger, since resistance does not erode it so easily. We can be skeptical of the expert's pronouncements, but if the expert is right, so much the worse for us.

Consider a simple case: Sara the Sommelier enters the wine game with special game-assigned powers and enhanced authority to recommend action (exit moves). Her expertise gives her some authority over wine selection if we dine together, and in wine matters, I often defer to her judgment. Despite her expertise, her judgment is nonbinding and unenforceable. I might recognize her expertise and the soundness of her advice and yet resist it, especially if the best wine choice for the meal is a wine I dislike, say Riesling. My resisting Sara's advice does not overturn her authority. My respect for her authority on wine remains intact, and Sara gets uptake, through my recognizing her advice as expert. She just fails to engender the action she wants me to undertake.

Resistance sometimes damages positional authority. In resisting the general's order, the private chips away at the chain of command and is punished for it. My non-Riesling exit move from the wine game, nevertheless allows me to make internal moves that depend upon and enhance Sara's expertise. The next time someone asks what I would suggest to accompany a delicate fish, I might say "Riesling" based on Sara's prior claim. The key point is that expertise authority has different grounds than positional authority, so resistance or support may also involve distinct kinds of challenges.

3.3 Derivatives

Some cases highlight intersections between expertise and positional authority, and require attention to whether these are independent or deferred. In each case, we see how gender undermines authority.

Gender traverses practices, shaping entitlements. Game-assigned powers enable us to make certain moves that count in the game. Sometimes getting to a position (to get the game-assigned powers) requires prior recognition of one's expertise. This is usually the case with a judge. Only the judge sitting on a particular case has the positional authority to use her expertise to issue a verdict, even though many attorneys might reach the same judgment. One particular judge is entitled to issue a sentence by one particular game-assigned positional power. Entitlements, however they are derived, are crucial for the basic speech act of asserting (upon which inferentialism is built). Brandom (1998, 180) says: "Absent such entitlement,

assertion is an attempt to lend what one does not possess.” This is true in cases of all varieties of Monday-morning quarterbacks, know-it-all attorneys, and ordinary back-seat drivers. If attempting to claim entitlements that have been neither granted nor earned is like writing a check with nothing in your account, gender constantly drains women’s accounts, requiring us to work harder to maintain even a minimal balance.

All or nearly all speakers within a discursive community are granted a range of basic entitlements (to speak and make commitments) just in virtue of group membership. We usually accept these straightforward speech acts, no matter who speaks. Call this phenomenon *prima facie or default authority*. Everyone gets to say “the lights are on now,” since this takes no special position or expertise, and if we required people to justify every claim like this, we would get little done (Brandom 1998, 177). *Prima facie* entitlements range across so many games that they might be seen as entitlements that precede game-assigned powers. These basic speech acts and *prima facie* entitlements can be challenged, with justification. Senator McConnell’s invoking Rule 19 not only challenged Senator Warren’s reading of the letter, it removed her *prima facie* weak entitlements as a Senator, her very capacity to speak in the Senate, for the entire hearing.

The expertise of others provides the research upon which so many everyday practices are built. One grants authority to experts’ speech acts by taking up the licenses they issue, while deferring responsibility for justification back to them, as I did with Sara’s wine recommendation. This successful parroting is a kind of *derivative expertise authority*. Such parroting has only *deferred* authority, derived from the expertise of the person who ultimately bears justificatory responsibility. Usually, all members of a community would get equal *prima facie* entitlements to such parroting, equally sharing in the derivative authority. When parroting requires earned expertise authority of one’s own, then one’s deontic status within the discursive community shapes derivative expertise authority. In such cases, flipping the F-switch might undermine even this.¹⁷

When a speaker’s utterance piggybacks on the authority of another’s utterance but moves beyond parroting to extend the claim, this mixes position and expertise, and blends deferred authority with independent authority. Smith develops a theory and thereby issues licenses to others to use it as-is. If Jones extends the scope of Smith’s theory, Jones must justify the extension, using a

¹⁷ Derivative expertise authority is distinct from *attachment authority*, which arises from an ongoing absorption of a subordinate’s domain into a dominant’s domain, generally affording some enhanced status to the subordinate. Attachment authority works, when it does, only as long as the person with the primary domain allows it, and only insofar as the secondary person is viewed as reliable.

mixture of Jones's own work and deferrals to Smith's licenses. This *derivative-plus expertise* authority requires additional justification for the "plus," calling the speaker's own independent expertise to account. Whether someone is entitled to extend Smith's theory may depend on the speaker's positional authority (professional experience, connection to Smith, etc.). Again, we see flipping the F-switch might damage women's exercise of such licenses and development of such authority.

3.4 Domains

Speaker authority is tied to having an individual *domain*, a broader discursive *community*, and participating in normative and material *fields* of action. Marilyn Frye (1983, 87) describes claiming a domain as holding that "one is a being whose purposes and actions require and create a web of objects, spaces, attitudes, and interests that is worthy of respect." Under the fragmenting and limiting forces of oppression, a person's quashed and misdirected agency results in a more limited domain than the domains enjoyed by those who are not oppressed. Oppressed people may think that they are respected persons with respected domains, but this illusion arises from normative submission. Settled into the narrowed range of what is recognized or granted (their effective domain), they accept the illusion until thwarted in trying to exercise the broader powers of legitimate domains (Shafer and Frye 1977). Failed uptake, particularly ongoing denial of authority by multiple members of one's community, dampens women's attempts at authoritative speech.

Considering the three major kinds of authority, we can see that relations amongst domains of speaker and audience are key. The perfect authority attributed to God claims God's absolute power over every domain. The positional authority of the general is made possible by each soldier's relinquishing significant control over their own domain, as an institutional entry-condition. The degree of domain ceding with other forms of positional authority depends on the scope of the relevant domains. Even expertise authority involves some domain ceding. In choosing a physician, one already adopts a stance of ceding some authority about health claims to that doctor, and yet the patient's body remains central to their domain. When a physician recommends health-enhancing lifestyle changes, a patient might accept the value of the recommendation, issue no challenges, but still resist the exit transitions (lifestyle changes). A recipient of an expert recommendation might forebear challenging and not follow advice, and nevertheless the speaker's authority remains intact.

Game-assigned powers help us track the domain-specific speaker authority required for successful speech acts. Citing Austin, Bourdieu emphasizes speaker authority in explaining successful performative utterances. Bourdieu says,

Most of the conditions that have to be fulfilled in order for a performative utterance to succeed come down to the question of the appropriateness of the speaker—or, better still, his social function—and of the discourse he utters. A performative utterance is destined to fail each time that it is not pronounced by a person who has the “power” to pronounce it, or, more generally, each time that the “particular persons and circumstances in a given case” are not “appropriate for the invocation of the particular procedure invoked”; in short, each time that the speaker does not have the authority to emit the words he utters. (Bourdieu 1991, 111; quoting Austin 1962, 26)

This works well for constrained circumstances with highly articulated game-assigned powers—the discursive equivalent to American football. Only the quarterback can call the play. Only the judge can sentence the defendant. Only the physician can authorize the patient’s treatment. Successful speech acts require speaker authority and discursive action to match within an appropriate domain. That domain is defined by location in a defined normative structure.

Authority is largely constituted by audience uptake, which is a matter of next moves. Austin holds that a speech act is not a bet, for instance, until someone says, “You’re on!” (Austin 1962, 36, 126, 136). We often overlook our complicity in maintaining the authority of others, and our need for others in maintaining our own. Bourdieu (1991, 116) explains: “The symbolic efficacy of words is exercised only in so far as the person subjected to it recognizes the person who exercises it as authorized to do so, or, what amounts to the same thing, only in so far as he fails to realize that, in submitting to it, he himself has contributed, through his recognition, to its establishment.” Here Bourdieu almost anticipates Maitra’s (2012, 106) “hike organizer” case, in which Andy, a peer in the hiking group simply starts assigning tasks, and others do as Andy says, thereby licensing his speech.

Institutional settings often mask the audience’s role in successful speech acts. This helps explain how standard or ritualized speech acts develop and remain in place. Even speech that feels like the exercise of pure authority nevertheless relies crucially on hearer uptake. Uptake-dependence does not mean that the criminal can walk away from the judge’s sentence by simply denying the court’s authority. Of course, some practices may allow individuals to opt out, and then the speech acts within the practice have no further hold upon them. Hegemonic practices generally do not allow opting out, and yet still require widespread uptake for those with positional power to retain that power.

That authority and uptake are intertwined is no surprise. Where positions are highly constrained, like courtrooms and football fields, tracking authority by following uptake can be straightforward. It gets messy when positions shift with

nearly every move, in practices that are more like court positions in basketball than field positions in football. Such variant positional authority is part of the circumstances of many utterances, part of what Lewis calls the “kinematics of score.” Ben gets to say what he does because Ann said what she did earlier; Ann licensed Ben’s utterance, granting him (at least temporary) authority to use Ann’s claim. Like passing the ball in basketball, passing discursive authority can succeed or fail in advancing the game’s objectives. Tracking variant positional authority in unofficial language games is challenging, to say the least.

Failed uptake is a key to understanding why women with earned expertise nevertheless must justify their authority, answering challenges and having to claim that authority more explicitly than similarly situated men. Withholding recognition of another’s authority may protect one’s own domain and weaken hers. For a full understanding of such failed uptake, we need to look at both highly constrained cases, as well as messy variant-positional cases. We must identify the circumstances under which women are appropriate speakers yet experience discursive disablement. What does the flipped F-switch do?

4. The F-Switch

The analogy to pre-’75 basketball helps disclose the mechanics of gender-based denials or distortions of discursive authority. I have been treating “the F-switch” as a master switch activated by gender attribution, which, once flipped, shapes the scope and force of a speaker’s discursive authority, specifically her capacity to make internal and exit moves within a language game. The F-switch makes gender a nonneutral entrance factor, and so reveals why some discursive moves women make, which seem *prima facie* just like moves men make, nevertheless have diminished scope and force. A woman’s nonneutral entrance limits her position-specific game-assigned powers, her positional authority, and undermines her power to exercise her expertise authority. Disregarded expertise authority impedes contributing to projects about which one cares, and in so doing, thwarts one’s developing further capacities. Such disregard undermines autonomy and creative effectiveness; it literally stunts one’s growth.¹⁸

¹⁸ When a woman’s “no” is disregarded in rape, her rightful authority over the disposition of her body, expressed through her power to withhold consent, is blatantly disrespected, revealing cultural norms that rob her of an authority that is partly definitive of personhood (Brison 2003; McGowan 2009; Shafer and Frye 1977). Given the prevalence of rape within patriarchal heterosexism, women’s *legitimate* domain has shrunken to a smaller *effective* domain (Shafer and Frye 1977). Sexual refusal is not among her game-assigned powers.

Understanding what happens when the F-switch is flipped requires understanding some ways in which speakers in general can be denied effectiveness. These include challenges to position, expertise, content, or manner. The character of a challenge may reveal the degree to which one is within a game. Ignoring that someone even spoke is a form of *locutionary erasure*; this is far more insidious than a challenge to the content of what one has said or even a challenge to one's entitlement to say it. Locutionary erasure blocks participation. When a speaker's illocutionary moves within a game are changed through uptake, this *illocutionary disablement* changes the score, and so changes subsequent entitlements. Challenging content may play the game straight, or it may bleed into these more destructive exclusionary moves. We have already seen that nonneutral entry to a game can undermine or enhance one's prospects in participation. Seeing how challenges and nonneutral entries work together can help us to understand the power of the F-switch.

4.1 Challenges

Many challenges are legitimate denials of authority. Certain kinds of discursive infelicities prompt challenges, as when someone usurps another's authority or commits various violations outlined by Austin or Grice (Austin 1962; Grice 1991). According to Austin, a speech act is an *abuse* if it is formally correct but done without the requisite intentions, as in lying promises or bigamous marriages (1962, 14–15). In the classic folktale, the boy who cried "Wolf!" lost his very capacity to warn, through abusing the speech act just for the pleasure of seeing the townspeople scramble. After multiple failures, people deny him uptake, disqualifying him from undertaking such commitments in the future (see Brandom 1998, esp. 180). The boy can say the words, but once people no longer count his speech acts as warnings, he just cannot warn them anymore. Having abused the speech act, the boy's future warnings (at least about wolves) are *illocutionarily disabled*. The boy's loss of authority is a punishment for inappropriate linguistic behavior.¹⁹

A courtroom janitor can utter "I hereby sentence you to 30 days," but without the necessary game-assigned powers, the janitor lacks the positional authority to make this exit move. Felicitously issued speech acts may nevertheless run into justifiable challenges requiring a response. Even with a judge's position-specific game-assigned power (positional authority) to issue a sentence, a judge's

¹⁹ In this case, what was an abuse comes to be recognized as such by the community, which then denies the speaker discursive authority (at least over wolf warnings, but perhaps more), so uptake fails, and so does the speech act. So here, once authority is denied, an attempted abuse becomes rendered a misfire.

sentence is not immune from challenges. To block the exit move (jail), a defendant's lawyer might make any number of challenges, each specific to the content of the decision and the rules of law. A legitimate challenge might not change the sentence; for example, seeking the judge's recusal might succeed and yet the sentence stand.

Some challenges require justification. Imagine I say, "Tom Brady is a great quarterback." My brother challenges, asking, "What do *you* know about *football*?" and I demand that he justify his challenge. Claiming a prima facie authority, I say: "I'm a New Englander! *Everyone* here knows all about the Pats." Not content to cast this into prima facie territory, he replies that I have never before shown any interest in any NFL team (so football is outside my domain), adding that a feminist should scorn American football. He might even quiz me on Brady's statistics to see if I can justify my claim. If I reply that Brady threw for over 5,200 yards in the 2011 season, a career high, beating (rival) Peyton Manning's then-career high of 4,700, then his challenge would be met and my expertise authority would be secure.

My brother's challenge gives my speech act uptake; it involves neither *locutionary erasure* nor *illocutionary disablement*. Locutionary erasure, treating someone as if she never said anything at all, is pernicious. The silent treatment treats the utterance as unworthy of even a challenge. If a speaker lacks entitlement to speak in a particular context, as a member of the courtroom gallery, for example, then overlooking her utterances enforces that lack of entitlement. But if, for example, the speaker is a graduate student in a seminar, then she has entitlement, and then another's utter lack of uptake counts as unjustly denying her legitimate status.

Brandom's default-and-challenge structure makes sense within the game of giving and asking for reasons amongst social peers, all more or less equal participants in a particular game or practice. Once social inequality is part of a practice, the view requires careful moderation. Oppressed people often face default challenges.²⁰ Whether gender is a prima facie challenge or one requiring justification depends on the particular game, practice, and discourse. A speaker's F-gender is often prima facie justified grounds for challenge. This supports taking the F-switch to be a global or master switch, one that governs the whole semantic index, not a local switch internal to the index, attaching to the speaker-item but leaving most of the game intact.

Flipping the F-switch is most obvious when it keeps women out of the game entirely. No one was fooled into thinking that girls' and boys' basketball was the same game before 1975. Less obvious are the insidious cases in which flipping the F-

²⁰ Think of Lewis's temporary Master/Slave situation between two speakers becoming reified across categories of social persons: this would create the categories *speakers* and *those spoken-to* (Lewis 1979).

switch changes rules within what might look like the same game but is not. While the guys get to rush the net and dunk, we have to dribble three times and then pass or shoot. If flipping the F-switch makes our entrance moves nonneutral, this not only ups the ante on entrance, but also shapes how our moves within the game are scored. We think we are playing the same game by the same rules, but the score never seems to add up, because we did not start with the same entitlements and powers, and will not accrue the same points. We need to know which game we are in and which rules to respect or challenge.

This Sellarsian language-game approach, with my added framework of neutral and nonneutral entrance moves, with distinctive game-assigned powers, explains some structural aspects of the norms of games. Whether an entrance is neutral or nonneutral is always shaped by context; context can be taken tightly (focusing on the game) or more broadly (on the social role and meaning of the game). There are no universally neutral entrances, for the salience of identity factors is always in play and highly dependent on social context. Identity factors, historically entrenched in practices, often influence whether someone will even try to enter a game, whether others will try to keep her out, and how such exclusions would be achieved. The histories of sexism, racism, ethnicity, and other widespread forms of oppression govern master switches that change the very practices in which we think we are engaging.

4.2 Master Switch v. Sub-Switch

As noted earlier, there are two main ways gender can be marked on the lived normative index that makes speech acts possible: it can be a global or master switch, shifting values all across the index, or a sub-switch on the speaker index with a narrower range. Although a thorough account of discursive disablement probably needs both, gender marking is best seen as a master switch on the index. The master switch is a game-changer, redefining moves, strategies, and scoring. Remember pre-'75 basketball. If the game itself actually changes, not just in terms of entitlements, licenses, and permissibility facts, but in terms of the broadest rules governing entrance, internal moves, scorekeeping, and exit moves, then it would be best understood as a master switch. The master switch determines what game is being played, by defining positions and game-assigned powers, so flipping the F-switch should be seen as shifting from neutral to nonneutral entry.

Since gender is a feature attributed to the speaker, it might seem to be a subcategory of the speaker index, rather than a game-changing master switch. Seeing gender marking as attaching mainly to a sub-switch limits our grasp of its power to change games. It misrepresents the damage done to the score—to the person's ability to make the moves and play the game. Sub-switch changes cannot account for nonneutral entries. Gender attribution might function as a sub-switch

when entrances truly are neutral—where the woman’s move gets uptake, but the character of the uptake is shaped by the hearer’s application of identity factors on the speaker-item.

The sub-switch view works best to account for speech acts within language games that seem *prima facie* open to all, concerning basic assertions which do not seem to require any special expertise, and games in which speaker identity factors are somehow masked. On the sub-switch view, a speech act could come off without attention to details revealing gender and other social speaker-identity factors. It makes the category’s activation optional, where it can remain unthrown. The speaker-item on the semantic index would need to track a lot of information about the speaker: sex, age, race, class, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, abilities, and more. The speaker function would be a complex set of switches, one for each identity factor. For some types of speech acts and some instances, some of these factors may be salient. For others, they may be moot. The sub-switch view best applies to cases in which we can ascertain a speech act while overlooking all these factors.

The major liability of the sub-switch view is that it fails to make sense of the gatekeeping roles that certain identity factors play and the ubiquitous demand for gender attribution. The sub-switch view overlooks that contexts of utterance and whole domains of discourse can be gendered as well, rendering some kinds of persons speakers and others not. The secretary quietly slipping papers to the board members is not herself a member of the board and lacks the standing to speak. Should the secretary speak, it is unauthorized and disrupts the proceedings. The secretary’s speech act may or may not gain uptake, but it is not ‘in the game.’ It is like a bolt from the blue. Women in male-dominated fields often find their participation is treated as just this sort of bolt from the blue—an aberration, even when they have earned the same credentials as their male peers.

Consider this real case, amongst purported peers, in a faculty meeting. People express confusion about a particular long-standing policy. The meeting’s chair acknowledges Professor A, who starts explaining the policy. After a sentence or two, Professor B interrupts loudly, saying, “FALSE! We NEVER agreed to any such thing! You’re WRONG!” Think of B’s speech act as a foul on A. B challenged A’s expertise (about the policy), but the rudeness and unprofessional character of the interruption also challenged A’s positional authority. Why would B think it permissible to treat a colleague and peer in this way? The behavior declares A *not-a-peer*. Interestingly, two other professors, quietly, one by one, said, “I remember it just as A does.” They thereby address the content (expertise), without directly addressing B’s inappropriate manner. Of these four speakers, A is the only female. B’s gender dominance, a form of positional authority, may have made B think his unprofessional conduct would be allowed. It partly *was* allowed, since the content

of his “foul” was overturned, but not the manner. This often happens to oppressed people in professional settings. The oppressed cope, but the impact of such attacks, minor and major, is an erosion of professional standing.

The master switch view helps to explain the double standards that cast women into a restricted game, dribbling three times then passing or shooting, prohibited from the fun and status-enhancing slam dunk. Sometimes we are indeed playing different games. Who gets the benefit of the doubt, who carries the burden of proof, who faces more peremptory challenges to her authority? Once the gender switch is thrown, scorekeeping changes. Legal moves generally open to all might become fouls when made by some players. Arcane rules that are rarely invoked (Senate Rule 19, for example) get pulled out to silence a potentially influential woman and then are cast aside for the next male speaker. Changes to scorekeeping reveal changes to the normative structure of the game.

The master-switch view also clarifies what is going on when authority is prized away from expertise. In particular, it shows why a woman with significant expertise nevertheless needs to prove herself again and again, as if always just breaking through. Expertise is not enough; position matters too. The master-switch view makes sense of the tension between position and expertise, by highlighting the power of the F-switch to attach a global, negative positional-authority value that trumps positive expertise. Position often trumps expertise, as we see when a well-positioned lesser expert gains more attention than a poorly positioned greater expert. Position, as a rank or a role in a hierarchy, confers differential power. Institutional affiliation and rank can amplify or modulate one’s authority, independent of expertise. Some institutions enhance opportunities for developing expertise, so having a position within their games—on those courts and fields—may actually foster greater substantive expertise.

Feminist philosophy of language applied to antipornography arguments (e.g., Langton 1993; McGowan 2003) and feminist social epistemology examining the role of power in ascribing testimonial credibility (e.g. Daukas 2006; Fricker 1998, 2007; Lackey 1999, 2008), have revealed how social conceptions of gender undermine women’s authority as speakers and knowers. The account developed here is compatible with these existing views, since here the question of women’s authority focuses on a prior point in the process. Setting aside rich epistemic issues, I focus on how one enters a language game, how entrances shape the kinds of powers one can have within that game, and how one can exit the game into nondiscursive arenas. Lackey (1999, 471), for example, offers a picture of testimonial knowledge as being “like a chain of people passing buckets of water to put out a fire. Each person must have a bucket of water in order to pass it to the next person, and moreover there must be at least one person who is ultimately acquiring the water from another source.” My project asks who gets into the line and what rules govern their potential

contributions once there. Thinking about language games reveals the limits imposed by the linearity of a bucket brigade metaphor, with its emphasis on transmission. (During a fire, there will be few variations in brigade members' game-assigned powers.) The discursive mechanisms sketched here will have implications for belief attribution, trust, and many other epistemically rich concerns, but developing those applications remains for a subsequent paper.

A more accurate account of language games incorporates master switches and sub-switches, using a Lewis-Kaplan concept of an index within a Brandomian inferentialism. An inferentialist framework reveals the normative damage to women's discursive authority by locating the problem in sanctioning of moves, in the deontic structure of norms and practices of scorekeeping, and not primarily in the individual intentions of particular people. Starting from intentions gets the story backwards (Brandom 1983, 648). This is a minority view, so far, in understanding discourse, but meshes with oppression theory. Frye (1983) taught us that "the locus of sexism is primarily in the system or framework, not in the particular act," adding that individual acts count as sexist insofar as they uphold that system (19, 38). By considering the problem of the disabling of women's discursive powers, we can see the potential of uniting these two approaches.

Bourdieu's reminder echoes: "*What speaks is not the utterance, the language, but the whole social person.*" To this we must add: . . . *and only then within a structure of norms and practices that render an utterance meaningful and make our many sorts of personhood possible.* The master-switch view highlights the role of identity politics in determining who gets automatic authority within an arena and who lacks it, even with expertise. Structural aspects of the position sketched here can help us keep track of the language games we play. Any factors that shape social hierarchy also could be master switches. Members of dominant groups, in contexts of their domination, will generally not trip such a switch, and their utterances will not be negatively skewed. Utterances by members of subordinate groups will flip the relevant switch, so their entrances will be nonneutral and disadvantageous. We must be alert to game-changes. We should track how identity factors limit or enhance game-assigned powers or entitlements. Certain discursive moves will be disabled. Others will be unjustly activated. Flipping the F-switch subverts positional authority. This in turn undermines expertise authority. No wonder women are constantly justifying our existence. Flipping the F-switch changes the game, and as we have long known, changing the game for some makes losers of us all.

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LYNNE TIRRELL is Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Connecticut, where she is also affiliated with the Human Rights Institute. Her research addresses the power of discursive practices to shape or damage social justice. Her research on the role of linguistic practices in preparing, inciting, and executing genocide is grounded by research in Rwanda and at the ICTR in Tanzania, and has appeared in

journals of philosophy, public policy, and edited collections. Her most recent article is "Toxic Speech" (*Philosophical Topics* 45 (2): 139–161. DOI: 10.5840/philtopics201745217). Professor Tirrell is an associate editor of *The Journal of Philosophical Research*, on the editorial board of the *Journal of Public Philosophy*, and an area editor for *Phil Papers*. She served as chair of the APA Public Philosophy Committee.