6. Discuss the various ways in which Lewis establishes his ethos: as a diplomat and public servant, as a nonscientist, as a man, as a citizen of the world. Cite specific passages that support thesepersonae.

7. Lewis writes, "For myself, I'm filled with rage" (para. 25). He goes on to describe the level and manifestations of that rage. Do you believe this admission undermines or strengthens his argument? Explain.

8. Lewis's tone is complex. He moves between straightforward analysis and raw emotion, yet he is rarely ambivalent about his topic or his position. How would you describe his tone? Refer to specific words and passages to support your response, characterizing the tone as a phrase rather than a single word.

9. Would this speech have been more or less effective if its author were a woman — even one who holds the same professional position as Lewis does? Discuss.

10. Does AIDS still "have a woman's face"? Follow up on Lewis's research to see if the situation has changed.

There Is No Unmarked Woman

DEBORAH TANNEN

A linguist by training, Deborah Tannen (b. 1945) is the best-selling author of more than fifteen books including You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation [1990], in which she argues that "communication between men and women can be like cross-cultural communication, prey to a clash of conversational styles." She also wrote Talking from 9 to 5: How Women's and Men's Conversational Styles Affect Who Gets Heard, Who Gets Credit, and What Gets Done at Work [1995], Women and Men in the Workplace: Language, Sex, and Power [1994]: The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue [1996]; I Only Say This Because I Love You: How the Way We Talk Can Make or Break Family Relationships throughout Our Lives [2001]; and You're Wearing That? Understanding Mothers and Daughters in Conversation [2005]. Winner of numerous fellowships and awards, Dr. Tannen is a professor of linguistics at Georgetown University. The following essay is part of a longer piece Tonnen wrote for the New York Times, "Wears Jump Suit. Sensible Shoes. Uses Husband's Last Name." She contrasts the impact that appearance, especially clothing, has in perceptions of men and women.

Some years ago I was at a small working conference of four women and eight men. Instead of concentrating on the discussion I found myself looking at the three other women at the table, thinking how each had a different style and how each style was coherent.

One woman had dark brown hair in a classic style, a cross between Cleopatra and Plain Jane. The severity of her straight hair was softened by wavy bangs and...
Each of the women at the conference had to make decisions about hair, clothing, makeup, and accessories, and each decision carried meaning. Every style available to us was marked. The men in our group had made decisions, too, but the range from which they chose was incomparably narrower. Men can choose the women, they had the option of being unmarked.

Take the men's hair styles. There was no marine crew cut or oily longish hair falling into eyes, no asymmetrical, two-tiered construction to swirl over a bald top. One man was unabashedly bald; the others had hair of standard length, parted on one side, in natural shades of brown or gray or graying. Their hair obstructed no views, left little to toss or push back or run fingers through and, consequently, needed and attracted no attention. A few men had beards. In a business setting, beards might be marked. In this academic gathering, they weren’t.

There could have been a cowboy shirt with string tie or a three-piece suit or a necklaced hippie in jeans. But there wasn’t. All eight men wore brown or blue slacks and nondescript shirts of light colors. No man wore sandals or boots; their shoes were dark, closed, comfortable, and flat. In short, unmarked.

Although no man wore makeup, you couldn’t say the men didn’t wear makeup in the sense that you could say a woman didn’t wear makeup. For men, no makeup is unmarked.

I asked myself what style we women could have adopted that would have been unmarked, like the men’s. The answer was none. There is no unmarked woman.

There is no woman’s hairstyle that can be called standard, that says nothing about her. The range of women’s hairstyles is staggering, but a woman whose hair has no particular style is perceived as not caring about how she looks, which can disqualify her from many positions, and will subtly diminish her as a person in the eyes of some.

Women must choose between attractive shoes and comfortable shoes. When our group made an unexpected trek, the woman who wore flat, laced shoes arrived first. Last to arrive was the woman in spike heels, shoes in hand and a handful of men around her.

If a woman’s clothing is tight or revealing (in other words, sexy), it sends a message — an intended one of wanting to be attractive, but also a possibly unintended one of availability. If her clothes are not sexy, that too sends a message, lent meaning by the knowledge that they could have been. There are thousands of cosmetic products from which women can choose and myriad ways of applying them. Yet no makeup at all is anything but unmarked. Some men see it as a hostile refusal to please them.

Women can’t even fill out a form without telling stories about themselves. Most forms give four titles to choose from. “Mr.” carries no meaning other than that the respondent is male. But a woman who checks “Mrs.” or “Miss” communicates not only whether she has been married but also whether she has conservative tastes in forms of address — and probably other conservative values as well. Checking “Ms.” declines to let on about marriage (checking “Mr.” declines nothing since nothing was asked), but it also marks her as either liberated or rebellious, depending on the observer’s attitudes and assumptions.

I sometimes try to duck these variously marked choices by giving my title as “Dr.” — and in so doing risk marking myself as either uppity (hence sarcastic responses like “Excuse me!”) or an overachiever (hence reactions of congratulatory surprise like “Good for you!”).

All married women’s surnames are marked. If a woman takes her husband’s name, she announces to the world that she is married and has traditional values. To some it will indicate that she is less herself, more identified by her husband’s identity. If she does not take her husband’s name, this too is marked, seen as worthy of comment: She has done something; she has “kept her own name.” A man is never said to have “kept his own name” because it never occurs to anyone that he might have given it up. For him using his own name is unmarked.

A married woman who wants to have her cake and eat it too may use her surname plus his, with or without a hyphen. But this too announces her marital status and often results in a tongue-tying string. In a list (Harvey O’Donovan, Jonathan Feldman, Stephanie Woodbury McGillicutty), the woman’s multiple name stands out. It is marked.

I have never been inclined toward biological explanations of gender differences in language, but I was intrigued to see Ralph Fasold bring biological phenomena to bear on the question of linguistic marking in his book The Socio-linguistics of Language. Fasold stresses that language and culture are particularly unfair in treating women as the marked case because biologically it is the male that is marked. While two X chromosomes make a female, two Y chromosomes make nothing. Like the linguistic markers s, es, or ess, the Y chromosome doesn’t “mean” anything unless it is attached to a root form — an X chromosome.

Developing this idea elsewhere Fasold points out that girls are born with fully female bodies, while boys are born with modified female bodies. He invites men who doubt this to lift up their shirts and contemplate why they have nipples.

In his book, Fasold notes “a wide range of facts which demonstrates that female is the unmarked sex.” For example, he observes that there are a few species that produce only females, like the whip-tail lizard. Thanks to parthenogenesis, they have no trouble having as many daughters as they like. There are no species, however, that produce only males. This is no surprise, since any such species would become extinct in its first generation.

Fasold is also intrigued by species that produce individuals not involved in reproduction, like honeybees and leaf-cutter ants. Reproduction is handled by the queen and a relatively few males; the workers are sterile females. “Since they do not reproduce,” Fasold said, “there is no reason for them to be one sex or the other, so they default, so to speak, to female.”
Fasold ends his discussion of these matters by pointing out that if language reflected biology, grammar books would direct us to use "she" to include males and females and "he" only for specifically male referents. But they don't. They tell us that "he" means "he or she," and that "she" is only used if the referent is specifically female. This use of "he" as the sex-indefinite pronoun is an innovation introduced into English by grammarians in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, according to Peter Mühlhäusler and Rom Harré in Pronouns and People. From at least about 1500, the correct sex-indefinite pronoun was "they," as it still is in casual spoken English. In other words, the female was declared by grammarians to be the marked case.

Writing this article may mark me not as a writer, not as a linguist, not as an analyst of human behavior, but as a feminist — which will have positive or negative, but in any case powerful, connotations for readers. Yet I doubt that anyone reading Ralph Fasold's book would put that label on him.

I discovered the markedness inherent in the very topic of gender after writing a book on differences in conversational style based on geographical region, ethnicity, class, age, and gender. When I was interviewed, the vast majority of journalists wanted to talk about the differences between women and men. While I thought I was simply describing what I observed — something I had learned to do as a researcher — merely mentioning women and men marked me as a feminist for some.

When I wrote a book devoted to gender differences in ways of speaking, I sent the manuscript to five male colleagues, asking them to alert me to any interpretation, phrasing, or wording that might seem unfairly negative toward men. Even so, when the book came out, I encountered responses like that of the television talk show host who, after interviewing me, turned to the audience and asked if they thought I was male-bashing.

Leaping upon a poor fellow who affably nodded in agreement, she made him stand and asked, "Did what she say accurately describe you?" "Oh, yes," he answered. "That's me exactly." "And what she said about women — does that sound like your wife?" "Oh yes," he responded. "That's her exactly." "Then why do you think she's male-bashing?" He answered, with disarming honesty, "Because she's a woman and she's saying things about men."

To say anything about women and men without marking oneself as either feminist or anti-feminist, male-basher or apologist for men seems as impossible for a woman as trying to get dressed in the morning without inviting interpretations of her character.

Sitting at the conference table musing on these matters, I felt sad to think that we women didn't have the freedom to be unmarked that the men sitting next to us had. Some days you just want to get dressed and go about your business. But if you're a woman, you can't, because there is no unmarked woman.

Exploring the Text
1. What is the effect of opening the essay with elaborate descriptions of the women's dress?
2. Do Deborah Tannen's references to her personal experiences strengthen or weaken the argument about marked versus unmarked people? Explain.
3. What is the effect of Tannen's turning to "biological explanations of gender differences in language" (para. 24)? Does this discussion support or challenge her thesis about marked women?
4. In paragraph 32, what is the impact of Tannen's presenting the television anecdote with the same reference, quotation, or anecdote. What effect does this have?
5. Tannen wrote this essay in 1993. Is it outdated, or is it even more relevant today? Consider her thesis in light of other cultures or ethnicities or time periods. In a country where women's choices in dress are restricted by social mores, for example, is Tannen's claim applicable?
6. In the last paragraph, Tannen argues that women should have the "freedom to be unmarked." What does she mean by this? Do you think an unmarked woman is possible in our culture today?

Sweat (fiction)
ZORA NEALE HURSTON

Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960) came to prominence in the 1920s during the Harlem Renaissance, a flowering of African American culture. A novelist, folklorist, and anthropologist, she first gained attention with her short stories, including "Sweat" and "Spunk." She is best known for her novel Their Eyes Were Watching God (1937), set in Eatonville, Florida, where Hurston grew up; the town was the first incorporated African American community in the United States. Her writing is known for its celebration of African American folk culture, as well as its use of authentic vernacular speech. Hurston's other works include the novel Jonah's Gourd Vine (1934); her autobiography, Dust Tracks on a Road (1942); and an anthropological study of Jamaican and Haitian folk religion, Tell My Horse (1938).

Hurston, who died in poverty, was all but forgotten until Alice Walker took an interest in her. Walker's essay "Looking for Zora," described her personal journey to find Hurston's unmarked grave. The publication of this essay prompted a resurgence of interest in Hurston, including republication of many of her books.