

Why defining is seldom ‘just semantics’

Marriage and *marriage*

Sally McConnell-Ginet
Cornell University

Defining occurs in diverse discourse contexts. This paper focuses on instrumental definitions, which recommend particular understandings indicated by the proffered definiens on the grounds of their alleged superior utility for certain purposes. These purposes can range from facilitating scientific or broader intellectual inquiry to promoting particular social ends. Instrumental definitions are often contested: Describing such contests as “simply linguistic” or “just semantics” is one strategy for resisting ends that the proffered definiens might promote. Dismissive critics draw on a view of defining as just pasting a linguistic label on an antecedently understood concept, a view that neglects the important role defining plays in developing concepts and, ultimately, understanding and social life. Debates over the definition of marriage and family illustrate instrumental defining activity. They are not just about the words *marriage* and *family* but about the institutions of marriage and family. But the words themselves matter because of their place in larger ongoing discourses.

1. Setting the stage

Should *marriage* be defined to exclude or include same-sex unions? Legislatively, the US Congress has answered “to exclude”.

- (1) Extract from *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA), enacted 1996:
[T]he word ‘marriage’ means only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife, and the word ‘spouse’ refers only to a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife.

Congress has, however, voted on but not endorsed the proposed amendment to the US Constitution restricting marriage to opposite-sex couples.

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

- (2) Extract from proposed federal marriage amendment (FMA) (Senate vote, July 2004; House vote, September 2004):

Marriage in the United States shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman.

On the other hand, the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has resoundingly answered “to include,” arguing in the majority opinion from which (3) is extracted that to do otherwise is inconsistent with that state’s provision of equal rights for all its citizenry.

- (3) Extract from decision of Supreme Judicial Court (4-3), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Goodridge*, November 18, 2003:

We construe civil marriage to mean the voluntary union of two persons as spouses, to the exclusion of all others.

It is not only legislators, judges, and politicians offering opinions: many ordinary folk are also weighing in on the definition of marriage. Some say definitional debates are “just semantics,” therefore trivial. Others, on both sides, argue that it matters considerably whether the word *marriage* shall be construed as including or excluding same-sex unions.

Linguist Geoffrey K. Pullum in a posting to Language Log on February 25, 2004 disapproves:

- (4) I twitch a little each time I hear someone talking about ... pass[ing] a law, or a constitutional amendment, that **defines** marriage as being a man and a woman, as if something lexicographical was at issue... This issue is being represented as **linguistic**, relating to a democratic right of the people to stipulate definitions, when it’s nothing of the kind. ... Don’t let them tell me they are revising a **definition**. It’s nothing to do with defining the word ‘marriage’. *Webster’s* has done that perfectly well. It’s about a denial of rights. [boldface in original]

In this paper, I will argue that the recent debates are, contra Pullum, about both definition and language (specifically, about regulating uses of the word *marriage*).¹ I will agree with him, however, that they are also about rights and other substantive matters of public policy.

Defining words is not just something lexicographers do; defining is a metalinguistic practice that plays an important role in intellectual inquiry as well as in social and political life. Why? Defining matters because words do not just label preexisting

1. In Pullum’s defense, I note that he was responding to President George W. Bush’s claim (February 24, 2004) that “a few judges and local authorities are presuming to change the most fundamental institution of civilization... the voice of the people must be heard ... If we are to prevent the meaning of marriage from being changed forever, our nation must enact a constitutional amendment to protect marriage in America. Decisive and democratic action is needed.”

determinate concepts; they often play a role in shaping concepts and in channeling thoughts and actions. Philosophers have traditionally distinguished nominal from real definitions,² the nominal being about language and the real about concepts and reality. The marriage controversy makes clear that nominal definitions often have import that goes far beyond language.

Even what lexicographers do is less definitive than we might want to believe. As Pullum notes, citing *Webster's*, current lexicographers seem to recognize both exclusive and inclusive construals as widespread and include each as a separate sense in their entries.

- (5) Entry from *American Heritage Dictionary*, 4th ed., 2000:
 Marriage 1a. *The legal union of a man and woman as husband and wife.* b. The state of being married; wedlock. c. A common-law marriage. d. *A union between two persons having the customary but usually not the legal force of marriage: a same-sex marriage.* 2. A wedding. 3. A close union: "the most successful marriage of beauty and blood in mainstream comics" (Lloyd Rose). 4. Games The combination of the king and queen of the same suit, as in pinochle.

Italics pick out both the exclusionary meaning encoded in (1) (DOMA) and pushed by supporters of (2) (FMA) – sense 1a – and the inclusionary construal – sense 1d – endorsed by the Massachusetts court.

The current conflict is over whether sense 1a or 1d is to be deployed in certain significant contexts. How will *marriage* and related words be interpreted at passport control points? On tax forms? In settling disputes over inheritance? By hospitals granting visitation rights or recognizing medical powers of attorney? By those trying to protect their children or themselves in the face of difficulties developing in a relationship with another person? And situations like these, where legal arrangements might have force, do not exhaust those where definitions of marriage matter. Which interpretations are in force when parents are talking about adult offspring's life choices? When family reunions or memorial services are being planned? When a parent of a young child dies? Finding that *Webster's* and the *American Heritage Dictionary* recognize that some sizeable group of people do apply the word *marriage* to some same-sex relationships does not answer questions like these.

2. What definitions do

Defining canonically associates a linguistic expression to be defined – the DEFINIENDUM – with something indicating a meaning for that expression, the DEFINIENS. The

2. The nominal/real distinction first introduced by Aristotle is explored in Robinson 1954 (along with many other issues raised by definitions); a more recent discussion appears in Cargile 1991. Abelson 1968 surveys philosophical accounts of definition.

definiens is often indicated linguistically, although nonlinguistic means – pictures or pointing or other demonstrations – can also direct attention to the concept the definer offers as the meaning of the definiendum. In this paper, methods for defining are not at issue. What is at issue are the purposes of definition and, related to these purposes, the grounds on which definitions are or should be appraised.

On the basis of what definers hope to do, I distinguish two kinds of definitions, INSTRUCTIONAL and INSTRUMENTAL. The dictionary definitions of distinct senses of *marriage* in (5) are instructional; the definitions of *marriage* in (1)-(3) are instrumental.

An instructional definition instructs the addressee on some established convention governing what (some group of) language users (sometimes) mean by the definiendum when they use it in utterances.³ Recipients of an instructional definition learn that there is some group of language users with a rule or convention that the definiendum shall mean the definiens in (some of) their utterances. Instructional definitions live in dictionaries, textbooks, and classroom lectures.

An instrumental definition typically assumes antecedent familiarity with the definiendum and its uses in certain kinds of discourses. The definiens offered may be one of the already established conventional understandings of the definiendum as in (1)-(3) above; what is urged is elimination of alternative understandings also already common. But an instrumental definition often urges adoption of a definiens somewhat divergent from though closely related to those already established as conventionally associated with the definiendum. The latter case would traditionally be called a “stipulative” definition, but that terminology suggests an arbitrariness and possibly complete novelty that is inconsistent with the connections instrumental definers generally draw to prior uses of the definiendum. In either case, it is the alleged superior utility for certain purposes at hand of the definitions urged that supports definers’ exhortations. Instrumental definitions live in scientific debates, in discussions of morality or of aesthetics, in courtroom exchanges and legal briefs.⁴

2.1 Instructional definitions

In one of the few extended linguistic studies of definition, Annabel Cormack (1998:4) offers the following:

- (6) A definition can be regarded as an utterance (written or spoken) designed to facilitate the acquisition or refinement of a lexical entry [in the addressee’s mental lexicon].

3. Relativizing instructional definitions to language users and contexts of use is crucial, a point sometimes overlooked in talk of “linguistic conventions”.

4. The closest parallel I have found to the distinction I want to elaborate is the contrast between lexical and legislative definitions drawn in Robinson 1954, but Robinson’s interests are somewhat different from mine.

Cormack focuses on instructional definitions, drawing examples from dictionaries and textbooks. Her formulation characterizes such definitions well, though we should note that an instructional definition may also function to remind or confirm that the particular definiens offered is indeed conventionally associated with the definiendum. Monolingual dictionaries are often consulted to see whether a particular sense or way of interpreting an expression has been "authorized" by respected lexicographers.⁵

This view of definition does not tell us how the definiens offered will be represented in a speaker's mental lexicon. Like some lexicographers, speakers may not draw as sharp a distinction as the linguist would recommend between their knowledge of an expression's meaning and their beliefs about the phenomena which the expression denotes – i.e., their internal dictionaries probably include what many linguists would characterize as encyclopedic as well as strictly semantic knowledge. But no matter what lexical entries are like, definitional discourse suggests that the "meanings" they include are open to change far more readily than other components of linguistic knowledge.⁶

Most readers of definition 5 will already have *marriage* entered in their mental lexicons with something like the proffered definiens for the main "senses" that the lexicographers have identified. (Actually, only card players are likely to recognize sense 4, and sense 3 reports on the apparent conventionalization of what began as a metaphorical extension, conveyed by pragmatic principles rather than by semantic conventions.) Even those who oppose the idea that same-sex marriage should be countenanced typically are familiar with and reliably interpret *marriage* as it occurs in *same-sex marriage*, roughly along the lines indicated in sense 1d in (5).

Nonetheless some of these folks may hold that a relationship's being a same-sex marriage would not entail that it is a marriage, just as something's being an artificial flower does not entail that it is a flower. And there are many others, holding that a same-sex marriage would indeed have to be a marriage, who on those grounds reject the very possibility of same-sex marriages. They claim that having spouses of different sexes is

5. On the authorizing function of standard monolingual dictionaries, see Treichler 1989.

6. Quine 1951 has convinced most philosophers that the distinction between analytic truths, which depend solely on the meaning of the words expressing them, and synthetic truths, which depend on nonlinguistic facts, cannot be maintained. Not all are thereby led to the view that semantic inquiry is a doomed enterprise; see e.g. Lycan 1991. Nonetheless, Quine's arguments do cast doubt on many of the notions that linguists working in formal semantics have assumed: e.g. what Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 2000 call "semantic entailment" and lexically-based contradictions. The semantic analysis of basic contentful expressions is on a shakier foundation than combinatorial semantics and the analysis of such relatively abstract linguistic elements as quantifiers, tense markers, pronouns, negation (see Horn 1987), and argument structure.

an essential feature of “real” marriage. Rev. Vernon C. Lyons, pastor of the Ashburn Baptist Church in Orland Park, IL, represents the sentiments of a large group:

- (7) Same-sex marriage is an oxymoron. If we accept same-sex marriage, we may as well discard our rationality and accept square circles, dry rain, loud silence, low skyscrapers, pure adultery, honest lying, and good murder.
[*Chicago Tribune*, May 18, 2004, sec. 1, p. 20.]

Lyons is applying the contradiction test that introductory semantics texts offer students for identifying which parts of what is conveyed by the use of an expression are due to what it means, i.e. which are semantically significant.⁷ He is unlikely to be impressed by Pullum’s claim that the existence of an entry in *Webster’s* for one sense of *marriage* that is gender-neutral means that *same-sex marriage* is not a contradiction. The same *Webster’s* entry, just like (5) from *AHD*, also identifies a distinct (and first mentioned) sense of *marriage* that is restricted to man-woman unions. For that mixed-sex sense of *marriage*, then *same-sex marriage* is contradictory. Lyons and others on his side in the debate are clinging to sense 1a and refusing to join the community of users for whom 1d has become unexceptional.

Both sides have ignored the fact that what is held to be “essential” to the concept associated with a word can (and does) change through time. For example, American courts during much of the 20th century specified that a rape victim had to be a woman other than the legal wife of the perpetrator, making both marital rape and rape with a male victim contradictory. Their refusal to see marital rape as semantically possible relied on the following doctrine formulated in mid-17th century England by Chief Justice Sir Matthew Hale:

- (8) The husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract, the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto her husband, which she cannot retract.

The contradiction test gives conflicting answers precisely where there is disagreement over which conventions members of the speech community should follow, where there are competing possibilities.

Cormack’s study, focusing on the syntax and semantics of definitional utterances, looks not only at the kinds of definitions dictionaries standardly offer but also at text-book definitions.

Here is a definition from Levinson (1983:16):

- (9) A linguistic scale [now often called a *Horn-scale*] consists of a set of linguistic alternates, or contrastive expressions of the same grammatical category,

7. Chierchia and McConnell-Ginet 2000 appeal to the contradiction test in discussing such examples as whether kiss entails touch with the lips. As that discussion makes clear, it is difficult to assess when we are dealing with a contradiction as opposed to the unexpected or unusual.

which can be arranged in a linear order by degree of *informativeness* or semantic strength.

Textbook definitions like that in (9) are standardly offered to introduce readers to the special terminology of a field of study. They sometimes involve terms or phrases that readers will not have encountered (at least not in anything like the sense identified by the definiens) but sometimes offer what Cormack calls "refinements" of what are probably already existing lexical entries, introducing more precise or limited understandings of a common term. For example, many introductory linguistic texts define *language* and *dialect* in ways that do not mesh completely with the understanding that students reading them will have on the basis of their familiarity with general English usage. But definitions now enshrined in standard textbooks and offered primarily for instructional purposes have usually been offered earlier as instrumental definitions, playing a role in shaping inquiry in the discipline in question. So, although Cormack does not explicitly consider instrumental definitions, many of the textbook definitions she examines began their lives with the instrumental aim of shaping investigation in some area of study, with implied exhortations to others to adopt this refinement of existing meanings. Even elementary textbook writers occasionally come up with new definitions to try to facilitate student learning, definitions sometimes more widely adopted for this end and perhaps also for research purposes.

Textbooks often begin by defining their subject. Levinson's 1983 introductory pragmatics textbook spends 30 pages of chapter one on "defining pragmatics," and Horn 1988, a survey article about pragmatic theory, also starts by discussing the boundaries of pragmatics. Wisely, neither Levinson nor Horn offers necessary and sufficient conditions to determine which phenomena or which investigations are pragmatic; both instruct their readers about previous practice in applying the labels *pragmatic* and *pragmatics* and offer some directions they think might usefully be pursued for deciding on future applications – i.e. both orient themselves instrumentally to the definitional project. In Levinson and in Horn, the definitional discourse is neither purely instructional nor purely instrumental. In general, a definitional utterance may be instructing the interpreter that this is how a particular term will be used in some subsequent stretch of discourse ("in this class," "during this lecture," "for the purposes of this chapter"), precisely in order to enhance comprehension or to advance inquiry. Refinements (see Cormack's definition of definition in (6)) in textbook definitions are often introduced to improve comprehension or to advance inquiry and thus serve instrumental purposes just as dictionaries can authorize as well as describe meaning.

A single definition then can be both instructional and instrumental, having multiple purposes. The important point to remember, however, is that simple reports on existing well-established ("conventional") usages of their definienda are by no means what definitions always or even primarily offer. Many definitions have a hortative illocutionary force: They are genuinely instrumental.

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

2.2 Instrumental definitions

Instrumental definitions try to regiment linguistic practice (usually, only in particular contexts) along certain lines in order to facilitate pursuit of some non-linguistic social, cognitive or technological goal. They go beyond changing lexicons to mobilizing the words in them to serve various ends: enhancing understanding or deepening knowledge, reshaping attitudes and evaluations, or developing a workable and just system of laws. Under a number of rubrics, they have been offered in such varied domains as science and other areas of scholarly inquiry, the value-laden fields of ethics and aesthetics, and, as the marriage debate illustrates especially vividly, in legal contexts.

2.2.1 *Scholarly inquiry: Developing methods and building theories*

The question of the meaning of scientific vocabulary and whether and how it changes as scientific knowledge and theories change is one of the most difficult in the philosophy of science. Rudolf Carnap, e.g., abandoned his early hope that theoretical vocabulary could be “reduced to” strictly “observational” terminology. Carl Hempel points out that “operational” definitions, introduced for purposes of quantifiable precision, do not exhaust the meanings of the terms they help give content to (we can change our means of measuring distance or time, e.g., without losing all the knowledge gained by use of earlier instruments), and offers the view that scientific concepts generally might be “open-ended” but nonetheless be “adequately understood for the purposes of science” (Hempel 1970, rpt. in Hempel, ed. Fetzer 2001:233). In other words, Hempel concluded that science can be done satisfactorily – i.e., can be explanatory and can offer replicable and intersubjectively reliable results – without what are traditionally thought of as complete definitions of theoretical expressions in terms of antecedently understood vocabulary. Open-endedness invites instrumental defining, sometimes restricted to particular inquiries and sometimes urged more generally.

Carnap (1950:3) introduced the important notion of *EXPLICATION*: “the transformation of an inexact, prescientific [or, as he later makes clear, what amounts to an earlier scientific] concept, the *explicandum*, into a new [more] exact concept, the *explicatum*.” Explication, he notes, is often accomplished through definition. Carnap’s criteria for judging the success of explicative definitions include not only precision and “simplicity” but, important for understanding how conceptual refinement of terminology outside the exact sciences might be judged, the similarity of the new concepts to understandings currently in play along with what Carnap calls their “fruitfulness.”

- (10) A scientific concept is the more fruitful the more it can be brought into connection with other concepts on the basis of observed facts; in other words, the more it can be used for the formulation of laws.
[Carnap 1950:5]

Some notion of fruitfulness is typically at stake when instrumental definitions are advanced in the course of scientific inquiry, sometimes as part of a challenge to existing

explanatory frameworks. Linguistics provides many examples, some recent and others further back in the history of the discipline. For example, as a graduate student being introduced to the development of the field of phonology, I read Twaddell 1935, "On defining the phoneme," a paper that examined the consequences for linguistic inquiry of alternative ways of understanding the notion of the basic sound units of a language. For semanticists, Tarski's definition of truth is a familiar example of an explicative definition, one that arguably has born significant fruit in semantic inquiry.

Marriage is, of course, not a subject of inquiry in the exact sciences, but scholars in the behavioral and social sciences certainly have wrestled with how to define it most fruitfully for their purposes. I will illustrate by pointing to a debate begun in the mid-1950s and persisting into the 1970s on how to define marriage, given institutionalized arrangements anthropologists were encountering in various parts of the world that seemed like marriage in many ways but did not fit the one woman-one man or many women-one man models most familiar to them. Eileen Jensen Krige (1974) reviews a number of these discussions and cites the following examples of earlier definitions of marriage:

- (11) a. Marriage and family may be defined as a culturally approved relationship of one man and one woman (monogamy), of one man and two or more women (polygyny) or one woman and two or more men (polyandry), in which there is cultural endorsement of sexual intercourse between the marital partners of opposite sex and, generally the expectation that children will be born of the relationship.
[Robert F. Winch, 1968 ed. of *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*]
- b. A union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are recognized, legitimate offspring of both partners.
[*Notes and Queries in Anthropology*, 1951]
- c. The constituent units of marriage are men and women and this seems to be marriage's single, universal feature.
[P.G. Rivière 1971]

During this same period, Sir Edmund Leach, reviewing a number of different kinds of marital arrangements and paying special attention to a polyandric case among the Sinhalese, concluded that marriage cannot be defined in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions but is more like what Wittgenstein called a "family-resemblance" concept. Leach (1955:183) offered a list of rights, some subset of which he took to be present in all the different arrangements to which anthropologists had applied the term *marriage*.

- (12) [A] marriage may serve: A. to establish the legal father of a woman's children, B. To establish the legal mother of a man's children, C. To give the husband a monopoly in the wife's sexuality, D. To give the wife a monopoly in the husband's sexuality, E. To give the husband partial or monopolistic rights

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

to the wife's domestic and other labour services, F. To give the wife partial or monopolistic rights to the husband's labour services, G. To give the husband partial or total rights over property belonging or potentially accruing to the wife, H. To give the wife partial or total rights over property belonging or potentially accruing to the husband, I. To establish a joint fund of property – a partnership – for the benefit of the children of the marriage, J. To establish a socially significant 'relationship of affinity' between the husband and his wife's brother...[I]n no single society can marriage serve to establish all these types of rights simultaneously; nor is there any one of these rights which is invariably established by marriage in every known society.

All of the definitions in (11) and most of the rights Leach lists in (12) assume sex-differentiated marital roles: man/husband/father and woman/wife/mother. But Edward E. Evans-Pritchard (1945, 1951) had earlier coined the term *woman-marriage* because he observed among the Nuer of Sudan an institutionalized relation of one woman to another that seemed otherwise exactly like the more conventional two-sex marriages he also observed. Rivière claims that woman-marriage, reported in a variety of forms from different parts of Africa, involves one woman's assuming the "conceptual role of male," and Evans-Pritchard sometimes implies such an analysis. Krige argues, however, that Rivière's ploy of saying that there is always "conceptually" a different-sex pairing fails to acknowledge that practices she observed among the Lovedu in southern Africa allow considerable scope for social roles to be filled by either sex, "buying" a bride being one such potentially gender-neutral role. Krige does not cite E. Kathleen Gough (1959) on the definition of marriage, which offers the following:

- (13) Marriage is a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rule of the relationship, is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his [or her] society or social stratum. [1959:39]

Gough developed this definition especially to encompass the marriage of a woman to a "collectivity of men," which is how she characterizes certain arrangements among the Nayar of Kerala (India). She draws attention to her choice of *persons* rather than *men*, however, as extending the definition's scope to cases of woman-marriage. Gough's definition singles out one of the women involved in a marriage; the status of any children she might bear is central to the purposes of the marriage, and it is she who defines marriage. For Krige, too, marriage revolves around a woman whose (potential) children are at issue.

- (14) The only constituent element that would appear to be indispensable in a marriage is the bride. Without a bride, there could be no marriage. [1974:32-33]

As Krige notes, the role of genitor is not only conceptually but practically distinct from that of husband even in different-sex marriages among the Lovedu. More generally, she argues that "the sexual relationship between the parties concerned in a marriage is not, as is commonly believed, central to the institution. Marriage may be entered upon by people of the same sex in capacities that have no sexual connotation" (1974:34).

Both Gough and Krige assume two distinct roles in marriage, which could be called *husband* and *wife*. They also both assume that a woman always fills the *wife* role but allow for the possibility that a woman may also assume the *husband* role. Their conceptions might allow for (some) contemporary marriages of two women though not for marriages of two men. They were writing before the recent movement for rights for sexual minorities had gotten widespread recognition, before advances in reproductive technologies, before adoption rights got extended beyond legally married heterosexual couples. Even so they may have overlooked some cases of their own era or earlier that would have challenged the assumption of sharply differentiated roles or their conviction that a marriage must involve a woman.

Recent anthropologists and other scholars have, not surprisingly, taken a fresh look at marriage and the related concept of family. I focus instead on this snapshot of earlier anthropological debates over defining marriage because these discussions can be more easily separated from the contemporary social situation in the US than more recent feminist scholarship. These mid-century anthropologists were clearly grappling primarily with the question of which definition of marriage, if any, would prove most fruitful for scholars to use in exploring the wide range of social and cultural arrangements found around the world that regulate certain kinds of mutual dependence of adults and also rights and status of (potential) children born to or adopted by one or more of the adults. Their own cultural backgrounds certainly affected how they engaged in these definitional projects, but they were not participating in our current controversy over same-sex marriage.

2.2.2 Evaluation and values: persuasive definitions

Philosopher Charles L. Stevenson (1960) introduced the notion of a PERSUASIVE DEFINITION:

- (15) [T]he term defined is a familiar one, whose meaning is both descriptive and strongly emotive...[T]he definition [aims] to alter the descriptive meaning of the term ... but ... does not make any substantial change in the term's emotive meaning... [T]he definition is used [to try] to secure, by this interplay between emotive and descriptive meaning, a redirection of people's attitudes. [Stevenson 1960:210]

In this passage he illustrates the notion by discussing a literary definitional debate:

- (16) Our language abounds with words which ... have both a vague [i.e., under-specified] descriptive meaning and a rich emotive meaning. The descriptive

meaning of them all is subject to constant redefinition . The words are prizes which each man seeks to bestow on the qualities of his own choice. Many literary critics, for instance, have debated whether Alexander Pope was or was not 'a poet'. The foolish retort would be, 'It's a mere matter of definition.' ... [I]mportant matters ... lie behind the acceptance or rejectance of the tacitly proposed, narrow [descriptive] definition of 'poet'. It is not a matter of 'merely arbitrary' definition, then, nor is any persuasive definition 'merely arbitrary', if that phrase is taken to imply 'suitably decided by a flip of a coin.'" [1960:213]

What does not emerge as clearly as it might from (16) is that the "important matters" lying behind whether or not the word *poet* should be applied to particular creators of texts go far beyond whether we ought to view the creator so tagged in a positive light. Should this person's works be included on the syllabus for a poetry course? Is the person a potential candidate for a poetry prize? Should aspiring poets look to this person as a possible role model? And of course once certain kinds of texts are generally classified as poetic, people need not evaluate them all positively. Still, Stevenson's insight that it is often value considerations that lead to a push to extend, contract, or shift the extensional boundaries of a particular expression is important.

Much of the controversy over marriage arises from the social values associated with the institution and a host of moral and religious judgments about practices associated with it, perhaps especially sexuality and child-rearing but also such matters as long-term commitment, affectionate intimacy, and mutual dependence. Some critics of the historically inequitable institution of marriage have offered definitions that do not so much shift the informational content of the word, what it denotes, as try to encourage others to examine it critically by offering negatively charged descriptions of it. Although these definitions work somewhat differently from Stevenson's canonical cases, I treat them as persuasive because what is at issue is transforming attitudes and evaluations. The samples in (17) come from *A Feminist Dictionary*, edited by Cheri Kramarae and Paula A. Treichler:

(17) Marriage is

"an institution which robs a woman of her individuality and reduces her to the level of a prostitute." (Mrs. Flora Macdonald Denison, 1914)

"slavery" (Nelly Ptashkina 1918)

"a labor relationship [with parallels to indentured labor or slavery, but] the terms of the marriage contract are never spelled out" (Diane Leonard 1982)

"a relation of economic dependence [of women upon men]" (Charlotte Perkins Gilman 1899)

The same source also offers considerably more positive persuasive definitions:

(18) Marriage is

“a total relationship of human closeness which begins with the head and involves a mutual drowning in each other’s depths.” (Ghadah al-Samman 1970)

a lasting relationship in which another person helps meet needs, including those for “sex, love, companionship, shared experience, being comfortable with someone, being important to someone, trust, approval, moral support, help, emotional security, cooperation in attaining a common goal, closeness, affection, touching, feedback, understanding, feeling like a part of something, the need to do for others, the need for personal growth” (Naomi Quinn 1984⁸)

Persuasive definitions are an important subspecies of instrumental definitions: They try to shift or influence attitudes and values, either by shifting or specially highlighting some portion of what the definiendum designates or by redescribing what is designated.

2.2.3 *Legal definitions*

Legal theorist Michael Bayles argues that judges should offer “instrumentalist definitions,”⁹ to be evaluated by how well they serve to produce a “justifiable legal system” (263). Whether or not those definitions happen to be ones that square with established linguistic conventions or whether they would be optimal for non-legal purposes (for the ethicist or the scientist, for example) does not decide the question of whether or not they work well for the law. Practical, scientific, and ethical considerations can, of course, be relevant to establishing what definition might work best in a particular case.

Certainly, some recent discussions of defining marriage have addressed implications for the overall justice and workability of the legal system. For example, the Supreme Judicial Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts offered equal rights, social stability, and children’s welfare considerations to support its gender-neutral defi-

8. Quinn 1984 reports on interviews with a number of American couples on their views of marriage; interestingly, children did not figure prominently in most discussions, nor was there insistence on particular forms of sexuality (though the couples were almost certainly assuming partners of the other sex, given that the possibility of same-sex marriage was not then raised at all among the general public).

9. Before reading Bayles, I used the term “instrumental definition” in talks I gave on defining marriage. I was delighted to encounter his discussion of “instrumentalist definitions.” He focuses on norms regulating legal definitions, contrasting instrumentalists (who believe that definitions should further certain purposes) with realists (who see definitions as specifying what really exists), conventionalists (specifying extant or earlier conventions), and reductionists (who want to eliminate one kind of term in favor of some other). His endorsement of an instrumentalist stance does not mean he thinks that judges should be free to offer whatever definitions they personally favor: There are constraints embodied in the idea of a “justifiable legal system.”

inition of marriage in 3. This brief extract gives some of the flavor of that attention to general consequences.

- (19) [B]arring an individual from the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage solely because that person would marry a person of the same sex violates the Massachusetts Constitution ... Marriage is a vital social institution ... The exclusive commitment of two individuals to each other nurtures love and mutual support; it brings stability to our society. For those who choose to marry, and for their children, marriage provides an abundance of legal, financial, and social benefits [and] imposes weighty legal, financial, and social obligations ... [The] marriage ban [prevents same-sex families] from enjoying the immeasurable advantages that flow from the assurance of a stable family structure in which children will be reared, educated, and socialized. ... It is the exclusive and permanent commitment of the marriage partners to one another, not the begetting of children, that is the sine qua non of marriage. [Extract from majority decision in *Goodridge*, written by Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall]

As we will see, those favoring exclusive definitions of marriage generally agree that promoting social stability and children's welfare are appropriate goals for the legal system: They reject the Massachusetts court's assessment of which definition might best promote such goals.¹⁰

But it is not just consequences for the legal system deriving from the content of definitions of marriage that matter. It also matters just how these definitions enter into the overall legal system. There are some who support an exclusive definition at state levels or even at the federal level as in (1) but argue against (2) on the grounds that the US constitution is not the place to define marriage. Legal scholar Joanna Grossman of Hofstra University provides some historical background on amending the constitution to regulate marriage:

- (20) [S]eventy-seven other constitutional amendments have been proposed that would have given Congress the power to regulate marriage and divorce at the national level. Three would have enshrined the once commonplace ban on interracial marriage in the constitution. But none ever made it to a vote ... The Constitution has always served to guarantee minimum rights and liberties. It has almost never been used to rein in individual rights... There is [only] one limit on states' power to regulate marriage and divorce...the federal constitution's minimum guarantees of equality...[On this basis], in *Loving v. Virginia*, the Supreme Court [in 1967] held Virginia's ban on interracial marriage unconstitutional. [<http://writ.findlaw.com/grossman/20040715.html>]

10. Legal definitions of death have also been hotly contested, and here too there is considerable attention to consequences for the overall legal system of particular definitions; see, e.g., Youngner et al. 1999 and the first case study in Schiappa 2003.

The Supreme Court could, on a similar basis, strike down DOMA or the state laws now being adopted that impose exclusive definitions of those who can marry.¹¹

3. Why the M-word matters

In "Two Dogmas of Empiricism," philosopher Willard van Ormond Quine (1951) observed that (scientific) words are enmeshed in webs of hypotheses, empirical findings, and general principles. He argued that even what we might initially consider analytic truths – propositions true by virtue of the meaning of the words that express them – might be abandoned because of their ties to other parts of the web. We might choose to redefine terms in order to minimize disruptive effects on the larger body of beliefs. Although Quine was focused on scientific discourse, his point, now widely accepted among philosophers, has wider application. We have already seen examples of how what was thought an analytic truth at one time – e.g., "A husband cannot rape his own wife" – could lose that protected status.

The view that it is trivial – "just semantic" – whether or not we include same-sex unions in the denotation of *marriage*, the M-word, ignores the source of definitional disputes: struggles over the future in scholarship or attitudes or public policy of the extralinguistic phenomena now associated with the definiendum. It ignores the discursive web of injunctions and beliefs in which the definiendum already figures and in which it will mostly remain embedded even if the definiens might shift somewhat.

3.1 The legal M-web

It would take volumes to spell out the ways in which the word *marriage* and related words like *husband*, *wife*, *spouse*, and *family* are woven into the legal fabric in the US. Among other matters, state laws address:

- Requirements for entering into marriage: age, medical examinations, waiting period after obtaining a license, no living spouse
- Problems arising in marriage: annulment, divorce, alimony, domestic abuse
- Interests of children or other dependents: adoption, child support, family leave, custody, child protection
- Health issues: hospital visitation rights, information and participation in medical decisions, health coverage benefits
- Economic issues: property ownership, tax filing, inheritance, pension benefits

Federal laws and regulations address some of the same issues and also such matters as immigration status and citizenship, federal income and estate taxes, and Social Secu-

11. Eleven states passed such legislation on November 4, 2004.

rity benefits. There are thousands of different contexts in which state and federal laws talk about marriage.

3.2 The extralegal M-web

Outside legal contexts, the M-web extends not only to moral and religious discourse but to more mundane social talk; I'll consider examples of both.

3.2.1 *Marriage is "sacred"*

The sacredness or "sanctity" of marriage is often cited by those who want to keep an exclusive (mixed-sex only) interpretation:

(21) Why the contract can't be a marriage contract for heterosexuals and a contract of civil union for homosexuals is a mystery to me... Why gays cannot accept or respect the uniqueness and special meaning many heterosexual-marrieds appear to experience by being a part of this group might need to be answered. ...It appears from my point of view that *homosexuals want to coopt or glom onto the sanctity or uniqueness of meaning already thought to be present in the hetero 'marriage'*.

[Posting, 2/25/04, Joe Peden to www.danieldrezner.com, italics added]

(22) I feel like it dilutes the sacredness of my marriage with my wife. It cheapens it and turns it into something of less value. ... I don't see why we have to change the rules to satisfy that tiny group of people.

[Kevin Salts, quoted in the *Honolulu Advertiser* in opposition not only to same-sex marriage but to any legal recognition of same-sex unions, fearing that such recognition paves the way for same-sex marriage]

Those expressing sentiments like those in (21) and (22) do not explain how the existence of same-sex marriage would diminish the sacredness they attach to different-sex marriage. Churches would still be free if same-sex marriage is legalized to refuse to marry same-sex couples, just as the Catholic Church refuses to marry those who have been divorced. But the real issue probably has little to do with the church. Perhaps it's like a band that starts admitting folks to play without an audition so that oldtimers who competed to join the band now complain that band membership no longer "means" anything: Even gay men and lesbians, grumble these heterosexuals, now are admitted to what was once our club. Or perhaps it is because these folks find distasteful the very idea of a homosexual relationship, something they see as sinful, being not only compared to their "sanctified" heterosexual relationship but also legitimated by marriage.

For some, marriage is considered sacred because it is considered a lifetime exclusive commitment to someone one loves deeply. It is on grounds like these that the "sanctity" of marriage is also cited by some supporting the inclusive interpretation (extending to same- as well as different-sex unions):

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

- (23) Especially for religious people, marriage makes a statement that 'this is someone I love and will grow old with'. When you're just 'partners' or 'living together' they think ... 'you know, every day a new lover'. With marriage, the commitment is real, and they believe it.

[Quote from Anne-Marie Thus of the Netherlands, who in 2001 married Helene Faasen, her long-time partner and co-parent; note that theirs is a civil and not a church-sanctioned marriage; www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/03/04/world/printable604084.shtml]

But the "sanctity" area of the M-web is a messy one. Seeing marriage as a matter of long-term commitment and the only site for "legitimate" sexual activity is threatened by the high rates of divorce now current as well as by widespread extramarital, including premarital, sexual activity. And the status of marriage as a religious "sacrament" lacks the long pedigree that many assume. Historically, marriage in Europe is first primarily economic and only after many centuries "sanctified" officially by Christian churches:

- (24) The Church struggles throughout to induce people to solemnize their unions in church or in the presence of priests, "in the face of the church", as they put it. But before the Council of Trent, c. 1570 in the full force of Counter-Reformation, they never managed to make it required by law. Prior to that date, you can say that marriages were independent contracts, often followed by church ceremonies and often taking place just outside (significantly) the church door. ...Property matters outside, souls (if desired) within. ... Of course, to lay people marriage was largely a business matter at all social levels. It can be analyzed in terms of the question: watch the money. See in what direction dowries, bride-prices etc. moved, and then think marriage market.

[personal communication, Paul Hyams, professor of history, Cornell University]

3.2.2 *Marriage is about family and children*

Although there are many heterosexual marriages without children (often as a matter of choice) and many in which there are no connections to the natal families of either spouse, marriage is strongly associated with expectations of children. Those supporting heterosexual exclusivity often speak of children's interests.

- (25) [If same-sex marriages are allowed, then marriage will no longer be a carrier of the message that children need mothers and fathers. Instead the law will legitimate the principles of family diversity: that adults get to form the families they choose and children will resiliently adjust. Or not, but who cares?

[Maggie Gallagher, cited http://www.leaderu.com/focus/redefining_marriage.html, March 22, 2004]

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

- (26) Ages of experience have taught humanity that the commitment of a husband and wife to love and to serve one another promotes the welfare of children and the stability of society.
[President George W. Bush, February 24, 2004, statement supporting DOMA, (1), and FMA, (2)]

But the other side is also concerned for children's welfare. Perhaps most notably, the Goodridge decision, summarized in (19), argued that forbidding same-sex marriage

- (27) works a deep and scarring hardship [on same-sex families] for no rational reason. [It prevents children of same-sex couples] from enjoying the immeasurable advantages that flow from the assurance of a stable family structure in which children will be reared, educated, and socialized ... It cannot be rational under our laws to penalize children by depriving them of State benefits because of their parents' sexual orientation.

And conservative columnist Andrew Sullivan (2004) argues that children growing up in families with heterosexual parents may also benefit from the more inclusive concept:

- (28) [My Catholic family taught me that what] really mattered was family and the love you had for one another. ... The most important day of your life was when you got married. It was on that day that all your friends and all your family got together to celebrate the most important thing in life: your happiness – your ability to make a new home, to form a new but connected family, to find love that put everything else into perspective. ... This isn't about gay marriage. It's about marriage. It's about family. It's about love ... *Putting gay relationships in some other category – civil unions, domestic partnerships, whatever – may alleviate real human needs, but by their very euphemism, by their very separateness, they actually build a wall between gay people and their families* (italic added). They put back the barrier many of us have spent a lifetime trying to erase ... I want [a kid like me] to know that his love has dignity, that he does indeed have a future as a full and equal part of the human race. Only marriage will do that. Only marriage can bring him home.

4. Where the M-word has been

Some oppose making marriage more inclusive on the grounds that it is an inherently unchanging institution, the same in different cultures and throughout history:

- (29) The union of a man and woman is the most enduring human institution, honoring – honored and encouraged in all cultures and by every religious faith.
[President George W. Bush, February 24, 2004]

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

We have already seen that marriage is diverse across cultures and that it has changed through time. But given the frequent references to the Bible in these debates, it is instructive to consider how the FMA in (2) might need to be reworded if historical precedents recorded biblically were followed:

- (30) A. Marriage in the United States shall consist of a union between one man and one or more women. (Gen 29:17–28; II Sam 3:2–5.) B. Marriage shall not impede a man's right to take concubines in addition to his wife or wives. (II Sam 5:13; I Kings 11:3; II Chron 11:21) C. A marriage shall be considered valid only if the wife is a virgin. If the wife is not a virgin, she shall be executed. (Deut 22:13–21) D. Marriage between a believer and a nonbeliever shall be forbidden. (Gen 24:3; Num 25:1–9; Ezra 9:12; Neh 10:30) E. Since marriage is for life, neither this Constitution nor the constitution of any State, nor any state or federal law, shall be construed to permit divorce. (Deut 22:19; Mark 10:9) F. If a married man dies without children, his brother shall marry the widow. If he refuses to marry his brother's widow or deliberately does not give her children, he shall pay a fine of one shoe and be otherwise punished in a manner to be determined by law. (Gen 38:6–10; Deut 25:5–10)

And it is probably useful to remind non-historians of the profoundly gender-asymmetric nature of marriage in many places until relatively recently. English legal scholar Sir William Blackstone's doctrine of *femme coverture* enunciated in his commentaries said that "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated" into that of the husband. Its persisting influence in 19th century America led Lucy Stone Blackwell and Henry Stone to read aloud the following statement when they married in 1855:

- (31) While we acknowledge our mutual affection by publicly assuming the relationship of husband and wife ... we deem it a duty to declare that this act on our part implies no sanction of, nor promise of, voluntary obedience to such of the present laws of marriage as refuse to recognize the wife as an independent, rational being, while they confer upon the husband an injurious and unnatural superiority... Finally, [we protest] the whole system by which 'the legal existence of the wife is suspended during marriage' so that, in most States, she neither has a legal part in the choice of her residence, nor can she make a will, nor sue or be sued in her own name, nor inherit property.
[Quoted under the *marriage* entry in Kramarae & Treichler 1985:254]

Contemporary marriage in the US has only a few legal vestiges remaining of this profoundly patriarchal past,¹² although the social and cultural traces of it have by no means vanished. It is also instructive to remember the racism operative in the history of mar-

12. Some states, e.g., still have "marital rape exemption" provisions that absolve a man from rape charges in certain cases when he is married to the woman assaulted.

riage in the US. Though unenforceable since the 1967 decision in *Gooding v. Virginia*, Alabama did not repeal its law against interracial marriage until November 2000.

The bottom line is that conceptions of marriage have changed significantly over time, especially in the direction of increased gender equity. Although most people in Anglo-American culture have assumed historically that marriage unites one woman and one man, definitions of marriage and the institution itself keep changing: Most people under 30 see no problem with same-sex marriage and fewer people overall oppose it now than opposed interracial marriage in 1967. Although the M-word has been places that many do not want it to revisit, its future could potentially be open to less problematic understandings.¹³

5. “A rose by any other name”

If our forebears had adopted the wordform that we inherit as *leek* to designate the flower we call *rose*, roses would still smell sweet and leeks more pungent, though we would express such facts differently than we now do. Those who dismiss definitional debates as insubstantial because they concern linguistic conventions and not “real” matters often cite the Shakespearean question “What’s in a name?”, assuming that the answer is “Nothing.” They forget that the context of that query from Juliet makes clear that there may be much indeed in a name.

(32) What’s in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call’d,
Retain that dear perfection which he owes
Without that title.
[W. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene II.]

The very next line is “Romeo, doff thy name”, and then the two young lovers engage in a fantasy of ridding themselves of the names that place them in the Montague-Capulet conflict destined to overwhelm their love for one another: Both Romeo and Juliet know that their family names do not just differ but symbolize their families’ enmity. Their own and others’ actions and attitudes have been shaped by the family alliances and rivalries their names evoke. The rose, in contrast, is unaware of and unaffected by its label. Juliet’s question is rhetorical: She wishes desperately that the answer were “nothing” but knows full well that it is not. Yet Shakespeare’s point has often been

13. Some feminists decline to marry because of the sexism still infecting the institution, others shun marriage because of its ties to heterosexual privilege, others think civil marriage (especially if children are not involved) an inappropriate intervention of the state in private matters of sexuality. For many reasons, not all who oppose discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation are pushing for same-sex marriage.

misunderstood and, not surprisingly, many have tried to enlist his help to dismiss definitional debates over marriage.

5.1 Shakespeare in Massachusetts: 'merely' semantics

Shortly after the Massachusetts Supreme Court issued its historic Goodridge ruling, the Massachusetts legislature scurried to come up with something. They formulated a measure reserving the word *marriage* for unions of heterosexual couples but offering "otherwise equivalent" civil unions for same-sex couples. They then asked the Court whether this proposed legislation would comply with the requirements of the Constitution of the Commonwealth and of its Declaration of Rights. On February 3, 2004, the Court answered "no", reviewing the opinion in the initial Goodridge decision and explaining why the proposed remedy would not work. At the same time Associate Justice Martha B. Sosman offered a dissenting opinion, calling on Shakespeare as her ally:

- (33) The insignificance of according a different name to the same thing has long been recognized. [cites (32)] There is, from the amici on one side, an implacable determination to retain some distinction, however trivial, between the institution created for same-sex couples and the institution that is available to opposite-sex couples. And, from the amici on the other side, there is an equally implacable determination that no distinction, no matter how meaningless, be tolerated. As a result, we have a pitched battle over who gets to use the "m" word.

[Footnote 6, dissenting opinion]

In the main text of her dissent, Sosman says: "Under this proposed bill, there are no substantive differences left to dispute – there is only, on both sides, a squabble over the name to be used." Sosman also, it should be noted, dissented from the original opinion extending civil marriage in Massachusetts to same-sex unions.

5.2 Shakespeare in Massachusetts: names do matter

Although not engaging directly with the question of whether the Shakespearean lines really should be read as showing that names do not matter, the majority opinion, written by Chief Justice Margaret H. Marshall, does take on Associate Justice Sosman's recruitment of Shakespeare.

- (34) The bill's absolute prohibition of the use of the word "marriage" by "spouses" who are the same sex is more than semantic. The dissimilitude between the terms "civil marriage" and "civil union" is not innocuous; it is a considered choice of language that reflects a demonstrable assigning of same-sex, largely homosexual, couples to second-class status. The denomination of this diffe-

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

rence by the separate opinion of Justice Sosman (separate opinion) as merely a “squabble over the name to be used” so clearly misses the point that further discussion appears to be useless. (Footnote 4: The separate opinion enlists Shakespeare in the cause of trying to convince us that words are unimportant. But whatever may pertain to two teenagers in love does not disguise the importance of the choice of words employed by the government to discriminate between two groups of persons regulated in their conduct by the government. The separate opinion fails to appreciate that it is not the word “union” that incorporates a pejorative value judgment, but the distinction between the words “marriage” and “union.” If, as the separate opinion suggests, the Legislature were to jettison the term “marriage” altogether, it might well be rational and permissible. What is not permissible is to retain the word for some and not for others, with all the distinctions thereby engendered.) If, as the separate opinion posits, the proponents of the bill believe that no message is conveyed by eschewing the word “marriage” and replacing it with “civil union” for same-sex “spouses,” we doubt that the attempt to circumvent the court’s decision in *Goodridge* would be so purposeful. For no rational reason the marriage laws of the Commonwealth discriminate against a defined class; no amount of tinkering with language will eradicate that stain. The bill would have the effect of maintaining and fostering a stigma of exclusion that the Constitution prohibits. It would deny to same-sex “spouses” only a status that is specially recognized in society and has significant social and other advantages.

In other words, the court is saying that the laws of Massachusetts should be amended so that whatever civil marriage it regulates is one defined in gender-neutral terms, allowing that Massachusetts might eliminate marriage from its jurisdiction altogether and confine its regulations to civil unions that do not specify the sex of the participants.

Those who see definitional debates as “mere squabbles over words”, as “just semantics”, are thinking of them as like discussions over which of several different labels (*lily*, *rose*, *dahlia*) ought to be attached to a particular plant, the rose: They assume that the definiens is unproblematically in place, just waiting for one definiendum or another to be attached to it. Back before any of these labels had a history, there would be no reason to care. But to continue the flower analogy: Suppose we have a large web of beliefs about and attitude towards roses. Roses should be planted in every garden, roses are the flowers to give on happy occasions, and so on. There might then be a substantive question whether horticultural, gift-giving, and other values might be better promoted if we expanded the *rose* category for such non-botanical purposes to include a couple of other species, say the lily and the dahlia.

Of course, as Shakespeare so astutely saw, talk about roses – or lilies or dahlias – will never have the significance of talk about families or marriage. He also seems to have had an inclusive stance towards marriage:

(35) Let me not to the marriage of true minds

Admit impediments ...
[Sonnet 116]

References

- Abelson, R. 1968. Definition. In P. Edwards, ed., *Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Volume 1*. New York: Macmillan. 314–324.
- Bayles, M.D. 1991. Definitions in law. In J.H. Fetzer, D. Shatz, and G.N. Schlesinger, eds., *Definitions and Definability: Philosophical Perspectives*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 253–267.
- Cargile, J. 1991. Real and nominal definitions. In J.H. Fetzer, D. Shatz, and G.N. Schlesinger, eds., *Definitions and Definability: Philosophical Perspectives*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 21–50.
- Carnap, R. 1962. *Logical Foundations of Probability*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Chierchia, G. and S. McConnell-Ginet. 2000. *Meaning and Grammar: An Introduction to Semantics*, 2nd edition. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cormack, A. 1998. *Definitions: Implications for Syntax, Semantics, and the Language of Thought*. New York: Garland.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1945. *Some Aspects of Marriage and the Family among the Nuer*. Rhodes-Livingstone Institute Papers 11.
- Evans-Pritchard, E.E. 1951. *Kinship and Marriage among the Nuer*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gough, H.K. 1959. The Nayars and the definition of marriage. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 89:23–34.
- Hempel, C. 1970. On the 'standard conception' of scientific theories. Reprinted in J. Fetzer, ed., 2001, *The Philosophy of Carl G. Hempel: Studies in Science, Explanation, and Rationality*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 218–236.
- Horn, L.R. 1987. *A Natural History of Negation*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Horn, L.R. 1988. Pragmatic theory. In F.J. Newmeyer, ed., *Linguistics: The Cambridge Survey I, Linguistic theory: Foundations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 113–145.
- Kramarae, C. and P.A. Treichler, eds. 1985. *A Feminist Dictionary: In our own Words*. London: Pandora Press.
- Krige, E.J. 1974. Woman-marriage, with special reference to the Lovedu – its significance for the definition of marriage. *Africa* 44:11–37.
- Leach, R. 1955. Polyandry, inheritance and the definition of marriage: With particular reference to Sinhalese customary law. *Man* 199:182–186.
- Levinson, S.C. 1983. *Pragmatics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Lycan, W.G. 1991. Definition in a Quinean world. In J.H. Fetzer, D. Shatz, and G.N. Schlesinger, eds., *Definitions and Definability: Philosophical Perspectives*. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 111–131.
- Quine, W.V.O. 1951. Two dogmas of empiricism. *Philosophical Review* 60:20–43.
- Robinson, R. 1954. *Definition*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press.
- Schiappa, E. 2003. *Defining reality: Definitions and the politics of meaning*. Carbondale/Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Stevenson, C.L. 1960. *Ethics and Language*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY

- Sullivan, A. 2004. Why the M-word matters to me. *Time* 2/6/04. [Retrieved from www.time.com/time]
- Treichler, P.A. 1989. From discourse to dictionary: How sexist meanings are authorized. In F.W. Frank and P.A. Treichler, eds., *Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical Approaches and Guidelines for Nonsexist Usage*. New York: Modern Language Association. 51–79.
- Twaddell, W.F. 1935. *On Defining the Phoneme*. Baltimore: LSA.
- Youngner, S.J., R.M. Arnold, and R. Schapiro, eds. 1999. *The Definition of Death: Contemporary Controversies*. Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins Press.

UNCORRECTED PROOFS
© JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY