In an attempt to round out my ethnographic look into the ways in which one sex talks about the other, I have decided to use 3 friends of mine, all female and all roommates. The names of these girls are Miljana Pavlovich, Talia Petrosino, and Lucy Sachtlebaum. I chose the first segment of my recording because it gave a good understanding of the inherent respect shown by females to the males being discussed. I chose the second segment of my recording to show that females use a variety of methods to exhibit respect in their everyday lives. Specifically, tanning is one of the ways that females look and feel better not only for themselves but for those around them as well. It is implied that because all of these women are interested in male partners that improving looks is not only for themselves and their friends but also the males they interact with on a daily basis. For these reasons I was able to arrive at the notion that while both sexes talk about the other on a regular basis, I believe in general women do so in ways that are more respectful.

In the opening segment of my fieldnotes, Miljana brings up the fact that Jason, a friend of the girls participating, has a brother who is currently in the process of applying to Stanford with a serious chance of getting accepted. Talia in response to the news that Jason’s brother is most likely going to Stanford exclaims, “wow” (line 15). Not only do I believe she is surprised to hear this news but also quite impressed. If you listen carefully it is clear that she is initially speechless and after a short pause replies, “wow”. It is pretty
clear that this news impresses her and sparks a newfound interest and respect, judging by her lack of response. The social business for Talia is less so directed towards getting something out of Jason and his brother because they were not present at the time she got the news. But instead is more about building Talia’s identity as someone who admires those of intelligence and strong work ethic.

In the following segment of my fieldnotes, tanning is introduced in the context of attempting to improve ones looks. Tanning however, has lots of unexpected side effects such as an increased chance of cancer as well as the possibility of skin getting, “bumpy” (line 27). Apparently, there was an issue last year in which girls went in for tans and came out with a skin disease. Tanning is an act that is as much for the person getting the tan as it is for the people the person tanning is trying to impress. In fact, Miljana states, “A lot of girls say they feel prettier with a tan” (line 14). Of course this is to the benefit of the person tanning. But tanning is also a means of improving your looks as a means to dress up or impress other people, like makeup. The difference being tanning has lots of cons as stated above whereas makeup is simply a time commitment. This is another example of ways in which females, who tan more often than men do, go out of their way to look good for those around them. With this idea of dressing up and looking good for others comes an added level of respect that recognizes the other person and says I care about how I look in front of you. Much like how Maltz and Borker wrote, “women show a greater tendency to use the pronouns ‘you’ and ‘we’, which explicitly acknowledge the existence of the other [person]” (170). This just goes to show how in general women go out of their way to be more respectful.
One last way in which the females are more respectful of males are the times in which they use cuss words. In the 3 minutes of segmented transcription not a single cuss word was used by any of the three female participants. Murray says that, “81% of the females claim to use dirty words only in the presence of members of the same gender” (236). Again this is another way in which females tend to speak to males with more respect than males do to females. This could very well be something that stems from a culture encouraging women to be more passive and reserved in everyday life. However, that does not change the fact that it is still another way in which females conduct themselves with a higher respect for those around them. In conclusion, women act with a general higher regard for others.

Works Cited