

GENERIC PRONOUN CHOICE AS
A MEASURE OF 'CONCRETE' BEHAVIOURAL INTENT

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the generic pronominal choices that men and women make in a variety of male-oriented, female-oriented and sex-neutral sentences. Responses are also analyzed in relation to a behavioural intent measure concerning pronoun change. It is shown that behaviours (pronominal choices) and attitudes (behavioural intent) are not always aligned with each other, especially among female subjects. Many females in the study repeatedly chose 'generic' he in sex-neutral sentences, and yet expressed a desire to see a gender-exclusive (but otherwise neutral) inscription changed to a gender-inclusive form. This opposition was not as prevalent among male subjects.

I. Introduction

Much has been written in recent years on the generic or pseudo-generic he. Moulton, Robinson and Elias (1978) note that the relationship between language and sexism was discussed as early as 1895 by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Stanton (1895, 1898) recommended that the 'dual pronoun' they be used instead of he, his or man. Charlotte Stopes (1908) argued that 'woman' will always be included in the word 'man' when there is a penalty to be incurred, but will be excluded from the interpretation when a privilege is to be conferred. Recent research (e.g. Bate 1975, Downey 1979, Falco 1977, Farwell 1973, Morton 1972, Murray 1973, Strainchamps 1971) suggest that the use of 'generic' he may serve to perpetuate the secondary social status of women in several ways. Because, as Murray (1973) comments, its use implies that all people are male until proven otherwise, 'generic' he operates to exclude women. Further, the marked pronominal category of 'female' usually carries negative, contemptuous connotations (cf. Miller & Swift 1972, Saporta 1974, Stanley & Robbins 1978, Veach 1979). Moreover, research suggests that 'generic' he may have detrimental effects on females' performance in psychological and educational tests (Selkow 1984), may discourage female applicants in employment-seeking situations (Bem & Bem 1973), and may limit comprehension and lead to poorer self-concept in females (e.g. MacKay 1983; MacKay & Konishi 1980).

Numerous studies (e.g. Blaubergs 1978, DeStefano, Kuhner & Pepinsky 1978, Harrison 1975, Harrison & Passero 1975, Kidd 1971, MacKay 1980, Moulton et al. 1978, Shimanoff 1977, Wilson 1978) have found that both children and adult subjects overwhelmingly interpret 'generic' he to mean male - not male or female. Prescriptive he is not neutral. In 1977, the American Psychological Association published 'Guidelines for Non-sexist Language in APA Journals,' predicated on findings that 'prescriptive he clearly influences normal comprehension in such a way as to create or maintain sex bias' (MacKay 1980:448). Germane to the present study is Falco's (1977) assertion that, because behavioural change tends to precede attitudinal change, efforts should be directed toward changing behaviours. Implicit in her assertion is that language should be considered a critical behaviour.

Several studies have investigated use of the generic he via sentence completion tasks. Martyna (1980) found that, among a sample of 400 subjects, he was preferred by 65% in sex-neutral sentences, only a very small percentage chose she (5%), while 30% opted for other pronominal alternatives, such as they, or he and she. In male-related sentences, 96% of subjects selected he; in female-related sentences, she was used in 87% of cases. The Martyna study also examined the effects of subject sex on pronominal choice. The females of the sample proved to use he somewhat less than did males in all three types of sentences, especially neutral ones; they also opted for she more than did males in female-related and neutral sentences. While this study did not employ any statistical testing, the data seem to suggest that, as of 1980 at least, generic he was still widely used by both males and females, even when the sentence was neutral in orientation.

The present study is similar to the Martyna investigation, in that it concerns itself with analysis of non sex-specific and sex-specific pronoun use in a sentence-completion task involving neutral, female-oriented and male-oriented sentence types. One of the hypotheses of the study is that males will make more 'traditional' pronoun choices than will females, even though this difference might not prove statistically significant. While results from the Martyna study found that females used he somewhat less in all three types of sentences, it is expected that continuing societal changes regarding sexist language will serve to reduce the discrepancy between male and female pronoun choices seven years later. Media attention, and government and industry response to the sexist language issue, have become increasingly pro-active. In Canada, for example, the Canadian Association of Broadcasters recently issued its members a guide for non-sexist language. Additionally, recent psychology and linguistics university textbooks (e.g. Brown 1983, Fasold 1984, Mook 1987) have taken great care to insure that

both male and female referents are used equally in examples. Thus, as gender-inclusive language becomes more commonplace, one might expect this to be reflected in the current data.

In order to examine language attitudes, in addition to linguistic behaviours, the present investigation goes beyond the Martyna (1980) study by introducing a further measure of analysis. The observation has been made that much of the research on the use of 'generic' he has involved analysis of texts, or sentence completion tasks. Bodine (1976: 192) points out '[since] frequency is too straightforward a question to require experimentation, further investigation should be based ... on observations in different social settings and involving different topics.' MacKay (1979) has argued that 'the wrong type of thought' has been explored in relation to language. He suggests that asking people to provide pronouns in tasks using occupational class, or traditionally sex-specific roles, involves having them rely not on evaluative processes, but on language-independent processes. That is, we might well expect more people to use he and him in sentences referring to chemists, pilots and so forth, because (according to MacKay) we survey our minds for real-life knowledge of 'what's actually out there.' Evaluative processes, by contrast, do not involve the use of such extensive, reliable data. How people feel about pronouns, then, rather than what they know about occupational and role ratios, is a more revealing criterion.

Considering this plausible assumption, it is appropriate to consider how males and females will respond to such an evaluative measure. The present study incorporated a measure of subjects' behavioural intent, in the form of their response to pronoun change in an otherwise neutral paragraph incorporating 'generic' masculines.

The primary purpose of the survey was to determine if a tendency to choose 'traditional' or 'non-traditional' pronouns could predict a behavioural intent which is concerned with pronoun change, and whether or not this would differ as a result of sex. Specifically, the research hypothesis predicted that traditional respondents, regardless of sex, would be significantly less inclined to see a need to eliminate gender-exclusive language, and would prove significantly less committed to change in favor of gender-inclusive language than would less traditional respondents. Since it is likely that more women than men would be affected by feminist beliefs, it was also hypothesized that males with a 'traditional' orientation would be less committed to language change than would 'traditional' females; among 'non-traditional' respondents, a greater proportion of females could be expected to display commitment to language change than their male counterparts.

2. Methodology

2.1 The questionnaire

A written questionnaire involving five different components was presented to subjects.¹ Part I consisted of a Social Desirability Scale, one of the two screening measures used in the study. This scale was composed of a standard questionnaire set, as developed by Crowne and Marlowe (1964); it was employed to detect those subjects who might wish to present themselves favourably to the experimenter, either knowingly or unknowingly, so that responses would not reflect their actual attitudes and beliefs. The second screening device was a short Demographics Questionnaire, which immediately followed Part II.

Part II constituted one of the two major components of the questionnaire. It consisted of a sentence completion set involving 36 sentences. Six of these contained references to traditionally female roles or occupations (e.g., librarian), six contained references to traditionally male roles or occupations (e.g., scientist), ten were irrelevant, calling for no pronoun choice, and fourteen were neutral (e.g., jogger). Placement of the sentences was determined randomly, using G.E. Dallal's PC-PLAN (1985), a computer program allowing the creation of random tables.

The second major questionnaire component, Part III, consisted of a Behavioural Intent Measure (B.I.). This section presented subjects with a paragraph representing an inscription that contained the masculine generics man and him.² Subjects were asked five questions designed to assess their degree of commitment to changing these forms to gender-inclusive alternatives, such as people, men and women, and them.

Part IV of the questionnaire was a qualitatively evaluated comment sheet, in which subjects were asked to respond to the nature of the survey and give their feelings about it.

Parts III and IV of the questionnaire were administered separately, following completion of Parts I, II and the Demographic Questionnaire. This was done to prevent subjects from looking ahead to Part III, and thereby being influenced in their responses to Part II.

2.2 Subjects

A total of 75 subjects in two night classes at York University participated in the study, which required about 45 minutes to complete. Subjects were told that the purpose of the investigation was to examine communication strategies and problem-solving. It was considered necessary to employ this modest deception in order to elicit the most honest responses possible, and to insure that subjects would take the survey seriously.

Those subjects who achieved a score of seven or more out of ten on the Social Desirability Scale (Part I of the questionnaire) were eliminated from the study, since their responses might have confounded the results. The potential sample was further reduced by the elimination of subjects who were younger than 18 or older than 35. Also, only subjects born in Canada or a 'westernized' English-speaking country were included in the analysis, since it is possible that inculturation processes have not yet allowed more recent immigrants to adapt to current norms of North American culture, including those relating to sexist language. The final sample contained only 44 subjects (12 males and 32 females). Given the small sample size, particularly for males, the findings presented cannot be regarded as conclusive, but rather, as a compelling call for further research in this area.

2.3 Analysis

The sentence-completion task of Part II included three relevant sentence types: male-related, female-related and neutral. Pronoun choices were scored as male (he, his, himself, or a male name - e.g., Fred), female (she, her, herself, mother, or a female name - e.g., Susan), or as neutral (i.e., including either a plural or specific reference to both gender, such as he and she, s/he, they, them, people, etc.). Scores assigned for each type of question, by pronoun type, are as follows:

SENTENCE TYPE	MALE PRONOUN	FEMALE PRONOUN	NEUTRAL PRONOUN
Neutral	3	1	2
Female-Related	3 OR 0 ³ (context-based decision)	2	1
Male-Related	2	0	1

Table 1. Scoring Scheme for the Sentence Completion Task

Scoring was in the direction of 'traditional' responses, that is, those that conformed to stereotypical pronoun use. For example, for every male-related sentence in which a person chose a male pronoun, a score of 2 was awarded; a female pronoun received a 0 (strongly non-traditional); and a neutral pronoun was given a score of 1. If person failed to answer a question, or failed to give a pronoun response, the maximum worth of the sentence was deducted from the total. An adjusted score was determined using a relative, or 'sliding' ranking scale.⁴ Thus, if a person scored a total of 46 points out of 65 (e.g. if three sentences were not completed with a pronoun), this would convert to 26 out of 45 or about 58%.

On the basis of their overall scores for Part II, subjects were divided into four main categories - Strongly Traditional (ST), Traditional (T), Non-Traditional (NT), and Strongly Non-Traditional (SNT). An ST orientation is denoted by a percentage range of between 76% and 100%, T by a range of between 50% and 75%, NT between 25% and 49%, and SNT between 0% and 24%.

Scores were analyzed statistically, via the Estimate of Interval for Two Independent Proportions. Additional analysis, using Forced Entry Regression, did not yield any substantially different results.⁵ Analyses were undertaken to determine a) if orientation differed significantly as a function of sex, b) if behavioural intent differed significantly as a function of either sex or orientation, and c) whether or not age influenced scores on either the orientation or behavioural intent measure.

3. Results

While the number of analyses that could be conducted on the data (even given the small sample size) are many, the tests reported on here are far from exhaustive. An extensive item-by-item analysis, such as the one done by Martyna 1980 (albeit without statistical analysis), was not performed. Nonetheless, a number of different analyses were conducted, which ordered the data along various dimensions. Results are presented in the following sections.

3.1 Subject orientation

Table 2A groups male and female responses on the sentence-completion task, or Part II of the questionnaire, according to orientation: ST, T, NT, and SNT. These orientations were also collapsed into two 'overarching' categories: traditional (ST/T) and non-traditional (NT/SNT), as shown in Table 2B. Collapsing was done to determine whether significant differences would emerge when sample size per orientation, over sex, was increased.

Overall, no statistically significant results were found. That is, males and females did not differ significantly on any of the four orientation categories, nor on the two more general categories. Pure proportions are noted here, however, as the small, non-significant differences noted in these Tables may be related to significant findings noted later in this paper.

	Males (n = 12)	Females (n = 32)
ST	(1) 8%	(3) 9%
T	(7) 58%	(17) 53%
NT	(3) 25%	(8) 25%
SNT	(1) 8%	(4) 13%

Table 2A. Subject Orientation
 ST - Strongly Traditional
 T - Traditional
 NT - Non-Traditional
 SNT - Strongly Non-Traditional

(Percentages may not total one hundred due to rounding).

	Males (n = 12)	Females (n = 32)
ST/T	(8) 67%	(20) 63%
NT/SNT	(4) 33%	(12) 38%

Table 2B. Subject Orientation, Collapsed Categories

Contrary to expectations, a slightly higher proportion of females than males proved strongly traditional (F = 9%, M = 8%); nonetheless, as predicted, a overall higher proportion of males (58%) than females (53%) displayed a traditional orientation. When the two traditional categories were collapsed, they likewise included a higher overall proportion of males (67%) than females (53%). As to non-traditional orientations, the strongly non-traditional (SNT) category contained as expected, a higher proportion of females (13%) than males (8%).

3.2 Behavioural intent

Part III of the questionnaire was designed to measure behavioural intent. Scoring for this section was relatively straightforward, as presented in Table 3 below.

	Response	Score
Question Regarding Change:	YES	1
Question Regarding Petition-Signing:	YES	2
Question Regarding Contributing Money:	YES	3
Question Regarding Amount of Money - between \$1.00 & \$5.00:	YES	(score remains the same) ⁶
- more than \$5.00:	YES	4

Table 3. Scoring for Subjects' Behavioural Intent
(A 'NO' response on any question scored zero)

These scores were converted to percentage form, based on the number of subjects in the category being analyzed. For example, when examining behavioural intent scores (B.I.) as a function of sex, if 7 of the 12 male subjects responded 'No Change', then the percentage would be 58% (7/12). These relative proportions were used throughout the analysis, as the small sample size prevented the use of averages (means). Table 4 below presents behavioural intent scores as a function of sex.

BEHAVIOURAL INTENT	SEX		SEX DIFFERENCES
	MALE n= (12)	FEMALE (32)	
No Change [0]	(5) 42%	(6) 19%	M 23% more in favour
Yes, Change [1]	[2] 17%	(4) 13%	M 4% more in favour
Yes, Petition [2]	(3) 25%	(6) 19%	M 6% more in favour
Yes, Low \$ [3] (\$1 - \$5)	(1) 8%	(11) 34%	F 26% more in favour
Yes, High \$ [4] (More than \$5)	[1] 8%	(5) 16%	F 7% more in favour

TOTAL 100% 100%

Table 4. Behavioural Intent as a Function of Sex

Tests for significance were performed on each behavioural intent pair, comparing males and females. In addition, the behavioural intent categories were collapsed into two: Change (C) and No Change (NC). Tests for significance tests were conducted i) on all (C) subjects compared to all (NC) subjects, and ii) on males who agreed to some form of change (C) compared to (C) females.

Of the 44 subjects in the survey, 33 opted for some form of change. This was significant at the 99% level ($p < .01$). A

comparison of males and females with respect to the behavioural intents 'Change' and 'No Change' revealed a higher proportion of females (81%) than males (57%) to be in favour of change, although this finding was not statistically significant. When males and females were compared over each specific behavioural intent (0-4), males proved more in favour of the no change (0), change (1) and petition (2) options, even though none of these proportions proved statistically significant. Females, on the other hand, were significantly more inclined to offer 'Low Money' (B.I. 3) ($p < .05$). A higher proportion of females also proved in favour of the B.I. 4 option of a higher monetary contribution, although this difference was not significant.

3.3 Subject orientation by behavioural intent

All subjects were grouped over the four orientation categories (ST, T, NT, & SNT), as well as over all behavioural intent categories (0-4). Percentages for each Orientation by Behavioural Intent dimension were calculated, and findings were examined for significance. Collapsing orientation categories into Traditional (ST/T) and Non-Traditional (NT/SNT) produced no significant differences in responses on the measured behavioural intent.

Orientation categories were collapsed into the two more general categories (ST/T & NT/SNT). These were compared against the two collapsed categories of behavioural intent, NC ('No Change') and C ('Change'), where C incorporates any form of change from 1 to 4.

While both males and females with NT/SNT orientation were equal in their behavioural intent responses, more ST/T females than ST/T males wanted change. While orientation did not significantly affect scores on the behavioural intent measure, both sex and age were significant determiners, with younger subjects, most notably females, being more committed to change than males or older subjects. This is a critical finding as it suggests a dissonance in females, but not in males, between linguistic behaviour and subsequent attitude.

As expected, non-traditional (i.e., NT/SNT) females proved to opt considerably more significantly for change than for lack of change. Unexpectedly, traditional (ST/T) females opted significantly ($p < .01$) in favour of change. There was no significant difference in traditional (ST/T) males who wanted change over those who did not - in fact, an equal number of males (4 each) opted for each possibility. In the non-traditional (NT/SNT) category, results were not significant but clearly indicated a trend. While

proportionately the same number of males as females wanted change here, the small sample size has prevented significance from emerging. Regression analysis revealed that, when behavioural intent is viewed along a continuum (rather than in discrete units), males display significantly less commitment to change than do females ($t = -2.297$, $p = .02$), regardless of linguistic behaviour on the sentence completion task.

SEX	BEHAVIOURAL INTENT	ORIENTATION	
		ST/T	NT/SNT
Males	NC	(4) 50%	(1) 25%
	C	(4) 50%	(3) 75%
Females	NC	(3) 15%	(3) 25%
	C	(17) 85%	(9) 75%

Table 5. Behavioural Intent No Change/Change in Terms of Sex and Orientation (Traditional/Non-Traditional)

NC = No Change (B.I. = \emptyset)
C = Change (B.I. = 1-4)

3.4 The effects of age

Males and females were grouped by age, and their orientation and behavioural intent scores were noted. Percentages in each age group for 'change' and 'no change' were calculated. Findings are presented in Table 6. Regression analysis indicated that behavioural intent varied significantly as a function of age and sex ($F = 4.1$, $p < .01$). Younger female subjects were more committed to change than older female subjects. The demographics of this sample show that both men and women in the age range 30-35 opted for some form of change in equal proportions (9 of the 12 females, and 3 of the 4 males). Both males and females who did not want the inscription changed in this age grouping were non-traditional (i.e., NT or SNT) in their orientation, which is counter to the hypothesis.

AGE GROUP	ORIENTATION	B. I.	PERCENT C/NC
30-35 Males (n=4)	T (50%)	4	75% - C
	T (64%)	2	
	T (60%)	1	
	NT (35%)	0	25% - NC
Females (n=12)	T (53%)	4	75% - C
	SNT (17%)	4	
	T (71%)	3	
	SNT (22%)	3	
	SNT (3%)	3	
	NT (45%)	3	
	T (70%)	2	
	ST (85%)	1	
	NT (29%)	1	
	SNT (24%)	0	25% - NC
NT (44%)	0		
NT (41%)	0		
24-29 Males (n=5)	SNT (10%)	3	40% - C
	T (50%)	2	
	T (65%)	0	60% - NC
	T (64%)	0	
ST (76%)	0		
Females (n=13)	T (57%)	4	85% - C
	NT (40%)	4	
	T (60%)	3	
	T (61%)	3	
	T (71%)	3	
	NT (49%)	3	
	T (68%)	2	
	T (67%)	2	
	NT (43%)	2	
	T (72%)	1	
	NT (44%)	1	
	T (75%)	0	15% - NC
ST (78%)	0		
18-23 Males (n=3)	NT (32%)	2	66% - C
	NT (37%)	1	
	T (66%)	0	33% - NC
Females (n=7)	T (51%)	4	86% - C
	T (64%)	3	
	T (67%)	3	
	T (58%)	3	
	T (51%)	2	
	ST (85%)	2	
	T (61%)	0	14% - NC

Table 6. Behavioural Intent (B.I.) in Terms of Age, Sex and Orientation

NC = No Change (0 B.I.)
C = Change (1-4 B.I.)

In the intermediate age category (24-29), the most striking sex-based differences appear. Of men in this age grouping, 60% (3 of 5) did not opt in favour of change; all were either ST or T in orientation. However, only 15% (2 of 13) women in this age grouping did not want an inscription change. Overall, findings for this age grouping support the hypothesis.

Finally, in the youngest age grouping (18-24), only one of the three males (the only one with a traditional orientation) was against any change.

By comparison, only 14% (one woman out of 7) in this age grouping was against any change. What is surprising, however, was that all women in the youngest age group proved traditional in orientation, even though 86% of them declared themselves in favour of some degree of change.

The oldest males of the sample, those aged 30 to 35, tended to be more in favour of change than their younger counterparts (75%, versus 40% and 66% in the two younger groups). In contrast, the largest proportion of females favouring change were in the youngest age grouping (86%), with the intermediate and oldest age levels following very closely (85% and 75%, respectively). Older women (30-35) were by far the most non-traditional, but were also the most 'divided' as a group. All three of the older females who opted for 'no change' were of non-traditional (i.e., NT or SNT) orientation, which runs counter to expectations.

4. Discussion

As predicted, this study found women and men to be similar in their orientation, as defined by their choice of generic pronouns. Further, sex proved important with respect to behavioural intent, since males of both traditional and non-traditional orientations were somewhat less inclined to opt for any change in the inscription presented. While the difference in orientation by B.I. between sexes is only marginally significant ($p < .10$ but $> .05$), using the Estimate of Proportion statistic, the Regression Analysis yields no significance here ($t = -1.569$, $p > .10$), suggesting that subject orientation does not vary as a function of sex in any meaningful way. However, the small sample size for males must be taken into account. In addition, the dividing line for 'traditional' versus 'non-traditional' orientations is somewhat arbitrary, and six of the scores were 'borderline' - that is, between 46 and 54%.⁷

In addition, an interesting phenomenon seemed to occur about half to three-quarters of the way through the sentence completion set. Subjects who had been scoring very traditionally appeared to 'switch tactics,' and use more female pronouns or alternatives - especially for the sentence with the referent 'president of the bank' - which occurred near the end of the set. This suggests that the hypothesis was not sufficiently obscured, and that during the set subjects inferred the intent of the study. To correct for these potential flaws, it would have been helpful to have included more irrelevant sentences, to have made sentences less clear-cut, and to have had a panel of independent judges rate each sentence and its proposed scoring key. A reliability co-efficient for inter-judge agreement could then be determined. To test for 'hypothesis guessing,' it might have been helpful to present the comment sheet before Part III was given, or to split Part II in half, to determine if there were any major discrepancies in answers between the first and second halves.

Some of the referents may have served to elicit what MacKay (1979) has suggested are 'descriptive' rather than 'evaluative' pronoun choices - that is, pronouns based on objective, real-life knowledge about proportions of doctors, scientists, librarians and so forth. Still, it is felt that, overall, the sentence completion set contained enough 'neutral' referents to allow for a valid orientation to emerge.

It is possible that petition-signing and money-donating attitudes may also have confounded responses. Subjects who may have agreed to change may not like signing petitions or donating money in general - so that these behavioural intent measures would be independent of any feelings about pronoun change, per se. Findings do not seem to support such an alternative hypothesis though - most of the 'change' measures were for petition-signing or low money. Only six of the thirty-three subjects who wanted some form of change opted for inscription change alone (B.I. = 1). Therefore, the behavioural intent criterion is considered a valid evaluative measure of attitudes about the need for pronoun change.

What, then, might explain the differences that were found? Several interpretations of the findings are possible. The comment sheet evaluations indicate that at least three forces were operating.

Comments such as 'It felt as though someone was trying (unsuccessfully) to manipulate my answers' (from a non-traditional female who wanted no change to the inscription) are interpreted as evidence of reactance. Reactance is a psychological construct which suggests that when people feel they are being controlled or manipulated against their will, they tend to adopt a contrary

attitude or behaviour to the one they feel is being 'demanded' of them, in an attempt to assert their independence. Several of the comment sheets contain responses which could be interpreted as evidence of reactance.

Another force that may have been operating was Cognitive Dissonance (Festinger 1957). Cognitive dissonance suggests that people wish to think of themselves as rational and strive for consistency. Having made one behavioural 'statement,' such as choosing mostly masculine pronouns, a subject would be compelled to make a similarly traditional response on the behavioural intent measure (i.e., make an attitude 'statement'). This would occur because, according to cognitive dissonance theory, attitudes and behaviours that are inconsistent with one another produce an unpleasant dissonance, which people are usually highly motivated to 'correct.' Here, as subjects could not change their answers on the sentence completions (having already turned the form in), they would be compelled to 'follow through' and be similarly traditional or non-traditional on the behavioural intent measure. To express a contrary attitude would produce dissonance. However, except for the traditional males in the intermediate and oldest age groupings, cognitive dissonance does not appear to be operating strongly. In fact, many traditional respondents, especially females, expressed very strong desires (B.I. = 3 or 4) to see a pronoun change - contrary to the action predicted by cognitive dissonance theory.

A third, more plausible factor might have been operating. Bem (1965) suggests that people assess their beliefs and feelings on the basis of observations of their own behaviour. What might have occurred here, especially among female subjects, is a post-assessment of feelings about pronoun use. That is, subjects recognized their own tendencies to respond in traditional ways and sought to 'correct' this behaviour by opting strongly for inscription change. This might explain one of the few highly significant findings - that females far outnumbered males in the 'Low Money' B.I. - and may further explain why so many traditional subjects overall responded in a contrary, non-traditional manner on the behavioural intent measure. This hypothesis is supported by several of the comment sheets. For example, one female subject with a traditional orientation opted for 'High Money,' and wrote on her comment sheet: 'I felt [the survey] showed me how aware I was in terms of sexual/gender bias.' A number of other subjects made similar responses.

5. Conclusion

While males and females did not differ significantly in their pronominal choices on the sentence completion task, females were significantly more committed to a pronoun change. Thus, many females whose behaviour indicated a fairly high traditional orientation, in terms of the number of 'generic' he completions used, were significantly less traditional in their attitudes than males.

Women of all three age groups tend to see a gender-inclusive inscription as being a desirable alternative to the man/him inscription, and in a greater proportion than their male counterparts. Older women, however, tended more often than men to use non-traditional pronouns, but, unlike their male counterparts, several of these women also rejected a pronoun change. Younger women, while overwhelmingly traditional in their pronoun choices, were far more willing to approve the inscription change.

Reactance, as noted, is one possible explanation for these older women's contrary responses. The fact that the experimenter was female and of a similar age may have further contributed to reactance. In a similar vein, younger women might have opted for the change because they wanted to 'please the experimenter,' who may have held more authority in their eyes. This explanation is purely speculative, of course, but the experimenter effect should not be overlooked as a confounding variable.

Donald MacKay (1983) cites studies by Shepelak (1977) and Bate (1975) which may better explain the discrepancy noted between females' linguistic behaviour and their subsequent attitudinal responses. MacKay argues that a person's cognitive framework may affect the ways in which she or he deals with prescriptive (i.e. 'generic') he. A person working within a feminist or egalitarian framework would view males and females as different but equal. Implications to the contrary, such as would be found in gender-exclusive language, would be resented. Under the conformist framework, women would value the goals ascribed traditionally to females, and would accept the connotations of prescriptive he. They would not find the test paragraph in this study offensive, because they accept their peripheral status and passive orientation. Women holding an assimilation framework, on the other hand, would accept, value and seek male goals for themselves, but would reject 'messages about other women' (here, that women should be included in the inscription) - women being a class of people that they themselves have no desire to be associated with.

Both the egalitarian and the assimilation frameworks may have been operating in this study. As subjects were university students,

it seems less probable that the conformist framework was operating, as women who supposedly reject motives such as ambition would not be attempting to earn a degree by attending night classes (presumably after working all day). However, such activity would fit well within the assimilation and egalitarian frameworks.

The egalitarian framework might explain the responses of those who exhibited both behaviours and attitudes favourable to women. Perhaps some of the older women who held unfavourable attitudes toward change were operating within an assimilation framework. But while the assimilation framework might account for the resistance to change, it does not adequately explain why these same subjects would choose gender-inclusive pronominal forms on the sentence completion task. If attitudes indeed 'follow' behaviours, then perhaps, given time, these subjects might become more favourable to change. Conversely, negative experiences may have suggested to these older women (but not the younger women), that 'making it' in a largely male-dominated world means rejecting a feminist viewpoint, while aspiring to and identifying with a male perspective.

In fact, it is quite possible that the younger women in the study may have been enculturated in a more transitional environment - where 'generic' he is still widely used in textbooks, in the media, and in everyday speech, but where more positive attitudes about women are also highly salient and where a relatively greater exposure to strong female role models has occurred.

Overall, results indicate that a significant proportion of females interpret a paragraph with 'generic' he to be exclusionary and that they wish to see this rectified. Conversely, males, while their pronominal choices might be indicative of increasing exposure and/or awareness, do not seem to hold similar attitudes. The fact that they are not excluded from such paragraphs may in part account for the difference in attitude.

However, results also indicate that a significantly greater number of subjects want some form of change over those who do not. Further, it appears as though inroads are being made in the 'generic' he arena, judging from the orientations of many of the respondents. While 'generic' he is still being used in neutrally-oriented sentences, alternatives are also being chosen. Only a few subjects departed radically from 'generic' he, but then only a few adhered strictly to this form as well. Finally, qualitative evaluations based on the comment sheets indicate that sheer exposure to the issue of gender exclusion through linguistic behaviour may encourage an attitude change.

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FOOTNOTES

¹An abbreviated example of each of the main sections of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix.

²The full paragraph, which represents an inscription chiseled in concrete over the main entrance of the Ross Building at York University, is provided in the Appendix as Part III of the questionnaire.

³Using a male pronoun in a female-related sentence may indicate either an extremely traditional orientation (using he for all sentences, regardless of type), or it may indicate a radical departure from tradition (using he only in female-related sentences). Thus, the context of the total paper determined the score on these sentences.

⁴Raw scores were quite variable, in part because not all subjects completed all sentences. The relative ranking conversion compensated for omissions on the sentence completion task by reducing the proportional discrepancies between response sets of varying sizes. Percentage scores were thus calculated based only on those sentences completed with a pronoun.

⁵Initially, limited computational facilities restricted the type of statistical analysis that could be performed. As the data dealt with proportions, the Estimate of the Interval of Two Proportions was chosen. This statistic yields identical results to those that would be found using Chi-square. As the sample size per cell in some of the analyses proved to be so small as to make the Estimate of Proportion somewhat problematic, regression analyses were subsequently conducted when additional computational facilities became available. Results from these indicated that there was no significant difference between males and females on the sentence completion task ($t = -1.569$, $p > .10$), but that sex and age were significant determiners of behavioural intent for both sex ($t =$

-2.297, $p = .02$) and age ($t = -2.233$, $p = .03$). Specifically, females and younger subjects were more committed to change than were males or older subjects.

⁶The third question (regarding monetary contribution, no stated amount) and the first part of the fourth question (regarding amount of money - between \$1.00 and \$5.00) are essentially similar in terms of reflecting subjects' commitment; hence the score of 3 given initially remains the same for an affirmative response to the first part of question four. The purpose of this reiteration was to determine subjects' consistency in responding.

⁷One of the reasons there may have been six of these borderline cases might be due to the ambiguity of some of the sentences. For example, it became apparent that the supposedly 'neutral' referent of parent could easily have been viewed as a 'female' referent, judging from the number of she pronouns that appeared here in otherwise very traditional response sets. Also, while not as clear-cut, the referents victim (neutral) and chef (male) appeared to elicit female responses in otherwise traditional response sets, thus making the overall score lower than it might have been.

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APPENDIX

(Abbreviated Version of Questionnaire)

PART I (Social Desirability Scale)

Subjects were asked to rate the following statements as true or false when applied to them personally. A score of 1 was assigned to a 'True' response in statements 1, 2, 5, 9 and 10, while a 'False' response received a score of 1 for the remaining questions.

1. I never hesitate to go out of my way to help someone in trouble.
2. I have never intensely disliked anyone.
3. On occasion I have had doubts about my ability to succeed in life.
4. I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.
5. My table manners at home are as good as when I eat out in a restaurant.
6. If I could get into a movie without paying for it and be sure I was not seen, I would probably do it.
7. On a few occasions, I have given up doing something because I thought too little of my ability.
8. I can remember "playing sick" to get out of something.
9. I always try to practice what I preach.
10. I don't find it particularly difficult to get along with loud mouthed, obnoxious people.

PART II (Sentence Completion Set)

(In each of the following sentences, F refers to a traditionally female role or occupation, M to a traditionally male role or occupation, and N to a neutral situation. The original questionnaire also contained 10 irrelevant sentences which called for no pronoun choice; these are not reproduced here).

1. After the leader of the negotiation team _____ two members to negotiate, _____ told them to address the issue clearly and _____. (N)
2. When a person is encouraged to feel that _____ has control over a stressful event, the _____ of that event will be _____. (N)
3. When an angel appeared to the congregation, _____ spoke of _____ and forgiveness. (N)
4. As a fashion model, _____ learned that it was important to pay attention to one's _____, even when not _____. (F)
5. The doctor, who was a heavy cigarette smoker, knew that _____ should quit, but it was _____ to advise patients to do so. (M)
6. Opening the front door, the jogger prepared for _____ daily run, but then noticed the _____ was _____. (N)
7. The alcoholic frequently finds that _____ is subjected to a great many unpleasant or negative experiences, due partly to _____ and also due to poor physical health. (N)
8. _____ was known as a great chef, and the best proof of this was in the _____. (M)
9. As a creature with few defenses against the environment, a small child must rely on _____ parents or other guardians to provide the _____ of life. (N)
10. After the flight attendant brought a _____ to the pilot, _____ left the cockpit and began to prepare the _____ to be served after take-off. (F)
11. When the hospital staff examined the victim, they noticed _____ had multiple bruises and severe swelling of the _____. (N)

12. For the Christmas charity bazaar, several _____ helped out by cooking _____ and setting up tables. (F)
13. Being a parent isn't all it's cracked up to be, _____ thought; there is always _____ to be done and never enough _____. (N)
14. _____ liked playing basketball for the sense of _____ it provided. (M)
15. Nowadays, the scientist without publications often finds _____ working without grant money and thus the _____ of research is limited. (M)
16. The patient disliked having _____ activities restricted; consequently the family made efforts to provide _____, which helped somewhat. (N)
17. _____ was a Scholar with a capital "S" - always _____ and well-known for being _____. (N)
18. When the store clerk approached the customer, _____ made a mental note of the _____ the customer was _____. (F)
19. Given the unusually high salary and good _____, it wasn't surprising that the librarian had been at _____ job for over fifteen years. (F)
20. Toronto is the kind of _____ where a driver could easily find _____ blood pressure rising, because there are so many _____ nowadays. (N)
21. A child care worker in a chronic care setting is more likely to find _____ falling prey to "burnout", than would a guidance counsellor in a _____ setting. (F)
22. The president of the bank always kept _____ desk free from clutter, and some employees saw this as a sign of _____, while others suggested it reflected _____ instead. (M)
23. _____ enjoyed being a mortician, although it was frustrating at parties when people _____ about the _____. (M)
24. A good journalist must be _____ when reporting highly sensitive events, and must not allow _____ own interpretations to bias _____. (N)

25. The student asked a lot of questions during _____, and while the professor seemed to like this, fellow students thought _____ asked questions just to _____ and score "brownie _____".
(N)
26. We at Delta U must give special _____ to the humanizing of _____, freeing _____ from those pressures which mechanize the _____ and make for routine _____. (N)

PART III (Behavioural Intent Measure)

Here is a paragraph that is chiseled in the concrete over the front entrance of the Ross Building at York University:

We at York ... must give special emphasis to the humanizing of man, freeing him from those pressures which mechanize the mind, which make for routine thinking, which divorce thinking and feeling, which permit custom to dominate intelligence, which freeze awareness of the human spirit and its possibilities.

1. Were you familiar with the above paragraph before you saw it printed here - that is, were you aware of such an inscription on the Ross Building at York University before today, or is this the first time you have read it? (please check one:)

[] NO, I was not familiar with the paragraph - this is the first time I have seen it or heard about it.

[] YES, I was familiar with the paragraph - I have seen it or heard about it before reading it here.

Suppose that the inscription on the Ross Building you just read could be changed very easily. For example, assume that there is a process whereby the letters chiseled in the stone can be smoothed and new letters put in their place; and assume that this process requires a minimum of tools, taking about half an hour per word, on average. Do you think the underlined words (man, him) should be CHANGED to an alternative similar to one of the following?:

people / them
men and women / them
woman and man / them

(The beginning of the paragraph would now look something like this:

We at York ... must give special emphasis to the humanizing of people, freeing them from those pressures which mechanize the mind etc.)

2. Please select one of the following:

- YES, I do think the inscription should be changed to one of the alternatives given. (Assigned 1 value in subsequent coding)
- NO, I do not think the inscription should be changed to one of the alternatives given. (Assigned a \emptyset value)

Questions (3) to (5) were answered only by those who gave a 'yes' answer to Question (2))

3. Would you sign a petition calling for a replacement of the words "man" and "him" to one of the alternatives given (e.g. "people" and "them")?

- YES, I would sign such a petition. (Assigned a 2 value)
- NO, I would not sign such a petition.

4. Would you contribute money in order to help raise the funds required to replace the words "man" and "him" to one of the alternative sets given (e.g. "people" and "them")?

- YES, I would contribute money for this purpose. (Assigned a 3 value)
- NO, I would not contribute money for this purpose.

5. How much money would you consider contributing to change the words? (check one answer only please):

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No money - I wouldn't contribute | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | \$1.00 | } (Low \$ - assigned a 3 value) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | More than \$1.00 and less than \$5.00 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | More than \$5.00 and less than \$10.00 | } (High \$ - assigned a 4 value) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | More than \$10.00 | |

PART IV (Comment Sheet)

1. In one or two sentences, in your own words, please state what you believe the survey was about.
2. Did you find the survey difficult to understand or complete? If yes, please state why. If not, why not?
3. How did you feel while you were filling out the survey?
4. Have you taken a similar type of survey before? If yes, can you remember what it was about?

2. Please select one of the following:

- YES, I do think the inscription should be changed to one of the alternatives given. (Assigned 1 value in subsequent coding)
- NO, I do not think the inscription should be changed to one of the alternatives given. (Assigned a \emptyset value)

Questions (3) to (5) were answered only by those who gave a 'yes' answer to Question (2))

3. Would you sign a petition calling for a replacement of the words "man" and "him" to one of the alternatives given (e.g. "people" and "them")?

- YES, I would sign such a petition. (Assigned a 2 value)
- NO, I would not sign such a petition.

4. Would you contribute money in order to help raise the funds required to replace the words "man" and "him" to one of the alternative sets given (e.g. "people" and "them")?

- YES, I would contribute money for this purpose. (Assigned a 3 value)
- NO, I would not contribute money for this purpose.

5. How much money would you consider contributing to change the words? (check one answer only please):

- No money - I wouldn't contribute
- \$1.00
- More than \$1.00 and less than \$5.00
- More than \$5.00 and less than \$10.00
- More than \$10.00
- } (Low \$ - assigned a 3 value)
- } (High \$ - assigned a 4 value)

PART IV (Comment Sheet)

1. In one or two sentences, in your own words, please state what you believe the survey was about.
2. Did you find the survey difficult to understand or complete? If yes, please state why. If not, why not?
3. How did you feel while you were filling out the survey?
4. Have you taken a similar type of survey before? If yes, can you remember what it was about?