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THE EFFECTS OF NEUTRAL AND SEX-SPECIFIC TERMINOLOGY
ON SEX STEREOTYPING

by

Natalie J. Malovich

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Psychology

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

1983

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ABSTRACT

The Effects of Neutral and Sex-Specific
Terminology on Sex Stereotyping

by

Natalie J. Malovich, Master of Science
Utah State University, 1983

Major Professor: Dr. Elwin C. Nielsen
Department: Psychology

A study was conducted to examine the effects of neutral and sex-specific terminology on sex stereotyping in regard to two primary questions: 1) whether or not the use of sex-neutral terminology alters subjects' associations to particular words, and 2) whether, in the absence of gender identification, subjects make traditional sex-role assumptions about neutral terms. A third question examined potential differences in male and female subjects' responses to neutral and sex-specific terminology.

Using a semantic differential technique, 40 male and 40 female volunteer subjects described a number of occupations and roles identified by sex-specific or sex-unspecified labels. Descriptions of those identified by sex-specific labels were compared with descriptions of equivalent occupations or roles labelled in a sex-neutral way. Selected descriptions of equivalent occupations not identified by sex were compared to descriptions of equivalent

occupations labelled with the sex-specific terms traditionally associated with them.

In analyzing the data obtained, analyses of variance, along with one and two-tailed t-tests were used. Results indicated that subjects did respond differentially to sex-specific and sex-unspecified or neutral terminology. However, no significant differences were found in the responses of male and female subjects, indicating that sex is not a factor in reaction to sex-neutral language of this type. When scores on neutral terms were compared with scores on traditionally sex-specific terms, no significant differences were found. Thus, for roles traditionally associated more with one sex than the other, the use of so-called neutral terms did not appear to decrease sex stereotyping.

(115 pages)

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent years patterns of sex bias in our society have become issues of widespread concern. No longer are so-called "women's issues" being addressed only by active feminists and women's groups; they are now receiving major attention from professional and educational institutions, as well. The topic of sexism has moved from being an ideological issue to a very real, pragmatic concern as professionals strive to improve the quality of life for all members of our society. A major area which has been identified as being intrinsically linked to sexism is that of language. Various authors have pointed out the influence that male dominance in society has had on the use and structure of the English language. This awareness has led to an extensive body of literature on sexism in language, as well as strategies for change (Key, 1975; Lakoff, 1975; Miller & Swift, 1977; Thorne & Henley, 1975). States Lakoff (1975), "The marginality and powerlessness of women is reflected in both the ways women are expected to speak, and the ways in which women are spoken of." (page 45) Miller and Swift (1977) and others have provided documentation of the bias inherent in much of our language. This bias has been widely criticized by feminists, who view language revision as a necessary step in achieving true equality between the

sexes. Thorne and Henley (1975) maintain that language and society cannot be easily separated, and that speech comprises a form of action, not just a reflection of underlying processes.

While feminists have long maintained that there is inherent inequity in the way we communicate, it is only recently that efforts have been made to counteract and correct problems in this area. Calls for the elimination of sex bias in language have led to the publication of a wide variety of guidelines to nonsexist language by publishers and professional societies. The American Psychological Association's Guidelines for Nonsexist Language in A.P.A. Journals (1977) exemplifies the efforts of professional organizations to eliminate sexism wherever possible. The National project on Women in Education, sponsored by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (1978), has also addressed the issue of sex bias in language and common patterns of communication. It is clear that educators and professionals in a variety of roles are actively working to eliminate sex bias in their teaching, writing, and other professional endeavors. As relevant as such efforts appear, however, one might question how effective linguistic change is in altering biased thinking patterns and the discriminatory actions that result from sexist attitudes. There appears to be a need for more objective knowledge in this area, so that any changes implemented will be directed toward obtaining maximum benefits.

Statement of Problem

As pointed out by Kramer, Thorne, and Henley (1978), the area of language and gender is evolving through the stage of description, and into that of practical application. In the development of actual strategies for language change, a number of controversies have emerged. Bate (1977) summarizes these as focusing on three basic issues: 1) what language forms should be changed, if any; 2) how proposed changes are to be effected; and 3) what benefits will result from implementation of these changes. While the many existing guidelines for nonsexist language are replete with answers to these questions, research in this area is sparse. This is particularly true in regard to the question of potential benefits of language reform. Kramer et al. (1978) note the lack of controlled research on linguistic change, while emphasizing the importance of providing direction for the inevitable changes to come. They also discuss the various proposals for linguistic reform, and the differences of opinion about them, even among feminist writers in the area.

Bate (1978) demonstrated that speakers can change their habits of biased language usage through conscious effort, given the information and professional situations which support change. For the educator or writer struggling to eliminate sex bias from his or her communication language thus represents a logical target area, for it is one in which direct action can be taken. In view of this, it seems important to directly address the issue of linguistic

change as a strategy for decreasing sexism and sex stereotyping. The present study was conducted in response to the current lack of systematic research in this area. Despite the wide range of proposals for change and diversity of opinions expressed in the literature, there is a need for more objective information about how linguistic change may affect stereotypic attitudes and imagery.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to examine the way in which the use of sex-unspecified or neutral language, that is, terminology which does not identify the sex of the subject, affects sex stereotyping. Using a semantic differential technique, volunteer subjects described a number of occupations and roles identified by sex-specific or sex-unspecified labels. This study compared the descriptions of occupations or roles identified by sex-specific labels (e.g., saleswoman, fireman), with descriptions of equivalent occupations or roles labelled in a sex-neutral way (e.g., salesperson, fire fighter). Descriptions of occupations not identified by sex were also compared to descriptions of equivalent occupations labelled with the sex-specific terms traditionally associated with them (e.g., chairperson and chairman, flight attendant and stewardess).

Objectives

The objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To determine if the use of sex-unspecified language evoked

descriptions which were similar to, or different from equivalent sex-specific language.

2. To determine if the use of neutral language had a differential impact on male and female subjects.

3. To determine if the use of sex-unspecified labels evoked descriptions which were, in fact, neutral, or if the imagery evoked matched the traditionally associated stereotypes of appropriate female and male roles.

Hypotheses

1. There are no significant differences in connotation between the descriptions of occupations and roles identified by sex, and those labelled with equivalent, sex-unspecified terms.

2. There are no significant differences in the descriptions generated by female and male subjects for sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms.

3. There are no significant differences between the descriptions of occupations and roles labelled with sex-unspecified terms, and descriptions of the equivalent sex-identified occupations and roles that would traditionally be associated with the roles presented.

Definition of Terms

Female-specific. Terminology or labels which apply specifically to girls or women (e.g., policewoman, sister, wife).

Male-specific. Terminology or labels which apply specifically to boys or men (e.g., policeman, brother, husband).

Sex-specific language. Linguistic forms which refer specifically to females or males (i.e., female-specific or male-specific terms).

Sex stereotyping. Any arbitrary attitudes, judgements, or descriptions of males or females (e.g., police officer, sibling, spouse) hence, sex-neutral terms.

Subject. A university student who completes a questionnaire as part of the present study, and whose primary language is English.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Several areas of literature related to the present study have been reviewed and will be presented in this chapter. Because the area of language and sexism is a new field of study, work done in this area is somewhat limited. The articles selected from the literature for review here either provide background and a conceptual framework basic to the area, or pertain directly to the study at hand.

A subject area in which much of the work involving language and sex bias has been done is that of language use. A brief review of this field of study is presented as background to the topic area under consideration. The issue of sexism in language content and structure is more closely related to the present study, and is thus given major attention in this review. In the study of this issue, the use of masculine terminology to refer to all people is a central concern, and so has been treated here as a separate topic. Likewise, special attention has been paid to the topic of sex bias in occupational and role titles, as this relates specifically to the present study. Finally, the more general issue of linguistic reform as a strategy for decreasing sexism is reviewed. Although this is the primary focus of the study presented in this report, the

literature pertaining to this topic was found to be the most limited.

Sex Differences in Language Use

In the study of language and sexism, two primary areas of interest have been addressed. The first of these is language use, which examines the communication patterns and formal linguistic styles of the sexes. There is a substantial literature exploring this area (Thorne & Henley, 1975). Much work has been done in the study of sex differences in traditional linguistic divisions, such as phonology, pitch and intonation, lexicon, and syntax (Lakoff, 1975). In addition, Henley (1977) has analyzed the sexual differentiation of nonverbal communication, involving such elements as gestures, facial expressions, and use of personal space. Other authors have directed research toward examining perceived sex differences in language use, rather than directly observing speech habits themselves. Kramer (1977), looking at stereotypes of speech behavior, found that the speech of males and females, as perceived by women and men, does not have the same subject matter or the same style of delivery. Of 51 speech characteristics considered by participants in the study, 36 were rated as differentiating between female and male speech to a significant degree.

Edelsky (1976) identified recognition of linguistic correlates of sex roles as being linked with increased competency in children's communication. That is, with age, children become increasingly able

to recognize forms of speech as being "appropriate" for males or females. Edelsky notes, however, that unlike the acquisition of syntax and phonology, acquisition of differential speech by males and females develops much later in childhood, as sex socialization progresses.

Sex Bias in Language

The second major area in the study of language and sexism is that of content or referential aspects of language, that is, the differential way in which we talk about males and females. While the reference systems within our language have been widely discussed and criticized, there has been little formal exploration of how this aspect of language relates to sexism in our society. Work in this area is based on a primary assumption of truth in the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. This is the idea that the structure of our language influences the way in which we understand reality and behave with respect to it. Whorf (1956) asserts that language is not merely a means of communication, but rather, is itself "the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual's mental activity." In this view, therefore, the way we talk not only reflects, but also shapes the way we think, and in turn, is intrinsically linked to the way we act. If one accepts this premise, the way in which we refer to and talk about males and females becomes an important issue.

Lerner (1976) maintains that one's choice of language reflects one's unconscious assumptions. She suggests that words used to

refer to women and men are a reflection of intrapsychic pressures, as well as societal sex-role expectations and values. Critics of proposed language revision, however, are quick to dismiss such views. They contend that linguistic reference systems are a function of habit and convenience, not internal psychological processes. Despite such criticism, research indicates that language may play an integral role in the formation and maintenance of attitudes about men and women, although the precise nature of this relationship is unclear.

Bate (1978) examined the rhetorical process of word choice in a sample of university faculty members by use of taped interviews and a card sort technique. This approach generated a wide range of information about language preferences and practices, and the process of applied linguistic change. This work also provided some insights into the relationship between sex-role attitudes and language. Responses from all but one or two of the twenty faculty members interviewed suggested a close connection between language change and social change. Bate suggests that interpersonal communication may be "the primary mediator between large-scale social processes and individual behavior." (p. 148)

The Generic Use of Masculine Terminology

Given the apparent link between language and thought, and, therefore, between language and sexism, numerous authors have illustrated the ways in which sex bias is evident in linguistic

structure. A primary focus of criticism in this regard is the generic use of masculine terminology, that is, the use of male-typed terms to refer to all people. Chafetz (1974) and others maintain that the lack of a gender-free singular pronoun to refer to a human in the English language constantly focuses unwarranted attention on gender. Even more important, the generic use of masculine pronouns implies that males are the model of our humanness, or that females are the exception, rather than equal participants in life events. Many authors support the view that generic use of terms such as "he," "man," and "mankind" cannot function as genuinely neutral terms, no matter how neutrally they are intended (Burr, Dunn, & Farquhar, 1972; Key, 1975; Korsmeyer, 1977; Miller & Swift, 1977, Moulton, 1977; Thorne & Henley, 1975).

Schneider and Hacker (1973) studied the use of the generic term "man" in an experimental context, to see whether or not this term functioned in a neutral way. Approximately 200 introductory sociology students were asked to select pictures they would use to represent chapters in a sociology textbook. Subjects were presented with sets of proposed chapter titles, some of which included the generic term (e.g., economic man, social man, and political man). Results indicated that, for a significantly large number of students, the generic "man" was not interpreted in a neutral way. Chapter headings that included this term generated a significantly larger percentage of male-exclusive and male-dominant pictures than did those which used more all-inclusive terms (e.g., economic

behavior, society, and political behavior). The generic intent of the term "man" was thus frequently interpreted in a distinctly non-generic way.

Similar results were found in a study conducted by Martyna (1978). In this work, 40 college students completed sentence fragments which presented people in traditionally male-related roles ("When an engineer makes an error in calculation"); female-related roles ("When a babysitter accepts an assignment"); and neutral roles ("When a teenager finishes high school"). The sentence completions were then examined for subjects' use of pronouns. The assumption was made that if the pronoun "he" functioned adequately as a generic term, it would be used whenever a pronoun was needed and the sex of the referent was unknown. Both written and oral responses were elicited to examine any differences in the use of the generic "he" depending on mode of communication. Sentence type--that is, whether a male-related, female-related, or neutral role was presented--was found to significantly influence the generic use of "he" or "she" in sentence completions. For example, "he" was typically used to refer to hypothetical politicians, police officers, and teenagers. On the other hand, "she" was typically used as a generic term in reference to hypothetical babysitters, librarians, and nurses. Response mode influenced this usage, with "she" being used for male-related and neutral sentence subjects more often in written than in spoken responses. Regardless of sentence type, women

subjects used the pronoun significantly less ($p < .018$) than did men subjects. Likewise, women were significantly more likely ($p < .018$) than men to use alternatives to generic pronouns, such as "they" or "he or she."

In the same study, Martyna also attempted to assess imagery evoked in response to the sentence subjects. After an explanation of the experiment they had participated in, subjects completed a questionnaire examining how they had decided which pronouns to use. Specifically, they were asked whether an image had come to mind as they selected a pronoun, and if so, to describe that image or idea. Inquiry was also made about the subjects' typical pronoun usage in discussing those subjects presented in the exercise. Both sexes reported primarily male imagery in response to the male-related sentences, and female imagery in response to the female-related sentences. Surprisingly, however, 60% of the men also reported imagery in response to the neutral sentences, while such imagery was reported by only 10% of the women. The imagery reported by women, as well as men, in response to these neutral subjects was overwhelmingly male. Martyna concludes that for many of the women, use of the generic "he" did function as a neutral term. For the majority of men, however, the use of "he" in neutral sentences reflected sex-specific imagery, rather than neutral usage.

Martyna generalizes these results as being indicative of a learned failure in women to imagine themselves as the subjects of neutral human references. This view is supported by the work of

Nilsen (1977b). From her work with children she suggests that generic use of masculine word forms have a differential, and dramatic effect on girls and boys. She describes a natural process in which boys learn to assume that anything not specifically female is male. Girls, however, must become accustomed to hearing themselves referred to with masculine pronouns. With time and increased socialization, girls gradually lose the process of imagining themselves as subjects in neutral or open ended statements. The exclusionary nature of generic masculine terminology may thus have social and psychological, as well as linguistic implications.

What Miller and Swift (1977) refer to as "the linguistic presumption of maleness" is seen more overtly in a wide range of nouns and descriptive labels commonly applied to women and men. Bosmajian (1972) and others maintain that identifiers such as "chairmen," "spokesmen," "businessmen," "congressmen," et cetera, are biased in that they make women not merely secondary to men, but invisible. Critics of this style of generic masculine terminology assert that such terms cannot function neutrally, even when applied to both women and men.

In a study involving 104 elementary and secondary school teachers, Wilson (1978) examined the inclusion of males and females in supposedly generic nouns. Subjects were presented with one or two sets of key nouns, one containing generic masculine terms such as "repairmen," "cavemen," "salesmen;" and the other made up of

generic neutral terms, such as "cavepeople" and "salespeople." Respondents then identified line drawings which they felt best depicted the key terms. The drawings from which they chose consisted of three inaccurate fillers, which depicted people not named by the key noun, and three "correct" drawings. Of these, one depicted two males, one a male and a female, and one showed two females. Results indicated that significant differences existed in the inclusion of females when using masculine/generic as compared to neutral/generic nouns. The same test administered to undergraduate education majors (Wilson, 1979) generated very similar results. This work suggests that, for many, so-called generic terms meant to include both sexes, do not function in a neutral generic way.

Sex Bias in Occupational and Role Titles

Allegations of linguistic male dominance have been consistently raised in regard to titles applied to many occupations and roles. Nilsen (1977a) illustrates the preponderance of male-typed terms in her observation that the 1964 college edition of Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language contained roughly a ratio of three masculine words to every one feminine word. An analysis of those words that had negative connotations, however, showed that feminine words outnumbered masculine words by a ratio of 25 to 20.

The common use of occupational terms ending in "-man," such as "anchorman," "fireman," and "policeman," accounts for many of the male-typed words in our language. Such terminology has been

criticized on the grounds that it suggests that certain fields are closed to women (Burr, et al., 1972). It is suggested that, in addition to influencing young people's vocational goals, male-typed occupational titles tend to perpetuate discriminatory practices. Stanley (1977) discusses the relationship between occupational and role terminology, and cultural definitions of "appropriate" male and female roles. She points out that nouns referring to active occupations, especially those that imply social prestige and financial reward, are generally male-typed or connote a male endeavor. Stanley further asserts that as women move outside their traditional roles of wife and/or mother, they move into "negative semantic space," that is, semantic space already occupied by males. Thus, even non-typed words such as "doctor," "lawyer," or "engineer," are often qualified when they refer to a woman (e.g., "lady doctor," "woman lawyer," or "female engineer").

A number of occupations incorporate parallel terms to denote females or males in the same role. Various writers, however, assert that these are seldom equivalent terms, usually carrying different connotations (Key, 1975; Korsmeyer, 1977; Lakoff, 1975; Schulz, 1975b). Tiedt and Semorile (1973) maintain that while males and females may carry out the same activity, their economic and social reality may differ. They cite the differing connotations of the terms "waiter" and "waitress" as an example of a role in which women may earn less and/or have lower social status than men performing the same tasks.

Linguistic Reform as a Strategy for Decreasing Sexism

As previously discussed, the broad body of literature on sexism in language and the publication of numerous guidelines for eliminating it, are evidence of a widely held view that language reform can help to decrease sexism. While many stress the need for linguistic change in this regard, however, others view sexist language as a symptom of social inequality, rather than a problem in its own right. Lakoff (1975) argues that linguistic and social change are different processes, with linguistic change being a natural result of increasing equality in society. She suggests that imbalances in our language bring real-world imbalances into sharper focus, and are thus an important clue to what needs to be changed, rather than a target to be directly altered.

Schulz (1975a) discusses a number of problems that may be encountered in the application of linguistic reform. She criticizes use of the suffix "-woman" (as in "chairwoman" or "businesswoman") as implying that significant differences exist between women and men in a particular role. An alternative ending "-person" is considered awkward, and further criticized on the grounds that "men resist accepting the new label." Schulz questions the obliteration of terms by "feminine decree," and wonders if masculine-typed terms are, in fact interpreted as designating male human beings.

Sagarin (1976) and others view language reform as a mistaken target for those seeking to decrease sexism in society. They suggest that efforts in this area may be harmful, as well a

diversionary, by resulting in token concessions at the expense of major issues.

Evidence supporting claims of negative effects from language change was found by Genaur (1977). Her work explored the possibility of a relationship between the degree of male pronoun dominance in the English language and the relative status of females and males it refers to. The experiment utilized three styles of language--traditional (using masculine pronouns); non-sexist (using he/she, she/he, or neutral pronouns); and itemized (using no pronouns). Subjects were presented with a hypothetical selection procedure for a high school representative to a "World Youth Conference." They also received three descriptions of applicants, each written using one of the three language styles. Qualifications of the applicants were controlled for, except for sex, with one male, one female, and one sex-unspecified applicant being rated by each subject. The task was administered to samples drawn from six populations: male and female undergraduate college students, middle-aged men and women, Kiwanis Club members, and National Organization for Women affiliates. Results suggested that language had little impact on subject responses. It was concluded that group membership variables, such as age, sex, and role rigidity, were more related to sex biases than was the use of standard, non-sexist, or itemized English. A finding of particular interest was Genaur's observation that for the most conservative group of subjects (Kiwanis), non-sexist language was associated with even stronger

pro-male bias than were the other language styles. Thus, in this case, non-sexist language had an effect directly opposite to that which was intended.

The call for linguistic reform is criticized on different grounds by Kingston and Lovelace (1977). They claim that the guidelines for nonsexist language, written by professional societies and publishers, constitute a new form of censorship. It is maintained that such publications and the standards they contain attempt to "mold the efforts of authors to the demands of current pressure groups." (page 92) Language guidelines are further criticized for their vagueness in defining sexist language, and the similarities among the suggestions they contain.

The above criticism notwithstanding, a wide range of professionals appear to concur about the negative effects of stereotyping and bias in language. The topic of sexism and language has received major attention from sociolinguists (Swacker, 1976), as well as a wide range of publishers and professional organizations. Groups which have published guidelines addressing this issue include: The American Psychological Association (1975, 1977); Houghton Mifflin (1976); Macmillan (1975); McGraw-Hill (1977); and the National Council of Teachers of English (1975). While application of the suggestions made in these guidelines may eliminate overt bias, one might question whether or not this would, in turn, counteract sexism. Farb (1974) cites cultural settings in which language is much less sexist than standard English, yet the

status of women is far lower than that of women in our society. Despite the propensity of suggestions for linguistic reform in this regard, the question of whether or not such change would decrease stereotyping and sexism remains unanswered.

Summary

The literature relating to language and sexism is directed toward two areas of study: language use, and language reference systems or content. It appears that the former area has been the subject of more controlled research, although a larger number of authors have addressed the latter topic. The literature reviewed indicates that choice of referential language -- the way in which we refer to or talk about others -- is related to the attitudes and beliefs we hold about them. Sex bias in language, therefore, may play an important role in perpetuating stereotypes about males and females and their behavior. The nature of such a relationship, however, is still unclear.

The dominance of masculine terminology in our language has been well documented by various authors. Much of this occurs in the form of generic use of male-typed words, that is applying masculine terms to both females and males. A number of formal research studies indicate that such terms, intended to function generically, are often interpreted as applying to males only, and are thus sex-biased, rather than neutral. Interpretation of referential terms, when the sex of an individual referred to is unspecified

appears to be linked to the type of imagery evoked by the terms or descriptions used.

Linguistic male dominance is particularly evident in titles applied to various occupations and roles. It is alleged that the use of sex-typed terminology in this context narrows the perceived options of young women and men, thus limiting their potential. Seemingly parallel terms for males and females in similar roles may carry different connotations, and so also perpetuate stereotyping.

While many authors stress the need for reform in our language to reduce sex bias, others question the value of such efforts. Language may be a symptom of social inequality, rather than a causal factor. If this is the case, efforts to reform language may detract from changes in more central areas. The various strategies for language change have a number of drawbacks which are likely to impede their practical application. Further, one study suggested that use of newly developed nonsexist language may cause a reactionary effect in conservative individuals, resulting in greater sex bias than their original forms.

Despite its critics, the topic of language reform has received a great deal of attention from a wide range of professional groups. A number of guidelines for implementing nonsexist language have been developed, however, the effects of these remain to be seen. Although many suggestions for linguistic reform exist, little is known about the practical effects that such changes might have. It

has not yet been demonstrated that use of nonsexist language does, in fact, decrease sex stereotyping.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The target population for the present study consisted of all undergraduate students at Utah State University. The experimentally accessible population from which the sample for this study was drawn was made up of primarily undergraduate students enrolled in undergraduate classes during summer quarter, 1980. Subjects were recruited in three social science courses: General Psychology (Psychology 101), Introductory Sociology (Sociology 101), and Educational Psychology (Psychology 366). These classes were chosen as sources for potential subjects in part because of their availability, but also because they seemed well suited to the topic in question. The social sciences have addressed the issue of language and sex bias to a greater extent than most other disciplines. In addition, because the subject matter of these fields pertains directly to human behavior, the use of referential language and its relation to sex stereotypes is directly applicable to these areas.

Subjects were recruited during class sessions. A brief description of the nature of the study was given, including the tasks that would be involved for participation and approximate time

that would be required. Participation was entirely voluntary, and students not choosing to participate were excused. All students who chose to participate were asked to sign an informed consent agreement, a copy of which appears in Appendix A.

Questionnaires were distributed to all students who volunteered to participate. Responses from a total of 80 subjects were utilized in the study, with 40 males and 40 females used for comparison purposes. A prerequisite for consideration of a subject's results was a report of English as his or her primary language. Extra questionnaires obtained in each group and those which indicated a primary language other than English were systematically eliminated. This process is detailed later in this chapter under the topic of "Procedures."

The sample used in the study ranged in age from approximately 17 to over 70. Over 75% of the subjects were between 17 and 24 years of age, and over 90% were under age 31. The male group was somewhat older than the female group. Over 70% of the male subjects were between the ages of 21 and 30, while almost 60% of the female subjects were between 17 and 20. Of the total sample, approximately 70% were either freshmen or sophomores. Tables 1 and 2 present a complete breakdown of the male and female subject groups by class rank and age. All subjects indicated their race as being white American, except for one female, who was half Native American.

Table 1
Subject Breakdown by Class Rank

Class Rank	Male		Female	
	N	% of Total Group	N	% of Total Group
Freshmen	18	45.0	24	60.0
Sophomore	8	20.0	5	12.5
Junior	4	10.0	7	17.5
Senior	9	22.5	3	7.5
Graduate	1	2.5	1	2.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

Table 2
Subject Breakdown by Age

Age Range	Male		Female	
	N	% of Total Group	N	% of Total Group
17 - 20	10	25.0	23	57.5
21 - 24	18	45.0	10	25.0
25 - 30	11	27.5	2	5.0
31-40	0	0	2	5.0
40+	1	2.5	3	7.5
Total	40	100.0	40	100.0

Measures

A short biographical form was used to collect basic demographic data about the subjects. Information requested on the form included: sex of subject, age at present time, year in college (class rank), race, and primary language. This form was combined with a brief set of instructions for the questionnaire used in the study, and was attached as a face sheet to the questionnaire itself. A copy of this form appears in Appendix B.

The study utilized two forms of an inventory that was derived from a list of 20 identifying nouns or noun phrases. Each of these nouns presented a different occupational or social role, and fell into one of three gender categories: male-specific, female-specific, and neutral or unspecified. For example, the words "chairman," "chairwoman," and "chairperson" each portray the same role, but represent different gender categories. A male-specific term was defined as one referring specifically to boys or men (e.g., policeman, brother, husband). Similarly, a female-specific term was defined as referring specifically to girls or women (e.g., policewoman, sister, wife). Finally, terms which did not specify either males or females were considered to be sex-unspecified (e.g., police officer, sibling, spouse). A complete list of the nouns used and their three gender forms is found in Table 3. These words were drawn from a variety of guidelines for nonsexist language (American Psychological Association, 1977; Chafetz, 1974; McGraw-Hill, 1977; U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1978). A

Table 3
Target Nouns Used in the Questionnaire

Sex-unspecified Category	Male-specific Category	Female-specific Category
businessperson	*businessman	businesswoman
camera operator	*cameraman	camerawoman
chairperson	*chairman	chairwoman
child	son	*daughter
council member	*councilman	councilwoman
dating partner	*boyfriend	girlfriend
fire fighter	*fireman	firewoman
flight attendant	steward	*stewardess
homemaker	househusband	*housewife
insurance agent	insurance man	*insurance woman
news anchorperson	news anchorman	*news anchorwoman
parent	*father	mother
person one is engaged to	*fiance (groom-to-be)	fiancee (bride-to-be)
police officer	policeman	*policewoman
representative	*congressman	congresswoman
salesperson	salesman	*saleswoman
sibling	*brother	sister
spokesperson	spokesman	*spokeswoman
spouse	husband	*wife
supervisor	foreman	*forewoman

*Words included on form A (all words not starred appeared on Form B).

composite list was made of sex-specific occupational and role titles and their preferred alternative, as presented in these sources. Thus, the words comprising the two forms of the inventory used here are words which have been identified as target words by proponents of neutral language.

Each questionnaire contained 10 male-specific, 10 female-specific, and all 20 sex-unspecified forms of these target nouns, thus a total of 20 sex-typed/sex unspecified word pairs (e.g., fireman/fire fighter, stewardess/flight attendant). Two forms were implemented in order to avoid excessive length of the instrument. By separating the initial list of 60 words (20 target words with three forms of each) into two forms, it was possible to include only two gender forms of each target word on each questionnaire (a single sex-typed/sex unspecified word pair). Thus, each subject responding to a sex-specific target word (e.g., foreman, housewife), also responded to its equivalent sex-unspecified form (e.g., superior, homemaker). The organization of the two forms of the questionnaire is illustrated in Table 4. The use of two forms, helped to avoid undue repetition on individual inventories, and made the focus of the study less overt. These forms were assumed to be equivalent in nature, thus, the questionnaire form (A or B) was not considered as a variable, but rather, data from both forms were combined for statistical analysis. Appendix C contains lists of the target words as they appeared in each form.

Table 4
Content of Questionnaire, Forms A and B

Form A (Administered to 20 males and 20 females)	Form B (Administered to 20 males and 20 females)
10 male-specific words e.g.: fireman policeman steward	10 male-specific words e.g.: congressman househusband salesman
10 female-specific words e.g.: congresswoman housewife saleswoman	10 female-specific words e.g.: forewoman policewoman stewardess
20 sex-unspecified counterparts e.g.: fire fighter police officer flight attendant representative homemaker salesperson	20 sex-unspecified counterparts e.g.: representative homemaker salesperson fire fighter police officer flight attendant

A semantic differential scale (SD), as developed by Osgood (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1967), was included after each noun to assess respondents' attitudes toward the individuals presented by the target words. The semantic differential consisted of a set of 15 adjective pairs along different dimensions, separated by a seven-point scale (e.g., compassionate - uncaring, aggressive - passive, etc.) The same SD scale was presented after each target noun or noun phrase on both forms of the inventory. The adjective pairs used on this scale were selected to incorporate masculine, feminine, and neutral labels, utilizing descriptors identified by

Bem (1974). Items for the SD were chosen from the Bem Sex Role Inventory, a self-report measure of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny. Bem constructed this instrument by selecting personality characteristics judged to be desirable in females or males in our society. Unlike most other instruments of this type, which define masculine and feminine traits on the basis of differential endorsement by males and females, Bem's scale is thus based on sex-typed social desirability. Masculinity and femininity are so treated as separate constructs, rather than two ends of a single dimension. Normative data on the Bem Sex Role Inventory were obtained from a sample of over 200 undergraduate students. In testing of the instrument, scores of masculinity and femininity were found to be empirically, as well as conceptually independent (average $r = -.03$). This finding validates the design of an inventory that does not treat masculinity and femininity as a unidimensional trait. The BSRI was found to be reliable over a four-week period (average $r = .93$), and uncorrelated with a tendency to describe oneself in a socially desirable direction (average $r = -.06$).

Thus, semantic differential used in the present study consisted primarily of descriptors clearly indicated as being masculine or feminine in nature. For this reason, the SD incorporated two separate scales for masculinity and femininity, thus generating a masculine SD score and a feminine SD score for each item. For example, the term "individualistic" has been identified as a masculine descriptor, that is, a characteristic viewed as being

desirable in men in our society. Its opposite "conforming," however, has not been identified as a desirable feminine trait. Thus, while a description of a person as individualistic would indicate masculinity, a description of a person as conforming would not necessarily connote femininity. The SD used in this study contained five definitely masculine descriptors, five feminine, and two which did fit a masculine/feminine continuum, that is, where both poles of the adjective pair had been identified as masculine or feminine. Three neutral adjective pairs, composed of descriptors found to be equally associated with males and females, were also included. It was believed that use of these neutral items would serve to make the masculine/feminine nature of the word pairs less overt, thus decreasing the probability of patterned responding. In addition, scoring of these neutral items provided a reliability check of the instrument. It was assumed that, if the SD were reliable, masculine and feminine SD scores might differ between sex-specific and sex-unspecified words. However, neutral SD scores for sex-specific and sex-unspecified words would not be expected to differ significantly. Appendix D contains a reproduction of the semantic differential as it appeared in the questionnaire. Items used in this scale were also found to be approximate stereotypic sex-role items identified by Broverman, Vogel, Boverman, Clarkson, and Rosenkrantz (1972), although the words were not selected from this source.

As previously mentioned, the adjective pairs comprising the SD did not necessarily fit a masculine/feminine continuum, so each target word was given a separate masculine and feminine SD score. It was assumed that this procedure increased validity of the instrument, as ipsative scoring was eliminated. The scoring procedure is illustrated below, using an abbreviated item from the questionnaire:

	chairman (target word)							
passive	___	___	___	___	___	X	___	aggressive (M)
outgoing	___	X	___	___	___	___	___	shy (F)
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	X	leader (M)
uncaring	___	___	X	___	___	___	___	compassionate (F)
skeptical	___	X	___	___	___	___	___	gullible (F)
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	X	___	competitive (M)
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

In this example, the letters (M) and (F) identify the adjectives determined to be masculine or feminine, and did not appear in the actual questionnaires. Likewise, the numbers below the scale are included here only to clarify scoring. If the above responses were given, the item would receive a feminine score of 2.3 ($2 + 3 + 2 = 7 / 3 = 2.3$), and a masculine score of 6.3 ($6 + 7 + 6 = 19 / 3 = 6.3$). Thus, this particular role title (chairman) would have a masculine connotation to the subject responding to it.

In addition to the masculine and feminine (SD scores obtained for each target word, it was possible to quantify the difference in these raw scores between the sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms. Because of the fact that for every male or female-specific noun responded to (e.g., policeman or policewoman), the corresponding neutral form (e.g., police officer) was also responded to, the images evoked by each were subject to direct comparison.

Procedures

Research design. In the first phase of the study, three variables were analyzed. These consisted of the following:

1. Sex of subject.
2. Type of word pair. Word pairs were either male-type or female-type. Word pairs defined as male-type consisted of a male-specific word (e.g., chairman) and its corresponding sex-unspecified term (e.g., chairperson). Similarly, female-type word pairs consisted of a female-specific word (e.g., congresswoman) and its sex-unspecified counterpart (e.g., representative).
3. SD score type. Masculine, feminine, or neutral as previously described.

Each subject responded to ten word pairs of each type (female-specific/sex unspecified and male-specific/sex-unspecified), generating a masculine, feminine, and neutral SD score for each.

The second research design implemented in this study was a 2x2 factorial design. This was used to evaluate the degree to which descriptions of particular roles which were identified by sex-unspecified terms differed from descriptions of their traditionally sex-specific associated stereotypes. The gender category of these terms (sex-specific vs. sex-unspecified) was thus compared to their respective SD score types (masculine, feminine, or neutral).

Administration of the inventory. The questionnaire described above was distributed to college students in classroom settings. Approximately equal numbers of form A and form B were administered to male and female subjects by distributing the questionnaires to one sex at a time, alternating forms (Appendices E and F contain copies of the two questionnaires administered). Instructions for completing the forms were reviewed, and any questions the subjects had were answered. Students were allowed to take as much time as they needed to complete the questionnaires, leaving the room as they finished. The informed consent forms were removed as the inventories were returned, thus ensuring subjects' confidentiality. Participation was totally voluntary, so subjects not choosing to complete the exercise were free to leave at any time.

Treatment of data. Questionnaires completed by subjects who indicated their primary language as something other than English, were eliminated from the data pool and not considered in analysis of the results. Because random or incomplete responding would

invalidate results, an attempt was made to eliminate obviously invalid test records. All questionnaires were thus scanned before scoring for evidence of patterned replying, missing responses, or misunderstanding of the task. Four questionnaires which showed obvious evidence of these were not used. (For example, several respondents failed to complete the inventory, and so generated invalid score totals. Another respondent marked only the middle blank on the SD scale for all responses). Data were analyzed from 40 male and 40 female subjects, with equal numbers of form A and B from each (thus 20 questionnaires in each group). In cases where more than the required number of valid questionnaires were received, the extra forms were randomly eliminated. This was done to obtain equal numbers for use in the statistical analyses of the data. Extra forms were eliminated with the use of a random numbers table, to insure a data pool free from experiments or bias. Five questionnaires were dropped in this procedure.

Questionnaires were hand scored, with a masculine, feminine, and neutral score being obtained for each item. A difference score was then calculated for each item by looking at the difference between sex-specific and sex-unspecified scores of equivalent word forms. That is, the masculine SD score for each male or female-specific word (e.g., policeman or policewoman) was first subtracted from the masculine score of its corresponding sex-unspecified term (e.g., police officer). The same was done for the feminine and neutral SD scores of that word pair. The masculine

difference scores on a particular record were then added with the feminine difference scores, generating a composite SD difference score for each subject. These composite differences were calculated separately for male-type (e.g., policeman/police officer) and female-type (e.g., policewoman/police officer) word pairs, so that the possible effects of this variable could be examined. The same process was done for the neutral scores; however, these were not added together with other score types as they were used a validity check on the instrument itself. By obtaining difference scores in this way it was possible to directly measure the degree to which the images evoked by sex-specific nouns differed from their sex-unspecified counterparts.

Data were treated differently for comparison of sex-unspecified descriptions with their traditionally associated, sex-specific stereotypes (Hypothesis 3). In this phase of the study, 13 of the 20 target occupations or roles were identified as being traditionally associated with either males or females. For example, the occupation of flight attendant has traditionally been held by women, while insurance agents have traditionally been men. Sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms were thus examined separately rather than as word pairs. Complete lists of these selected terms appear in Table 5. The masculine SD scores for the 13 identified sex-specific terms were first added together, as were the feminine and neutral SD scores on these same words. Similar score totals were then obtained for the sex-neutral terms corresponding to these.

Thus, score totals in this process were calculated across items, rather than within individual subject records. For example, the masculine, feminine, and neutral SD scores obtained for the target word "fireman" were summed using all form A questionnaires. Then scores obtained for the word "fire fighter" were summed, again using form A records. Thus, individual subjects' response totals were not calculated in this phase of the study.

Table 5
Selected Word List

<u>Sex-neutral Form</u>	<u>Sex-specific Form Traditionally Associated</u>
1. businessperson	1. businessman
2. camera operator	2. cameraman
3. chairperson	3. chairman
4. council member	4. councilman
5. fire fighter	5. fireman
6. flight attendant	6. stewardess
7. homemaker	7. housewife
8. insurance agent	8. insurance man
9. new anchorperson	9. news anchorman
10. police officer	10. policeman
11. spokesperson	11. spokesman
12. supervisor	12. foreman
13. representative	13. congressman

Analysis

As an initial validity check on the data collected, a 2x3 analysis of variance was used. In this procedure, word pair type (male-specific/sex-unspecified or female-specific/sex-unspecified) was compared with SD score type (masculine, feminine, or neutral). In comparing the mean difference scores in each of these cells, it was expected that word pair type would not have a significant effect. If the semantic differential scale used was effective, however, differences could be expected in the means of the three SD score types (masculine, feminine, or neutral).

In order to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between SD scores generated in response to sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms (Hypothesis 1), a one-tailed t-test was used. This test served to examine whether the SD difference scores obtained for male-type and female-type word pairs (e.g., fireman/firefighter or firewoman/firefighter) were significant in and of themselves. A one-tailed t-test was also completed for the neutral difference scores as an additional validity check.

A two-tailed t-test for independent means was conducted to test whether or not there were significant differences between the difference scores of male and female subjects (Hypothesis 2).

A 2x3 analysis of variance was used to analyze the data obtained in the second phase of the study, that is, the comparison of sex-neutral terms with their traditionally associated stereotypes (Hypothesis 3). In this procedure, word type (sex-specific or

sex-unspecified) was compared with SD score type (masculine, feminine, or neutral), to determine possible effects of these variables.

Finally, a one way analysis of variance was completed, directly comparing score types and using the sex-specific and sex-neutral scores obtained in the second phase of the study. This was done to test whether or not the neutral scores were more associated with masculine or feminine traits. If this were the case, these terms could not be examined as truly neutral concepts, decreasing their value as a validity check, but explaining any unexpected variance obtained in them. The .05 level of significance was used in all statistical computations done in the study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study examined the effects of sex-unspecified (neutral) and sex-specific terminology on sex stereotyping from two different approaches. In the first phase of the study, the differences in SD scores obtained for sex-specific/sex-unspecified word pairs were analyzed. Group variation in these summed difference scores was also examined, looking at possible effects of word pair type, as well as sex of subject. In the second phase of the study, sex-unspecified terms for occupations were compared with the sex-specific terms traditionally associated with them. The purpose of this phase was to determine if stereotyped assumptions were made when the sex of an individual was unspecified. This was evaluated by analyzing the three SD score types (masculine, feminine, and neutral) obtained for each sex-specific and sex-unspecified word identified as one having a traditionally associated stereotype.

Validity of the questionnaire was evaluated by analyzing the difference between sex-specific and sex-unspecified words. In the second phase of the study, the mean neutral SD scores were also compared directly to the average masculine and feminine SD scores, to determine whether they were, in fact, considered neutral by this particular sample.

Group Differences Between Sex-Neutral and Sex-Specific Terminology

The first hypothesis tested was that there is no significant difference in connotation between descriptions of occupations and roles identified by sex, and those labelled with equivalent sex-unspecified (neutral) terms. Mean SD difference scores obtained from male-type and female-type word pairs were analyzed by using a one-tailed t -test for independent means (Table 6). The combined masculine and feminine SD score differences calculated for male-type word pairs were found to be statistically significant, $t(239) = 46.77$, $p < .0005$. Similarly, the difference scores for the female-type word pairs were also statistically significant, $t(238) = 61.93$, $p < .0005$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The level of significance exceeded the predicted level of .05. A significant difference was also found in the neutral SD scores obtained on sex-specific and sex-neutral terms, $t(159) = 43.15$, $p < .0005$. This suggests that the sex-neutral terms did not function in a truly neutral way, either because of invalidity of the scale or their association with masculine or feminine traits. The same statistical procedure utilizing separate, rather than combined masculine and feminine SD difference scores, generated the same conclusions, resulting in rejection of the null hypothesis. These results, which provide a measure of statistical validity, are found in Table 7.

The second hypothesis stated that there are no significant differences in the descriptions generated by female and male

Table 6

Mean SD Difference Scores on Male-type and Female-type Word Pairs
(masculine and feminine SD scores combined)

Group	X	S	DF	t-score
Total	14.26	4.50	479	69.34*
Male-type pairs	14.43	4.77	239	46.77*
Female-type pairs	14.07	4.20	238	63.93*
Neutral totals (male-type and female-type)	12.44	3.64	159	43.15*

*p < .0005

Table 7

Mean SD Difference Scores on Male-type and Female-type Word Pairs
(masculine and feminine SD scores calculated separately)

Group	X	S	DF	t-score
Total	7.13	2.62	479	59.63*
Male-type pairs	7.31	2.66	239	42.42*
Female-type pairs	6.94	2.56	238	41.83*
Neutral (male-type)	6.50	2.10	79	27.43*
Neutral (female-type)	5.95	2.29	79	23.02*

*p < .0005

subjects for sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms. The mean SD difference scores of female and male subjects were analyzed by a two-tailed t-test for independent means. In this analysis, the individual SD score types -- masculine, feminine, and neutral -- were examined for both groups. In comparing the masculine SD difference scores of male and female subjects, no statistically significant difference was found, $t(156) = 1.53, p > .05$. Likewise, there was no significant difference between the feminine SD score differences of subject groups, $t(157) = .82, p > .05$, or in the neutral SD score differences, $t(157) = .50, p > .05$. Therefore, the null hypothesis was retained, as SD difference scores did not vary as a function of sex. These results are presented in Table 8.

The results of these analyses indicate that subjects did respond differently to sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms. This suggests that use of sex-unspecified terms may, in fact, alter the imagery or associations generated by a particular occupational or role title. It is not implied by these results that the sex-unspecified terms were judged as being neutral, but simply that they were judged to be somewhat different from equivalent sex-specific terms.

Neutral Terms and Their Traditionally Associated Stereotypes

The third hypothesis tested stated that there are no significant differences between the descriptions of occupations and roles labelled with sex-unspecified terms, and descriptions of

their equivalent, sex-identified counterparts that would be traditionally associated with the role presented. A 2x3 analysis of variance was used to compare the mean SD scores (masculine, feminine, and neutral) obtained on selected sex-specific and sex-unspecified words (Table 9). No significant difference was found between the mean SD scores of sex-unspecified and their corresponding sex-specific terms ($F = .03, p > .05$). As in the first phase of the study, significant differences were indicated to exist between score types ($F = 49.42, p < .05$). There was no evidence of significant interaction between the variables of word type and SD score type ($F = .254, p > .05$). The null hypothesis was, therefore, retained. These results suggest that, in the absence of gender identification, roles which are traditionally associated with one sex, are assumed to fit that stereotype.

Validity of the Inventory

To check the overall validity of the inventory used in the study, a 2x3 analysis of variance was used. This procedure analyzed the effects of word pair type (male-specific and unspecified, or female-specific and unspecified) and SD score type (masculine, feminine, or neutral). In this analysis of word pair type, as expected, did not have a significant effect on the SD scores obtained ($F = .799, p > .05$). A significant difference was indicated as a function of SD score type ($F = 20.96, p < .05$). No significant interaction between word pair type and SD score type was found

Table 8
Average SD Score Differences for Male and Female Subjects

Score type and group	X	S	DF	t-score
Masculine Scores				
Male	7.74	3.24	146.56	1.53*
Female	8.44	2.50		
Feminine Scores				
Male	7.22	2.78	137.33	0.82*
Female	6.91	1.84		
Neutral Scores				
Male	6.13	2.34	158	0.50*
Female	6.31	2.09		

* $p > .05$

Table 9
Analysis of Variance Comparing Effects of Word Type
(sex-specific vs. sex unspecified) and SD Score
Type on Mean Scores, Selected Word List

Source	DF	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Significance
Total	77	.91		
Word Type	1	0.01	0.03	
Score Type	2	20.30	49.42	*
Word Type X Score Type	2	0.10	0.78	
Error	72	0.41		

* $p < .05$

Table 10

Analysis of Variance Comparing Effects of Word Pair Type
(male or female specific) and SD Score Type on Mean
Difference Scores, Total Word Pool (combined
masculine and feminine scores)

Source	DF	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Significance
Total	478	20.23		
Word Pair Type	1	14.97	0.80	
Score Type	2	392.56	20.96	*
Word Pair Type X Score Type	2	3.80	0.20	
Error	473	18.73		

* $p < .05$

Table 11

Analysis of Variance Comparing Effects of Word Pair Type
(male or female specific) and SD Score Type on Mean
Difference Scores, Total Word Pool (masculine
and feminine scores calculated separately)

Source	DF	Mean Squares	F Ratio	Significance
Total	478	6.84		
Word Pair Type	1	15.26	2.43	
Score Type	2	140.45	22.37	*
Word Pair Type X Score Type	2	2.01	0.32	
Error	473	6.28		

* $p < .05$

($F = .203, p > .05$). These results are presented in Table 10. They suggest that the instrument did adequately differentiate between the masculine, feminine, and neutral SD scales used in scoring, rather than collapsed data (Table 11). The same conclusions were generated, indicating that results were not contaminated by combining masculine and feminine SD difference scores.

Finally, a one way analysis of variance was completed to determine if the neutral SD score differences varied significantly from the differences obtained for the masculine and feminine SD scores. This analysis indicated that there were significant differences between score types ($F = 51.10, p < .05$). Duncan's t-test for multiple ranges was then applied to determine the exact nature of any differences in this respect. This test showed all three scores used in the second phase of the study to differ significantly from one another ($p < .05$). The neutral SD scores were found to be significantly less than the masculine SD scores, but significantly larger than the feminine SD scores obtained. In a practical sense, this suggests that, for this particular sample, the neutral descriptors used in the semantic differential were somewhat associated with masculine traits.

Summary

This study examined the effects of neutral and sex-specific terminology on sex stereotyping in regard to two primary questions. In respect to the first, whether or not the use of sex-neutral

terminology alters subjects' imagery or associations, significant score differences were indicated. This suggests that subjects did respond differentially to sex-specific and sex-unspecified or neutral terminology. In regard to this same question, no differences were found in the responses of male and female subjects, indicating that sex is not a factor in reaction to sex-neutral language of this type. Results did not provide evidence as to whether or not the sex-unspecified terms were interpreted in a neutral way. That is, although subjects' responses to sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms differed, it cannot be assumed that they were viewed as truly neutral concepts.

The second major question addressed by this study was whether, in the absence of gender identification, subjects would assume the traditionally associated sex to hold the role in question. That is, when presented with a sex-unspecified descriptor (e.g., fire fighter), would the traditionally associated stereotype be applied (e.g., fireman)? Results indicated no significant difference between scores of neutral (sex-unspecified) terms and their sex-specific, stereotyped counterparts. Thus, for roles traditionally associated with one sex more than the other, so-called sex-neutral language did not appear to affect the imagery evoked in subjects.

In testing the validity of the inventory, it was found that neutral scores obtained from the semantic differential were somewhat associated with the masculine traits presented. This

suggests that they did not function in a truly neutral way, but this finding also helps to explain the difference between neutral scores on the sex-specific and sex-unspecified words. Possible explanations for all of these results will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the way in which use of neutral (sex-unspecified), as compared to sex-specific terminology affects sex stereotyping. Eighty volunteer subjects completed a questionnaire consisting of a set of 20 sex-specific terms for occupations and roles, and their equivalent sex-unspecified forms. Each of these target terms was followed by a semantic differential of 15 adjective pairs. The semantic differential was constructed to incorporate traits identified as masculine, feminine, or neutral. For each target word, therefore, a masculine, feminine, and neutral SD score was obtained.

The first objective of the study was to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between responses to sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms. In the first phase of the study, therefore, responses to all sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms were examined. The sex-specific/sex-unspecified word pairs were compared on each questionnaire, and differences in the masculine, feminine, and neutral SD scores were calculated. These difference scores were then analyzed by use of a one-tailed t-test for independent means. The second objective of the study was to determine whether or not the use of sex-neutral language had a

differential impact on male or female students. The mean SD difference scores (masculine, feminine, and neutral) of females and males was analyzed by a two-tailed t-test for independent means.

The third objective of the study was to determine if there was a significant difference between responses to sex-unspecified and sex-specific language when the occupations referred to were ones traditionally associated with men or women. A 2x3 analysis of variance was used to compare the mean SD scores obtained on sex-neutral words with the SD scores generated for their traditionally associated, sex-specific forms.

A 2x3 analysis of variance was also employed to compare the effects of word pair type (male-specific/sex-unspecified or female-specific/sex-unspecified) and SD score type, on the difference scores obtained on the target word pairs. All word pairs were used in this analysis. This procedure was used as a validity check of the methodology used in the study. Differences in neutral scores obtained for all sex-specific and sex-unspecified words were also examined as a measure of instrument validity. Finally, a one way analysis of variance was completed to see if the neutral scores obtained in the second phase of the study (using only words with traditional stereotypes) differed significantly from the masculine and feminine scores. Duncan's t-test for multiple ranges was used to determine the direction of any significant difference found in this procedure.

Evaluation of Findings

It was predicted by the null hypothesis that overall responses to sex-specific and sex-neutral terms would not differ significantly. This prediction was not fulfilled, however, as the difference scores for each word pair type were found to be statistically significant.

It was also predicted that male and female subjects would respond differentially to sex-specific and sex-neutral terminology. The lack of significant difference between the mean SD difference scores of female and male subjects contradicts this expectation. There were also no statistically significant differences in the SD difference scores obtained for male-type and female-type word pairs.

In comparing responses to selected sex-neutral occupational terms and their sex-specific counterparts traditionally associated with them, no significant differences were found. This fulfilled the expectation that, in the absence of gender identification, subjects would assume a traditional stereotype if the role referred to has been more associated with one sex than the other.

In testing the validity of the instrument, it was expected that word pair type would not have a significant effect, but that SD score type would. These expectations were fulfilled. In addition, it was expected that, regardless of changes in masculine or feminine SD scores in response to sex-neutral terms, neutral SD scores would remain relatively constant. This was not the case, however, as a statistically significant difference was found in the neutral SD

scores, as well. This finding prompted a comparison of neutral SD scores with the masculine and feminine scores obtained on selected words. The finding that all three SD score types differed significantly, suggested that the neutral adjective pairs presented in the semantic differential were not strongly associated with either the masculine or feminine traits used. The mean neutral SD value in this analysis, however, was found to be significantly greater than 3.5, the hypothesized mean score to be expected if the descriptors were truly neutral. Because primarily male-type word pairs were used in this procedure, this might suggest some association of the "neutral" word pairs with the masculine descriptors used.

Implications

The findings indicate that the use of sex-neutral terms did affect subjects' descriptions of a broad range of occupations and roles. When occupations commonly associated more with one sex than the other were examined, however, sex-neutral language was found to have no significant impact on descriptions. This finding suggests that, although sex-neutral language may alter imagery and association of traits with some roles, it is ineffective in altering these if a sex stereotype is already present. The differential responses given for sex-specific and sex-neutral terms when all target words were used might be due to the fact that many of these expressed relationship, rather than occupational roles. For

example, it can be surmised that in responding to these terms, subjects were more likely to think of specific individuals in their lives. This suggests that stereotyping would occur more frequently in descriptions of impersonal titles, than it would in describing family or relationship role titles.

The significant response differences obtained when all terms were analyzed could be due to the comparison of three gender forms of each term. For example, a subject responding to the terms "policewoman" might describe that individual in a high-feminine, low-masculine way. When the same subject responded to the term "police officer," however, he or she might assume the terms to indicate a male, and so generate high-masculine, low-feminine response scores. If this pattern occurred frequently, stereotyping would, in fact, lead to scores which would suggest a significant difference as a result of sex-neutral language. Such an indication, however, would not necessarily mean that the sex-unspecified terms were responded to in a more sex-neutral way. The use of equal numbers of male-type and female-type word pairs on each questionnaire should have counter-balanced this pattern if it existed, but this factor should still be considered in interpreting the results. Thus, the initial finding of significant differences between SD scores for sex-specific and sex-unspecified terms found when all words were analyzed, must be interpreted cautiously.

The finding of no significant differences by gender category when commonly stereotyped occupations were studied, appears to be

more reliably significant. If sex-neutral language does not affect sex stereotyping of roles that have been traditionally associated with males or females, one might wonder whether or not its usage in these cases might simply maintain stereotyped assumptions. Perhaps using sex-specific labels opposite those traditionally associated with a given role (e.g., policewoman, househusband) would be more effective in building an awareness of the variability in men's and women's roles.

Subjects. The subjects participating in the study consisted of 40 male and 40 female students. No significant differences were found between the responses of male and female subjects, suggesting that females in the sample were no less likely to apply sex stereotyping to the target terms than were males. All but one subject described themselves as white American, and only six subjects reported being over 30. These factors, combined with the fact that data collection occurred during summer quarter when the student population is primarily local, indicate a fairly homogenous sample. The cultural conservatism of the area may have played a role in subject responses in this regard. If the subjects were personally conservative or traditional in outlook, it can be surmised that sex stereotyping would be more likely, decreasing the impact of sex-neutral language on descriptions of occupational terms. It would be valuable to do further research in this area, taking into consideration subjects' attitudes in regard to sex roles

and/or women's issues. It is suspected that these variables would play a major role in this type of language interpretation.

Methodology. Results of the study suggested no significant effects of word pair type on composite difference scores for sex-specific and sex-neutral terms. Masculine, feminine, and neutral SD scores, however, were found to differ significantly from one another. These findings help to validate the instrument used in the study. They suggest that the inventory did adequately differentiate between masculine and feminine SD scales used in scoring, but that scoring was not altered by differences in word pair type. The significant difference found in the neutral SD scores of sex-specific and sex-neutral words, however, was unexpected, and could be due to a number of possibilities. First, this difference might reflect a lack of validity in the concepts comprising the semantic differential. A more likely explanation, however, is that these terms, although neutral when evaluated in regard to the sexes in general, may take on different connotations when applied to particular occupations or individuals in those roles. For example, it is possible that some individuals who consider policemen to be generally modest, might view policewomen as conceited because they occupy a nontraditional role. Likewise, given the present social structure, it is reasonable to expect that househusbands would be described as very adaptable individuals. Thus, the term "adaptable" might be associated equally with both

sexes, but take on special meaning when applied in a specific context.

Finally, the neutral word pairs simply might not have functioned in a neutral way. In studying selected terms that are commonly stereotyped, the mean neutral SD score exceeded 3.5 by a significant degree, the hypothesized mean if these descriptors were, in fact, neutral. Because this word list was predominantly male-typed, a high score would suggest more masculine characteristics. Thus, although neutral scores were significantly lower than the masculine scores, some association between them might have existed. If this were the case, the neutral terms would not have functioned in a neutral way for the sample group.

Limitations

There are several limitations evident in this study. Primary among them is the length of the inventory used. Each subject responded to a list of 40 target words, with 15 adjective pairs for each. Completion of this task took subjects from approximately 20 to 40 minutes. It can be surmised that the monotony of the task may have resulted in subject fatigue, and led to occasional patterned or random responding. It might be advantageous to replicate the study using a shorter questionnaire but a larger sample group.

Another weakness of the study is the use of a non-random sample. Because the majority of subjects were freshman and sophomores, the university population was not accurately reflected.

A factor counteracting this limitation, however, is the observation that although participation was voluntary, few students in any of the classes used failed to complete the questionnaire.

An additional limitation of the study is the potential for misleading difference scores referred to in the preceding section. Although differences were found in the total responses to sex-specific and sex-unspecified (neutral) words, it is not clear in which direction these differences occurred. That is, sex-unspecified terms may have been rated in a more neutral way, suggesting a decrease in sex stereotyping; or, the sex opposite that of the sex-specific term might have been assumed when sex-unspecified words were used. If this were the case, sex stereotyping would result in significant differences between scores for sex-specific and sex-unspecified words. Such differences, therefore, could be attributable to increased, as well as decreased sex stereotyping. It would thus be helpful to measure the direction of differences that occurred with the use of supposedly sex-neutral terms.

Finally, the target words used in the study generally fit one of two descriptive categories: occupational titles and relationship titles. It would be interesting to replicate the present study examining these different categories of terms. Sex-neutral language may have a differential effect depending on the type of role it is used to refer to, but this variable was not directly considered.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the effectiveness of sex-unspecified language as a tool in decreasing sex stereotyping be further researched. Some changes in the present experiment could be implemented to increase the amount of knowledge in this area. Specifically, it is recommended that:

1. The present study be replicated using a shorter questionnaire, and a larger, randomly selected sample.
2. The inventory be redesigned to address either occupational or relationship titles. This could be done by using separate forms for each, or by calculating and analyzing scores separately for each category.
3. Scoring of the questionnaire be revised to incorporate measurement of the direction of score differences.
4. The study be replicated with the addition of a measure of sex role attitude, or attitudes toward women's issues. Correlation between attitudes in these areas and the impact of sex-neutral language could then be determined.
5. More detailed demographic data be considered. Variables such as age and education level may have significant effects on the interpretation of sex-specific and sex-unspecified language.

Summary

This chapter has evaluated the research findings, examined the implications and limitations of this experiment, and recommended directions for future research. In general, individuals did respond differently to sex-unspecified and sex-specific terms when all target terms were considered. These response differences did not differ significantly between male and female subjects. In comparing responses to sex-unspecified and sex-specific terms for occupations commonly stereotyped, however, no significant differences were found as a function of gender specification. These results suggest that the use of sex-neutral language did not decrease existing sex stereotypes. For occupations traditionally associated with one sex or the other, the use of parallel, sex-specific terms may be more effective in altering stereotypic attitudes. It is recommended that further research examine this issue in more detail, to determine exactly how sex-neutral or sex-specific language may affect attitudes.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A
Informed Consent Agreement

INFORMED CONSENT AGREEMENT

Utah State University

I hereby give my consent to participate in the project involving human subjects. I understand the procedure to be followed in the study. I will receive answers to any inquiries regarding the project, as well as results of the study when they are available. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time. All information I give will be kept confidential, and no person participating in the study will be identified by name in release of the findings of the study.

Subject Signature Date

Researcher Signature Date

Appendix B

Biographical Form and Instructions

1. Sex of student: male _____ female _____
2. Age at present time:
 _____ 17-20
 _____ 21-24
 _____ 25-30
 _____ 31-40
 _____ 41 or more
3. Year in college: Fr. _____ Soph. _____ Jr. _____ Sr. _____ Grad. _____
4. Race:
 _____ White American (Caucasian)
 _____ Black American
 _____ Spanish Speaking American (Hispanic)
 _____ Native American
 _____ Asian American
 _____ Foreign
5. Primary language: English _____ Other _____

INSTRUCTIONS

The purpose of this study is to measure the meanings that certain occupations or roles have to various people. In the following questionnaire you will be presented with a number of occupational or role titles (e.g.: plumber). After each of these words, there will be a set of word pairs that will be used to describe that individual. Each word pair will consist of two adjectives that could be used to describe some people. The two adjectives will be separated by a 7-point scale, with one word on each side of the scale. For each word pair, you will place an X in the blank that is closed to how you would describe the individual presented. For example, the first question may look like this:

1. bank teller

honest ____:____:____:____:____:____:____ dishonest

You would check the blank closest to how you usually think of bank tellers as being. The direction toward which you check, of course, depends upon which of the two ends of the scale seem to best describe people in the occupation or role you are judging. Work at a fairly high speed through this questionnaire. Your first impressions are most valuable, so check the responses that first come to mind.

Appendix C

Target Words

Target Words as They Appeared on the Questionnaire Forms

<u>Form A</u>	<u>Form B</u>
1. flight attendant	1. flight attendant
2. forewoman	2. foreman
3. spokeswoman	3. spokesperson
4. child	4. child
5. boyfriend	5. girlfriend
6. salesperson	6. salesperson
7. police officer	7. police officer
8. housewife	8. househusband
9. insurance woman	9. insurance man
10. news anchorperson	10. news anchorperson
11. dating partner	11. dating partner
12. fiance (groom-to-be)	12. fiancée (bride-to-be)
13. businessman	13. businesswoman
14. sibling	14. sibling
15. insurance agent	15. insurance agent
16. cameraman	16. camerawoman
17. wife	17. husband
18. supervisor	18. supervisor
19. homemaker	19. homemaker
20. chairman	20. chairwoman
21. spouse	21. spouse
22. news anchorwoman	22. news anchorman
23. policewoman	23. policeman
24. fire fighter	24. fire fighter
25. saleswoman	25. salesman
26. congressman	26. congresswoman
27. businessperson	27. businessperson
28. daughter	28. son
29. camera operator	29. camera operator
30. councilman	30. councilwoman
31. chairperson	31. chairperson
32. father	32. mother
33. spokeswoman	33. spokesman
34. representative	34. representative
35. council member	35. council member
36. stewardess	36. steward
37. parent	37. parent
38. brother	38. sister
39. person one is engaged to	39. person one is engaged to
40. fireman	40. firewoman

Note: These word lists were ordered by use of a random number table.

Appendix D
Semantic Differential

Semantic Differential

1. (M) assertive ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ yielding (F)
2. modest ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ conceited (N)
3. conforming ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ individualistic (M)
4. distant ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ affectionate (F)
5. cooperative ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ competitive (M)
6. outgoing ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ shy (F)
7. rough ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ gentle (F)
8. conscientious ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ careless (N)
9. dependent ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ independent (M)
10. skeptical ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ gullible (F)
11. follower ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ leader (M)
12. inflexible ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ adaptable (N)
13. uncaring ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ compassionate (F)
14. passive ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ aggressive (M)
15. (M) masculine ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ : ___ feminine (F)

Note: Scoring will be done on a scale of 1 to 7, going from left to right, except for items 1 and 15 which will be scored for both masculinity and femininity. Items 2, 8, and 12 will be used to compute neutral scores. Feminine and masculine poles are labeled as (F) and (M) respectively (feminine: 1,4,6,7,10,13, 15; masculine: 1,3,5,9,11,14,15).

Appendix E
Questionnaire Form A

A-14

27. businessperson

assertive	___	___	___	___	___	___	yielding
modest	___	___	___	___	___	___	conceited
conforming	___	___	___	___	___	___	individualistic
distant	___	___	___	___	___	___	affectionate
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	___	competitive
outgoing	___	___	___	___	___	___	shy
rough	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle
conscientious	___	___	___	___	___	___	careless
dependent	___	___	___	___	___	___	independent
skeptical	___	___	___	___	___	___	gullible
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	leader
inflexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	adaptable
uncaring	___	___	___	___	___	___	compassionate
passive	___	___	___	___	___	___	aggressive
masculine	___	___	___	___	___	___	feminine

28. daughter

assertive	___	___	___	___	___	___	yielding
modest	___	___	___	___	___	___	conceited
conforming	___	___	___	___	___	___	individualistic
distant	___	___	___	___	___	___	affectionate
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	___	competitive
outgoing	___	___	___	___	___	___	shy
rough	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle
conscientious	___	___	___	___	___	___	careless
dependent	___	___	___	___	___	___	independent
skeptical	___	___	___	___	___	___	gullible
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	leader
inflexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	adaptable
uncaring	___	___	___	___	___	___	compassionate
passive	___	___	___	___	___	___	aggressive
masculine	___	___	___	___	___	___	feminine

Appendix F
Questionnaire Form B

B-5

9. insurance man

assertive	___	___	___	___	___	___	yielding
modest	___	___	___	___	___	___	conceited
conforming	___	___	___	___	___	___	individualistic
distant	___	___	___	___	___	___	affectionate
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	___	competitive
outgoing	___	___	___	___	___	___	shy
rough	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle
conscientious	___	___	___	___	___	___	careless
dependent	___	___	___	___	___	___	independent
skeptical	___	___	___	___	___	___	gullible
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	leader
inflexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	adaptable
uncaring	___	___	___	___	___	___	compassionate
passive	___	___	___	___	___	___	aggressive
masculine	___	___	___	___	___	___	feminine

10. news anchorperson

assertive	___	___	___	___	___	___	yielding
modest	___	___	___	___	___	___	conceited
conforming	___	___	___	___	___	___	individualistic
distant	___	___	___	___	___	___	affectionate
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	___	competitive
outgoing	___	___	___	___	___	___	shy
rough	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle
conscientious	___	___	___	___	___	___	careless
dependent	___	___	___	___	___	___	independent
skeptical	___	___	___	___	___	___	gullible
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	leader
inflexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	adaptable
uncaring	___	___	___	___	___	___	compassionate
passive	___	___	___	___	___	___	aggressive
masculine	___	___	___	___	___	___	feminine

B-14

27. businessperson

assertive	___	___	___	___	___	___	yielding
modest	___	___	___	___	___	___	conceited
conforming	___	___	___	___	___	___	individualistic
distant	___	___	___	___	___	___	affectionate
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	___	competitive
outgoing	___	___	___	___	___	___	shy
rough	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle
conscientious	___	___	___	___	___	___	careless
dependent	___	___	___	___	___	___	independent
skeptical	___	___	___	___	___	___	gullible
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	leader
inflexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	adaptable
uncaring	___	___	___	___	___	___	compassionate
passive	___	___	___	___	___	___	aggressive
masculine	___	___	___	___	___	___	feminine

28. son

assertive	___	___	___	___	___	___	yielding
modest	___	___	___	___	___	___	conceited
conforming	___	___	___	___	___	___	individualistic
distant	___	___	___	___	___	___	affectionate
cooperative	___	___	___	___	___	___	competitive
outgoing	___	___	___	___	___	___	shy
rough	___	___	___	___	___	___	gentle
conscientious	___	___	___	___	___	___	careless
dependent	___	___	___	___	___	___	independent
skeptical	___	___	___	___	___	___	gullible
follower	___	___	___	___	___	___	leader
inflexible	___	___	___	___	___	___	adaptable
uncaring	___	___	___	___	___	___	compassionate
passive	___	___	___	___	___	___	aggressive
masculine	___	___	___	___	___	___	feminine

