Every chair*man* for *him*self?

A Study of the Influence of Feminist Language Planning on Written Media Language

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Planning on Written Media Language

Abstract

The present thesis explores the effects of feminist language planning on written media language, by examining the influence of feminist guidelines on newspaper style manuals and on the work of journalists. Due to space restrictions, the focus is placed on one of the features repeatedly denounced as gender-biased by feminists, namely the use of the suffix *–man* in occupational titles, such as *chairman*.

This study is based on authentic data extracted from the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*, and reveals a tendency on the part of journalists to relinquish the use of gender-marked masculine occupational titles and to adopt gender-neutral terms instead. The intricacy in the system of forces influencing the adoption of feminist proposals is brought to light. Results show that even though feminist language planners have succeeded in raising worldwide awareness about the gender bias present in the English language, the gender-fair terms and structures that they promote have not necessarily reached the status of 'preferred alternatives', particularly within the sphere of American journalism.

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Chapter One: Introduction

> In the mouths of sexists, language can always be sexist. (Cameron 1985: 90)

This statement was made in 1985 by Deborah Cameron to stress the fact that meaning is created in discourse, and that linguistic reforms targeted at individual words are doomed to failure, a theoretical position which later became the spearhead of linguists associated with Third Wave feminism (1990's to the present). The fact that sexism is ingrained in discourse means that speakers use language differently (often unconsciously), depending on whether they refer to a woman or a man. Third Wave feminist linguists such as Cameron are critical of the word-replacement strategies which were promoted in the 1970's and 1980's, arguing that weeding out problematic words will not eliminate the gender bias present in language, since other terms are bound to take their place by acquiring sexist meanings or connotations. It is also possible that he new terms promoted by feminists will acquire pejorative connotations of 'Political Correctness', radical feminism, etc., or be used in parallel with the old terminology. Cameron, who judges such reforms to be "a purely cosmetic measure" (Cameron 1985: 86) certainly paints a gloomy picture of feminist language planning, both in terms of achievements and prospects.

Nevertheless, despite internal theoretical disputes and obstacles typically encountered in both language planning and feminist campaigns, feminist language planners have managed to raise awareness about the fact that women are treated differently in language. In the face of vehement criticism, they have suceedeed in downgrading certain language practices to the status of 'disapproved' or 'discouraged' (Pauwels 1999: online), such as the generic use of *man* and *he*, as in "*Man* is a multi-sensorial being. Occasionally *he* verbalizes" (Birdwhistell, cited in Eggert 2010: xiii). The aim of this thesis is therefore to assess and discuss the degree of influence that such feminist reforms have had on language, forty years after the publication of the first gender-fair guidelines.

A quick review of the debate on gender bias in the English language takes us back to 18th century Britain, when grammarians such as Kirby began supporting the use of generic *he* to the detriment of singular *they*, which was treated as a case a violation of agreement rules (Frank and Treichler 1989: 114)

> the masculine person answers the general Name, which comprehends both Male and Female; as 'any person, who knows what *he* says'. (Kirby, cited in Frank and Treichler 1989: 114)

This trend is illustrated by the Acts of Parliament Abbreviation Act passed in the United Kingdom in 1850, whose purpose was to shorten the language of the Acts of Parliament by ensuring, among other things, "That in all Acts to be hereafter made Words importing the Masculine Gender shall be deemed and taken to include Females" (British Sessions Papers 1850; cited in Baron 1986: 140). This Act was followed by a Repeal Bill introduced by John Stuart the next year on account that

> now by this Act, though contrary to the intention of the parties, female issue would be included […] and the consequence would be that females would be entitled to vote. […] Could a more monstrous absurdity be palmed off on the House in an unguarded moment than this Act of Parliament? (Stuart, in Hansard online)

Since then, generics, and particularly the generic use of pronouns has been the subject of heated discussions, and serious attempts were made at introducing a third-person singular pronoun which would be truly generic, but to no avail. It was not until the 1970's that debates on linguisic gender bias began in earnest, and that feminist linguists, journalists, authors, editors, etc., began promoting language reform proposals, through the publication of various types of guidelines and articles in the press, and by reviewing the form and contents of the language used in school manuals, religious texts, pieces of legislation, and the media, to give but a few examples.

Aim of the thesis

I became aware of the issue of gender bias in language in 2008, when a French comedian wrote a song to show that, in French, almost any feminine word which is derived from a masculine form can be used with the meaning of 'prostitute', and I decided to use this theme for a project in a linguistics course taught by Toril Swan at the University of Tromsø. Since then, my stance on the subject of feminist language planning has evolved, and I tend to agree with Third Wave feminist linguists who claim that the chances of success of form-replacement reforms are slim, particularly if those reforms are targeted at language users who do not support the feminist movement. However, I believe that word-replacement strategies can be an efficient tool to raise-awareness about the androcentric, or 'male as the norm' undercurrent which defines our Western societies. It is certainly an exaggeration to claim that language change can trigger social change, yet feminist language planning arose from a strong

social movement whose achievements form a solid basis that can be valuable in helping to promote further changes.

In any case, regardless of one's stance on feminism and feminist language reform proposals, I believe that the efforts and strategies employed in promoting these proposals make for an interesting case of language planning. Frank and Treichler write that "although much of the criticism […] occurred soon after the guidelines first appeared in the 1970s, similar arguments are still being advanced today" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 128). Indeed, even though feminist language planners have managed to raise awareness worldwide, their reforms have greatly suffered from the anti-feminist backlash which emerged in the 1990's. It is therefore legitimate to investigate the state of the art, now that the subject no longer makes the front pages of national newspapers, or inspires many a passionate counter-argumentation. In other words, 'now what'? Now that the buzz has faded, can we assert that feminist language planning efforts have succeeded in changing people's language habits? That they have helped improve the status and visibility of women, particularly in the workplace?

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to assess the effects of all feminist reform proposals on all genres. I have thus chosen to focus on a specific feature, i.e. the use of the suffix *–man* and of the alternatives proposed by feminists, as used within the semantic field of professional occupations. Gender-fair alternatives to words such as *chairman* are possibly the ones which have been simultaneously the most publicized and the most disparaged.

> Feminists have given much attention to discouraging the use of such gender-marked compound words as *manpower, chairman,* and *manmade,* and it is in this area, perhaps, that they have had their most consistent and widespread success. Many state and federal government agencies, for example, have officially adopted gender neutral job titles […] At the same time, this is the area of language most readily caricatured by critics of language change. *Personhole cover* as a substitute for *manhole cover* is a favorite proposal among these critics. (Frank and Treichler 1989: 191-2)

I thus address the following research questions:

- Has change occurred?
- If so, has change occurred as a result of feminist language planning?
- Can we discern patterns in the use of terms promoted by feminists?

In order to obtain generalizable results about the effects of feminist language planning since the publication of the first feminist guidelines, I have based my study on authentic data extracted from the only large corpus which is both freely available online and allows for diachronic observations, namely the *Corpus of Contemporary American English*.

Outline

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. Chapter 2 provides theoretical background to the main study, by clarifying the terminology used for the remainder of the thesis, and by presenting the various theoretical approaches which have been influential in the language planning process, as well as the main strategies and responses that characterize this movement.

In Chapter 3, more detailed information is provided as to the nature and relevance of the present study, along with a word about previous studies conducted on the subject, which have influenced my methodological choices and the formulation of my hypotheses and expectations.

Chapters 4 to 6 represent the main bulk of the study. I start by examining the contents of feminist guidelines and their influence on institutional guidelines that have the power to regulate and orient the speech community's language habits (Chapter 4). In Chapter 5, I give an overview of the use of a selection of sixty-eight *–man* compounds and of their alternatives. Chapter 6 is devoted to the study of the usage patterns of seven specific *–man* compounds, namely *anchorman*, *businessman*, *cameraman*, *chairman, craftsman*, *fisherman* and *policeman*. Despite the fact that *chairman* does not belong to the same semantic category as the others, i.e. I have classified it as referring to the notion of 'hierarchy' rather than 'trades and professions', it seemed necessary to include *chairman* in this study, as it is a recurrent example and has become symbolic of theoretical disputes on the adoption of gender-fair language.

Chapter 7 contains a short study on the influence that newspaper style manuals have over written media language, as well as the final discussion on the extent to which feminist language planners can be said to have succeeded in having their suggestions adopted by the language community at large.

Chapter 8 concludes this thesis by summarizing the main findings, and by making suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Theoretical background

The notion of *gender* in language received renewed focus during Second Wave feminism (1960's-1990's). However, many arguments formulated at the time (both pro- and anti-feminist) were based on erroneous understandings of gender systems. Therefore, I want to begin with a quick review of what is meant by the term *gender* in the context of linguistics, before moving on to *sexism* and 'sexist language'. In the second part, I review the different theoretical frameworks and strategies that have been used to address the issue of linguistic gender bias. Part Three gives an overview of the concrete initiatives taken by feminist language planners, and Part Four summarizes the reactions of the general public.

1. __Definitions__

1.1. Gender in linguistics

1.1.1. Gender as a grammatical category

The word *gender* is derived from the Latin word *genus*, meaning 'race, kind'[1], and is used in linguistics to refer to a certain type of grammatical category. Gender systems are used to classify nouns into different groups or noun classes, which in turn affect concord. Although useless in appearance – non-native speakers will be understood despite gender-agreement mistakes (Yaguello 2002: 113) – gender systems can be found in a great many languages. Yaguello attributes the survival of gender, in spite of the principle of linguistic economy, to its metaphorical function and its role in the creation of "collective symbolic representations" (ibid.: 143, my translation).

1.1.2. Two types of gender systems

In linguistics, it is common to differentiate between *grammatical* and *natural* types of gender systems.

In a *grammatical* or *linguistic gender system*, words may be assigned to a particular gender according to their morphological or phonological structure (what Corbett 1991 refers to as *formal gender*), as in Russian for instance, where a word's final letter defines its gender. In

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[1] "gender, n.". OED Online. December 2011. Oxford University Press. 20 January 2012

some languages, such as French or Spanish, the classification of nouns seems arbitrary, i.e. it cannot be predicted from either word structure or a particular feature of the referent. However, some linguists claim that gender assignment is always influenced by semantics to a certain extent (Corbett 1991: 8).

The classification of words into *natural gender systems* is based on semantics, in this case on the reference (or absence thereof) to the sex of the referent. Thus, a distinction is made between 'male animate', 'female animate' and 'inanimate'. Natural gender is a subset of *semantic gender* (cf. Corbett 1991), in relation to which gender assignment is based on various characteristics of the referent (not just its sex). Thus, semantic gender systems may include more than three genders.

The terms *masculine gender* and *feminine gender* can be misleading, because they refer to social constructs as well as linguistic categories (grammatical and natural), and the existence of a connection between the two is still a debated issue.

1.1.3. The case of English

The case of the English language is highly unusual, since its gender system has undergone an evolution from grammatical to natural.

The Old English gender system was grammatically-based and included three genders (feminine, masculine, neuter). It has evolved over the centuries to the natural gender system that is now in use in Modern English, where the feminine gender corresponds to female animates (humans and animals), the masculine gender to male animates and the neuter to inanimates. There are, however, some exceptions (e.g. babies are neuter) and what Curzan refers to as *resilient nouns*, i.e. nouns that "retain gendered references" (Curzan 2003: 29), such as *city* (f), *death* (m), etc. It is also common to refer metaphorically to cars, planes, boats or countries as feminine.

It is important to stress that English has not lost its gender system altogether, although most of its nouns have become grammatically generic or "gender unmarked" (Gygax et al. 2009: 236) and only the third-person singular pronouns and a few nouns are now outwardly marked for gender (e.g. *actress*, *repairman*).

There has been, and to some extent still is, a great deal of confusion about the notion of gender in language, not to mention theoretical disagreement among experts. Many (non-

linguist) feminists have accused the gender systems of western languages of being a source of sexism, based on observations that were taken out of context. In the next section, I look at sexism in language in some detail and present various theoretical positions that have been influential in the language planning process. I then address the question of what exactly is meant by 'sexist language' in this context, as well as whether branding language as sexist is justified.

1.2. Sexism

1.2.1. *Defining sexism*

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) gives the following definition of *sexism*:

> Originally: the state or condition of belonging to the male or female sex; categorization or reference on the basis of sex (now *rare*); (in later use) prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex. [2]

Definitions of sexism have evolved since the era of Second Wave Feminism (1960's-1990's). Third Wave feminists (1990's-present) have moved away from a 'Man vs. Woman' view of society, as claimed by Spender (1980), who mirrored Marxist arguments by portraying men as the ruling class, having the power to define reality, and women as oppressed, deprived of power and perpetually being defined (Black and Coward 1998: 101). Third Wave feminists argue in favor of a less Manichean approach, and their models rely on the premise that because "society as a whole is based on the notion of the female-male heterosexual couple who live together in an intimate relationship, [...] misogynistic statements against women are usually made about sub-groups of women" (S.Mills 2008: 39). Thus, Third Wave theories take other factors than gender into consideration, such as social background, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

Third Wave feminists treat sexism as "a resource available to men but which not all men draw on" (S.Mills 2008: 21). They argue against a reductive view of sexist practices as individual 'slips', even though S.Mills acknowledges that "sexism develops at least in part from individual usages within particular contexts" (ibid.: 4). Instead, they favor an institutional view of sexism as a common belief system which stems from societal forces, and which speakers *may* draw on (ibid.: 1).

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[2] "sexism, n.2". OED Online. December 2011. Oxford University Press. 10 January 2012.

The question 'Can statements about men be sexist?' elicits varied answers. Current definitions tend to leave the door open for an extension to men's experiences, but some feminist scholars, such as S.Mills, strongly oppose it.

1.2.2. Sexism in language

Second Wave feminists tended to look at sexist language in terms of derogatory statements, irrelevant foregrounding of gender, or the assumption of maleness as the norm. Third Wave feminists have expanded the definition to encompass "statements which rely on stereotypical and outdated beliefs" (S.Mills 2008: 2), "the presupposition that any activity associated with women is necessarily trivial or secondary in relation to male activities" (ibid.), "language which describes women as dependent on or submissive to men" (Hellinger et al., quoted in Pauwels 1998: 155), or simply language that ignores the presence of women.

Sexism in language may be intentional – as with insults – but not necessarily, as attested by testimonies of speakers trying to reform their own language, who admit to the difficulty of the enterprise (cf. Nilsen 1987, Hofstadter 1998).

All feminist linguists agree that sexism in language is a reality, however, what is meant by language and which exact features can be regarded as sexist are still controversial issues. One way into the debate is to look at the evolution from Second Wave to Third Wave theories.

Second Wave Theories about Sexist Language

Second Wave feminists considered sexism to reside in words and morphemes.

The reference to maleness as the norm is considered one of the main sexist aspects of language. Second Wave feminists argue that this is rendered through the use of pseudo masculine generics,[3] such as *he*, *man* and the suffix *–man*, or the compounding of a word supposed to act as a generic with a collocate marking the feminine gender:

(1) It seems that *man* can realize that liberty only if *he* does not forget (COCA 1997, no reference)
(2) And there was never going to be a *lady governor* of Texas? (COCA 1999, 19990727)

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[3] The term 'pseudo-generic' was coined by Julia Penelope in 1978 (then known as Julia P. Stanley) to designate masculine words which can be used either specifically and generically, as in the case of *man*. Feminists acknowledge the fact that *man* once meant 'human being', while *wer* and *wyf* were used to designate a man and a woman. However, in their eyes, the etymology of *man* does not constitute a valid argument in favor of the retention of its generic use; because language is constantly evolving, what a word once meant is irrelevant in present-day debates. Therefore, they reject the claim that a specific and a generic meaning can coexist within the word *man*: "despite its origins, [it] no longer implies all the *wers* and *wyfs* all the time" (Shewchuk 2000: online).

Feminists argue that such language practices are unfair, because they obscure the presence and achievements of women. Many studies have been conducted on the subject of mental representations triggered by masculine terms, and results demonstrate that speakers do "not usually produce generic interpretations" (Gygax et al. 2009: 242).[4] Feminists also emphasize the fact that masculine forms have been used in parallel with other alternatives for centuries, and that their proclamation as generic and unmarked, or as sole correct usage in the case of pronouns, only dates back to 18th- and 19th-century grammars, all of which were authored by men.

The feminine suffixes *–ette*, *–ess* and *–trix*, as in *usherette*, *waitress* or *aviatrix* are considered demeaning to women's occupations, on the grounds that they occur in words that have acquired negative connotations (e.g. *poetess*) and in diminutives (e.g. *kitchenette*), and have therefore become associated with notions of triviality and petiteness.

Asymmetrical naming practices are deemed unfair: that a woman's marital status should be made conspicuous (*Miss/Mrs*) is no longer warranted in our modern day and age. Such naming practices also concern the asymmetrical use of occupational and honorific titles

(3) *President* Sarkozy and *Mrs* Merkel need to find a compromise… (emphases added),[5]

together with the use of middle initials as a sign of male prestige, and the tradition for women to be defined "in terms of their relationship to men" (Hellinger and Pauwels, cited in S. Mills 2008: 62), i.e. being given their father's name at birth and adopting their husband's upon marriage.

Another sexist feature of language is that which Muriel Schultz has labeled the *semantic derogation of women*, i.e. a gradual process of pejoration undergone by most words referring to women; "in their downhill slide, they slip past respectable women and settle upon prostitutes and mistresses" (Schultz 1975: 66). There also exists a "mild[er] form of debasement, whereby a word once reserved for persons in high places [e.g. *lady*] is generalized to refer to people in all levels of society" (ibid.: 65). This is referred to as *democratic leveling*.

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[4] See also, among many others, Schneider and Hacker (1973) on the mental representations associated with *man* and *–man*, and Moulton et al. (1978) and Martyna (1978) on those associated with *he*.
[5] 'Political courage is needed in Paris – and needed now', Dec. 5th 2011, http://www.thisiscornwall.co.uk/Political-courage-needed-Paris-ndash-needed/story-14045387-detail/story.html, [Accessed 13th January 2012].

Spender's model (1980) differs from most Second Wave theories, in that she claims that "the problem lies not in the words but in the semantic rule which governs their positive or negative connotations" (Spender, cited in Black and Coward 1998: 101). According to Spender, men have "formulated a semantic rule which posits them as central and positive as the norm, and they have classified the world from that standpoint" (ibid.).

This view of sexism ingrained at the syntactic level has been criticized by Black and Coward, who argue that what Spender calls 'syntactic rule' does not actually have anything to do with syntax:

> The question is not 'how did men make syntax?'; the issue here is how did certain idioms and stereotypical phrases like *men and women* arise, and why are idioms often a central component of ideological discourses where they function as if they were required by the structure of language, the organization of society or human nature […] Reference has little to do with syntax; the relationship between a word and its referent, or possible referents, is not determined or constrained by syntactic factors. Therefore, 'this use of *man* and *he* as terms to denote a male, but on occasion to encompass a female' may well be sexist, but is not 'an example of sexist linguistic structure'. (Black and Coward 1998: 105)

Third Wave Theories about Sexist Language

Third Wave feminists have come to look at sexism and language from a different perspective. They do not deny the unfairness of the practices mentioned above, however, they believe that sexism resides in discourse, and not in individual words. S.Mills defines *discourse* as the "rules and guidelines which we produce and which are produced for us in order to construct ourselves as individuals and to interact with others" (S.Mills 2008: 9). According to Third Wave feminist linguists, discourse is where meaning is negotiated and co-constructed, in a constant interplay between "individual will" and "social relations embedded in political structures" (McConnell-Ginet, cited in Ehrlich and King 1994: 60).

As an example of sexism in discourse, Pauwels cites what Freebody and Baker refer to as the *cuddle factor*, that is to say the association of women with "more emotional states of mind as well as less physical and gregarious activities" (Pauwels 1998: 21). This can be achieved through the use of stereotypical processes and qualifying adjectives, certain patterns of turn-taking, but also through the organization of information (men as 'doers' and women as done-tos'), the marking or hiding of agency, or the tendency for the speech of women to be reported in indirect speech in the media, (a mediation "which often leads to evaluative statements" (S. Mills 2008: 71)). Black and Coward take up the notion of 'maleness as the norm' and apply it to discourse:

> What is available to men is a discourse where gender and sexual identity appears to be absent […] however different we are constituted in different practices and discourses, women are constantly and inescapably constructed as women. There is a discourse available to men which allows them to represent themselves as people, humanity, mankind. (Black and Coward 1998: 118)

An example of this would be the following: "Drivers – belt the wife and kids" (Road safety sign, Black and Coward 1998: 108).

Even though the claim that language can be sexist is now relatively uncontroversial, pinpointing what makes language sexist in a particular context may not be that straightforward, especially since content can be subject to interpretation. Nilsen, who has worked as editor of the *English Journal*, writes about the difficulties of putting non-sexist guidelines into practice: "For editorial purposes, it is extremely hard to decide what is sexist content and what is sexist language" (Nilsen 1987: 51).

Difficulties in locating sexism in language lead to difficulties in responding to it, and S.Mills suggests a distinction between *overt* and *indirect sexism*. *Overt sexism* covers features flagged as sexist by Second Wave feminists, whereas *indirect sexism* is a more subtle form of sexism, in which context the speaker

> attempts to deny responsibility for an utterance, mediating the utterance through irony or disguising the force of the sexism of the utterance through humour, innuendo, embedding sexism at the level of presupposition, or prefacing sexist statements with disclaimers or hesitations. (S. Mills 2008: 135)

Indirect sexism includes a common phenomenon whereby journalists who talk or write about women often resort to "sexual or romantic scenarios" (S.Mills 2008: 148), or include irrelevant references to family or physical appearance, as in:

> (4) Andrea Wallace, one of Britain's top cross-country athletes and a *mother of two*, running in only her second marathon, believes that if she is still there at 20 miles, she has a chance of gaining a medal. (BNC – AJY 349, emphasis added)
> (5) A man [...] went berserk with a machete and murdered *his next door neighbour's wife*. (example cited in Cameron 2006: 17, emphasis added)

Indirect sexism is the extremely difficult to respond to without appearing to be splitting hairs or to lack a sense of humor entirely. S.Mills sums up women's quandary in the following manner:

> So if we laugh [...] we could be seen to be buying into sexism, that is, rejecting feminity and valuing masculinity; if we don't laugh [...] we could be seen as humourless and unable to see the overt playfulness and critique. (S. Mills 2008: 145)

Sexist language or sexist language use?

The question of whether a language can be inherently sexist, or whether only usage can be sexist, was at the heart of the debate on feminist language planning in the 1970's-1980's. Some linguists reject the idea that *langue* can be sexist; only *parole* can be.[6] Thus a sentence cannot be sexist, but an utterance can be (Black and Coward 1998: 109).

> The phenomena feminists are concerned with have little to do with linguistic systems […] Language, as a system of phonological, syntactic, and logical structures and rules, is not inherently sexist or 'man-made' in Dale Spender's sense. Linguistic systems, however, serve as the basis for the production and interpretation of sets of related utterances – discourses – which effect and sustain the different categorizations and positions of women and men. It is on these discourses, and not on language in general and on linguistic systems, that feminist analyses have to focus. (ibid.: 110-1)

However, one might wonder whether the impossibility for *langue* to be sexist, as well as the very distinction between *langue* and *parole,* is actually relevant to the debate on feminist language reforms. Ultimately, our main concern is sexism lodged in discourse, that is to say, what people say or write and the way in which they do it. Form matters in any given situation of communication, indeed "why should the form of language be significant in a poem, novel, or autobiography, but not in the language in which we discuss such things?" (Penelope 1982: 844).

I support the view that form is meaning, and therefore am reluctant to consider the two separately. However, it may be useful to distinguish between content and form in order to differentiate between sexist content and gender-exclusive or gender-biased lexical choices. Thus it can be argued that the English lexicon bears a male bias, but that only discourse can be labeled sexist as such, even though the relevance of this distinction is questionable in real life. With these considerations in mind, I decided to use the terms *gender-biased* and *gender-fair* language instead of *sexist* and *non-sexist* for the remainder of this thesis, except in references to theoretical positions defended by linguists who used these specific terms.

The fact that form generates meaning substantiates Second Wave word-level reforms, which are just as warranted as reforms at discourse level, if only for the reason that questioning asymmetrical naming practices and the assumption of maleness as the norm has symbolic value for advocates of equal visibility and a gender-fair society.

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[6] "*Langue* refers to the system of rules and conventions which is independent of, and pre-exists, individual users; *parole* refers to its use in particular instances." Daniel Chandler, http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/S4B/sem01.html, [Accessed 13th January 2012].

2.   What kind of reform?

The idea of reforming gender-biased language dates back to the end of the nineteenth century (cf. A history of the contestation of the use of masculine generics in Frank and Treichler 1989: 114-8), and despite the large gap between Second and Third Wave understandings of the workings of sexism, feminist linguists agree that action must be taken and that things must change.

They argue that change is warranted "in the name of fairness and equity" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 133) since, in its current state, the English language (and its community of speakers) hampers women's visibility, silences their experiences and conveys harmful stereotypes, all of which have negative effects on women's employment opportunities, and more generally on their sense of identity. Furthermore, feminists claim that an inaccurate rendering of society prevents effective communication.

Sweeping aside claims that it is an unrealistic endeavor to make people change their language practices, feminist scholars stress the fact that 'gatekeepers of language' – the majority of whom are conservative – do not exert an all-encompassing influence, and that reforming efforts can be made at various levels. Feminists admit that "nonsexist writing may not come naturally" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 137), and that making conscious efforts to change one's speaking and writing habits is a necessary step towards a gender-fair use of language.

However, the marked divergence of opinion within the feminist movement regarding approaches and strategies has led to internal theoretical disputes on how and to what extent gender-fair language use should be promoted.

2.1. Theoretical frameworks

Black and Coward deplore the absence of any "ready-made theoretical framework that feminists can simply take over and apply to the analysis of the relevant phenomena" (Black and Coward 1998: 111). This is indeed one of the reasons behind the disagreements present within feminist circles. The vagueness of the theoretical models used as basis for reform proposals is caused by disagreements on the subject of the creation of meaning and the relationship between language change and social change (Cameron 2006: 13).

The question of whether language change triggers social change or whether things happen the other way around is of particular importance in the debate on gender-fair language reforms, because scholars do not all agree on whether language shapes our reality or whether it simply reflects it. Penelope calls this a "chicken-egg dispute" (Penelope 1982: 840), the insolubility of which results in both sides standing their ground and dismissing their rivals' arguments as theoretically flawed.

2.1.1.   Social change must precede language change

'Wait and See': language can be reformed, once society has changed.

This is the approach adopted by feminist linguist Robin Lakoff (1973). She does not dismiss the possibility of reforming language, but is of the opinion that only certain aspects can be forced to evolve (e.g. marital and occupational titles) as opposed to others, pronouns for instance. The second main aspect of her approach is that language change cannot initiate social change. In other words, language change can only be successfully implemented once society is ready and receptive.

> It should be recognized that social change creates language change, not the reverse; or at best, language change influences changes in attitudes slowly and indirectly, and these changes in attitudes will not be reflected in social change unless society is receptive already. (Lakoff 1973: 76)

She backs up her theory with the example of the adoption of the term *black* in the United States, replacing the now infamous *negro*, which spread across the country in about a year (Henley 1987: 9). The time, she argues, "was ripe for such a proposal, but it is not yet ripe for change in linguistic sexism" (Lakoff, cited in Henley 1987: 9).

Needless to say, this theoretical stance is not popular amongst feminist linguists, who retort that waiting for society to change is not a realistic solution. Romaine claims that Lakoff's theory is untenable, and she is categorical about language change not being a necessary consequence of social change. "It has to be actively pursued", she writes (Romaine 1999: 316).

'Time to act': society has changed, hence language must be reformed.

Miller and Swift (1976, 1980) do not disagree with Lakoff, but argue that change has already occurred: women have gained new ground in society, especially in the workplace. Hence action must be taken, because language 'lags behind' and does not accurately reflect women's

reality. This approach is based on the premise that gender-biased language has no place in a modern society, particularly in light of the commitments made by governments to achieve complete equality in employment.

Furthermore, giving language a nudge to adapt faster is a matter of successful communication; because society has evolved, using terms that are no longer adapted is counterproductive (Miller and Swift 1980: 7-8).

2.1.2.   Language change must precede social change

Feminist linguists who advocate using language change as a trigger for social change use theoretical models based on the strong version of the *Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis*.

The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis was originally formulated on the basis of observations made about Native American languages, and proposed that

> languages vary dramatically [...] and that such variations encode dramatically different understandings of reality, so that people speaking different languages actually see the world in widely divergent ways. According to the Sapir-Whorf line of thinking, language structures our perceptions not only through word choice, but through metaphors and metaphor systems, with benefits, limitations, and concrete consequences. (Squier and Vedder 2000: 307)

Hence, the strong version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis posits that language determines thought.

Spender's determinist approach

Applied to the issue of sexism in language, this model, also referred to as the *causal approach* (Peterson 1994: 6), postulates a pre-existing sexist linguistic system which is the source of sexist thought.

> It is language which determines the limits of our world, which constructs our reality [...] Language is *not* neutral. It is not merely a vehicle which carries ideas. It is itself a shaper of ideas [...] Human beings cannot impartially describe the universe because in order to describe it they must first have a classification system. But, paradoxically, once they have that classification system, once they have a language, *they can see only certain arbitrary things*." (Spender 1998: 94)

However, most feminist linguists have come to criticize Spender's theories about the formation of meaning, as well as her assumption of monolithic groups (Men vs. Women), both of which have been dismissed on account of being theoretically flawed and untenable.

Frank and Treichler agree that "few would suggest that sexual or racial inequality exists because of language use. Nor would many argue that banishing sexist and racist labeling would in itself result in a just society" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 108-9). On the other hand, the majority of feminist linguists support the idea that "language is not a neutral medium" (Pauwels 1998: 92) and argue in favor of a theoretical model in which reality and language influence each other, i.e. in which language both reflects society and helps perpetuate certain ideas and behaviors.

2.1.3. *Language change can foster social change*

The majority of feminist linguists have adopted the weak version of the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which posits that language does not determine thought, human behavior and reality, but instead helps construct them by serving as an "ideological filter on the world" (Ehrlich and King 1994: 60).

The Interactionist approach

Scholars who endorse this approach apprehend the relationship between language change and social change as a "complex two-way process" (S.Mills 2008: 44). Thus, they support feminist language planning.

> The argument that changing erroneous or offensive terminology relating to an issue is a necessary component to changing conceptions about the issue itself is certainly a valid one. Changing accepted forms of language is a way to shape how speakers linguistically formulate or articulate their ideas, even if it does not immediately alter the ideas themselves. (Curzan 2003: 30)

As can be derived from Curzan's statement, supporters of the *Interactionist approach* are cautious in their predictions. Many do not believe in form-replacement strategies, nor do they "assume that language holds the key to women's liberation" (Pauwels 1998: 92). Nevertheless, they consider language to be as important a front as any other, to be dealt with as part of larger campaigns for gender equality. They argue that feminist reforms may not succeed in eliminating sexism from language, but that they can at least serve to expose it, and therefore function as a consciousness-raising tool, as well as provide women with "the opportunity to become 'namers' and 'meaning makers'" (ibid.: 102).

Initiating debates about appropriate ways to thwart sexist practices in language can give women the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and make speakers aware that

"language combines the functions of a mirror, a tool, and a weapon" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 108).

2.2. What strategies?

2.2.1. Which aspects of language should be reformed?

Despite a widespread consensus about the need to reform language, no uniform approach has been sanctioned by a distinct majority of feminists. Most Third Wave feminist linguists stress the importance of changing discourse conventions, where real sexism lurks. However, this is still a marginal practice, confined to feminist circles. Dealing with indirect sexism is also a delicate issue, considering that meaning is a matter of interpretation (S.Mills 2008: 97) and that, in this context, accusations of sexism will be perceived as a moral judgement and dismissed as a lack of sense of humor.

Form-replacement strategies are the only type of reform to have enjoyed extensive media coverage, whether they encourage the use of words already present in the lexicon, or that of new words coined for specific situations. Yet the fact that form-replacement strategies have been thrust into the limelight does not mean that they are unanimously approved. Cameron is extremely critical of such strategies, arguing that sexist speakers will adapt their language practices and find oblique new ways of rendering sexist content. They may even use the terms promoted by feminists in a manner that still conveys a sexist meaning. She claims that promoting form-replacement lures people into thinking that changing a few words here and there is enough to solve the problem.

Third Wave feminists emphasize that "there are no linguistic quick fixes" (Eckert and McConnel-Ginet, cited in S.Mills 2008: 94) and warn us that new, gender-fair forms may undergo a semantic shift. Since meaning is co-constructed in discourse, there is no guarantee that the new forms will be used by the speech community at large in the way in which they were originally intended by feminist language planners.

Nevertheless, it appears that promoting form-replacement is the most realistic strategy, as far as implementation methods are concerned. Their use is also justified for the purpose of getting language users to think about the issue.

2.2.2. Gender-neutralization or gender-specification?

A crucial aspect of gender-fair language reforms to consider is whether occupational terms should be made generic or whether they should be feminized.

Gender-neutralization

Gender-neutralization, or *change via circumvention* (Blaubergs 1978: 247), consists in eliminating "any morphosyntactic and lexical features marking human agent nouns and pronouns (or other parts of speech) as masculine or feminine" (Pauwels 1998: 109). This strategy is based on the notion that speakers do not always need to make gender salient, particularly in work-related contexts.

Table 1. Gender-neutralization in English

Before	After
Actor/Actress	Actor
Lawyer/Lady lawyer	Lawyer
Chairman	Chairperson/Chair/Department Head, etc.
Salesgirl, saleslady	Shop assistant
Generic *he*	Plural, passive voice, singular *they*

It should be noted that *gender-neutral* is not synonymous with *gender-fair*. *Gender-neutral* is a linguistic description, while *gender-fair* is a social evaluation. The two may be consistent, but are not necessarily so.

Gender-specification

The strategy of *gender-specification*, or *feminization*, consists, on the contrary, in making gender visible as often as possible, in order to stress the roles and achievements of women in society. This strategy also includes the attempt to reclaim certain gender-marked feminine forms which have acquired pejorative connotations.

Table 2. Gender-specification in English

Before	After
Chairman	Chairwoman
Generic *he*	S/he, he or she, generic *she*
Men and women	Women and men
Pejorative connotations of feminine suffixes, such as *-ette* and *-ess*	Reclaiming and promoting usage of feminine suffixes with pejorative connotations

Also part of this strategy is the use of *gender-splitting*, which entails mentioning both female and male terms in certain contexts, as in

(6) Waiting tables in New York City used to be a way station for aspiring *actors and actresses*, not career-stalled college graduates. (COCA 2009, 091126)

Due to the "diversity of idiolect" (Blaubergs 1978: 259), using a feminine form can reflect either somewhat old-fashioned language practices, or, on the contrary, a desire to promote greater visibility for women in discourse.

Pros and Cons of gender-neutralization and gender-specification

Gender-neutralization allows language users to do away with irrelevant focus on gender and is presented by most guidelines as the favored alternative in the case of English. It is relatively easy to coin new generic terms without dramatically disrupting the lexical system, which facilitates their acceptance by the speech community. However, referring to actresses as *actors* and female surgeons as *surgeons* may further deny women visibility in discourse. Another snag is the difficulty to change the mental images that speakers associate with certain gender-neutral words. Blaubergs cites the examples of *sewing worker* and *bank president*, the gender-neutrality of which is, in the end, doubtful (Blaubergs 1978: 248), a fact that is emphasized by Romaine, as she expresses her reserve about gender-neutralization:

> At the moment, sex neutrality is not a recognized category. We can see this reflected in other aspects of society. When we speak of unisex clothing or styles, for instance, what is happening is not really a neutralization of sex-specific styles of dressing, hairstyles, and so on, but *an erasing of the distinction in favor of the masculine form.* Thus, unisex fashions have fostered greater acceptability for women to wear trousers, and other items of clothing once regarded as for men only. They have not created a social climate of tolerance for men to wear skirts or dresses. (Romaine 1999: 309, emphasis added)

In Cameron's words, gender-neutral words such as *actor* and *surgeon* are "neutral on the surface, but masculine underneath" (Cameron 1985: 86).

Another aspects of language to be taken into consideration is the natural tendency for speakers to want to include a reference to gender, which could trigger the following evolution pattern: *poet* and *poetess > poet > poet* and *female/lady/woman poet*, thereby creating a different kind of asymmetry.

The drawbacks of gender-neutralization mentioned above seem to strengthen the case for gender-specification. Indeed, it would solve the visibility issue and thus be "socially more effective" (Pauwels 1999: online). Insisting on using feminine terms could also accelerate the demise of masculine generics, by bringing forward the gender-specifity of gender-marked terms such as *chairman*. Yet implementing a feminization procedure presents both difficulties and risks. First of all, only –*woman* forms can be said to have been successfully reclaimed, as well as to have been in use long enough (according to the OED, since the 17th century), to seem like a natural solution to recalcitrant language users. Even disregarding the issue of the

pejorative connotations of feminine words currently in use, coining a feminine equivalent to every masculine/pseudo-generic word, as well as a new generic form, would present a major challenge. Yet another obstacle would be to find a feminine suffix which is still productive and bears relatively neutral connotations, since *–ess*, *–ette* and *–trix* seem to be beyond redemption.

The fact that many feminine forms have acquired pejorative connotations is the main argument presented against gender-specification strategies. Because the processes of semantic derogation and democratic leveling so often affect words referring to women, it is highly probable that new feminine forms would develop similar negative connotations. It then comes down to a question of ideology, of whether "it is better to be named, even if there are negative connotations, and be visible than to be invisible" (Van Alphen, cited in Pauwels 1998: 122).

Some linguists have suggested using both strategies. This can be done synchronically, depending on the context, by using feminized forms when the referent is known to be a woman, and gender-neutral forms when the referent is unknown. In their study of the use of occupational terms in Australian and New Zealand English, Holmes et al. (2009: 195) observe that both strategies are used diachronically. In other words, the evolution is proceeding in two phases: a first phase of gender-specification where women gain visibility, and a second phase of gender-neutralization, where the decreasing use of gender markings is interpreted as evidence of a greater acceptance and integration of women in the workplace.

2.2.3. Bottom-up or top-down?

Bottom-up

In the case of the feminist movement, bottom-up language planning strategies are part of what Pauwels refers to as a *grassroots approach* (Pauwels 1998: 6), whereby "individual women, women's groups, feminist collectives, task forces and working parties on women's and equality issues" (ibid.: 12) work to raise awareness at the local level, namely within their own social networks. This *role model and solidarity strategy* (ibid.: 140) is favored by feminists because it is an unintrusive way of rallying people to their cause: language users learn about the new, proposed terms, and can decide whether to adopt them or not.

Bottom-up feminist actions also consist in lobbying organizations and institutions (schools, universities, business companies, publishing companies, newpapers, Government agencies, etc.) which in turn can act as intermediaries in promoting feminist reforms.

Top-down

Top-down language planning strategies mainly comprise official language policies and various types of legislation. Feminists consider that gaining institutional support is indispensable if their proposals are to achieve the status of favored alternatives. There is need for a global strategy, and this is only possible if 'gatekeepers of language' endorse and legitimize their proposals. Indeed, "one does not change alone" (Henley 1987: 14).

There are nevertheless disagreements about the potential for success of top-down strategies. Even though they give feminist language planners more leverage, such strategies have proved particularly difficult to implement. First of all, the majority of the language-regulating bodies hold conservative attitudes to language change, and have generally opposed feminist proposals. Secondly, even though there does exist legislation supporting and promoting gender-fair language, sanctions for non-compliance are hardly ever enforced (Pauwels 1998: 147; Pauwels 2001: 109).

Another argument against top-down strategies is that people generally do not enjoy being told what to do, and in view of the reactions prompted by the debate on gender-biased language, they like even less being told how to speak. Bearing in mind that most speakers experience language change as a permanent process of decay of what they consider 'proper language', or in this case 'proper English' (cf. Part 4: Reception), it appears that a stage of explanation and discussion is essential, particularly in the case of reforms associated with the feminist movement. I presume that this is all the more relevant in the case of American English, because speakers are neither used to following rules set by a language-regulation body such as the (independent) French Académie Française or the (State-run) Norwegian Språkrådet, nor to extensive involvement of the federal Government in matters of language or education (Henley 1987: 23, Frank and Treichler 1989: 132).

3.   Concrete initiatives: methods and actions

Language planning initiatives taken by feminists must be considered as part of a larger, predominantly grassroot movement "concerned with the creation of new cultural forms allowing for a more equitable quality of life for all" (Van Den Bergh 1987: 133).

3.1. Raising awareness

The act of *raising awareness* or *raising consciousness* is the first step taken by a movement promoting social change: only once a problem is openly acknowledged, can it be dealt with effectively. This is particularly relevant to the debate on sexism, since feminists argue that sexism in language is not necessarily deliberate, and can result from "laziness, habit, or overreliance on what the rule books say is correct" (Miller and Swift 1976: 158).

3.1.1.   *Linguistic disruption*

The purpose of disruption, be it at word or discourse level, is ultimately to denounce the invisibility of women. It is my impression that this strategy of experimenting with language as a form of resistance has been widely misunderstood, and used as an argument to undermine the credibility of the feminist movement. I feel that the form which epitomizes the dispute is *herstory* (instead of *history*), which has been used by opponents as evidence that feminists were zealots with unrealistic claims. Reading articles from the period 1970's-1990's gives the impression that many missed the point that this new word was supposed to make, which was to denounce "the fact that in patriarchal discourse 'history' is equated mainly with the story of men and not with that of women" (Pauwels 1998: 99).

Apart from wordplays of the type *herstory*, feminists have used graphemic innovations (Pauwels 1998: 104), as for instance the re-spelling of the words *woman* and *women* to *wommon/wimmin* and *womyn*, in order to draw attention to the fact that maleness is viewed as the norm in English-speaking societies.

Another type of disruption, albeit marginal, is the use of norm-breakers to flout certain discourse conventions, in order to challenge descriptions of women as weak, passive, overtly emotional, etc. (S. Mills 2008: 88). This is achieved by placing women in agent position as often as possible, by using the pronoun *she* generically, or by inverting stereotyped descriptions of the sexes, as in the following:

(7) The new bridegroom was in tears after his unsuccessful dinner (Pauwels 1998: 102)

(8) Mr Jones, wearing the latest in Italian fashion attire, […] collected his award for bravery (ibid.)

Changing the stress pattern in words of the type *chairman* is another strategy, altering the pronunciation to [tʃɛəˈˈmæn] instead of [ˈtʃɛəˈmən] (Pauwels 1998: 101), to show one's disagreement with the generic use of –*man* compounds.

3.1.2. Reclaiming

Reclaiming is a strategy that is also used to denounce racist and homophobic practices. It consists in using insults or pejorative terms in a positive way, in a "turnabout provocation by the epithet's targets" (Miéville 2009: 25), thereby creating a *counter-discourse* (S. Mills 2008: 89). In the case of feminism, the underlying principle is a refusal to be defined from a male perspective. Van Den Bergh (1987: 130) considers renaming a "vehicle for empowerment", that is to say a psychologically powerful way for a group to gain control over their identity (ibid.: 131). A recent example would be the attempt to reclaim the insult *slut* through the use of the term *slutwalk*.[7]

However, this procedure is not without risks. First of all, it is impossible for a pejorative word to be wholly reclaimed in the eyes of the larger speech community; just as a white man could not call an African American a *nigger* without it being perceived as extremely racist and aggressive, a man could never use an insult of the type *bitch*, *slut*, etc. to address a woman he has never met or does not know very well. Thus, reclaiming only works within particular, well-defined contexts. Another potential risk is the shock that reclaimed words represent for the uninitiated ear, which in some cases is clearly the effect intended, but which could also do a disservice to the image of women.

3.1.3. Neologisms

Coining new words that reflect women's perspectives and experiences more accurately has been, and continues to be an effective way of fighting sexism. Feminist neologisms have not been at the forefront of feminist language reform projects, yet many of them have become successfully integrated into the collective lexicon, as for instance *sexism*, *pro-choice*, *sexual*

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[7] The term *slutwalks* refers to a series of protests organized in the spring of 2011, in reaction to a remark made by a police officer to female students at York University in Toronto. He argued that women should not dress like 'sluts' if they want to avoid being raped. Protesters reacted strongly against this attitude of blaming rape on the victim, and purposefully chose a controversial name for their movement to call attention to the issue.

harrassment or *date rape*. Others, such as *malestream*, *enveloping* (instead of *penetration*) or *phallocentrism* are rarely used outside of academic and feminist circles.

The creation of neologisms is an important aspect of anti-sexist campaigns, as it enables women to put words on "a problem that has no name" (expression coined by Betty Friedan in 1963), or something that was "just called life" (Steinem, cited in Ehrlich and King 1994: 61). These new encodings characterize certain individual experiences as social phenomena, which until then had remained unnamed and therefore did not exist "except at the level of unverified, illegitimate, individual – and very lonely – response, its cause ignored and objections to its effects silenced" (Ramsay and Stefanou-Haag, cited in Pauwels 1998: 106).

3.1.4. Women-centred language

Certain feminist linguists and writers have deplored the use of androcentric discourse practices and have advocated developing "women-focussed discourses" (Pauwels 1999: online). The idea of an *écriture féminine* (female writing) was explored by francophone authors and philosophers Kristeva, Cixous and Irigaray as they felt that they could not, as women, express themselves adequately in an androcentric language. Instead, they developed a type of writing which was "non-linear, sensual, and true to women's experience in patriarchal culture" (Squier and Vedder 200: 321).

Many authors have been experimenting with language, especially in the genre of Science Fiction (e.g. Atwood and Le Guin in English, Brantenberg in Norwegian, Wittig in French, to mention a few). In her *Native Tongue* trilogy, American linguist Suzette Haden Elgin created the Láadan language, which now lives a life of its own, with the specific purpose of expressing the perceptions of women.[8] However, Penelope has demonstrated that Elgin did not manage to create a language completely free of male bias (Penelope, cited in Pauwels 1998: 105). The reactions of readers to new forms of expressions tested out in Science-Fiction novels have been closely observed, the main conclusion being that feminist linguistic innovations *did* startle readers at first, but did not hamper understanding (Henley 1987: 16).

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[8] cf. www.laadanlanguage.org

3.1.5. *Feminist dictionaries*

In order to make the public aware of the male bias present in the English language, feminists have attempted to debunk the *myth of lexicographic objectivity* (Nilsen, cited in J.Mills 1991: xiii). Indeed, dictionaries are treated as absolutes and are used to settle disagreements. A close inspection, however, reveals that these 'dick-tionaries' (Romaine 1999: 293) are not bias-free.

> More space is given to male items, sex-stereotypes are used to illustrate sentences, the masculine is presented first in a sequence where the feminine is also present, more insulting terms are included for women than men, prejudiced comments are included and there are more drawings of men and male animals. (Thorne and Henley, cited in J.Mills 1991: xiii)

Feminist linguists have considered it a matter of principle to counter the hegemony of mainsteam dictionaries and the exclusion of women from the dictionary-making process. As a result, they have published their own, feminist dictionaries (See for instance Kramarae and Treichler's *A Feminist Dictionary* and J.Mills's *Womanwords*). This issue is of particular importance in the United States, because dictionaries tend to assume the role of "semiofficial language authority" in countries without language academies (Nichols, cited in Pauwels 1998: 23).

3.2. Imposing gender-fair language

3.2.1. *Legislation*

In spite of the fact that feminism is primarily a grassroot movement, and that top-down measures are unlikely to be popular, there has been legislation enforcing the use of gender-neutral language in the United States. Firstly, the language of legislative and legal documents has been reformed, in view of the paramount importance that words have in the law (Danet, cited in Pauwels 1998: 29-30).

Most of the top-down language reforms were part of a larger movement for equality in employment. Job titles and job descriptions have been "'neutralized' for gender" (Pauwels 1999: online), on the premises that the sex of a person is irrelevant in this context, and that feminine job titles bear trivial or negative connotations.

However, there has been little official legislation formulated in response to the demands made by feminists with regard to their language reform proposals. As far as the United States is concerned, I am only aware of the 1972 'Ms. Bill', which "forbade the federal government

from using prefixes indicating marital status in any official document or publication of the US Government Printing Office" (Mankiller et al. 1998: 385), as well as a 1973 Connecticut law which requires the title of a public office to fit the gender of the civil servant (Miller and Swift 1976: 128).

3.2.2. Guidelines

As mentioned above, top-down strategies are neither favored, nor widely available to feminist language planners. The production of guidelines is therefore considered to be a good compromise, a way of implementing change that is not as authoritative as a piece of legislation would be, but which still manages to influence official (written) communication, as guidelines are targeted at 'key agencies' capable of regulating the language behavior of larger groups of speakers (Pauwels 1998: 14).

Guidelines do not just serve as a consciousness-raising tool or as a guide for language users who seek advice about appropriate terminology. Their main purpose is to provide women with "institutional support when challenging the use of overt sexism" (S.Mills 2008: 21). Most feminists believe that the adoption of guidelines by many institutions is a sign that the situation is improving, and that guidelines are the exact push needed to create a snowball effect, which will accelerate the process of language change (Frank and Treichler 1989: 112).

In conclusion, we can say that feminist language planning is first and foremost a grassroot movement, "with some official sanctioning" (Pauwels 1998: 223), and that they employ a wide range of strategies to promote gender-fair language. I look at feminist guidelines in more detail in later chapters, to study the extent to which they have succeeded in influencing other types of guidelines (Chapter 4), as well as the lexical choices of journalists (Chapter 7).

4. **Reception**

Over the years, feminist language planners have found it useful to study the public's reactions to their proposals. Paying attention to both positive and negative feedback has enabled them to test several options, and to find out the ones most likely to be adopted without too much resistance. Negative criticism has also motivated researchers to carry out further studies, particularly to back up theories about the detrimental effects of gender-biased language. One thing that the debate on gender-biased language has proved for certain is that questions of language are definitely not a trivial subject.

4.1. Favorable reception

Despite their lack of strong influence at the institutional level, feminist language planners have received support from many universities, publishing companies and trade unions (S. Mills 2008: 20). Anti-discrimination legislation comprising matters of language has been passed, which, added to the widespread adoption of guidelines, means that most of the administration and media language in the United States is now expected to be gender-neutral.

4.2. Hostility

Opposition to feminist reform proposals has ranged from flat denial of sexism to violent backlash. It is clear that the male bias denounced by feminist linguists is far from being acknowledged by all (Pauwels 1998: 67); not everyone agrees that language is or can be sexist. Many linguists and writers, as well as "self-appointed language commentators" (ibid.: 174) have argued that feminists are confused about matters of gender in language.

An interesting aspect of the resistance to feminist proposals is the fact that many of their detractors are women themselves. Yaguello refers to women who internalize masculine norms and support an androcentric use of language as *femmes-alibi* (alibi-women) (Yaguello 2002: 171). This phenomenon is due to questions of social prestige; because maleness is viewed as the norm, women, and particularly women working in competitive, male-dominated environments, consider masculine behaviors, titles, etc., to denote a higher status.

4.2.1. Arguments of the opposition

Recurrent arguments of the opposition have been classified by feminists in order to develop more effective responses (Blaubergs 1980, Penelope 1982, Henley 1987, Parks and Roberton

1998). Blaubergs focused on arguments defending the use of masculine generics, and I have chosen to present her classification system, in order to illustrate some of the reactions prompted by feminist language proposals.

Table 3. Arguments against feminist language reform proposals[9]

Blauberg's classification (1980)		
	Category	**Content**
1	The cross-cultural arguments	Involve references to "specific societies or cultures, the language of which is less sexist than English [...] but in which the status of women is considered to be even less equal to men than in the United States" (137)
2	The 'language is a trivial concern' arguments	(1) "Including language among the other aspects of sexism will detract from the perceived seriousness of the other injustices" (2) "The limited energies of feminists could be better spent in addressing other forms of sexism." (138)
3	The 'Freedom of Speech/ Unjustified coercion' arguments	"The proponents of change are threatening or coercing others to change their language usage." And "the proponents of change [...] are described as deviants while their tactics are described as inappropriately coercive." (139)
4	The 'Sexist language is not sexist' arguments	Emphasis on the "nonsexist intentions of the users of masculine/generic terms" and the "false interpretation given to such terms by the proponents of change" (140)
5	The 'Word etymologies' arguments	"Because they historically were not sex-specific, their correct usage is what it once was". (141)
6	The 'Appeal to authority' arguments	"Judgments based on prescriptive assumptions have been put forth as 'linguistic universals'." (Penelope, quoted in Blaubergs 1980: 142) *("To appeal to the traditional authorities on language usage appears to overlook the fact that it is the traditional authorities that proponents of changing sexist language are challenging.")* (143)
7	The 'Change is too difficult, inconvenient, impractical or whatever' arguments	Referred to as "Generic apologia" (Winter 1979 issue of *Women and Language News*): Opponents "consider sexist language to be a necessary (or at least unavoidable) evil" (143), e.g. the pronoun system is seen as too difficult to change.
8	The 'It would destroy historical authenticity and literary works' arguments	"Changing sexist language would involve the rewriting of literary works", which would "destroy the value, authenticity, purity, elegance, precision, etc. of written works". (145)

Figure 1. 'The adventures of PC- Person': Mocking gender-fair reform efforts, in *Thatch*, by Jeff Shesol

4.2.2. *Conservative attitudes towards language*

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[9] A table listing the various arguments, together with definitions and examples, as well as the additions made by Parks and Roberton (1998), can be found in the Appendix.

Feminist language planners are not only confronted with an opposition to planned or forced language change, they are also faced with a deep-seated resistance to language change in general. Not only do most language users perceive language as a neutral vehicle for information, they also "conceptualise language itself as a fixed point in the flux of experience" (Cameron, cited in J.Mills 1991: xvi). I would argue that each generation accepts past language change without second thought, but that they experience change occurring during their lifetime as decay, brought about by the sloppiness of younger generations. Miller and Swift write that the aspect which "people find hardest to accept is that a word which used to mean one thing now means another" (Miller and Swift 1980: 6-7). This would explain why so many language users oppose the claim that masculine pseudo-generics are ambiguous in some contexts.

Appeals to dictionaries, grammars and style guides epitomize this view of language as neutral and of meaning as fixed. As mentioned above, dictionaries are taken to be bias-free when in fact they reflect the stance of lexicographers, who choose to include or exclude certain meanings, making the end product an "ideological creation" (Yaguello 2002: 209). Advocates of masculine generics do not acknowledge the fact that the promotion of pseudo-generic *he* and the concomitant demotion of singular *they* – which had been used in parallel for centuries (Curzan 2003: 71-2) – was intitutionalized by 18th- and 19th-century grammars (Bodine, cited in Henley 1987: 13). Feminist linguists stress the fact that the hegemony of pseudo-generic *he* did not materialize out of thin air because it made more sense, but was established by prescriptive rules.

Folk etymologies are often used as counter-arguments to the claim that the use of *man* and *–man* is not generic. Many *man–* and *–man* compounds are claimed to be derived from "'manus' – the hand, i.e. manmade = handmade; and chairman = taking a hand in the chairing of a meeting" (The Bulletin, cited in Pauwels 1998: 175). Others argue that we must distinguish between "compounds in which *man* occurs as a stressed syllable (e.g. *mánpower)* and those in which it is unstressed (e.g. *cháirman*)" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 192). As an unstressed syllable, *–man* supposedly does not trigger masculine mental images.

4.3. Why such a strong and widespread opposition?

4.3.1. *Language change as an emotionally-charged issue*

Miller and Swift write that "our native language is like a second skin" (Miller and Swift 1980: 4), which is partly why contemporary language change is so difficult to accept. Yet, the crux of the matter seems to be that, by promoting gender-fair alternatives, feminists have created an imbalance in the lexicon. Thus, lexical choices now reflect a certain ideological stand – namely, support or opposition of feminist claims – and speakers object to "being openly judged on their political positions through their use of language items" which until then has seemed natural (S.Mills 2008: 117).

4.3.2. *Power relationships*

Feminists argue that the resistance to their reform proposals is ultimately less a matter of lexical preference than a reflection of the struggle over who has the right to name and to impose their experience as the norm:

> 'When *I* use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, "it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.'
> 'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you *can* make words mean so many different things.'
> 'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master – that's all.' (Carroll 1994: 100)

S.Mills defines language as "a pool of available meanings, some of which are ratified and affirmed by their usage within institutions" (S.Mills 2008: 124). Therefore, the goal is for feminist proposals to become the standard, so that women can find themselves in a position to 'define' and have their perspectives accepted as natural.

Feminist reforms are thus unpopular mostly because they are seen as disrupting the status quo and challenging traditional values and gender roles. They constitute a threat to the view that 'maleness as norm' is the natural order of things, and therefore a threat to men's ideological power, i.e. "the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense'" (Fairclough 2001: 26)

> What is at stake is the establishment or maintenance of one type [of discourse] as the dominant one in a given social domain, and therefore the establishment or maintenance of certain ideological assumptions as commonsensical. (ibid.: 75)

Hence, feminist language reforms go beyond matters of vocabulary, and should be considered as political actions. This accounts for the fact that most of the opposition's arguments are not concerned with language, but instead attack feminists directly, together with their ideology,

which is brushed aside as mere concerns with 'Political Correctness'.[10] The label 'Political Correctness' is used to flout feminist arguments in favor of gender-fair language, by branding their concerns as trivial and their actions as excessive (S.Mills 2008: 103).

In this chapter, I have summarized various theoretical stances and arguments related to the debate on feminist language reform proposals. I have outlined the main strategies and actions taken by American feminists, as well as given an overview of the range of reactions prompted by their proposals. The present chapter thus constitutes the background in light of which I analyze the results of my study of *–man* compounds and their alternatives.

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[10] S.Mills defines *Political Correctness* as "an excessive attention to the sensibilities of those who are seen as different from the norm" (S.Mills 2008: 100).

Chapter Three: Methodology

1. Research questions

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the main goal of this thesis is to assess the status of feminist language reform proposals. In *Woman Changing Language* (1998), Pauwels looks at feminist suggestions as an instance of language planning, and therefore proposes to assess their effect as such, by asking the following questions:

- Who uses what?
- What is the the status of the alternatives in use? Are the alternatives used by the speech community in the way originally intended by the language planners?
- What are the factors promoting or hindering the spread of non-sexist language through the speech community?

I have based my methodological approach on Pauwels' model of language planning assessment, and have considered the advice and rules provided by feminist guidelines and more mainstream style manuals as a baseline for the potential changes occurring over the period 1970-2010. Thus, I address the following research questions, repeated here for convenience:

- Has change occurred?
- If so, has change occurred as a result of feminist language planning?
- Can we discern patterns in the use of terms promoted by feminists?

2. Nature, method and relevance of the study

2.1. Gender bias at the lexical level

I have used as my starting point a study by Ralph Fasold entitled 'Language policy and change: sexist language in the periodical news media' (1987). In this study, Fasold and his students investigate the effects of newspaper style manuals on the production of three American newspapers and two magazines, by measuring the extent to which journalists adhere to prescriptive rules in terms of gender-fair writing style. The results show that some of the specific recommendations found in newspaper manuals, on the use of *Miss* or the form 'Mrs John Smith', have led to a decrease in gender-biased language in the printed news media. Fasold's conclusions on the subject of *–man* compounds are more tentative, as he explains that this case turned out to be more complicated than his research team had originally

expected. Their unclear results are attributed to "every word having its own history" (Fasold 1987: 196). Fasold concludes the article by emphasizing that "language usage policies codified in newspaper style manuals are strikingly effective in the media to which they apply" (ibid.: 202). The resistance must therefore lie at the editing level, some usage suggestions being considered "keenly disappointing to someone concerned with fairness in language and gender usage" (ibid.: 189). Overall, this study shows that some progress has been made, but that it is uneven, and that the main issue remains "the vast difference in the sheer numbers of references to men and to women" in the newspapers observed (ibid.: 201).

Despite claims by Cameron (1995, 2006) and S.Mills (2008) that the real danger of sexism in language resides in discourse, I have chosen to focus on gender-bias at word level, for two main reasons. Firstly, because form-replacement strategies have been widely publicized since the 1970's, and therefore, we can safely assume that all American journalists are aware of the issue. Secondly, I wanted to measure the effects of this type of feminist proposal on a large scale, which can only be achieved by means of a large, partly quantitative corpus study, a form which is typically well-suited for word searches.

Form-replacement strategies comprise the use of courtesy titles, masculine generics, feminine suffixes, middle initials and the semantic derogation of feminine words. In order to work with a manageable amount of data, I restricted my research to occupational terms, and more particularly to pseudo-generic *–man* compounds and their gender-specific and gender-neutral alternatives. This specific case is subject to explicit rules in guidelines across the board, and usage patterns are easily observed by looking at corpus data.

The use of *–man* compounds and their alternatives are an important part of the debate on gender-biased language use for several reasons. First of all, there exist many such compounds; Doyle (1995) lists more than a hundred, including one word-, two word- and hyphenated compounds. They are quite commonplace and are used in various semantic fields: sport (*baseman*, *defenseman*), military (*batman*, *marksman*), nationality (*Frenchman*, *Irishman*), place of dwelling (*townsman*, *backwoodsman*), membership (*Cambridge man*, *tribesman*), historical period (*Neanderthal man*, *Renaissance man*), trade or profession (*fisherman*, *repairman*), public office (*ombudsman*, *Congressman*), hierarchy (*chairman*, *foreman* in certain contexts), and idiomatic expressions (*chessmman*, *right-hand man*), etc. Secondly, *–man* compounds used as occupational titles act as social markers. Studying their usage patterns in contrast to their alternatives' can give us indications as to the degree of

social change taking place, by characterizing relationships in the workplace or the types of careers open to women: "there is no *fisherwoman* in English" (Pauwels 1998: 45). The use of masculine compounds as generic or unmarked terms is of particular interest, because it indicates that "traditional expectations have not been disrupted, while marked items signal a dangerous transgression of established boundaries" (Holmes et al. 2009: 191).

2.2. The American press

In the present project, methodological shortcomings acknowledged in previous research on this subject were taken into consideration (mainly the fact that researchers were "hampered by sparse data" (Fasold 1987)) and the study was devised accordingly.

In order to observe usage patterns and evolutions, I needed large amounts of data reflecting widespread usage. A corpus of newspaper texts seemed ideal in this respect. More specifically, data from the American press were chosen as a way of following up on Fasold's study, and because the press potentially reflects and influences current usage. I am aware that studying both spoken and written media language would have provided a more accurate picture of general usage, but unfortunately spoken data are not available for the period that precedes the publication of the first feminist and newspaper guidelines.

I would argue that after spoken language, the press is the category which best reflects current usage. It is not as idiosyncratic as fiction, yet not as codified as academic publications. Even though journalists must abide by certain stylistic rules, they often cite sources which are under no obligation to do so. They must also (ideally, at least) respect the way in which people wish to be referred to.

Due to its world-wide visibility and the prestige of its national newspapers, the American press has the potential to influence general usage to a great extent. In fact, written media language originating from the United States is possibly the most influential genre there is: established publications such as the *New York Times* are esteemed sources of information, and are read daily by millions of both native and non-native speakers of English.

> The effects of media power are cumulative, working through the repetition of particular ways of handling causality and agency, particular ways of positioning the reader, and so forth [...] Media discourse is able to exercise a pervasive and powerful influence in social reproduction because of the very scale of the modern mass media and the extremely high level of exposure of whole populations to a relatively homogeneous output. (Fairclough 2001: 45)

The same visibility and prestige apply to newspaper style manuals, which are not only used by journalists, but also serve as "in-house guides" (Fasold 1987: 188). Feminists understand the importance of 'media power', and consider the approval of the print media to be a determining factor in the success of their language reforms (cf. Harrigan and Lucic 1988, Pauwels 1998).

However, I acknowledge the existence of a number of disadvantages resulting from my methodological choices. The main criticism regarding the representativeness of newspaper data is the tendency for journalists and newspaper editors to be conservative when it comes to language. They do not set trends, and therefore, are unlikely to be in the vanguard of gender-fair language use. A possible reason for this is that journalists assume that readers expect them to uphold certain conservative standards, and that therefore, "any planned changes cannot be too far ahead of what readers are prepared to accept or the newspaper risks losing them" (Fasold 1987: 203). Indeed, Ehrlich and King note that the *Toronto Star* style guide proscribed *chair* on account that it "irritates many readers" (Ehrlich and King 1992: 162). A second drawback with respect to newspaper data is that it covers only careful, public written communication; journalists and readers who submit opinion pieces write with the purpose of being published. Thirdly, newspaper data are likely to be heterogeneous, varying both within and between newspapers, according to personal writing style and editorial policies, which are subject to change.

2.3. A corpus study

Previous studies on the subject of the promotion of feminist form-replacement strategies and the adherence of newspapers to their own guidelines are either synchronic (Ehrlich and King 1992, Romaine 2001), or based on small data sets (Fasold 1987, Fasold et al. 1990, Rubin et al. 1994, Holmes 2001, Holmes et al. 2009). They also usually look at *–man* compounds among other features of gender-biased language: I could not find a study which focused only on these compounds, from a diachronic perspective, using just one large corpus.

One of the studies conducted on the gender-biased use of titles is based on self-reports and an opinion survey (Bates 1978). This form of study is legitimate in order to test the popularity of feminist measures. However, it is not ideal if the aim is to observe large-scale usage patterns and arrive at generalized results. These are the main reasons for my opting for the corpus alternative. An attempt was made at collecting data directly from various newspaper archives

and creating a corpus tailored to the present study. However, the sheer amount of data needed to obtain a balanced and representative selection made me prefer the alternative solution of using a large pre-existing corpus, namely the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (COCA). It is one of the largest corpora available and its search engine allows for precise searches, both synchronic and diachronic, making it possible to get a close look at recent and ongoing language change. Since I wanted to analyze data that spanned over a period of time starting before the emergence of the debate on sexist language in the 1970's, all the way to the present, I decided to use the *Corpus of Historical American English* (COHA) as well, while being aware of the significant differences between the two corpora in terms of size and distribution.

The corpora

COCA is a free online corpus created by Mark Davies at Brigham Young University. It was released in March 2008 and is now updated twice a year. As of Monday, October 10th 2011, it contained precisely 437,785,716 words distributed over 176,389 texts, dating from 1990 up to the present date. Its compilers present COCA as "the only large and balanced corpus of American English" (COCA's web interface). Indeed, with an average of 20 million words per year, evenly distributed across five genres (Spoken, Fiction, Newspapers, Magazines and Academic publications) and forty-two subgenres (or domains), it offers a wide variety of search possibilities. The five genres each comprise between 85 and 90 million words and contain the following material:

- *Spoken*: unscripted conversations from TV and radio programs
- *Fiction*: short stories and plays extracted from various kinds of magazines, as well as first chapters of novels and film scripts
- *Newspapers*: a selection of articles from a wide range of sections, extracted from ten major American newspapers
- *Magazines*: a selection of articles from a wide range of sections, extracted from nearly a hundred American magazines
- *Academic publications*: nearly a hundred peer-reviewed journals, balanced across the Library of Congress classification system

COCA is tagged for Parts Of Speech (POS), and some of the tools available in the corpus' integrated search engine are, among others, concordance lines, 'Key Word In Context' views (KWIC views) and collocate searches. The main shortcoming with this corpus is the limited access to expanded contexts, both in size and number, for copyright reasons. The impossibility to access entire texts restricts the type of information which may be collected.

COHA was created along the same lines as COCA and shares a similar web interface. Its first beta version was released in September 2010. It is larger than any other historical corpus of English; it spans over 199 years, from 1810 to 2009, with 406,232,024 words distributed over more than 100,000 individual texts. The categories differ slightly from the ones found in COCA, and there is no spoken material available for the period covered by this corpus. The four genres are the following:

- *Fiction*: excerpts from plays, novels, poetry, short stories and movie scripts. The contents of this category represent around 50% of the total for each decade.
- *Newspapers*: "in each decade, the newspapers are balanced across at least five newspapers". (Web interface)
- *Magazines*: "in each decade, the magazines are balanced across at least ten magazines". (ibid.)
- *Non-Fiction*: "in each decade, the non-fiction is balanced across the Library of Congress classification system". (ibid.)

The overview of 68 –*man* compounds presented in Chapter 5 is based on all genres, whereas the more detailed study which constitutes Chapter 6 only takes the category 'Newspapers' into account.

2.4. Hypotheses and expectations

In light of the conclusions drawn by researchers in previous studies on the subject, combined with my reading, I formulated the following hypothesis:

Over the period 1970-2010, the use of gender-fair language will have increased in American newspapers as a result of the debate which arose in the 1970's, with a marked preference for gender-neutral alternatives, whether the referent is female or male.

I expect that, because feminist claims have stigmatized gender-biased language as discriminatory, ambiguous, offensive, etc., and because women have gained ground in the workplace, language users will have adapted their lexical choices to the reality they live in. I presume that people generally try to avoid offending others, and as a result pay conscious attention to form, especially journalists, who are required to respect a standard of formality regarding style. However, considering previous research and the loud protest against feminist language planning, I do not expect dramatic changes in usage patterns to have occurred.

Regarding variation in use, I expect a slight difference between the prodution of female and male journalists, with the latter prone to using more masculine forms in reference to women or in generic situations. As a result of various influences, such as feminist language planning,

style manuals, editing policies and personal style, I also expect to find variation between, as well as within, newspapers.

The question of whether gender-fair alternatives are used in the way in which they were originally intended is a delicate one. Based on the fate of *Ms* and the negative publicity received by *–person* compounds, I expect some difference between planned and actual use, but prefer to refrain from further speculation.

Chapter Four: Gender-fair guidelines in American English

There exist many guidelines on the subject of gender-fair language use, which differ in content, format and purpose. Some take the form of leaflets listing problematic structures and possible alternatives, others are descriptive accounts of current usage, providing authentic examples. Guidelines also come in the form of argumentative essays, prescriptive rules or official legislation. This heterogeneity in design and content is due to the diversity of contexts to which gender-fair language is applied. Indeed, guidelines on the subject have been commissioned and adopted by organizations as varied as textbook publishers, media companies and religious bodies.

In order to present an overview of the information available to speakers of American English on gender-fair language use, I have decided to look at a varied sample of guidelines. I have chosen to focus on guidelines because they are the most common way (far-reaching, yet not peremptory) of promoting language change in a country without a language-regulating academy. Further, for the purpose of studying form-replacement strategies, guidelines can be used as a baseline, and their influence can be observed on natural language production through language corpora. However, I am aware that changes may have been brought about by other language reform strategies and initiatives.

Since my objective is to study the effects of feminist language planning on American language users, particularly in the printed media, I start by looking at guidelines written by feminists before examining other types, to find out whether claims and suggestions made in the former have trickled down to more widely-available and more influential sources of information regarding questions of 'correct' language use. I focus specifically on recommendations made on the subject of generic compounds of the type *chairman* and on their possible alternatives.

1. __Feminist guidelines__

I have chosen three of the most cited feminist references on the subject of gender-fair language, namely Miller and Swift's *The Handbook of Nonsexist Language* (1980), Frank and Treichler's *Language, Gender, and Professional Writing: Theoretical approaches and guidelines for nonsexist usage* (1989) and Doyle's *The A-Z of Non-sexist Language* (1995).

1.1. Target audience and argumentative strategies

Because it is unlikely that speakers would turn to feminist essays when in need of clarification − instead, they would prefer more widely-available and user-friendly style manuals which provide lists of problems and ready-to-use solutions − feminist guidelines are mainly targeted at language experts, i.e. people and organizations dealing with linguistic matters professionally, such as publishing companies, dictionary compilers, writers, editors, journalists, etc, in view of their authority and power to influence the speech community at large by altering the standards to be learned and followed by the population. Yet those who consider themselves as gatekeepers of correct language usually hold conservative views and oppose linguistic innovations. Interestingly, teachers seem to belong to this category.

> Teachers correct […] spontaneous use of language […] In fact, some of the people most critical of our work are English teachers trained in the old way. Some are even scornful, saying we break all the rules. (Miller, quoted in Isele 1994)

Winning educators over is crucial if feminist reforms are to be accepted and promoted, as teachers exert a decisive influence over what speakers will hold to be 'proper English' for the rest of their lives.

The fact that so many of the feminists' interlocutors still need convincing is the main reason why feminist language planners choose the essay format (with the exception of Doyle who preferred to write a thesaurus, and confined her argumentation to the introduction of her book). Frank and Treichler devote the first half of their book to 'theoretical approaches', which provide a "theoretical and empirical foundation" for their proposals (Frank and Treichler 1989: 137). Aside from suggesting ready-made solutions, they also give advice on how to adopt a general non-sexist attitude to communication. Miller and Swift favor a different approach. They concentrate on providing their readers with information on language change and the natural tendency to resist it. However, their guidelines are not practically oriented, since they do not provide us with clear gender-fair alternatives. Yet this is exactly their point.

> We just wanted to give people the background, to make them aware of what was happening right under their noses, so that they could […] try to come up with their own ways of solving the problem. There is no set solution such as every 'man' should become 'person', so we refused to make this a how-to-do-it book. (Miller and Swift, quoted in Isele 1994)

Indeed, it is unlikely that feminist guidelines in the form of lists and statements about 'correct' or appropriate usage would be accepted without any justification, the way the information contained in dictionaries and style manuals usually is. On the other hand, a feminist essay defending the need for linguistic reforms is bound to reach a fairly limited audience. Doyle seems to have found some sort of compromise in size and format, listing alternatives but also elaborating on the most important points.

Feminist guidelines differ from one another in terms of their degree of assertiveness. I have measured it for each guideline, according to style, format and content. The resulting picture is quite heterogeneous. Frank and Treichler's *Language, Gender, and Professional Writing* is the most radical of the three, yet the formulation is not very assertive, since feminist writers tread lightly for fear of facing charges of censorship or coersion. However, the two authors do not compromise about the degree to which speakers may or may not adopt gender-fair language.

Thus, feminist guidelines do not appear to be the instrument of propaganda of a man-hating 'language police'. The authors of the three guidelines surveyed here accept the fact that speakers may not wish to change the way they use language, and that "what is sexist to one person may be acceptable usage to another" (Doyle 1995: 5). Nevertheless, they warn us against ambiguity, misinterpretation and possible offense.

1.2. Theoretical stance on language, power, thought and change

The disputed nature of the relationship beween language and power, along with that between language change and social change is mentioned in the three guidelines, to various extents. None of the five authors deny that their attempts at reforming language are ultimately political actions, questioning whose language variety will be chosen as standard and perceived as the norm, thereby alloting a higher social status to those who already master it.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Frank and Treichler admit that "few would […] argue that banishing sexist and racist labeling would in itself result in a just society" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 109). However, they subscribe to the interactionist model and defend the idea of gender-fair language planning, as they argue that "language not only reflects social structures but, more important, sometimes serves to perpetuate existing differences in power" (ibid.).

Supporters of the 'social change must precede language change' point of view (cf. Chapter 2, section 2.1.1) believe that there is no need for forced language planning, yet Miller and Swift think that language needs a nudge to adapt faster. Doyle is of the same opinion, arguing that using terms that are no longer relevant may result in awkwardness, ambiguity and inaccuracy, in which case "[language] ceases to be an effective tool for communication" (Doyle 1995: 1). All insist on the fact that language is not a neutral medium, and that it can be used as an instrument of change.

1.3. Theoretical stance on masculine generics and reform strategies[11]

All three guidelines emphasize the problems posed by the use of pseudo-generic *he*, *man* and –*man*. As was to be expected, a case is made against using *man* and its compounds generically, on the grounds that they are unclear, unfair and unwarranted, obscuring "the actions, the contributions, and sometimes the very presence of women" (Miller and Swift 1980: 8). Moreover,

> most job titles ending in *man* date from a time when only males performed the jobs described. It was natural to speak of an insurance man, delivery man, draftsman, or newsboy because […] the masculine-gender terms matched the sex of nearly everyone doing the jobs described. (Miller and Swift 1980: 28)

But the situation has evolved, they claim, and the generic use of occupational titles can "psychologically inhibit women from applying for such jobs" (Miller and Swift 1980: 29).

There are, however, disagreements as to which strategies should be adopted to counter this usage. English now uses a natural gender system and except for certain words (*wetnurse*, *waitress*, *chairman,* etc.), nouns and adjectives are now epicene, i.e. they refer to neither men nor women in particular. Miller and Swift defend the use of gender-neutral words. In *Words and Women* – published four years before *The Handbook* – they argue that there is no reason "to differentiate, on the basis of sex, between two qualified people: a licensed pilot is an aviator; a licensed physician is a doctor; a poet is a poet" (Miller and Swift 1976: 46). Frank and Treichler do not appear to support gender-neutralization over feminization. What they emphasize is that people should "avoid expressions [they] dislike" and "try to respect others' preferences" (Frank and Treichler 1989: 197-8). As for Doyle, she promotes an extended use of inclusive language, although she agrees that using feminine forms can be useful "in male-

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[11] Detailed tables about the suggestions favored by feminist language planners are available in the Appendix.

dominated professions – to combat the assumption of maleness that is usually made" (Doyle 1995: 7).

A look at the suggestions made in these three guidelines shows that there is no 'right' solution to the problem of gender-biased language which would apply to, and be satisfactory in all contexts. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that gender-neutralization is the strategy favored most of the time.

2.   <u>Other types of guidelines</u>[12]

Other types of guidelines have been considered, so as to see whether suggestions made by feminists have had an influence beyond the scope of feminist circles. In order to obtain as representative a sample as possible, different types of guidelines were selected, accompanied by later reeditions whenever available. My sample therefore comprises guidelines published by academic associations (American Psychological Association (APA) (1978), Warren for APA (1986); the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) (1985), NCTE (2002)), UNESCO (1999) and the US Manpower Administration (now US Department of Labor) (1975). I checked the entries for *man*, *woman*, *person* and *gender* in the *Random House Dictionary* (RHD) (1967, 1987 and 2011) and in the *Oxford Dictionary of American Style and Usage* (2011). Finally, I looked at the three major guidelines used by the American press, i.e. *The Washington Post Deskbook on Style* (WAP 1989), *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage* (NYT 1999) and *The Associated Press Stylebook* (AP 2005). I also checked other sources which referred to earlier editions of these three publications, and was able to obtain information about the contents of their 1978, 1976 and 1977 editions, respectively.

It should be noted that there were no entries for words such as *chairman*, *chairperson* or *chair* in feminist dictionaries (Kramarae and Treichler's *A Feminist Dictionary* (1985) and J. Mills's *Womanwords* (1989)).

2.1. Guidelines most influenced by feminist work

Organization guidelines and official legislation are the most visibly influenced by feminist proposals. Their degree of assertiveness ranges from strong encouragement to explicit rules. The US Manpower Administration's 'Job title revision' has a special status, in that it followed

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[12] Detailed tables about the suggestions made in various guidelines are available in the Appendix.

American equal employment legislation (Civil Rights Act 1964 and Age Discrimination in Employment Act 1967).

The NCTE states that manuscripts which do not conform to their guidelines will be returned for revision. Should authors then refuse to rephrase their text, a footnote explaining their choice of words will be included. Warren (writing on behalf of the APA in 1986) judges this solution to be inadequate:

> What authors intend is not the main issue. Good intentions which are not carried through are not good enough. (Warren 1986: 473)

Although the reason behind the publication of organization guidelines is not the defense of a particular model of language, it is made clear that authors support the interactionist approach. They emphasize the ethical need for clear, bias-free language promoting gender equality, and argue that gender-fair formulation is a small step towards breaking the reproduction of sexist practices, on top of reflecting more accurately the way in which our society has evolved.

Organization guidelines are quite homogeneous regarding the strategies selected to introduce gender-fair language use. Gender-neutralization is the general trend, with some exceptions made in difficult cases, yet the APA stresses that "under no circumstances should an author hide sex identity in an attempt to be unbiased, if knowledge of sex may be important to the reader" (APA 1978: 17). However, no mention is made of feminized forms in their 1978 guidelines, and Warren emphasizes that *chairwoman* must only be used "if deemed necessary to assert that a woman is a chair" (Warren 1986: 479). The NCTE explicitly encourages the use of epicenes "when naming jobs that could be held by both" (NTCE 1985: 55). They also advise to "avoid using the combining form –*person* as a substitute for –*woman* only" (ibid.) and warn against the use of compounds ending in –*woman* "when describing a job or career both men and women might perform" (NCTE 2002: 5).

The UNESCO team suggests gender-neutral forms in most cases, except when the sex of the referent is known in the specific cases of *police-, spokes-, sports-* and *states-* compounds. The term *chairwoman* is never mentioned. Interestingly enough, a distinction is made between *chairman* as an occupational title and as a term of address. It is suggested that both be replaced by gender-neutral forms*: chairperson/chair* and *Madam chairperson/Mister chairperson*.

The strategy adopted by the US Manpower Administration is similar: clearly gender-neutral, chiefly making use of non-compounded epicenes and gender-neutral compounds in *–worker, –helper, –manager*, etc. Nevertheless, they admit that "for certain jobs, no meaningful neuter titles could be developed. In these cases, dual male/female job titles are provided and both must be used or cited" (US Labor 1975: 7). The examples given are *host/hostess* and *waiter/waitress*.

The purpose of these guidelines is to be brief and to provide ready-to-use solutions, and in that, they differ from feminist guidelines, which can afford to include comprehensive discussions about different strategies. Even though they confer some degree of freedom to the individual user, writers of organization guidelines have to make a certain number of choices beforehand. Nonetheless, the strategies and solutions presented, as well as the extent to which they advise us to employ gender-fair language, show that feminist proposals have clearly been influential in the conception of organization guidelines.

2.2. Guidelines least influenced by feminist work

2.2.1. Dictionaries

Evidence of the influence of feminist language planning can be found in dictionaries, in the form of usage notes included in entries for *man*, *–man*, *he*, *woman*, *person*, *gender* and so on, describing former and current usage. One gets the impression, however, that gender-fair alternatives are mentioned due to the media hype that they provoked in the 1970's and 1980's, but that the compilers (all of whom but one are men) do not necessarily agree with them:

> The objection is based **on the idea** that *man* is most commonly used as an exclusive sex-marked noun...
> (RHD 1987, entry for *man*, emphasis added)
> **Sensitivity** to sexism impels many writers to use *chair* rather than *chairman*, **on the theory** that doing so avoids gender bias. (ODASU, entry for *chair,* emphases added)
> Words ending in -*person* are at once **wooden** and **pompous**. (ibid., emphases added)
> Certainly *chair* is **better** than *chairperson*, an **ugly** and **trendy** word. (ibid., emphases added)

A pragmatist, the editor of the *Oxford Dictionary of American Style and Usage* advises us to adopt "a style, on the one hand, that no reasonable person could call sexist, and on the other hand, that never suggests you're contorting your language to be nonsexist" (ibid.).

2.2.2. Newspaper style manuals

Newspaper guidelines can potentially influence large audiences, both directly, through the mass circulation of their style guides, and indirectly, through the style set by their journalists.

Lippman writes that "in the United States, unlike France, there is no official arbiter of usage. The style that we follow is the style we impose on ourselves, guided by custom, common sense and the scholarship of others" (WAP 1989: viii). Thus, journalists and editors defend a certain degree of conservatism in order to both "hol[d] the exacting reader" (NYT 1999: vii) and achieve "a uniform presentation of the printed word" (AP 2005: 6). It follows from this that American newspaper guidelines are quite homogeneous in both form and content, even though the degree to which editors accept gender-fair language varies slightly from guideline to guideline, its keenest supporters being editors at the WAP.

Newspaper manuals are pragmatic, prescriptive guides, and therefore do not include any theoretical discussion about language. The fact that the three manuals contain a paragraph about sexism in language is a sign that feminist campaigns have been far-reaching. However, a closer look reveals that feminist suggestions have not been wholeheartedly endorsed in the journalistic world. The same argumentative structure recurs in all entries on gender-fair language:

a) Journalists and editors do not condone gender stereotyping.
b) They acknowledge that society has evolved and that journalists must adapt their way of referring to women.
c) However, they decry feminist neologisms and defend the use of masculine generics.

The impression that one gets from consulting these three newspaper guidelines is that journalists and editors pride themselves in being "traditional but not tradition-bound" (NYT 1999: viii). Therefore, they readily follow current usage, and yet are reluctant to give in to feminist pressure groups pushing for more extensive language change.

Strategies favored by newspaper editors

Gender-neutralization is the strategy favored across the board, with the exception of –*person* compounds, which are not considered a possible solution.

The three newspapers adopt different positions regarding the use of compounds ending in –*woman*. The AP and the WAP accept their use in cases where it is apparent that the referent is a woman, and that she has not specified that she wished to be called otherwise. The NYT is more conservative, as its 1976 manual forbids the use of *spokeswoman* and *chairwoman.*

Newswoman, servicewoman and *Congresswoman*, on the other hand, are allowed (NYT, in Fasold 1987: 190). More than twenty years later (NYT 1999 edition), *spokeswoman* was still banned, but *chairwoman* had become accepted.

Newspaper guidelines exemplify the hostility that has developed against occupational titles ending in *–person*. Their use is explicitly forbidden in both editions of all three guidelines, along with neologisms coined by feminists, such as *waitron* (for *waiter/waitress*). Coining *–person* compounds was proscribed in all three guidelines from the 1970's (Fasold 1987: 190). Decades later, the situation has not changed and the terms are still prohibited, except in the case of quotations or official terminology.

Editors of newspaper guidelines do not seem to mind the use of masculine generics personally, but advise against using them so as not to offend readers. However, *chairman* is an exception; its use is still accepted in reference to either a woman or a man.

The case of *chairman* appears to be a sensitive issue that tugs at the heartstrings of everyone concerned with language. As mentioned previously, feminists deplore the fact that *chairperson*, an easy and convenient alternative, has received such negative publicity. Denigrating *chairperson*, and more generally, *–person* compounds, has become the spearhead of the backlash movement against 'Political Correctness'.

"Are you the house person who advertised for a cleaning person?"

Figure 2. Mocking *–person* compounds in comic strips (Romaine 1999: 123)

The three newspaper manuals are adamant in their rejection of *chairperson*. They also discourage the use of *chair*. This alternative is never mentioned in the AP guidelines. The WAP authorizes its use as a transitive verb, otherwise only in quotations. The NYT only allows the noun *chair* in certain contexts, to refer to an endowed professorship or a position in an orchestra (NYT 1999: entry for *chair*). However, it is explicitly stated that *chair* should not be used as a verb or "to mean chairman or chairwoman" (ibid.). Therefore, the only alternatives left – terms like *head* being deemed too vague by the NYT – are indeed *chairwoman* and *chairman*. *Chairwoman* seems to have become part of every journalist's vocabulary, yet the WAP still recommends using the "commonly accepted form" – according to them, the masculine form – to refer to specific positions or in general references.

In short, the recommendations given in newspaper style manuals are quite homogeneous, and have been so for the past four decades. Journalists and editors endorse equal treatment of women and men, and accept that some women wish to be referred to in a certain way. However, their conservative tone makes it is difficult to see a direct feminist influence beyond the point of equal treatment in news coverage.

3.   Concluding remarks

To conclude more generally, the mere fact that all guidelines, dictionaries and style manuals include usage notes on gender is evidence that feminist reform proposals have trickled down to more mainstream sources of information on language. Yet we are left to wonder whether this constitutes a real success for the feminist movement, since media style guides openly reject many of the suggestions made by feminists, in spite of supporting the notion of equal treatment in media coverage and in discourse.

Although guidelines vary in format and content, it is possible to see a clear preference for the strategy of gender-neutralization, realized through the use of epicene nouns (–*person* compounds excepted). However, the variety of suggestions made by feminist language planners, and the overly simplified rules set by newspaper manuals make it difficult to predict the extent to which feminist proposals as presented in guidelines are used in the print media, and whether they are used according to recommended usage.

Chapter Five: General Distribution

A quantitative review of the use of *–man* compounds and their alternatives

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1.   <u>Aims and Data Collection</u>

In order to get a first impression of the use of *–man* compounds and their alternatives, I conducted a general search in all genres for the years 1950, 1970 (COHA), 1990 and 2010 (COCA).[13] Both corpora include the year 1990, but considering the significantly larger amount of data that it provides, I chose to use COCA in this case. I looked at forms ending in *–man/–men* and at their counterparts in *–woman/–women* and *–person/–persons/–people*, as well as their other epicene quivalents[14]. These searches were conducted in order to answer the following questions, which shed light on whether change has occurred in the language practices of speakers of American English, as well as define broad tendencies that are used as a springboard into a more detailed analysis of individuals compounds (Chapter 6.)

- Has the relative frequency of occurrence of *–man* compounds decreased over the period 1950-2010? If this is the case, can we assume this decrease to be the result of feminist language planning efforts?
- What gender-specific and gender-neutral alternatives are in use? Is there a strategy that appears to be more popular amongst American speakers? Is the use of *–person* compounds lagging behind that of other epicene nouns?
- Is there a significant difference between the frequency of singular and plural nouns?

I compiled a list of compounds ending in *–man* used in American English by working my way through Doyle's *A-Z of Non-sexist Language*. Taking into account Holmes et al.'s comments on *–man* compounds relating to sports, hobbies and military roles which "did not denote a proper profession at the time or, in the case of military labels, excluded women" (Holmes et al. 2009: 192)), I narrowed down my search to compounds belonging to the semantic field 'trades and professions'. I excluded items that were not lexicalized[15] (e.g. *currency man, demolition man*), as well as items whose polysemy complicated the data collection process

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[13] Data from COHA-1950 were added in order to balance the data, and in the hope that they may help explain potential differences between COHA and COCA as a result of COHA's smaller size (COHA-1950: **1**,085,867 words, COHA-1970: **2**,738,642 words, COCA-1990: **20**,587,368 words, and COCA-2010: **19**,905,617 words).

[14] I am aware that 'epicene' is an umbrella term and that, by definition, this category includes terms ending in *–person*. However, in order to differentiate between the two types of gender-neutral alternatives, and for want of a more accurate term, I shall use 'epicene' for the remainder of this thesis to refer to all gender-neutral equivalents to *–man* terms, with the exception of *–person* compounds.

[15] Fiedler defines the process of *lexicalization* as "the fact that a Phraseological Unit is retained in the collective memory of a language community […] and memorized holistically (i.e. as a whole) by the language users" (Fiedler 2007: 21).

(e.g. *airman, yeoman*). I checked whether both one-word and two-word spellings (hyphenated forms included) existed for each compound. When this was the case, I took both into account by adding their raw frequencies together. I did the same in cases where several epicene alternatives (*–person* compounds excepted) existed for one *–man* compound. The list of epicene terms was compiled by taking into consideration alternatives proposed in the three feminist guidelines used for this study, as well as by consulting the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Table 4. List of 68 *–man* compounds and their epicene equivalents

–man compound	Epicene alternative	*–man* compound	Epicene alternative
anchorman	anchor, newsreader, news presenter	**handyman**	caretaker
barman	bartender	**harvestman**	harvester (P)
bluesman	blues player, blues musician	**henchman**	N/A
businessman (P)[16]	business executive, entrepreneur	**herdsman**	herder
busman	bus driver	**hitman**	contract killer, hired killer
cameraman	camera operator	**horseman**	horse rider
cattleman	cattle herder	**huntsman**	hunter
cellarman	cellarer	**insurance man**	insurance seller, ins. vendor, ins. representative
churchman	church member	**journeyman**	journey worker
clergyman	cleric	**junkman**	garbage collector
coachman	coach driver	**laundryman**	laudry worker
crafstman	artisan	**lengthman**	road worker, road maintenance worker, road repairer
crewman	crew member	**mailman**	mail carrier, letter carrier, postal carrier
dairyman	N/A	**maintenance man**	maintenance worker, caretaker
deliveryman	deliverer	**medecineman**	healer
deskman	office worker	**milkman**	milk deliverer
doorman	porter	**nurseryman**	nursery worker
draftsman	drafter	**patrolman**	patroller
dustman	garbage collector	**pitman**	pit worker
fireman	firefighter	**policeman**	police officer
fisherman	fisher	**pressman (P)**	printer (P)
flagman	flagger	**quarryman**	quarry worker
frogman	frog diver	**radioman**	radio operator, radio tech, radio technician
garbage man	garbage collector	**railwayman**	railway worker
gasman	gas fitter	**repairman**	repairer
glassman	glazier	**rifleman (P)**	rifle shooter
groundsman	groundskeeper	**salesman (P)**	sales clerk, sales representative, shop assistant
gunman (P)	shooter, professional killer	**seaman**	sailor

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[16] Terms marked with a (P) are polysemous. In cases where epicene nouns were polysemous (e.g. *printer*), or were also used as proper nouns (e.g. *porter*), immediate contexts were used in order to obtain distribution patterns that were as accurate as possible.

Table 4 (cont'd). List of 68 –*man* compounds and their epicene equivalents

showman	N/A	**vestryman**	vestry member, parish councillor
spaceman	astronaut, cosmonaut	**watchman**	
stockman	cattle breeder	**weatherman**	weather forecaster, weather reporter
swordsman	sword fighter, fencer	**wireman**	electrician
taxman	tax collector, tax inspector	**workman**	worker (P)
tradesman (P)	merchant, shop keeper	**yardsman**	N/A

2.   **Presentation of the Results and Discussion**

2.1. Masculine compounds

A search for both singular and plural forms of the compounds listed above yielded the following results.

Table 5. Number of types listed in Table 4 which occurred at least once.

–*man*	Types	TOTAL	Percentage	–*men*	Types	TOTAL	Percentage
2010	49	**68**	72	2010	38	**68**	56
1990	54	**68**	79	1990	44	**68**	65
1970	21	**68**	31	1970	31	**68**	46
1950	17	**68**	25	1950	25	**68**	37

Table 6. Token distribution and relative frequencies of –*man* and –*men* compounds (per 100,000 words).

–*man*	Tokens	Rel. Frequency	–*men*	Tokens	Rel. Frequency
2010	945	**4.747**	2010	647	**3.250**
1990	1570	**7.611**	1990	1473	**7.155**
1970	369	**13.474**	1970	432	**15.774**
1950	303	**27.904**	1950	295	**27.167**

The results from Table 5 serve as an indicator of the presence of –*man* compounds in the language production of American speakers in 1950, 1970, 1990 and 2010. However, the difference in size between COCA and COHA undermines their reliability. Thus, I shall use Table 6 instead, where the column entitled 'Tokens' displays the sum of the occurrences of all masculine compounds for a given year. Taking into consideration COHA's small size, relative frequencies have been calculated per 100,000 words.

Results indicate a clear drop in the use of –*man* compounds over the period 1950–2010: the relative frequency of singular forms was divided by 6 between 1950 and 2010 (by 8 for plural forms). Broken down into 3 periods of 20 years, it becomes apparent that usage frequency was divided by half every 20 years, and that therefore, the decreasing trend is slowing down.

**Evolution of the usage frequencies
of -*man* and -*men* compounds**
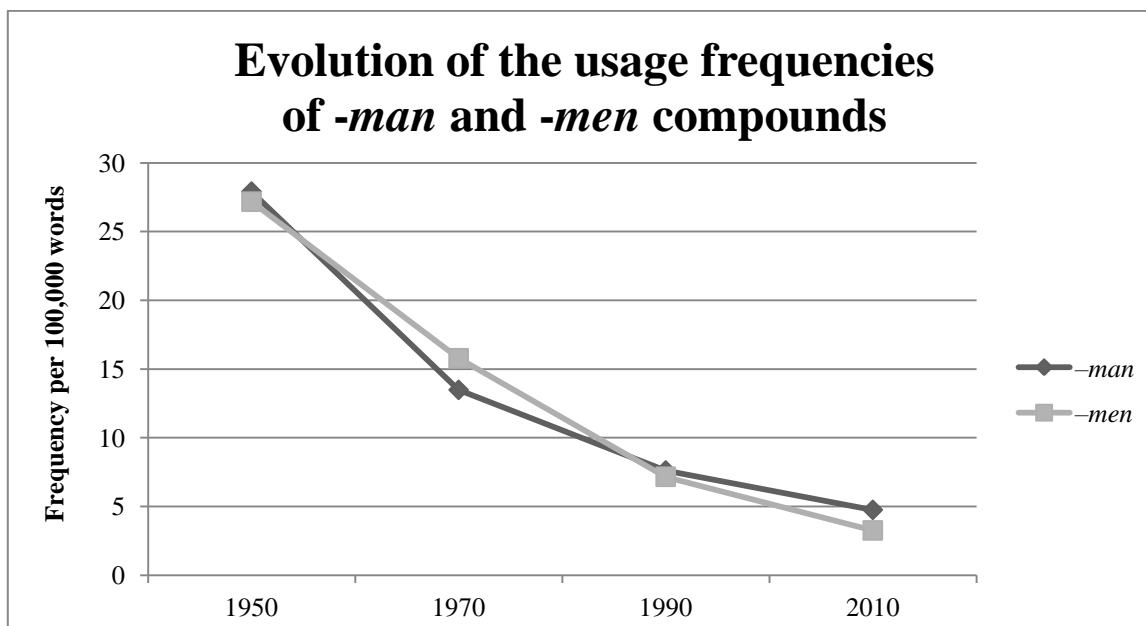
Figure 3. Evolution of the usage frequencies of –*man* and –*men* compounds

The important reduction that took place between 1970 and 1990[17] (-5.9×10^{-3} and -8.6×10^{-3} percentage points (pp) for singular and plural forms, repectively) corresponds to the pinnacle of Second Wave Feminism and the publication of the first gender-fair guidelines. Therefore, this decrease could be interpreted as a sign that feminist language planning was bearing fruit. The slower reduction which took place over the following period (-2.9×10^{-3} and -3.9×10^{-3} pp for singular and plural forms, repectively) may correspond to a sustained effort made by the majority of American speakers to eliminate gender-exclusive forms in work-related contexts. The slowing decline would thus reflect the fact that the most offensive, ambiguous or inappropriate uses of –*man* compounds have been progressively abandoned, leaving only terms for which no equivalent could be found, or in which case stylistic constraints called for a form ending in –*man*. Nevertheless, one cannot ignore the fact that the quickest decline occurred between the years 1950 and 1970, that is to say, before the publication of the first gender-fair guidelines. A possible explanation is that the tremendous decrease in –*man*/–*men* compound usage over this period is due to the very nature of the professions that they designate. Indeed, many of the terms listed in Table 4 refer to professions that have either

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[17] In the absence of an appropriate unit referring to a decrease or an increase in relative frequency calculated per 100,000 words, I have decided to use percentage points. Thus, while relative frequencies are given per 100,000 words, evolutions are given in percentage points. However, because such a conversion entails low percentage point figures, the format **y×10^{-x}** was chosen, in order to avoid dealing with up to five or six decimals:
$1 \times 10^{-3} = 0.001$, $1 \times 10^{-4} = 0.0001$, $1 \times 10^{-5} = 0.00001$ and $1 \times 10^{-6} = 0.000001$.
Example: The relative frequency of –*man* compounds has decreased from 7.611 to 4.747/100,000 words between 1990 and 2010, which is equivalent to 0.007611 and 0.004747/100 words. The frequency was therefore reduced by 0.002864 percentage points, i.e. 2.9×10^{-3} points.

been disappearing or evolving. This quick reduction could thus partly reflect the fact that American speakers of English have automatically adapted their language use to the evolution of their society. However, a look at the concurrent evolution of gender-neutral and feminine equivalents must be considered in order to draw firmer conclusions (cf. Section 2.2).

A closer inspection shows that the near totality of the relative frequencies of individual –*man* types is confined below the cutoff point of 1/100,000 words, and that the vast majority is situated below that of 0.1/100,000 words, which represents extremely low scores (cf. Table 7). Again, we notice a decreasing tendency over the period 1950-2010, which is particularly visible in the case of the three most frequent compounds, *businessman*, *policeman* and *salesman* (cf. Figure 4).

Table 7. Distribution of types of –*man* and –*men* compounds according to relative frequency. Frequencies (f) are given per 100,000 words.

–*man* - Distribution of types					–*men* - Distribution of types				
	1950	1970	1990	2010		1950	1970	1990	2010
f=0	*51*	*47*	*15*	*19*	*f=0*	*43*	*37*	*24*	*31*
0.001<f<0.009	0	0	8	8	0.001<f<0.009	0	0	10	6
0.01<f<0.099	0	2	27	32	0.01<f<0.099	0	12	22	24
0.1<f<0.999	9	15	15	9	0.1<f<0.999	18	15	10	7
1<f<1.999	5	3	3	0	1<f<1.999	3	2	1	0
2<f<9.999	3	1	0	0	2<f<9.999	4	2	1	0
f>10	0	0	0	0	f>10	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**68**	**68**	**68**	**68**	**TOTAL**	**68**	**68**	**68**	**68**
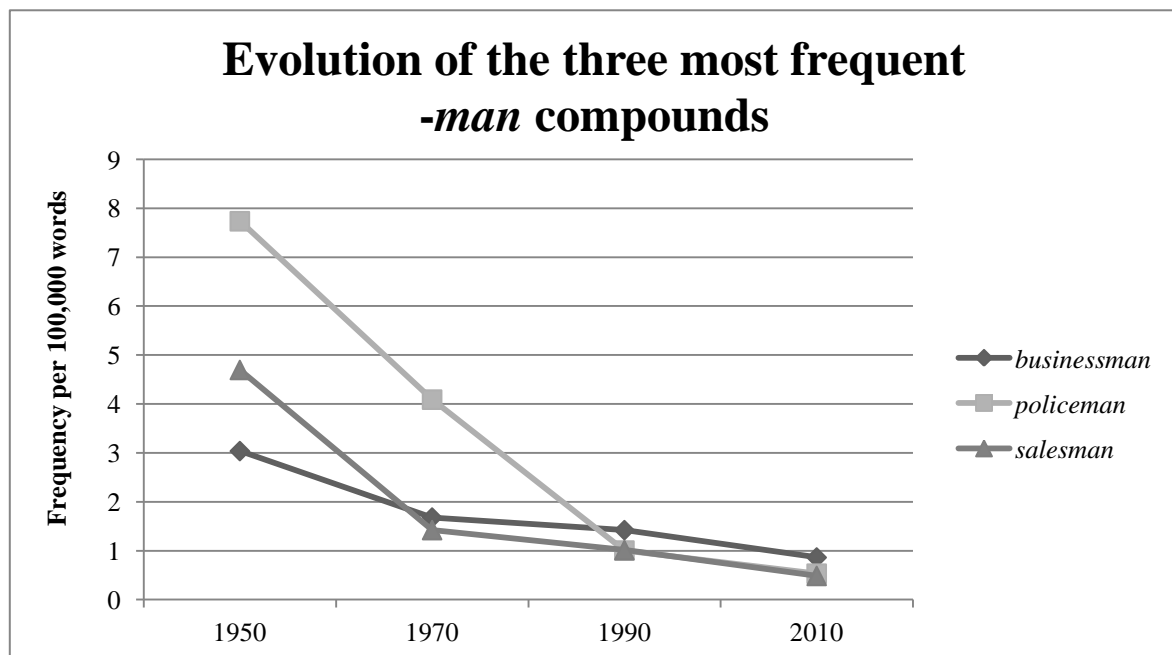
Figure 4. Evolution of the three most frequent –*man* compounds

Table 8 gives an overview of the evolution patterns of masculine compounds between the years 1950 and 2010.

Table 8. Evolution patterns of –*man* and –*men* compounds between 1950 and 2010.

–*man* (1950-2010)		–*men* (1950-2010)	
Evolution	Types	Evolution	Types
Decreasing	17	Decreasing	24
Increasing	33	Increasing	17
Stable	0	Stable	0
No occ.	18	No occ.	27
TOTAL	**68**	**TOTAL**	**68**

Even though the number of increases is superior to that of decreases in the case of singular forms, detailed results show that all increases are situated below the cutoff 9×10^{-6} percentage points, which can be considered negligible. Decreases, on the other hand, are much more significant. As an indicator, the relative frequency of one of the most frequent compounds, *policeman*, has dropped by 7.2×10^{-3} pp between 1950 and 2010.

Figures for the period 1950-1970[18] denote stronger increases, particularly in the case of *cameramen*, *delivery men*, *mailmen*, *watchmen and weathermen*. In parallel, decreases are lesser, for the majority of both singular and plural forms. Over the period 1970-1990, usage of masculine compounds has increased slightly, however, only *fishermen* underwent a marked increase ($+1.8 \times 10^{-4}$ pp). The distribution of decreases is more spread out; usage frequency for *patrolman*, *businessmen*, *firemen* and *workmen* was reduced significantly, yet the compounds which underwent the strongest decrease over this period are *policeman* (-3.1×10^{-4} pp) and *policemen* (-3×10^{-4} pp).

Because the absence of a great number of compounds from COHA-1950 and COHA-1970 may be a question of size rather than indicative of that particular year's usage patterns, let us focus on the evolution that took place between the years 1990 and 2010.

Table 9. Evolution patterns of –*man* and –*men* compounds between 1990 and 2010.

–*man* (1990-2010)		–*men* (1990-2010)	
Evolution	Types	Evolution	Types
Decreasing	38	Decreasing	31
Increasing	16	Increasing	16
Stable	4	Stable	0
No occ.	10	No occ.	21
TOTAL	**68**	**TOTAL**	**68**

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[18] Detailed tables are available in the Appendix.

Table 9 shows that over half of the compounds listed in Table 4 occurred less frequently in 2010 than in 1990, with a similar trend for plural forms. A look at evolution patterns reveals that the majority of both increases and decreases are quite modest. It is the most frequent compounds (*businessman, salesman*, *businessmen* and *fishermen*) that have undergone the most significant changes in usage (in this case, decreases). Other frequent compounds (*fisherman*, *policeman*, *policemen* and *salesmen*) show slightly lesser decreases. The two compounds whose usage increased the most are *gunman* and *gunmen*. It becomes apparent that, in the case of masculine compounds from the semantic category 'trades and professions', there is no significant difference between the evolution patterns of singular and plural forms.

It is important to note that many of the compounds listed in Table 4 did not occur at all (cf. Table 10). The probability of terms being absent from COHA-1950 and COHA-1970 as a result of the size of the corpora is the reason why I do not mention them here. However, it is possible to distinguish patterns for singular terms absent from the corpus in 2010. They mainly have to do with low-ranked tasks (*dustman, garbage man, junkman*), and rare occupations: husbandry (*nurseryman, stockman*) and artisan crafts (*glassman*). Most of these results are coherent with what has been discussed earlier in this chapter, i.e. that some terms in –*man* gradually disappear because they have acquired negative connotations through their association with tasks that are not held in high esteem, or else because the activity that they designate has evolved dramatically or is no longer relevant. Terms absent from COCA-1990 do not fall into such a clear-cut pattern. They encompass religious (*churchman*) and criminal activities (*hitman*), as well as office work (*insurance man*) and manual labor (*quarryman, wireman*).

Table 10. Compounds which did not occur in the corpus.

–*man*	Types	TOTAL	–*men*	Types	TOTAL
2010	19	**68**	2010	31	**68**
1990	15	**68**	1990	24	**68**
1970	47	**68**	1970	37	**68**
1950	51	**68**	1950	43	**68**

A general search for compounds used in collocation with *female*, *lady* or *woman* for the years 1950, 1970, 1990 and 2010 shows that this is a marginal practice (only one occurrence: *female watchman*, COCA-2010). Widening the search criteria to masculine forms from other semantic categories confirms that this type of collocation is extremely rare. There was one occurrence of *lady chairman* (1950) and one of *woman foreman* (1970). A quick search for terms of address yields similar results; no *madam chairman* (but one occurrence of *madam*

chair in 2010). These observations contradict the concern expressed by feminist language planners that some speakers prefer to make a woman's gender visible by adding one of these three collocates before a form ending in –*man*.

Overall, then, the general tendency regarding the way in which American speakers of English used –*man* compounds in 1950, 1970, 1990 and 2010 is an overall decrease in relative frequency. However, it is too early to conclude that this change was triggered by feminist language planning efforts. The only observation that can be made at this point is that the decline in the use of –*man* compounds is partly concomitant with the emergence of the debate on sexism in language. However, the sharp frequency drop over the period 1950-1970 does not allow us, so far, to attribute the overall decrease to a success of feminist language planning. Rubin et al. observed a similar phenomenon in their study of speeches by American male private-sector speakers, namely, a decline in the use of gender-exclusive language which predated the publication of feminist guidelines. They attributed this decrease to a "moral and political response to changing social norms" (Rubin et al. 1994: 111).

Other factors must also be considered, such as the fact that many of the occupations designated by –*man* compounds, a lot of which refer to "traditional rural or historical roles" (Holmes et al. 2009: 201), have become rare or obsolete, or have even completely disappeared. As mentioned above, a great deal of professions have evolved, mainly due to technological advances, and nouns ending in –*man* may have been discarded because the occupations that they designate no longer corresponded to the reality of things. The change described above may also result from employment policies, which introduced new designations as a result of the archaic or pejorative connotations that –*man* compounds had acquired (particularly in the case of low-ranked tasks). Holmes et al. allude to this phenomenon "working in parallel to feminist language reform proposals" (Holmes et al. 2009: 198). They mention several "conservative or old-fashioned labels for occupations, some of which are now relatively rare, or have no modern equivalents, e.g. *crossbowman, liveryman, herdsman, cowman, coachman*", and judge their decrease to be predictable and to "contribut[e] to the overall decrease in occupational –*man* items" (ibid.).

In other contexts, however, the archaic feel of –*man* compounds could be the very reason for their retention. For instance, an author may wish to retain the term *huntsman* because of its quaint and literary connotations. Another example is *fisherman*, which North American

communities of fishermen wish to retain both in reference to women and to men, as a symbol of their proud tradition and culture (cf. Shewchuk 2000 and Chapter 6).

Finally, as a result of all of the above, speakers may consider *–man* compounds to be unsuited to refer to their everyday-life reality, because a woman holds the position in question, because the term has become associated with a particular genre, or because its usage has become discouraged as a result of feminist language planning or other factors. This may have led to *–man* no longer being a productive or favored way of coining new job titles (to the benefit of *guy* in informal speech?), which in turn has affected the usage patterns of the compounds still in use. However, we must bear in mind that this study only includes compounds referring to trades or professional occupations. Results may have been different, had compounds referring to hierarchical positions or public offices been included. Indeed, semantic derogation is a likely cause for the sharp decrease observed above. However, occupations designated by terms such as *chairman*, *spokesman* or *Congressman* bear a certain prestige, which can potentially influence speakers not to adopt their gender-fair alternatives.

In short, several factors appear to be at play in the use that American speakers make of *–man/–men* compounds. In order to get a more comprehensive picture, we must compare their evolution to that of *–woman/–women*, *–person/–persons/–people* and other epicene terms, to find out whether or not they seem to be correlated.

2.2. Alternatives to masculine compounds

Table 11. Number of types which occurred at least once.

–woman	Types	TOTAL	Percentage	–women	Types	TOTAL	Percentage
2010	9	**68**	13	2010	5	**68**	7
1990	10	**68**	15	1990	5	**68**	7
1970	3	**68**	4	1970	3	**68**	4
1950	2	**68**	3	1950	1	**68**	1.5

-person	Types	TOTAL	%	*-persons*	Types	TOTAL	%	*-people*	Types	TOTAL	%
2010	6	**68**	9	2010	3	**68**	4	2010	8	**68**	12
1990	3	**68**	4	1990	4	**68**	6	1990	10	**68**	15
1970	0	**68**	0	1970	0	**68**	0	1970	1	**68**	1.5
1950	0	**68**	0	1950	0	**68**	0	1950	1	**68**	1.5

Epicene	Types	TOTAL	Percentage	Epicenes	Types	TOTAL	Percentage
2010	40	**64**	63	2010	42	**64**	66
1990	43	**64**	67	1990	44	**64**	69
1970	26	**64**	41	1970	31	**64**	48
1950	21	**64**	33	1950	18	**64**	28

Table 11 shows that, over the period 1950-2010, the number of feminine types used represented between 1.5% and 15% of the total (as opposed to a range extending between

25% to 79% for masculine forms). Results for –*person* compounds are along the same lines, except for the fact that no –*person* or –*persons* form was used in 1950 or 1970. This is in keeping with dictionary entries, which date their first known use to a period of time between 1970 and 1976 (Random House, Merriam-Webster). The high visibility of epicene nouns (between 33% and 67% of the types listed in Table 4 were used) suggests that these forms predate feminist reform proposals and have led a life of their own. In other words, they do not serve only as equivalents to –*man* compounds in the way –*woman* and –*person* forms do, and may have slightly different meanings or connotations.

2.2.1.   Feminine forms

The distribution of feminine tokens is in keeping with general type evolution patterns (cf. Tables 11-12). Except for a slight decrease between 1950 and 1970, the frequency of –*woman* compounds has been on the increase, the quickest increase having taken place between 1970 and 1990 ($+5.2 \times 10^{-4}$ percentage points, against $+9.9 \times 10^{-5}$ pp for 1990-2010, cf. Table 12). Usage patterns for –*women* compounds are slightly different; frequency increased slowly until 1990, and then started to decrease. We can clearly see that in the case of feminine compounds, plural forms are used much less frequently than singular forms. Therefore, it seems that compounds ending in –*woman/–women* in reference to professional occupations do not follow the same trend as the nouns *woman* and *women*, as observed by Holmes et al. (2009), who found that women were more often referred to as a group than individually. Only five plural types occurred more than once in the corpora, and they refer to commercial (*businesswomen*, *saleswomen*, *tradeswomen*), artisan (*craftswomen*), and religious activities (*churchwomen*). We can link this marked difference in frequency between singular and plural forms to two different factors, the first being that groups of professionals entirely composed of women are rare, and the second, that when women are referred to as part of a larger, mixed group, a masculine or gender-neutral term will be used.

Table 12. Token distribution and relative frequencies of –*woman* and –*women* compounds (per 100,000 words).

–*woman*	Tokens	Rel. Frequency	–*women*	Tokens	Rel. Frequency
2010	152	**0.764**	2010	13	**0.065**
1990	137	**0.665**	1990	26	**0.126**
1970	4	**0.146**	1970	3	**0.110**
1950	3	**0.276**	1950	1	**0.092**

A detailed token distribution shows that the frequencies of feminine compounds are all situated below 1/100,000 words. Looking at general frequencies (all years taken together), the

most frequent words are *policewoman*, *saleswoman*, *medicine woman*, and *businesswoman*. Interestingly, *businesswoman* and *policewoman* have become more frequent, whereas *medicine woman* and *saleswoman* have undergone the opposite process. This could reflect the case made by some feminist language planners for using feminine nouns when referring to women involved in traditionally male occupations, in order to achieve better visibility. On the other hand, gender-neutral terms are preferred in reference to women involved in traditionally female occupations, to counter the process of semantic derogation of words associated with women and their traditional spheres of influence. These results reflect Holmes et al.'s findings, in that "female roles are often still explicitly linguistically marked, but [that] this could be interpreted as an indication of women's entry into formerly male-centric domains" (Holmes et al. 2009: 183). Yet, later Australian and New Zealand data show a decrease in the use of explicit gender-markings, which suggests a second, gender-neutral phase in the evolution of occupational-term usage, once the presence of women has become generalized in all male-dominated fields (ibid.: 201).

Table 13. Evolution patterns of *–woman* and *–women* compounds between 1950 and 2010.

–woman (1950-2010)		*–women* (1950-2010)	
Evolution	Types	Evolution	Types
Decreasing	2	Decreasing	1
Increasing	7	Increasing	4
Stable	0	Stable	0
No occ.	59	No occ.	63
TOTAL	**68**	**TOTAL**	**68**

Table 13 gives an overview of the way in which usage of feminine compounds has evolved between 1950 and 2010. Increases and decreases in frequency are low for all terms except *policewoman*, which is partly due to then fact that *–woman/–women* compounds are not very frequent in the first place. Breaking down the results into three time periods reflects what has been presented above, namely that the use of feminine compounds increased the most between 1970 and 1990, and that this trend slowed down over the last period.

When it comes to the evolution of the use of gender-neutral forms, the frequency data are more difficult to read.

2.2.2. Gender-neutral forms

The absence of any occurrence of *–person* and *–persons* compounds before 1990 reflects the fact that these forms were marginal before feminist language planners made a case for their use (cf. Table 14). Interestingly, *–people* forms seem to have been in use long before their

–person/–persons counterparts were introduced (*salespeople* was in use in 1950 and 1970). However, despite a marked overall increase in relative frequency between 1970 and 1990 for these three forms, a decrease is visible across the board for the period 1990-2010. Frequencies of *–person/–persons/–people* compounds are also situated beneath the level of 1/100,000 words, the most frequent types being *salesperson, salespeople* and *businesspeople*.

The use of epicene nouns has seen a sharp decrease between 1950 and 1970, the relative frequency of singular and plural forms being divided by 3 and by 2, respectively. It picked up between 1970 and 1990, only to decrease again over the last period.

<u>Table 14.</u> Token distribution and relative frequencies of *–person/–persons/–people* compounds and other epicenes (per 100,000 words).

-person	Tokens	Rel. Freq.	-persons	Tokens	Rel. Freq.	-people	Tokens	Rel. Freq.
2010	29	**0.146**	2010	4	**0.020**	2010	59	**0.296**
1990	32	**0.155**	1990	5	**0.024**	1990	92	**0.447**
1970	0	**0**	1970	0	**0**	1970	1	**0.037**
1950	0	**0**	1950	0	**0**	1950	2	**0.184**
Epicene	**Tokens**	**Rel. Frequency**		**Epicenes**	**Tokens**		**Rel. Frequency**	
2010	2296	**11.533**		2010	4280		**21.501**	
1990	3101	**15.065**		1990	5145		**24.991**	
1970	264	**9.640**		1970	668		**24.392**	
1950	332	**30.575**		1950	532		**48.993**	

The trend outlined by the evolution of epicene forms between the years 1950 and 2010 hides many disparities. Indeed, despite the fact that many terms have seen their frequency increase, the use of terms like *sailor(s), merchant(s)/shopkeeper(s) and worker(s)* has been so dramatically reduced that it resulted in an overall decrease in frequency for all epicene nouns. The same holds for the period 1950-1970, with *astronauts/cosmonauts* being the only terms to have seen their relative frequency increase (by over 2×10^{-3} pp; their masculine equivalent, *spacemen,* underwent the opposite evolution). Usage trends were reversed over the period 1970-1990, with low decreases (except for *astronauts/cosmonauts*), and high increases in frequency for the terms *sailor* and *worker(s).* Finally, the period 1990-2010 mirrors 1950-1970, with low increases and high decreases, the highest concerning *sailor* and *worker(s).*

As expected, in contrast to feminine compounds, gender-neutral plural forms were much more frequent than singular forms across the board (counting *–persons* and *–people* forms together), from 1.6 to 3 times more frequent. Considering occurrences for the four years together, the most frequent *–persons/–people* forms were *salespeople* and *businesspeople*, and the most frequent plural epicene forms were *workers*, *merchants/shopkeepers* and *hunters*.

The higher frequency of –*people* over –*persons* forms is probably influenced by the difference between the use of the two substantival forms *people* and *persons*.

The fact that the number of tokens increased for both feminine and gender-neutral forms between 1970 and 1990 could reflect feminist language planning efforts. Yet it is striking that the general decrease in gender-neutral forms that occurred between 1990 and 2010 was not paralleled by an increase in the use of gender-marked forms, working as a counterbalance. The only plausible explanation is that the professions in question have slowly become obsolete.

3. <u>Concluding remarks</u>

The above figures reflect a decreasing use of compounds ending in –*man* and –*men* over the period 1950-2010, in the language used by American speakers. In spite of the retention of quite a large number of masculine forms, it was found that speakers did not use them in collocation with *female*, *lady* or *woman*, as a way of making gender visible. The general decrease unfolded in parallel with a steady increase in the use of feminine forms, especially between 1970 and 1990, (with the exception of their plural forms between 1990 and 2010). However, usage frequencies of feminine compounds are still much lower than those of masculine forms. Even though the number of feminine types in use has increased, their highest score remains quite modest; only 15% of –*man* compounds listed in Table 4 had a –*woman* alternative in use in 1990.

The distribution of gender-neutral forms between 1950 and 2010 is uneven. Nevertheless, the overall preference of speakers for epicene forms is quite clear. Roughly forty years after the debate on feminist language reforms was initiated, only 9% of terms from Table 4 had a –*person* alternative in use, with a slightly higher score for –*people*. Moreover, nearly all –*person* forms in use had an epicene equivalent which was used much more frequently over the same period. Only one –*persons* form (*showpersons*/1990) and three –*people* forms (*salespeople*/1950, *camerapeople*/*camera people*/1990, *insurance people*/2010) were used as sole gender-neutral alternatives.

Thus, we can affirm that, despite a visible drop in frequency over the last period, epicene terms are still the preferred alternative over both –*woman* and –*person* terms, in the case of occupational terms from the category 'trades and professions'. There are cases where the

feminine and one or both gender-neutral equivalent forms are used, for instance (*businesswomen*, *businesspeople*, *business executives/entrepreneurs*; *repairwoman*, *repairperson*, *repairer…*). However, few –*woman* or –*person* compounds are used as sole alternatives (in my data, only *horsewoman*, *horsewomen*, *insurance people* and *showperson*). The overwhelming preference for epicene terms can be explained by the fact that they are not perceived as alternatives to –*man* forms, but as fully-fledged words with their own history, meaning and connotations. Therefore, they may not feel 'forced' in the way new forms promoted by language reformists may be perceived on first contact. This is likely to appeal to speakers who refuse to be 'coerced' into using certain forms by feminist language planners, but who still have to follow gender-fair guidelines for professional reasons. The fact that these words are used 'independently' of their equivalents in –*man* also means that they occur in a wider variety of contexts, which is likely to inflate their distribution figures.

In conclusion, the results of this short study on the distribution and evolution of the use of professional titles ending in –*man* and of their gender-specific and gender-neutral equivalents allow us to draw tentative conclusions regarding the impact of feminist language planning efforts on the general population's use of these terms. (Due to the nature of this study, i.e. four cross-sectional observations, the data collected present a simplified and slightly distorted picture). Some of the tendencies observed can be interpreted as the result of feminist language planning and of its ripple effects, achieved through the introduction of gender-fair guidelines into diverse institutions. Relevant examples would be the type and token distribution patterns of the years 1970 and 1990, as well as the evolution between the two, the (slow) increase in the use of –*woman* forms and the appearance of –*person* forms after 1970. I am reluctant to add as an example the fact that epicene forms were more frequent than masculine compounds (except for singular forms in 1970), on account of the artificial inflation of epicene results mentioned in the previous paragraph. However, the fact that many absentee masculine forms had epicene equivalents in use (*flagger*, *groundskeeper*, *harvester*, *bartenders*, *bus drivers*, *glaziers*, to mention a few) could reflect a progressive takeover on the part of gender-neutral forms. On the other hand, their overall decreasing relative frequencies and the extremely low number of occurrences of –*person/–persons/–people* forms could reflect the backlash against feminism that occurred in the 1990's.

Thus, results do not enable us to affirm anything with certainty, especially considering the fact that feminist language planning is not the only force at play. Other factors influencing

speakers' lexical choices are working in parallel, and we must take into consideration the fact that many professions designated by –*man* compounds are either evolving or disappearing. In the face of this ongoing change, speakers are adapting their language accordingly, be it as the result of an unconscious process triggered by the need for accurate terminology as a "moral and political response to changing social norms" (Rubin et al. 1994: 111), or because of official reforms, such as the US Department of Labor's 'Job title revision'.

This quantitative study gives us a general impression about global distribution patterns in all genres available in COHA and COCA. However, in order to establish, or disprove, connections between the evolution outlined above and a possible feminist influence, we need to take a certain amount of contextual information into account. This is only feasible in a more focused study, narrowing down the search to a smaller number of compounds and to one genre only, which is the object of the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Seven compounds

A review of their use in American newspapers

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1. <u>Aims and Data Collection</u>

The aim of this detailed study of seven –*man* compounds and their gender-specific and gender-neutral equivalents is to uncover the extent to which newspaper production conforms to guidelines and editing policies, as well as to observe usage patterns. The study of guidelines presented in Chapter 4 illustrated the fact that, despite openly advocating a fair representation of the sexes in the media, newspaper style manuals were not greatly influenced by feminist language reform proposals when it came to the specifics, namely the ways in which gender-fair representation was to be achieved at word or sentence level. Chapter 5 outlined broad evolution tendencies regarding the general use of job titles. In the present chapter, the focus is narrowed down to six –*man* compounds belonging to the category 'trades and professions': *anchorman*, *businessman*, *cameraman*, *craftsman*, *fisherman* and *policeman*. '*Chairman'* was added to the list, on account of its centrality in the debate on gender-fair language. The contextual information collected concerns usage patterns in relation to external factors such as type of news section, political leaning, and sex[19] of both referents and journalists.

For methodological reasons presented in Chapter 3, I have collected data from the newspaper sections of both COHA and COCA. Data from 1950 were not included here, as the seven compounds occurred too rarely that year for their contextual information to be generalizable. Information on the composition of the corpora is given in Table 15, along with an exhaustive list of the newspapers included.

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[19] 'Sex' was chosen over 'gender' in this case, because it was not possible to find out whether a particular referent or journalist identified with a gender that was incongruent with his/her sex.

Table 15. Detailed composition of the newspaper sections in COHA 1970, COCA 1990 and COCA 2010[20]

COHA-News 1970	COCA-News 1990	COCA-News 2010
446,248 words (487 texts)	4,000,927 words (2,829 texts)	4,217,928 words (3,034 texts)
	Associated Press	Associated Press
		Atlanta Journal Constitution
Chicago Sun Times		Chicago Sun Times
Christian Science Monitor	Christian Science Monitor	Christian Science Monitor
		Denver Post
		Houston Chronicle
New York Times	New York Times	New York Times
	San Francisco Chronicle	San Francisco Chronicle
	USA Today	USA Today
Wall Street Journal		
	Washington Post	Washington Post

The six compounds ending in –*man* that were chosen were the most frequent forms belonging to the category 'trades and professions' in my data, and were selected for this reason, as well as for the fact that they all possessed a feminine, a –*person*, and at least once epicene equivalent.

Table 16. Forms selected for the study

-*man* form	-*woman* form	-*person* form	Epicene form
Anchorman	Anchorwoman	Anchorperson	Anchor, News presenter
Businessman	Businesswoman	Businessperson	Business executive, Entrepreneur
Cameraman	Camerawoman	Cameraperson	Camera operator
Chairman	Chairwoman	Chairperson	Chair
Craftsman	Craftswoman	Craftsperson	Craftsworker, Artisan
Fisherman	Fisherwoman	Fisherperson	Fisher
Policeman	Policewoman	Policeperson	Police officer

The following criteria were applied during the data collection process:

- Plural forms were discarded, as the sex of the referents was often unknown or impossible to determine from the limited context available.
- Occurrences which presented typos or agreement mistakes (e.g. *three policeman) were discarded.
- All occurrences of terms which were used both in general references to a profession and as a title preceding a proper noun were included.

> (9) I saw *a policeman* smile benignly at two 'hippies'… (*New York Times* 1970 – 19700811)
> (10) *Policeman Edward Manley* flagged them down… (*Chicago Tribune* 1970 – 19700905)

- Terms which occurred several times within the same article, with the same person as referent, were only counted once.
- Polysemy was approached on a case-by-case basis. Only nouns whose referent was a person, referred to in terms of their professional occupation, were kept. Proper nouns (e.g. *Anchor Books, Derek Fisher*) were disregarded, along with attributive nouns of

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[20] Sizes given in Table 15 are not the ones that can be found on COCA's web interface, as it turned out that these did not correspond to the sum of all subsections. Therefore, the present figures are based on my own calculations (for which I used official content lists compiled by Mark Davies).

the type *anchor tenant*. Forms of the type *fisherman's knot* or *artisan's village* were included, on account that their equivalents, *fisher's knot* and *craftsman's village,* are also in use. Anchors in sports teams and marching bands were excluded. In the case of *chair*, committee, board and university department chairs were included, but not references to professors holding an endowed chair, such as the *Rupert Murdoch Chair of Language and Communication*.

- All the results regarding occurrences of *chairman* in COCA-News 1990 are based on a random sample of 196 occurrences. Due to the high frequency of this term that particular year (2,248 occurrences), I extracted a random sample of 500 occurrences from COCA-1990 and retained only the ones from the category News (196 occurrences).

For each form, in each of the three years, information was collected on the following eleven variables.

1) Raw and relative frequency

2) The name of the newspaper from which an occurrence was extracted

3) Whether or not usage conformed to guidelines (in the case of the *Associated Press*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*)

4) The political leaning of the newspaper from which an occurrence was extracted

5) The news section from which an occurrence was extracted

In his 1987 study of "sexist language in the periodical news media", Fasold classified entries according to two categories, 'hard news' and 'soft news'. These turned out to be impractical (What constitutes a piece of 'hard' news? Should this category be associated to a type of news section such as politics, economy, etc., or to 'serious' subjects, such as cancer, war, etc.?), and resulted in a classification that I judged too subjective to be reliable. In consequence, an adapted version of the NYT's news sections was used, with a reduced number of categories in order to obtain a more balanced classification of the data.

6) Sex of the referent

Sex of the referent was classified according to the following categories: Female, Male, Unknown and Generic. Generic references usually corresponded to an office, or metaphors of the type

(11) No government can play global *policeman* yet remain small and nonintrusive at home. (101129, 2010)

The sex of a referent was determined according to proper nouns and anaphoric/cataphoric pronouns. If none could be found, the occurrence was automatically classified as unknown, even though it could be assumed from the context that the referent was a man, as was often the case with occurrences of *policeman*, for instance. I am aware that this may play down men's visibility within the professional sphere, but I preferred not to involve intuition and assumptions of gender-roles in the data-collecting process. Masculine pronouns were examined to find out whether they had been intended as generics.

7) Sex of the journalist

Entries were classified according to the following categories: Female, Male, Mixed and Unknown. It is important to stress that this category refers to the sex of the journalist and not of the enunciator. Occurrences which were part of quotations are signaled in a different category (Context), along with the sex of the person quoted. This choice was made in consideration of the fact that, unlike journalists, quoted sources were unlikely to be familiar with newspaper guidelines. Therefore, a category 'Sex of the enunciator' would not have reflected editorial policies. On the other hand, I have considered as journalists readers whose letters were published by editors, on the ground that they purposefully wrote for publication. The fact that readers should decide to interact with a journalist or an editor also reflects their involvement with a particular newspaper, which may influence their language habits. Thus, I consider the category 'Letters' to involve careful language production.

8) Stance of journalists on feminist language planning

In cases where feminine and gender-neutral forms occurred in an article about feminism or in metalinguistic comments about language use, a search for the stance of the journalist on feminist language planning was conducted. Occurrences were classified according to the following categories: Pro, Con, Neutral and Unknown.

9) Gender-splitting

Occurrences of *–woman* terms were examined for instances of gender-splitting.

10) Collocates

Occurrences were examined for recurrent collocates.

11) Context

The category 'Context' concerns the occurrences of terms within direct quotations (along with the sex of the enunciator), as well as whether the use of a masculine term with a female referent reflected the official terminology of a particular organization, to the extent that this kind of information was retrievable. Unfortunately, the information available both in the corpora and online did not make it possible to find out whether a particular term had been specifically requested by the referent of an article.

2. **Presentation of the Results**

2.1. Distribution and general usage patterns

2.1.1. *Distribution and evolution of the four categories*

The total relative frequency of the seven masculine compounds considered together dropped from 38.544 to 11.688/100,000 words between the years 1970 and 2010 (cf. Table 17, Total), which reflects the global decreasing tendency outlined in Chapter 5. However, broken down into two time periods, the evolution of these seven compounds differs from the trend followed by the 68 compounds presented in the previous chapter. In the present case, the decrease accelerated, that is to say, it was slightly more marked between the years 1990 and 2010 (-1.4×10^{-2} percentage points (pp)), than between 1970 and 1990 (-1.3×10^{-2} pp). The frequency of *−man* compounds used generically also decreased over the whole period (relative frequency divided by 6), the stronger decrease occurring, in constrast, between 1970 and 1990. The fact that the use of the 68 compounds used in Chapter 5 and the seven compounds studied here did not decrease at the same pace reveals internal differences between individual terms. The decreasing evolution of the most frequent *−man* compounds seems to have been gaining momentum (present chapter), whereas when we consider them together with other, rarer compounds such as *vestryman* (Chapter 5), a different evolution pattern emerges (i.e. the decreasing trend is slowing down), which is influenced by the obsolescence and mutation of many of the occupations associated with these terms.

The most frequent generic uses of masculine terms concerned *businessman* in 1970, *chairman* in 1990 and *fisherman* in 2010. This evolution could be interpreted as a reflection of the gradual inroads made by women into professional areas considered to be 'masculine territories', in this case, business, management, and finally, fishing. The more women employed in a given branch, the more difficult it becomes to use the corresponding

occupational titles generically. This could also represent evidence supporting the 'social change must precede language change' type of approach. Indeed, language users involved in male-dominated work environments may not feel directly concerned, and therefore not be as receptive to the issues raised by feminist linguists. In contrast, as the number of women employed in their line of work increases, the effects of feminist guidelines become amplified. This is illustrated by my results, which show that *businesswoman* and *chairwoman* have both become established –*woman* forms, whereas *fisherwoman* has not (more details in 2.1.2.2).

Table 17. Distribution and evolution of the seven masculine compounds

Distribution	Anchorman		Businessman		Cameraman		Chairman	
	Tokens	Freq. [21]	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.
2010	1	0.023	68	1.597	6	0.141	381	8.947
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.071*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.071*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*9*	*0.213*
1990	15	0.368	77	1.891	11	0.270	881[22]	21.633
Generic ref.	*3*	*0.074*	*4*	*0.098*	*1*	*0.025*	*19*	*0.475*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.025*	*0*	*0*	*18*	*0.450*
1970	0	0	10	2.241	0	0	136	30.476
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.896*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.672*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.224*

Distribution	Craftsman		Fisherman		Policeman		TOTAL	
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.
2010	5	0.117	18	0.423	14	0.329	493	11.688
Generic ref.	*3*	*0.070*	*5*	*0.117*	*2*	*0.047*	*16*	*0.379*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.024*	*0*	*0*	*10*	*0.237*
1990	5	0.123	19	0.467	30	0.737	1038	25.944
Generic ref.	*4*	*0.098*	*9*	*0.221*	*7*	*0.172*	*47*	*1.175*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.025*	*0*	*0*	*20*	*0.500*
1970	0	0	2	0.448	24	5.378	172	38.544
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.672*	*10*	*2.241*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.224*

The use of these seven –*man* compounds with reference to women has fluctuated, but has not changed significantly over the past forty years. This usage saw a modest increase between 1970 and 1990 (from 0.224 to 0.5/100,000 words), and a nearly equivalent decrease over the next two decades (from 0.5 to 0.237). The persistence of this usage is not caused by their occurrence in quotations, as only one –*man* compound referring to a woman originated from a quoted source (interestingly enough, a woman).

> (12) I've always loved the outdoors, and I wanted hands-on work. That's why I became a *fisherman*. (19900317, 1990)

The highest ranking compound in this category is *chairman*, whose usage in reference to women is far ahead the other six nouns.

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[21] All relative frequencies are given per 100,000 words and are calculated on the basis of COCA-News for a given year.
[22] Underlined figures correspond to results based on a random sample of 196 occurrences.

(13) FDIC *Chairman* Sheila Bair and Fed Chairman Ben Bernanke endorse this approach (100425, 2010)

It must be noted, however, that in most cases of this type, the term *chairman* was the official term used by the organization or company in question, independently of the gender of the person in office. Yet in other, admittedly rare, cases, the masculine compound was used *in spite* of an organization's official gender-neutral terminology (*chair*, in the case of (14)).

(14) Now [Carol] Tome holds another rare title: *chairman* of the Atlanta Fed board (100509, 2010)

The distribution of masculine compounds, and particularly their decreasing relative frequency, is meaningful in light of the general and sustained increase visible for all the other forms. The relative frequency of *–woman* forms increased from 0 to 1.138/100,000 words, that of *–person* forms from 0 to 0.142, and epicenes from 0.448 to 2.910. Generic uses of *–person* compounds and epicenes both increased, as did their use in reference to women (cf. Tables 18 to 20), which may reflect a gradual spread of the ideas defended by feminist language planners.

The relative parts represented by feminine and gender-neutral forms within the total number of tokens all increased: by 7 percentage points (pp) for *–woman* compounds, 1 pp for *–person* forms and 20 pp for epicene nouns (cf. Figure 5).
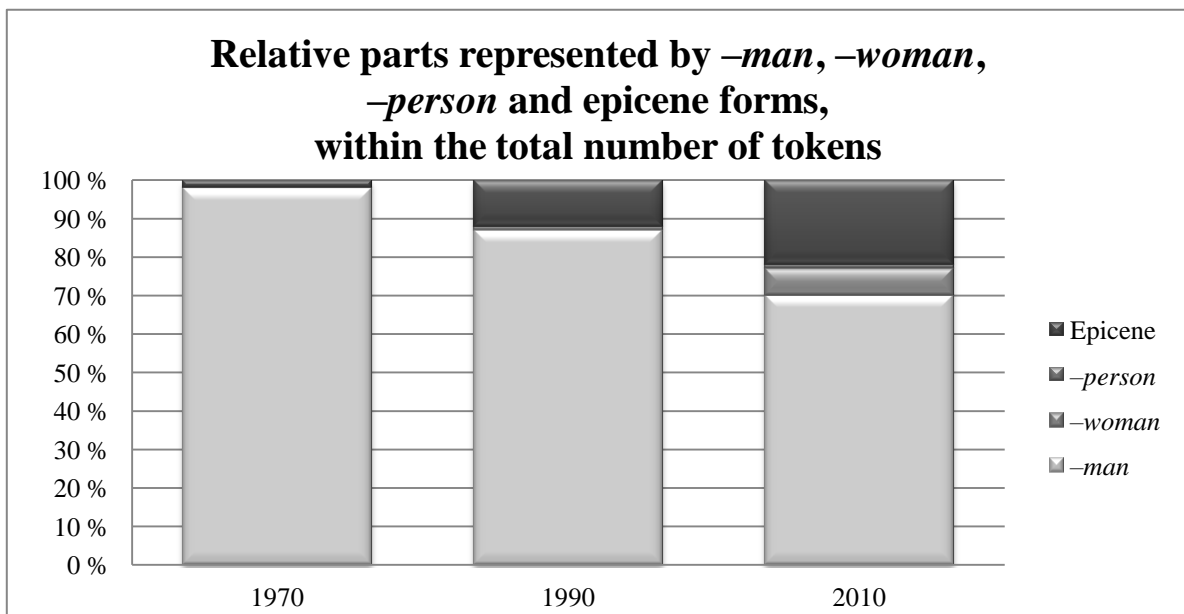
Figure 5. Relative parts represented by *–man*, *–woman*, *–person* and other epicene forms, within the total number of tokens

The period 1990-2010 saw a greater increase overall, especially in the case of feminine compounds. Conversely, the relative part occupied by masculine compounds diminished, losing 28 pp between 1970 and 2010. Therefore, it seems at first glance that these results are coherent with what has been presented earlier on. However, despite a significant decrease in frequency, –*man* compounds remain by far the most frequent category of the four. In 2010, they still represented 70% of the total number of tokens, all four categories taken together.

Before discussing possible causes for these results and drawing any conclusions, individual evolutions must be considered. Due to space restrictions, I do not discuss each term to the same extent, but focus on patterns and criteria which are relevant to this study.

Table 18. Distribution and evolution of the seven feminine compounds

Distribution	Anchorwoman		Businesswoman		Camerawoman		Chairwoman	
	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.
2010	0	0	7	0.164	0	0	38	0.892
1990	3	0.074	2	0.050	1	0.025	10	0.246
1970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Distribution	Craftswoman		Fisherwoman		Policewoman		TOTAL	
	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.
2010	0	0	1	0.023	2	0.047	48	1.138
1990	0	0	1	0.025	1	0.025	18	0.450
1970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 19. Distribution and evolution of the seven –*person* compounds

Distribution	Anchorperson		Businessperson		Cameraperson		Chairperson	
	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.
2010	0	0	1	0.023	0	0	4	0.094
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.024*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.024*
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.049
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.050*
1970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*

Distribution	Craftsperson		Fisherperson		Policeperson		TOTAL	
	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.	Tokens	Rel.Freq.
2010	1	0.023	0	0	0	0	6	0.142
Generic ref.	*1*	*0.023*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.024*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.047*
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.050
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.050*
1970	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*

Table 20. Distribution and evolution of the seven epicene forms

Distribution	Anchor/News pres.		Business exec/Entr.		Camera operator		Chair	
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq
2010	9	0.211	37	0.869	0	0	33	0,775
Generic ref.	*1*	*0.023*	*3*	*0.070*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*5*	*0.119*	*6*	*0.142*	*0*	*0*	*14*	*0,332*
1990	36	0.884	36	0.884	0	0	6	0,147
Generic ref.	*6*	*0.150*	*7*	*0.172*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*6*	*0.150*	*1*	*0.025*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0,050*
1970	0	0	1	0.224	0	0	1	0,224
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*

Distribution	Craftsworker/Art.		Fisher		Police officer		TOTAL	
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq
2010	5	0.117	1	0.023	70	1.644	155	2.910
Generic ref.	*4*	*0.094*	*0*	*0*	*14*	*0.329*	*22*	*0.450*
Female ref.	*1*	*0.024*	*1*	*0.024*	*2*	*0.047*	*29*	*0.688*
1990	1	0.025	3	0.074	59	1.449	141	2.624
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.025*	*11*	*0.270*	*25*	*0.450*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.075*	*12*	*0.300*
1970	0	0	0	0	1	0.224	3	0.448
Generic ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*
Female ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*

2.1.2. *Distribution and evolution of individual forms*

2.1.2.1. *Masculine forms*

As illustrated in Tables 17 to 20, the seven compounds selected for this study are far from equal in terms of frequencies. *Chairman* is the most popular, with a relative frequency of 8.947 per 100,000 words in 2010 (cf. Table 17). *Businessman* is the most frequent in the category 'trades and professions', with a frequency of 1.597 that same year. *Policeman* and *fisherman* have frequencies between 0.3 and 0.5, while *cameraman*, *craftsman* and *anchorman* come last, with frequencies of 0.141, 0.117 and 0.023, respectively. It has been mentioned that the relative frequency of –*man* compounds as a group decreased from 38.544 to 11.688 between 1970 and 2010. Looking at individual compounds, we can see that this tendency is mostly noticeable in the case of the most frequent forms (*chairman*, *businessman* and *policeman*). Unsurprisingly, less frequent compounds underwent less dramatic changes.

In most cases, the frequencies of masculine forms appear to be decreasing to the benefit of their epicene counterparts, which, in the case of *anchor, artisan* and *police officer*, had either replaced or caught up with them in 2010 (cf. Table 17 and 20). This may reflect a phenomenon which Pauwels alludes to, as she claims that "the adoption of the feminist linguistic alternative form moves gradually and differentially through a noun class depending on the social meaning of the noun" (Pauwels 1999: online). In other words, the use of terms

associated with power and a high social status oppose more resistance to change, probably because of the aura of prestige that they bestow on the person assuming the role. Pauwels illustrates this statement by citing the term *spokesman*, which "possibly does not call up such a strong association in social gender terms [as would a term like *chairman*], thus facilitating change to *spokesperson*" (ibid.).

The fact that the increasing frequency of *entrepreneur* is still nowhere near that of *businessman* is probably due to the fact that they are not considered full synonyms; therefore, the choice to use one or the other depends on contextual factors. In the case of *cameraman*, the masculine form seems to be the only viable option; its frequency is decreasing but none of the alternatives studied here seem to be taking over. Out of the seven forms, *fisherman* can be singled out as an exception. It is the only compound whose usage remained relatively stable between 1990 and 2010, while none of its gender-specific or gender-neutral alternatives increased concomitantly.

2.1.2.2. *Alternatives to masculine forms*

The distribution of the corresponding *–woman*, *–person* and other epicene forms also corroborates the general results presented in Chapter 5. In other words, epicene forms are the most frequently used, followed by compounds ending in *–woman* (although far behind), and finally by *–person* compounds. In the majority of cases, the use of *–person* compounds has not caught on: four of the seven forms were never used (*anchorperson*, *cameraperson*, *fisherperson* and *policeperson*). On the other hand, all epicene and feminine forms were used at least once, with the exception of *camera operator* and *craftswoman*.

Feminine forms

Chairwoman and *businesswoman* seem to be the only truly established *–woman* forms. With a total of 38 occurrences in 2010, *chairwoman* can be considered part of the common lexicon, whereas *businesswoman* is still far behind, with a shy increase from 0 to 0.164/100,000 words, and a total of only 7 occurrences in 2010. The use of *anchorwoman*, *camera woman*, *fisherwoman* and *policewoman* is marginal, and the form *craftswoman* does not seem to be in use. There was one case where the feminine form was chosen despite the official term being masculine (*chairman* in this case), and where it was obvious that the (female) journalist was

aware of feminist language reforms and of the fact that a speaker's choice carries ideological meaning.

> (15) In a letter addressed to Hall and former board *chairwoman* LaChandra Butler Burks - who Elgart purposely addressed as the board's *chairperson* […]. (101028, 2010)

There were no cases of gender-splitting, and a look at the adjectives used in collocation with feminine forms did not reveal any particular focus on physical or stereotypically feminine attributes (cf. Table 21).

Table 21. Adjective collocates of –*woman* compounds

1970	1990	2010
/	**Retired** teacher and businesswoman **Professional** camerawoman **Former** chairwoman **Unpaid** chairwoman	**Gimlet-eyed** businesswoman **Out-of-touch billionaire** businesswoman […] how **smart** a businesswoman she is. **Rookie** policewoman

Gender-neutral forms

Compounds ending in –person

Results from Tables 19 and 20 confirm the blatant discrepancy which exists between the two types of gender-neutral forms, as was mentioned in Chapter 5. –*person* compounds were rarely used. *Chairperson* was the highest-ranking form, with four occurrences in 2010 and two in 1990. Three of its four occurrences in 2010 went against official usage, which required either *chair* or *chairman*. It is surprising to note that neither *chairperson* nor *chair* was used generically or in reference to positions which had yet to be filled. Apart from the case of *chairperson*, the use of –*person* compounds is nearly non-existent; there was only one occurrence of *businessperson* and one of *craftsperson* in 2010. The majority of the referents are women, with four occurrences in total, against three for men and one generic reference (*craftsperson*) (cf. Table 22). In contrast, the raw number of female referents in the category 'Epicenes' is much higher, yet their proportion compared to the total is three times lower. Even though these results show that, in relative terms, language users are more comfortable using forms ending in –*person* than epicenes in reference to women, this cannot be interpreted as a confirmation of the concern voiced by feminists regarding their exclusive use in reference to women, while men are still referred to as *businessmen*, *chairmen*, etc. In any case, the low number of –*person* tokens compels us to be careful and nuanced in our conclusions. What can be affirmed, however, is that, as a group, –*person* compounds are still a long way from the status of tolerated usage. Epicene terms are by far the preferred strategy, regardless of the fact

that their distribution according to the sex of their referent is not proportionally as balanced, and is actually more similar to the distribution of masculine compounds. Therefore, we must be careful not to assume that gender-neutral terms are necessarily used in a gender-fair manner.

Table 22. Distribution of –*person* and epicene forms according to sex of the referent, all years taken together.

	–*person*		Epicene	
	Tokens	**Percentage**	**Tokens**	**Percentage**
Male referents	3	**37.5**	170	**66**
Female referents	4	**50**	41	**16**
Generic referents	1	**12.5**	47	**18**
TOTAL	8	**100**	258	**100**

Epicenes

Epicenes are much more frequent than compounds ending in –*person*, with 155 tokens in 2010 for the former, against 6 for the latter. The total relative frequency of epicenes increased from 0.448 to 2.910/100,000 words, against 0 to 0.142 for –*person* forms (cf. Tables 19 and 20).

The fact that *chair* is not the most frequent form in this category is worth noting. Instead, *police officer* is far ahead, and it has been used more frequently than its masculine counterpart since 1990, possibly due to a combination of the growing number of women employed in the police force, and a shift in the official labeling of offences and crimes, which now seem to require a gender-neutral term.

> (16) Obstructing a *police officer* (101230, 2010)
> (17) Eluding a *police officer* (19900714, 1990)

Even though *police officer* has replaced *policeman* to a large extent, the occurrences collected fall into a recognizable pattern, at least in the case of generic references. Generic uses of *police officer* are used in references to legal matters (crimes and official regulations), to positions which have yet to be filled, and in literal references to people assuming the role of police agent.

> (18) Aggravated assault of a *police officer* with a deadly weapon (100117, 2010)
> (19) Food service workers, maintenance personnel, custodians, *police officer*, crossing guards (100725, 2010)
> (20) A zero-tolerance policy requires that any *police officer* who lies or files a false police report be fired (100828, 2010)

Generic uses of *policeman* also cover references to a person in the job (one occurrence was part of a quotation), but this usage is decreasing (from a relative frequency of 0.448 in 1970 to 0.024 in 2010). Other occurrences are metaphorical uses of the word *policeman*, which refer to the general idea of preserving law and order, rather than to a person occupying that position.

> (21) No government can play global *policeman* yet remain small and nonintrusive at home. (101129, 2010)
> (22) Would-be Dick Tracys can play *policeman* with a pair a $19.99 wrist walkie-talkies. (19900611, 1990)
> (23) The American people would choose the *policeman's* truncheon over the anarchist's bomb (19700903, 1970)

Following *police officer*, *entrepreneur* and *chair* are the most frequent epicene forms. The relative frequency of *entrepreneur* has been multiplied by four between 1970 and 1990, and has remained relatively stable afterwards. *Business executive*, a more specific term, is far behind, with only 6 occurrences in total, all in 2010. Disregarding the fact that *business executive* and *entrepreneur* do not have the exact same meaning – that is, *business executive* is a more specific job title, and is bound to occur in more specific and rarer contexts – the distribution according to the factor 'sex of the referent' reveals an interesting pattern (cf. Table 23). The form *business executive*, formally promoted by feminist language planners, is equally used in reference to women and men, but is not very frequent. The epicene form *entrepreneur*, on the other hand, which is unmarked for gender, yet has not been openly discussed in relation to the feminist debate, is by far the most frequent form, and follows a distributional pattern much more similar to that of *businessman* than of gender-fair forms. It is possible that language users adhere to the idea of a gender-fair and balanced representation of the sexes in the media, but wish to change their language production on their own terms. Hence the rapid change in usage patterns, without however making use of forms promoted by feminist language planners.

Table 23. Distribution of *business–* forms according to sex of the referent, all years taken together.

	–*person*		Epicene1 (*business executive*)		Epicene2 (*entrepreneur*)	
	Tokens	**%**	**Tokens**	**%**	**Tokens**	**%**
Male referents	0	**0**	3	**50**	54	**79**
Female referents	1	**100**	3	**50**	4	**6**
Generic referents	0	**0**	0	**0**	10	**15**
TOTAL	1	**100**	6	**100**	68	**100**

Chair saw its relative frequency drop somewhat between 1970 and 1990; however, its usage boomed over the last period, i.e. it was multiplied by 5 between 1990 and 2010. Usage in

reference to women increased, yet *chair* was never used generically. This is striking considering that neither is *chairperson*. Since it is doubtful that these results are caused by the rarity of generic references to positions of chair, it must be that generic usage favors other gender-neutral terms, such as *president*, *moderator*, *presiding officer*, etc., depending on the context (the use of *head* is discouraged by NYT editors), or else that the favored usage remains *chairman*, despite a noticeable decrease in frequency over the past forty years.

As far as references to women are concerned, *chairwoman* seems to be the term preferred by American journalists, with 38 occurrences in 2010 (none of which were used in quotations), against 14 for *chair*, 9 for *chairman*, and 1 for *chairperson*. It must be noted that none of the instances of *chair* in reference to a woman were due to *chair* being an official title, whereas this was the case for 6 out of 9 occurrences of *chairman* in 2010. It could not be ascertained whether the occurrences of the year 1970 followed the official terminology of the time. Therefore, it appears that American journalists almost always use *chairman* in reference to a woman out of necessity to follow official terminological protocol. In other references, the feminine alternative is preferred over either gender-neutral alternative.

The remaining three epicene forms in use are *fisher*, *craftsworker/artisan* and *anchor/news presenter*. As already noted, Pauwels wrote that "there is no fisherwoman in English" (Pauwels 1998: 45). Indeed, *fisherwoman* was used only twice, as a headline in 1990, and in a hyphenated form in 2010, which is a sign of hesitant or unestablished usage. The use of *fisher* has not caught on either[23], except maybe in the compound noun *fly fisher*. *Fisherperson* did not occur.

(24) Every proficient **fly fisher** knows the importance of studying bug hatches (19900716, 1990)

The resurrection of the term *fisher* in media language in the 1990's was at the origin of a controversy in North America, where both female and male fishermen felt that the term did not do justice to their professional activity, and therefore reacted strongly against it (cf. Miller and Swift (1980: 31-32) for the US, and Shewchuk (2000 online) for Canada). The preference for the masculine form expressed by the individuals concerned thus conflicts with the general tendency to avoid *–man* in reference to a woman, which has slowed down the adoption of a gender-fair substitute. As a result, the use of *fisherman* and *fishermen* has remained virtually

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[23] The noun *fisher* was actually in use long before *fisherman*. The OED dates the appearance of *fisher* to circa 893, as opposed to *fisherman*, which was not used until 1526.

unchanged over the past forty years, and these two terms are still used to refer to women, men, as well as in generic references (the newspaper guidelines used in this study did not mention this particular case).

Craftsworker does not seem to be in use at all, but *artisan* is. *Artisan* and *craftsman* were equally frequent in 2010, but the former was on the increase, while the latter was on the wane, which means that *artisan* will probably supersede the masculine form in a few years. Both these terms are relatively rare, however, and they are almost always used generically.

The case of *anchor* is interesting (*news presenter* did not occur). As was the case with *police officer*, *anchor* is much more frequent than its masculine counterpart, except that in this case, the epicene was coined by shortening the masculine form, instead of replacing the masculine suffix with a pre-existing epicene noun. The resulting form is a word which already exists in the English lexicon and designates an object, mirroring the case of *chair*. Yet the fact that *anchor* has become more frequent than *anchorman* (*anchorwoman* is a marginal form and *anchorperson* did not occur), discredits claims that the use of *chair* in reference to a person is confusing, or feels unnatural because the word 'already means' something else, i.e. refers to a piece of furniture.

> Chair [...] sounded four-legged. (Safire 1999: online)
> I want to decide for myself whether I should be called a chairman, a chairwoman, or a chairperson (I am not a chair). (Ravitch, cited in Sommers (no date): online)
> For my part, I shall continue to use it [Madam Chairman] unless stopped by the chair herself, or by a chair itself. (Barzun 1980: 72)
> Let's drop this [...] article of furniture 'chair', and let a woman be 'Madam chairman'. In any case [...] are you not troubled by the 'son' in chairperson? (Reader of the *Dominion* newspaper, quoted in Pauwels 2001: 125)

There are no apparent lexical reasons to resist the use of *chair*, and it is clear that the animosity towards this form is first and foremost a question of ideology. Indeed, resisting *chair* as a possible substitute for *chairman* has become a symbol of the opposition to feminist language reforms. More importantly, however, it reveals how aware speakers have become of the scrutiny under which their lexical choices are now placed, and of the ideological significance attached to each strategy. The use of *anchor*, it seems, does not provoke this kind of reaction. Admittedly, it rarely appears on its own, but is used together with the name of a channel or a program, or is preceded by the noun 'news' or 'TV'.

> (25) **WGN-TV** *anchor* Allison Payne, who is African-American (2010, 100228)
> (26) A media-obsessed young man's quest to meet the **news** *anchor* Soledad O'Brien (2010, 100319)

(27) Douglas Edwards, 73, World War II radio correspondent, nation's first **network TV** *anchor*, for CBS. (1990, 19901227)

Anchor also seems to be the preferred term when the referent is a woman (as mentioned above, *anchorwoman* and *anchorperson* are not popular options). The masculine form was never used in this context.

Table 24 displays the results of a search for adjectives used in collocation with terms that have female referents. As in the case of forms ending in –*woman*, no significant patterns hinting at an unconsciously different textual treatment of women involved in business could be detected.

Table 24. Adjective collocates of –*man*, –*person* and other epicene forms used with female referents

1970	1990	2010
/	**Local** businessman **Well-spoken former** police officer **New** chair (of the Leningrad City Council Commission on Communications)	**Career** businessperson (noun used as adj.) **Former** business executive **41-year-old high-tech** entrepreneur **Local** internet entrepreneur **Fourth-generation** fisher **Former** police officer **Retired** police officer

In short, this detailed study of distribution patterns reflects the observations made in Chapter 5, i.e. that masculine compounds are losing ground but still remain the most frequent alternative. When it comes to other forms, gender-neutrality is the most frequent alternative, although a noticeable increase in the use of feminine compounds has occurred between 1990 and 2010. The use of compounds ending in –*person* is so rare that it can almost be considered negligible, yet, based on the few occurrences available, it seems that in the case of these seven compounds, the concern voiced by feminist linguists about –*person* undergoing a semantic shift towards becoming a euphemism for –*woman* can be put to rest.

In order to gain better insight into the use of the seven compounds under scrutiny, the next part focuses on external factors that may exert a certain degree of influence on usage. I start by having a look at differences in usage between newspapers, and at the extent to which these can be predicted from a newspaper's political leaning. Then, I investigate whether the type of news section and the sex of the reporter plays a significant part in final lexical choices. The following observations are all based on descriptive statistics, as it was estimated that the data collection method chosen for this study did not permit satisfactory use of inferential statistics. Therefore, I concentrate on comparing distribution patterns according to different variables, and look for signs of potentially direct influence, all the while acknowledging the fact that a

descriptive account limits the possibilities of assessing whether these patterns exist in a meaningful way (Levon 2010: 70).

2.2. External influences

2.2.1. Source: do American newspapers differ from one another in relation to their reporters' use of –man, –woman, –person and epicene terms?

Details about the composition of COHA-News 1970, COCA-News 1990 and COCA-News 2010 are given in Table 25.

Table 25. Composition of COHA-News 1970, COCA-News 1990 and COCA-News 2010 (the size is given in number of running words).

Source	COHA 1970	COCA 1990	COCA 2010
Associated Press (AP)[24]	0	584,003	369,018
Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC)	0	0	440,155
Chicago Sun Times (CST)	84,597	0	452,022
Christian Science Monitor (CSM)	84,109	731,937	416,197
Denver Post (DP)	0	0	421,773
Houston Chronicle (HC)	0	0	441,705
New York Times (NYT)	255,511	572,226	439,092
San Francisco Chronicle (SFC)	0	725,875	418,581
USA Today (USAT)	0	603,018	389,676
Wall Street Journal (WSJ)	22,031	0	0
Washington Post (WAP)	0	783,868	429,709
TOTAL	**446,248**	**4,000,927**	**4,217,928**

The fact that only two sources out of a total of eleven were included in all of the three corpora complicates comparison in terms of gender-fair language use. In consequence, sources have been divided into four groups: (1) the ones which were used in 1970, 1990 and 2010, (2) 1990 and 2010, (3) 1970 and 2010, and (4) sources which were included only once.

(1) The first group includes the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times* (cf. Table 26). Both of these newspapers followed the same global trend, that is, their use of masculine compounds decreased, while their use of gender-fair alternatives increased. Yet a certain number of differences is visible. First of all, *–man* compounds were about twice as frequent in the NYT as they were in the CSM in 1970 and 1990. However, their relative frequency underwent a much more significant decrease in the NYT (divided by 3) than in the CSM (divided by 2) between 1990 and 2010. As a result, the gap between the two newspapers had considerably narrowed by 2010.

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[24] In the following paragraphs, the *Associated Press* is treated as a source of written media language, but not as a newspaper.

Results show that in terms of gender-fair strategies, the two newspapers have followed different paths. The CSM favors the use of epicenes, whose relative frequency increased gradually over forty years (from 0 to 3.604/100,000 words). Their use of –*woman* compounds had begun to increase as well, but then decreased again over the period 1990-2010, to reach half of its 1990 level. Results for the NYT hint at a change halfway between 1990 and 2010, if not in editorial policy (nothing points towards NYT editors having become more receptive to suggestions made by feminists), then at least in style, since the relative frequency of epicenes nearly quadrupled between 1970 and 1990, only to return to its original level in 2010. Meanwhile, –*woman* compounds, which had a slow start (their frequency increased from 0 to 0.175 between 1970 and 1990), became 21 times more frequent over the last period. This means that, in 2010, epicenes represented the default gender-fair alternative for journalists working at the CSM, while feminine compounds were preferred by NYT journalists, even though they also used a few epicene terms. It transpires from these results that the ban on –*person* compounds established by newspaper style manuals has been effective, as they were either absent (NYT) or very infrequent (CSM) over the whole period.

Table 26. Usage in the *Christian Science Monitor* and the *New York Times*.

CSM	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	50	**12.014**	1	**0.240**	15	**3.604**	1	**0.240**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.481*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.240*	*0*	*0*	416,197
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*6*	*1.442*			
1990	186	**25.385**	1	**0.056**	14	**1.913**	3	**0.410**	
Gen. ref.	*11*	*1.503*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.546*	*0*	*0*	731,937
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.137*	*0*	*0*			
1970	17	**20.212**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*1*	*1.189*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	84,109
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
NYT	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	62	**14.120**	0	**0**	8	**1.822**	16	**3.644**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	439,092
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
1990	244	**42.606**	0	**0**	25	**4.369**	1	**0.175**	
Gen. ref.	*5*	*0.874*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.699*	*0*	*0*	572,226
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
1970	114	**44.616**	0	**0**	3	**1.174**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*9*	*3.522*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	255,511
Fem. ref.	*1*	*0.391*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

(2) The distribution of masculine and epicene terms in material extracted from the *Associated Press*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *USA Today* and the *Washington Post* reveals important discrepancies (cf. Table 27). In 1990, masculine terms were fairly frequent in the AP and the WAP (frequencies of 26.438 and 31.982, respectively), while their use by SFC and USAT reporters was only half as frequent (16.650 and 14.176, respectively). On average, usage was

cut by half between 1990 and 2010 for all sources except USAT (relative frequency divided by 1.16), which means that the 2010 distribution puts USAT ahead of all other sources in this category, with a relative frequency of 14.371, followed closely by the WAP and the AP. The SFC was and remains the newspaper with the least frequent use of –*man* compounds (14.176 in 1990 and 6.689 in 2010).

As regards the use of alternative forms, journalists seem to resort to epicenes most of the time. It should be noted, however, that their relative frequency decreased in AP and USAT texts; epicene forms were respectively 2 and 3 times less frequent in 2010 than in 1990 in these sources. This decrease was accompanied by an increase of the use of feminine forms in USAT, but not in articles published by the AP, which show decreases across the board. The use of epicenes increased slightly in WAP articles. They more than doubled in the case of the SFC, which was therefore, in 2010, the newspaper with the lowest masculine compound use and the highest epicene use. In 1990, it also had the highest relative frequency of feminine compounds out of all 11 sources (closely followed by the AP), but was only in fourth place in 2010. Apart from a slight decrease in the AP, feminine compounds have seen their relative frequency increase slowly. –*person* compounds were, yet again, almost invisible (one occurrence of *chairperson* in SFC-1990 and one of *businessperson* in WAP-2010).

Table 27. Usage in the *Associated Press*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *USA Today* and the *Washington Post*.

AP	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	49	**13.278**	0	**0**	7	**1.897**	1	**0.271**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.271*	*0*	*0*	369,018
Fem. ref.	*2*	*0.542*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.542*			
1990	154	**26.438**	0	**0**	21	**3.596**	4	**0.685**	
Gen. ref.	*6*	*1.027*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.342*	*0*	*0*	584,003
Fem. ref.	*1*	*0.171*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.342*			
SFC	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	28	**6.689**	0	**0**	27	**6.450**	4	**0.956**	
Gen. ref.	*3*	*0.717*	*0*	*0*	*6*	*1.433*	*0*	*0*	418,581
Fem. ref.	*1*	*0.239*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.717*			
1990	103	**14.176**	1	**0.076**	20	**2.755**	5	**0.689**	
Gen. ref.	*10*	*1.378*	*0*	*0*	*5*	*0.689*	*0*	*0*	725,875
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.138*	*3*	*0.413*			
USAT	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	56	**14.371**	0	**0**	7	**1.796**	4	**1.026**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	389,676
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.513*			
1990	100	**16.650**	0	**0**	32	**5.307**	2	**0.332**	
Gen. ref.	*4*	*0.663*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.663*	*0*	*0*	603,018
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.332*			

Table 27 (cont'd).

WAP	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	59	**13.730**	1	**0.233**	16	**3.723**	2	**0.465**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.465*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.698*	*0*	*0*	429,709
Fem. ref.	*6*	*1.396*	*1*	*0.233*	*3*	*0.698*			
1990	251	**31.982**	0	**0**	29	**3.700**	3	**0.383**	
Gen. ref.	*11*	*1.403*	*0*	*0*	*6*	*0.765*	*0*	*0*	783,868
Fem. ref.	*19*	*2.424*	*0*	*0*	*5*	*0.638*			

(3) The third category of sources (used in 1970 and 2010) concerns the *Chicago Sun Times* (cf. Table 28). Results for this particular newspaper reflect the general tendencies outlined in the previous chapter: a sharp decrease in the use of masculine compounds (relative frequency divided by 4 between 1970 and 2010), paralleled by a sharp increase in the use of epicenes, a slight increase in the use of feminine forms, and no occurrences of –*person* compounds.

Table 28. Usage in the *Chicago Sun Times*[25].

CST	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	41	**9.070**	0	**0**	15	**3.318**	2	**0.442**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.442*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	452,022
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.664*			
1970	31	**36.644**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	84,597
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

(4) The final category, comprising sources which were included only once, does not give us any clues as to the evolution of writing practices. Nevertheless, the synchronic results for the the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the *Denver Post*, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Wall Street Journal* are congruent with general evolution patterns (cf. Table 29).

Table 29. Usage in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, the *Denver Post*, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

AJC	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	49	**13.278**	0	**0**	7	**1.897**	1	**0.271**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.271*	*0*	*0*	369,018
Fem. ref.	*2*	*0.542*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.542*			

DP	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	43	**10.195**	1	**0.237**	18	**4.268**	1	**0.237**	
Gen. ref.	*3*	*0.711*	*1*	*0.169*	*3*	*0.711*	*0*	*0*	421,773
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.474*			

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[25] NB: the absence of data for 1990, combined with COHA-1970's small size possibly distorts the resulting picture.

Table 29 (cont'd).

HC	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	33	**7.471**	0	**0**	15	**3.396**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.906*	*0*	*0*	441,705
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.226*			

WSJ	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
1970	10	**45.391**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	22,031
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

In brief, all newspapers seem to follow the general trend when it comes to the use of masculine compounds, with the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Chicago Sun Times* showing the lowest frequencies in 2010 (under 10/100,000 words). As mentioned above, the SFC already presented a much lower frequency than other newspapers in 1990, together with USAT. In comparison, all 1970 frequencies were above 20/100,000 words, with articles from the *Wall Street Journal* scoring the highest frequency of –*man* compounds (45.391/100,000 words). –*person* compounds were, overall, rarely used. We can note that half of the tokens for the year 2010 occurred in the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* (three occurrences of *chairperson*, two of which followed official terminology, the last one being used in spite of it).

That the use of epicene nouns increased is undeniable, even though their evolution was not linear. It even decreased between 1990 and 2010, in articles from the *Associated Press* and the *New York Times*, yet epicenes remained the default choice for a majority of newspapers. Feminine compounds also became more visible, but to a lesser extent. For instance, they were not used at all by *Houston Chronicle* reporters. Still, in 2010, feminine compounds were a near-equal to epicenes at *USA Today*, and the preferred gender-fair alternative at the *New York Times*. This last observation is striking considering that –*woman* forms are openly discouraged by the NYT style manual.

These results show us that most American newspapers follow the same trend, but that usage still varies significantly between sources. The individual preferences of journalists and editors, influenced by their educational and professional background, their stance on feminism, as well as their sensitivity to linguistic issues, all undeniably play a part in giving the newspaper they work for its particular tone. Retrieving this type of information exceeded the scope of this study, due to the large number of articles consulted, as well as the fact that COHA/COCA does not automatically provide authors' names. One aspect of potential interest

that *was* possible to examine, however, was the extent to which usage can be predicted from a newspaper's political leaning.

2.2.2. Political leaning: does 'politically conservative' necessarily go hand in hand with 'lexically conservative'?

With the help of David C. Mauk and Mark Luccarelli, University of Oslo, I have classified the ten newspapers into three broad (and somewhat simplistic) categories: Liberal, Moderate and Conservative. The *Associated Press* was excluded due to its cooperative modus operandi.

Table 30. Classification of newspapers according to their political leaning

Liberal	Moderate	Conservative
Chicago Sun Times Denver Post New York Times San Francisco Chronicle	Atlanta Journal Constitution Houston Chronicle USA Today Washington Post	Christian Science Monitor Wall Street Journal *(no data for the year 2010)*

The distribution of 2010 occurrences according to this criterion is quite diverse and does not reveal a strong correlation between conservative political views and conservative linguistic choices (cf. Table 31[26]). Contrary to what we could expect, the CSM (conservative) does not use –*man* compounds more frequently than the other newspapers. In fact, as far as masculine compounds are concerned, their relative frequency in the CSM was of 12.014/100,000 words in 2010, which was only slightly above the average (11.653). In comparison, three of the four moderate newspapers used masculine compounds more frequently. Yet the frequencies of –*man* forms are noticeably lower in the liberal newspapers (with a group average of 10.049, and only one newspaper above the general average). The same goes for masculine forms in references to women. The CSM and liberal newspapers did not use any (with one exception for *chairman* in the SFC), whereas moderate newspapers regrouped all of the occurrences. As regards the use of masculine generics, it was most frequent in liberal publications. The use of –*person* compounds is mostly concentrated in AJC texts (due to the presence of official terms), which distorts results for the 'Moderate' category. As for epicenes, the CSM's relative frequency is not particularly remarkable, slightly below the average (3.604<3.786), which is also the case with two liberal and three moderate newspapers.

The most distinctive result concerns the average frequency of –*woman* compounds, which appears to be much lower in the category 'Conservative'. However, frequencies of individual

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[26] Table 31 only includes averages. The full table is available in the Appendix.

newspapers which are lower than the CSM's or even zero are found within the 'Liberal' and 'Moderate' categories as well.

Table 31. Distribution according to political leaning in 2010

Liberal (average)	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
All referents	43.5	**10.049**	0.25	**0.058**	17	**3.927**	5.8	**1.328**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.462*	*0.25*	*0.058*	*2.3*	*0.520*	*0*	*0*	432,867
Fem. ref.	*0.3*	*0.058*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.462*			
Moderate (average)	**Man**		**Person**		**Epicene**		**Woman**		**Size**
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
All referents	55	**12.932**	1	**0.235**	16.3	**3.821**	5.8	**1.352**	
Gen. ref.	*1.5*	*0.353*	*0*	*0*	*2.8*	*0.647*	*0*	*0*	425,311
Fem. ref.	*1.8*	*0.411*	*0.5*	*0.118*	*3*	*0.705*			
Conservative	**Man**		**Person**		**Epicene**		**Woman**		**Size**
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
CSM	50	**12.014**	1	**0.240**	15	**3.604**	1	**0.240**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.481*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.240*	*0*	*0*	416,197
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*6*	*1.442*			
TOTAL (average)	**Man**		**Person**		**Epicene**		**Woman**		**Size**
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
All referents	49.5	**11.653**	0.75	**0.177**	16	**3.786**	4	**0.981**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.432*	*0*	*0.020*	*2*	*0.471*	*0*	*0*	424,792
Fem. ref.	*1*	*0.157*	*0*	*0.039*	*4*	*0.863*			

From this, it appears that editing policies and actual usage cannot be predicted from a newspaper's political slant, as results show important differences between newspapers which adhere to similar political views. One thing that is made conspicuous, however, is the diversity of editing policies that exists among major American newspapers. It is unrealistic to try and pin down the cause of this diversity to a single factor. Indeed, we can surmise that the inter-variation described above is due to a combination of variables, such as the personal preferences of journalists and editors, varying conceptions of gender roles and language change, the heterogeneous content of guidelines currently in circulation, and more particularly the lack of clear concrete gender-fair strategies and solutions noticeable in newspaper style manuals.

The next section focuses on the distribution of terms according to their occurrences in various news sections.

2.2.3. News Section: do 'serious' subjects call for more 'conservative' lexical choices?

The purpose of this section is to investigate whether more 'serious' types of article contain more conservative lexical choices than 'softer' sections, due to a variation in tone and stylistic

habits. Occurrences were classified according to a list of eleven news sections (details are given in Table 32). In his study, Fasold stated that "women were more often mentioned in 'soft news' articles than in 'hard news'" (Fasold 1987: 197), and Pauwels noted that the style adopted in sports sections seemed to be particularly resistant to change promoted by feminists (Pauwels 1998: 206). The data collection method used for this study did not make it possible to verify whether the former statement applied to the present results, however, the possibility must not be disregarded.

Table 32. News section categories

News Section	COHA 1970 Size	COCA 1990 Size	COCA 2010 Size
Culture (Art, Media and Style)	1,590	449,202	449,692
Deaths and Obituaries	10,657	46,485	1,013
Food, Wine and Dining	0	36,542	184,643
Money (Business and Econ)	43,633	412,805	411,162
Opinion (Op-ed and letters)	84,275	313,934	114,493
Politics (Domestic affairs)	69,960	145,810	235,239
Science, Health and Technology	7,696	66,931	73,332
Sports and Outdoors	1,627	556,030	1,126,958
Travel and Tourism	0	31,764	31,511
US (Domestic news)[27]	128,441	1,302,919	1,169,382
World news[28]	98,369	638,505	420,503
TOTAL	**446,248**	**4,000,927**	**4,217,928**

The distribution of *–man* compounds has varied over the past forty years, yet 'Politics' remains the category where they are the most frequent (cf. Table 33). 'Money' also always makes the top 4, an unsurprising result considering the nature of the terms selected for this study. Masculine terms with generic or female referents, however, do not fall into such a predictable and clear-cut pattern. Apart from 'Politics' which still ranks high with frequencies above the average (except in 1970), most tokens were found in articles from the following sections: 'World', 'Culture', 'Opinion', 'US' and 'Sports'.[29]

The evolution of the category 'Opinion' is interesting, since it concerns pieces written by both journalists and readers who react to a particular article or comment on a current event. This category started out with the highest frequency in 1970, for both generic and feminine uses of *–man* compounds (7.12 and 1.187/100,000 words, respectively). Results for 1990 and 2010, however, show that a definite change in writing habits has taken place, since frequencies for

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[27] The category 'US (Domestic news)' includes news articles on the following topics: crime, education, environment, immigration, justice, as well as any other subject related to domestic affairs.
[28] Articles about space and astronauts are included in this category.
[29] Due to space considerations, only results for the categories 'Opinion' and 'Politics' are included here. More detailed results are available in the Appendix.

both features decreased faster than in any other news section. The use of masculine forms with female referents even seems to have disappeared in this category. This evolution is interesting in that it gives a hint as to the actual lexical choices made by the general public. That gender-biased language appears to be on the wane in this particular category is a promising sign, in terms of the capacity of feminists to reach a wide audience. Nevertheless, this observation must be nuanced in the face of the absence of –*person* and –*woman* compounds in this category, and of the sharp decrease in the relative frequency of epicene terms between 1970 and 1990.

Another news section whose results may reflect a feminist influence is 'Politics'. Indeed, the relative frequency of masculine compounds in this category decreased from 74.328 to 45.486/100,000 words between 1970 and 2010, while that of epicenes went up from 0 to 13.178/100,000 words over the same period of time. In 2010, 'Politics' was the news section which ranked first concomitantly as regards the frequency of masculine, epicene, and feminine forms (45.486, 13.178 and 5.526, respectively).

Table 33. Usage in the news sections 'Opinion' and 'Politics'

Opinion	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	17	**14.848**	0	**0**	5	**4.367**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*1*	*0.873*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*1.747*	*0*	*0*	114,493
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*1.747*			
1990	9	**2.708**	0	**0**	3	**0.956**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.637*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.319*	*0*	*0*	313,934
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.319*			
1970	32	**37.971**	0	**0**	2	**2.373**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*6*	*7.120*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	84,275
Fem. ref.	*1*	*1.187*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
Politics	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	
2010	107	**45.486**	1	**0.425**	31	**13.178**	13	**5.526**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.850*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*1.275*	*0*	*0*	235,239
Fem. ref.	*3*	*1.275*	*1*	*0.425*	*11*	*4.676*			
1990	127	**87.374**	0	**0**	3	**2.057**	1	**59.923**	
Gen. ref.	*10*	*6.858*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	145,810
Fem. ref.	*9*	*6.172*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.686*			
1970	52	**74.328**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*2.859*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	69,960
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

In conclusion, it is difficult to say whether the type of news section strongly influences the use of 'conservative' lexical choices, namely the use of masculine compounds with female and generic referents. In spite of the uneven distribution according to news section available for 1970, it seems that there is a general tendency to use them less and less frequently. This

does not necessarily denote a direct feminist influence, but it shows that journalists writing in all types of news section take the issue of gender-biased language seriously.

The following section deals with the last factor surveyed in this study which potentially influences the use of –*man* compounds, as opposed to the preference for feminine or gender-neutral alternatives, namely, the extent to which the sex of a journalist influences his/her lexical choices.

2.2.4. Sex of the journalist: are male journalists prone to use gender-biased language more extensively than their female colleagues?

Results presented in previous studies on this subject have led to different conclusions being drawn. Rubin et al. and Pauwels claim that 'female pens' used less gender-biased language than their male counterparts before the enforcement of gender-fair guidelines, and that they were more receptive to suggestions made by feminist language planners, at least as far as public language use was concerned (Rubin et al. 1994: 93, Pauwels 1998: 211). Fasold et al.'s study hints at an evolution in the way male journalists used middle initials in reference to women and men as a sign of prestige. They found that their production became more balanced after the publication of guidelines, even though their study concerned a feature of language situated below the level of social awareness. Results for female reporters, however, did not indicate "any significant differences in the use of initials according to the sex of the subject" (Fasold et al. 1990: 535). Since COHA/COCA made it possible to retrieve the identity of reporters in many cases, the following section aims at observing the differences in gender-biased and gender-fair usage, according to whether the reporter is a woman or a man.

In this section, entries have been classified according to the sex of the journalist rather than that of the enunciator (cf. Table 34). Indeed, tokens occurring in quotes are a minority, which means that this type of information is provided on a case-by-case basis. Data from 1970 were disregarded on account of the low number of occurrences available for this year, together with the extremely low number of articles written by female journalists included in COHA-1970 (nine in total). The combination of these two factors increased the risk of obtaining a distorted picture, to a point where it was judged preferable to focus on the evolution between 1990 and 2010. FT ('Female Text') and MT ('Male Text') are used in reference to articles authored by female and male journalists, respectively. The total number of texts written by female journalists is 358, against 1,258 by male journalists.

Cases for which the features 'gender-markedness' and 'sex of the referent' were congruent, as in *fisherwoman* in reference to a woman or *cameraman* in reference to a man, followed the general evolution trends described in Chapter 5. While the use of –*woman* compounds with female referents increased at a similar rate in the work of both female and male journalists between 1990 and 2010, the use of –*man* forms with male referents followed the opposite progression, i.e. their overall relative frequency was divided by 1.57 in FTs and by 1.63 in MTs. Despite these opposite evolutions, the resulting distribution remains predictably unbalanced. In 2010, –*man* forms with male referents were still used three times more frequently by male than by female journalists, a result which is influenced by the larger quantity of MTs present in this survey.

The evolution patterns of –*man* compounds which have female or generic referents is interesting. Their low number of occurrences in quotes means that the following results reflect general usage among journalists. The use of masculine generics has decreased to a much greater extent in MTs than in any other category, with the resulting effect that, in 2010, female and male journalists both used this feature as frequently in their articles (0.142/100,000 words). The relative frequency of feminine uses of –*man* compounds, on the other hand, remains much lower in FTs (0.047/100,000 words, against 0.142 for in MTs). Yet a look at the evolution between 1990 and 2010 shows that the use of masculine forms has decreased in reference to men as well, both overall (cf. Table 34, Total) and at the hands of male journalists, while it has increased in articles by female journalists, albeit only marginally. On the whole, these results indicate a general move away from the use of gender-marked compounds, or in this case, masculine compounds, with referents who are not men, under the pen of both female and male reporters (feminine compounds were never used generically or with masculine referents).

Gender-neutral cases cover the use of gender-neutral terms used with female, male, and generic referents. Occurrences of gender-neutral forms with unknown referents were disregarded, for the simple reason that it was not always possible to know whether the sex of the referent had been unknown to the enunciator, or whether they had chosen not to mention it. Frequency figures for –*person* compounds are too low to be generalizable, yet their distribution hints at a recent and nearly exclusive use in MTs, with no visible preference for female over male referents in this category.

Between 1990 and 2010, the generic use of epicenes decreased both in MTs and overall (cf. Total). In contrast, the relative frequency of generic epicenes was multiplied by 2.84 in FTs, although it remained behind (0.142/100,000 words, against 0.213 in MTs). As it appears, the use of epicenes is much more frequent in reference to men (2.015/100,000 words in 2010, against 0.688 for female referents), and this masculine use of epicenes has become more frequent in FTs (3.79 times as frequent, against 1.2 in MTs). However, figures also show a general and steady increase in the use of epicenes with female referents, slightly higher on the part of female journalists.

Table 34. Distribution according to the variable 'Sex of the journalist'

Sex referent / Sex journalist			Female Journalist		Male Journalist		TOTAL[30]	
	Form	Year	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq
Female Referent	*-man*	2010	2	0.047	6	0.142	10	0.237
		1990	0	0	15	0.375	20	0.500
	-person	2010	1	0.024	1	0.024	2	0.047
		1990	0	0	1	0.025	2	0.050
	epicene	2010	9	0.213	11	0.261	29	0.688
		1990	4	0.100	6	0.150	12	0.300
	-woman	2010	11	0.261	33	0.782	48	1.138
		1990	3	0.075	10	0.250	18	0.450
Male Referent	Form	Year	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq
	-man	2010	102	2.418	306	7.255	451	10.692
		1990	152	3.799	474	11.847	943	23.570
	-person	2010	0	0	3	0.071	3	0.071
		1990	0	0	0	0	0	0
	epicene	2010	20	0.474	57	1.351	85	2.015
		1990	5	0.125	45	1.125	82	2.050
Generic Referent	Form	Year	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq	Tokens	Rel.Freq
	-man	2010	6	0.142	6	0.142	16	0.379
		1990	7	0.175	32	0.800	47	1.175
	-person	2010	0	0	1	0.024	1	0.024
		1990	0	0	0	0	0	0
	epicene	2010	6	0.142	9	0.213	22	0.522
		1990	2	0.050	19	0.475	25	0.625

It is difficult to draw definite conclusions from these results, since the observations made in the previous paragraphs are based on occurrences retrieved directly from an online corpus, and not from a tailor-made corpus of entire articles, evenly balanced between female and male writers. Nevertheless, despite this 'blind' approach, certain comments can be made. Results indicate that female journalists use *–man* compounds in reference to women much less frequently than their male colleagues, and that their generic use of masculine compounds is decreasing to the benefit of epicene forms. As for male journalists, their generic and feminine

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[30] Figures in this column include results from the categories 'Mixed' and 'Unknown journalists', in addition to Female and Male journalists.

use of *–man* compounds is decreasing. Regarding the form used most frequently in reference to women, female pens seem to put epicenes and feminine compounds on an equal footing, whereas men seem to prefer marking gender by using *–woman* forms. Therefore, to the extent that conclusions can be drawn from the above results, it seems that there does exist a difference between usage patterns found in the work of female, as opposed to male journalists. The most noticeable difference lies in the slower adoption of gender-fair terms by male writers, and in their marked preference for gender-marked terms in reference to a woman, whereas female journalists seem to use gender-neutral terms as frequently as gender-specific ones.

3. <u>Concluding remarks</u>

The results detailed in this chapter are aligned with the findings presented in earlier studies about the evolution of the usage patterns of *–man* compounds. Holmes and Sigley (2002) and Holmes et al. (2009) also note a decrease in their use over time, and suggest as main causes of this tendency the obsoleteness of the professions concerned, together with the more recent availability of gender-fair forms. They also noticed a decrease in the use of masculine compounds with generic references (Holmes et al. 2009). Yet all researchers comment on the fact that *–man* compounds retain an overwhelming majority, which can be explained by taking into consideration a combination of factors.

First of all, several *–man* compounds remain the current official terminology by which journalists must abide. This concerns mostly *chairman,* although Fasold also mentions that NYT journalists had to refer to employees of the police force by "the official term used in the jurisdiction involved in the story", e.g. *police officer* in the New York City Police Department, and *patrolman* in the Phoenix PD (Fasold 1987: 196). As of 2012, the official rank title for these two cities, as well as for all major American city police departments is *police officer*. The only two exceptions that I could find concerned the police departments of Jacksonville, FL and North Berwick, ME, where both female and male officers are still referred to individually as *patrolman*.

Secondly, *–man* compounds also constitute the majority due to the fact that they are found more frequently in quotations than other forms (46 times in total, against 12 for epicenes and 1 for *–person* and *–woman* forms). Journalists must cite their sources word for word, and have therefore no control over the contents of quotations.

Thirdly, newspaper style manuals are fairly restrictive in their adoption of gender-fair terms and strategies, to which Fasold et al. allude: "The data indicate that if a newspaper follows a policy similar to that of *The Washington Post* (as many do), […] it is likely that its usage with respect to compounds with *–man* is the same as it was 20 years ago" (Fasold et al. 1990: 525). Cooper (1984) also concludes that *–man* compounds are the most resistant to change, which, Fasold presumes, is partly due to the fact that the "language policy of the publications involved makes it difficult to use alternatives" (Fasold 1987: 188, 197).

Finally, the overwhelming masculine presence in the data doubtlessly reflects actual patterns of employment, rather than extremely conservative reporting styles. Holmes et al. and Romaine allude to the matter (Holmes et al. 2009: 199, Romaine 2001: 163), and indeed, my results reveal that, out of a total of 1,974 referents whose gender was known (all years taken together), men represented 87% (1,711 tokens), against 7% for women (142 tokens) and 6% for generics (121 tokens). This indicates that, as far as the professional sphere is concerned, men still occupy most of the discourse space in the media. Another influential factor may be the presence of 'alibi‑women' mentioned in Chapter 2, which is particularly relevant in the context of positions of leadership in competitive male-dominated environments such as business, politics and the administration, where a term like *chairman* is likely to be retained in light of its connotations of prestige and authority.

Based on the results presented above, the answer to the question 'Which strategy has become the prominent one, gender-neutralization of feminization?' is unmistakably the former, if we consider the total number of occurrences. However, if we look only at terms used to designate female referents, then feminine compounds have gained the upper hand (cf. Figure 6). This contradicts the claim that *–woman* has become more or less taboo, and that speakers use gender-neutral terms as euphemistic substitutes, all the while retaining *–man* terms for men (Miller and Swift 1980: 119).

Female referents
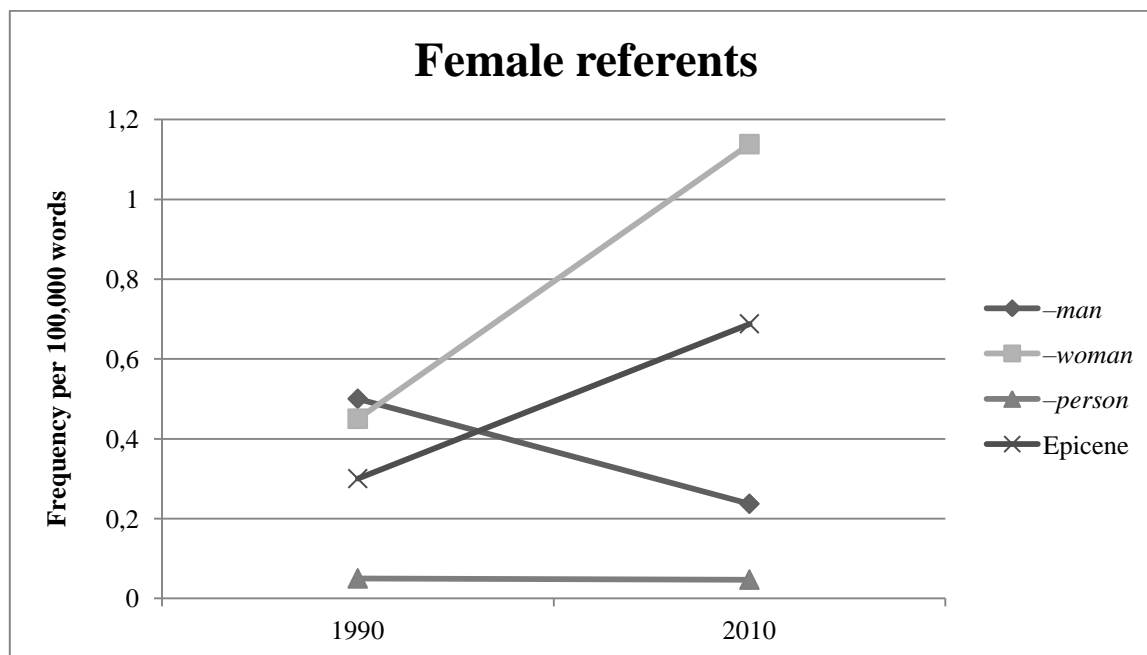
Figure 6. Frequencies of terms used in reference to women, in 1990 and 2010

Holmes et al. noted an increase in the number of marked references to women in job titles in New Zealand and Australian English (Holmes et al. 2009: 186). These may take the form of terms ending in *–woman*, or other types of compounds (e.g. *woman doctor*) (Holmes et al. 2009: 194). They argue that this is not necessarily a bad thing, and that it can be considered an "important acknowledgement of women moving into traditionally male work domains" (ibid.: 184).

> Explicit contrast between genders, and this increase in gender-marking [in the case of both male and female subjects] reflects both increased real-world participation, and continued attention to equal opportunity issues. (ibid.: 202)

However, they have noticed a decrease in the use of gender-marked terms in recent years, and suggest that the increased linguistic visibility of women constituted the first phase in the evolution of the relation between women and the workplace. According to them, such usage has paved the way for a second, gender-free phase, currently at its outset (Holmes et al. 2009: 184, 201). It must be noted that their results differ from mine in terms of the way in which this gender-free phase is realized, since Holmes et al. observed "an increase in the use of gender-neutral markers such as *–person*" (Holmes et al. 2009: 184).

American speakers of English, it seems, have a generalized preference for epicene nouns (*–person* compounds excepted). The fact that gender-neutralization through the use of epicenes is the strategy adopted and promoted by antidiscrimination and equal employment

opportunity laws is bound to exert a decisive influence. Another potential factor is the principle of least effort. Fasold argues that the effort required to think of replacements for –*man* compounds is one of the main reasons for their pervasive use. However, I think that the principle of least effort also benefits the use of epicenes, particularly the type which are derived from –*man* compounds by loss of suffix, such as *anchor*. Indeed, replacing a –*man* compound by an epicene means that speakers can use a term which, in many cases, is already present in the speech community's lexicon, and which can be applied to any referent, in any context. Speakers' preference for epicenes is also facilitated by the general bashing of –*person* compounds, which are openly hissed at on account of their unaesthetic quality: "the word is disagreeably hoity-toity" (Barzun 1980: 71).

Results presented in this chapter reflect Fasold's, who recorded a "uniform resistance to the use of compounds in –*person*" (Fasold 1987: 202). This outcome is striking if we consider that –*person* is so frequently mentioned in guidelines as the default gender-fair alternative. One of the main reasons for this rejection is the fact that newspaper manuals all ban its use (without any justification). We can surmise that this is caused by both a preference for traditional writing styles on the part of journalists and editors, and by a widespread backlash against a form which has come to embody excessive and misplaced 'Political Correctness' (possibly more so for –*person* than *person*). One comforting result, however, is the fact that –*person* compounds do not seem to be used exclusively in reference to women, which was also the conclusion Holmes et al. came to:

> gender-neutral alternatives for professions where women are competing in the real world (including terms headed by –*person*, as well as more idiosyncratic items such as *chair* and *firefighter*) […], within the limits of our data, seem to be used as true epicenes rather that covertly marking female gender. (Holmes et al. 2009: 201)

Hence, their data, as well as my own, refute the following semantic evolution feared by feminist language reformists.

Table 35. A possible evolution feared by feminist language planners

Gender-biased use of titles		Asymmetrical use of feminist proposals
Male = –*man*	>	Male = –*man*
Female = –*man* or –*woman*		Female = –*person* or epicene

It is important to note that a search by keyword or suffix does not enable me to ascertain that –*man* compounds and epicenes are never used in complementary distribution according to the sex of the referent. This would require a different approach to data collection.

As for the now symbolic and "socially very salient" case of *chairman* (Holmes 2001: 125), the masculine form remains the most frequent of the four, due to, among other things, the fact that such positions are still mostly occupied by men, and that some organizations have retained the gender-marked masculine form as part of their official nomenclatures. Holmes (2001) is of the opinion that this term has become a symbol of the resistance to feminist language planning, and may exert an influence on the retention of other –*man* forms, on account of the status and influence that are associated with the role of chairman. My results show that *chairwoman* is the favored term for women referents, and that *chair* wins over *chairperson* within the gender-neutral category.

As far as American newspapers are concerned, my results demonstrate that, in terms of frequency, the introduction of *chairperson* as a convenient alternative to *chairman* is a language planning failure. Fasold's results run along the same lines: no occurrence in the WAP and only one in the NYT, as part of a quotation (Fasold et al. 1990: 525). Even Holmes et al., who claim that the use of *chairperson* has caught on, admit that "most occurrences […] were found in legal documents", which, for want of providing evidence of its adoption by the English-speaking community at large, still "exemplifies the policy to use nonsexist gender neutral language in official writings" (Holmes et al. 2009: 200).

Drawing definite conclusions regarding the factors which cause variation in use are beyond the scope of this chapter. General tendencies can be outlined, however. What results show is that major American newspapers all adhere to the notion of fair treatment of the sexes in the media, independently of their political slant. Traditionally more conservative newspapers did not, in 2010, show significantly more conservative usage of the compounds. Distribution by news section did not yield distinctive patterns, apart from a generalized decline in gender-biased use. As for the question of whether the sex of a journalist determines their use of gender-fair language, my results echo Fasold et al.'s in showing that yes, the factor 'Sex of the journalist' exerts a visible influence in the choice between gender-biased and gender-fair use, although this would need to be complemented by a study based on elicitation tasks, with a balanced number of female and male participants, answering the same questionnaire. Attempting to assess which factors affect lexical choices, to what extent, and whether their impact is direct or indirect, reveals a complex system of variables, which makes it difficult to establish relations of causation. Indeed, the tension between individual and collective forces is entertwined with the opposition between conscious and unconscious, as well as chosen and

imposed forces, all of which form an intricate network which the data collected for this study could but begin to disentangle.

In conclusion, despite certain weaknesses inherent in the methodology associated with the extraction of data from a ready-made online corpus, the information collected makes it possible to assess global tendencies regarding the use of –*man* compounds, as opposed to their feminine and gender-neutral counterparts. Although the seven compounds studied in this chapter follow general rules, I agree with Fasold that individual distribution patterns point towards "every word having its own history" (Fasold 1987: 196). In other words, –*man* compounds are not all attributed the same status, which in turn affects the ease with which their gender-fair alternatives can worm their way into speakers' language habits. Even though language users show a clear preference for words which already exist, their evaluation of potential alternative terms seems to be conducted on a case-by-case basis. Epicenes coined by loss of the suffix –*man* constitute a representative example, with the relatively smooth adoption of *anchor*, against the adamant rejection of *fisher* and *chair*, for of the most conservative users. In Fasold's words: "the case of compounds ending in –*man* turns out to be much more complicated than […] expected" (ibid.: 197).

Chapter Seven: Assessing the influence of feminist language planning on written media language

The first part of this chapter focuses on the adherence of journalists to newspaper guidelines, which determines the margin of influence that feminist language planners may hope to gain on printed media language. This introduces the final part of the discussion on whether or not feminist language reforms can be considered a success.

1. <u>Adherence to guidelines</u>

In this section, I examine the degree to which the results obtained for the *Associated Press*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* reflect usage policies presented in their respective style manuals.

Previous studies on the subject report different conclusions. Fasold, for instance, although reluctant to read too much into his "scanty data", claims that "the language usage policies codified in newspaper style manuals are strikingly effective in the media to which they apply" (Fasold 1987: 202). Cooper (cited in Fasold 1987: 197) is more reserved with regard to his results, writing that "at least part of the reason" for the retention of *–man* compounds "may be that the language policy of the publications involved makes it difficult to use alternatives". In contrast, Ehrlich and King (1992: 163) uncovered "widespread sexist usage in the face of non-sexist guidelines" in Canadian newspapers. For instance, journalists at the *Toronto Star* did not follow the rule which both explicitly stated not to use *man* as a generic and provided examples of gender-neutral language. They acknowledge the fact that their results contradict Fasold's, and conclude that "having non-sexist guidelines is not enough; an organization's commitment to enforcing them is crucial" (ibid.).

The focus is placed on tokens occurring in the AP, the NYT and the WAP, in order to conduct direct comparisons between guidelines and actual production. Table 36 summarizes the preferences expressed in the three style manuals, regarding the use of *–man*, *–woman*, *–person* and other epicene forms.

Table 36. Usage preferences in newspaper style manuals.

Guidelines - usage preferences	AP (2005)	NYT (1999)	WAP (1989)
If the sex of the referent is known	*–man* or *–woman*	*–man* (*–woman* is accepted in some cases, but mostly discouraged and, in the case of *spokeswoman*, proscribed)	*–man* or *–woman* (the acceptance of epicenes is unclear)
If the sex of the referent is unknown	epicene (never *–person* unless it is the official term)	/	/
Generic reference	/	epicene (never *–person*)	*–man* (or epicene unless it sounds awkward, but never *–person*)
Particular cases	*chair* is not mentioned	*chair* is forbidden in the sense of *chairman*/*woman*	*chair* is not mentioned

I am aware that the different publication dates complicate the process of assessing how closely these guidelines are observed, but based on the information retrieved about earlier editions in Miller and Swift (1980) and Fasold (1987), it can be assumed that their contents has not changed a great deal since the 1980's.[31]

One of the key differences between the three manuals lies in the NYT's reticence to accept feminine compounds (which the results presented in Chapter 6 seem to disprove), whereas they are both accepted by AP and WAP editors. Another difference is the WAP's apparent tolerance for the use of epicenes when the gender of the referent is known, a usage which is not tolerated in either AP or NYT articles. Another important contrast between the NYT and the WAP guidelines concerns the recommendations made for replacing masculine generics: the NYT favors epicenes, whereas the WAP still accepts masculine forms in this context. The term *chair* does not receive great support overall; at best it is ignored (AP and WAP).

In the following review, occurrences for 1990 and 2010 are taken into account. The year 1970 was excluded, since it precedes the publication of the first guidelines, feminist or otherwise. Occurrences where the gender of the referent could not be retrieved from the limited context available were also excluded, even though this piece of information may have been known to the journalist at the time. There were some borderline cases, which are discussed further on.

On the whole, it seems that journalists follow editing policies quite closely (cf. Table 37). AP journalists are the most observant and WAP journalists the least, although the gap between the two is really narrow. The low frequency of *–person* compounds (only one occurrence was found, *businessperson*, WAP/2010) can also be read as a direct consequence of these style

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[31] To my knowledge, the WAP's *Deskbook on Style* 1989 is the most recent edition.

policies, which categorically ban their use. It is interesting to note that none of the cases in which guidelines were ignored belonged to the subcategory 'Letters' (included in 'Opinion'), which contains texts sent by readers, that is to say, texts which are not subject to the same degree of scrutiny.

Table 37. Adherence to newspapers style manuals, in number of tokens (1990 and 2010 taken together)

Adherence to guidelines	Usage = conform	%	Usage = nonconform	%	Usage = acceptable[32]	%	TOTAL
AP	194	92	9	4	9	4	**212**
NYT	311	92	16	5	12	3	**339**
WAP	311	91	25	7	5	2	**341**
TOTAL	**816**	**91**	**50**	**6**	**26**	**3**	**892**
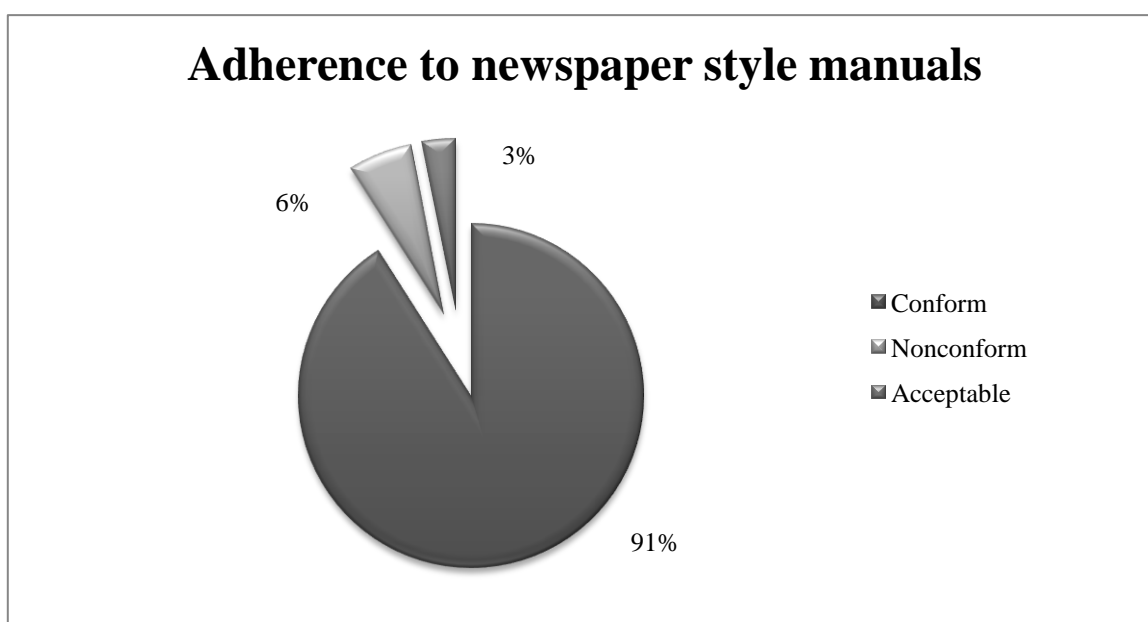
Figure 7. Adherence to newspapers style manuals (Total, 1990 and 2010 taken together)

Out of the 816 entries in which usage was in accordance with the relevant guidelines, 23 were so because the term used was part of a quotation, and 26 because it was the official title of the organization mentioned, both of which have precedence over the editor's preferences.

Non-compliance with guidelines occurred in the following contexts:

- Epicenes with known masculine and/or feminine referents: *anchor* (AP, NYT and WAP), *chair* (AP and WAP), *fisher* (AP), and *police officer* (AP, NYT, WAP) – the case of the WAP is debatable.
- –*woman* in the NYT: *policewoman*
- Non-conformity with official nomenclature: *chairman* was used instead of the official term *chair* in the WAP:

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[32] The instances classified as 'acceptable' include lexical choices which did not strictly conform to the general guidelines, but which could be defended in view of current global usage, e.g. *anchor* with a known referent, *policeman* in a generic reference (when the term had a metaphorical meaning).

(27) Sandy Praeger, *chairman* of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners Health-care Committee and Insurance Commissioner for Kansas (100309, 2010)

The three forms most frequently involved in cases non-compliance are *anchor*, *chair*, and *police officer* (none of the style manuals recommend using a gender-neutral term in cases where the gender of the referent is known). The case of *anchor* by WAP journalists is debatable, since WAP guidelines do not seem to oppose the use of epicenes in reference to women. Yet *anchor* was formed by shortening *anchorman*, mirroring the case of *chair*, which is never mentioned as a possible alternative to *chairman*. I infer from this that *anchor* is not the favored alternative. Moreover, just as in the case of *anchor*, the use of *chair* increased despite being banned or given the silent treatment. The fact that the frequency of *chair* increased from 0.224 to 0.775/100,000 words over the whole period, and that only three tokens out of thirty-three occurred in quotes in 2010 reflects a growing disregard for guidelines in this respect. The increasing use of *police officer* in connection with known referents indicates the importance that this term has acquired, to the detriment of *policeman*. It seems that this epicene is well on its way to becoming the preferred, default term.

The case of the use of *–woman* compounds in the NYT is delicate, since editing seems to work on a case-by-case basis (why should *chairwoman* be accepted, *saleswoman* tolerated, yet *spokeswoman* proscribed?). Reading the *NYT Manual of Style and Usage* gives the impression that feminine compounds are still globally frowned upon ("Avoid most terms with grafted feminine endings", NYT 1999, entry for 'man and woman'), yet results reveal that they are more frequent than epicenes with female referents (cf. Tables 18 and 20).

The preference of NYT editors for masculine terms, whichever the gender of the referent may be, does not mean that the NYT is the most gender-biased newspaper. This role is assumed by the WAP, with a total of 13 generic and 25 feminine uses of a *–man* (1990 and 2010 together), against 6 and 3 for the AP, and 5 and none for the NYT.

In contrast to Ehrlich and King (1992), but in congruence with Fasold (1987), the present study reveals that the tendency of journalists to adhere to their newspaper's guidelines is not sporadic. Indeed, rules are followed 91% of the time (cf. Table 37). Further, it seems that cases of non-compliance were not prompted by a desire to introduce linguistic innovations (feminist or other) in spite of conservative guidelines, but by a will to follow the evolution of general usage, possibly in cases where guidelines were felt to be too restrictive (as on the subject of generics with known referents).

In light of these observations, and of the results presented in the previous chapters, the next section addresses the following question: 'Can we consider feminist language reforms to have been successful in influencing written media language?'

2. **Discussion**

In the previous section, it was observed that, in the case of –*man* and possible alternatives, journalists followed editorial policies to the letter 91% of the time. These results corroborate Fasold's conclusion that "language usage policies codified in newspaper style manuals are strikingly effective in the media to which they apply" (Fasold 1987: 202). Newspaper style manuals also appear to exert a pervasive influence on the English-speaking, newspaper-reading community in this respect, as usage patterns for the category 'Opinion' demonstrate. The strict adherence to newspaper guidelines on the part of journalists and readers means that the low occurrence of terms promoted by feminists does not derive from a lax implementation of editorial policies. Indeed, the resistance to feminist reforms occurs at the level of policy creation, as was documented in Chapter 4. In other words, journalists follow the rules communicated to them, while editors of style manuals, who are responsible for setting the editing trends of major American newspapers, turn out to be reluctant at best, if not downright hostile to the idea of incorporating feminist alternatives and neologisms into their manuals. Thus, both the low level of feminist influence on newspaper style manuals (Chapter 4), and the strict adherence of journalists to these same manuals (present chapter) point towards a relatively low level of feminist influence on printed media language in general.

In order to evaluate whether feminist language reforms have failed to influence written media language, I use Pauwels' language planning assessment terminology.

> In language planning terms, successful feminist linguistic reform entails evidence that the feminist alternatives move from a status of 'discouraged' or even 'disapproved' use to that of 'tolerated', and eventually 'preferred' or 'promoted' use[33] (Pauwels 1999: online).

2.1. Not a raging success for feminists

As regards –*man* compounds, the gap which exists between newspaper and feminist guidelines in terms of contents and strategies, and which is reflected in distribution patterns, does not, thus far, represent a raging success for feminists. My results mirror Cooper's and Fasold's in showing –*man* as particularly resistant to change (Fasold 1987 and Cooper, cited

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[33] This is based on Kloss' paradigm of language planning assessment (Kloss 1968).

in Fasold 1987), especially in the case of *chairman*, which has been retained as official terminology by a certain number of companies and organizations. The use of feminine compounds seems to have caught on, but only in a limited number of cases (*chairwoman*, *businesswoman*). The increasing frequency of epicene terms (*–person* compounds excluded) is a promising sign regarding the efficiency of gender-neutralization strategies. However, their distribution according to sex of the referent is unbalanced and actually more similar to that of masculine terms than of gender-fair alternatives. This means that their increasing use now conceals the discrepancy which exists between the proportions of women and men occupying positions of management and leadership.

As mentioned in Chapter 6, the introduction of the term *chairperson*, and more generally of all compounds ending in *–person*, could be considered a language planning failure. Indeed, in contrast to the overall retention of *–man*, the low frequency of *–person* compounds and their decreasing use over the period 1990-2010 cannot be missed. The fact that some of the occupation titles ending in *–person* selected for this study *did* occur attests to a certain visibility of forms promoted by feminist language planners (in this case, the influence of feminists is unmistakable, since their guidelines were the first sources to promote these terms). However, the scarcity of *–person* compounds in the data indicates that attempts at hoisting them up to the status of default alternative cannot be considered a success, at least within the sphere of American journalism. Further, *–person* compounds now often drag along connotations of excessive 'Political Correctness', and have thus become victims of a redefinition initiated by the language community at large.

> Because linguistic meanings are, to a large extent, socially constructed and constituted, terms initially introduced to be nonsexist and neutral may lose their neutrality in the mouths of a sexist speech community and/or culture […] Rather, […] terms get redefined and depoliticized by a speech community that is not predominantly feminist and is often sexist. (Ehrlich and King 1994: 59)

Indeed, *gender-neutral* is not necessarily congruent with *gender-fair*, and speakers "can make *chairperson* in reference to a woman sound like an insult" (McConnell-Ginet, cited in Frank and Treichler 1989: 192-3), as is illustrated by the following contrast between *chairwoman* and *chairperson* mentioned in one of the COCA entries.

> (28) In a letter addressed to Hall and former board *chairwoman* LaChandra Butler Burks - who Elgart purposely addressed as the board's *chairperson* […]. (101028, 2010, emphases added)

This shows that *–person* forms are not always used in the way intended by feminist language planners. In some contexts, the suffix *–person* has become stuck with a 'feminist' or

'politically-correct' tag, and its use now tends to inform more about the enunicator than the referent. In contrast, epicenes and *–woman* forms do not seem to suffer from this plight.

2.2. Obstacles to the adoption of *–woman*, *–person* and other epicene alternatives

Despite the cold-shoulder treatement that feminist language planners have received from them, newspaper editors cannot be considered as the sole obstacle to the use of gender-fair terms by their journalists. We can cite as extenuating circumstance the fact that some organizations have chosen a gender-marked, masculine noun (*chairman*) as part of their official nomenclatures. In other contexts, where they have not necessarily been declared 'official titles', masculine forms are still currently in use because the position in question has always been occupied by a man, which means that the terminology was never changed, either because people did not feel that change was needed, or simply because the title has always fitted the gender of the person in office. Indeed, it is debatable whether using a compound ending in *–man* in reference to a man should be considered unfair usage.

Another factor over which journalists and editors have no control is the fact that comparatively few positions of authority are occupied by women, which causes their under-representation in the media (cf. Figure 8).
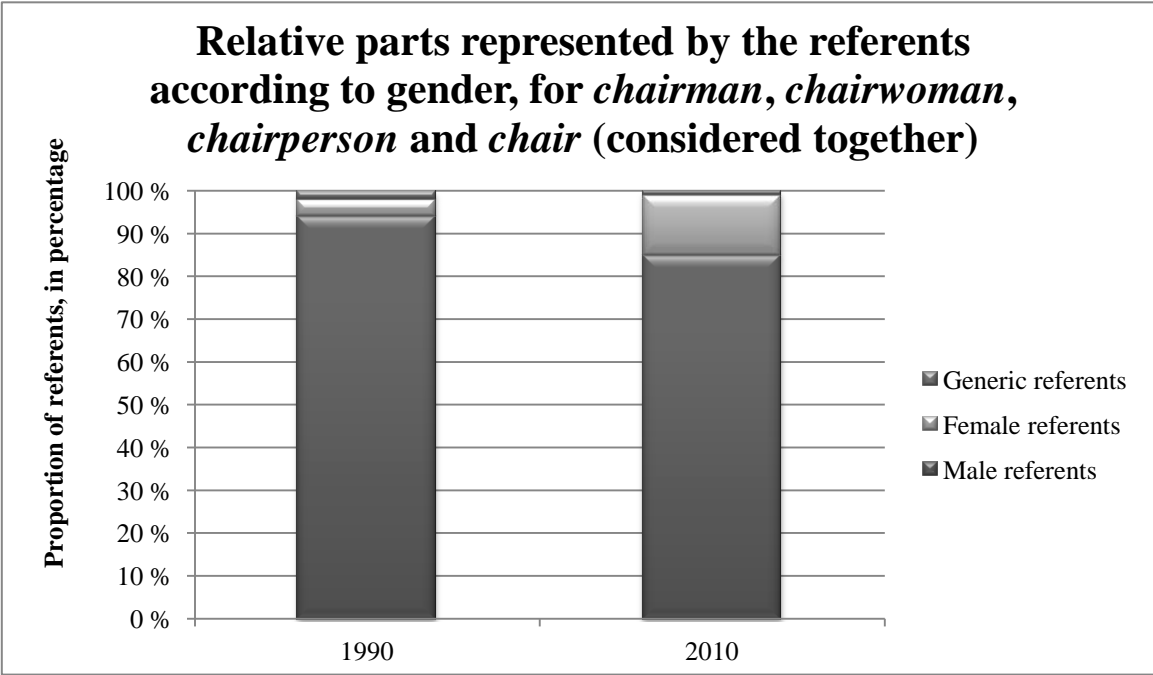

Figure 8. Relative parts represented by the various referents, according to gender, for *chairman*, *chairwoman*, *chairperson* and *chair* considered together, in percentage.

Although this is a social inequality which, in the long run, feminist language planners hope to alleviate by degendering the (male) mental images associated with positions of authority, this phenomenon is not a language-planning issue, and needs to be considered and dealt with from a social perspective. Thus, the unbalanced distribution of masculine, as opposed to feminine and gender-neutral terms, is not just a result of the general lack of enthusiasm shown for feminist language reforms. Instead, it mostly reflects the absence of female-male parity in certain sectors of employment, especially at management or leadership level.

Nevertheless, it is clear from the contents of newspaper style manuals that more could be done to redress the situation and make women more visible. It is also interesting to note that the Associated Press Company, the New York Times Company and the Washington Post Company all use the term *chairman* to refer to certain members of their boards of directors, women included.[34]

Obstacles encountered by feminists are numerous and varied. Some are inherent to any situation of language change, while others are specific to the feminist movement. Examples of the latter encompass smear campaigns triggered by their language proposals, restricted access to far-reaching top-down strategies, the anti-feminist backlash, androcentric societal values, and the semantic derogation of words referring to women. Yet, despite these pitfalls, feminist language planners have managed to introduce a certain degree of change in the practices of the language community as a whole.

2.3. Some successes under their feminist belts

Even though none of the studies conducted on gender-fair language in North American newspapers ended on a very optimistic note, it must be acknowledged that Second and Third Wave feminist language planning is a recent phenomenon. Most of the new forms and meanings were introduced into the language community less than forty years ago, which represents barely a heartbeat in terms of language change.

> It is easy to forget how far feminist language reform has come and how fast […] it has taken less that twenty-five years […] for generic *he* to become generally unacceptable in written prose. (Curzan 2003: 181)

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[34] The Associated Press Company: http://www.ap.org/company/board-of-directors, [Accessed 10th April 2012]
The New York Times Company: http://www.nytco.com/company/board_of_directors/index.html
The Washington Post Company: http://www.washpostco.com/phoenix.zhtml?c=62487&p=irol-govhistdirectors

As we consider the numerous forces at play which feminist language planners have had to negotiate, it becomes clear that claiming that all their reforms are a failure would be both unfair and untrue. Indeed, in spite of having to face a current of linguistic conservatism and the natural tendency of human beings to resist change (to say nothing of change initiated by women), feminists have obtained visible and widespread, albeit uneven results in a fairly short period of time.

I would argue that their main achievement resides in awareness-raising campaigns, and the way in which they have thrust into the limelight certain language habits, such as the feminine use of *chairman*. This represents, in my opinion, their most important success, since even though language users may decide to retain their former language habits, it has become impossible for them to ignore the fact that their lexical choices, whatever they are, now make an ideological statement. By drawing attention to certain language practices and labeling them *gender-biased* or *sexist*, feminist language planners have clearly succeeded in changing the resonance that these words or expressions have in discourse. For instance, language users may decide to hold on to the generic use of *he*, as many have made clear such was their intention, yet they can no longer pass this generic meaning as self-evident, and assume that their interlocutors will interpret and accept it as such. In other words, the linguistic, and more generally, the social stigmas acquired by certain words and expressions as a result of feminist language planning have triggered their semantic evolutions. The reaction of literary critic C. K. Stead reflects this phenomenon.

> My own response to feminist demands for 'non-sexist' language was at first to ignore them. I felt that as a writer I had to defend my own sense of style against any and every encroachment. But as time has gone by the complainants have brought about what they said was the case all along. By insisting that the generic 'he' is not neuter but masculine, they have made it so… (Stead, cited in Romaine 1999: 317)

In short, despite the limited success of certain of their reforms proposals, feminist language planners are definitely a force to be reckoned with, and we can attribute to their campaigning efforts some of the results obtained in this study, e.g. the adoption of occupational terms ending in –*woman* and the (very limited) adoption of those ending in –*person*, as well as part of the decreasing use of their masculine equivalents, particularly in reference to women. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that these results and observations only allow for tentative conclusions, in light of all the other forces liable to influence the end-results.

2.4. Reasons to be optimistic about the future

The results presented in this study give supporters of gender-fair language reason to be optimistic about the evolution of the use of job titles. Frequencies and usage patterns reveal that change is underway, which is in keeping with previous research on feminist language planning assessment in other genres and varieties of English. Rubin et al. found a sharp drop in the use of 'sexist language' in the speech production of language users working in business (Rubin et al. 1994). Cooper found a decrease in the use of generic *man*, and Fasold underlined the decline of certain types of formulations such as 'Mrs John Smith' or the asymmetrical use of first names (Fasold 1987). Fasold et al. uncovered a narrowing gap in the use of middle initials as a sign of prestige (Fasold et al. 1990), and Holmes et al.'s results show a decreasing use of masculine compounds which profits both feminine and gender-neutral forms (Holmes et al. 2009). Conclusions as to whether the form *Ms* is a success are varied (Holmes 2001, Romaine 2001). *Ms* has become fully integrated into the common lexicon, yet the fact that (American) forms now supply *Ms in addition to Miss* and *Mrs* shows that its purpose has been misunderstood and its meaning co-opted.

All these results show that some of the terms promoted by feminists have been accepted and assimilated by the linguistic community as a whole. However, this statement must be mitigated. Indeed, researchers agree on the fact that gender-fair guidelines have a more substantial effect on formal, written language production, especially in contexts where language comes under strong scrutiny and where sanctions can be applied, such as in academic journals or classified ads. Fasold states that "success is increased if the plan is directed at written rather than spoken usage, involves a limited scope of application, does not exceed enforcement capabilities, and is not overly innovative" (Fasold 1987: 203). It would be logical that feminist language planning strategies should have a lesser influence on more informal genres. However, the very nature of these genres makes this difficult to evaluate.

Furthermore, groups of language users have reacted differently to feminist language planning. Parks and Roberton (2008) measured the influence of factors such as age, gender and level of education on the willingness to adopt forms promoted by feminists. Their results show that, among a population of university students and employees, 'gender of the enunciator' and 'age' did not influence the use of gender-inclusive language significantly, although older participants (51-69 years old) tended to be more receptive. Parks and Roberton found that the "primary predictor […] was attitude toward women. Regardless of age or gender, people's attitudes toward sexist language are related to their feelings about women" (ibid.: 282).

Another influential variable was 'education', their "results suggest[ing] that education focused on helping people of all generations see women in a more positive light" (ibid.). Other studies on the subject have suggested as possible influences the increasing number of women working in journalism (Fasold et al. 1990: 537), the "attitudes and values of individual writers" (Chelin, cited in Ehrlich and King 1992: 163), the profitable nature of gender-fair language (i.e. "sexist language is […] bad for business" (Doyle 1995: 3)), etc. The increasing visibility of women, both in the workplace and in the media should also be mentioned, as well as the campaigns of gender-neutralization of job-titles implemented by government agencies as a direct consequence of anti-discrimination legislation.

The current status of terms promoted by feminists thus depends on the context of use and on the sub-group of language users studied. There are so many variables that weigh on the lexical choices of journalists that it proves difficult to discern what constitutes a success for feminist language planners from what is caused by other, concurrent phenomena. Evidence for this can be found in Chapter 5, where a look at the evolution of 68 different *–man* compounds reveals that the most dramatic drop in frequency occurred between 1950 and 1970, i.e. before feminists had brought the issue of sexism in language to the forefront of public attention. Another example is provided in Rubin et al.'s study of speeches by male private sector speakers, which reports that the decline in their use of gender-exclusive language predated the publication of feminist guidelines. As mentioned previously, they construe these results as a "moral and political response to changing social norms" (Rubin et al. 1994: 110-1). We can interpret as further evidence of this "response to changing social norms" the fact that gender-neutralization has gained ground while terms closely associated with the feminist movement, such as *chairperson*, have failed to reach the status of 'preferred usage'. It is entirely plausible that some members of the language community do not condone sexism, but do not wish to be 'forced' to change the way in which they express themselves, and to be told that some of their language habits have become offensive, unclear, inadequate, etc, which causes them to evaluate potential alternatives on a case-by-case basis.

Although many still oppose and ridicule their proposals, feminist language planners have succeeded in getting speakers to think about and debate the issue. They have acted as a catalyst in the evolution of language practices, by "giv[ing] people the background, to make them aware of what was happening right under their noses, so that they could […] try to come up with their own ways of solving the problem (Miller and Swift, quoted in Isele 1994)".

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

1. <u>Major findings</u>

The aim of this master's thesis has been to investigate the use of a specific feature of language in a specific context, namely, the use of the suffix *–man* and its gender-fair alternatives, within the semantic field of professional occupations, as used in American newspapers. The results of this study give some insight into the state of affairs regarding feminist language planning, forty years after the first gender-fair guidelines were published.

Before setting out to collect data, I formulated the following hypothesis: that over the period 1970-2010, the use of gender-fair language would have increased in the American press as a result of the debate which arose in the 1970's, with a marked preference for gender-neutral alternatives, whatever the sex of the referent. However, considering the adamancy of the opposition and the mixed results presented in earlier studies on the subject, I did not expect dramatic changes in usage patterns to have occurred.

Overall, the results obtained are conform to my expectations, as they reveal a decreasing use of *–man* compounds, and particularly of their generic and feminine use, and an increasing use of gender-fair forms. The most popular strategy among journalists is clearly one of gender-neutralization, yet compounds ending in *–woman* have also become more frequent. Some of them even seem to have become part of the common lexicon. Due to a combination of factors discussed in Chapter 6, masculine forms remain nonetheless the most frequently used forms. Results concerning the contextual information surrounding the use of the seven compounds under scrutiny are somewhat encouraging, as the treatment of female and male referents in discourse does not seem to differ (no visible difference in collocational patterns). All newspapers showed improvement in their use of gender-fair terms, regardless of political sympathies, and progress was made within all news sections, under the pen of both female and male journalists. Further, comparing different types of guidelines reveals that conservative gatekeepers of language such as dictionaries and style manuals all include notes on gender-fair representations of women and men, as well as formulations to be avoided (Chapter 4).

This thesis has shed light on the intricacies in the system of forces that influence the implementation of feminist language planning, all of which complicate its assessment. The research methods adopted restrict my ability to generalize and draw far-reaching conclusions, yet previous studies, as well as my own, show that usage patterns are evolving. The present study fits into a coherent scheme, and therefore it is possible to conclude that despite still having a long way to go, feminist language planners have managed, in the space of a few decades, to raise worldwide awareness and to make an impact on language production, for instance by challenging the neutrality of items such as masculine generics. Most importantly, however, they provide institutional support to individual women who feel discriminated against.

The adoption of terms and formulations promoted by feminists is unevenly distributed across populations of language users. Even though feminist language planning still has fervent opponents, there are definitely environments, such as academic circles or the administration, where their suggestions have reached the status of 'default choice' or, in Kloss' terminology, 'preferred alternatives'. Yet within the sphere of journalism, and as far as the United States is concerned, it seems that feminist alternatives oscillate between 'disapproved' and 'preferred'. This is in keeping with the conservative tenet of newspaper editors, who consider themselves as gatekeepers of the English language, with a responsibility to uphold a certain conservative standard. The policies set by newspaper style guides present a gloomy prospect for the successful adoption of feminist language reforms, yet the increasing variability in usage observed in previous chapters can be interpreted as a manifestation of "instability in 'traditional' usage patterns" (Pauwels 1999: online). This usually constitutes an encouraging sign that language is evolving. Furthermore, despite the minor influence that feminist language planners exert over the final decisions of newspaper editors, the consistency with which journalists apply editing rules make newspaper style manuals a legitimate target for further feminist language planning efforts.

2.   Suggestions for further reasearch

The scope of this thesis determined the specific nature of the study conducted, and the focus was placed on one type of gender-marked postmodification, within one semantic category, represented by a small selection of terms. Hence, further research is needed if we are to begin formulating definite answers regarding the extent to which feminists have succeeded in challenging gender-biased language habits, and in improving the status and visibility of

women in the media. Indeed, "nonsexist language change is a collective name for a range of changes, lexical, morphological, discoursal, etc. [and] the progress of each of these needs to be examined as part of the overall assessment" (Pauwels 1998: 216).

Studies available on this topic are either based on small corpora, or report synchronic observations, which complicates comparison, evolution assessments, and generalization. A truly longitudinal corpus study, in lieu of repeated cross-sectional observations, would be ideal in order to leave as little to chance as possible, and would give a complete picture of the nature of change, i.e. has it been abrupt or gradual? Are there any signs of periodic relapse into older usage patterns?

An opinion survey had originally been planned to accompany this study based on corpus data, but was abandoned due to time and space restrictions. However, investigating the attitudes of journalists towards gender-fair language as promoted by feminists would provide invaluable insight into production patterns and the perception of the feminist movement (interviews of Canadian journalists on the subject were conducted by Chelin (1991), cited in Ehrlich and King 1992).

As indicated previously, form-replacement is but one of the many language planning strategies employed by feminists. Surveys of fewer, but entire texts would reveal patterns which are undetectable when searches are conducted through a corpus' search engine. Further, as Third Wave feminist linguists have pointed out, sexism does not reside in particular words, therefore more qualitative studies of full texts would prove enlightening regarding the degree of sexism still present in discourse (see for instance Alnes 2009). This type of data collection method could also be used to explore the differences between the use of gender-fair language by female, as opposed to male journalists at discourse level.

Pauwels, who evaluates feminist reforms from the point of view of language planning, stresses the importance of measuring the social effectiveness of language reforms in addition to their linguistic viability (Pauwels 1998: 116). This entails conducting studies using psycholinguistic experiments and questionnaires to assess the cognitive imagery that people associate with gender-fair and gender-biased language use.

One of the major concerns of feminist language planners is the difficulty to assess the effects of their efforts on spoken language. Complementing my study on written media language by

one of transcripts from TV programs would provide information on more spontaneous types of language use, and would get us one step closer to evaluating the success of feminist language planning on private usage.

Finally, according to Marc Luccarelli, "gender neutrality has had a greater influence on American newspapers than British newspapers, which might be a more interesting comparison, sociologically speaking" (personal communication, 21st February 2012). Indeed, the results obtained by Holmes et al. and Pauwels in their surveys of New Zealand and Australian English, and by Romaine in British and American English imply that the adoption of feminist language reforms is far from being homogeneous among the different varieties of English.[35] Therefore, a comparison of media language across different varieties of English may yield interesting and insightful results, and help feminist language planners define more specific targets and adapt their strategies accordingly.

3.   <u>Concluding remarks</u>

While there have been some encouraging signs that feminist language planners have succeeded in making their reforms known to the community at large, it is still too early to declare this a successful case of language planning. Indeed, progress reports produced by Harrigan and Lucic (1988), Kennedy (1993), and Parks and Roberton (1998, 2008) reveal that many speakers only become aware of the gender bias present in language as they enter university, and that many show strong resentment to the idea of adjusting their language habits.

As Nilsen (1987) and Hofstadter (1998) emphasize, altering one's language habits to embrace gender-fair alternatives does not always come naturally. Considering the results of studies evaluating attitudes towards gender-fair language, it may well be that the only way for it to become the norm is to introduce it in the early stages of first language teaching, a process which must necessarily go hand in hand with a change in attitudes towards women in general. Indeed, if feminist language reforms are to succeed, they must be designed with a long-term perspective in mind, as part of a larger social movement. In the words of Marina Yaguello, "À lutte idéologique, terrain idéologique [Ideological struggles must be waged on ideological grounds]" (Yaguello 2002: 234, my translation).

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[35] Cf. Pauwels 1997, Holmes 2001, Pauwels 2001, Romaine 2001, Holmes and Sigley 2002, and Holmes et al. 2009.

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Appendix

Chapter Two: Theoretical background

Arguments against feminist language reform proposals

	Category	Content	Examples
		Blauberg's classification (1980)	
1	The cross-cultural arguments	Involve references to "specific societies or cultures, the language of which is less sexist than English [...] but in which the status of women is considered to be even less equal to men than in the United States" (137)	"The presence of gender in language bears no relation whatsoever to the nature of the corresponding societies. The best historically conspicuous example is Persian." (Sommers - no date)
2	The 'language is a trivial concern' arguments	(I) "Including language among the other aspects of sexism will detract from the perceived seriousness of the other injustices" (2) "The limited energies of feminists could be better spent in addressing other forms of sexism." (138)	"Our society should worry about how men beat their wives and not if a woman is called a woman or a wife." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 452, quoting one of their subjects) "I suggest a politics-grammar deal: let half the Senate be women and let the male pronoun embrace the female. " (Safire, cited in Rubin et al. 1994: 110)
3	The 'Freedom of Speech/ Unjustified coercion' arguments	"The proponents of change are threatening or coercing others to change their language usage." And "the proponents of change [...] are described as deviants while their tactics are described as inappropriately coercive." (139)	"Controls of this sort have been common in totalitarian societies" (Kingston and Lovelace 1977: 92) "Gender-neutral agenda"; "play with people's minds"; "**blitzkrieg**"; "massive societal peer pressure"; "censorship"; "brainwashing"; "subtle tactics of intimidation"; "gender-neutral takeover"; "George Orwell's **1984**"; "**Gulag** Archipelago"; "thought police" (Markos 2008) "Language police"; "**evil** principle"; "dehumanizing and totalitarian"; "feminist New Speak" (Sommers - no date)
4	The 'Sexist language is not sexist' arguments	Emphasis on the "nonsexist intentions of the users of masculine/generic terms" and the "false interpretation given to such terms by the proponents of change" (140)	"As a female this [being referred to as 'chairman'] does not bother me at all and I cannot understand why or how it would affect anyone. After all it's just a title." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 452, quoting one of their subjects)
5	The 'Word etymologies' arguments	"Because they historically were not sex-specific, their correct usage is what it once was". (141)	Arguments about the etymology of *man* (originally in a parallel to *homo* or *anthropos*), as opposed to *wer* (= *vir*, *aner*) "I conclude, on the source of history and etymology, that 'Madam Chairman' is a correct and decent appellation" (Barzun 1980: 72)
6	The 'Appeal to authority' arguments	"Judgments based on prescriptive assumptions have been put forth as 'linguistic universals'." (Penelope, quoted in Blaubergs 1980: 142) *("To appeal to the traditional authorities on language usage appears to overlook the fact that it is the traditional authorities that proponents of changing sexist language are challenging.") (143)*	Reference to dictionaries, grammars or teachers. "When Paul says, 'if anyone be in Christ, he is a new creation,' everyone (and I mean everyone) knows that the 'he' does not refer to men only but to all humanity (men and women)." (Markos 2008)

Arguments against feminist language reform proposals (cont'd)

#	Category	Content	Examples
7	The 'Change is too difficult, inconvenient, impractical or whatever' arguments	Referred to as "Generic apologia" (Winter 1979 issue of *Women and Language News*): Opponents "consider sexist language to be a necessary (or at least unavoidable) evil" (143), e.g. the pronoun system is seen as too difficult to change.	"Words will change, without strain or connivance, when attitudes change (Cheshire, quoted in Romaine 1999: 292) "We have used these titles [mailman, etc.] for years and it's hard to change." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 452, quoting one of their subjects) The apologetic approach (Pauwels 1998 : 179): authors who agree with feminist claims, but do not wish to change their style.
8	The 'It would destroy historical authenticity and literary works' arguments	"Changing sexist language would involve the rewriting of literary works", which would "destroy the value, authenticity, purity, elegance, precision, etc. of written works". (145)	Feminists are "blithely sweeping away three millennia of traditional syntactical structures"; "revamping of the Holy Scriptures" (Markos 2008) Feminists are "bastardizing" of language." (J.Simon, quoted in Romaine 1999: 298)

	Category	Content	Examples
	Parks and Roberton's additional categories (1998)		
9	Sexism is Acceptable	"Males are superior to females, so it doesn't matter if language reflects their superiority." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 453)	"A woman (is it safe to use this word?) will never be one hundred percent equal to a man. It is a concept that needs to be faced." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 453, quoting one of their subjects)
10	Hostility toward Proponents of Change	"The topic of sexist language is ridiculous, perhaps even dangerous; those who worry about it are insecure, parasitic, and contemptible." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 453)	"I do not believe that men or women should change their vocabulary on account of a few outspoken liberal women!"; "I think the only people who really take offense to any such things are the feminist activists that do nothing but protest all day long. The irony here is that while this protesting may be noble, it does not pay a salary, so the women who scream 'We don't need men!' go home to their husbands and live off of his money." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 453, quoting two of their subjects)
11	Tradition	"Masculine terms are traditional in society; language has existed in society for a long time and should not be changed" (Parks and Roberton 1998: 453)	"Words such as waiter and waitress . . . have been around for hundreds of years . . . they should not be tampered with." (Parks and Roberton 1998: 453, quoting one of their subjects)
12	Lack of Understanding	"Comments in this category suggested that people who resist nonsexist language probably are unaware that sexist language is inappropriate or harmful." (456)	/
	Ridicule		
13	Mocking the feminists	"According to such critics, women's issues are, like women, trivial and to be laughed at. This is a familiar strategy dominant groups use to reassert their power over minorities." (Romaine 1999: 297)	"Linguistic sexism … is overblown by a lunatic fringe brewing a tempest in a teapot." (Henley 1987: 8, Listing arguments of the opposition) Feminist linguistic reforms as "something shrill and hysterical" (Scruton, quoted in Frank and Treichler 1989: 131) "Pronoun envy" (The Harvard Crimson, cited in Pauwels 1998: 68)
14	Mocking their proposals	The "strategy of ridicule" works as an "attack purely on emotional grounds" (Pauwels 1998: 184)	"Personchester" (Yaguello 2002: 241); "Italyas" (Werden 1998), "Woperson" (Blaubergs 1978: 244), "Womenu" (Newsweek 1991) About 'he/she': "Who wants to sound like a [man] with a chronic sneeze?" (Hofstadter 1988: 142, in a satiric argumentation in favor of masc. generics); "It ... sounds like a chocolate bar" (Bucke and Johnson, cited in Curzan 2003: 182, in reference to the chocolate brand Hershey's)

Chapter Four: Feminist Guidelines

Compounds ending in -*woman* as alternative to masculine generic compounds

	Compounds ending in -*woman*, as in *chairwoman*
Miller and Swift	Accept compounds ending in -*woman* as a legitimate alternative, but do not encourage their use because of their unpopularity, especially amongst journalists and editors. *"Whatever the reasons for its disfavor,* chairwoman *is a historically sound parallel to chairman, and it pays a woman the courtesy of recognizing both her sex and her achievement. It does not, however, solve the problem of what to use as an indefinite, sex-inclusive title"*. (26)
Frank and Treichler	Do not state their opinion explicitly in the case of compounds such as *chairwoman*.
Doyle	Does not disapprove of compounds ending in –*woman*: *"Many* –man *compounds have acceptable* –woman *parallels"* (64). She is categorical, however, about the need for symmetry: *"When retaining* –man *words and using them in conjunction with* –woman *words ... be sure to use them in a balanced way. Do not, for example, use* craftsmen *and women"*. (64)

Compounds ending in -*person* as alternative to masculine generic compounds

	Compounds ending in -*person* as in *chairperson*
Miller and Swift	Neither encourages nor discourages the use of compounds ending in –*person*, but they inform the reader about the strong negative bias that has developed against them.
Frank and Treichler	Acknowledge compounds in –*person* as a legitimate alternative to compounds in –*man*. *"Person is currently a serviceable noun to indicate an individual of either sex. It has come to function in recent years as the most frequently recommended gender-neutral replacement for man in many contexts"* (193) However, they recognize that it is often ridiculed, and offer tentative explanations for the strong opposition to this particular gender-fair alternative.
Doyle	Does not discourage the use of compounds in –*person*, but prefers epicene alternatives. *"Although it is an acceptable, clear and easy alternative, it has been the butt of many jokes about political correctness and so has not enjoyed much success"* (64)

Other types of compounds as alternative to masculine generic componds

	Other types of compounds
Miller and Swift	Compounds ending in -*worker*: "Worker is a useful suffix, as in *longshoreworker* for *longshoreman*"(30).
Frank and Treichler	No mention is made of this solution.
Doyle	No mention is made of this solution.

Epicene nouns as alternative to masculine generic compounds

	Epicene terms
Miller and Swift	¤ **Epicene synonyms**: *"New sex-inclusive language is emerging… Present alternatives to the false generic* Congressman *include* member of Congress *and* representative, *and no doubt other ways will also evolve to designate those elected to offices which were once male domains. A member of a council, city or otherwise, is a* councillor, *for example. In line with the ancient linguistic process whereby adjectives are converted into nouns, a* member of Congress *may someday be simply a* congressional, *just as a* member of a nation *is a* national". (28) ¤ **Epicene terms ending in -er**: *"Resistance to such terms as* repairer *(for* repairman*) and* launderer *(for* laundress *and* laundryman*) is also odd considering the frequency of* -er *and* -or *endings in other agent nouns:* explorer, bookkeeper, helper, lawyer, painter, photographer, laborer, auditor, conductor, *etc."* (30) ¤ **Epicene terms in -Ø**: *"With some compounds ending in* -man *the solution of simply dropping the last syllable revives a former usage that proves to be still serviceable.* Watchman, *for instance, can become* watch, *used from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries to mean "one who watches... for the purposes of guarding and protecting life and property"*. (30) Defends the use of *chair* as a metonymy, just as *the Crown* is used for in reference to a monarch (26).
Frank and Treichler	No mention is made of this solution.
Doyle	Clearly in favor of this solution (mention both **epicene synonyms** and **epicene terms ending in –er**): *"A different word can be the best option, eliminating sexism and enhancing clarity by being more specific"* – She gives the example of *artisan* instead of *craftswoman* or *craftsperson* *"In many cases, this is easiest done by replacing* –man *at the end of the word with* –er*"* (64) Nationalities, as in *Frenchman "present unique problems"* (64)

Guidelines most influenced by feminist work

Extract of the APA (1978) 'Guidelines for nonsexist use of language in APA journals', pp. 16-17.

Item	Examples of common usage	Consider meaning: an alternative may be better	Comment
18	Chairman (of an academic department)	Use *chairperson* or *chair* if it is known that the institution has established either form as an official title. Otherwise use *chairman*.	*Department Head* may be appropriate, but the term is not synonymous with *chairman* and *chairperson* at all institutions.
	Chairman (presiding officer of a committee or meeting)	Chairperson, moderator, discussion leader	In parliamentary usage, *chairman* is the official term. Alternatives are acceptable in most writing.
20	Foreman, policeman, stewardess, mailman	Supervisor, police officer, flight attendant, postal worker or letter carrier	Noun subsituted.

Extract of Warren (1986) Guidelines for nonsexist use of language – APA, pp. 479, 481.

Item	Example	Preferred alternative	Comment
19	Prof. Smith will be the chairman of the Philosophy Department.	Prof. Smith will be the *chair* (head, chairperson) of the Philosophy Department. OR: Prof. Smith will *chair* the Phil. Dept.	Use the same term for both males and females, rather than distinguishing between chairmen and chairwomen, or between chairmen and chairpersons. Alternatively, use verbs (to chair, to head, to moderate) to avoid the whole problem. (Exception: if it is deemed necessary to assert that a woman is chair, *chairwoman* may be used -- preferably to be contrasted with *chairperson*, to avoid generic *chairman*).
	Prof. Smith will be the chairman of tomorrow's session.	Prof. Smith will be the *chair* of tomorrow's session. OR: Prof. Smith will *chair* tomorrow's session	
25	Congressman, Congresswoman, poetess, stewardess, fireman, lady lawyer, male nurse, woman doctor	US Representative, member of Congress, poet, flight attendant, firefighter, lawyer, nurse, doctor	Choose nonsexist labels for occupations. The terms lawyer, nurse and doctor include both males and females.

Extract of NCTE (1985) 'Guidelines for Nonsexist Language Use', pp. 55-56.

Problem	Alternatives
chairman/chairwoman	Chair, coordinator (of a committee or department), moderator (of a meeting), presiding officer, head, chairperson
businessman/businesswoman congressman/congresswoman policeman/policewoman	business executive, manager congressional representative police officer
salesman/saleswoman	sales clerk, sales representative, salesperson
fireman mailman	fire fighter letter carrier

Extract of the NCTE (2002) 'Guidelines for Gender-Fair Use of Language', p 6.

Avoid exclusionary words and phrases such as	Choose inclusionary alternatives
chairman/chairwoman	chair, coordinator, moderator, presiding officer, head, chairperson
businessman/businesswoman	business executive, manager, businessperson
congressman/congresswoman	congressional representative
policeman/policewoman	police officer
salesman/saleswoman	salesperson, sales clerk, sales representative
fireman	firefighter
mailman	postal worker, letter carrier

Extract of UNESCO (1999) Guidelines on gender-neutral language, 3rd edition, pp. 8-15.

Example	Alternative	Comment
Ambiguity		
businessman	business manager, executive, head of firm, agent, representative, business traveller; (pl.) business community, business people	The appropriate term will depend on the context.
cameraman	photographer, camera operator; (pl.) camera crew	
caveman	cave dweller	
chairman	chairperson, chair, president, presiding off icer	
craftsman	craftworker, artisan, craftsperson; (pl.) craftspeople	
draughtsman	designer	
Fellow countryman	compatriot	
fireman	fire-fighter; (pl.) fire crew, fire brigade	
foreman	supervisor, superintendent	
layman	layperson, non-specialist, non-professional, novice	
ombudsman	mediator	
policeman/men	police officer, or (pl.) just police. 'John Smith is a policeman' but 'It is the duty of every police officer…'	
salesman/girl	shop assistant, sales assistant, shop worker; (pl.) sales staff	
spokesman	spokesperson, representative, official. 'Ms X was the spokeswoman' but 'The delegation shall appoint a spokesperson/ representative', etc.	Use *spokesman* or *spokeswoman* as appropriate when a specific person is intended. Use non gender-specific term when reference is indeterminate, i.e. to post or function. This applies to '-man' terms generally.
sportman	athlete, sportsman/sportswoman	
statesman	political leader, stateswoman (where appropriate), public servant	
Titles and forms of address		
chairman	Chairperson, chair, president, presiding officer. When addressing the individual: Madam Chairperson, Mr Chairperson.	When new bodies are set up or rules of procedure, etc. of existing bodies are updated, *chairperson*, *chair* or *president* should be used in place of *chairman*.

Extract of US Manpower Administration (1975) 'Job title revision...' , pp. 10-11

Former job title	New, gender inclusive job title
Epicenes ending in -er	
Accordeon repairman	accordeon repairer
Acid pumpman (Chem.)	Acid pumper
Compounds ending in an epicene noun (helper, tender, operator, supervisor, agent, worker, manager…)	
Acid conditioning man (synthetic fibers)	Acid conditioning hand
Acid craneman (iron and steel)	Acid crane operator
Ammunition foreman (Ammunition; explosives)	Ammunition supervisor

Guidelines least influenced by feminist work

A summary of the suggestions for gender-fair terms made in the *RHD* and *Oxford Dict. of Am. Style and Usage*

Suggestions for alternative, gender-fair forms	
RHD 1967	No entries for *chairperson*, *-woman* or *-person*
RHD 1987	Mentions a preference of speakers for the use of "*sex-neutral form[s]*" (entry for 'woman')
RHD 2011	Idem. Mentions the form *chairperson*, but not *chair*.
OCASU	*"If we're to have a substitute wording, we ought to ensure that* chair *(which goes back to the mid-17th c.) and not* chairperson *becomes the standard term"* (entry for 'chair*').

Newspaper guidelines condemn the use of exclusive language

AP Stylebook	NYT	WaP
"Use the same standards for men and women in deciding whether to include specific mention of personal appearance or marital and family situation. In other words, treatment of the sexes should be evenhanded and free of assumptions and stereotypes" (Goldstein 2005: 274).	"Times writing treats the sexes equally. It reflects a society that no longer assigns roles or occupations to men only or women only. Thus the copy shuns stereotypes and assumptions… For occupational terms, resist modifiers that imply a "norm" of maleness or femaleness" (Siegal and Connolly 1999: 205-6). "In referring to women, we should avoid words or phrases that seem to imply that The Times speaks with a purely masculine voice, viewing men as the norm and women as the exception" (Jordan 1976, in Fasold 1987: 189)	"The basic idea is to treat all persons the same in all areas of coverage and to avoid condescension and stereotypes" (Lippman 1989: 191).

Epicene nouns as alternative to masculine generic compounds

Other types of compounds and epicene terms	
AP 1977	In the case of *spokesman*, they suggest that, "if the sex of the individual is not known, … writers use *representative*" (Angione, in Miller and Swift 1980: 24-5).
AP 2005	Preferable "if you do not know the sex of the individual" (entry for 'spokesman'). / *Rep.* and *U.S. Rep.* are the preferred first-reference forms when a formal title is used before the name of a U.S. House member (Ibid: entry for 'Congressman')
NYT 1976	No information available, due to lack of direct access.
NYT 1999	"In general references, use a neutral job title like *letter carrier* rather than *mailman,* and *police officer* rather than *policeman* or *policewoman.* Avoid most terms with grafted feminine endings" (entry for 'men and women').
WaP 1978	No information available, due to lack of direct access.
WaP 1989	"Use generic terms for occupation or groups of people unless it would be awkward or artificial" (entry for 'sexism and sex-based language'), e.g. Business executive, business manager; member of Congress, representative; Council member; Firefighter; Garbage collector; Letter carrier; Reporter, journalist; Police officer; worker

Compounds ending in *-woman* as alternative to masculine generic compounds

Compounds ending in *-woman*	
AP 1977	"The *Associated Press Stylebook* … approves both *spokeswoman* and s*pokesman* (depending on the person's sex) (Angione in Miller and Swift 1980: 24-5) / They "encourage the use of compounds ending in *–woman* instead, or avoiding the compound entirely by using a term like *representative* instead of *spokesman*" (Angione, in Fasold 1987: 190)
AP 2005	"*Spokeswoman* is preferable to *spokesperson*, if it is known that the subject is female" (Goldstein 2005: entry for 'spokesman').
NYT 1976	"More often, however, arbiters of usage assign generic status in some instances and not in others—and their reasons are usually hard to discern. *Spokesman,* for example, is considered sex-inclusive by the *New York Times,* whose *Manual of Style and Usage* (1976) forbids either *spokeswoman* or *spokesperson.* Yet the paper does permit its writers to use *saleswoman,* which may be an indication that whoever makes such decisions thinks *salesman* applies to males only. Why anyone should decide it is all right for women to be called "saleswomen" but not "spokeswomen" is unclear" (Jordan, in Miller and Swift 1980: 24-5).
NYT 1999	"*Spokesman, spokesmen.* Use for both men and women. Do not use *spokeswoman* or *spokesperson*" (Siegal and Connolly 1999: entry for 'spokesman').
WaP 1978	They "encourage the use of compounds ending in –woman instead, or avoiding the compound entirely by using a term like representative instead of spokesman" (Webb, in Fasold 1987: 190)
WaP 1989	"Use spokesman as the generic term and in references to specific male persons. Use spokeswoman in references to specific females, unless they specify otherwise" (Lippman 1989: entry for 'spokesman').

Compounds ending in -*person* as alternative to masculine generic compounds

	Compounds ending in -*person*
AP 1977	"Compounds ending in -person are explicitly proscribed" (Angione, in Fasold 1987: 190).
AP 2005	"Do not use *chairperson* unless it is an organization's formal title for an office" / "NOT *spokesperson*. Use a *representative* if you do not know the sex of the individual" / "*Businesspeople* is acceptable, but not *businessperson*" / "The general term is *salesclerk* or *sales representative,* not *salesperson*" (Goldstein 2005: entries for chaiman, spokesman., etc.).
NYT 1976	"Compounds ending in -person are explicitly proscribed" (Jordan, in Fasold 1987: 190). **"***Spokesman, spokesmen***.** Use for both men and women. Do not use *spokeswoman* or *spokesperson*". "*-person***.** Do not use compounds like these: chairperson, foreperson. newsperson, salesperson. Also, do not use Assemblyperson. Congressperson. Councilperson". (Jordan, in Fasold 1987: 189).
NYT 1999	*Spokespersons is* "ostentatiously desexed"... "not *councilpersons*"... "not *four-person*" / "Do not use *waitperson*" (Siegal and Connolly 1999: 205)
WaP 1978	*"Compounds ending in -person are explicitly proscribed" (Webb, in Fasold 1987: 190).*
WaP 1989	*"Some words ending in –man are unavoidable... midshipman, freshman, foreman, ombudsman... Do not coin term such as foreperson or ombudsperson in an attempt to avoid these terms" / "Do not use spokesperson except in quotations" (Lippman 1989: 192, 198)*

Alternatives to *chairman* proposed by the newspaper guidelines

	The case of *chairman*
AP 1977	No information available, due to lack of direct access.
AP 2005	"Do not use *chairperson* unless it is an organization's formal title for an office" (entry for 'chairman/chairwoman')
NYT 1976	No information available, due to lack of direct access.
NYT 1999	*Chair***.** As a noun, it can mean an endowed professorship *(the Anyell Chair in Philosophy)* or a position in an orchestra *(first-chair players).* Do not use it to mean *chairman* or *chairwoman.* Avoid it as a verb meaning *lead a committee;* try *lead, head* or *preside over* instead. Similarly, avoid *co-chair* (n. and v.) *Chairman, chairwoman***.** Also: *board chairwoman* and *chairman of the board,* although *board* is usually redundant with these titles; make it *chairwoman of the XYZ Company.* Do not use *chairlady* or *chairperson* (entry for chairman *Head* (n.). A specific organizational title is preferred *(president, chairman, chairwoman, director),* because the vagueness suggests superficial reporting.
WaP 1978	*No information available, due to lack of direct access.*
WaP 1989	*"For titles, when referring to specific individuals, use the title they give themselves... When referring to such positions generally ... use the commonly accepted form", i.e. –man form (entry for 'sexism and sex-based language')* *"When referring to a specific individual, use chairman unless a particular woman prefers chairwoman or the official title of a position prefers another word... In general references, use chairman" (entry for 'chairman, chairwoman, chair')* *"Chair: use only if the group's bylaws make it the official title... Chair may be used as a transitive verb" (Ibid).*

Chapter 6: Seven compounds

Usage in the news sections 'Culture', 'Money', 'Opinion', 'Politics', 'Sports', 'US' and 'World'

Culture	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	31	**6.894**	0	**0**	13	**2.891**	6	**1.334**	
Gen. ref.	*4*	*0.889*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.445*	*0*	*0*	449,692
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.667*			
1990	52	**11.576**	0	**0**	39	**8.682**	7	**2.577**	
Gen. ref.	*13*	*2.894*	*0*	*0*	*8*	*1.781*	*0*	*0*	449,202
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*5*	*1.113*			
1970	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	1,590
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

Money	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	91	**22.132**	0	**0**	15	**3.648**	3	**0.730**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.243*	*0*	*0*	411,162
Fem. ref.	*2*	*0.486*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.973*			
1990	326	**78.875**	1	**0.242**	18	**4.360**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.727*	*0*	*0*	412,805
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.242*	*1*	*0.242*			
1970	14	**32.086**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	43,633
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

Opinion	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	17	**14.848**	0	**0**	5	**4.367**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*1*	*0.873*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*1.747*	*0*	*0*	114,493
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*1.747*			
1990	9	**2.708**	0	**0**	3	**0.956**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.637*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.319*	*0*	*0*	313,934
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.319*			
1970	32	**37.971**	0	**0**	2	**2.373**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*6*	*7.120*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	84,275
Fem. ref.	*1*	*1.187*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

Politics	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	107	**45.486**	1	**0.425**	31	**13.178**	13	**5.526**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.850*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*1.275*	*0*	*0*	235,239
Fem. ref.	*3*	*1.275*	*1*	*0.425*	*11*	*4.676*			
1990	127	**87.374**	0	**0**	3	**2.057**	1	**59.923**	
Gen. ref.	*10*	*6.858*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	145,810
Fem. ref.	*9*	*6.172*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.686*			
1970	52	**74.328**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*2.859*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	69,960
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

Sports	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	35	**3.106**	0	**0**	6	**0.532**	1	**0.089**	
Gen. ref.	*1*	*0.089*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.089*			1,126,958
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
1990	66	**11.852**	0	**0**	8	**1.439**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*7*	*1.259*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.360*	*0*	*0*	556,030
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
1970	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	1,627
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

Usage in the news sections 'Culture', 'Money', 'Opinion', 'Politics', 'Sports', 'US' and 'World' (cont'd)

US	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	140	**11.972**	3	**0.257**	65	**5.558**	23	**1.967**	
Gen. ref.	*4*	*0.342*	*0*	*0*	*11*	*0.941*	*0*	*0*	1,169,382
Fem. ref.	*5*	*0.428*	*1*	*0.086*	*5*	*0.428*			
1990	209	**16.064**	1	**0.077**	41	**3.147**	7	**1.233**	
Gen. ref.	*8*	*0.614*	*0*	*0*	*7*	*0.537*	*0*	*0*	1,302,919
Fem. ref.	*11*	*0.844*	*1*	*0.077*	*3*	*0.230*			
1970	60	**46.714**	0	**0**	1	**0.779**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*1.557*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	128,441
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

World	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
2010	63	**14.982**	1	**0.238**	12	**2.854**	1	**0.238**	
Gen. ref.	*4*	*0.951*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	420,503
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.238*			
1990	184	**28.864**	0	**0**	18	**2.819**	1	**4.521**	
Gen. ref.	*7*	*1.096*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.157*	*0*	*0*	638,505
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.157*			
1970	12	**12.199**	0	**0**	0	**0**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	98,369
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			

Detailed distribution – 'Liberal' and 'Moderate' newspapers

Liberal	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
CST	41	**9.070**	0	**0**	15	**3.318**	2	**0.442**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.442*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	452,022
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.664*			
DP	43	**10.195**	1	**0.237**	18	**4.268**	1	**0.237**	
Gen. ref.	*3*	*0.711*	*1*	*0.169*	*3*	*0.711*	*0*	*0*	421,773
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.474*			
NYT	62	**14.120**	0	**0**	8	**1.822**	16	**3.644**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	439,092
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*			
SFC	28	**6.689**	0	**0**	27	**6.450**	4	**0.956**	
Gen. ref.	*3*	*0.717*	*0*	*0*	*6*	*1.433*	*0*	*0*	418,581
Fem. ref.	*1*	*0.239*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.717*			
Average	43.5	**10.049**	0.25	**0.058**	17	**3.927**	5.8	**1.328**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.462*	*0.25*	*0.058*	*2.3*	*0.520*	*0*	*0*	432,867
Fem. ref.	*0.3*	*0.058*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.462*			

Moderate	Man		Person		Epicene		Woman		Size
	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	Tokens	Freq.	
AJC	72	**16.358**	3	**0.682**	27	**6.134**	17	**3.862**	
Gen. ref.	*4*	*0.909*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.909*	*0*	*0*	440,155
Fem. ref.	*1*	*0.227*	*1*	*0.227*	*6*	*1.363*			
HC	33	**7.471**	0	**0**	15	**3.396**	0	**0**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*4*	*0.906*	*0*	*0*	441,705
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*1*	*0.226*			
USAT	56	**14.371**	0	**0**	7	**1,796**	4	**1.026**	
Gen. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	389,676
Fem. ref.	*0*	*0*	*0*	*0*	*2*	*0.513*			
WAP	59	**13.730**	1	**0.233**	16	**3,723**	2	**0.465**	
Gen. ref.	*2*	*0.465*	*0*	*0*	*3*	*0.698*	*0*	*0*	429,709
Fem. ref.	*6*	*1.396*	*1*	*0.233*	*3*	*0.698*			
Average	55	**12.932**	1	**0.235**	16.3	**3.821**	5.8	**1.352**	
Gen. ref.	*1.5*	*0.353*	*0*	*0*	*2.8*	*0.647*	*0*	*0*	425,311
Fem. ref.	*1.8*	*0.411*	*0.5*	*0.118*	*3*	*0.705*			