

Shifting Visions

Shifting Visions:

Gender and Discourses

Edited by

Allyson Jule

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This collection of research articles is dedicated to all the scholars and members of the International Gender and Language Association (IGALA).

For almost twenty years, this community of scholars has produced cutting edge research and has created a warm and encouraging academic space from which original ideas can flourish and take form.

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PREFACE

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This edited volume consists of a selection of research articles presented at the eighth biennial International Gender and Language Association (IGALA) conference, held in Vancouver, Canada, in 2014. The conference included many thematic strands and over 200 paper presentations which engaged, in different ways, with the broader notion of shifting (our and others') visions of gender, sexuality, discourse and language. The papers presented in this book—in their explorations of gender and language study, embodiment, religion, ethics, heteronormativity, politics, terrorism, magazines, news coverage and education—offer only a snapshot of the wide range of work done in a field that is rich, diverse and essentially interdisciplinary. In addition to drawing on different disciplines and approaches, these original papers also truly reflect the make-up and ethos of the IGALA community, in particular the bringing together of scholars with diverse knowledge and international perspectives and an appreciation of the mutually-supporting synergy between late and early career researchers.

I have had the privilege of providing leadership and direction for IGALA and its members at the time this book went to print. I know that this collection would not have been possible without the vibrant environment of the IGALA community of scholars around the world and without the hard work and commitment of its editor, Allyson Jule. They have all helped carve out spaces for sharing, questioning and deepening our understanding of the complex relationships between language, gender and sexuality. This collection of papers represents one such space which I hope you will find inspiring and encouraging.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The funds that made the production of this book possible, including helping to subsidize the conference which produced these articles, came from the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Connection Grant Scheme, which encourages international collaborations and innovation in social science research. I am grateful the committee saw this project as worthwhile.

The IGALA community is one I experience as deeply supportive in many ways, including active support for knowledge distribution via its *Gender and Language* journal and its vibrant conference culture. The associations emerging from IGALA researchers have a long history of being collaborative, encouraging and committed to interdisciplinary work. This network has emerged from a rare group of foundational scholars who have aimed to be supportive of both new ideas and newcomers to the field of gender and language research.

The collaborative energy of all the contributors to this edited collection and their enthusiasm throughout the process have been wonderful. The contributors' erudition and their shared desire to make this collection a meaningful addition to gender and language scholarship have resulted in an intriguing collection of original and refreshing research about the role of language in gendered relationships as well as the role of gender in various discourses.

I am forever grateful for the input by Cheryl Wall and Julie Sutherland on the manuscript itself and the ways they participated in bringing this book to fruition. If it weren't for their skills and insights, this book would likely never have materialised.

I am also so thankful to the people at Cambridge Scholars Press who believed in this project and offered so much support along the way.

—Allyson Jule

INTRODUCTION

ALLYSON JULE

TRINITY WESTERN UNIVERSITY

The study of sociolinguistics is based on a basic human curiosity: who says what to whom and why? Each of the chapters in this book presents cutting edge research that explores the who, what and why of communication. While human beings differ enormously, something is being enacted and something is being meant in language use. The role of the sociolinguistic researcher is to explore such language use and ask those questions in various social situations.

We know that language choices exist in social practice and are influenced by context and particular situations. The field, which emerged in the 1970s, has explored how language is used, how it reflects social contexts, and how sociological variables such as race, ethnicity, social class, religion, sexuality and generational and geographical location impact on language choices. The applied sociolinguistic field is long past seeing “differences” in social variables as ways to analyse of the power of language. More and more attention is paid to context and motivations. The field is certainly long past seeing “differences” between those born male and those born female as the way to apply a gender analysis in order to understand who we are and why we communicate things the way we do. Today’s analysis seeks to see speech as a vision of possibility, located in the intention to belong to others in a certain way. *How* we are located in the communities that we are has much to say regarding who we are and why we say the things we do. Also, the complexities of enacted femininities and masculinities continue to propel the field into ever-new ways of understanding what it means to be human and what a study of language use can offer in such explorations.

The twelve chapters in this collection contribute to gender and language scholarship in unique ways. Each explores various sites of intersection of gender/sexualities and language/discourses. This collection of original research serves to highlight the dynamic and increasingly vibrant scholarly community emerging from the International Gender and Language Association (IGALA). This well-established association has

sought ever-new advances in feminist linguistics that have made exciting contributions to a growing field within sociolinguistics. IGALA has done so with the establishment of the journal, *Gender and Language*, as well as with the supportive and vibrant conference culture and local chapters of gendered language research communities. Since 1999, IGALA has served as an international interdisciplinary organization that is committed to the promotion and support of research on language, gender, and sexuality from around the world. Over the years, IGALA conferences have been located in the US, the UK, Japan, New Zealand, Brazil and Spain.

The organisation of the chapters here is based on a broad sense of movement from foundational studies to specific educational contexts. Locations include the US, the UK, Croatia, Cameroon, Norway, Japan and Canada. These sites demonstrate the rich possibilities of understanding language embedded in various counties and cultures. The book's variety of focus and place is in keeping with the long and solid tradition of IGALA scholarship. This is the vision of such scholarship: to search the margins or unexplored sites where more can be understood about the relationships between gender and language. The effort to encourage a range of local and regional contributions, as well as conferences in far-reaching places, has propelled research in particular contexts and in ever-complex sites that are constantly shifting. Thus, sociolinguists regularly "shift" in understandings of power and the centrality of language in everyday lives'.

Chapter One presents Jane Sunderland's work on "similarities and distinctions" in language study. This chapter advances the notion that the study of language and gender requires fundamental understanding of both past and recent theories of how language and gender intersect in such insidious ways. Chapter Two is Marjorie Harness Goodwin's research on embodied intimacy. That exploration takes readers to a place of understanding intimate and familiar relationships – that both language use and body language interplay to reveal intimacy and connection – or lack of it. Both Sunderland and Goodwin presented their ideas as keynote speakers at the IGALA 8 conference in Vancouver, Canada in 2014. Together, they set the tone of urgency and vibrancy for the conference regarding language and gender as the central point in critical sociolinguistic research today. That is, the intersection of other sociological variables seem so woven in with gendered identities and cultural expectations of gender that the study of gender and language is perhaps most the crucial site to explore the interactions of power and relationships.

Kate Power's study (Chapter Three) on Reverend Canon Melissa Skelton, the first female diocesan bishop in the Canadian province of

British Columbia, and discusses her rise to this position through strategic use of language. Her assessment of the role of linguistic strategy within church leadership is both enlightening and disturbing in church governance and how language use factors into poisoning of power. In Chapter Four, Ashley Pullman builds on Judith Butler's work on performativity and Saba Mahmood's views of such performativity, which extends Butler's studies to the embodiment of gender performances. She takes readers into areas of foundational theory and the continued relevance of these two fundamental theorists for feminist linguistic research.

In Chapter Five, Roswitha Kersten-Pejanić takes a good look at the "old limitations" of a language with strong grammatical gender, like the Croatian, and offers new ways forward. This insight into the limits and the insights offered by languages with gendered grammar points to the ever-changing concepts of gender more generally in the relevant society. Lillian Atanga and Alexandre T. Djimeli of Cameroon present in Chapter Six an investigation into the role of gender in Cameroonian electoral documents. We learn that the leadership of a country (specifically here Cameroon) may offer advanced understandings of gender in official documents, but that this may (and does) hide the lived gendered experiences of the citizens themselves. In Chapter Seven, Hedda Hakvåg offers reflections on the 2011 terrorist attack that took place in Norway. Terrorism is used as a site of gender exploration. Yoko Kobayashi explores Japanese women's magazines and the construction of language for women found within them in Chapter Eight. Here we can see a central example of how culture aligns with values of gendered performances and that belonging is central as seen in women's magazines. Georgina Turner's contribution (Chapter Nine) is about news coverage of the spy industry in the UK and its relation to sex. Her analysis is based on two spy cases which took place recently in the UK—those of Mark Kennedy and Anna Chapman. This exploration tells us of gendered inflected news coverage and the relevance of one's sex to news coverage.

The final three contributions focus on specific educational contexts that challenge notions of education as gender neutral. Helen Sauntson's research (Chapter Ten) is focused on teachers in the UK and their reflections, attitudes and experiences with sexualities, equality and diversity training. The portrait points to the lack of important understandings of gendered sexual identities among teachers and the lack of adequate preparation to deal with complexities of this nature. The portrait Naghmeh Babae (Chapter Eleven) paints of language learning classrooms is one where connections of language learning and ethnic gendered identity are seen to influence the learning context and the quality

of language learning in particular among Iranian communities in Canada. Also in Canada, Jessica Phillips' concluding chapter (Twelve) is about primary teachers in Toronto and their experiences with constructions of gender. Sites of early-years education alongside a gender analysis offer a connection of early learning and socialization of attitudes and understandings of gender. The teacher's role in such formation is critical.

This collection is varied, yet each of the contributions stems from sociolinguistic principles or traditions regarding the powerful intersection of gender and language. These explorations take readers around the world to see various circumstances that reveal our shared humanity and our continual search to make sense of its incredible complexity. The who, what and why of communication continues to shift in various contexts and with varying motivations and intentions. In this way, following the "shifting visions" in gender and language research is central in furthering understanding of the relationship of gender and language.

CHAPTER ONE

SIMILARITIES AND DISTINCTIONS
IN GENDER AND LANGUAGE STUDY

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Introduction

This chapter is written with the hindsight afforded by many years of experience of teaching gender and language. This has cast into relief for me two concepts which tend to be under-appreciated, especially in the analysis and interpretation of data, and the writing up of empirical work—certainly by students, but also sometimes by their teachers and supervisors/advisors. These are the importance of similarities and of distinctions—more specifically of *seeking* similarities across women and men, boys and girls, and of making a *range* of distinctions. These concepts intersect at various points. While this chapter offers pedagogic guidance regarding how to address both, it also has two theoretical foci, both related to *representation*. The first is the theoretical question of whether it is not only epistemologically but also politically more appropriate to look at and for “gender differences” in representation than in naturally-occurring talk. The second is the notion of “intersectionality” and more specifically whether we can talk about “representational intersectionality.” While *similarity* has a particular relevance for sociolinguistics in general, it has a particular ideological relevance for gender and language study. *Distinctions* are of course relevant to all the social sciences (and presumably the arts and humanities and natural sciences more widely).

I look at the above in relation to three recent empirical research projects: “*Harry Potter* and Boys’ Literacies” (researchers: Steven Dempster, Jane Sunderland and Joanne Thistlethwaite), “Gender representation in language textbooks in Hong Kong” (researcher: Chi Cheung Ruby Yang), and “Gender representation in children’s picturebooks featuring two-Mum

and two-Dad families” (researchers: Mark McGlashan and Jane Sunderland).

Similarities

The discourse of “gender difference” is not only dominant in many cultural contexts and Communities of Practice, but is probably universal. Evidenced by best-sellers such as John Gray’s *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (1992), Allan and Barbara Pease’s *Why Men Don’t Listen and Women Can’t Read Maps* (2001) and Deborah Tannen’s *You Just Don’t Understand: women and men in conversation* (1990), acceptance and articulation of this discourse is easy and broadly appealing. ‘Gender difference’ discourse instantiations are also ubiquitous. A website devoted to ‘pointlessly gendered products’¹ points to labels on two large jars of M & Ms: one says ‘ “Girls rule” mix’ and the other ‘ “Boys rule” mix’; the sweets/candies in the former are pink, white and green; those in the latter red, blue and grey. A second example is of two Fisher Price rattles: “For a sweet baby girl” (inside a heart) and “for a busy baby boy” (inside a circle). The girl’s is in the shape of a pink and purple diamond ring; the boy’s in the shape of a blue, red and yellow saw. On the packaging, where the girl’s says “Diamond ring rattle,” the boy’s says “I can see saw.”

We can here see the relevance of a quote by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet which I believe should be cited and discussed in every gender and language course:

Gender builds on biological sex, but it exaggerates biological difference, and it carries biological difference into domains in which it is completely irrelevant. (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2013: 2)

In whose interest is all this social and textual construction of gender—of masculinity and femininity as different? “Gender difference” of course comfortably echoes and supports heteronormativity—this would be the topic of a whole other paper. But Deborah Cameron (2007) makes an additional point, relevant to recent decades, that:

In the societies where the myth of Mars and Venus has flourished most conspicuously, it is obvious that sex and gender differences have become less significant socially than they were in even the fairly recent past. It is also clear that many aspects of human sexual biology and reproduction are becoming more susceptible to the intervention of science and technology.

“Gender assignment” is now done routinely When it comes to sex and gender, then, the age-old certainties are very visibly being challenged

She goes on to ask: “[C]ould our uncertainty about the present and future significance of sex and gender be precisely what is enabling the myth of Mars and Venus to flourish?” (2007: 168-9), to which the answer is likely to be “Yes—at least in part.”

Reasons for its existence aside, one result of the “gender difference” discourse is that gender and language students often feel an obligation to find gender differences in some aspect and context of mixed-sex talk, and disappointment if they fail to do so. This would be unsurprising even if they were blissfully unaware of popular culture, as “gender difference” reigns in the academic world too. An examination of Google Scholar in May 2014, for example, showed the hits for the following phrases:

- gender difference: 2,250,000
- gender differences: 2,240,000
- gender similarity: 428,000
- gender similarities: 501,000

There were thus about five times as many hits for *difference(s)* as for *similarity/ies*. In the field of gender and language, the difference was even more pronounced, with a figure of 2,160,000 for the former and 282,000 for the latter, i.e., around eight times as many hits for *difference(s)*.

Of course, the history of the gender and language field has entailed “gender differences” aplenty. Analysis of gender and talk has gone through the interpretive frameworks of *deficit* (retrospectively named), *(male) dominance* and *(cultural) difference* (see e.g., Talbot 2010; Litosseliti 2006), and even though these frameworks are now widely seen as outdated for many reasons—Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003: 9) cite “inadequacy and invidiousness”—their legacy still obtains. As regards inadequacy, there was an essentialist tendency to see language use *reflecting* speaker gender, and hence a focus difference. And Cameron had commented succinctly on invidiousness a decade earlier:

Every word we say on the subject of difference just **underlines the salience and the importance of a division we are ultimately striving to end** (1992: 40; bold font mine)

Appreciation of this, in conjunction with post-structuralist understandings of meaning-making and the “discursive turn,” has led to more social constructionist understandings of the gender/language relationship: That

language use/discourse shapes rather than reflects gender. In part because it does so in diverse, socially contingent ways, “gender similarities” will also often be evident.

Broadly speaking, “gender similarities” are also *salient*, not least as shown in the simple fact that women and men *do* understand each other, as do boys and girls. Cameron reminds us: “There is a *great deal* of similarity between men and women, and the differences within each gender group are typically as great or greater than the difference between the two” (2007: 163, emphasis mine). This often gets forgotten (earlier Cameron had noted: “Why does no-one study ‘sex similarity’? There is plenty of it, after all” (1992: 37)).

In her 2007 paper, Cameron observes:

Many differences are context-dependent: patterns which are clear in one context may be muted, non-existent or reversed in another, suggesting that they are not direct reflections of invariant sex-specific traits

This socially contingent nature of difference cannot be underestimated. Cameron continues:

If these points were acknowledged, the science soundbites would be headed “Men and women pretty similar, research finds” and popular psychology books would bear titles like *There’s No Great Mystery about the Opposite Sex* or *We Understand Each Other Well Enough Most of the Time*. Of course, these titles do not have the makings of best-sellers . . . (Cameron 2007: 163-4)

There is thus a “productive” intersection between commercial imperatives (surely responsible for the “pointlessly gendered” products shown above) and the familiar “gender difference” discourse.

The idea of studying “sex similarity,” as Cameron proposed, can be extended in documentation of research to making similarity explicit whenever, and in whatever ways it occurs, regardless of the original research focus. This of course is not the same as being “gender-blind,” which is pejoratively associated rather with ignoring gender tendencies when these are to do with the disadvantages experienced by being women, girls, men or boys.

Similarities: “*Harry Potter* and Boys’ Literacies”

As an example of “easy gender differences,” let us take two (representative) media claims in newspaper headlines about a particular impact of the *Harry Potter* seven-book series: “The Harry Potter effect:

how one wizard hooked boys on reading” (*Ottawa Citizen* 2007) and “Potter’s magic spell turns boys into bookworms” (*The Observer* 2005). Here there is no mention of *girls*, and no mitigation of *boys*. Claims such as these (more manifestations of the “Gender differences” discourse) prompted what became a British Academy funded project, “*Harry Potter* and Boys’ Literacies” (see Dempster et al. 2014, forthcoming). Children in four UK primary and secondary schools completed questionnaires about their literacy practices and perceived achievements in relation to the *Harry Potter* series; they also offered their responses to the stories. *Harry Potter* “enthusiasts” (those who in each school had read a certain number of books, as opposed to “readers,” who may have only read one) took part in focus groups.

The initial findings were as follows: Of the 621 pupils who completed the questionnaires, 606 said they had heard of *Harry Potter*. Of this 606, about half (the “readers”) said they had read at least one book in the series. Of *this* group, most were indeed boys, and this difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$). While this is an interesting finding, however, it does need to be qualified: These boys may have been greater *Harry Potter* readers than their female peers only in the sense that more had read just one book. This is just one of several possible meanings of “being a Potter reader.” Other meanings are suggested in other findings, i.e., of other “differences,” though differences which were not statistically significant. These included that, of the “readers” of *Harry Potter* books:

- (i) girls were more likely to be *re*-readers,
- (ii) a greater percentage who had engaged with *each* book were girls, and
- (iii) more girls than boys reported a positive influence of their *Harry Potter* experience on their later reading (more books, harder books, more fiction; again see Dempster et al. 2014, forthcoming).

Combined, these significant and non-significant findings suggest that the idea of *Harry Potter* as read and enjoyed more by boys than girls is very much a simplification; what is likely is that while *Harry Potter* may *tend to* be read by, enjoyed by and benefit boys in one way and girls in another, these will only ever be tendencies, some of which will be statistically significant, some not. Those tendencies which are not statistically significant could logically more accurately be described as “similarities,” especially if they are very far from significance. This is important, as there will always be “differences” of some magnitude even between two “matched” groups, not least because of intra-group variation, many of which will be significant neither statistically nor socially (see also Baker (2014) for further discussion of quantitative findings concerning gender).

Further types of similarity can be considered. One is that which is quantitative but not established by (or amenable to) tests of statistical significance (for example, shared modes). In this study, interestingly, the modal pattern of the number of *Harry Potter* books read by the “readers” was actually bimodal—one and seven (i.e., all)—and this was true of both girls and boys. A second, very different type is “perceived similarities.” These were evident in the focus group data, in which neither boy nor girl “readers” suggested that *Harry Potter* was “mainly for boys” or “mainly for girls,” including when asked directly.

What are the implications of “similarities” for the supervision and carrying out of empirical student research projects? Most basically, a similarity is still a finding, and a potentially interesting one. Additionally, from a feminist perspective at least, a finding of gender similarity is frequently something to be welcomed, as a small challenge to the ubiquitous and disadvantaging “binary” characterisation of gender. As regards Research Questions, if gender tendencies are to be explored with queries such as “Are there any differences in . . . ? If yes, to what extent/in what ways?” these need to be complemented with questions such as “Are there any similarities in . . . ?” In this way similarities can be made *explicit*. Relatedly, empirically-established differences or tendencies need to be fully contextualised—in particular, in relation to the (likely) co-present similarities.

More broadly, both similarities and differences need contextualising in interpretation and discussion of the findings. Although gender may be always “potentially relevant” (Lazar 2014), in the case of similarities, it may not actually be so. If it *is* relevant, something else may also be (more) so, such as ethnicity. In education, for example, although the three variables intersect differently, social class has on the whole been found to be more relevant than gender, with ethnicity in between (see e.g., Demack et al. 2000). Here, we can ask if gender and, say, class are relevant intersectionally, in an integrated rather than additive way. In this study, for example, although more boys than girls had read at least one *Harry Potter* book, this was statistically significant only for the secondary school children, suggesting a gender-age intersection, or, arguably, “gender similarity” for the primary school children. This, however, is to use the notion of *intersectionality* in a very weak sense, and I return to this below. We can also ask whether and when gender is being “made relevant” (Stokoe and Smithson 2001), for example, in conversation, or in media representations.

Findings about Gender

Before moving on to the question of *distinctions*, which is of course part of intersectionality, I would like to make some general, associated observations on findings about gender. As with the *Harry Potter* study, findings of any study are likely to be patchy: Boys may tend to be advantaged and/or dominant in some ways, girls in another (and in many ways there will be no evident gender tendencies). This is particularly so, I suggest, in late twentieth and twenty-first century contexts, with their manifestations of “subtle sexism” (Lazar 2005) and “indirect sexism” (Mills 2008). The challenge here is to seek *patterns* in the patchiness: Which girls/boys/women/men? In which contexts/genres? With which/whose communicative aims?

Let us also consider the important questions of similarities/differences and data type. Regardless of what gender and language students wish to explore in their empirical research projects, as I have said, there are many arguments for not seeking binary “gender differences” in naturally-occurring behaviour (including talk), and indeed in elicited data (such as questionnaires). *Representation*, however, is a rather different ball game. This is not the place to discuss representation (e.g., *vis-à-vis* construction) in depth, but let us take as givens: (i) that representation is of someone(s) and their attributes/behaviour, by someone(s), sometime, somewhere, somehow; (ii) that it is the result of a set of choices (e.g., of words) from a wider pool; (iii) accordingly that it involves creativity, agency and intention (or at least awareness); (iv) accordingly again that it is not a “mirror on reality;” and that (v) the availability/desirability of the choices are filtered through ideology, socially shaped beliefs and awareness both of what is commercially advantageous (e.g., representations of “gender differences”) and the consequences of transgression. A frequent critique of *gender* representations is that they are stereotypical (e.g., of women as privileging their appearance above all, of men as domestically incompetent).

I argue that in studies of representation, in different text types, including multimodal texts, there *is* a case (or at least a greater case than in studies of naturally occurring behaviour) for seeking out gender differences—or, at the very least, being vigilant about occurrences of these. This extends to representation of gender *in talk*, in contrast to a focus on speaker sex, i.e., what is said, rather than who says it. Different but related reasons are that (media) representations are often the privilege of the powerful—those who have access to media and with interests to protect, including interests associated with hegemonic masculinity. In a

broadly still male-dominant society, we would then expect (some) representations which serve to potentially disempower (some) women and girls. Indeed, many media representations of gender have been shown to ferment “gender differences” discourses (e.g., Freed 2014; Cameron 2014; Talbot 2014). There is thus arguably a need to be vigilant about all sorts of possibilities/manifestations of *represented gender difference* (including ironic and subtle ones).

A recent example is a poster produced by the University of Kent, UK, advertising a “Party in the car park.”

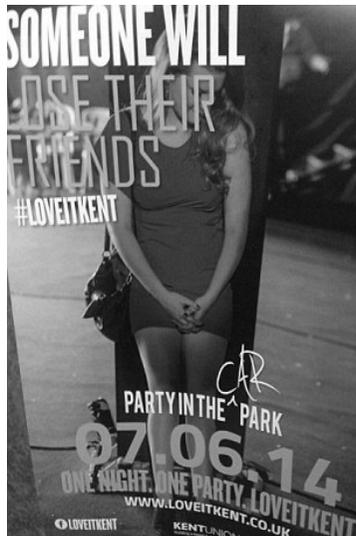


Fig. 1-1: “Someone will lose their friends”.

Critically addressed by Manon Aurelia Verchot in the *The Tab*,² it seems clear that one reading of this particular representation is that young women are “fair game.” As a result, the National Union of Students called the poster “disgusting,” and it was eventually removed from the Canterbury campus (see also *Mail Online* March 31, 2014).³

In the poster, *someone* is clearly gendered—and not as masculine. And while there are other readings, this very diversity of readings suggests a need for continuing vigilance, and suggests too that “gender differences” in representations would seem to be still worthy of study. In this case, the representation is very much that of a young *woman* (we can consider (i) why a young woman was selected for inclusion and (ii) readings if she

were replaced by a young man). Of course, what we are seeing is a familiar stereotype—not only that women are fair game, but also if they are not protected, what happens to them is their problem—and, as Eckert and McConnell-Ginet rightly remind us, gender stereotypes “need to be examined . . . as components of gender ideology” (2003: 85), as “part of the object of study” (2013: 58).

In the rest of this chapter I explore this idea in two textual genres: foreign/second language textbooks and children’s picturebooks featuring same-sex parent families. And here *distinctions* really come into play. A familiar distinction has already been made between statistically significant and non-significant differences/tendencies, but equally importantly between those of the latter, which might be *nearing* significance or are *far from* significance. I have also made a distinction between naturally-occurring data and representations. A further, very broad distinction is between one genre and another, in terms of their purposes and textual characteristics, although, as I will show, we can also make distinctions within given genres.

Distinctions and Language Textbooks

Why are language textbooks particularly interesting for gender representation? Perhaps most obviously, they are full of represented human characters, fictional and actual, who carry out a range of social actions (van Leeuwen 2008). Another reason is that they often involve repetition: drills, dialogues to practise a particular grammatical feature, repeated phrases in written exercises. So a gender stereotype in a punctuation exercise such as “Darling she asked sweetly do you think I could have a little extra housekeeping money this week” (from a 1976 textbook, *Turning Point*, identified in an unpublished essay by Alexandra Zogafou), may receive a lot of coverage in class. And while textbooks are pedagogically motivated, students may learn beyond documented curricular intentions.

Findings of early, pioneer work on language textbooks consistently found relative invisibility of women and girls—as referred to in texts, as speakers in dialogues and in visuals. Karen Porreca (1984), in a study of fifteen ESL textbooks in the USA, found a male:female ratio of 1.97:1. Relatedly, in English language textbooks used in German schools, Marlis Hellinger found greater anonymity of women, in expressions such as *John’s wife*. A second general finding was that of greater subordination and distortion/degradation of women and girls: women and men often in gender-stereotypical occupations with predictable differences in prestige,

gender stereotyping more broadly (e.g., the “nagging wife”), women and girls more frequently described in terms of physical appearance (Carroll and Kowitz 1994) and emotion (e.g., being over-emotional) than were men and boys, and, linguistically, women frequently represented by “speaking” rather than “material” verbs (e.g., *tell*, *admit*, *say*—Hellinger 1980). Porreca (1984) also found ten more occurrences of *mother-in-law* than *father-in-law*, usually with negative connotations.

Can we expect changes in gender representation in language textbooks since these early studies? Probably yes. Social climates are changing, with a raised profile of women in public life, globally, a new social awareness of the importance of inclusion, and the often unacceptability of different sorts of social exclusion. Equal Opportunities/Sex Discrimination policies and legislation are commonplace, and, in the world of publishing, guidelines for “Inclusive language” for curricular materials abound. For example, the Hong Kong Education Bureau’s “Guiding Principles for Quality Textbooks” (2014), point C9, identifying the desiderata, reads:

There is not any bias in content, such as over-generalisation and stereotyping. The content and illustrations do not carry any form of discrimination on the grounds of gender, age, race, religion, culture, disability etc., nor do they suggest exclusion.⁴

The “etc.” is interesting, perhaps leaving the door open for the addition of the currently omitted *sexuality* or *sexual preference*?

More recent studies do suggest improvement, with, for example, some male:female ratios getting closer (e.g., Pihlaja 2008; Healy 2009), but still sometimes being pronounced (Lee and Collins 2009; Barton and Sakwa 2012). In 2002, the Equal Opportunities Commission in Hong Kong still found a male:female ratio of 3:2 in terms of pronouns, nouns, titles and first names, and, again in the Hong Kong context, men in language textbooks still tended to be found in public settings, women in household settings (Law and Chan 2004), and men and boys were more active and sporty (Lee and Collins 2010). There is still therefore a need for vigilance.

Methodologically, as was characteristic of early studies of gender and talk, many early studies of gender representation in textbooks did not look for similarities, and some recent ones are little better in this respect. The importance of this is shown in Chi Cheung Ruby Yang’s (2104) study of two frequently-used primary English textbook series in Hong Kong, *Primary Longman Express* (2005) and *Step Up* (2005) in which she found that:

Although there is some variation [in gender representation] with textbook series and sub-genres . . . **there are obvious similarities in gender representation across the whole data set** (my bold font).

Additionally, and returning to the point about distinctions, some past (and indeed some recent) textbook studies were also arguably limited in their frequency counts of male and female characters. Whereas some did distinguish between text and visuals, few made representational distinctions between (1) types and tokens, (2) human/nonhuman characters (e.g., robots, ghosts, fairies, who may be particularly evident in primary school language textbooks) and (3) different sorts of visuals (e.g., line drawings/photographs). Most also did not distinguish (sufficiently) between different sub-genres, or between texts and uses of texts in the classroom. Likewise, textbook studies of gender representation failed to look adequately or even at all at sexuality or heteronormativity. I look at each of these below, but not before emphasising the rationale for the *need* for all these distinctions: they allow for heterogeneity of findings (“patchiness”), rather than un-nuanced findings about the textbook (or set of textbooks) as a whole, and, importantly, in today’s social climate, heterogeneity of findings in terms of gender representation (as suggested above) is to be expected. In her study, for example, Yang (2014) made use of the type/token, human/nonhuman and different types of visuals distinctions, which allowed for representational differences on some dimensions (e.g., *tokens* of *humans* as represented visually in *line drawings*) but not others.

Whereas *type* refers to an actual person (e.g., Susan Smith), *tokens* are all *references* to Susan Smith, including repeated ones: *Susan Smith*, *Susan*, *Sue*, *Miss Smith*, *she*, *her*, etc. This is important in frequency counts. Yang found seventy-five male and seventy-four female “types” in the two textbooks series used in Hong Kong primary schools, but the male:female token ratio was 733:522, a statistically significant difference. So while we can say that the characters who populate *Step Up* and *Primary Longman Express* are represented quantitatively equally in terms of gender in one way, they are definitely not so in another.

The distinction between *human* and *nonhuman* characters is interesting in that nonhuman characters, especially fantasy ones, including talking animals, are arguably not subject to the same social representational constraints (or at least expectations) as human characters. In principle, they do not “need” to be gendered in a human way. On the other hand, illustrators, and perhaps writers, may feel a need to do precisely this, and indeed more or stereotypically so: for example, giving a rabbit an apron to indicate that she is female. It is thus always interesting to ask whether

nonhuman characters are “humanly” gendered, and, if so, how. In Yang’s study, it was noticeable that pink and blue clothes were *not* used gender-stereotypically; on the other hand, in one of the textbook series, *Step Up*, nonhuman females were noticeably frequently portrayed with accessories such as handbags and/or with bows in their hair.

The distinction between different types of visuals (e.g., photographs and line drawings) is interesting in that a modern photograph (unless it is digitally altered) must show what is happening at the time it is taken. Many years ago, commenting on the 1970s textbook series *English for Today*, Hartman and Judd (1978) made the observation that the photographs showed women “in a variety of occupational roles not reflected by the text itself” and indeed were far less gender-stereotypical than the drawings. They commented, “Perhaps photographs capture a reality that has not yet thoroughly impressed itself on our more conservative imaginations” (388). Of course, we can again expect patchiness of findings here, and indeed Yang (2014) found human males quantitatively over-represented in the line drawings, nonhuman females in the (fewer) photographs—both significantly so. This can be seen as an intersectional relationship between visual type and character type (but see below for more on intersectionality).

The distinction between textbook sub-genres is an important one, as it is entirely possible that gender representation will vary between, say, reading comprehension exercises, listening exercises and dialogues. Yang (2014) found significantly more gender imbalance in terms of tokens of male characters in the reading passages in both textbook series than in the dialogues. And dialogues are of particular interest, given their implications for classroom practice—if, say, the teacher asks male students to play the male roles, female students the female roles. I return to this below, but to make the point: A study of an early textbook, *Functions of English* (1977), found that in the fifteen dialogues, all included at least one male character, seven included no female characters and all were initiated by a male character (Jones, Kitetu and Sunderland 1997). On the other hand, Yang found significantly more utterances in the between-female than the between-male dialogues in *Primary Longman Express*, a reminder that imbalance is not always “in favour” of males.

To summarise the findings of Yang’s (2014) study of the primary textbooks, *Primary Longman Express* and *Step Up*, used in Hong Kong, what is represented is mainly gender similarity. There were six cases of statistically significant over-representation of males, three of females. While this can be seen as predictable patchiness, the direction suggests that this is still a matter of concern.

The distinction between textbook texts and uses of those texts in the classroom clearly concerns students and student-teacher interaction as well as the teacher. For example, we cannot predict from a given text what the students will think or say about it; in particular, sexist representations can be recognised and resisted/critiqued. Looking at the teacher, we can ask what she does with a given text. This is because teacher behaviour is also unpredictable from the text itself: the teacher may be in a hurry, she may misinterpret or re-interpret the textbook writer's intention, she may not feel confident about the particular teaching point, she may like or dislike the particular content, she may feel she can deal with it in a way better than that proposed in the textbook itself. As an example, a teacher in Portugal using a textbook text about a wedding decided to tell his students about weddings in the UK. He said:

And the bride (.) usually (.) if it's for the church wedding will wear white (.) and (.) the bridesmaids (.) she will often choose the (.) the outfit for them (.) usually she chooses something horrible so they (.) don't look as good as her (Shattuck 1996: 27)

While this utterance represents women as vain and as jealous of other women (it may have been intended as a joke; it may or may not have been received as such), the utterance itself was completely unpredictable from the text itself. Conversely, a sexist text can also be critiqued (rehabilitated?) by the teacher. Angela, a French teacher, said in an interview with the researchers:

We used to laugh at this—Madame Lafayette . . . we used to ask them “look at this, ‘where is she? in the kitchen’—and where else would she be? She couldn't possibly be anywhere else” so we used to make fun and make jokes of it. (Sunderland et al. 2002)

The last critique of language textbook studies to be mentioned here is that analysts have shown a preoccupation with gender and traditional gender relationships at the expense of considering sexuality or exposing heteronormativity. It is not just that textbooks do not represent gay relationships, but that they also tend to be extremely heteronormative, with continual representations of heterosexual couples, conventional nuclear families and possible heterosexual romance. Similarly, language textbook studies are behind the times in the field of gender and language, in that they tend not to consider sexuality (but see Pakula et al. 2014; Gray 2013; Nelson 2009). A response to this may be that large-scale, commercial publishing of language (especially English) textbooks is subject to global

market forces (again see Gray 2013). Textbooks could nevertheless safely move some distance from heteronormativity and include, for example, more portrayals of single parents and/or same-sex friends and friendship groups (which would allow a reading of gayness), representations of social diversity more generally and fewer explicitly heterosexual interest narratives. Implications for students analysing textbooks are that they not only critique gender imbalance and stereotyping, but also highlight the textual prevalence/flaunting of heterosexuality (which is not hard!), and also look for and welcome non-heteronormative representations or at least at possible readings of these, and if possible also consider ways they are addressed in class (the “talk around the text”).

In the last part of this chapter, I will return to the notion of *intersectionality*, with particular reference to picturebooks featuring same-sex parents, and hence to *representational* intersectionality. *Intersectionality* involves, here, making a basic conceptual distinction between gender and something else, and looking at relationships between the two concepts. The term is sometimes used literally to mean the intersection between gender and ethnicity/social class/age or some other *social variable* or identity. But this is not very different from traditional sociolinguistic variationist studies, e.g., language use in relation to gender and social class (Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972): a combination of social variables “gender **and** class” or “gender **and** race” (what Elizabeth Spelman (1988) called “the ampersand problem”). Intersectionality is, however, more interestingly and powerfully used to mean a complex system of power/oppression, *as experienced*. As Michelle Lazar writes:

Even though women as a social category are structurally disadvantaged in the patriarchal gender order, the intersection of gender *with other systems of power* based on race, social class, sexuality and so on means that gender oppression is neither materially experienced nor discursively enacted in the same way for women everywhere. (2014: 189; my italics)

The term used in this sense can be credited to legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, who, with a focus on race, argued that:

The problems of exclusion cannot be solved simply by including Black women within an already established analytical structure . . . the intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism . . . (1989: 40)

Interestingly, Crenshaw extended the concept (in principle, at least) to representation. With reference to a set of song lyrics, she wrote: