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# Evangelical Perceptions on Linguistic Sexism in English

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Evangelical Perceptions on Linguistic Sexism in English

Anna M. Beckmeyer

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### **Abstract**

This study explores how evangelical Christians view connotatively and denotatively sexist language in English through a comparative study against non-evangelicals. Research on unnecessarily gendered language establishes English as contextually and denotatively sexist through falsely generic nouns, lexical asymmetries, and derogatory terms for females.

Evangelical Christians have historically viewed gender roles as distinct from each other, however, little research has been done on how that affects perceptions of gendered language.

Taking the stance that English unnecessarily prioritizes maleness, this study uses surveys and interviews to gather opinions on definitions of sexist language and asks participants to apply that definition in specific examples. The results are inconclusive in some examples, but a general trend shows that self-identified evangelicals do not see issue with what this study defines as linguistic sexism. This study also explores how belief systems correlate with why evangelicals view English differently than non-evangelicals. Since language influences how we perceive society, it is important to understand the influences linguistics holds in specific spheres. In this study, unnecessarily gendered language is the sphere examined.

### **Literature Review**

Culture is intimately woven into language. The relationship between the two remain inseparable. “Language is far from merely reflecting the nature of society; it serves as a primary means of constructing and maintaining that society” (He, 2010, p. 332). Gendered language is one specific sphere which culture has shaped. As women’s rights have become more accepted in North America in recent decades, changes in language use related to that discussion have inevitably followed. The culture of the United States values equality and desires for that to be expressed in language use as well as through actions. This has prompted the discussion on whether English is a sexist language. Understanding the different forms in which sexism in language can appear is important in evaluating English’s tendencies toward gendered language. The following literature review will discuss research that establishes English as a sexist language. This paper will continually revisit why sexism in language is an issue through specific examples of linguistic sexism. Finally, the discussion will be directed into the evangelical Christian sphere to examine how evangelicals view gendered language in English.

Is English actually a sexist language? Linguists have cast light on this question by studying how maleness is prioritized in English. Burlacu (2011) discusses supposedly generic nouns, feminine words derived from masculine nouns, and derogatory terms for women. Firstly, “he” and “mankind” are considered generic nouns and pronouns, although many believe they are falsely generic. The terms are meant to include females, but the male terminology is denotatively exclusive (Burlacu, 2011). Lexical asymmetries are another aspect of English that prioritizes maleness (Sarrasin, Gabriel, & Pascal, 2012). For example, “governess” is a feminine word derived from the male term “governor.” “Governess” insinuates a lower social class, while the term “governor” connotes power (He 2010). Each term implies authority, but in vastly different

spheres: a governess has authority over children, while a governor holds authority over a state.

As English has developed, some terms have changed to include a feminine form. Changing “Governor” to “governess” is one such example. Other examples can be seen in the words “master/mistress” and “prince/princess.” The female words tend to have a less favorable meaning or a meaning which connotes dependency on a man (Lei, 2006; Burlacu, 2011).

Exceptions can be found in the cases of “widower” and “bridegroom,” in which the basis are female terms “widow” and “bride” (Burlacu, 2011). However, these female terms are in the context of marriage, relating to a woman’s relationship to a man.

Other examples of unnecessarily gendered language are evident in derogatory terms for women. They are rampant in English compared to similar connotatively derogatory terms for men. English has two classes of female derogatory terms: the “mistress-figure” and the “mother-figure” (Burlacu, 2011). The terms “whore, slut, witch,” etc. belong to the former category and words such as “angel, lamb, baby, sugar,” etc. belong to the latter category. Using the mother-figure terms in situations that do not call for such intimacy is condescending and insulting to women (Lei, 2006). The mistress-figure category hardly needs explanation. English has far more derogatory terms for women than men and more terms that connote promiscuity. Since language is a reflection of culture, the differences in language referring to women than men is an indication of how women are perceived by society (Parks & Robertson, 1998). Therefore, the frequency of derogatory terms for female point to an imbalance in culture’s understanding of discrimination.

Sexism in language appears in several different forms and in differing intensities. Since it can differ in language and form, a catch-all term for sexism is not practical. Researchers have identified two strains of sexism. Glick and Fiske (1996) offer hostile sexism and benevolent

sexism as two different, but equally dangerous forms of sexism. Hostile sexism is open antipathy toward women, whereas benevolent sexism is dangerous in the subtle attitudes it fosters. Hostile sexism is synonymous with prejudice against women. Benevolent sexism lies in traditional stereotyping and masculine dominance. Sexism in the United States has become less overt in recent decades due to societal pressure against prejudice. Benevolent sexism is the outcome of the shift toward surface-level equality: a subtler version of sexism that views women positively, but still in restricted roles (Sarrasin, Gabriel, & Pascal, 2012). Benevolent sexism consists of chivalry and condescension. It claims women are weak and need male protection (Glick & Fiske, 1996). It deals more with attitudes related to sexism more so than overtly sexist actions toward women.

Not only do different forms of unnecessarily gendered language exist, but also differing levels of prejudice. Prewitt, Caswell, and Laakso (2011) have studied how naturally gendered languages, such as English, compare to gendered languages, such as Spanish or French, where grammatical gender for nouns is required. For example, in French nouns require the article *le* or *la* based on the grammatical gender of the noun. In their study, those who read a passage in English as compared to French or Spanish expressed less sexist attitudes. The grammatical structure of French and Spanish, gendered languages, correlated with more sexist attitudes. “Language not only reflects the conventions of culture and particular patterns of thought, but...can actually shape our cognitive understanding of the world around us” (Prewitt et al, 2011). The language people use affects perception (Parks & Robertson, 1998).

English identifies as a naturally gendered language which still allows for sexist attitudes. For the purpose of this research paper, sexist language has been defined as “words, phrases, and expressions that unnecessarily differentiate between females and males or exclude, trivialize, or

diminish either gender” (Parks & Robertson, 1998). Additionally, sexist language should be understood as interchangeable with the term “unnecessarily gendered language.”

How women are viewed in different social spheres, specifically Christian, is evidenced in the way language is used. Differing views on English as an unnecessarily gendered language can be attributed to societal differences in beliefs, attitudes, and behavioral practices of the difference between men and women (Prewitt et al, 2011). Some evangelical Christians create a subculture which seeks to retain traditional gender roles of men and women. For example, some emphasize that in the beginning Eve was created from Adam (Genesis 2:22). The evangelical church holds protective attitudes toward women and a reverence for them as wives and mothers (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This may translate into the use of patriarchal language that individuals who hold to less traditional beliefs consider unnecessarily gendered. Some take traditional ideology further and suggest that the church harbors sexist attitudes and behaviors (Gonzales, 1982). Ruether (2014) discusses how the church claims that men and women are created equal, yet women are not allowed the same privileges men are. To him, this tendency seems hypocritical. For example, women are not allowed to hold the same offices as men in the church.

Some more progressive branches of the church advocate changing terminology for God to more gender neutral terms. Feminine terminology for God is strongly opposed by more traditional denominations and even seen as heretical (Toon, 1991). This resolve in belief has earned some conservative branches of Christianity the label of prejudiced and unprogressive. Since the evangelical church holds to a more traditional stance on the roles of men and women, society often views that stance as restricting to women. Whether or not the church is prejudiced against women is another study entirely, but how evangelicals view language is inseparable from

their beliefs. Prewitt and colleagues (2011) claim belief systems inevitably affect language and, therefore, linguistics inevitably affects the church.

A basis of understanding of why English can be considered unnecessarily gendered gives a starting point to the discussion of whether evangelical Christians view English in a similar manner. Burlacu's (2011) research points to countless connotative and denotative examples in sexist tendencies in English, giving authority to the claim that English is a sexist language. Variances in sexism between languages show that sexism can be controlled and measured. Since English is naturally gendered it harbors fewer sexist attitudes than romance languages and other languages. Knowing sexism is partially dependent on language aside from connotations is important in trying to determine whether evangelicals perceive English as unnecessarily gendered. Finally, the church as a traditionally patriarchal establishment has been criticized for being prejudiced, and ultimately sexist. How this relates to language is unknown. Although evangelical Christians historically hold to traditional views on the roles of women and men, little research has been done on whether gender restrictions are reflected in evangelical Christians' use of English.

"Linguistic sexism is rooted in the social inequality between men and women" (He, 2010, p. 334). The success of eliminating sexism likely lies in social change, rather than purely linguistic change. If social inequality remains, linguistic attempts to achieve real equality are anything but possible (He, 2010). This research approaches English as a sexist language. Since English has been established as unnecessarily gendered, the next step is understanding how subcultures of American society view the language they use. If the sub culture of evangelical Christianity fails to understand English's sexist tendencies, social change is impossible. This study aims to answer the following questions:

- Do evangelical Christians and non-evangelicals have different definitions of sexism?
- Do evangelicals view benevolent sexism as a legitimate form of sexism?
- Do evangelical Christians perceive distinctions in the roles of men versus women that inform how they view gendered language?
- How do belief systems influence reactions to sexist language?

### **Methodology**

In order to evaluate how evangelical Christians view the English language, I used surveys (see Appendix A) and two sets of interviews (see Appendix B and C). The survey gathered opinions on the idea of language being sexist from the viewpoint of college age individuals. One survey was sent to twenty-eight individuals who identify as evangelical Christians. An identical survey was sent to seven college aged individuals who identified as non-evangelical Christians. This second survey group served as a group in which to compare perspectives. Gender was roughly equal in each group—half male, half female. The survey used both qualitative and quantitative data to gather opinions. The first questions asked the participants to define sexism. This served two purposes: it informed the participants to what the survey was about and showed whether sexism is defined differently by different groups. More open-ended questions asked respondents to list derogatory terms for men and derogatory terms for women. These questions aimed at procuring information on how negative names for the genders compared and if derogatory terms were consistent in the evangelical and non-evangelical groups. Another set of open questions asked what participants thought of when they hear the word “bachelor” and the word “spinster.” The denotation of both terms refer to an unmarried person, the only difference is gender, so these questions aimed at uncovering connotations behind the words. One question

also asked what the participants thought inherently sexist language was, focusing the definition on language specifically. The other portion of the survey served as quantitative data.

To find more developed, holistic answers I conducted four initial interviews—two individuals who identified as evangelical Christians and two who did not. The same set of questions was asked of each individual. The basic format of the interview was explaining examples of sexist language found in research and asking for the interviewee's response. The first questions were broad and asked whether language, and specifically English, can be sexist. The next question asked for the interviewee's opinion on changing male specific terms for occupations to be more gender inclusive. Another question asked for opinions about Miss, Mrs., and Ms. as titles for women. Opinions on different connotations of the word "tramp" for a male versus a female were asked. The final example outlined the idea of hostile sexism and benevolent sexism with a definition and example from Glick and Fiske (1996). I ended the interview by asking if the participant thought English was unnecessarily gendered.

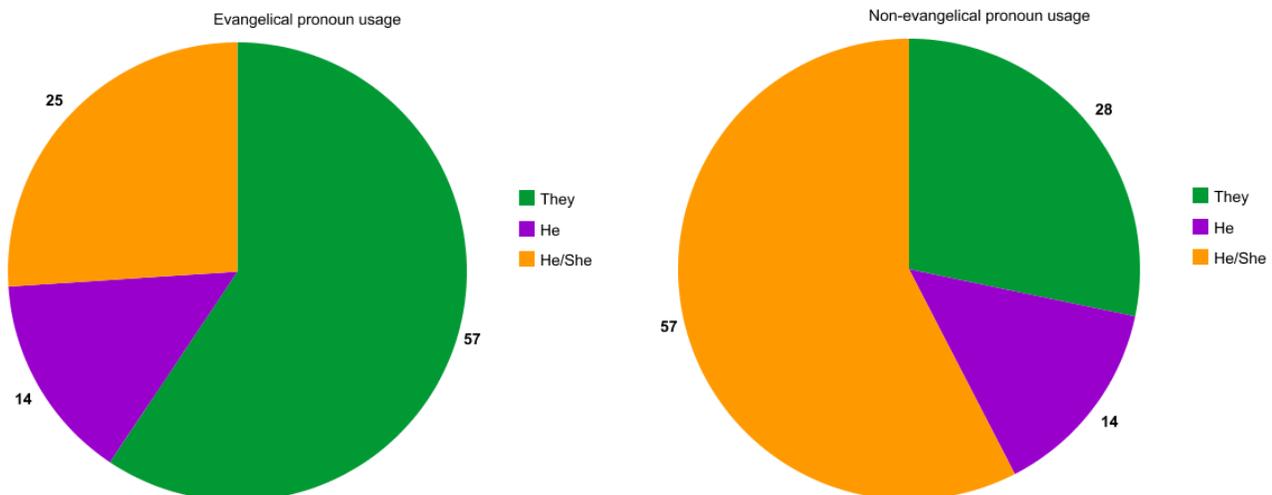
The second set of interviews were conducted after finding trends in the surveys and initial interviews. Fifteen college age individuals participated: ten who identified as evangelical Christians and five who did not. A few were survey participants and were already familiar with the topic of research while others were new research participants. Each participant defined sexism and sexist language. At the end of the interview each participant stated whether they believed English to be unnecessarily gendered. The interview consisted of examples of gendered language use and asked for a response from the participant on whether they perceived it as an issue. The examples dealt with third person singular pronouns, the titles Miss/Mrs., the terms bachelor and spinster, and benevolent sexism. Additionally, I asked the participants to rate how

sexist they thought several derogatory terms toward females were and their male related opposites.

### Results

On the surveys, participants in both groups responded with similar definitions of sexism. Words like “bias,” “discrimination,” and “prejudice” were frequently used. However, definitions of inherently sexist language varied greatly. Both evangelical and non-evangelical participants gave connotative and denotative examples. One connotative example said inherently sexist language was a word or phrase that at least connotatively applies to a certain sex in a positive or negative way, like “spinster.” Other people referenced the third person singular pronoun dilemma. Six participants in the evangelical group said inherently sexist language does not exist.

In the question that asked what pronoun the participants used for an unknown gender, 57% of the evangelicals reported using “they,” 25% using both “he” and “she”, and 14% using “he.” 28% of the non-evangelical groups reported using “they,” 57% using both “he” and “she,” and 14% using “he.”



In the evangelical group, 50% of the participants thought English should have a generic third person singular pronoun. In the non-evangelical group, 57% said there should be a pronoun.

The evangelical group rated the term “salesman” a 2.9 out of 5 on how sexist it is. “Mankind” was rated a 2.3 on average. The non-evangelical group’s average rated “salesman” as 3.4 and “mankind” as 3.1.

The interviews drew out the participants’ perceptions of English and how culture and beliefs related to language. I will refer to the interviewees as Participants A, B, C, and D. Participants A and B identified as evangelical Christians while Participants C and D did not. All the participants had fairly similar responses to what they thought of in reaction to the term “sexist language.” Their answers to whether language, and English particularly, is sexist were varied. Evangelicals and non-evangelicals both had differing answers. Participant A’s response to sexist language had a negative connotation while the other three participant’s answers were neutral. When asked if English specifically is sexist, Participants A said no while Participants B, C, and D said it depends on factors like perception, culture, and context.

Participants A and D thought changing terms like salesman and mankind to more inclusive was unnecessary. Participant A expressed that mankind is not sexist since woman originated from man. He stated that the term has been used for a long time and does not have to do with men. Participant B expressed neutrality toward more inclusive terms, while Participant C thought it would be beneficial so as not to preemptively form opinions on the gender, and therefore the capabilities of the person based on assumed gender.

The issue of Miss/Mrs./Ms. compared to Mr. was the next topic the interview explored. After being exposed to two opposite opinions on the issue of whether women should be defined by marital status, the participants were asked what opinion he or she believed an evangelical Christian would have on the issue. The evangelical participants were fairly neutral toward it, believing it should not be an issue, and pointed to Biblical evidence where man is the head of the

house. Participant C also thought evangelicals would be fairly neutral toward the issue, but would support woman being created from man if pressed. Participant D thought evangelicals would not even address the issue because they would not believe it to be an issue. Participants A and D are male and dismissed the issue more so than female Participants B and C. However, the idea of using terms equivalent to the Spanish *senora* and *senorita* was given by Participant A. These terms define a person by age and not marital status and Participant A saw value in that concept, even if he thought changing the language was not practical.

The next question dealt with the connotation of the word “tramp” for a man versus a woman. The evangelical participants considered the term consistent in reference to males and females, meaning a person of questionable, promiscuous character. Participant B used the phrase, “degraded by society.” However, Participant A considered the term more derogatory for women because it is used more often for females. Participant C thought of the dog from the film *Lady and the Tramp* when asked about tramp in reference to males. For females, she thought of someone with loose morals. The difference, in her opinion was a “hobo persona” for a male compared to a promiscuous connotation for a female. Participant D understood the term “tramp” only in reference to females. In his opinion the term is used exclusively meaning promiscuous is for a female and should not be used in reference to anyone because it is degrading. Since the non-evangelical participants saw a difference in the term in reference to males compared to females I asked why they believed it was different. Both believed the difference was due to culture, context, and how the term is used by society.

In the next portion of the interview, the evangelicals responded to Glick and Fiske’s (1996) research of benevolent sexism dismissively while the non-evangelical participants thought benevolent sexism was valid and dangerous. This portion of the interview elicited the

most opposing views from the two groups. The evangelical participants supported their views with a biblical perspective on the roles of men and women. Both reported benevolent sexism as a non-issue. Conversely, Participant C understood how an evangelical would view benevolent sexism, but understood it as more complex. Participant D saw benevolent sexism as equally prejudiced as hostile sexism. He thought it fit more into a traditional worldview and that is why evangelicals would dismiss its validity.

In the second set of interviews, evangelical and non-evangelical participants again had similar definitions of sexism, but answers varied as to whether English was unnecessarily gendered. The non-evangelicals all said English was sexist *and* unnecessarily gendered. Six of the evangelicals' answers were different for the two questions. Four out of five non-evangelicals thought English was sexist compared to only four of the ten evangelicals—80% compared to 40%. On the question about benevolent sexism, 80% of non-evangelicals thought benevolent sexism was a legitimate form of sexism, while only 30% of evangelicals thought it was valid. Dealing with generic pronouns, 80% of non-evangelicals thought the lack of a generic third person singular pronoun was an issue compared to only 10% of evangelicals. On titles, 80% of non-evangelicals saw an issue with the titles Miss and Mrs. compared to 60% of evangelicals. Lastly, 80% of non-evangelicals thought benevolent sexism was a legitimate form of sexism compared to only 30% of evangelicals (See Graph 1). The majority of the participants rated derogatory terms as nearly equally offensive to females as to their male counterparts. For example, the term “whore” was rated a 4.8 on average on a scale with 5 being the most sexist, and “man whore” was rated a 4.3. One participant rated the derogatory terms for men as 10, even though the scale did not allow that, because those terms used words that referenced females to also be derogatory to males. Therefore, it was twice as sexist in his opinion.

### Discussion and Conclusion

For the purpose of this research I have defined sexism as “prejudice or discrimination based on sex; *especially*: discrimination against women” (sexism). Sexist language has been defined as “words, phrases, and expressions that unnecessarily differentiate between females and males or exclude, trivialize, or diminish either gender” (Parks & Robertson, 1998). Each participant defined sexism similarly to the dictionary definition. The participants’ definitions of sexist language were more varied, showing a significant drop in understanding compared to the definition. This trend demonstrates how a well understood idea like sexism can lose understanding when applied in a specific manner. Increased awareness is needed in the area of what is meant by sexist language. Some understood sexist language in only a connotative or denotative context, but the definition includes both. Evangelicals responded to sexist language more dismissively than non-evangelicals. Some evangelicals backed the claim that language is not sexist by stating Biblical evidence in which man was created prior to woman being created. Therefore, language that prioritizes maleness is natural. The difference in how sexist the evangelical and non-evangelical groups ranked the terms “mankind” and “salesman” points definitively to a difference in how each perceives English.

Additionally, many participants in both survey and interview research recognized sexist tendencies in language and even stated it was an issue, but did not adhere to a belief that English was unnecessarily gendered. This showed another disconnect between definitions and practical application. In my research, I consider the two terms interchangeable (Sarrasin et al, 2012). However, participants were inconsistent in their definitions of sexist language compared to unnecessarily gendered language. This could be due to connotations playing a significant role in research results. Sexism is a strong word that includes a myriad of connotations based on a

person's individual experiences. Interview participant A thought of the words "feminism, social justice, and oversensitivity" in response to the term sexist language. A non-evangelical participant thought of the expression "you throw like a girl." Connotations of the same words are different due to a cultural split between evangelicals and non-evangelicals. Evangelicals had more negative responses to the term sexist language due to negative experiences related to the term. The semantics of the term are inconsistent.

Another trend I found was that female participants were more attuned to sexist language examples than males. Even within the evangelical participants, more females recognized examples as sexist. Several male participants expressed that they had no opinion on issues and others recognized that they had no experience with issues such as Miss or Mrs. as a title. Since women are primarily the ones affected by sexism, this trend is consistent with the definition of sexism that states women are the ones primarily affected. Four non-evangelicals defined sexism as *only* affecting women. They believe reverse sexism is impossible. In the Mrs./Miss example, a higher percentage of evangelicals thought it was an issue that the terms defined a woman by her marital status than in the other examples. This was due to a greater response from the female evangelicals recognizing it as an issue, rather than situational like some uses of sexism. Not all women have experience with derogatory terms or are affected by lexical asymmetries such as "governess" or "mistress." However, all women have used titles, even if they were unaware of the implications of the titles.

Five evangelical and non-evangelical participants mentioned context playing a role in whether language is considered sexist. They recognized how semantics contributes to English. A reference to different people or things, even with the same terms, elicits different meanings. One example is in the term "tramp." Two participants recognized its different meanings based on the

gender to which it referred. Another participant mentioned culture's influence on sexist language and the cyclical relationship language and culture has.

The most opposing opinions from the evangelical and non-evangelical participants related to hostile and benevolent sexism. The majority of evangelicals dismissed benevolent sexism as an invalid form of sexism. They provided support by recognizing that they held a more traditional belief, but believed men and women operate in different spheres and have different roles. Benevolent sexism abolishes the idea of different roles and points to traditional roles as part of why benevolent sexism exists (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Because of their individual beliefs, a large portion of evangelical Christians do not recognize benevolent sexism as a form of sexism. This research found that 75% of the interview participants believe benevolent sexism to be illegitimate. All of the research points to religious and cultural effects on how the participants view the English language. Beliefs shape perceptions, even into the sphere of language. Two non-evangelical participants noted that benevolent sexism is more destructive than hostile since it is accepted and often revered in society. Hostile sexism is easily recognized, but benevolent sexism can be disguised as chivalry and respect. One participant stated, "It's not physically dangerous for a woman, like hostile sexism has been historically, but it's more dangerous in that people don't recognize it as sexism."

It follows that language that is viewed as positive toward women, even if it places them in a different sphere or gives them a different role than men, will be more acceptable to evangelicals than to non-evangelicals. This may be the reason having the terms Miss and Mrs., which define women by marital status, are more often viewed as illegitimate forms of linguistic sexism by evangelicals. Non-evangelicals more often dismiss sexism in examples such as Miss/Mrs. in correlation to their broader definition of sexism.

### **Limitations**

The people who identified more strongly with their self-identification of evangelical or non-evangelical were more consistent in how they rated unnecessarily gendered language. Several participants identified as ‘Christian,’ but not necessarily evangelical Christian. Their data fluctuated more than that of people who strongly identified as non-evangelical Christians. In further research, I would create more identity categories related to belief systems and observe how that affected data.

To accommodate for connotative differences in participants’ reactions to terms such as sexist language, I would define terms in future research. The goal of this project was to compare perspectives on sexist language and that required recording the participants’ understanding of the terms. This study identified how participants define terms such as sexism, sexist language and unnaturally gendered language. However, future research should be done to build on the trends established with this research between evangelical and non-evangelical participants’ understanding of the terms.

The narrow demographic of my research only gathered opinions from a small population—college age students primarily from the Midwest. This research should be expanded to include other ages and backgrounds to give more holistic results on how evangelicals view English. Additionally, balanced groups of evangelical and non-evangelical participants would give further study more substantial conclusions.

Little to no research has been done on whether Christians perceive English as a sexist language, so this research was very preliminary. More research could be done exploring new topics like marriage related terms for females compared to males, how the amount of time a person has been emerged in a Christian atmosphere affects perceptions of English, different

reactions of females compared to males to sexist examples, and how different connotations of the word “sexist” affect a person’s recognition of gendered language. Another benefit to the study would be more quantitative data. Much of this study involved gathering opinions on an array of examples and topics. Because of the lack of research on which this study was based, broad questions were necessary to find the points that were most opposing. In the future, narrowing the research to quantitatively study a few examples more in-depth would be beneficial.

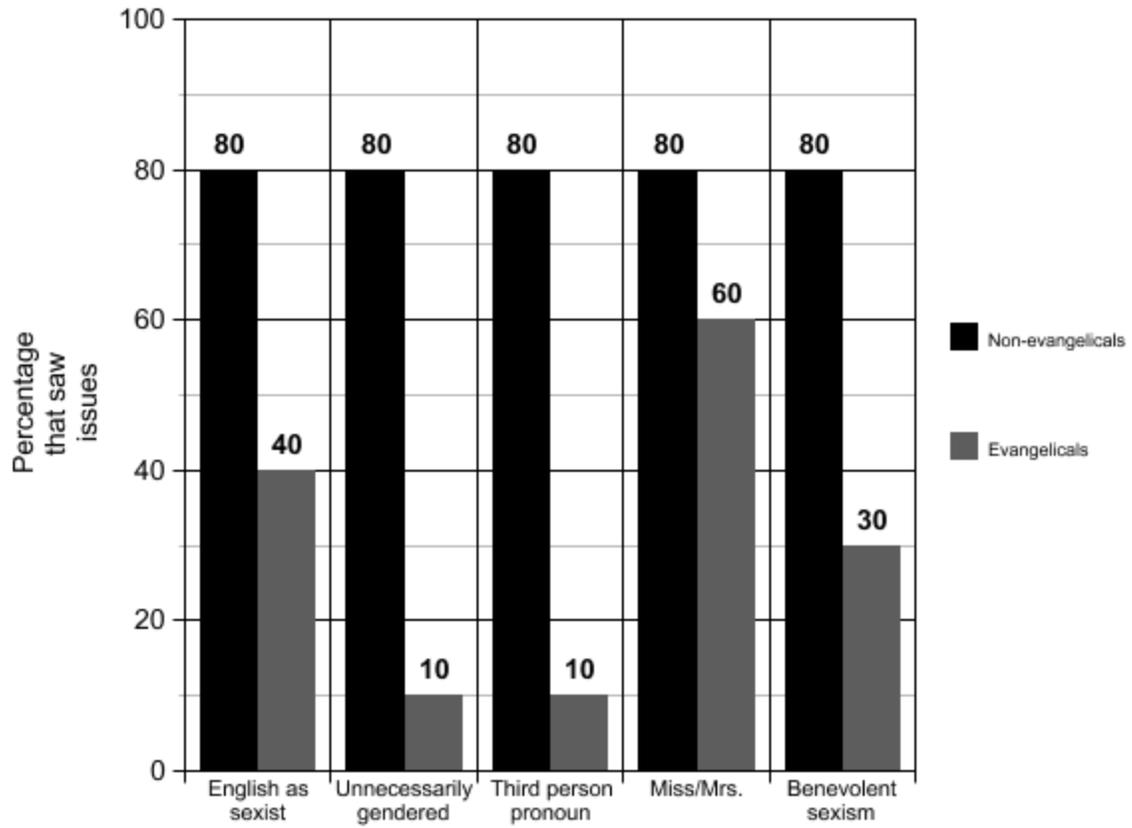
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Graph 1



## Appendix A

Survey

1. What's your gender?
2. How do you define sexism?
3. What pronoun do you use in writing when the gender doesn't matter? (for example:  
"When a student drops a pencil, \_\_\_\_\_ should pick it up.")
4. Do you think English should have a pronoun when someone's gender is unknown, like in  
the previous example? (a word that includes both he and she)
5. Do you use the term "fireman" or "firefighter" more often?
6. How sexist do you consider the term "salesman" to be on a scale from 1 to 5? (1 is not  
sexist and 5 is extremely sexist.)
7. How sexist do you consider the term "mankind" to be? (1 is not sexist and 5 is extremely  
sexist.)
8. What do you think is inherently sexist language?
9. What do you think of when you hear the term "bachelor?"
10. What do you think of when you hear the term "spinster?"
11. Do you identify as an evangelical Christian?

## Appendix B

First Interview Questions

1. Do you identify as an evangelical Christian?
2. What do you think of when you hear the term “sexist language?”
  - 2b: Do you think language can be sexist?
  - 2c: Do you think English is sexist?
3. What’s your response to people who claim that we need to stop using words like congressmen, businessman, policeman, or man referring to the human race for more inclusive words for females?

*(Background to next set of questions)*

Two extreme views:

The use of the title 'Mr' before a person's name merely identifies that person as a male adult. The titles 'Mrs' and 'Miss', however, not only identify the person addressed as a woman but also makes known her marital status. Two extreme views on this idea:

*I am in the process of buying a thing online. I get to the page where I am asked to enter my details. One of the required fields is ‘Salutation’.*

*The available salutations are as follows: “Mr, Miss, Mrs, Dr”.*

*This, gentle readers, is what we call a Conundrum. I go by Ms. Always have. Unless I get myself a PhD, I always will.*

*This leaves out Miss and Mrs. My marital status is none of your business unless you want to marry me. In which case you hopefully know me well enough to know my marital status already.*

*The only other two are Dr and Mr. Given that I identify pretty strongly as female and have (so far) an MA as opposed to a PhD, neither of these is entirely honest, either. However, I am currently in a situation where I have no choice but to pick one.*

*The question, therefore, is this: Do I have more respect for the institutions of education and academia, or for those of arbitrarily-defined gender?*

*Mister it is, then.*

*Mrs. and Miss should perish into extinction from lack of usage, especially the former, whose very existence grates on my nerves. (Ms., Miss, and Mrs.-the fatal feminist*

<https://thefatalfeminist.com/2011/11/11/ms-miss-and-mrs/>)

The other extreme view says that a woman should be defined by man, therefore it is right for her title to change once she's married. Woman is nothing without a man. No other titles need exist.

4. Where do you think the evangelical church would fall in this spectrum and why?

4b: what they would say is unacceptable?

5. What kind of person do you think of when I say "he's a tramp"?

5a. What kind of person do you think of when I say "she's a tramp"?

5c: Do you think there's a difference?

*(Background to next set of questions)*

Hostile sexism is prejudice against women and is the classic view of sexism or discrimination. Benevolent sexism depicts women as weak and needing male protection. It sees males as benefactors of women, provided women embrace their conventional (subordinate) gender role. The tone is positive, and views women as helpful and caring, but in restricted roles. "We do not consider benevolent sexism a good thing, for despite the positive feelings it may indicate for the perceiver, its underpinnings lie in traditional stereotyping and masculine dominance (e.g. the man as the provider and woman as his dependent), and its consequences are often damaging. Benevolent sexism is not necessarily experienced as benevolent by the recipient. For example, a man's comment to a female coworker on how "cute" she looks, however well-intentioned, may undermine her feelings of being taken seriously as a professional. Nevertheless, the subjectively positive nature of the perceiver's feelings, the prosocial behaviors, and the attempts to achieve intimacy that benevolent sexism generates do not fit standard notions of prejudice" (Glick and Fiske, 1996).

6. What's your response to this idea of benevolent sexism?

6b. How do you think the evangelical church would respond and why?

7. Do you see English as unnecessarily gendered?

## Appendix C

Second Interview Questions

1. How do you define sexism?
2. Do you identify as an evangelical Christian?
3. What do you think of when you hear the term ‘sexist language’?
4. Is English sexist?
5. Should there be a third person singular pronoun in English?
6. The titles “Miss” and “Mrs.” define a woman by her marital status, while “Mr.” does not.  
Is this an issue?
7. How sexist do you consider the term “whore” on a scale from 1 to 5? (1 is not sexist; 5 is extremely sexist?)
8. How sexist do you consider the term “man-whore” on a scale from 1 to 5?
9. Is benevolent sexism a legitimate form of sexism?
10. Are “bachelor” and “spinster” equal opposites? Why or why not?
11. Is English unnecessarily gendered?