

**Friday lunch talk  
Yale linguistics  
12pm Dow 201**

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**Gender bias in linguistics textbooks:  
Has anything changed since Macaulay & Brice (1997)?**

In linguistics example sentences there is a substantial imbalance of male (N= 816) to female (N=416 arguments). Males occur as subjects at over twice the rate of females (46.2% vs. 20.8%), while both genders occur as direct and indirect objects at similar rates (12.7% vs. 8.4% and 22% vs. 24.4%, respectively). Male authors used fewer female arguments than their female counterparts, esp. in subject position. As in Macaulay and Brice (1997; MB), examples often perpetuate gender stereotypes: e.g., for violent activities, perpetrators were predominantly male, while victims were predominantly female (1a); professionals were mostly male (1b).

- (1) a. Father hit mother with a stick.
- b. The stodgy professor left with his teaching assistant.

20 years later, many of the issues discussed in M&B are still present in current syntax textbooks. As a result, instructors who use these examples in the classroom and in their scholarly writings are implicitly perpetuating gender stereotypes in materials on a subject matter that should not be biased at all – the structure of human language.