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The use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons

Melanie Leigh Woods
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The use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons

Thesis

Submitted to

The College of Arts and Sciences of the

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree

Master of Arts in Communication

By

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UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Dayton, Ohio

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2008

ABSTRACT

THE USE OF GENDER-EXCLUSIVE LANGUAGE IN RELIGIOUS SERMONS

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The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effect of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons. It was hypothesized that the use of gender-exclusive language will lower the level at which females relate to the message more so than males and that the use of exclusive language will inhibit women from identifying themselves as the intended audience of the message. This study was conducted in two phases. In Phase I, two sermons were manipulated to produce one gender-inclusive and one gender-exclusive version of each sermon. Participants randomly read one of the messages and filled out a survey. This phase produced support for both hypotheses. Women did not relate to the gender-exclusive messages while men related to both types of messages equally. Additionally, women did picture females as the ones being discussed when reading the gender-exclusive messages.

In Phase II, a male and female minister were videotaped delivering each of the four sermons used in Phase I. This phase did not produce direct support for the hypotheses. As a whole, participants were more likely to relate to the inclusive messages, but there was no difference based on gender. When it came to identifying the subject of the message, there was no difference in who males versus females identified based on the language used. There was, however, a

significant difference based on the gender of the person delivering the messages. People who viewed the sermons delivered by the female minister were more likely to say that that subject of the message was either male or female whereas those viewing the sermon delivered by the male minister were more likely to say that the subject was a male.

The results of this study provide insight into the effect of gender-exclusive language in a religious setting. If the goal of a sermon is for listeners to identify with a message and apply it to their own life, it is hoped that preachers will adopt inclusive language in their sermons to increase the number of churchgoers that identify and relate to the message.

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I have been working on this thesis for the past three years, but it has really been a 10-year journey to get to this point. When I became a Christian, I had a strong desire to form a relationship with God but could not get past the language that my church used in sermons to address the congregation and God. I failed to see myself in sermons that used "generic" male pronouns and that professed God as the Father. This spiritual struggle has served as the foundation for my thesis and I have a few important people to thank for helping me reestablish my faith and investigate this issue.

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Chapter I

Review of Literature

"Linguistically, human beings are considered to be male unless proven otherwise." – Ann Bodine (1975)

Language is a constant, yet dynamic part of society. While language has always been a tool for communication, languages have evolved over the years as the society using them has evolved. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, developed by Edward Sapir and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf, argues that our grammar shapes our thought (Gastil, 1990). In the same way, culture shapes language just as language shapes culture (McCant, 1999). As a result, language plays an important role in the creation of social reality (Griffin, 2002). The words one uses will have an impact on the way one views reality. For example, if women continually hear gender-exclusive language, they may begin to actually feel excluded. Therefore, language reflects, as it shapes, how one imagines reality (Atkins-Sayre, 2005; Walsh, 1989). Additionally, "every language reflects the prejudices of the society in which it evolved" (Miller & Swift, 1980, p. 3). Therefore, a society that uses gender-exclusive may in fact be prejudice against

women. Sexist language contributes to sexist thinking, perception and behavior (Sweeney, 1993).

Defining the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis

Also known as the theory of linguistic relativity, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis says that language affects reality and the way we think (Lucy, 1997). Language is defined by Sapir (1921) as "a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (p. 8). This hypothesis claims that certain characteristics of a "given language have consequences for patterns of thought about reality" (Lucy, 1997, p. 294). Similarly, according to Whorf, speakers of different languages will be led by those languages to different observations, evaluations and views of the world (Carroll, 1956). According to Lucy (1997), "language embodies an interpretation of reality and language can influence thought about that reality," (p. 294).

Generally speaking, there are two levels of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: a stronger, more linguistically determinant hypothesis that says language determines thought, and a milder, more relative hypothesis that says language influences thought (see Cameron, 1999; Hill & Mannheim, 1992; Kodish, 2003/2004; Lucy, 1997; Penn, 1972; Sweeney, 1993). It is important to distinguish between these hypotheses. The first, that language determines thought, is viewed as an extreme position that is hard to empirically support; the latter, that language influences thought, can sometimes also seem hard to support. However, as will be discussed further in this literature review, several

studies have been able to provide empirical support for the milder hypothesis (see Artz, Munger & Purdy, 1999; Bem & Bem, 1973; Cooper, 1984; Falk & Mills, 1996; Gastil, 1990; Greene & Rubin, 1991; Hill & Mannheim, 1992; Kay & Kempton, 1984; Levinson, 1996; Lucy, 1997; MacKay, 1980; McCant, 1999; Rubin, Greene & Schneider, 1994). The current study is based on the milder hypothesis, exploring whether gender-exclusive language influences the way people think and the images that come to mind when hearing so-called generic masculine pronouns.

When the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis became popular, theories and studies about language focused on linguistic *universals*, not differences (Hill & Mannheim, 1992). One of the most renowned scholars in universal linguistics is Noam Chomsky. His theory of universal grammar is rooted in the concept that language is innate; people are born with it (Chomsky, 1968; Kodish, 2003/2004). Knowledge of language is, therefore, independent of thought and independent of individual experience (Chomsky, 1968). This is in direct contrast to how Sapir and Whorf viewed language and thought. They saw language and thought as *interdependent*, not independent.

Chomsky views all languages as being the same on some level (Cameron, 1999). Because of this, there are a limited number of schemas to which languages conform and a specific set of ways languages can be used (Chomsky, 1968). In following universal grammar, then, it can be assumed that Chomsky would argue against linguistic relativity, seeing languages as similar and therefore having similar effects on perception and reality. In fact, Chomsky

views the theory of linguistic relativity as "premature" and argues that the theory could be conceivable "without there being any actual or even possible differences among human languages," (Schaff, 1973, pp. vii, ix). Here he still argues for universal principles within languages, resisting the idea that there are any differences in languages or that those differences could lead to different interpretations of reality. After thoroughly investigating the limitations to Chomsky's theory, Sampson (1997) found that "there are some universal features in human languages, but what they mainly show is that human beings have to learn their mother tongues from scratch rather than having knowledge of language innate in their minds," (p. 136). His work refuted the concept of universal grammar.

Those who agree with Chomsky in believing that language structures are based in genetics might consider the linguistic differences (and implied cognitive differences, according to Sapir and Whorf) of linguistic groups to be trivial (Kodish, 2003/2004). But these differences cannot be ignored. There have been several examples of empirical research stressing that these differences are, in fact, important in affecting reality, perception and thought. Because people speak different languages and because people use language differently, research can examine whether or not these languages imply different perceptions of the world (Schaff, 1973).

Kay and Kempton (1984) designed a study to directly test the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis. They had speakers of English and Tarahumara, an Uto-Aztecan language of northern Mexico, distinguish between different shades of blue and

green. The English language discriminates between green and blue whereas Tarahumara has one word, *siyóname*, which refers to both colors (Kay & Kempton, 1984). In following Sapir and Whorf, this study hypothesized that the linguistic differences in these two languages would create variation in the speakers' subjective distances between colors (Kay & Kempton, 1984).

To test this, they made eight color chips representing varying shades of green and blue on two levels of brightness. Participants were shown the chips in groups of three and asked to pick which one was the most different. This process was repeated until all the possible triads had been shown, revealing the subjective distances between colors. This experiment found results consistent with the theory of linguistic relativity (Kay & Kempton, 1984). English speakers had larger subjective distances for the color chips, especially the ones that were a perfect mix of blue and green (Kay & Kempton, 1984). Because the English language has more distinctions between colors and more ways to name colors than Tarahumara, the English speakers saw the color chips differently. They thought about the colors separately, as either green or blue, rather than grouped together, as the Tarahumara speakers did. Differences in the language structures led to differences in thought and perception.

Another study examined how speakers of different languages describe space. Levinson (1996) defined different frames of reference people use when describing space. The first is the intrinsic frame of reference in which the object is described in the context of another object, using modifiers like left, right, top or bottom (Levinson, 1996). An example of this would be *the ball is to the left of the*

chair. Another type of spatial description utilizes absolute frames of reference, such as north, south, east or west (Levinson, 1996). Within this frame of reference, the ball would be described as *east of the chair*. Both of these frames of reference will have different effects on how a speaker perceives and thinks about the ball and the space around it. Lucy (1997) describes this effect: "If something is to the left and I turn around, it is now to the right, but if I conceive of it as to the east, then turn around, it remains to the east," (p. 301). A practical implication for this effect comes with giving directions. The language used to give directions changes how the giver and receiver of directions envision the relevant locations. Locations described using intrinsic frames of reference could potentially become confusing if the receiver does not have the same perceptual left/right as the person giving them directions. Absolute frames of reference, on the other hand, typically allow for a more concrete, shared understanding. Thus, the language used to describe the object spatially affects how it is perceived and thought about and how that perception can change or remain the same.

The idea that language influences, and possibly determines, thought, reality and perception has received much praise and just as much criticism (Schaff, 1973). However, in the years since Sapir and Whorf both passed away, their ideas have been carried on, tested and supported by their followers. It can no longer be argued that the theory of linguistic relativity cannot be empirically supported. The current study hopes to add to that support by examining the effect of gender-exclusive language in a religious context using a two-phase experiment. In Phase I of the present study, the effect of gender-exclusive

language was tested using written sermons. Phase II built on the findings from phase I by showing participants videotaped sermons and testing for an effect.

Sexist Language

The effect of language in general has been a major topic of discussion, debate and research amongst scholars (Falk & Mills, 1996). There is abundant evidence that language affects thought (Bing, 19992). Several studies have focused this debate on sexist language (see Artz, Munger & Purdy, 1999; Bem & Bem, 1973; Cooper, 1984; Falk & Mills, 1996; Gastil, 1990; Greene & Rubin, 1991; MacKay, 1980; McCant, 1999; Rubin, Greene & Schneider, 1994; Watkins Meyers, 1990). Sexist language, more specifically gender-exclusive language, is critical to study because its use results in women being ignored, disadvantaged, deprecated or negatively stereotyped (Artz et al., 1999; Pepitone-Arreola-Rockwell, 1981; Sweeney, 1993). When sexist language is used, women's experiences are ignored, undermined and made invisible (Sweeney, 1993; Tolstokorova, 2005). Generic masculine pronouns highlight men at the expense of women (Stringer & Hopper, 1998). Further, Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990) argued that "continual emphasis on the masculine as the unmarked conventional gender can...create the illusion that women have lesser rights in the moral order of speaking" (p. 229). Inclusive language can combat some of these negative effects. Sweeney (1993) noted that inclusive language is a "way by which that which has been linguistically hidden can be brought into the open" (p. 31).

Sexist language is that which entails inequality between the sexes or that which contributes to thoughts and attitudes that emphasize gender inequity

(Rubin et al., 1994). Sexist language can also be defined as "biased, frequently demeaning vocabulary that ascribes positions of authority to men and subservient positions to women" (Vaughn, 1991, p. 34-35). Gender-exclusive language can be defined as "words and phrases that are claimed to refer to both women and men yet are denotatively masculine; for example, the word *man* used to refer to all human beings" (Wood, 2007, p. 319). Martyna (1978) noted that the use of *he* to refer to both sexes results in ambiguity, exclusion, and inequity. That is, the generic use of *he* creates confusion in that it is unclear when it applies specifically to males versus when it includes females; it commonly results in the exclusion of a female interpretation and it creates nonparallelism between the male and female pronouns (Martyna, 1978). One example of nonparallelism is the fact that the pronoun *man* is equivalent with *human* but the pronoun *woman* is not.

Examples of gender-exclusive language include the use of *man*, *man* in compounds, and *he* when referring to both males and females (Cooper, 1984). The problem with these so-called "generic" pronouns is that most people do not use these generics in the sense prescribed by grammarians (Ng, Chan, Weatherall & Moody, 1993). Todd-Mancillas (1981) reviewed several studies on sexist language and found that "man"-linked words were more likely to be perceived as referring to men than women, and non-"man"-linked words were equally likely to refer to men and women.

In their study of adopting gender-inclusive language reforms, Rubin et al. (1994) conducted two studies to determine the use of sexist language in

discourse. The first study chose several speeches delivered by males from 1960 through 1988. They coded these speeches for sexist language using categories that included the generic use of *man* terms and the generic third person singular *he* (Rubin et al., 1994). They found a sharp decline in the amount of sexist language used in the more recent speeches.

Their second study asked undergraduate students to write a letter about a fictional proposal for mandatory drug testing. These letters were coded for gender-exclusive language using the same categories as the first study. Gender-inclusive language was also coded, with categories including using generic alternatives to *man* terms, using *they/their/them* to refer to single persons, using *one*, using *he/she*, and repeating a singular subject (Rubin et al., 1994). After writing the letters, students completed a survey on attitudes toward gender-exclusive and inclusive language. The study found that most people used pluralization strategies to avoid the generic use of *he* (Rubin et al., 1994). An example of pluralization would be changing the sentence "Insurance companies provide cash when a man really needs it" to "Insurance companies provide clients cash when they really need it." The students' attitudes toward sexist language did not affect their use of it in the letters. Rubin et al. (1994) believed the lack of a relationship between attitude and use was because "many young language users simply fail to connect language choices with ideological choices" (p. 109). However, they also noted that gender-exclusive language accurately reflects our gender-exclusive society (Rubin et al., 1994).

Watkins Meyers (1990) examined what language people used to describe a person whose sex is not specified. She looked at pronoun use in 392 college students' responses to the prompt "What is an educated person?" There were five general categories of pronouns used in the responses. Thirty-four percent used the generic masculine (*he*), 32 percent used the singular *they*, 22 percent used varying forms of *he or she*, 8 percent used *one* and 4 percent used the generic feminine (*she*). Female participants were less likely than males to use the generic masculine (Watkins Meyers, 1990). It might be, then, that they are also less likely to identify with a message that uses the generic masculine when referring to both males and females.

Gastil (1990) stated that "feminist scholars maintain that the generic *he* and similar words not only reflect a history of male domination, but also actively encourage its perpetuation" (p. 630). Furthermore, Moulton, Robinson and Elias (1978) noted that gender-exclusive language can be both the cause and result of sexism, and it must be noted that its use can create or maintain a sex bias (Moulton et. al, 1978). While some linguists believe that language is inherently sexist and always has been, others note the active role speakers have in choosing the words they do (Cameron, 1990). Is it the language that is sexist or the person using it? People have a choice to use certain words over others. So, while language may perpetuate sexism, it is also important to note the active role speakers have when using discourse (Cameron, 1990).

In their study of sex biased language, Moulton et al. (1978) had college students make up a story about a fictional character based on one of two

prompts: "In a large coeducational institution the average student will feel isolated in ____ introductory courses," and "Most people are concerned with appearance. Each person knows when ____ appearance is unattractive" (p. 1034). The blanks were replaced with either *his*, *their*, or *his or her*. The gender of the fictional character was determined from pronouns and proper names used in the story.

The results showed that, overall, when the pronoun *his* was used, 35 percent of the story characters were female; for *their*, 46 percent were female; and for *his or her*, 56 percent were female (Moulton et al., 1978). These results suggest that regardless of the neutral intent of *he*, *his* and *man*, the use of male pronouns as gender-neutral terms indicate that a male is being referred to, even when the sex of the subject is not clear (Moulton et al., 1978). This study also noted that women are at a disadvantage because they are part of a population referred to by a "parasitic neutral term" (p.1035). The authors defined parasitic reference as "a gender-specific term, one that refers to a high-status subset of the whole class 'human,' used in place of a neutral generic term" (Moulton et al., 1978, p. 1035). For example, the authors suggested that when college recruiters are asked to "look for the best student and send *him* an application," male students are more likely to be sent an application first.

On the basis of the findings of the studies cited above, one may argue that it is important to examine the negative effects of such gender-exclusive language and to highlight its use when women are the receivers of the message. Can women relate to a message that excludes them? Do they see themselves as the

intended receiver of a message that uses generic pronouns? Furthermore, is the generic *he* actually generic in use and perception?

Gastil (1999) attempted to answer this question when he had undergraduates read aloud a passage and then verbally describe the images that came to mind. For example, one student read aloud, "The average American believes he watches too much TV." The student then responded, "I see a fat guy sitting on a couch..." (Gastil, 1999). The study found that, in total, *he* evoked more male images than either *he/she* or *they*. For women, *he* also evoked more male images than either *he/she* or *they*. This finding suggests that women do not picture themselves when they hear the generic *he*. Gastil also found that, for women, *they* evoked more self-images than *he*. This further indicates that women do not think of themselves when a message uses gender-exclusive language. Gastil (1999) noted that *they* allows women the most opportunities to see themselves when used generically. Thus, the most effective communication would use the truly generic *they*. This study did not focus on the difference in singular versus plural pronouns, but in following the general rules of grammar, the pronoun *they* would only be appropriate when referring to a group of people (Fowler, H.R. & Aaron, J.E., 2004). When referring to a single person, the generic and inclusive pronoun *one* is preferred.

Bem and Bem (1973) applied a similar method when studying sex-biased job advertising and its potential deterrence for applicants of the opposite sex. Each participant was given one of three different versions of a booklet containing 12 job advertisements and was asked to rate how interested they were in

applying for each job. One-third of the booklets contained sex-biased job advertisements, or ads that supported gender stereotypes. Another third of the booklets contained unbiased job advertisements that eliminated all sex-related job titles and pronouns, but had the same content as the first set. A final third had sex-reversed advertisements that were worded specifically to contradict gender role stereotypes. The findings of the study showed that sex-biased jobs clearly discouraged men and women from applying for "opposite-sex" jobs (Bem & Bem, 1973). Bem and Bem found that more women would be interested in applying for "male" jobs if the ad's sex bias were removed and would be even more interested if affirmative-action ads were specifically written to recruit them (Bem & Bem, 1973).

These findings imply that women respond more to messages written using language that includes, rather than excludes, them. Bem and Bem (1973) also suspected that most men and women never bother to read or seriously consider opposite-sex advertisements. It could be that women ignore messages not geared toward them and that, for the most effective communication, the senders of these messages should reevaluate their use of sexist language. It is important to note that this study took place more than 30 years ago when women were not as prevalent in the workforce. Women today, who are not as limited in the types of jobs they can have, might respond differently to opposite-sex advertisements. With things like equal employment policies and nondiscrimination acts, women today might be less affected by the language in advertisements as far as what

jobs they are interested in applying for. Regardless, Bem and Bem's research provides a strong foundation in the argument against sexist language.

Falk and Mills (1996) reported that several studies show the more a receiver feels he or she is similar to the source of a message, the more effective the persuasive appeal will be. If messages persistently use gender-exclusive language, a woman may perceive the sender as a man and therefore not feel similar to the sender. Even more important is whether or not receivers perceive themselves as the intended audience. If people interpret generic pronouns to signify masculine subjects, as Gastil (1999) found, it follows that women will not identify with messages that use such language.

To study this effect, Falk and Mills (1996) surveyed college students to see how much they perceived themselves to be the intended audience of an advertisement and how they felt about sexist language, among other things. The results showed that for advertisements worded using masculine language, men gave the perceived intended audience a mean ranking of 4.1 (out of 5) whereas women only rated it a 2.5 (Falk & Mills, 1996). This finding supported their hypothesis that women would be less likely to perceive themselves as the intended audience when masculine generic wording was used and reinforced the idea that generic masculine pronouns were not accepted as generic by their audiences (Falk & Mills, 1996). This study, like several others, reinforces the fact that gender-exclusive language is just that -- exclusive.

It is important to note that gender-exclusive language is not always bad. For instance, it is acceptable to use the term *he* when referring to a male subject.

Likewise, it is not sexist to describe a group of people as *men* if they all are, in fact, men. The American Psychological Association produced guidelines for nonsexist language in APA journals in 1977. The guidelines, as cited in the February 1978 *Personnel and Guidance Journal*, stated that an "author should make clear that both sexes are under discussion when they are and should indicate sex when only one sex is discussed" (p. 374).

Sermons as Forms of Communication

All of the studies mentioned so far look at gender-exclusive language in a general sense. The current study intends to determine the effects of gender-exclusive language in a religious setting. One of the most central forms of communication in religions is preaching (Joseph & Thompson, 2004). A vast majority of preaching is done in the form of a sermon. It has only been in the past few decades that sermons have been studied as a form of human communication (Greene & Rubin, 1991). The focus of much of this research has been on increasing the effectiveness of sermon preaching (Joseph, 2002). By investigating the effect of gender-exclusive language in sermons, the current study intends to make preaching a more effective form of communication for its female receivers.

Guthrie (2007) conducted a comprehensive review of empirical studies focusing on preaching looking for patterns in the research. He determined seven general research questions that have been commonly pursued in empirical studies: what are preachers actually preaching, how often do preachers preach on social issues, do sermons persuade, do individual differences in hearers

matter for preaching, what qualities in a sermon make it more effective, does feedback and training help the preacher to preach more effectively and how do people best understand and retain religious messages (Guthrie, 2007). In his analysis, Guthrie (2007) also found that between 1979 and 2004, only five of the more than 60 articles published in the *Journal of Communication & Religion* were empirical investigations on preaching. This lack of empirical research led Guthrie to call for more, better empirical studies to be conducted in this field. The current study hopes to help answer that call.

Joseph and Thompson (2004) studied the effect of vividness on the persuasiveness of sermons in listeners. Sermons are a form of persuasion, attempting to “inspire attitudinal and behavioral changes in the receiver” (Joseph & Thompson, 2004, p. 218). Carrell (2000) found that 54 percent of preachers surveyed said their main goal in preaching was to change hearers’ beliefs, values or actions. Essentially, the goal of a sermon is for listeners to internalize the message and reflect upon it in their own life. Using the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) as a framework, Joseph and Thompson’s study looked at variables that affect persuasion. Citing the ELM, the study listed two key factors that influence the likelihood of message elaboration: those that influence motivation to elaborate and those that influence the ability to elaborate (Joseph & Thompson, 2004).

What motivation do women have to elaborate on a message when the language used excludes them? The study noted that motivation is impacted by personal involvement. Crawford and English (1984) found that both males and

females tend to interpret generic masculine language literally and, therefore, it has less personal relevance for women than men. Pargament and Silverman (1982) surveyed 15 Roman Catholic parishes and found that a sermon's perceived relevance was the strongest predictor of its impact. The use of gender-exclusive language may affect the level of personal involvement women have with a sermon. After hearing sexist language for presumably their entire lives, some women may be socialized to the point that they do not recognize gender-exclusive language, and are therefore not affected by it. However, those that do recognize every time a preacher refers to God as a man or uses the generic *he* might in fact have lower levels of involvement in the message of the sermon. As a result, these women may be less motivated to internalize the message and apply it to themselves. One such woman described her experience: "As I felt progressively more excluded and alienated, I found myself asking: Why do I continue to participate in a ritual that obviously does not recognize or value me? Why do I continue to support a church that doesn't support or nurture me?" (Cooney-Hathaway, 1990, p. 500).

Identification and Sermons

For sermons to be truly effective and inspire change in churchgoers, audience members must identify with the message. Burke (1969) believed that identification was a response to division. To make up for this division, people identify with other people, groups, values and more (Cheney, 1983). Burke (1969) further defined consubstantiality as the extent to which A identifies with B, or how much overlap exists in the interests of A and B. When applied to

sermons, it could be said that to identify with a message, the audience must recognize interests and properties in the message that they see in themselves or in their own lives. If the properties of a message include gender-exclusive language, women may be less likely to identify with the message and feel like it applies to their life.

Cohen (2001) defined identification in a slightly different way:

"identification is a process that culminates in a cognitive and emotional state in which the audience member is aware not of him- or herself as an audience member, but rather imagines being one of the characters in the text" (p. 252).

Again, if the goal of a sermon is for listeners to internalize the message and apply it to their life, the language used might influence whether or not audience members are able to imagine themselves as "characters" in the message. If a sermon is delivered using gender-exclusive language, women may be less likely than men to identify with the male "characters" in the message, and as a result, may be less likely to identify with the message as a whole.

Sexist Language in Sermons

While the amount of research completed on sermons and the effectiveness of preaching as a form of communication is ever-growing, very little has been completed on sexist language in sermons and its effect on the audience. As early as 1895, Elizabeth Cady Stanton called for a change in biblical studies, recommending *they* instead of the generic *man* and *he* (McCant, 1999). She believed that gender-exclusive language was a symbol of the oppression of women and that the use of such language may lead to

misunderstandings (Moulton et al., 1978). Though it was over one hundred years later that the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis was developed (Sapir, 1921), Stanton's arguments adhere to the same concept: the way we think is affected by the language we use.

The importance of studying language in a religious venue is based on the fact that language is central to humans' experience of the supernatural (Greene & Rubin, 1991). Joseph and Thompson (2004) argued that the purpose of sermons is "to bring hope, encourage the community to keep their faith, challenge to effect changes in persons and communities, and to convince listeners that a God they cannot see is with them" (p. 224). Because sermons play a vital role in religious communities, the type of language used in these sermons is that much more important to study.

Avery and Gobbel (1980) found that, at the time of their study, literature on preaching affirmed the church's declaration that in preaching the word of God is present. Additionally, in his analysis of what makes sermons distinct from similar types of speeches, Clark (1977) found that the purpose of most Christian sermons is to convey the word of God to members of the congregation. If people in religious communities perceive sermons as the word of God, then the language used in the sermon has an even greater impact on the audience. If a sermon uses gender-exclusive language and the listener interprets this language to be directly from God, the effect of that language on how a person identifies or relates with the message is intensified. In his book *Language for a "catholic" Church*, Groome (1991) argued that inclusive language is especially important for

religious leaders to adopt because the people in their communities have an immense respect for the power of religious words. Therefore, the nature of these words, whether inclusive or exclusive, is significant. Murphy (1980) noted that sermons must be dialogic in nature, with preachers being explicitly and reflexively in tune with their audience. It might be that preachers who use gender-exclusive language in sermons are not in tune with female audience members and therefore are not properly engaging in a dialogue with them.

Before going any further into the research on sermons, it is important to define sexist language in a religious context. Inclusive and exclusive language in a religious context can be both horizontal and vertical. Horizontal language refers to the people of the church. Horizontal exclusive language is consistent with the general definition of gender-exclusive language used throughout this study: the use of masculine pronouns when referring to both men and women. Hymns and sermons that use the generic masculine when referring to both males and females are gender-exclusive. Vertical language, on the other hand, is language used to describe God (Dumm, 1991; Murphy & Hughes, 1994). Vertical inclusive language changes are the most controversial (Strauss, 1998). Gonzalez (1982) defined this language as that which refers to God and is used to talk about God. Dumm (1991) described vertical inclusive language as using gender-free nouns and pronouns when referring to God "since God clearly transcends gender restrictions" (p. x). For example, many people refer to God as *he*, *him*, or *Father*. This is considered gender-exclusive language.

Historically, religions have been slower to change than the rest of society. The first American woman elected into a political position of power was Susanna Salter, who became the mayor of Argonia, Kansas, in 1887 (CAWP, 2006). However, several religions did not allow women to be ordained ministers until much later than that. In the 1950s, Methodist and Presbyterian women were allowed to be ministers; in the 1970s, Lutheran and Episcopalian women could be ordained; the first woman rabbi was ordained in 1976; and it was not until 1992 that the Church of England approved the ordination of women (McCant, 1999). However, many religions, such as Catholicism, still do not allow women to be ordained ministers.

Just as churches have been slow to give women leadership positions, they have been equally slow in altering the language used in sermons. Some efforts are being made to reduce sexism and increase gender-inclusiveness in sermons, but these changes have not been universally accepted (McCant, 1999; Sweeney, 1993). The foundation of this sexist and exclusive language focuses on images of the divine. The images and metaphors used to express religious thoughts are overwhelmingly male (McCant, 1999; Sweeney, 1993). Many of these images and metaphors are conveyed in sermons. The effect this language has on receivers, particularly women, is of great importance.

One image of God used by religious communicators is that of a powerful white, older male (Murphy & Hughes, 1994; Radford Ruether, 1983). The language used to describe this image of God is, not surprisingly, masculine (Murphy & Hughes, 1994). God is commonly described as a king, father,

husband, judge and master (Cooney-Hathaway). This image, however, is not consistent with the biblical representation of God, who is described as both male and female in Genesis, nor does it represent the majority of religious communities, which are comprised of men, women, and children of varying ethnicities. As a result, the majority of people in these communities, then, may be less likely to relate to a message that uses this stereotypical image of the divine. Some theologians are moving toward a new type of language to describe God -- a language that identifies with people of all sexes and races (McCant, 1999).

Acknowledging feminine aspects of the divine might enhance the likelihood that a woman will relate to the message of a sermon and see herself as the intended receiver. Research shows that the generic masculine pronoun is likely to limit opportunities and affect self-concepts of women (McCant, 1999). This research leads to the question, how are women affected by the use of gender-exclusive language in sermons? McCant (1999) challenged future research to determine the cognitive effects on listeners of hearing gender-exclusive and -inclusive language in religious settings. He also noted that hearing religious passages in inclusive or exclusive language may invoke different images for listeners. The current study intends to explore these cognitive effects.

Biblical Translations

In a discussion about language and sermons, it is necessary to address language and the Bible. Sweeney (1993) argued that an important source of sexism in Christianity, and by extension, the language used in sermons, is based on inaccurate and inappropriate translations of the Bible. The Bible was originally

written in Hebrew, Arabic and Greek (Resnik, Broman Olsen, & Diab, 1999). For centuries, the Bible has been translated into different languages. There are two general approaches to translating the Bible: a literal translation and an equivalent translation (Bock, 2002; Clason, 2006). The literal approach is a word-for-word translation from the original language to the new one. The equivalent approach is an attempt to convey the meaning of the passage as it was originally written using the linguistic style and idioms of the new language (Bock, 2002; Clason, 2006). The debate between these two approaches is whether or not the word of God is being distorted (Bock, 2002). Bock (2002) argued that it is possible to be slightly freer in one's interpretation when translating the Bible without violating the original intent of the word of God.

Gender-exclusivity plays a role in the process of translation. While some recent efforts have been made to be more inclusive, a good amount of translations remain gender-exclusive. The first true attempts at a gender-inclusive version of the Bible were the *New Jerusalem Bible* in 1985, the *Revised English Bible* in 1989 and the *New Revised Standard Version* in 1990 (Cosgrove, 1993). The translators of these versions altered gender-exclusive language when it was clear the original language referred to both men and women. Strauss (1998) defines a gender-exclusive translation as "a translation that seeks to avoid masculine terminology when the original author was referring to members of both sexes" (p. 14). A more recent gender-inclusive translation, *Today's New International Version* (TNIV), was published in 1997 and received much criticism. The Bible it was translated from, the *New International Version* (NIV), is one of

the most widely used by Christians (Clason, 2006). Critics of the TNIV said it was giving in to a "feminist agenda" and "political correctness" and was not to be trusted (Clason, 2006, p. 24). It is interesting to note that the TNIV only changed horizontal exclusive language, retaining all masculine references to God (Clason, 2006).

The use of gender-exclusive language in translating the Bible is just as significant as the use of gender-exclusive language in sermons. Sermons are a central form of communication in religious communities and preachers often quote the Bible in their messages to the congregation. Therefore, exclusive language in the Bible has the potential to impact people in the same way that exclusive language in sermons does. Clason (2006) summed it up best when she wrote, "as a feminist and a Christian, I would prefer the language of my Bible to communicate clear inclusion of women, using gender-inclusive language" (p. 33).

Studying the use of gender-exclusive and gender-inclusive language in sermons is necessary to raise awareness about the negative effects on listeners, particularly women. Research has shown that sex-role stereotypes are facilitated and reinforced by language (McCant, 1999). In accordance with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, the language society uses perpetuates stereotypes just as much as stereotypes alter the language used. Additionally, using gender-exclusive language seemingly maintains and supports masculine dominance in our society (Cole, Hill & Dayley, 1983). As McCant (1999) stated, there must be "a radical restructuring of thought and analysis that accepts that humanity consists of both women and men, and that the experiences, thoughts and insights of both sexes

must be represented in every generalization about human beings" (p. 184).

Murphy & Hughes (1994) further argued that "each of us should feel included, should hear ourselves named, should discover that we are part of this one great act of praise... The use of inclusive language assures that we will hear ourselves addressed in the language of our prayer" (p. 36).

The use of inclusive language, when applicable, may have a positive effect in religious communities. Its use may reduce the ambiguity women often feel about whether they are or are not included in phrases such as "the nature of man" (Bate, 1981). This ambiguity is often the result of the double role gender-specific and gender-neutral terms such as *he*, *his*, and *man* undertake (Moulton et al., 1978). One solution is providing information as to whether these pronouns refer specifically to males or if they are intended to include females as well (Moulton et al., 1978). The use of gender-inclusive language may also recognize women as being "real," when they have been repeatedly socialized to be unimportant (Bate, 1981). Women may also become empowered to think and act as individuals when language distinguishes them as separate entities from men (Bate, 1981). Finally, women may be more likely to find meaning, identity and belonging in inclusive religious communities (Cooney-Hathaway, 1990).

Hypotheses

After reviewing the previous research on gender-exclusive language and sermons, two questions are raised. First, can women identify with a message that does not specifically include them? Second, do women see themselves as the intended receivers of a message that uses gender-exclusive language?

From these questions, it is hypothesized that the use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons will lower the extent to which females relate to a message compared to males. It is also hypothesized that gender-exclusive language in sermons will inhibit women from identifying themselves as the intended audience of the message more so than men.

Rationale for Methods

To address these hypotheses, an initial experiment (Phase I) was conducted in 2006 and a follow up experiment was conducted in 2008 (Phase II). Each experiment involved manipulating the use of gender-exclusive language in sermons and testing its effect on both men and women. Similar experimental designs have been used by researchers studying the effects of gender-exclusive and -inclusive language (Crawford & English, 1984; Greene & Rubin, 1991; Holt, Lee & Wright, 2008; Ng, 1991; Johnson & Dowling-Guyer, 1996) and the effect of vividness in sermons (Joseph & Thompson, 2004) and have been successful at supporting their respective hypotheses. Hunter, Hamilton and Allen (1989) referred to this design as a traditional way to study language variables and noted that any difference found in the dependent variable is likely due to the difference in the manipulated, independent variable in these types of experiments. Messages in the traditional design control for confounding variables that might also have an effect on the dependent variable, allowing for conclusions to focus on the intended main effect (Hunter et al., 1989). Additionally, Guthrie (2007) noted that experiments can be effective in studying preaching effectiveness if designed carefully and if they include control groups.

Holt, Lee and Wright (2008) used a traditional design when researching spiritual versus secular based approaches to breast cancer early detection education on African American, church-attending women. They produced two versions of an educational booklet by manipulating the language. The spiritually-based booklet contained the same core information as the secular one, but also incorporated spiritual beliefs such as the idea that your body is the Lord's temple (Holt, Lee & Wright, 2008). All other aspects of the booklets were the same.

Johnson and Dowling-Guyer (1996) also used a traditional design when studying the effect of inclusive versus exclusive language on evaluations of counselors. Participants received transcripts that were identical except for the gender of the counselor and the counselor's use of gender-inclusive or -exclusive language. To manipulate the type of language used, Johnson and Dowling-Guyer altered the pronouns used to describe people in the transcript. Exclusive language included stereotyped pronoun references, such as referring to a secretary as *she*, and inclusive language used the terms *she or he* and *he or she* (Johnson & Dowling-Guyer, 1996). Similarly, Crawford and English (1984) manipulated text used in their experiment of the effects of generic versus specific language on recall. Every aspect of the essays was identical except that the generic version used male pronouns and the specific version used both female and male pronouns.

Greene and Rubin (1991) studied the effects of inclusive and exclusive language in religious discourse on how listeners evaluated preachers. They created two versions of a sermon on friendship, manipulating 29 constructions in

each sermon. For example, the exclusive condition used *man*, *mankind*, and the generic *he/his*, whereas the inclusive condition used *people*, *humans*, and removed personal references (Greene & Rubin, 1991). In the inclusive form, all references to God as *he* were removed, but male references to Jesus were preserved (Greene & Rubin, 1991). Joseph and Thompson (2004) also used the traditional design to study sermons when they manipulated the level of vividness to determine its effect on the memorability and persuasiveness of a sermon.

These studies relied on the traditional design of manipulating one variable in a message to study its effect on the audience. Gender-exclusive language is a variable that can easily be manipulated in sermons so this design is very appropriate for the present study.

With the exception of Joseph and Thompson (2004), each of the aforementioned studies only used one message with two or more variations. To better generalize the results of the present study, two sermons will be used. Experiments that use one message and alter its characteristics do not always guarantee generalizable results (Jackson & Jacobs, 1983). For example, studying the effect of gender-exclusive language in a sermon that discusses friendship may not have the same impact as studying its use in a sermon about marriage. The use of gender-exclusive language in one sermon may not have the same effect on audience members when applied to a similar, but not identical, sermon. It might be that the content of the message affects the extent to which people relate to and identify with that message. Using multiple messages will help control for potential confounding variables like content and

will increase the likelihood that the results of this study can apply to sermons in a broader sense.

Several studies and articles outline the definitions of gender-exclusive and sexist language (Bate, 1981; Cooper, 1984; Crawford & English, 1984; Gastil, 1990; Gonzalez, 1982; Greene & Rubin, 1991; Grodzins Romm, 1985; Johnson & Dowling-Guyer, 1996; MacKay, 1980; McCant, 1999; Moulton, et al., 1978; Ng, 1991). These definitions were used when operationalizing and manipulating the use of gender-exclusive language in the sermons for this experiment. In general, these studies declare that the pronouns *he*, *him*, and *man* are exclusive to women. Alternatives *he or she*, *she/he*, *you* and *they* are considered inclusive forms of these pronouns. When developing the different versions of the sermons, the changes in language were based on these accepted gender-exclusive and gender-inclusive pronouns.

Grodzins Romm (1985) offered ways to avoid writing with gender-exclusive language. Her suggestions included eliminating the pronoun, repeating the noun (i.e. replacing "God wants his people to..." with "God wants God's people to..."), and using *one* or *it*, among others (Grodzins Romm, 1985). These tactics were also used when creating the sermons for the proposed study.

Chapter II

Methods

Phase I – Written Sermons

Phase I of this study was conducted in 2006 using written versions of the same sermons that were used in Phase II.

Participants

Undergraduate communication students were asked to administer the actual survey in their hometowns. Students were given complete instructions and participated on a voluntary basis receiving extra credit. Students did not fill out the surveys themselves and were instructed to administer the surveys to nonstudents. The sample included 859 females and 839 males. Seventy-seven percent of respondents were Caucasian, 15 percent were African American, 4 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Native American, 2 percent Asian American and less than 1 percent identified themselves as "other." Sixty percent of participants were Catholic. Other religions identified included Protestant, Non-Christian, Jewish, Baptist, Lutheran and Agnostic. The sample included respondents from under 21- to 71-years-old with the majority (58 percent) falling into the under 21 and 21-30 age categories. Forty percent of respondents had some college education and 26 percent had received their Bachelor's degree.

Procedures

Participants were asked to answer demographic questions, read a sermon, and then answer questions relating to the sermon. Participants randomly received one of four sermons: a gender-exclusive version of the first sermon, a gender-inclusive version of the first sermon, a gender-exclusive version of the second sermon or a gender-inclusive version of the second sermon. The first sermon discussed what should happen when people go to church and the second sermon asked the question "Does God hear us when we pray?" All four versions are included in Appendix A. The sermons were taken from *The Minister's Manual 2002*. These sermons were selected because they did not rely heavily on material directly from the Bible. Because the Bible was "written by men, translated by men and primarily interpreted by men," its language has been historically categorized as gender-exclusive and its words cannot be easily manipulated for testing purposes (Gonzalez, 1982, p. 14).

Alternate versions of each sermon were exactly the same except for the type of language used. A manipulation check was completed for each sermon to make sure the independent variable was significantly altered. Fifty-seven undergraduate communication students read both versions of each sermon and completed the respective manipulation check survey. An example of the manipulation check is in Appendix B. The frequencies of the results showed that the messages were altered enough so that one version was clearly more gender-exclusive than the other.

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of the four sermons and then completed a survey with questions relating specifically to the sermon (Appendix C). An Attitude Toward Gender Inclusive Language Scale was also included in the survey. The attitude scale includes seven items relating to gender-inclusive language in religious settings and is rated using a five-point Likert-type scale. The Attitude Toward Gender Inclusive Language Scale has a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha of .89 (Robbins, 2001). This scale was included to test the interaction between this attitude and how people relate to the sermons. How people feel about inclusive language in a religious environment might influence how much its use affects them. For example, women who are very open to inclusive language and recognize its impact may be less likely to identify with sermons that use gender-exclusive language.

Results

Hypothesis One

In order to test the hypotheses, a series of statistical tests was completed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The first hypothesis, that gender-exclusive language in sermons will lower the level females relate to a message more than males, was tested using a factorial MANOVA. The independent variables were the message type and gender of participant and the dependent variables were the Likert-type questions "I identify with the message of the sermon," "I can relate to the message of the sermon," "I feel that this message applies to my life," and "this message spoke to me." Homogeneity of variance was violated for this test. A significant main effect was found for the type

of message read on how much a person identified with the message ($F=5$, $df=3$, $p=.016$), how much they felt it applied to their life ($F=2.694$, $df=3$, $p=.045$) and whether or not the message spoke to them ($F=3.491$, $df=3$, $p=.015$). As a whole, both male and female participants were more likely to identify with the gender-inclusive messages than the gender-exclusive messages, were more likely to feel that the gender-inclusive messages applied to their life and felt that the gender-inclusive messages spoke to them more (see Table 1 for means). A significant interaction effect was found for the type of message read and the gender of the participant such that women reading the gender-inclusive sermons were more likely to feel that the message applied to their life ($F=4.425$, $df=3$, $p=.004$) and were more likely to agree that the message spoke to them ($F=5.246$, $df=3$, $p=.001$). There was no significant difference for men (see Table 2 for means).

Hypothesis Two

A series of factorial ANOVAs was conducted to test the second hypothesis, that the use of gender-exclusive language in sermons will inhibit women from identifying themselves as the intended audience of a message more so than men. An ANOVA conducted to test the effect of the type of message read on whom participants identified as the subject of the message indicated a significant difference ($F=105.932$, $df=3.1688$, $p>.001$); homogeneity of variance was violated. In general, people who read the gender-exclusive messages were much more likely to say that a male was the subject of the message while people who read the gender-inclusive messages said that both males and females were

Table 1 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the effect of type of message read

*Dependent Variable	Message number	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I identify with the message of the sermon.	Message 1	2.345	.040	2.267	2.423
	Message 2	2.287	.041	2.207	2.368
	Message 3	2.287	.042	2.205	2.370
	Message 4	2.462	.046	2.373	2.552
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	Message 1	2.354	.041	2.273	2.435
	Message 2	2.305	.043	2.221	2.389
	Message 3	2.303	.044	2.217	2.389
	Message 4	2.415	.048	2.322	2.509
I feel that this message applies to my life.	Message 1	2.612	.043	2.528	2.695
	Message 2	2.527	.044	2.441	2.614
	Message 3	2.572	.045	2.483	2.661
	Message 4	2.709	.049	2.613	2.805
This message spoke to me.	Message 1	2.616	.043	2.531	2.701
	Message 2	2.512	.045	2.424	2.600
	Message 3	2.582	.046	2.492	2.672
	Message 4	2.726	.050	2.628	2.824

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

Table 2 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the effect of type of message read and gender of the participant

*Dependent Variable	Message number	GENDER	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I identify with the message of the sermon.	Message 1	Female	2.345	.057	2.233	2.458
		Male	2.344	.055	2.237	2.452
	Message 2	Female	2.243	.055	2.135	2.351
		Male	2.332	.061	2.212	2.452
	Message 3	Female	2.235	.064	2.109	2.360
		Male	2.340	.055	2.233	2.448
	Message 4	Female	2.538	.059	2.422	2.654
		Male	2.387	.070	2.250	2.524
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	Message 1	Female	2.359	.060	2.242	2.476
		Male	2.348	.057	2.236	2.460
	Message 2	Female	2.247	.057	2.135	2.359
		Male	2.362	.064	2.237	2.487
	Message 3	Female	2.257	.067	2.126	2.388
		Male	2.348	.057	2.236	2.460
	Message 4	Female	2.490	.062	2.370	2.611
		Male	2.340	.073	2.197	2.483
I feel that this message applies to my life.	Message 1	Female	2.601	.062	2.480	2.722
		Male	2.623	.059	2.507	2.738
	Message 2	Female	2.453	.059	2.337	2.568
		Male	2.602	.066	2.473	2.731
	Message 3	Female	2.480	.069	2.346	2.615
		Male	2.664	.059	2.548	2.779
	Message 4	Female	2.838	.063	2.714	2.963
		Male	2.580	.075	2.433	2.727
This message spoke to me.	Message 1	Female	2.592	.063	2.469	2.715
		Male	2.639	.060	2.522	2.757
	Message 2	Female	2.370	.060	2.253	2.488
		Male	2.653	.067	2.522	2.784
	Message 3	Female	2.492	.070	2.355	2.629
		Male	2.672	.060	2.555	2.789
	Message 4	Female	2.838	.064	2.712	2.965
		Male	2.613	.076	2.464	2.763

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

the subject of the message. The mean for participants reading the first message (gender-exclusive) was 2.61 (s.d.=.525), the mean for message two (gender-inclusive) was 2.23 (s.d.=.482), the mean for message 3 (gender-inclusive) was 2.15 (s.d.=.438) and the mean for message 4 (gender-inclusive) was 2.61 (s.d.=.494).

To test if the gender of the participant influenced the effect of type of message read on whom respondents said was the subject of a message, a factorial ANOVA was conducted. Homogeneity of variance was violated and a significant interaction effect was found ($F=3.134$, $df=3$, $p=.025$). Both men and women were more likely to say that a male was the subject when reading the gender-exclusive messages. Additionally, both genders were also more likely to say that either a male or female was discussed in the gender-inclusive messages (see Table 3 for means).

These analyses support both hypotheses. Additional statistical tests were conducted to determine other factors that influence whether or not people identified with the messages and who they pictured as the subject of the messages. A factorial MANOVA was performed to test the interaction effect of message type, gender and the religious affiliation of the participant on the five Likert-type questions relating to the sermon. Religion had a significant main effect on how much a person identified with the message ($F=15.114$, $df=4$, $p>.001$), how much a person related to the message ($F=9.190$, $df=4$, $p>.001$), if a person felt the message applied to their life ($F=14.541$, $df=4$, $p>.001$) and whether or not the message spoke to them ($F=13.893$, $df=4$, $p>.001$).

Table 3 Means for the factorial ANOVA for the interaction effect of type of message read and gender of participant

*Dependent Variable: The person discussed in the sermon is

Message number	GENDER	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Message 1	Female	2.524	.032	2.462	2.587
	Male	2.690	.031	2.630	2.750
Message 2	Female	2.133	.031	2.072	2.194
	Male	2.350	.034	2.283	2.417
Message 3	Female	2.140	.036	2.069	2.210
	Male	2.164	.031	2.104	2.224
Message 4	Female	2.542	.033	2.478	2.607
	Male	2.711	.039	2.634	2.789

*Dependent variable measured so that 1=female, 2=female or male and 3=male.

Homogeneity of variance was violated. Post hoc tests revealed that, in general, Non-Christians and those identifying themselves as "other" were less likely to identify with the message, relate to it, feel it applied to their lives and feel it spoke to them (see Table 4 for means). Respondents of all religions, however, were more likely to say that a male was the subject when reading the gender-exclusive messages (see Table 5 for means).

A significant interaction effect was also found for religious affiliation, gender and the type of message read on how much a message applied to a person's life ($F=1.999$, $df=12$, $p=.021$) such that female Catholics, Non-Christians and Protestants were less likely to feel that the message applied to their life when reading gender-exclusive messages. For males of these same religions, the level they felt the message applied to their life either did not change or was actually increased when reading the gender-exclusive messages (see Table 6 for means). Homogeneity of variance was also violated for this test.

An additional factorial MANOVA was conducted to test the interaction effect of the type of message read, gender and how much a person feels alienated by the use of exclusive language on how they responded to the Likert-type questions relating to the sermon. Homogeneity of variance was violated. How much a person feels alienated by the use of exclusive language had a significant main effect on all five dependent variables. Table 7 lists the F values, degrees of freedom and significance levels for each dependent variable. A significant interaction effect was found for the three independent variables on who participants said was discussed in the message ($F=2.721$, $df=12$, $p=.001$).

Table 4 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the main effect of religious affiliation

Dependent Variable	What is your religious affiliation?	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
*I identify with the message of the sermon.	Catholic	2.282	.027	2.229	2.335
	Non-Christian	2.730	.056	2.620	2.841
	Protestant Evangelical	2.149	.085	1.984	2.315
	Protestant other	2.254	.063	2.131	2.377
	Other	2.407	.081	2.247	2.566
*I can relate to the message of the sermon.	Catholic	2.277	.028	2.221	2.332
	Non-Christian	2.651	.059	2.535	2.766
	Protestant Evangelical	2.230	.089	2.056	2.404
	Protestant other	2.270	.066	2.141	2.399
	Other	2.440	.085	2.273	2.608
**The person discussed in the sermon is	Catholic	2.397	.015	2.367	2.428
	Non-Christian	2.456	.032	2.393	2.519
	Protestant Evangelical	2.389	.048	2.295	2.484
	Protestant other	2.434	.036	2.364	2.504
	Other	2.322	.047	2.231	2.413
*I feel that this message applies to my life.	Catholic	2.503	.029	2.446	2.560
	Non-Christian	2.941	.060	2.823	3.058
	Protestant Evangelical	2.458	.090	2.280	2.635
	Protestant other	2.562	.067	2.431	2.693
	Other	2.901	.087	2.730	3.072
*This message spoke to me.	Catholic	2.519	.029	2.462	2.577
	Non-Christian	2.966	.061	2.846	3.086
	Protestant Evangelical	2.479	.092	2.298	2.660
	Protestant other	2.505	.068	2.371	2.639
	Other	2.862	.089	2.688	3.036

*These variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

**This variable was measured so that 1=female, 2=female or male and 3=male.

Table 5 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the interaction effect of message type and religious affiliation

*Dependent Variable	What is your religious affiliation?	Message number	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The person discussed in the sermon is	Catholic	Message 1	2.596	.029	2.540	2.653
		Message 2	2.253	.029	2.196	2.310
		Message 3	2.130	.032	2.066	2.194
		Message 4	2.609	.033	2.544	2.674
	Non-Christian	Message 1	2.792	.064	2.666	2.918
		Message 2	2.248	.064	2.123	2.373
		Message 3	2.163	.065	2.036	2.290
		Message 4	2.619	.064	2.493	2.744
	Protestant Evangelical	Message 1	2.710	.086	2.542	2.878
		Message 2	2.125	.094	1.941	2.309
		Message 3	2.119	.081	1.961	2.277
		Message 4	2.603	.121	2.366	2.841
	Protestant other	Message 1	2.470	.069	2.335	2.605
		Message 2	2.296	.083	2.133	2.459
		Message 3	2.280	.060	2.162	2.398
		Message 4	2.690	.072	2.548	2.832
	Other	Message 1	2.431	.083	2.267	2.594
		Message 2	2.158	.088	1.986	2.330
		Message 3	2.050	.084	1.886	2.214
		Message 4	2.650	.114	2.427	2.873

*Dependent variable measured so that 1=female, 2=female or male and 3=male.

Table 6 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the interaction effect of religious affiliation, gender and type of message read

*Dependent Variable	What is your religious affiliation?	GENDER	Message number	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I feel that this message applies to my life.	Catholic	Female	Message 1	2.420	.082	2.259	2.582
			Message 2	2.410	.070	2.273	2.546
			Message 3	2.333	.095	2.148	2.519
			Message 4	2.689	.077	2.537	2.840
		Male	Message 1	2.606	.070	2.469	2.743
			Message 2	2.448	.083	2.285	2.612
			Message 3	2.596	.076	2.447	2.744
			Message 4	2.523	.097	2.333	2.713
	Non-Christian	Female	Message 1	2.914	.152	2.617	3.212
			Message 2	2.862	.167	2.535	3.189
			Message 3	2.667	.173	2.328	3.006
			Message 4	3.324	.154	3.021	3.626
		Male	Message 1	3.043	.187	2.676	3.411
			Message 2	2.786	.170	2.453	3.119
			Message 3	3.179	.170	2.846	3.511
			Message 4	2.750	.183	2.391	3.109
	Protestant Evangelical	Female	Message 1	2.286	.240	1.815	2.756
			Message 2	1.909	.271	1.378	2.440
			Message 3	2.500	.240	2.029	2.971
			Message 4	3.000	.339	2.334	3.666
		Male	Message 1	2.167	.212	1.752	2.582
			Message 2	3.313	.224	2.872	3.753
			Message 3	2.375	.183	2.016	2.734
			Message 4	2.111	.299	1.524	2.698
	Protestant other	Female	Message 1	2.760	.180	2.408	3.112
			Message 2	2.478	.187	2.111	2.845
			Message 3	2.500	.154	2.198	2.802
			Message 4	2.692	.176	2.347	3.038
		Male	Message 1	2.583	.183	2.224	2.943
			Message 2	2.462	.249	1.973	2.950
			Message 3	2.600	.164	2.278	2.922
			Message 4	2.421	.206	2.017	2.825
	Other	Female	Message 1	3.000	.173	2.661	3.339
			Message 2	2.333	.259	1.825	2.842
			Message 3	3.000	.240	2.529	3.471
			Message 4	3.625	.317	3.002	4.248
		Male	Message 1	2.750	.259	2.242	3.258

			Message 2	2.500	.201	2.106	2.894
			Message 3	2.800	.201	2.406	3.194
			Message 4	3.200	.284	2.643	3.757

*Dependent variable was measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

Table 7 Factorial MANOVA for the main effect of how much a person feels alienated by exclusive language :

Source	Dependent Variable	df	F	Sig.
ATTITUD1	I identify with the message of the sermon.	4	9.252	.000
	I can relate to the message of the sermon.	4	7.096	.000
	The person discussed in the sermon is	4	5.876	.000
	I feel that this message applies to my life.	4	10.644	.000
	This message spoke to me.	4	9.684	.000

The more women felt alienated by the use of gender-exclusive language, the more likely they were to say that a male was the subject of message one, whereas those reading message two were more likely to say that both males and females were the subject of the message. There was no significant pattern for women reading message three or four. For males reading message four, the more likely they were to feel alienated by the use of exclusive language, the more likely they were to say that both males and females were the subject of the message. There was no significant difference for males reading the other messages. Table 8 displays the means for this interaction.

Responses to the attitude toward gender inclusive language scale were summed to create an overall measure of respondents' attitudes. Lower totals indicated a positive attitude and higher totals indicated a negative attitude toward gender-inclusive language. These scores, along with the type of message read and the gender of the participant were entered in a factorial MANOVA with the dependent variables being the five Likert-type questions relating to the sermon. Homogeneity of variance was violated. Overall attitude had a significant impact on all five questions (see Table 9 for F values and significance levels). People who were more open to inclusive language were also more likely to relate to and identify with the messages, regardless of the type of language used (see Table 10 for means). Overall attitude had a significant interaction effect on who respondents said was discussed in the sermon when paired with the type of message read ($F=1.771$, $df=12$, $p=.048$). People more open to inclusive language were more likely to say that a male was the subject of message one

Table 8 Means for the factorial MANOVA for type of message read, gender and feeling alienated by the use of exclusive language

*Dependent Variable	Message number	GENDER	I feel alienated by the use of exclusive language	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The person discussed in the sermon is	Message 1	Female	strongly agree	2.538	.132	2.280	2.797
			2.00	2.559	.058	2.446	2.672
			3.00	2.667	.076	2.517	2.816
			4.00	2.463	.049	2.367	2.559
			strongly disagree	2.375	.168	2.045	2.705
		Male	strongly agree	2.750	.238	2.284	3.216
			2.00	2.529	.082	2.369	2.689
			3.00	2.636	.059	2.522	2.751
			4.00	2.772	.045	2.685	2.859
			strongly disagree	2.667	.097	2.476	2.857
	Message 2	Female	strongly agree	2.000	.119	1.767	2.233
			2.00	2.067	.050	1.968	2.165
			3.00	2.167	.069	2.032	2.301
			4.00	2.203	.055	2.094	2.311
			strongly disagree	2.300	.150	2.005	2.595
		Male	strongly agree	2.143	.180	1.790	2.495
			2.00	2.245	.068	2.112	2.378
			3.00	2.526	.077	2.375	2.678
			4.00	2.380	.053	2.275	2.485
			strongly disagree	2.227	.101	2.028	2.426
	Message 3	Female	strongly agree	2.000	.143	1.719	2.281
			2.00	2.073	.064	1.947	2.198
			3.00	2.100	.087	1.930	2.270
			4.00	2.211	.055	2.104	2.318
			strongly disagree	2.286	.180	1.933	2.638
		Male	strongly agree	2.000	.336	1.341	2.659
			2.00	2.125	.084	1.960	2.290
			3.00	2.230	.055	2.121	2.338
			4.00	2.130	.044	2.043	2.217

	Message 4	Female	strongly disagree	2.158	.109	1.944	2.372
			strongly agree	2.357	.127	2.108	2.606
			2.00	2.627	.055	2.519	2.734
			3.00	2.606	.083	2.444	2.768
			4.00	2.464	.052	2.363	2.566
			strongly disagree	2.750	.238	2.284	3.216
		Male	strongly agree	2.000	.275	1.462	2.538
			2.00	2.393	.090	2.217	2.569
			3.00	2.788	.083	2.626	2.950
			4.00	2.806	.058	2.692	2.920
			strongly disagree	2.833	.112	2.614	3.053

*Dependent variable measured so that 1=female, 2=female or male and 3=male.

Table 9 Factorial MANOVA for the main effect of overall attitude

Source	Dependent Variable	df	F	Sig.
SUMATTIT	I identify with the message of the sermon.	4	7.129	.000
	I can relate to the message of the sermon.	4	6.493	.000
	The person discussed in the sermon is	4	5.515	.000
	I feel that this message applies to my life.	4	7.292	.000
	This message spoke to me.	4	6.036	.000

Table 10 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the main effect of overall attitude

Dependent Variable	SUMATTIT	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
*I identify with the message of the sermon.	1.00	2.159(a)	.160	1.846	2.472
	2.00	2.141	.047	2.049	2.232
	3.00	2.382	.030	2.323	2.442
	4.00	2.447	.045	2.359	2.535
	5.00	2.472	.113	2.250	2.694
*I can relate to the message of the sermon.	1.00	2.127(a)	.167	1.800	2.454
	2.00	2.142	.049	2.046	2.238
	3.00	2.398	.032	2.336	2.460
	4.00	2.434	.047	2.342	2.526
	5.00	2.397	.118	2.165	2.629
**The person discussed in the sermon is	1.00	2.294(a)	.090	2.116	2.471
	2.00	2.308	.026	2.256	2.360
	3.00	2.441	.017	2.407	2.475
	4.00	2.428	.025	2.378	2.478
	5.00	2.397	.064	2.271	2.523
*I feel that this message applies to my life.	1.00	2.437(a)	.171	2.101	2.772
	2.00	2.380	.050	2.281	2.478
	3.00	2.651	.032	2.587	2.715
	4.00	2.710	.048	2.615	2.804
	5.00	2.690	.121	2.452	2.928
*This message spoke to me.	1.00	2.409(a)	.175	2.065	2.752
	2.00	2.406	.051	2.305	2.506
	3.00	2.640	.033	2.575	2.706
	4.00	2.714	.049	2.617	2.810
	5.00	2.726	.124	2.482	2.970

a. Based on modified population marginal mean.

*These variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

**This variable was measured so that 1=female, 2=female or male and 3=male.

and were more likely to say that both males and females were the subject when reading the gender-inclusive message (Table 11 lists means). No pattern was found for those reading message four. There was no significant interaction effect for the type of message read, gender and overall attitude ($F=1.071$, $df=55$, $p=.336$).

Phase II – Oral Sermons

Phase II of this study was conducted in 2008 using the same manipulated sermons from Phase I.

Participants

Local churches of varying denominations were recruited using the letter in Appendix E. Of the 25 churches contacted, four agreed to participate. In order to increase the sample size and ensure validity, undergraduate students were also recruited. These students received extra credit in undergraduate communication courses.

The convenience sample included 95 females and 53 males. Ninety-six percent of respondents were Caucasian, 3 percent African American and 1 percent Native American. Forty-six percent of participants identified themselves as Catholic and 28 percent identified as Protestant – Other. Other religions identified included Christian – Nondenominational, Non-Christian, Baptist, Episcopal and Methodist. The sample included respondents from under 21- to 95-years old with the majority (61 percent) falling into the under 21 and 21-30 age categories. Sixty percent of respondents had some college education and 14 percent had received their Bachelor's degree.

Table 11 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the interaction effect of type of message read and overall attitude

Dependent Variable	Message number	SUMATTIT	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
The person discussed in the sermon is	Message 1~	1.00	2.917	.169	2.585	3.249
		2.00	2.519	.048	2.426	2.613
		3.00	2.619	.033	2.554	2.684
		4.00	2.629	.046	2.538	2.719
		5.00	2.635	.118	2.403	2.866
	Message 2	1.00	2.028	.132	1.768	2.287
		2.00	2.191	.051	2.091	2.291
		3.00	2.270	.034	2.204	2.335
		4.00	2.236	.055	2.128	2.344
		5.00	2.429	.106	2.221	2.637
	Message 3	1.00	1.500(a)	.338	.836	2.164
		2.00	2.080	.053	1.976	2.183
		3.00	2.178	.034	2.111	2.246
		4.00	2.185	.047	2.094	2.277
		5.00	2.000	.116	1.772	2.228
	Message 4	1.00	2.333	.160	2.020	2.646
		2.00	2.442	.060	2.324	2.560
		3.00	2.697	.036	2.626	2.768
		4.00	2.664	.055	2.555	2.772
		5.00	2.524	.165	2.200	2.848

a Based on modified population marginal mean.

*Dependent measured so that 1=female, 2=either female or male and 3=male.

Procedures

Each of the four sermons was delivered by Fr. Satish Joseph and Rev. LaKendra Hardware and recorded onto videotape. The purpose of having them both record each sermon was to control for the effect of the sex of the preacher on how much a person identifies with a message. It might be that women relate more to a message delivered by a woman, regardless of the type of language used. Additionally, Joseph is of Indian descent and Hardware is African American. Because the participants came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, they might identify differently with the messages based on whether or not they are the same race as the preacher rather than because of the language used. A question was included on the survey to help control for this effect. The author also worked with both preachers to make sure their delivery styles were similar. Ensuring that the preachers had equal levels of animation helped control for additional confounding variables like the effect of the level of excitement of the preacher on how much a person identifies with the message.

During the Phase II experiment, participants were randomly assigned to view one of the eight sermons: a gender-exclusive version of the first sermon delivered by Joseph (SJ1, $n=19$), a gender-inclusive version of the first sermon delivered by Joseph (SJ2, $n=16$), a gender-inclusive version of the second sermon delivered by Joseph (SJ3, $n=21$), a gender-exclusive version of the second sermon delivered by Joseph (SJ4, $n=18$), a gender-exclusive version of the first sermon delivered by Hardware (LH1, $n=18$), a gender-inclusive version of the first sermon delivered by Hardware (LH2, $n=18$), a gender-inclusive

version of the second sermon delivered by Hardware (LH3, $n=22$), or a gender-exclusive version of the second sermon Hardware (LH4, $n=16$). Table 12 displays the number of males versus females that viewed each tape. After viewing the sermon, participants answered demographic questions and completed a survey about the sermon (Appendix D). The survey, slightly altered from Phase I, has a satisfactory Cronbach's alpha of .82 for attitude and .80 for sermons.

Results

Descriptive tests were conducted for the five Likert-type questions relating to the sermon and the seven Likert-type questions in the attitude toward inclusive language scale. Tables 13 and 14 display the means and standard deviations for those items.

Hypothesis One

In order to test the hypotheses, a series of statistical tests was completed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The first hypothesis, that gender-exclusive language in sermons will lower the level at which females relate to a message more than males, was tested using a factorial MANOVA. The independent variables were the message type and gender of participant and the dependent variables were the Likert-type questions: "I identify with the message of the sermon," "I can relate to the message of the sermon," "I feel that this message applies to my life," and "this message spoke to me." Homogeneity of variance was violated for this test. A significant main effect was found for the type of message viewed on how much a person related to the

Table 12 Frequency of males and females viewing each sermon

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	Female
Message type	LH 1	15	3	18
	LH 2	9	9	18
	LH 3	12	10	22
	LH 4	11	5	16
	SJ 1	11	8	19
	SJ 2	12	4	16
	SJ 3	14	7	21
	SJ 4	11	7	18
Total		95	53	148

Table 13 Means for Likert-type questions relating to the sermon

*Dependent Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
The person discussed in the sermon is	148	2.2838	.80846	.654
I identify with the message of the sermon.	148	2.3446	.74426	.554
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	148	2.2838	.75629	.572
I feel that this message applies to my life.	148	2.4797	.83682	.700
This message speaks to me.	148	2.7095	.85915	.738
Valid N (listwise)	148			

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

Table 14 Means for Likert-type questions in attitude toward inclusive language scale

*Dependent variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
I feel alienated by the use of exclusive language.	148	3.3784	1.03940	1.080
Inclusive language should be used in service books.	148	2.7297	1.00064	1.001
Inclusive language should be used in hymns.	148	2.9662	.91410	.836
Inclusive language should be used in bible translations.	148	3.0608	1.04476	1.092
I find inclusive language disruptive to worship.	148	3.4797	.96517	.932
Hymns and prayers should use both male and female imagery for God.	148	3.0878	1.17762	1.387
Hymns and prayers should address God as both mother and father.	148	3.3851	1.10978	1.232
Valid N (listwise)	148			

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

message ($F=2.325$, $df=7$, $p=.029$). As a whole, participants of both genders were more likely to relate to the gender-inclusive messages than the gender-exclusive messages, though the effect size was only .110 (see Table 15 for means). There was no significant main effect for gender or significant interaction effect.

Hypothesis Two

A series of factorial ANOVAs was conducted to test the second hypothesis, that the use of gender-exclusive language in sermons will inhibit women from identifying themselves as the intended audience of a message more so than men. An initial ANOVA performed with the message type as the independent variable and who participants identified as the subject of the message as the dependent variable indicated a significant difference ($F=8.487$, $df=7$, $p=.000$). Homogeneity of variance was violated. In general, people who viewed sermons delivered by the female minister were more likely to say that the subject of the message was either male or female, whereas those viewing the sermons delivered by the male minister were more likely to say that the subject was a male, regardless of the language used. Table 16 lists the means and standard deviations for each message.

A factorial ANOVA was ran to test if the gender of the participant influenced the effect of type of message viewed on whom respondents said was the subject of a message. No significant difference was found in who males versus females identified as the subject of the messages.

Although participants of both genders were more likely to relate to the inclusive messages, most of the tests conducted failed to provide support for the

Table 15 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the effect of type of message read

*Dependent Variable	Message type	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Level	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I identify with the message of the sermon.	LH 1	2.167	.234	1.704	2.630
	LH 2	2.167	.174	1.822	2.512
	LH 3	2.283	.158	1.970	2.597
	LH 4	2.182	.200	1.787	2.577
	SJ 1	2.727	.172	2.387	3.067
	SJ 2	2.333	.214	1.911	2.756
	SJ 3	2.250	.171	1.911	2.589
	SJ 4	2.487	.179	2.133	2.841
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	LH 1	2.333	.232	1.874	2.792
	LH 2	2.222	.173	1.880	2.564
	LH 3	1.908	.157	1.598	2.219
	LH 4	2.036	.198	1.645	2.428
	SJ 1	2.744	.170	2.407	3.081
	SJ 2	2.250	.212	1.831	2.669
	SJ 3	2.429	.170	2.093	2.764
	SJ 4	2.442	.177	2.091	2.792
I feel that this message applies to my life.	LH 1	2.133	.264	1.612	2.655
	LH 2	2.611	.197	2.222	3.000
	LH 3	2.333	.178	1.980	2.686
	LH 4	2.473	.225	2.028	2.917
	SJ 1	2.727	.194	2.344	3.110
	SJ 2	2.375	.241	1.899	2.851
	SJ 3	2.286	.193	1.904	2.667
	SJ 4	2.552	.202	2.153	2.951
This message speaks to me.	LH 1	2.633	.270	2.100	3.167
	LH 2	2.833	.201	2.436	3.231
	LH 3	2.408	.183	2.047	2.769
	LH 4	2.573	.230	2.118	3.028
	SJ 1	2.909	.198	2.517	3.301
	SJ 2	2.792	.246	2.305	3.279
	SJ 3	2.429	.197	2.038	2.819
	SJ 4	3.091	.206	2.683	3.499

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

Table 16 Means and standard deviations for the ANOVA for effect of message type on subject of the sermon

Message type	Mean	Std. Deviation
LH 3	1.6364	1.023
LH 4	1.6875	.832
LH 1	2.1111	.728
LH 2	2.1111	.793
SJ 2	2.5623	.535
SJ 3	2.6667	.512
SJ 4	2.7222	.483
SJ 1	2.7895	.461

*Dependent variable measured so that 1=female, 2=female or male and 3=male.

hypotheses. Additional statistical tests were conducted to determine other factors that influence whether or not people identified with the messages and who they pictured as the subject of the messages. A factorial MANOVA was performed to test the interaction effect of message type, gender and the religious affiliation of the participant on the five Likert-type questions relating to the sermon. There was no significant main effect for religion nor was there a significant interaction effect for the three independent variables.

Another factorial MANOVA was conducted to test the interaction effect of the type of message viewed, gender and how much a person feels alienated by the use of exclusive language on how they responded to the Likert-type questions relating to the sermon. Homogeneity of variance was violated. A significant main effect was found for how alienated participants feel by exclusive language on how much they related to the message ($F=2.528$, $df=4$, $p=.046$) and how much they felt it applied to their life ($F=3.001$, $df=4$, $p=.022$). In general, the more respondents felt alienated by exclusive language, the less likely they were to relate to the message and to feel that it applied to their life. Table 17 displays the means for this interaction. A significant interaction effect was found for the type of message read and how much a person feels alienated by the use of exclusive language on how much a person felt they related to the sermon ($F=1.810$, $df=21$, $p=.028$) and how much they felt the message applied to their life ($F=1.828$, $df=21$, $p=.026$). In general, the more respondents felt alienated by the use of exclusive language, the less likely they were to relate to the

Table 17 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the main effect of feeling alienated by the use of gender exclusive language

*Dependent Variable	I feel alienated by the use of exclusive language.	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	strongly agree	3.056(a)	.243	2.574	3.538
	agree	2.553(a)	.155	2.245	2.860
	not certain	2.083(a)	.147	1.792	2.375
	disagree	2.314	.087	2.141	2.486
	strongly disagree	2.056(a)	.236	1.586	2.525
I feel that this message applies to my life.	strongly agree	2.722(a)	.283	2.160	3.284
	agree	2.783(a)	.181	2.425	3.142
	not certain	2.145(a)	.171	1.806	2.485
	disagree	2.559	.101	2.357	2.760
	strongly disagree	1.944(a)	.276	1.397	2.492

a Based on modified population marginal mean.

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

gender-exclusive messages and the less likely they were to feel that the gender-exclusive messages applied to their life (see table 18 for means).

As in Phase I, responses to the attitude toward gender inclusive language scale were summed to create an overall measure of respondents' attitudes. Lower totals indicated a positive attitude and higher totals indicated a negative attitude toward gender-inclusive language. The overall mean for attitude toward inclusive language was 21.129 (s.d.=5.199). The mean for females was 20.716 (s.d.=5.363) and for males was 21.868 (s.d.=4.856). These scores, along with the type of message read and the gender of the participant were entered in a factorial MANOVA with the dependent variable being the five Likert-type questions relating to the sermon. No significant effect was found.

An additional factorial MANOVA was conducted to see if age had an effect on how respondents answered the Likert-type questions about the sermons. Message type and gender of the participant were also entered as independent variables to test for any interaction effects. Homogeneity of variance was violated. A significant main effect was found for the age of participants on how much they thought the message spoke to them ($F=2.130$, $df=6$, $p=.041$) such that participants over the age of 51 were more likely to say that the message spoke to them, regardless of the type of language used. Table 19 displays the means for this main effect. No significant interaction effect was found.

Finally, a factorial MANOVA was conducted to see if how often a person attends church and how long they have been attending church had an effect on the Likert-type questions relating to the sermons. Additional independent

Table 18 Means for the factorial MANOVA for the interaction effect of message type and how much a person feels alienated by the use of exclusive language

*Dependent Variable	Message type	I feel alienated by the use of exclusive language.	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	LH 1	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	1.900	.363	1.179	2.621
		not certain	2.500	.468	1.570	3.430
		disagree	2.556	.349	1.862	3.249
		strongly disagree	(a)			
	LH 2	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	2.000(b)	.663	.684	3.316
		not certain	2.000(b)	.331	1.342	2.658
		disagree	2.250	.214	1.825	2.675
		strongly disagree	2.333(b)	.383	1.574	3.093
	LH 3	strongly agree	1.667	.383	.907	2.426
		agree	2.250	.406	1.444	3.056
		not certain	2.000	.406	1.194	2.806
		disagree	1.900	.201	1.502	2.298
		strongly disagree	2.000(b)	.663	.684	3.316
	LH 4	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	2.667(b)	.383	1.907	3.426
		not certain	1.333	.383	.574	2.093
		disagree	2.200	.222	1.759	2.641
		strongly disagree	(a)			
	SJ 1	strongly agree	4.000	.468	3.070	4.930
		agree	4.000	.406	3.194	4.806
		not certain	2.250	.406	1.444	3.056
		disagree	2.475	.222	2.034	2.916
		strongly disagree	2.000	.468	1.070	2.930
	SJ 2	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	2.000(b)	.663	.684	3.316
		not certain	2.000(b)	.383	1.240	2.760
		disagree	2.313	.203	1.910	2.715
		strongly disagree	(a)			
	SJ 3	strongly agree	2.000(b)	.468	1.070	2.930
		agree	2.500	.331	1.842	3.158
		not certain	2.500	.406	1.694	3.306
		disagree	2.367	.242	1.886	2.847
		strongly disagree	2.000(b)	.331	1.342	2.658
	SJ 4	strongly agree	5.000(b)	.663	3.684	6.316
		agree	2.667(b)	.383	1.907	3.426

I feel that this message applies to my life.		not certain	2.000	.363	1.279	2.721
		disagree	2.450	.277	1.900	3.000
		strongly disagree	2.000(b)	.663	.684	3.316
	LH 1	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	1.700	.423	.860	2.540
		not certain	2.000	.546	.916	3.084
		disagree	2.389	.407	1.581	3.197
		strongly disagree	(a)			
	LH 2	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	3.000(b)	.772	1.466	4.534
		not certain	2.000(b)	.386	1.233	2.767
		disagree	2.708	.249	2.213	3.203
		strongly disagree	2.667(b)	.446	1.781	3.552
	LH 3	strongly agree	1.667	.446	.781	2.552
		agree	2.750	.473	1.811	3.689
		not certain	2.500	.473	1.561	3.439
		disagree	2.450	.234	1.986	2.914
		strongly disagree	2.000(b)	.772	.466	3.534
	LH 4	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	3.667(b)	.446	2.781	4.552
		not certain	1.833	.446	.948	2.719
		disagree	2.450	.259	1.936	2.964
		strongly disagree	(a)			
	SJ 1	strongly agree	3.000	.546	1.916	4.084
		agree	4.000	.473	3.061	4.939
		not certain	2.500	.473	1.561	3.439
		disagree	2.675	.259	2.161	3.189
		strongly disagree	1.500	.546	.416	2.584
	SJ 2	strongly agree	(a)			
		agree	3.000(b)	.772	1.466	4.534
		not certain	2.667(b)	.446	1.781	3.552
		disagree	2.312	.236	1.843	2.782
		strongly disagree	(a)			
	SJ 3	strongly agree	2.000(b)	.546	.916	3.084
		agree	2.250	.386	1.483	3.017
		not certain	1.750	.473	.811	2.689
		disagree	2.733	.282	2.173	3.293
		strongly disagree	2.000(b)	.386	1.233	2.767
	SJ 4	strongly agree	5.000(b)	.772	3.466	6.534
		agree	2.333(b)	.446	1.448	3.219
		not certain	2.100	.423	1.260	2.940
		disagree	2.750	.323	2.108	3.392
		strongly disagree	2.000(b)	.772	.466	3.534

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

Table 19 Means and standard deviations for the factorial MANOVA for main effect of age on how much the message spoke to participants

Age	Mean	Std. Deviation
under 21	2.8571	.80035
21-30	2.7692	.81524
31-40	3.0000	.81650
41-50	2.8421	1.16729
51-60	2.3750	.80623
61-70	2.1250	.35355
71 or higher	2.1111	.60093

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

variables included the message type and gender of the participant. Homogeneity of variance was violated for this test. A significant main effect was found for how often participants attend church services on how much they felt the message applied to their life ($F=5.579$, $df=2$, $p=.006$) such that the more often people attended church services, the more likely they were to feel the message applied to their life, regardless of the type of language used. A significant interaction effect was found for gender and how often participants attend church on how much they identify with the sermon ($F= 3.218$, $df=2$, $p=.046$) and how much they relate to the message ($F=3.547$, $df=2$, $p=.034$). The more often both males and females attended church, the more likely they were to identify with the message, regardless of the language used. Additionally, while there was no clear difference for females, males who attended more often were more likely to relate to the message of the sermon, again regardless of the language used. Table 20 displays the means for this interaction effect.

Table 20 Means for the factorial MANOVA interaction effect of gender and how often participants attend church services

*Dependent Variable	Gender	How often to you attend church services?	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I identify with the message of the sermon.	Female	regularly	2.425(a)	.118	2.189	2.660
		occasionally	2.326(a)	.177	1.974	2.677
		seldom	2.292(a)	.192	1.910	2.674
		never	3.000(a)	.694	1.618	4.382
	Male	regularly	2.385(a)	.149	2.088	2.683
		occasionally	2.667(a)	.205	2.258	3.075
		seldom	2.500(a)	.300	1.901	3.099
		never	2.750(a)	.425	1.904	3.596
I can relate to the message of the sermon.	Female	regularly	2.298(a)	.125	2.049	2.547
		occasionally	2.250(a)	.187	1.878	2.622
		seldom	2.333(a)	.203	1.929	2.738
		never	2.000(a)	.735	.537	3.463
	Male	regularly	2.292(a)	.158	1.977	2.606
		occasionally	2.444(a)	.217	2.012	2.877
		seldom	2.625(a)	.318	1.991	3.259
		never	2.500(a)	.450	1.604	3.396

*Dependent variables were measured on a five-point Likert-type scale with 1 being strongly agree and 5 being strongly disagree.

Chapter III

Discussion

The present study addressed the effect of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons. It was hypothesized that the use of gender-exclusive language would lower the level at which females relate to the message compared to males and that its use would inhibit women from identifying themselves as the intended audience of the message. The first phase of this study, which had participants read the sermons, provided support for both hypotheses. Most women did not relate to the gender-exclusive messages while men related to both types of messages equally. Additionally, women did not picture females as the ones being discussed when reading the gender-exclusive messages. The main limitation for Phase I was that churchgoers do not read sermons every week, they hear them. Phase II was designed to address this issue.

Having the participants view and hear the sermons in Phase II did not produce as much support for the hypotheses. As a whole, participants were more likely to relate to the inclusive messages, but there was no difference based on gender. When it came to identifying the subject of the message, there was no difference in who males versus females identified based on the language used.

There was, however, a significant difference based on the gender of the person delivering the messages. People who viewed the sermons delivered by the female minister were more likely to say that the subject of the message was either male or female whereas those viewing the sermon delivered by the male minister were more likely to say that the subject was a male.

Phase I Discussion

Based on the statistical tests from Phase I, both hypotheses were supported. It is clear that women did not relate to the gender-exclusive messages while men related to both types of messages equally. Men are already included in language that excludes women. While the pronoun *he* is ambiguous in whether or not it applies to women, it always applies to men. Men, therefore, do not have to question if they are included when reading or hearing these pronouns.

Consistent with past research, it is also apparent that women did not picture females as the ones being discussed when reading gender-exclusive messages. When reading the gender-inclusive message, however, women were more likely to say that the message discussed both males and females. Male participants responded in the same way. If generic male pronouns are truly generic, there should be no difference in who participants pictured as being discussed in the messages. It appears, then, that women who read exclusive language are likely to feel excluded.

A person's gender was not the only factor that influenced how they related to a message, however. Subsequent analyses revealed that Non-Christians and those identifying themselves as "other" were less likely to identify with the

messages, regardless of the type of language used. This finding makes sense because the content of the messages dealt with topics that Non-Christians presumably would not relate to—praying and attending church. Regardless of whether or not they identified with the message, participants of every religion were more likely to identify males as the subject of the message when reading the gender-exclusive messages. No matter what environment gender-exclusive language is used in, it is still interpreted as exclusive. Although Non-Christians may not be as familiar with the communication style of sermons, they were just as affected by the use of exclusive language as were participants of other religious affiliations.

Along with religious affiliation, how respondents felt about the use of inclusive language in religious environments affected how they related to the messages. People who were more open to inclusive language were more likely to relate to the message, regardless of the type of language used, and were more likely to say that both males and females were the subject of the inclusive messages. People who are opposed to inclusive language or who are against its use in religious settings might find inclusive language disruptive to worship and therefore not relate to inclusive messages as much. How one views inclusive language influences how he or she responds to its use. Although there were no open-ended questions on the survey, one female respondent wrote: "If indeed the words as written in the Bible are the exact words of Our Lord, I believe they should not be changed." This person believes in a literal translation of the Bible

and reinforces the fact that many people view sermons and the Bible as the direct word of God.

Another respondent expressed her attitude about inclusive language, writing: "Mary is a woman, Jesus is a man, God is neither- it's GOD. 'I am who I am.' GET OVER IT." This participant appears to be ambivalent about the use of inclusive language. It is interesting to note, however, that she first wrote "God is neither- he's GOD," but crossed out the *he*, replacing it with the more inclusive pronoun *it*. So while this person is saying it does not matter what type of language we use, she consciously changed her use of pronouns, suggesting that the type of language we use really does matter.

An additional influencing factor to how a person was affected by the use of exclusive language was whether or not they feel alienated by its use in the first place. Women who felt alienated by the use of exclusive language were more likely to say that a male was the subject of message one and that both males and females were the subject of message two. Because these women felt alienated by exclusive language ahead of time, they might have been more aware of its use and may have recognized that the generic male pronouns were not, in fact, used generically. People who are not as affected by gender-exclusive language, who do not feel alienated by its use, interpret generic male pronouns as just that—generic. It may be that these respondents have been socialized to the point that they do not recognize sexist language and its excluding effect. They may not think twice when interpreting the "generic" *he* and assume it is referring to both men and women. In accordance with the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, it is these

assumptions, however, that need to be changed in order for our society to abandon the illusion of inclusiveness it holds onto now, making inclusion and equality a reality for both men and women.

Phase I Limitations

As with any study, there were limitations to the sample, design and results of this study. The first limitation was that there were not an equal number of people reading each message. Table 21 shows the breakdown of the number of males and females that read each message. The results of the study might have been even more significant had an equal number of men and women read each message. Another limitation was that the majority of the surveys were administered by college students receiving extra credit instead of by the researcher herself. While it cannot be guaranteed that all of the answers were legitimate, any surveys that appeared to be made up were thrown out. Also, one confounding variable was the content of the messages. While the use of exclusive versus inclusive pronouns appeared to affect how much participants related to the messages, the content of the message may have influenced the relationship as well. This variable was somewhat controlled for by having more than one message, but the limitation is still important to note.

A fourth, more important limitation is that sermons are forms of oral communication, not written. This experiment had participants read the messages instead of having them listen to a preacher deliver the messages. While the written delivery of the sermons is appealing because it eliminates any effect that preachers themselves might have on how much a person relates to the

Table 21 Frequency of females and males reading each type of message

		GENDER		Total
		Female	Male	
Message number	Message 1	225	246	471
	Message 2	243	198	441
	Message 3	179	245	424
	Message 4	212	150	362
Total		859	839	1698

message, churchgoers do not read sermons every Sunday, they hear them. The effect of *hearing* gender-exclusive language, instead of *reading* it, may be very different. Simply having the words in front of you may call attention to the meaning and content of a message more so than hearing them. That is, people may be more inclined to notice gender-exclusive or –inclusive pronouns when they can literally see them. That is why Phase II of this study utilized orally-delivered messages.

Finally, surveys are limited in the number of questions they can ask. Although this study found that women are, in fact, affected by the use of gender-exclusive language in sermons, it cannot answer why they are affected. Furthermore, the study found that women do not picture themselves when hearing the generic *he*, but it cannot go into further detail about how women are affected by this alienation and exclusion or why they do not see themselves when hearing these pronouns. Mere speculations can only be offered as to the how and why of these effects. This was a limitation of Phase II as well.

Phase II Discussion

Statistical tests from Phase II did reveal some support for the first hypothesis. There was no significant difference in how males versus females related to and identified with the sermons. However, participants as a whole were more likely to relate to the inclusive messages. This finding suggests that preachers should adopt gender-inclusive language if they hope to reach the broadest audience possible with their sermons.

Data analyses did not reveal direct support for the second hypothesis; there was no significant difference in who females versus males identified as the subject of the messages. One explanation for this might be the content of the messages themselves. More than one respondent wrote on their survey that they were confused about who was the subject of the sermon "When a man/person goes to church." One male who heard and saw the sermon "When a man goes to church" wrote "I assume you mean Isaiah" next to the question asking who the person discussed in the sermon was. Because Isaiah was quoted multiple times in the first sermon, participants may have misinterpreted him as the subject of the message instead of the general "he" or "he or she." This issue did not show up in Phase I.

Another possible reason for the lack of support in Phase II might be the medium through which the messages were delivered. Participants read the sermons in Phase I and the data did reveal significant findings. During that phase, it was noted that the effect of hearing gender-exclusive language might be different than reading it. Phase II was designed to address this issue with participants viewing and hearing sermons instead. It appears that the medium very well may influence the effect of gender-exclusive language. It may be that seeing the actual pronouns brings them to one's attention more than hearing them.

While the Phase II results may not have directly supported the second hypothesis, they did produce a surprising finding: participants of both genders were more likely to say that the subject of the message was either male or

female when viewing the sermons delivered by the female minister, whereas those viewing the sermons delivered by the male minister were more likely to say that the subject was a male. This finding suggests that the gender of the speaker may play more of a role than the actual language used. It may be that so-called "generic" male pronouns are more likely to be interpreted generically (i.e. as describing both men and women) when used by a female. Additionally, this finding provides potential support for the inclusion of women as ministers. If people were more likely to picture both males and females when hearing and viewing sermons delivered by the female minister, it may be that having a female minister is the best way to reach the broadest audience possible. Many religions still do not allow women to become ordained ministers but this finding suggests that seeing inclusiveness may play as much of a role as hearing inclusiveness.

Subsequent analyses revealed additional factors that effect how participants identify with and relate to gender-inclusive versus –exclusive messages. One of those factors was how often participants attended church services. The more often people attended church, the more likely they were to relate to the messages, regardless of the language used. People who attend church regularly are familiar with hearing these types of messages. They routinely listen to preachers and likely apply the sermons they hear to their life on a regular basis. Someone who does not attend church as often may be less used to hearing sermons and relating them to their own life. Additionally, one of the messages directly talked about what should happen when you go to church. With

this message, it is easy to see how someone who attends church more often may relate to the message more, despite the type of language it uses.

An additional factor that influenced how participants identified with the messages was whether or not they felt alienated by the use of exclusive language in the first place. The more people felt alienated by its use, the less likely they were to relate to the gender-exclusive messages. This finding makes sense as people who are already aware of the effects of gender-exclusive language would presumably not relate to a message that used it. People who are not as affected by gender-exclusive language, who do not feel alienated by its use, interpret generic male pronouns as just that – generic. It may be that these respondents have been socialized to the point that they do not recognize sexist language and its excluding effect. They may not think twice when interpreting the “generic” *he* and assume it is referring to both men and women.

Related to how much participants felt alienated by the use of exclusive language was their overall attitude toward inclusive language. Participants' responses to the attitude toward inclusive language scale were summed to give an overall score indicating a positive or negative attitude. Statistical tests revealed no significant effect for a person's attitude toward inclusive language on how he or she related to the messages and who she or he identified as the subject. The average score was 21.129 (s.d.=5.199), which does not indicate a strong opinion either way. The range of scores was 7 to 35. Since participants were, on average, unsure of their attitude toward inclusive language, it may not have played as much of a role in how they related to each type of message. It

would be expected that people who are more open to inclusive language would be less likely to relate to exclusive messages and more likely to relate to inclusive messages, with the reverse being true for people who are less open to it. Because the average was in the middle, it is not surprising that there was no significant effect for this variable.

There was also no significant effect for religious affiliation on how participants related to the messages. Almost all of the participants identified with one of the religions listed on the survey. Only one or two wrote in that they were agnostic or non-religious. Because most of the participants considered themselves religious, it makes sense that they would relate to the sermons, regardless of the type of language used. If there had been more non-religious respondents, a difference in how people related to the messages may have emerged. The content of the messages – going to church and praying – is presumably something that religiously affiliated people would relate to while non-religious people would not.

Phase II Limitations

As with Phase I, there were limitations in this phase of the study. The first limitation was that the cell sizes for the groups were not equal. Table 22 shows the breakdown for each sermon. The results of the study might have been different if an equal number of men and women viewed each message. Additionally, because the sample size was so small, the generalizability of the results is limited. With that, the sample was also not very diverse. All of the participants came from the Midwest and an overwhelming majority of them were

Table 22 Frequency of males and females viewing each sermon

		Gender		Total
		Female	Male	Female
Message type	LH 1	15	3	18
	LH 2	9	9	18
	LH 3	12	10	22
	LH 4	11	5	16
	SJ 1	11	8	19
	SJ 2	12	4	16
	SJ 3	14	7	21
	SJ 4	11	7	18
Total		95	53	148

Caucasian. The undergraduate students participating in the study attended a Catholic university. This again limits the ability to generalize the results.

Also, as touched on before, the content of the messages may have been a confounding variable. With the first message, some participants confused the subject of the message with Isaiah, who was quoted in the sermon. A message that directly addressed the audience may have been more appropriate.

Additionally, the way people related to the messages may have had more to do with the actual content of the message than the type of language used. This limitation was somewhat addressed in having more than one message, but is still important to note.

Other limitations surrounded the survey itself. With any study, researchers have to be aware of the social desirability factor. Participants may have been answering questions based on what they thought the desired response was instead of listing their actual answer. In the data collection process, however, it was made clear that the surveys were completely anonymous and that participants should answer openly and honestly. Another factor was the time in which it took participants to fill out the survey. Because the surveys were administered in a group setting, some participants may have felt rushed to complete the survey. As a result, they may not have been as focused when answering the questions. Finally, as with Phase I, surveys are limited in the number of questions they can ask. This study cannot address the question of *why* people are affected by the use of inclusive or exclusive language.

Future Research

If a survey alone cannot answer the deeper, more pertinent questions regarding whether and why women and men may be affected by gender-exclusive language in the religious setting, future research should focus on these questions. There is a strong need for qualitative research to investigate the use of sexist language both in general and more specifically in the religious environment. While it is tempting to focus only on how women are affected by this language, future qualitative research should interview both men and women of varying religions to gain a complete understanding of how language shapes our view of reality.

This research should also concentrate on determining how open people are to changing the language they use, especially in interpretations of the Bible and hymns as well as in describing God. The focus of the current study was the use of gender-exclusive pronouns, but references to God were also manipulated in each message. More research needs to be completed with the focal point being how language is used to describe the divine. Religious tradition agrees that no one knows what God actually looks like so the language used to describe God greatly impacts our "reality" of this image. What implications does the use of gendered language to describe God have for how people relate to God? Additionally, should gendered language even be used at all to describe God? One female participant suggested calling God "parent" instead of "mother" or "father." Another female participant wrote that hymns and prayers should not assign God a gender at all. It is possible that some people imagine God outside

of a physical being and assigning God a gender might further limit how people relate to the divine. These are just two of several questions that could be researched further for this topic.

In addition to qualitative research, more quantitative research should be completed, particularly in looking at the effect of the gender of the speaker on how gender-inclusive versus –exclusive pronouns are interpreted. The findings of this study suggested that these pronouns were interpreted differently when the message was delivered by a female instead of a male. Future research would benefit from addressing this effect.

It would also be useful to apply this same method, producing one gender-inclusive and one gender-exclusive version of a message, to other types of messages and settings to further support the concept that “generic” male pronouns are not interpreted generically. One area that would benefit from this type of analysis is advertising. The goal of advertisements is to convince people that they need a certain product. The type of language used in an advertisement might have an impact on who responds to the message and whether or not they are motivated enough to purchase the product. Another area that could be useful to study with this method would be communication in corporate settings, such as memos, meeting agendas, employee benefits brochures, etc. How employees are addressed might effect how they identify with the company, how willing they are to put forth a good effort and much more.

Relating more to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, future research should apply this theory to how the language we use influences gender-role stereotypes in

various settings such as the classroom, the office and the home. If language influences our view of reality, the words we use to describe gender and to communicate gender might shape our concept of gender and how we view gender-role stereotypes. This perception, in turn, will affect how people interact, what they expect of each other and what they view as "normal" behaviors for each respective gender.

Conclusion

If the language we use shapes our thought, it could be argued that, with gender-exclusive language, the words we use may be creating a sexist reality that neglects half the population – women. While the findings of this study have serious implications for how we should change our use of language in general, their application is even more critical to note in religious settings. If the purpose of a sermon is for listeners to identify with a message and relate it to their own life, using gender-exclusive language may prohibit women from doing just that. To reach the broadest audience, then, it seems likely that people delivering sermons should consider the use of gender-inclusive language. Adopting inclusive language may make preaching a more effective form of communication, enhancing the religious experience of churchgoers. In many religions, the person delivering the message is seen as an agent of God, communicating God's message every week. This image gives preachers great power and influence among their church members. With this perceived relationship between God and the preacher, the language preachers use to communicate becomes even more important. If preachers want to truly be effective in inspiring their communities to

keep faith, they need to consider applying the use of inclusive language. The persistent use of exclusive language may continue inhibiting the level at which women can identify with religious sermons.

Using inclusive language, when applicable, may offer positive results in religious communities. Its use may reduce the ambiguity women often feel about whether or not they are included in so-called generic terms like *he*, *his* and *man*. The use of gender-inclusive language may also help validate women as being real—separate entities from men. If language shapes reality, it is necessary to change the language we use in order to change the sexist structures that are the foundation of our society.

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Appendix A:
Message 1 (gender-exclusive)

When a Man Goes to Church

Churchgoing has been the practice of multitudes of men for centuries. Some go to church to be seen by others. Others go for social and economic reasons. A few go to worship the living God, our Father.

Here is what Isaiah said should happen when a man goes to church:

He should see the holiness of God. The greatest tragedy of our day may well be that we have lost a sense of the holiness of God. Let us seek to recapture an awareness of his presence. We need not see a preacher, be reminded of a church, or even hear a sermon to worship. We need to catch a vision of the glory of a holy God who created this world and all that dwells therein, who is still in control of that which he created, and who gave his only Son to redeem us through the blood he shed on Calvary's cross.

The object of worship is to see God. Oh, that we could see God as Isaiah saw him—"sitting upon a throne," exalted, his presence filling the place of worship. Oh, that we could see God, "holy, holy, holy," with his glory filling the entire Earth.

He should see his own true nature. Immediately upon seeing the glory of a holy God, Isaiah caught a vision of how man's nature compares with the nature of God. Then he cried out, "Woe is me!" Isaiah saw that man was corporately unclean as he said, "I dwell in the midst of men of unclean lips." He also saw that he was personally unclean as he confessed, "I am a man of unclean lips."

Authentic worship makes us painfully aware that we have "all sinned and come short of the glory of God." This kind of worship also makes us aware that "the wages of sin is death." How sinful we must appear before a holy, righteous God!

He should see the necessity and availability of cleansing. When men realize their own inadequacy, they will be ready to cast themselves on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, "who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Isaiah was cleansed from sin and his iniquity was taken away.

Authentic worship will not occur until we confess our sins and accept the cleansing and forgiveness offered to us by our Father through Jesus Christ.

He should see God's will for his life. Have you ever wondered why God doesn't zap us and take us to heaven as soon as we trust him? Heaven is a better place than this Earth. Christ has gone there to prepare a place for us. If worship is no more than gathering together to exalt God, we could do a better job in his presence. God has created us for a purpose, and he has left us here for a purpose.

Isaiah heard God ask, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" That's God's universal question: "Who will go for us?" The Great Commission which Jesus gave his disciples states, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching

them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20).

At his Ascension, Christ implied that he would leave when he said, "But ye shall receive power; after that the Holy Spirit will come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the Earth" (Acts 1:8). You can't spell *God* without *go*. You can't spell *gospel* without *go*. And you can't really worship without feeling compelled to *go*!

He should see his own level of commitment. Isaiah responded to God's call to go with a genuine commitment: "Here am I, Father, send me." Will you respond in the same way? If our worship is authentic, our commitment will also be authentic, for it will grow out of that worship experience.

The true purpose of worship is that, on seeing the holiness of God our Father, we might grow dissatisfied with ourselves, become cleansed for service, spring into action, and go tell others what God has done to redeem the world in Christ.

Message 2 (gender-inclusive)

When a Person Goes to Church

Churchgoing has been the practice of multitudes of people for centuries. Some go to church to be seen by others. Others go for social and economic reasons. A few go to worship the living God, our Mother and Father.

Here is what Isaiah said should happen when a man or woman goes to church:

He or she should see the holiness of God. The greatest tragedy of our day may well be that we have lost a sense of the holiness of God. Let us seek to recapture an awareness of God's presence. We need not see a preacher, be reminded of a church, or even hear a sermon to worship. We need to catch a vision of the glory of a holy God who created this world and all that dwells therein, who is still in control of that which they created, and who gave their only Son to redeem us through the blood he shed on Calvary's cross.

The object of worship is to see God. Oh, that we could see God as Isaiah saw God—"sitting upon a throne," exalted, God's presence filling the place of worship. Oh, that we could see God, "holy, holy, holy," with glory filling the entire Earth.

He or she should see their own true nature. Immediately upon seeing the glory of a holy God, Isaiah caught a vision of how people's nature compares with the nature of God. Then he cried out, "Woe is me!" Isaiah saw that humans were corporately unclean as he said, "I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." He also saw that he was personally unclean as he confessed, "I am a man of unclean lips."

Authentic worship makes us painfully aware that we have "all sinned and come short of the glory of God." This kind of worship also makes us aware that "the wages of sin is death." How sinful we must appear before a holy, righteous God!

He or she should see the necessity and availability of cleansing. When we realize our own inadequacy, we will be ready to cast ourselves on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, "who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Isaiah was cleansed from sin and his iniquity was taken away.

Authentic worship will not occur until we confess our sins and accept the cleansing and forgiveness offered to us by God our Father and Mother through Jesus Christ.

He or she should see God's will for their life. Have you ever wondered why God doesn't zap us and take us to heaven as soon as we trust God? Heaven is a better place than this Earth. Christ has gone there to prepare a place for us. If worship is no more than gathering together to exalt God, we could do a better job in God's presence. God has created us for a purpose, and has left us here for a purpose.

Isaiah heard God ask, "Whom shall I send and who will go for us?" That's God's universal question: "Who will go for us?" The Great Commission which

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The true purpose of worship is that, on seeing the holiness of God our Father and Mother, we might grow dissatisfied with ourselves, become cleansed for service, spring into action, and go tell others what God has done to redeem the world in Christ.

Message 3 (gender-inclusive)

Does God Hear Men and Women When They Pray?

Every once in a while you meet a person who had prayed all their life; they were brought up to pray, they had prayed regularly and naturally, and then gradually they stopped praying—because they thought God did not hear them when they prayed.

Our question this morning is, Does God really hear men and women when they pray? The answer, let it be said at once, is yes, God does. "When I was in trouble, I called unto God the Mother and Father and God heard me." But it is not as simple as that, and it is not enough simply to say that and nothing more.

One of the reasons that you wonder from time to time whether God hears you when you pray is that it is almost impossible for you to visualize it. Isn't that true? You can't picture it. You may have a picture of God as a great man or woman, a magnified man or woman. You picture God in human terms—the great Cosmic Executive with the management of the universe in its hands. Then you go on to picture God getting calls from all over the inhabited world.

When you stop to think of the number of people in the world and of the vast variety of requests they make to the Mother and Father of the universe, and of the calls that cancel out each other, the whole thing seems fantastic.

You may have a less personal picture of God. Your image of God, as you think of God either consciously or unconsciously, is the God of the sun and the planets, the great cosmic God who keeps the universe going. And if you have that sort of picture of God, you can hardly imagine God being interested in the likes of you and your rather unimportant needs and desires.

You know that the sun shines graciously and gloriously on everybody and you can praise the sun; you can expose yourself to the light and warmth of it, but it never occurs to you to think that the sun singles you out for special attention. You can worship God, but you can't expect God to single you out for special attention.

Whatever your picture of God may be, it becomes increasingly difficult for you to visualize that God hears you individually, so you may come to the conclusion that God doesn't hear you at all, and if God doesn't hear you, there isn't much use in praying.

Just two or three suggestions: First, because you are a human being, you are bound to visualize; you will never get away entirely from pictures, and the deeper the thing is that you are thinking about, the more you will depend on pictures.

I think you are on safer ground with the picture of the big cosmic God than you are with the picture of the Senior Executive. Both pictures of drawbacks and dangers, but the larger picture is more likely to be the better one.

As you grow, your picture of God ought to grow, and as your imagination, understanding, and depth of perception increase, you ought to reach out to greater depths of understanding the nature of God, until the Mother and Father becomes vaster, more wonderful, and more majestic than God was when you

were a child. After all, that is how it happens in the Bible. God appears in the opening chapters of Genesis in very human terms, as a God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and in the last chapters of Revelation as the great cosmic energy of love who is making all things new. This growth in men and women's picture of God is right; it is natural.

There are more practical reasons that you sometimes wonder whether God hears you and that is that you don't get an answer. No answer, no one home.

But not *quite* so. The situations are not altogether comparable. In the first place, you don't expect a verbal answer to prayer as you would expect an answer to a letter or a telephone call. The answers to prayer come in the course of events, in the things happen to you. If things don't happen the way you want them to, you assume that you've not gotten an answer. If you ask God to make you well when you are sick and you get well, you say your prayer was answered. But if you don't get well, you say your prayer was not answered. There is another possibility, of course, and that is that the answer was no, that God heard you but the answer was no, or "Not yet."

Even though it is hard to take no for an answer from anybody, let alone from God, we know that we are not always going to get everything we ask for in prayer.

You know, even Jesus did not get everything he asked for. On the very last night of his life he asked to be spared from the agony of death. He wasn't spared. He was given the strength to meet and face the ordeal and to go through it in such a way as to save the world. When we ask for things in absolute confidence and trust, as he taught us to ask, we also ask with humility, always adding to our prayer, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

Shorthouse had the boldness to put into a single line in *John Inglesant*, "Only the infinite Pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life."

Message 4 (gender-exclusive)

Does God Hear Men When They Pray?

Every once in a while you meet a person who had prayed all his life; he was brought up to pray, he had prayed regularly and naturally, and then gradually he stopped praying—because he thought God did not hear him when he prayed.

Our question this morning is, Does God really hear men when they pray? The answer, let it be said at once, is yes, he does. "When I was in trouble, I called unto my Father and he heard me." But it is not as simple as that, and it is not enough simply to say that and nothing more.

One of the reasons that men wonder from time to time whether God hears them when they pray is that it is almost impossible for men to visualize it. Isn't that true? Men can't picture it. They may have a picture of God as a great man, a magnified man. I don't mean a man with a gray beard; they outgrew that image long ago. But nevertheless men picture God in human terms—the great Cosmic Executive with the management of the universe in his hands. Then they go on to picture him getting calls from all over the inhabited world.

When we stop to think of the number of people in the world and of the vast variety of requests they make to the Father of the universe, and of the calls that cancel out each other, the whole thing seems fantastic.

You may have a less personal picture of God. Your image of God, as you think of him either consciously or unconsciously, is the God of the sun and the planets, the great cosmic God who keeps the universe going. And if you have that sort of picture of God, you can hardly imagine him being interested in the likes of you and your rather unimportant needs and desires.

You know that the sun shines graciously and gloriously on everybody and you can praise the sun; you can expose yourself to the light and warmth of it, but it never occurs to you to think that the sun singles you out for special attention. You can worship God, but you can't expect him to single you out for special attention.

Whatever man's picture of the Father may be, it becomes increasingly difficult for him to visualize that God hears him individually, so he may come to the conclusion that God doesn't hear him at all, and if the Father doesn't hear him, there isn't much use in praying.

Just two or three suggestions. First, because you are man, you are bound to visualize; you will never get away entirely from pictures, and the deeper the thing is that you are thinking about, the more you will depend on pictures.

I think you are on safer ground with the picture of the big cosmic God than you are with the picture of the Senior Executive. Both pictures of drawbacks and dangers, but the larger picture is more likely to be the better one.

As you grow, your picture of God ought to grow, and as your imagination, understanding, and depth of perception increase, you ought to reach out to greater depths of understanding the nature of God, until he becomes vaster, more wonderful, and more majestic than he was when you were a child. After all,

that is how it happens in the Bible. God appears in the opening chapters of Genesis in very human terms, as a God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and in the last chapters of Revelation as the great cosmic energy of love who is making all things new. This growth in man's picture of God is right; it is natural.

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Even though it is hard to take no for an answer from anybody, let alone from God, men know that they are not always going to get everything they ask for in prayer.

Even Jesus did not get everything he asked for. On the very last night of his life he asked to be spared from the agony of death. He wasn't spared. He was given the strength to meet and face the ordeal and to go through it in such a way as to save the world. When we ask for things in absolute confidence and trust, as he taught us to ask, we also ask with humility, always adding to our prayer, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done."

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Appendix B:
Manipulation Check

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1) After reading Message #1 and Message #2, please answer the following questions circling the answer that best fits.
- 2) Gender-exclusive language in the questionnaire is defined as language that does not specifically include a female interpretation. An example of gender-exclusive language is using male pronouns (such as *he* or *man*) to describe both males and females.

Gender: Female Male

1. Which sermon uses more gender-exclusive language?
Message 1 Message 2 Neither
2. Which sermon uses generic male pronouns to describe both males and females more?
Message 1 Message 2 Neither
3. Which sermon refers to God as a male more?
Message 1 Message 2 Neither
4. The main audience for Message 1 is:
Males Females Neither Both Males and Females
5. The main audience for Message 2 is:
Males Females Neither Both Males and Females
6. Which sermon do you think women can relate to more?
Message 1 Message 2 Neither

Appendix C:
Phase I Survey

PLEASE CIRCLE THE NUMBER OF THE MESSAGE YOU HAVE JUST READ

Message 1 Message 2 Message 3 Message 4

Now in response to the sermon you have just read, please respond to the following questions. After each statement, circle the option that best fits. These surveys are completely anonymous so please answer freely and honestly. Thank you.

Demographic Questions

Gender: Female Male

Age: under 21 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71 or higher

Level of education you have completed:

1. Grade school 2. High school 3. some college 4. Bachelor's degree
5. Graduate work

With what racial group do you identify?

1. Caucasian 2. African-American 3. Hispanic 4. Native-American
5. Asian-American 6. Other—please describe _____

What is your religious affiliation?

1. Catholic 2. Non-Christian 3. Protestant Evangelical 4. Protestant other
5. Other—please describe: _____

How often do you attend church services?

1. regularly 2. occasionally 3. seldom 4. never

How long have you been attending church services? (place an X on the line that best reflects your answer)

All my life _____ only recently **OR** I have never attended _____

The person that delivers the message at the churches I attend is a:

1. female 2. male 3. both males and females deliver messages in my church

Questions Relating to Sermon

I identify with the message of the sermon.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I can relate to the message of the sermon.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

The person discussed in the sermon is:

1. female 2. either female or male 3. male

I feel that this message applies to my life.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

This message speaks to me.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I consider myself a feminist.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Attitude Toward Gender Inclusive Language

Directions: Below are seven statements about attitudes toward gender inclusive language in a religious environment. Please indicate whether or not the statement applies to you by circling the answer that best fits. Exclusive language is defined as language that excludes one gender. One example is using male pronouns (such as *he* or *man*) to describe both males and females. Inclusive language makes attempts to include both genders.

I feel alienated by the use of exclusive language.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Inclusive language should be used in service books.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Inclusive language should be used in hymns.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Inclusive language should be used in bible translations.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I find inclusive language disruptive to worship.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Hymns and prayers should use female imagery for God.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Hymns and prayers should address God as both mother and father.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Appendix D:
Phase II Survey

In response to the sermon you have just viewed, please respond to the following questions. After each statement, circle the option that best fits. These surveys are completely anonymous so please answer freely and honestly. Thank you.

Demographic Questions

Gender: Female Male

Age: under 21 21-30 31-40 41-50 51-60 61-70 71 or higher

Highest level of education you have completed:

1. Grade school 2. High school 3. some college 4. Bachelor's degree
5. Graduate work

With what racial group do you identify?

1. Caucasian 2. African-American 3. Hispanic 4. Native-American
5. Asian-American 6. Other - please describe _____

What is your religious affiliation?

1. Catholic 2. Non-Christian 3. Protestant Evangelical 4. Protestant other
5. Christian – Nondenominational 6. Other - please describe: _____

How often do you attend church services?

1. regularly 2. occasionally 3. seldom 4. never

How long have you been attending church services? (place an X on the line that best reflects your answer)

I have never attended _____ I have attended all my life

I more commonly hear sermons delivered by a:

1. female 2. male 3. both males and females

I am comfortable hearing sermons delivered by a female preacher.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I am comfortable hearing sermons delivered by a male preacher.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I prefer to hear sermons delivered by a preacher of the same racial group as me.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Questions Relating to Sermon

The person discussed in the sermon is:

1. female 2. either female or male 3. male

I identify with the message of the sermon.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I can relate to the message of the sermon.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I feel that this message applies to my life.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

This message speaks to me.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I consider myself a feminist.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Attitude Toward Gender Inclusive Language

Below are seven statements about attitudes toward gender-inclusive language in a religious environment. Please indicate whether or not the statement applies to you by circling the answer that best fits. Exclusive language is defined as language that excludes one gender. One example is using male pronouns (such as *he* or *man*) to describe both males and females. Inclusive language makes attempts to include both genders.

I feel alienated by the use of exclusive language.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Inclusive language should be used in service books.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Inclusive language should be used in hymns.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Inclusive language should be used in bible translations.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

I find inclusive language disruptive to worship.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Hymns and prayers should use both male and female imagery for God.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Hymns and prayers should address God as both mother and father.

1. strongly agree 2. agree 3. not certain 4. disagree 5. strongly disagree

Appendix E:
Recruitment Letter to Churches

(Insert name of person),

My name is Melanie Woods and I am a graduate student at the University of Dayton. I am working on my Master's in Communication. I am currently gathering data for my Master's thesis. My thesis is looking at the use of gender-exclusive vs. inclusive language and its effect on how audience members relate to and identify with sermons. I am writing to request the participation of your church in my data collection efforts. Let me first tell you a little about the project itself.

I have worked with two ministers (one male and one female) to create gender-inclusive and gender-exclusive versions of two sermons. The first sermon focuses on going to church and the second on praying. I would be happy to send written versions of the sermons to you to look at if you would like. I have videotaped the two ministers delivering the sermons and would like permission to recruit volunteers from your congregation to view one of these sermons and fill out a corresponding survey. A copy of the survey is attached. The entire experiment would take about 30 minutes for each group of participants and would require the use of a TV and VCR/DVD player. I can supply the equipment if it is not readily available at your church. I can also work with you to set up multiple sessions during the evening or on Sunday mornings if you already have adult classes that meet. The ideal situation would be to have multiple groups at each participating church, with each group viewing different versions of the sermons. There are eight different versions – two sermons, each of which has two versions (gender-exclusive and inclusive), each delivered by either a male or female minister. I do understand, of course, that many churches will not have 8 groups available for participation.

This project has been approved by the Institutional Research Board of the University of Dayton. It is directed by Dr. Teresa Thompson of the Department of Communication at UD. She can be reached at Thompson@udayton.edu or 937-901-1556 if you would like to contact her. All responses to the survey would be completely anonymous. No names would be requested. Additionally, the participating churches will also remain anonymous. No church names will ever be mentioned in any of the results, written work, or presentation of the results.

If you are willing to allow your church to participate in my study, I would ask that you not mention the specific details of my study to any potential participants. Making them aware that the study is looking at the use of gender-exclusive language might compromise the results or lead to a bias when participants watch the sermons. I would like at this point to merely tell participants that the study is looking at responses to different styles of preaching. I would have them fill out an informed consent form and make clear to them that their participation is completely voluntarily. I would, of course, completely explain the full study to

participants following their participation. I would also be happy to share the results of the study with them and with you after the results have been analyzed.

The goal of this study is to help pastors improve their ability to reach members of their congregations. It may be that the language used in sermons has implications for the way churchgoers identify with those sermons and with their faith in general.

I would really appreciate your help with my study, although I do not expect you to be able to commit to participation based simply on a reading of this letter. Please let me know if you would be interested in chatting more with me about this project and the possibility of recruiting participants within your church. I can be reached at (317) 430-5005 or at woodsmel@notes.udayton.edu.

Thank you for your time and have a blessed day.

Melanie Woods
University of Dayton
Graduate Assistant

VITA

Melanie Leigh Woods

Education

University of Dayton, Ohio
Master's of Arts in Communication
GPA: 4.00/4.00
Thesis: The use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons
Graduated May 2008

University of Dayton, Ohio
Bachelor's of Arts in Journalism with minors in Psychology and Women's Studies
GPA: 3.79/4.00
Graduated May 2007

Honors/Affiliations

Phi Beta Chi, professional communication fraternity

Teaching Experience

Graduate Assistant, University of Dayton, Ohio
August 2007 – May 2008
- Responsible for the construction and implementation of lesson plans for introductory communication courses: Group Decision Making (CMM 110), Informative Public Speaking (CMM 111), Interviewing (CMM 113)

Instructor, University of Dayton, Ohio
August – November 2006
- Responsible for the construction and implementation of lesson plans for introduction to the university class for first-year communication students (ASI 150).

Competitively Selected Convention Papers

Woods, M. (November, 2007). "The use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons." Paper presented at the National Communication Association annual conference, Chicago, Illinois.

Invited Presentations

Woods, M. (April, 2008). "The use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons." Paper presented at University of Dayton Stander Symposium, Dayton, Ohio.

Woods, M. (January, 2008). "Tips for a successful employment interview." Speaker for Phi Beta Chi Symposium, Dayton, Ohio.

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Woods, M. (November, 2007). "Language about God and the people of the church." Guest lecturer in REL 471: Women and Religion, Dayton, Ohio.

Woods, M. (April, 2007). "Gender representations in magazines: How Katie Couric's bedroom is decorated." Paper presented at University of Dayton Stander Symposium, Dayton, Ohio.

Woods, M. (April, 2006). "The use of gender-exclusive language in religious sermons." Paper presented at University of Dayton Stander Symposium, Dayton, Ohio.