Tab 1

Metaphorical Constructions of Gender: How Language Shapes our understanding of Masculinity and Femininity

# Abstract

This paper examines how metaphorical language systematically constructs gender based inequality through everyday discourse, literature and media. Through analysis of metaphors, idioms and expressions used to describe men and women in literature, media, and contemporary culture, this paper reveals asymmetrical power relations embedded within language. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) as a theoretical framework, this study uses how linguistic metaphors not only reflect but actively construct and maintain gender hierarchies. The analysis uses traditional metaphorical domains including animals, war, nature, and objects while examining contemporary digital media platforms and current trends equivalent to these patterns. The research shows that masculine metaphors always focus on strength, power, and control. On the other hand, feminine metaphors emphasize beauty, emotions, and relationships.

Keywords - Conceptual metaphor theory, Gender, Tropes, Language and Power

# 

# Introduction

Language shapes how we see and experience the world more than we often realize. The metaphors we use everyday don’t just describe things, they influence how we think and act (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). When we look at gender through the lens of language, we find that metaphorical expressions play a big role in maintaining social power differences.

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, and identities that a society considers appropriate for men, women and other gender identities (WHO 2023). For example, calling men ‘lions’ and women ‘as delicate as flowers’ shows how language reflects deep cultural ideas about masculinity and femininity.

Metaphors are ways of understanding one thing in terms of another, like thinking of arguments as wars ‘He attacked every point’ (Lakoff and Johnson 1980). These metaphors often carry hidden messages about gender and power.

This paper explores how gender based metaphors act as a form of linguistic ideology, a way of thinking about language that supports unequal power structures. Using ideas from cognitive linguistics and gender studies, this study looks at how everyday metaphors help spread and normalize gender inequality in different areas of communication.

This matters because language can both oppress and empower. As Beroiza- Valenzuela and Salas-Guzman (2024) explain gender stereotypes in language affect how people interpret and remember information which helps keep harmful gender norms in place. By understanding these patterns, we can work toward more equal and fair ways of using language.

# Theoretical Background

This research is grounded in Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). The theory was developed by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their foundational work Metaphors We Live By (1980). According to CMT, metaphor is not just a stylistic feature of language but a basic cognitive process that structures human thought and experience. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, metaphors are ‘metaphors we live by’ because they shape our perceptions and actions in ways we often take for granted.

CMT proposes that metaphors involve systematic mappings between two conceptual domains: a source domain typically concrete and embodied and a target domain typically abstract. For example, when we conceptualize ARGUMENT as WAR, we map elements of warfare onto argumentation, resulting in expressions such as ‘defending your position’, ‘attacking weak points’ and ‘winning an argument’.

The field of language and gender studies emerged in the 1970s. The most notable book Language and Woman’s Place (1975) by Robin Lakoff shows how women’s speech was often characterized by features signaling deference and lack of authority. Lakoff’s work laid the foundation for understanding how language maintains gender based social hierarchies.

Since then, the field has evolved to challenge binary conceptions of gender. Linguistic ideology refers to the beliefs and assumptions about language that influence how speakers interpret and evaluate linguistic practices. These ideas are often overlooked which makes it seem like certain ways of talking about gender are just natural or unavoidable. But they’re actually shaped by culture and political beliefs.

This paper uses a critical approach to language to examine metaphors as a place where different ideas compete. Instead of thinking of metaphors as neutral or simply descriptive, it looks at how metaphorical language shows the most common ideas about gender. This practice can help maintain or challenge existing power structures and social inequalities.

# Metaphors of Masculinity

We use language every day without thinking about how it shapes our ideas about men and women. The way we talk about men reveals what society expects from masculinity. When we look at the metaphors we use for men, we see patterns that keep showing up again like strength, power, control and keeping emotional restraint.

## Animal Metaphors used for Men

Society consistently associates animals that appear powerful and dominant with men. Lions serve as the obvious choice for masculine representation. Expressions like "He's a lion in battle" or "He roared like a lion" link male actions to bravery and strength. Since the lion represents the king of the jungle, comparing men to lions suggests they should be natural leaders.

Wolves have become central to modern discourse. The concept of ‘alpha males’ or ‘alpha wolf’ comes directly from wolf pack behaviour. Someone described as ‘a lone wolf’ works independently, while ‘pack mentality’ refers to men working together. The wolf represents the wild, hunting aspect of masculinity that society appears to value.

Bulls and stallions appear when discussing raw power and sexuality, ‘He’s a bull of a man’ creates images of someone large and unstoppable. ‘He’s a stallion’ connects men to wild, sexual energy. These animals are not gentle creatures, they represent power and potential danger.

Sharks frequently appear in business contexts. ‘He’s a shark in negotiations’ indicates ruthless focus. Dogs carry dual meanings: ‘He’s loyal as a dog’ expresses positive traits, while ‘He’s such a dog’ usually carries negative implications about treatment of women. Even peacocks describe men who display attention-seeking behaviour.

Notably, gentle animals like rabbits or deer never appear in masculine metaphors. The chosen animals are consistently predators, strong creatures or fighters.

## War Metaphor used for Men

Military and combat language constantly describes men. The phrase ‘man up’ demands toughness. ‘He took it like a man’ means someone avoided crying or complaining. ‘He’s a warrior’ suggests someone who fights through difficulties.

This military language appears everywhere in masculine discourse. Men ‘battle’ their problems, ‘fight’ for their families, and serve as ‘soldiers’ in the corporate and real world. ‘Man of Steel’ represents the ultimate masculine ideal figure, someone who cannot be hurt, who remains unbreakable, who continues regardless of circumstances.

‘He’s bulletproof’ means criticism or emotions do not affect him. The underlying message suggests that real men can handle pain without displaying it.

## Men as Machines and Tools

Mechanical metaphors for men emphasize efficiency and emotional detachment. ‘He’s a machine’ indicates hard work done without complaint. ‘He’s built like a tank’ suggests both physical and emotional strength.

Men become ‘workhorses’ who persist, ‘well-oiled machines’ who perform perfectly, or remain ‘solid as a rock’ when providing stability. Men are called ‘fixers’ for problem-solving, ‘drivers’ for leadership and most men consider that they are a better driver when compared to women. They are praised for having ‘nerves of steel’, ‘balls of steel’ during stressful situations.

These mechanical metaphors suggest that men should be reliable, functional and avoid letting emotions interfere with productivity. The expectation appears to be that men should operate like tools which are useful, strong and always ready to work.

## Men as Foundation and Structure

Family and relationship metaphors frequently cast men in structural roles. ‘He’s the rock of the family’ indicates stability and dependability. ‘He’s the foundation of this house’ suggests that everything else depends on his strength and steadiness.

‘He wears the pants’ indicates decision making authority, even when applied to women, which reveals that authority is still conceptualized as naturally masculine. ‘Head of the household’ and ‘father figure’ position men as protectors and leaders. They portray the meaning that men as structure holds everything together. Someone who is immovable and constantly available when needed.

## Men as Heroes and Legends

Some metaphors elevate men to extraordinary status. ‘He’s a hero’ recognizes bravery and protection of others. ‘He’s a titan’ indicates enormous influence and power. ‘Spartan’ describes disciplined, emotionally controlled men.

‘Dark horse’ refers to mysterious men with hidden potential. Successful men are called ‘legends in their fields’. These metaphors connect ordinary men to extraordinary, almost superhuman standards.

Popular culture reinforces these heroic masculine metaphors through media representation. Marvel movies exemplify this pattern of male superheroes like Iron Man, Captain America and Thor embody the ‘hero’, ‘titan’ and ‘warrior’ metaphors discussed above. These characters are portrayed as emotionally stoic problem solvers who save the world through physical strength and sacrifice. The male gaze in these films focuses on power, action and heroic responsibility.

Comic representations like Archie Comics reveal gendered treatment differences. Male characters like Archie are shown as bumbling but ultimately good-hearted people who must choose between different female options. The male characters drive the narrative and make the important decisions. Female characters like Betty and Veronica, however, are primarily defined through their relationships to men and their competition for male attention.

The female gaze in recent media has begun challenging these heroic masculine metaphors. Female-centered superhero films like Wonder woman and shows often present more emotionally complex male characters who can be vulnerable while still being heroic. This shift reveals how traditional heroic metaphors may be limiting for both men and women, men are expected to be emotionally distant heroes, while women are shown as supporting roles in their own stories.

## Negative side of Male Metaphors

Not all masculine metaphors carry positive meanings. ‘Iron fist’ suggests cruel, oppressive control. ‘Caveman’ indicates crude and antisocial behaviour. ‘Stone cold’ describes someone lacking empathy or warmth.

‘He’s a loaded gun’ implies dangerous unpredictability. These negative metaphors often derive from the same concepts as positive ones, like strength becomes oppression, emotional control becomes coldness and protection becomes aggression.

# Metaphors of Femininity

When we study metaphors used for women, patterns of softness, beauty, care, emotion, and fragility appear repeatedly. These patterns are a part of everyday speech and cultural stories. They encode certain expectations about how women should look, feel and behave. By analyzing these recurring figurative expressions, we can see how language reflects and creates gendered identities and show power.

## Animal Metaphors used for Women

Society often compares women to small, delicate or beautiful animals. ‘As graceful as a swan’ links femininity with elegance and poise. The swan represents quiet beauty, control and smooth movement, which are traditionally feminine traits.

Cats are common in feminine metaphors. Phrases like ‘she’s a cat’ or ‘she’s catty’ carry mixed meanings. Sometimes it implies independence and mystery, but it also connects to jealousy or rivalry, especially between women. There are some slang words ‘cat’, ‘kitty’, ‘pussy’ which are used as euphemisms for female private parts especially in informal sexual contexts. The word ‘pussy’ is one of the most common gendered insults and is often used against men, ‘Don’t be a pussy’, ‘Man up, don’t act like a little pussy’ are some phrases used to mean weak, scared or emotional. These traits that society has wrongly linked to femininity. This insult works by feminizing men and then belittling femininity itself. ‘Pussy’ is also tied to fear, shame and cowardice.

‘She’s a doe-eyed girl’ compares women to deer, who are gentle, wide eyed and innocent. This comparison shows vulnerability and a need for protection which is an image we get from looking at a deer. ‘Like a lamb’ or ‘meek as a lamb’ paints a picture of obedience and harmlessness.

Butterflies and birds appear when describing beauty and lightness. ‘She’s like a butterfly’, ‘Girls got wings’ refers to delicate charm and visual appeal. Birds like doves are tied to peace and love, ‘as gentle as a dove’ expresses kindness and nurturing. These qualities are oftentimes associated with femininity.

In Japanese culture, the fox (kitsune) can be wise and magical, but also deceptive. In folklore, kitsune are shape-shifters often taking the form of a beautiful woman. While the kitsune can be protective or loyal in some stories, modern slang still uses ‘kitsune’ to hint at a woman being sly or seductive. It is not always in a positive way. In folklore, kitsune onna (fox woman) is shown as a mysterious, attractive and often dangerous woman who fools a man with her beauty, charm and emotional manipulation. So, phrases or terms like this link women to illusion and trickery in romance. In Chinese, xián qī liáng mǔ meaning worthy wife and good mother is traditional model of womanhood. This phrase shows a woman who is virtuous, family oriented and hardworking at home. It reflects the cultural idea that a good woman serves others, especially husbands and children. In both Japanese and Chinese, female metaphors swing between two extremes: an ideal woman who is pure, quiet, obedient, beautiful but passive and the other is a dangerous woman who is seductive, clever, independent and in the end is often punished for her actions.

Unlike the masculine metaphors, animals used for women are rarely predators. They are small, non-threatening and often judged for appearance. Power is not a focus in these metaphors, grace, gentleness and emotion are.

## Nature Metaphors for Women

Nature metaphors dominate the word usage around femininity. ‘She’s a flower’ connects women to beauty, softness and something to be admired. ‘Blooming’ refers to physical growth, especially during puberty or pregnancy.

Different flowers suggest different types of women, ‘a delicate rose’ implies beauty and can also imply danger because of the thorns, while ‘a wallflower’ suggests someone quiet and overlooked.

We associate motherhood with nature like ‘Mother Earth’, ‘Mother Nature’, and sometimes nations can also be referred to with similar words like ‘Mother India’. Even the moon becomes a feminine symbol. ‘She’s moody like the moon’ points to changing emotions, linked to monthly cycles. These comparisons show how femininity is viewed as natural but changeable.

Water is another frequent element used. ‘She has depth like the ocean’ can mean emotional complexity and ‘she flows like a river’ suggests grace and calmness.

## Metaphors of Women in the Bible

Eve in the Book of Genesis becomes a central metaphor for female temptation. She is the one who gives Adam the fruit from the tree of knowledge. This moment creates a lasting image, woman as the source of sin or downfall. This metaphor is repeated across centuries, the idea that a beautiful or bold woman can lead men astray just like Eve.

In the song of songs 4:5, a woman's body is compared to a garden, her beauty to flowers and her sexuality to something sealed or reserved. The message is her beauty is for one man, and her purity is prized. Where the breasts of the woman were compared to two fawns and gazelle.

## Women as Objects and Decorations

Women are often described in ways that link them to appearance and surface value. ‘She’s a jewel’ or ‘she’s a diamond’ means she is precious but also something to be owned or shown off.

‘She’s a doll’ refers to beauty, perfection and sweetness, but also suggests being lifeless or only for display. ‘She’s arm candy’ or ‘trophy wife’ openly reduces women to visual accessories for men.

‘She’s a porcelain doll’ combines the idea of beauty and fragility. These metaphors focus heavily on how women look, not what they do or feel. The message is that women should be beautiful and delicate like objects placed on a shelf.

## 

## Women as Caregivers and Supporters

Many metaphors describe women through their relationships to others. ‘She’s the heart of the home’ means she keeps the emotional connection alive. ‘She’s the glue that holds the family together’ shows her role in maintaining harmony.

‘Mother figure’ shows respect, but also links her to caring, sacrificing and being there for others. ‘She’s a nurturer’ or ‘she has a mother’s touch’ suggests gentleness and deep emotional care.

Even in workplaces, supportive roles are feminized, ‘office mom’ describes someone who helps, listens and cares for the team. These metaphors place women in emotional labour roles, while leadership is often assigned to men.

## Women as Temptation and Danger

Not all metaphors for women are soft or kind. Some highlight danger, but in a different way than men. ‘She’s a siren’ or ‘femme fatale’ refers to women who use beauty to manipulate or control men.

‘She’s poison’ or ‘a snake in the grass’ paints women as deceptive. ‘She’s high maintenance’ which can imply both positive and negative notions. ‘Drama queen’ and ‘emotional wreck’ focuses on the uncontrolled feelings depicted by women. These metaphors link femininity to emotional excess and instability. While men are judged for not showing enough emotions, women are criticised for showing too much.

## Women as Goddesses and Angels

Some metaphors elevate women to divine levels. ‘She’s an angel’ shows purity, kindness and sacrifice. ‘She’s a goddess’ praises beauty, strength and independence. The idealization of women often takes away their humanity, either they are too good or too emotional.

# Gendered Tropes and Stereotypes

There are many trope terms or phrases associated with each gender which are mentioned or framed in media and literature. For instance, Mama’s boy is used as an insult to describe a man who depends too much on his mother and seems to be under her control. It shows a man doesn’t have enough self reliance or independence. In the eyes of the woman character or even in real life, Mama's boy term appears in a negative way, where women don't want to be entangled with such partners who cannot rely on themselves for decisions. In many movies and series, this point shows the breaking up of the couple or creating problems in their relationship. Opposite to this is the “Family Man” trope which is all about men who are completely devoted to their families. It shows their identity through his role as a husband and father. This character usually values stability, loyalty, and protection of his loved ones above all else. He often does things to take care of his family or to spend time with them.

The ‘alpha male’ concept borrowed from debunked wolf pack research positions men as natural leaders worthy of respect and sexual success. This metaphor extends into related terms like ‘sigma male’ which is the independent outsider and ‘Chad’ the stereotypically successful, attractive man.

These terms function as aspirational metaphors for men while simultaneously creating exclusionary categories. The ‘beta male’ designation is used for policing masculine behaviour suggesting that men who display emotional vulnerability, collaborative leadership or non aggressive conflict resolution are somehow deficient. More recent additions like ‘soy boy’ explicitly connect to describe men who are seen to lack masculine characteristics.

The rise of the term ‘simp’ in online media trends shows how contemporary gendered language disciplines men for emotional vulnerability and investment in women. This was originally derived from the phrase ‘Sucker idolizing mediocre pussy’, the word has evolved beyond its crude origin to become a catch all insult for any man who shows affection, attentiveness and financial generosity toward a woman.

Modern usage of language has created increasingly specific categories for policing feminine behaviour, each with its own mechanisms for constraint and judgment. The ‘Karen’ word represents perhaps the most significant development, functioning as a catch all term for any woman who expresses authority, makes complaints or asserts her preferences in public spaces.

Likewise, the label ‘pick me girl’ targets women who attempt to navigate patriarchal systems by distancing themselves from other women. By claiming to be ‘not like other girls’, such women seek male validation. This reveals the impossible position women are placed in to conform to gender norms and be seen as unoriginal or shallow.

The term ‘basic bitch’ further proves how women’s everyday preferences and interests such as enjoying popular fashion trends, romantic comedies or pumpkin spice lattes are mocked and dismissed. There is no direct masculine equivalent that receives the same level of cultural scorn.

# Media and Cultural Reinforcement

One must have heard about this in advertisements or seen this in banners, “Boys will be boys, men will be men.” This is one of the popular taglines used in the perfume industry by a well known company. In the advertisement, you often see men getting attracted towards somebody else's wives and there comes the tagline of ‘Men will be men.’

The idea of men as foundation and being constantly available when needed seems to fade away. As this idealized metaphorical construction contrasts sharply with social reality. Popular social media threads, videos and cultural jokes about men ‘leaving to buy milk and never returning back’ highlights a different pattern, one of abandonment rather than reliability. This contradiction between metaphorical expectation of men being the foundation and documented social trends showcasing rising single motherhood rates and absent fathers reveals the gap between how language constructs masculine ideals and how some men actually behave in family structures.

Traditional Hollywood cinema established metaphorical frameworks that continue to influence contemporary gender discourse. Class films created archetypal masculine figures that embodied metaphors such as the stoic cowboy who suppresses his emotions, the war hero who shows sacrificial strength, the business tycoon and the protector figure.

Humphrey Bogart’s characters in films like Casablanca (1942) and the Maltese Falcon (1941) portrays the ‘strong silent type’ metaphor which values emotional restraint and decisive action. John Wayne’s characters reinforced metaphors of masculine duty and protection which often frames violence as necessary for moral order. Masculinity was metaphorically constructed as emotionally distant yet fundamentally stabilizing.

Female characters were reduced to narrow metaphors like the ‘angel in the house’ who are pure, domestic and nurturing and the ‘femme fatale’ who are the seductive, dangerous and morally corrupt ones. The femme fatale was never framed positively, her threat to male protagonists reinforced the idea that feminine agency is inherently destructive. This is also seen in Indian television sitcoms and series, where there is a good wife and there is a vamp.

Digital platforms have become key arenas for gender metaphor creation. Instagram reinforces metaphors linking feminine value to aesthetics, with personas like the ‘Instagram baddie’ which emphasizes curated beauty and desirability. TikTok further accelerates metaphor innovation through trends like #CheffyBoys or #ThatGirl which appears progressive while establishing the norms of attractiveness, productivity and gender performance.

Twitter’s language focused design foregrounds debates over metaphor which are evident in battles over terms like ‘birthing people’ versus ‘mothers’. These contests show how gender metaphors remain central to identity politics.

In gaming culture, masculine metaphors have evolved into detailed hierarchies like ‘Chad’, ‘incel’, ‘beta cuck’. These terms create ideological stratification based on power, sexuality and success. The persistence of gendered metaphors across evolving media demonstrates how metaphor remains a primary vehicle for cultural transmission. Masculine metaphors continue to emphasize strength, agency and autonomy, while feminine metaphors are tied to beauty, emotion, and relational labour.

Digital culture has intensified this dynamic through metaphor saturation, constant exposure to tropes based content that normalizes gender expectation. However, these platforms also enable resistance. Hashtag activism, satirical memes and counter metaphors challenge dominant scripts and offer alternative frameworks.

# Double standard in language used

Language can reveal gender biases through different terminologies chosen to describe identical behaviours performed by men and women. This linguistic double standard shows how society evaluates the same actions differently based on gender, often favouring masculine interpretations while diminishing feminine ones.

Taylor Swift, the pop singer has captured this notion perfectly and has stated in one of her interviews what she observed. She stated that when a man does something, it is seen as ‘strategic’, but when a woman does the same thing, it is labeled as ‘calculated’. This observation shows how identical planning and decision making behaviours receive certain framing to men versus showing negative interpretation to females.

In professional settings, these double standards become particularly evident. When men assert themselves in meetings, they are described as ‘confident’, ‘authoritative’ or ‘natural leaders’. Women displaying identical behaviour are often called ‘bossy’, ‘pushy’ or aggressive’. A man who negotiates hard is ‘tough’ and ‘business minded’, while a woman doing the same is ‘difficult’ or ‘demanding’.

Men who show anger are described as ‘passionate’, ‘intense’ or ‘having strong convictions’. Women expressing identical anger are called ‘emotional’, ‘hysterical’ or ‘overreacting’. The language usage and the way we construct it suggests that male anger is justified and powerful, while female anger is irrational and excessive.

When men remain calm under pressure or are the silent ones, they are ‘cool-headed’, ‘composed’ or ‘unflappable’. Women showing the same composure are sometimes labeled ‘cold’, ‘unemotional’ or ‘ice queens’.

Men with multiple partners are ‘players’, ‘studs’ or simply ‘experienced’. Women with similar relationship histories face terms like ‘promiscuous’ or ‘slut’. The same behaviour receives celebration for men and judgment for women.

In committed relationships, men who are attentive and caring are praised as ‘devoted’ or ‘romantic’. Women showing identical care are often dismissed as ‘clingy’, ‘needy’ or ‘dependent.’ The expectation seems to be that female care-giving is natural and therefore less noteworthy, while male care-giving is exceptional and praiseworthy.

Physical presentation shows different descriptive language based on gender. Men who dress well and pay attention to grooming are ‘sharp’, ‘polished’ or ‘well put together’ but if they start doing it too much they are being looked down upon or assumed as ‘gay’. Women with identical attention to appearance are sometimes labeled ‘high maintenance’, ‘superficial’ but this can be good in some cultures like Japanese and Korean.

Speaking patterns reveal gendered language biases as well. Men who speak frequently in groups are seen as ‘contributing’, ‘engaged’ or ‘taking leadership’. Women with similar participation levels are often described as ‘talkative’, ‘chatty’ or dominating the conversation.

Achievement language shows difference. Successful men are described as ‘driven’, ‘accomplished’ and ‘visionary’. Successful women often face questions about ‘work-life balance’, are called ‘lucky’ or have their achievements attributed to external factors rather than personal capability.

# Changing Metaphors and Resistance

Metaphors about gender have never stayed still. They reflect the time and society they come from and as social norms shift, so do the metaphors. However, change is often met with resistance, especially when old ideas about masculinity and femininity are deeply rooted in the culture, religion, and tradition.

After the chaos of World War II, society pushed for a return to ‘normal’. Women were encouraged to leave wartime jobs and go back to being wives and mothers. The old idea of the woman as the ‘angel of the house’ came back which showed the belief that women should stay at home while men worked. This reflected the political and economic aspect of the society.

Feminist movements in the 1960s through the 1980s pushed back. They introduced new ways of talking about women’s lives, using words like ‘consciousness raising’, ‘sisterhood’ and ‘empowerment’. These new terms encouraged women to see themselves as active and powerful, not just passive or decorative.

Today resistance continues in new forms. Online movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp give people new ways to talk about power and gender. These hashtags provide a way for people to share their experiences, which were previously ignored or hidden.

Social media has also become a space for satire. Memes that joke about ‘toxic masculinity’ or ‘Karens’ show how gender stereotypes can be exposed and challenged. But they can also reinforce the very ideas they mock if repeated too often.

People in academic and activist groups are creating new ways to talk about gender. Words like "toxic masculinity" and "internalized misogyny" help us understand harmful behaviors. Meanwhile, words used by non-binary and genderfluid people challenge the old belief that gender must be either male or female.

Still not everyone accepts these changes. Arguments about pronouns, gender-neutral language and inclusive speech show how deeply gendered ideas are built into our institutions and our identities.

# 

# Linguistic Implications and Future Directions

From a language point of view, this all shows how metaphors shape our ideas about power. Gender metaphors and words aren’t neutral. They usually reflect bias.

For example, metaphors about men often involve strength, structure, or action like ‘rock’, ‘backbone’ or ‘warrior’. Metaphors for women tend to focus on beauty, emotion. This reflects what linguist call markedness.

The internet speeds up how these metaphors evolve. New words like ‘trad wives’, ‘chads’ and ‘pick me girl’ spread quickly, showing how fast gender language can change, but also how it can repeat old patterns.

Future research could look at how gender metaphors work in different cultures and languages. This could help us see which parts are universal and which are shaped by culture. It’s also important to study how new technologies like AI might implement gender biases found in existing language.

Education has a big role to play. Teaching people to notice and question gendered metaphors and trends could help them make more thoughtful and fair language choices in daily life.

# Conclusion

The findings suggest that metaphor is not just a way of speaking, it is a way of thinking. When we say someone is ‘the man of the house’ we’re not just using mere words. We’re passing on beliefs about who holds power and who doesn’t.

By understanding how language creates inequality, we can start changing it. As we move forward into a world that is more and more connected, the ways we talk about gender will continue to shape how future generations understand themselves and each other.

# References

Beroíza-Valenzuela, Daniela, and Diego Salas-Guzmán. 2024. "Language and Gender Stereotypes in Cognitive Processing." *Journal of Cognitive Studies*, 15(3): 45-62.

*The Bible*. New International Version. 2011. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

*Casablanca*. 1942. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Warner Bros.

Clark, Emily. 2024. *Metaphor and Ideology: Cognitive Frames in Social Discourse*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Iron Man*. 2008. Directed by Jon Favreau. Marvel Studios.

Lakoff, George, and Mark Johnson. 1980. *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakoff, Robin. 1975. *Language and Woman's Place*. New York: Harper & Row.

*The Maltese Falcon*. 1941. Directed by John Huston. Warner Bros.

Pak, Min-Jung. 2023. *Gender Performed: Language, Identity, and Intersectionality*. London: Routledge.

Silverstein, Michael. 1979. "Language Structure and Linguistic Ideology." In *The Elements: A Parasession on Linguistic Units and Levels*, edited by Paul R. Clyne, William F. Hanks, and Carol L. Hofbauer, 193–247. Chicago: Chicago Linguistic Society.

Swift, Taylor. 2019. Interview with CBS Sunday Morning. CBS. October 6, 2019.

Tasker, Yvonne. 1993. *Spectacular Bodies: Gender, Genre and the Action Cinema*. London: Routledge.

*Wonder Woman*. 2017. Directed by Patty Jenkins. Warner Bros.

World Health Organization (WHO). 2023. "Gender and Health." <https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender>.

Tab 2

*Vocabulary.com Dictionary*, s.v. "bull," accessed May 23, 2025, <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/bull>.