



APPENDIXES FOR GENDER NEUTRAL TASK FORCE

Appendix A

Research on Pronouns, Gender, Psychology and God

- *"Psychology, Prescriptive Grammar, and the Pronoun Problem,"* Donald G. McKay, University of California Los Angeles, American Psychologist, May 1980
ABSTRACT: An experimental technique is reported for evaluating the prescription of he to mean 'he or she'. Subjects who read textbook paragraphs containing prescriptive 'he' referring to neutral antecedents, such as person, miscomprehended the antecedents as male 40% more often than did subjects who read identical paragraphs with prescriptive 'he' replaced by a previously unencountered neologism (e, E or tey). Using 'he' to mean 'he or she' doesn't work and maintains sex bias. It may subtly influence the way people think and behave.

- *"Generic Pronouns and Sexist Language: The Oxymoronic Character of Masculine Generics,"* John Gastil, University of Wisconsin- Madison, Sex Roles, 11/12 1990
ABSTRACT: This experiment investigated the propensity of the generic 'he' to evoke images of males relative to he/she and the plural they. Undergraduates read sentences aloud and verbally described the images that came to mind. The results provide strong support for the hypothesis that the generic 'he' evokes a disproportionate number of male images. Results also suggest that while the plural 'they' functions as a generic pronoun for both males and females, males may comprehend 'he/she' in a manner similar to 'he'. Theoretical implications for a critique of sexist language and prescribing generic pronoun usage are considered. "...Using the generic 'he' interferes with effective communication, and viable alternative pronouns exist -even the most obscure of which (e.g., 'tey') students readily comprehend (MacKay, 1980b; Todd-Mancillas & Meyers, 1980).Therefore, grammarians (and readers) should recommend the use of an alternative generic pronoun. Of course, if one acknowledges that language use has an effect on society, the harmful effects of the generic 'he' mentioned above provide another argument for discouraging its usage."

- *"God as a Man Versus God as a Woman: Perceiving God as a Function of the Gender of God and the Gender of the Participant,"* Rachel Ann Foster and Renée L. Babcock, Central Michigan University, The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 2001
ABSTRACT: This study examines the hypothesis that women and men relate differently to a male God-figure and a female God-figure. The participants (281 undergraduates at a large West Coast university in the United States, and 154 undergraduates at a large Midwestern university in the United States, who participated for course credit) wrote fictional stories about an encounter with either a female God or a male God. The stories (N = 435) were then content analyzed for differences in story characteristics as a result of the gender of God. The results indicate significant differences due to both the gender of God and to the gender of the participant. Results indicate that participants writing about a female God were skeptical, but more likely to experience reassurance and comfort. Men were more likely to write action-oriented stories, whereas women wrote feelings-oriented stories.

Appendix B

2016 AWSC AND PRE CON INPUT FROM MEMBERS

SUPPORT:

- The existence of a process for change is a sign that we knew change would be needed. Trust the process.
- I am super Christian and I am in support of changing the language
- This language is divisive, it hurts unity
- We need to update our language to reflect linguistic and cultural changes
- Members often change the language during meetings, which hurts unity
- Minority voice is important
- This would remove a barrier and make us more accessible for present and future generations
- We owe our teens a more inclusive program.
- We have the opportunity to be of service and work our process.
- Male pronouns deny my experience as a woman, being invisible
- If we push people away, we have to look at that (Traditions 1, 5, 11)
- Principles over personality (Tradition 12)
- Put spiritual principles on the line
- Maybe it's not working (anymore)
- People already struggling with concept of Higher Power makes it harder
- I love this family and I am glad we are talking about this
- Keep an open mind about this topic. Be open to change.

CONCERNS:

- Isn't "He" already gender neutral?
- It's already inclusive and working, why change it?
- What else will change?
- Isn't this an outside issue? Doesn't this distract from our primary purpose?
- What would it cost to change?
- Why not change God's name to Higher Power or something else?
- Would we still be following AA's Steps and Traditions?
- Hasn't this already been voted on and decided?
- What is the process for making changes to the Legacies?
- What is the WSO process for translating literature into other languages?
- With the difficulties in making a change to the Legacies, why would we consider trying?

Appendix C

RESPONSES from TASK FORCE regarding these CONCERNS

1) Isn't 'He' already gender neutral?

A 1980 study at UCLA concluded that using he to mean “he or she” doesn’t work and maintains sex bias. It may subtly influence the way people think and behave. A 1990 study at the University of Wisconsin reached a similar conclusion. A 2001 study at Central Michigan University found that women and men respond differently to the concept of God depending on whether God is portrayed as a man or a woman.

These studies tell us that using "he" or "him" to refer to God leads inevitably to thinking about God as a man, that this carries with it gender bias. This can influence how we respond to the concept of God, potentially making it more difficult for some to relate to that concept based on the individual's gender and beliefs.

2) It's already inclusive and working, why change it?

As referenced above, using "He" to refer to God is no longer believed to be gender neutral. This notion does not reflect the growth and understanding of our members. Some of us have heard, anecdotally, from other members that the use of gender specific pronouns in the Steps and Traditions made it more difficult for them to feel comfortable and safe in meetings.

3) What else will change?

There is fear that change will lead to dilution of the Al-Anon program; that bending to cultural changes and personal conflicts weakens the program. In the past, Al-Anon and the World Service Conference have not shied away from making changes that were deemed important.

On the occasion of our 25th anniversary, Lois W wrote to the 1976 World Service Conference: *“It’s always forward that we have to look, and let our gratitude be for those to come...”* This year's (2018) WSC Theme, is *‘There is No Standing Still.’* We believe responding positively to the issue of gender bias by revising our Steps and Traditions is an important way to become more open and inviting to everyone who needs the recovery and healing of our program.

4) Isn't this an outside issue? Doesn't this distract from our primary purpose?

Tradition 10 states: The AFGs have no opinion on outside issues: hence our name ought never be drawn into public controversy. *“If we are unsure whether or not something is an outside issue, we might apply the following question to it: Does it fall within Al-Anon's single purpose-to help families and friends of alcoholics?”* (Paths to Recovery, p. 220).

Tradition 3 talks about as an Al-Anon Family Group our focus is on gathering together for mutual aid and having no other affiliation. Affiliation means endorsing or implying endorsement of specific treatment methods, etc.- which can make Al-Anon and Alateen vulnerable and can lead to the dilution of our primary spiritual aim.

Changing to gender neutral language has nothing to do with outside affiliations, and instead provides a more welcoming, inviting, and inclusive atmosphere to our groups, as well as our organization as a whole. Having Al-Anon continue to refer to God as a 'He' can be construed as promoting certain religious views.

5) What would it cost to make this change?

A change would be required to Steps and Traditions wording in any new literature, or literature that is revised. Trusted servants can use their discretion in deciding when and how to make this change in the literature, with cost and other considerations in mind. Websites are easily updated; area and district websites would be updated by those service arms.

In our opinion, this is a minor cost. Ballots (for voting on this issue) can be sent out electronically (using e-mail or inviting groups to vote via online survey). If changing to gender neutral wording welcomes more people who are suffering from the effects of alcoholism (Tradition 5), we believe the cost is worth it.

6) Why not change God's name to Higher Power or something else?

The Gender Neutral Task Force has but one purpose: to gather information regarding the impact of using male pronouns when referring to God and the possibility of changing our language to be gender neutral. Although the issue of using the word God instead of Higher Power may be a valid concern, it is not within the scope of this task force. This would need to be addressed by another task force or committee.

7) Would we still be following AA's Steps and Traditions?

Other 12 step programs that use the AA Steps and Traditions have gotten approval from AA to adopt a gender neutral version of the Legacies. This approval was given from the inception of those groups, so they did not need to go through a process of requesting the change after-the-fact as we are. If AA approved the change for other groups, we can infer that AA does not believe it is an alteration of the core meaning and purpose of the original AA Steps and Traditions. Also, there are already several differences between AA's and Al-Anon's Steps and Traditions.

8) Hasn't this already been voted on and decided?

This gender neutral topic was last considered by WSC in 1993 which was over 25 years ago. Lots has changed over that time. Our literature has become more inclusive due to our members encouragement. Our membership has become more diverse in age/sex/nationalities/religions from around the world.

The focus in Al-Anon is on each member and encouraging everyone's voice be heard. This is shown in the World Service Structure diagram in the 2018-2021 Service Manual (p. 171). The entire structure of this organization exemplifies that everything starts and ends with each family group and its individual members. Even our beloved daily reader's title, *Courage to Change*, embodies the need to be open to change.

And timely, the theme for this year's WSC is, "We're Not Standing Still". As we know better, we do better. Knowing the effects that many people experience to God being referred to as male, we can realize that even if we are not personally bothered about this, we know that others are and may decide to become open to this change.

9) What is the process for making changes to the Legacies?

"No changes are to be made in the Al-Anon or Alateen Traditions, The Steps, the Concepts of Service, or the General Warranties of the Conference Charter without written consent of three-quarters of the Al-Anon Family Groups." Service Manual 2018-2021, pp. 226-227. This refers to Al-Anon groups worldwide.

The process (condensed from *2014 World Service Conference Summary, p. 36*):

- 1) Group discussion and vote
- 2) District discussion and vote
- 3) AWSC discussion and vote
- 4) Area Assembly discussion and vote
- 5) To World Service Conference (WSC) either by:
 - a) Motion by Area Delegate
 - b) Possible agenda item for Area Chair or Area Delegate to either Policy Committee or Board of Trustees
- 6) Discussion and vote at WSC
- 7) Return to Areas for further discussion
- 8) Present and vote at following year's WSC
- 9) Poll all AFG's worldwide, needs to pass by three fourths

10) What is the WSO process for translating literature into other languages?

- 1) First changed in English, then into Spanish and French by paid WSO staff
- 2) Translations are reviewed by Al-Anon members
- 3) Local service arms are responsible for translating and printing into languages other than French and Spanish
- 4) Permission is needed from WSO since our literature is copyrighted. If permission is granted, there is a Literature Translation Committee, comprised of local members in that country, that works together on each translation
- 5) The WSO does not provide staff or financial resources to translate literature in these countries, though can request volunteers to review it before it is finalized

11) With the difficulties in making a change to the Legacies, why would we consider trying?

On Al-Anon's 25th anniversary, Lois W. wrote to the 1976 WSC: *"It's always forward that we have to look, and let our gratitude be for those to come..."*. This sentiment is echoed in this year's 2018 WSC theme that our WA Area has adopted, *"There is No Standing Still."*

We believe responding positively to the issue of gender bias by revising our Steps and Traditions is an important way to become more open and inviting to everyone who needs the recovery and healing of our program. The proposed motion will more closely align us with the principles of the Al-Anon program. We believe using gender neutral language in the Al-Anon Legacies is an important way to become more open and inviting to everyone who needs the recovery and healing of our program.