

## **Sociolinguistics: Gender and Profanity**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, I examine the relationship between gender and use of profanity. My primary focus is whether men or women use profanity more, and what circumstances impact its use. I look at the formality of the environment and the gender of the interlocutor. I take as my hypotheses the stereotypes that men swear more than women in every circumstance and that both men and women are more likely to swear in casual speech or with male friends than in a formal setting or with female friends. I examine the use of the word “fuck” among 218 subjects ages 18-25 to reflect attitudes among subjects toward profanity by giving each subject a survey about his/her comfort with the word in different circumstances. I am able to make generalizations about subjects’ use of profanity depending on formality and the interlocutor’s gender. I find that most of my hypotheses are accurate and that men use the word significantly more than women. The one exception to my hypotheses is women in casual settings, who claim to use the word equally with interlocutors of both genders. I suggest interpretations of these results and the relevance of profanity in the study of gender and language.

### **References**

Meyerhoff, M. (2006). *Introducing Sociolinguistics*. Glasgow, UK. Routledge.

### **Acknowledgements**

The following people participated in designing the questionnaire and/or collected and entered data into the database: Erin Axley, Desiree Cossyleon, Lukas Hackett, Dani Hadaway, Kimie Kimura, Amanda Lowry, Abigail Peeler, Amelia Upton