

Gender & Sexuality

LCD 205: Sociolinguistics
Queens College, CUNY

C.N. Serrano Madsen II
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Outline

- Individual Speech
- Exams

Lecture

GENDER, SEXUALITY AND LANGUAGE

- Recalling our web of association
- What is associated with:
 - Men
 - Women
 - Homosexuals

Indexing

- A relationship between identification
 - Direct
 - Conventional implicature
 - An inference that arises from the meaning (or semantics) of a word or phrase
 - Something concrete in the language indicates something
 - e.g. masculine inflection on adjectives (cansado v. cansada)
 - Indirect
 - Indirect association
 - E.g. higher pitch associated with femininity & size

Variables and Indices

- Gendered Indices
 - Masculine variables
 - Feminine variables
- Generally associated with several other social meanings
 - Casualness
 - Vernacularness

- What are some masculine variables and what are they associated with?
- What are some feminine variables and what are they associated with?
- What are some gay variables and what are they associated with?

- These associations help to constitute what it means to be 'male' or 'female' or 'gay'
- So according to your list, what does it mean to be:
 - Male
 - Female
 - Gay

Variables and Indices

- Everyone manipulates their language to convey meaning
 - Use different variables to express (index) different things
- Two views of using identity
 - Constitutive
 - Features of the language define (constitute) the meaning of a social category
 - You use it because you want to show you are / making yourself one by the use of it
 - Reflexive
 - Language reflects identification with a group or personal stance
 - You use it because you are

MEN V. WOMEN

- Do men and women sounds different?
 - YES
- Females female child directed speech in Newcastle tends to include more prestige variants
- Discourse analysis shows diminished force
- Why is this? Why might women use more prestige forms?

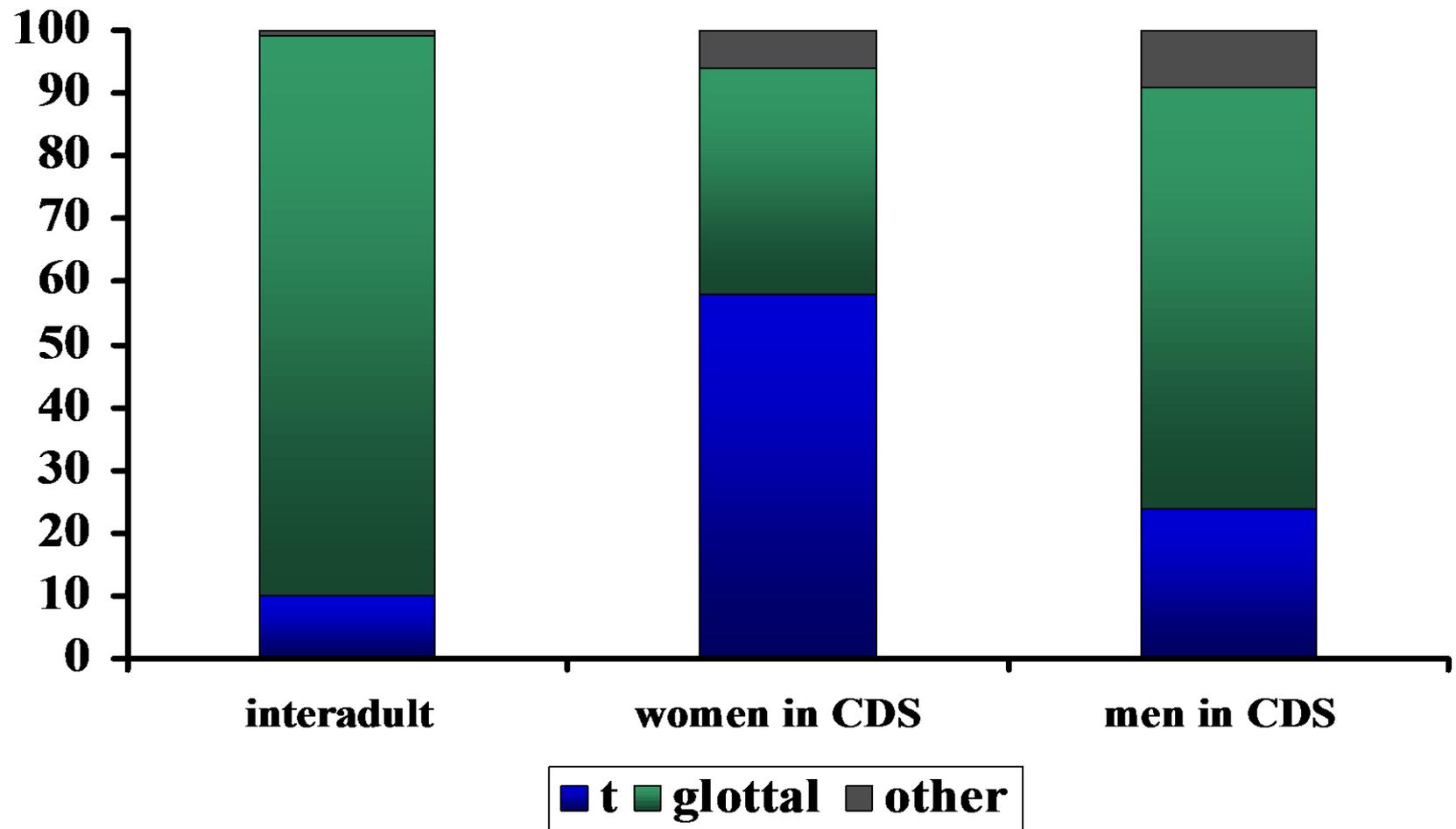
Child Directed Speech

Foulkes et al (2001, 2005 etc.)

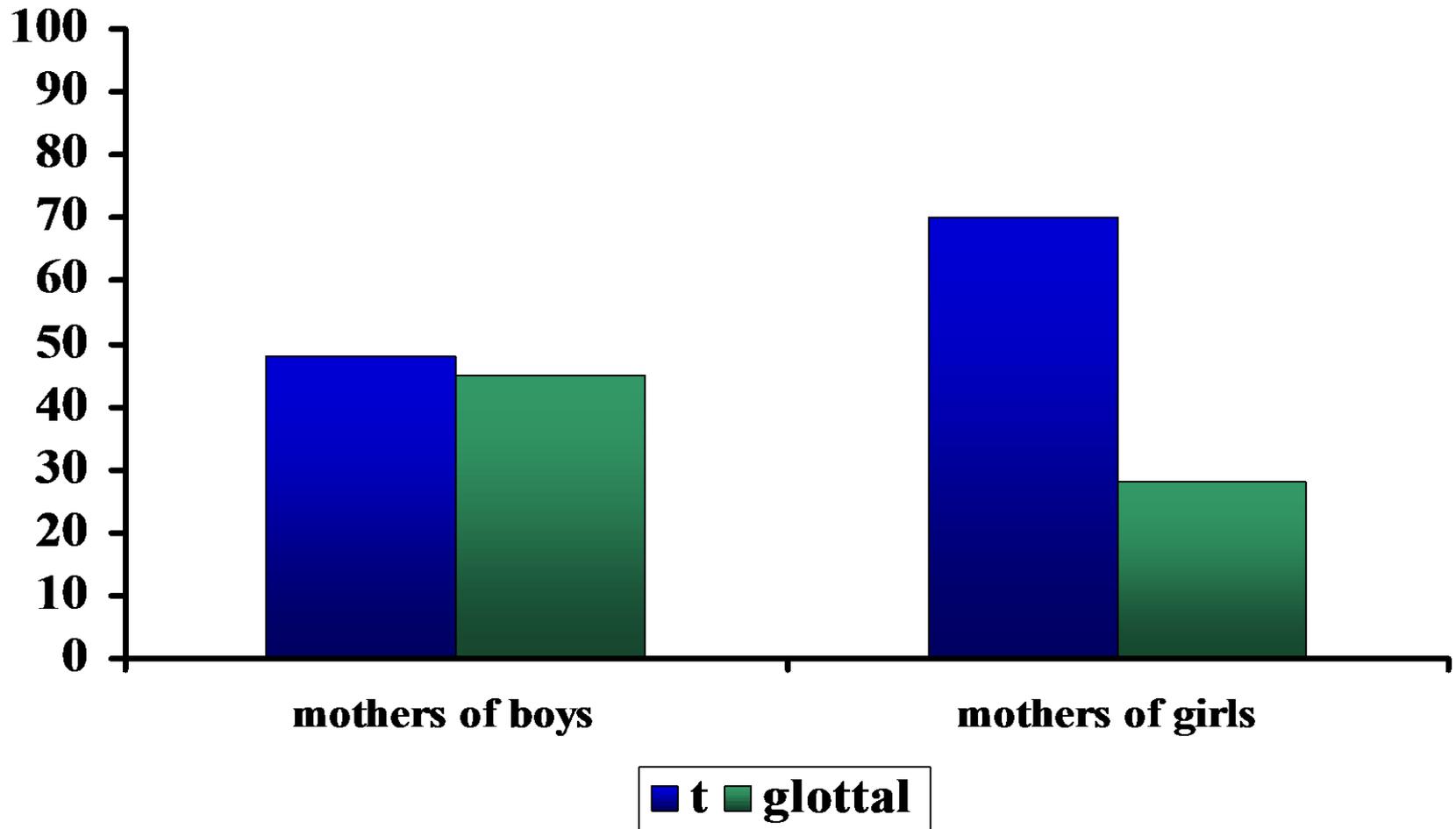
- 40 children aged 2-4 in Newcastle
- Mothers and fathers talking to other adults/talking to their kids
- Study of (t) in caregiver speech [t] vs. [ʔ]



Child Directed Speech



Child Directed Speech



Discourse

- Women
 - Make fewer interruptions
 - Talk more
 - Use softer constructions
 - Would you mind closing the door. vs. Shut the door, please.
 - Use more tags
 - Nice day, isn't it?
 - Discourse markers
 - I mean
 - you know

Discourse

- Lakoff (1973) argues that:
 - Such features diminish the force of an utterance
 - Show a lack of confidence

- So it seems that women use more prestige variants than men
 - More prestige variants when talking to little girls
 - More polite
 - Labov (1990): “In stable sociolinguistic stratification, men use a higher frequency of nonstandard forms than women.”
- Why should this be so?

- What are some possible reasons for men and women using different varieties?
- Why might women use more prestige variants?

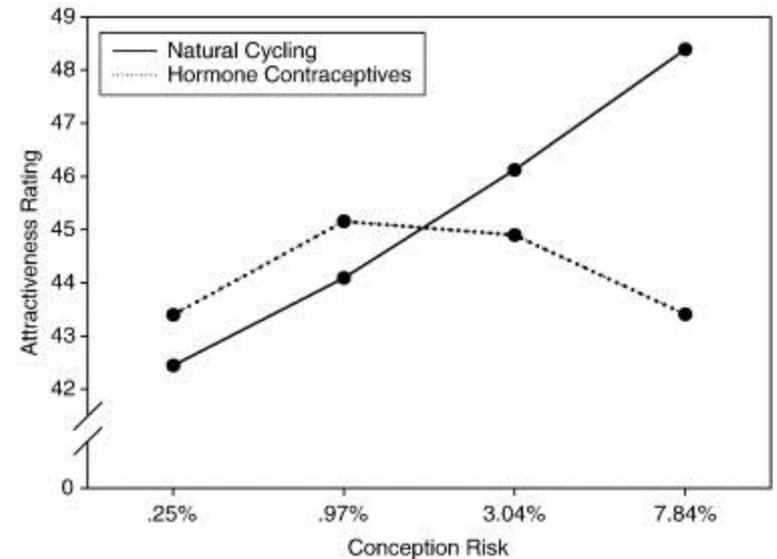
- Some explanations given:
 - Different biological makeup.
 - Different roles in the labor market and different kinds of speech communities.
 - Differences in power.

Biology

- Chambers (1995)
 - Biological differences in brain organization
 - Women have better verbal abilities than men

Biology

- Ovulation and Voice Attractiveness, Identification of menstruation
 - Pipitone & Gallup (2008)
- F0 – Men's pitch is half as high as women's
 - Titze (2000)
- Vocal fold length 60% longer in Men
 - Titze (2000)
- Men – longer vocal track and different relevant proportions of oral and pharyngeal cavity
 - Fitch & Giedd (1999)



Biology

- These aren't related to use of prestige variants
- Differences in size and the correlated pitch differences and articulatory differences are associated with indices, but not related to use of prestige variants

Market Forces

- Premise: You tend to talk like who you talk to.
 - In many societies men and women tend to play different roles in the labor market.
 - In the West, women's jobs may be more likely to put them in contact with middle-class speakers than men's jobs.

- A similar kind of explanation is that men and women tend to have different social networks.
 - Different employment patterns for men and women created stronger local networks than women.
 - Men tended to work in shipyards, mines etc.
 - Women often worked outside the community or stayed home.
- The vernacular norm is therefore more strongly reinforced in men than women.